THE WAY

a review of Christian spirituality published by the British Jesuits

April 2005 *Volume 44, Number 2*

MINISTERING GOD'S WORD

Book Reviews

Margaret Blackie on Tim Muldoon's Ignatian fitness programme

William J. O'Malley on an important new Ignatian book on education

Peter Hackett on Ignatian humanism

John Pridmore on Anglican identities as seen by Rowan Williams

Sue Delaney on spirituality and the family

Norman Tanner on Hadewijch, the great medieval mystic

Kevin Alban on the Carmelite rule

Beth Crisp on a new book about saints

Judith Lancaster on new approaches to the study of spirituality from Ireland

FOR AUTHORS

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 can be found on *The Way*'s website, www.theway.org.uk. The Special Number for 2005, marking the centenary of the theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1980), will be entitled *Spirituality, Tradition and Beauty*. In 2006, the special number, marking jubilees for Ignatius and for his first two companions, Pierre Favre and Francis Xavier, will be about Ignatian spirituality and growth in relationships. Contributions for these two projects will be especially welcome.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The article by Helmut Gabel first appeared in *Korrespondenz zur Spiritualität der Exerzitien*, and is presented here by kind permission of the author and editor.

Translations: Philip Endean SJ.

Illustrations: Peter Brook SJ; www.visipix.com; Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod; Web Gallery of Art; www.webshots.com; www.corpwatch.org; www.painetworks.com; www.cartoonbank.com; www.herrieliza.org; www.sxc.hu; www.hermanoleon.org; www.pbase.com.

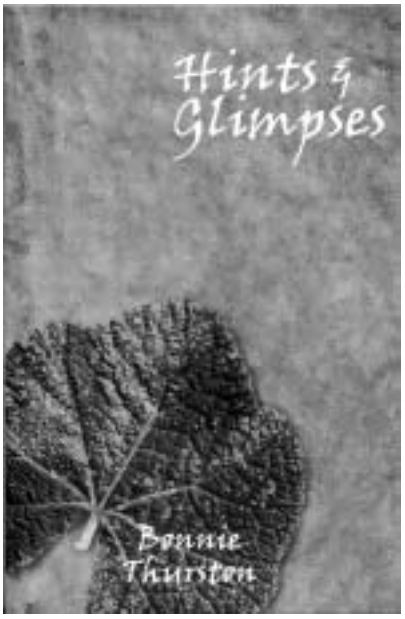
FOREWORD

THE BIBLE DOES NOT CLAIM TO BE TRUE BEYOND QUESTION; it claims to be 'inspired by God' (2 Timothy 3:16). It certainly refers to things that happened in history, but it does not give us straightforwardly historical truth. It may indeed tell us truths we can rely on, but these truths are of a distinctively religious character. They are not like logical axioms: cool, detached and neutral. Rather, the foundational convictions of the Bible involve us, change us, subvert us. 'The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow ….' (Hebrews 4:12)

This second issue of *The Way* for 2005 explores the different ways in which the Word of God nourishes our Christian lives. Bonnie Thurston and Nicholas King reflect on the figurative and transformative character of biblical writing. Peter Edmonds and Helmut Gabel—helped by a seventeenth-century Jesuit theologian from Peru—look at the distinctive ways in which Ignatian spirituality draws on the Bible. Gerard J. Hughes and David Goodall consider the tactfulness and sensitivity necessary to Christian witness when it engages cultures that are secular, foreign or both, while Róisín Pye tells of how *Sacred Space*, the Irish Jesuits' prayer website, has enabled people to share the Word in new and fruitful ways. Finally, we consider the Word's authority. Two bishops, Brian Noble of Shrewsbury and Oscar Romero of San Salvador (through the sensitive voice of Matthew Ashley), look at how biblical tradition properly shapes and regulates contemporary Christian spirituality. If spirituality is to maintain stability and identity, it must be regulated by the practices of biblical and traditional 'religion'—a regulation, rightly understood, that empowers rather than constrains.

When the Easter Jesus touches us, we are in the position of the Lukan disciples: he opens our minds so that we may read the Scriptures anew (Luke 24:45). He fulfils our expectations, but also extends them. May this Eastertide issue sustain that process as we wait in our cities for the promised Spirit, who will clothe us with power from on high (Luke 24:49).

Philip Endean SJ



Bonnie Thurston

Hints and Glimpses

'In this second collection of her poems, Bonnie Thurston leads us through the year's cycle—autumn, winter, spring, summer. Her words heighten the experiences of our daily life … she helps us to discern the small radiances that suggest transcendence.'

From the preface, by James Coutts

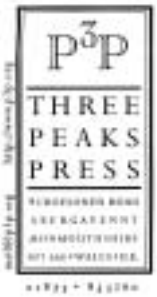
'There is a pilgrimage thrust throughout this book, and we are invited, unstated, to travel ourselves through the poems. It is a delightful book, beautifully produced ….'

David Scott, The Merton Journal

pb. 64pp. ISBN 1 902093 09 7 **£6.99**

Hints and Glimpses *is available from The Way Ignatian Book Service* (***www.theway.org.uk/bookservice.shtml***)*,*
or from our editorial offices:

The Way
Campion Hall
Oxford
OX1 1QS
(44/0 1865) 286117
the.way@campion.ox.ac.uk



WORDS AND THE WORD

Reflections on Scripture, Prayer and Poetry

Bonnie Thurston

FOR MOST OF MY ADULT LIFE, I have been both a poet and a professor of the New Testament. The Word and words are central to my life. They are also a source of considerable perplexity and sometimes of downright difficulty.

First there are all the complications of the Word, of Holy Scripture, of the Bible. It has been my privilege to deal daily with the mystery of Holy Scripture. And it is mystery, this process of inspiration and the resultant authority of the Bible. Would that we could remember that Scripture is mystery, would that we could kneel in its presence and open it in awe, gratitude and wonder as frequently as we confront it with scalpel and microscope! But, as Kathleen Norris quipped in an introduction to the Psalter, 'today's bblical scholars are trained in abstraction, and not in poetry'.[1] A major problem with the study of Scripture in the academy is that scholars and pastors are often trained to treat the Word as ordinary word.

Then there are difficulties with the language of prayer. I agree with Jean Daniélou that prayer is primarily,

> … the expression of an ontological bond that exists between God and us. It is the outward manifestation of a fundamental reality: we continuously receive ourselves from God, and we continuously refer back to [God].[2]

Prayer is essentially a matter of making ourselves present to the God who is always present to us.[3] But in the practice of most Christians, prayer is less a matter of presence and more a matter of saying words.

[1] Kathleen Norris, 'Preface', in *The Psalms* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1997), xviii.
[2] Jean Daniélou, *Prayer: The Mission of the Church*, translated by David Louis Schindler (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 15.
[3] Daniélou, *Prayer*, 19.

The Way, 44/2 (April 2005), 7-20

Eventually 'saying words' goes stale, and what is one of God's greatest gifts, that most wonderful gift of relatedness to the Divine Self, is truncated. Seldom is it seriously experienced and deeply explored.

Once again, at least part of the problem is that words obscure the Word. We are bombarded by so many words that we forget language's power. Writing in an article in *The Christian Century* in 1986, Kathleen Norris reflected:

> … when I began attending a small Presbyterian church in my town, it struck me that, for a religion of 'the Word', Christianity had a long way to go to take words—and their real power, beauty and mystery—seriously enough.[4]

That power and beauty and mystery are dependent on the presence of silence. Writing in 1960, the US American Cistercian monk Thomas Merton noted that some people,

> … are beginning to feel the futility of adding more words to the constant flood of language that pours meaninglessly over everybody, everywhere, from morning to night. For language to have meaning, there must be intervals of silence somewhere. … For the mercy of God is not heard in words unless it is heard, both before and after the words are spoken, in silence.[5]

In what follows, I want to explore how the Bible talks about the Word, words and God, to outline what we might call a biblical theology of language. And I want to suggest that Scripture, prayer and poetry are, if not always simply identical, certainly closely related.

A Biblical Theology of Language

'Language is the precinct (*templum*) … the house of Being', Martin Heidegger wrote in *Poetry, Language, Thought*.[6] 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God', declares the opening of St John's Gospel. From very different points of view,

[4] Kathleen Norris, 'Finding a Place for Poets in the Church', *The Christian Century*, 103/35 (19 November 1986), 1054.
[5] Thomas Merton, 'The Solitary Life' (1960), in *The Monastic Journey*, edited by Patrick Hart (Kansas City: Sheed, Andrews and McMeel, 1977), 153-154.
[6] Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, translated by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper Colophon, 1975), 132.

both of these statements suggest that language—word—is a fundamental human reality. Language is more than little puffs of breath, and words are more than a series of significant sounds; 'language is not only and not primarily an audible and written expression of what is to be communicated'.[7] For Heidegger, language 'houses' existence itself; it is the 'place' in which we dwell. And in the thought of John the Evangelist everything comes into being or existence via the Word who is God. Word, being equated with God, is eternal. So says the prophet Isaiah: 'The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever' (Isaiah 40:8). So says God's Word-made-flesh, Jesus: 'Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away' (Mark 13:31). At this point a biblical theology of language begins. In the Bible the Eternal Word of God creates, sustains and saves.

The Creating Word

The Bible is very clear that everything that came into being did so through God's Word. God speaks and things happen:

> In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light. (Genesis 1:1-3)

For the wonderful poet of Genesis whom scholars call the Priestly writer, God's language is powerful. The pattern of creation in Genesis 1

[7] Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 73.

is 'and God said', followed by 'and it was so'. For the Priestly writer, God *spoke* the world and all its creatures into being; God's *Word* made it happen.

The Priestly writer's view comes to be the biblical understanding of creation: God created by means of Word. 'By the word of the Lord the heavens were made', the Psalmist declares, 'and all their host by the breath of His mouth' (Psalm 33:6). This vision carries over into the New Testament. John the Evangelist's creative genius equated the concept of the *Logos*, and all it meant in his Jewish and Hellenistic environment, with Jesus Christ. John writes of the Word who is God: 'All things came into being through Him, and without Him not one thing came into being' (John 1:3).

In Hebrew Scripture, God creates by means of the Word. In the New Testament, the Word becomes flesh in Jesus Christ, who thus comes to be understood as God's agent of creation. Jesus comes to function much as the figure of Wisdom does in Proverbs:[8]

> When He established the heavens, I was there, when He drew a circle on the face of the deep, when He made firm the skies above, when He established the fountains of the deep, when He assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress His command, when He marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside Him, like a master worker; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing before Him always, rejoicing in His inhabited world and delighting in the human race. (Proverbs 8:27-31)

The Christ Hymn in Colossians, a poem which probably pre-dates the letter into which it was inserted by Paul, sings that in Christ,

> … all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him.
> (Colossians 1:16)

For the biblical writers, 'the word of God is living and active' (Hebrews 4:12). God 'sends out His command to the earth', the Psalmist writes, 'His word runs swiftly' (Psalm 147:15).

[8] Compare also Wisdom of Solomon 7-11.

Language is thus not a passive collection of words, but an explosive, creative force in the universe. Writing about the prophets of Israel, Gerhard von Rad noted that 'in the deepest insights of theology or prophecy alike, Israel took as her starting point her conviction that the word possessed creative power'.[9] By means of the Word, God created the world; by means of the Word, God is sustaining the world; by means of the Word, God is bringing out the divine purposes for and in the world. Especially in the prophetic canon of Hebrew Scripture, a word spoken by God brings about what it states. Similarly, according to the Deuteronomist, Israel's history is 'a history of Yahweh's effective word; it postulated a number of predictions as the real causes of events'.[10] The prophetic formula 'Thus says the Lord' means business. Here is one very pointed example from Isaiah 55:10-11 (italics and lineation mine):

Language is an explosive, creative force in the universe

> For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
> and do not return there until they have watered the earth,
> making it bring forth and sprout,
> giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
> *so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;*
> *it shall not return to me empty,*
> *but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,*
> *and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*

For the prophet Isaiah, the Word of God which issues forth from God's mouth is as active and as inexorable a force as the natural processes of fertility and growth. Given that his cultural context in the ancient Near East was shaped by fertility religions, what he says represents an immense theological advance. God's words will do what God says. Word causes to be. Word accomplishes.

The Sustaining Word

Word also sustains. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel use the image of eating the Word of God and being sustained by it. Poor old, miserable

[9] Gerhard von Rad, *The Message of the Prophets*, translated by David M. Stalker (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 65.
[10] Von Rad, *The Message of the Prophets*, 73.

Jeremiah, who seems to have had so little joy, says in a rare burst of light:

> Your words were found, and I ate them,
> and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart ....
> (Jeremiah 15:16)

As part of his call experience, Ezekiel too is given a scroll of writing to eat (Ezekiel 2:8-3:11). In modern parlance, Ezekiel is to 'internalise' the words of God, so that he can speak them to Israel with power. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel imagine nearness to God, intimacy with God's ways and intentions, in terms of eating God's Word, of taking in the creative and accomplishing power of God.

That the creative Word of God sustains is an idea that also occurs in the New Testament. The writer of 2 Peter wants to encourage a group of Christians who are facing both persecution from without and the threat of false teachers from within. He encourages them to remember the words they have heard before:

> … I am trying to arouse your sincere intention by reminding you that you should remember the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour spoken through your apostles. (2 Peter 3:1-2)

He continues:

> … by the word of God heavens existed long ago and an earth was formed out of water …. But by the same word the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, being kept until the day of judgment .... (2 Peter 3:5,7)

While 2 Peter's image of judgment may sound odd to us, it would not have sounded odd to his innocent and persecuted audience. It would have sounded like justice. However, the point in this context is that Peter presumes that the active power of God in God's Word is both creative and sustaining. By the Word the heavens and earth were formed; by the Word they are kept, sustained, preserved.

The Saving Word

God's Word creates. God's Word sustains. And God's Word, incarnated in the person of Jesus Christ, saves. So, again, the prologue of John's gospel:

> And the Word became flesh and lived among us …. From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. (John 1:14, 16)

The other wisdom hymn I mentioned, Colossians 1:15-20, repeats the same idea: in Christ,

> … all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. (Colossians 1:19-20)

So far, I have tried to express two ideas. First, God, Word and Christ are equated. The biblical writers understood the Godhead itself in terms of the concept of language. Second, Word is described as creating, sustaining and saving. A biblical theology of language understands that Word is the first gift of God, whose operative power it is.

Writing about Christianity and Zen Buddhism, William Francis Healy noted:

> Christianity is a religion of the Word. It begins with word, message, good news, revelation. It would be misleading to call the 'good news' of Christianity merely a doctrine for it is God revealing Himself in Christ. However, it is proposed to us in statements ….[11]

God is revealing God's self to us through the Word. Word is God's power active among us. But word in what sense? I would suggest word as metaphor, as symbol, and thus, in a sense, as sacrament.

The Languages of Scripture, Prayer and Poetry

Once we begin to have some inkling of how *Scripture* sees language as dynamic and powerful, we can never again take the language of the

[11] William Francis Healy, *The Thought of Thomas Merton Concerning the Relationship of Christianity and Zen* (Rome: University of St Thomas Aquinas in Urbe, 1975), 55.

Hints and Glimpses

All we have
are hints and glimpses,
something seen
fleetingly
as in peripheral vision,
a shadowy shape
beyond the drape,
the voice that whispers
behind the grille,
the merest murmur
of Elysian melody,
a prickling of the skin
which might be
but a draught
from an open window.
But it is the window
opening on eternity,
seen now darkly,
but then
face to face.

Bonnie Thurston

The title poem of a collection published by Three Peaks Press, Abergavenny, Wales.

Bible as merely literal. This is not to suggest that biblical language is untrue. On the contrary, it is the truest language there is, precisely because it mediates Reality to us on many, many levels. The language of Scripture, like the language of poetry, is multivalent. It has many levels of meaning.

Let me put it another way. Biblical language cannot be just literal, because human beings cannot speak literally about God. This is not my idea; you can find it in St Augustine. Remember that the name of God was so powerful to the Hebrews that they did not even dare to speak it. Remember how God is so immense that humans cannot begin to comprehend what is meant by the word 'God'. And now attend to St Augustine:

> What then … shall we say of God? For if you have been able to comprehend what you would say, then it is not God …. If you have been able to comprehend Him as you think, by so thinking you have deceived yourself. This then is not God, if you have comprehended it. But if it be God, then you have not comprehended it. Therefore how would you speak of that which you cannot comprehend?[12]

The answer to the question 'How would you speak of that which you cannot comprehend?' is: 'By making a metaphor'.

God is not some object to be grasped or comprehended or defined. The proper response to the Reality for which the word 'God' stands is not comprehension, but worship. God is the Creator before whom the creature falls down in worship. The creature may be able to ascertain the *fact* of this God's existence, but the *manner* of that existence, God's

[12] Augustine, *Sermon* 52. 16.

being, God's essence, is beyond human comprehension. Now hear St Thomas Aquinas:

> When the existence of a thing has been ascertained there remains the further question of the manner of its existence, in order that we may know its essence. Now, because we cannot know what God is, but rather what He is not, we have not means for considering how God is, but rather how He is not.[13]

Because we cannot know God in the way in which we know 'ordinary things', the language used to talk about God, or indeed to communicate with God, cannot be 'ordinary language'. We can only either describe what God is not (*via negativa*) or else compare God with things that are and can be known—what St Augustine in Book II of *On Christian Doctrine* calls 'perceiving through similitude'.

When we 'perceive through similitude', when we seek to understand through comparisons, we are comparing what cannot be fully known with what we do know. When the writers of the Hebrew Bible call God a king or a judge they are 'perceiving through similitude'. They do not mean that God sits on a throne wearing a crown, any more than when Jesus called God 'Abba' he meant that God engaged in the sexual act of fathering children. They do not mean that God sits in a courtroom wearing a wig and a black robe, any more than the American poet Anne Sexton is saying that God would like to pick up some bad habits when she writes,

> God loafs around heaven,
> without a shape
> but He would like to smoke His cigar
> or bite His fingernails.[14]

All these expressions involve the making of metaphors; they are comparing what is known to what can be only seen 'in a glass darkly', as the Authorised Version memorably renders Paul in poetic mode (1 Corinthians 13:12).

In John's Gospel, Jesus suggests that his teaching too is metaphorical. In the middle of the farewell discourse he announces:

[13] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae,* 1.3, Introduction.
[14] Anne Sexton, 'The Earth', in *The Awful Rowing Toward God* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), 24.

> I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures, but will tell you plainly of the Father. (John 16:25)

'Figures of speech' is the NRSV translation of *en paroimiais*, which George R. Beasley-Murray thinks is in its turn a translation of the Hebrew word *masal*. *Masal* means proverb, riddle or parable; those who hear it take for granted that it has an enigmatic quality.[15] John's Jesus here echoes Mark's, who says to the twelve and the disciples:

> To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables. (Mark 4:11)

To the crowd 'he did not speak … except in parables, but explained everything in private to his disciples' (Mark 4:34). For John full understanding 'did not come until the era of the Spirit'.[16] Before the great revelation of the passion (Jesus' 'lifting up'), his disciples cannot understand 'plain speech', *parresia*. (Is there a delicious audible pun on the word used for Jesus' ultimate presence, *parousia*?) It is not simply that Jesus as a person is 'a riddle to those who fail to perceive his role as mediator of the kingdom of God';[17] it is also the case that his teaching is meaningless to those who do not recognise its form, 'figures of speech'.

It is crucially important that Christians understand metaphorical or symbolic language. It is the primary way in which human beings can speak of God, and the primary way in which God speaks to human beings. Through the mystery of inspiration, God empowered the biblical writers to make God known by means of human language. The metaphors and symbols they used carry us from the known to the Unknown; the word carries us to the Word. Moreover, as metaphor and symbol, they speak to the whole person, not just to part of the person, and this reflects God's plan and providence. Metaphorical and symbolic language engages emotions and intellect, heart and head, and, if Jung is correct, a deep connectedness uniting the whole human family.

It is crucially important that Christians understand symbolic language

[15] George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (Waco: Word Books, 1987), 286.
[16] Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970), 723.
[17] Beasley-Murray, *John*, 287.

In his book *The Sacred and the Profane*, Mircea Eliade speaks of how symbols enable us to find our way out of particular situations and open ourselves to 'the general and the universal':

> Symbols awaken individual experience and transmute it into a spiritual act, into metaphysical comprehension of the world … by understanding the symbol, man succeeds in living the universal.[18]

Eliade here echoes what the US American poet Mary Oliver says about poetry:

> … as I see it, the work of the poem is to transcend the ordinary instance, to establish itself on a second, metaphysical level ….[19]

'Metaphysical' is exactly the right word here, formed from the Greek *meta*—meaning 'after', 'alongside' or 'behind'—and *physis*—meaning 'nature'. Kathleen Norris says nearly the same thing:

> Poets are making a kind of wisdom literature, in which the ordinary events of life are seen to have deep spiritual significance.[20]

Biblical language, the language of the Sacred, and poetry have in common a deep understanding of the power of the word. Each speaks of what humans cannot fully know in terms of things that they can know, that they have known. Each, if you will, seeks to make visible what is invisible. 'What are the sacraments?' goes the question at the back of my *Book of Common Prayer*. 'The sacraments are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace', the answer begins.[21] God's language, sacred language, the language of prayer and poetry takes the 'inward and spiritual' and makes it 'outward and visible'. Scriptural and poetic language uses the known to help us glimpse the Unknown. How else could we know or communicate with God?

Evelyn Underhill, the great Anglican spiritual writer of the early twentieth century, notes in her magisterial work entitled simply *Worship* three ways in which poetry is suited to what she calls religious

[18] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York: Harvest Books, 1959), 211-212.
[19] Mary Oliver, *Blue Pastures* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1995), 105.
[20] Norris, 'Finding a Place for Poets in the Church', 1054.
[21] *The Book of Common Prayer* (Episcopal USA), 857.

experience. First, it is the carrying medium of something which otherwise wholly eludes representation: the soul's deep and awestruck apprehension of the numinous. Second, it can universalise particulars; giving an eternal reference to those things of time in and through which God speaks to humans. And finally, it is a powerful stimulant of the transcendent sense.[22] Much as the sacraments use physical entities such as water and bread and wine and oil to bring grace to bear upon us, so metaphor or poetic language communicates the things of God through familiar words and ideas. Mary Oliver puts the point simply and beautifully:

> … *all* poetry … carries one from this green and mortal world … lifts the latch and gives a glimpse into a greater paradise ….[23]

Words and Communication

Poems are 'made things': little universes created by an author and brought into being by means of words. And all of creation is God's poem: God spoke it all into being, and sustains it and saves it by that same Word. The writers of the Bible have brought God's eternal and unseen reality and purposes into the temporal and visible realm by means of symbolic language, empowered by God's inspiration. Abraham Heschel speaks of the prophet's word as a means by which 'the invisible God becomes audible'.[24] This transmission from unseen to seen, from invisible to audible, is also fundamentally what the Incarnation, that supreme translation of the Infinite into the finite, is about. In the imaginative transformation of the unseen, eternal world into concrete, physical terms that we can at least partially comprehend, it is possible for word to become Word.

Language is a powerful medium of communication between God and human beings. The biblical writers had a lively sense of the power and mystery of that medium, and they referred to it as 'Word of God'. For them, Word was also God's means of creating, sustaining and saving the world, the heavens and the earth. Language is powerful. We forget that at our peril. Of all the users of language, poets may have the

[22] Evelyn Underhill, *Worship* (New York: Harper, 1936), 112-113.
[23] Mary Oliver, *A Poetry Handbook* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994), 9.
[24] Abraham Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1969), 22.

liveliest sense of its power and mystery. We had better make room in the Church for poets. The New Testament writings, especially the letters of St Paul and the Revelation to St John, provide ample evidence that the earliest Church did.

Language is also the means by which most people reach out to relate to God. It is the medium which most of us use in prayer. If our prayer life seems flat or arid, could it be because it has become all word and no Word, all verbiage with no respect for language? Kathleen Norris described her first forays back to church after many years of absence as exhausting 'word-bombardments'.[25] I sometimes wonder if God feels like the target of all our religious words, rather than the partner in a Divine-human conversation—a thought that I developed in my poem 'You're Safe With Me'.

You're Safe With Me

Poor God,
consigned by theologians
to a dark, cold
corner of the universe
into which they blindly shoot
carefully contrived
arrows of orthodoxy,
small, devious darts of dogma.
They hope to hit You,
listen into the void
to hear You cry out.

Do they frighten You?
Are You lonely hiding there
in heaven's back room?
Come close;
You're safe with me.
I have built a fire
for You in my heart.
We'll have a glass of wine,
toast some cheese,
sit companionably
by the glowing embers
and say nothing at all.

Too many words can prevent us from hearing the Word. Indeed, words can be a symptom of our hiding from the Word. If we are to have a proper relationship with the Word, perhaps we should stop wallowing in language. Most of us, to put it rudely, need to shut up, to be silent for a while, to listen. And when we do use language, we need to use it respectfully. All too easily our religious language can regress, and become merely little puffs of breath, empty sounds. Used without

[25] Norris, 'Finding a Place for Poets in the Church', 1054.

attentiveness, religious language first becomes cant and then dies altogether. In the realm of prayer and worship, familiarity can comfort; it can also kill.

When religious language becomes so familiar to us that it plods, perhaps we need to reach to poetry to make it dance again. If prayer has become a desert, perhaps we should exchange our breviaries for the sonnets of John Donne or Gerard Manley Hopkins, or for the lyrics of Wendell Barry, Denise Levertov, Mary Oliver or R.S.Thomas. Or perhaps we simply need to recover the heart of our Bible: a collection of *poems*, the Psalms, which has always been the prayer book of the Great Cloud of Witnesses.

Mary Oliver has identified what she calls 'the three ingredients of poetry': the mystery of the universe, spiritual curiosity, and the energy of language.[26] In my view, these are also three essential 'ingredients' in the language of Scripture and in the life of prayer. If we lose any one of them in our prayer life and in our reading of Scripture, we run the distinct risk of entombing ourselves spiritually in Ezekiel's valley of dry bones.

Bonnie Thurston currently lives as a solitary, having resigned the William F. Orr Professorship in New Testament at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in 2002. She has written ten theological books, over 100 articles and two volumes of poetry. Her Church affiliations include the Episcopal Church and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). She was ordained in 1984, and is a spiritual director and retreat speaker.

[26] Oliver, *Blue Pastures*, 57.

THE 'HISTORY' IN IGNATIAN CONTEMPLATION

From the Last Supper to the Garden

Peter Edmonds

WHEN CONTEMPORARY SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS suggest a gospel passage for prayer, they normally just mention it, and perhaps point up a few details. This practice follows Ignatius' own advice: the one giving the Exercises is to 'run over the salient points with only brief or summary explanations'. The hope is that the one making the Exercises will go over this history and reflect on it personally, so as to come independently 'upon things which throw further light on it or which more fully bring home its meaning' (Exx 2).

Such a practice takes the biblical passage as what Ignatius calls a 'foundation'—something just given. If, however, we are aware of what modern scholarship has discovered about the Gospels, we can develop a richer, more subtle understanding of what is happening. For the gospel narratives are not just records and chronicles. Behind each of them, rather, lies a process akin to what Ignatius hopes anyone making his Exercises will go through. As each of the evangelists wrote their account, they contributed the fruits of their own reflections, their own insights.[1] What we have, therefore, are not simply the facts about Jesus, but rather those facts as imaginatively presented by various early Christians. John's Jesus had promised that 'the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you' (John 14:26).

Many of the episodes that we take for prayer are found in two or more of the Gospels. Ignatius himself, in common with devotional tradition more generally, tends to bring together elements from the

[1] See the teaching of Vatican II in *Dei verbum*, n. 19: 'the apostles, after the Lord's ascension, passed on to their hearers what he had said and done, but—having learned by experiencing the glorious events of Christ and by enlightenment from the Spirit of truth—with the fuller insight which they now possessed'.

The Way, 44/2 (April 2005), 21-36

different accounts indiscriminately. But it is neither necessary, nor even desirable, for us always to follow this practice. Instead, we can take *each* of the gospel texts individually, as models for the kind of process that Ignatius is trying to foster in the retreatant.

In this article, I shall try to illustrate this idea by taking an example: Ignatius' contemplation 'From the Last Supper to the Garden', which he proposes as the second exercise for the first day of the Third Week (Exx 201-203). Each of the gospel narratives, in its choice of details and emphases, reflects the 'light' thrown on the history as particular early Christians pondered the traditions they inherited. In what follows, we will go through the four gospel accounts in turn, and then revisit Ignatius' own presentation (Exx 201). Modern biblical awareness enables us to develop a much richer account than Ignatius' own of the fruit that people might seek today from these accounts, and of what might happen as they ask, in best Ignatian fashion, for what they want (Exx 193).

The 'History' According to Mark

Mark's version of the events from the Supper to the Garden forms the beginning of his passion story. It takes up 25 verses, which makes it about 4% of the whole Gospel.[2] The passage is clearly an important one.

Mark's narrative falls into three sections. Before recounting Jesus' *prayer* in Gethsemane and his subsequent *arrest*, Mark gives an account of the *journey* from the upper room:

> When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. And Jesus said to them, 'You will all become deserters; for it is written, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered". But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.'
>
> Peter said to him, 'Even though all become deserters, I will not'. Jesus said to him, 'Truly I tell you, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times'. But he said vehemently, 'Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you'. And all of them said the same. (14:26-31)

[2] The whole amounts to 661 verses.

When reflecting on this passage, we may join the disciples in singing the Psalms of Ascent (Psalms 121-134), which are short and attractive Psalms.

Before arriving at Gethsemane, Jesus speaks prophetically to Peter and his disciples about their imminent apostasy, and about his own resurrection, after which he will go before them into Galilee; he quotes the prophet Zechariah (Zechariah 13:7). When later some say to Jesus, 'Prophesy!' (Mark 14:65), the reader will perceive the irony, and realise that Peter's denials were a fulfilment of his prophecy. Here already we can pray for a deeper commitment to the person of Jesus, a prophet concerned for the disciples who so markedly fail to understand him. We may also pray for deliverance from the complacency and self-trust which so deceived the disciples.

Mark's account of the *prayer* of Jesus is among the most carefully crafted passages of his Gospel:

> They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray'. He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And he said to them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake'.
>
> And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, 'Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want'.
>
> He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, 'Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.'
>
> And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him.
>
> He came a third time and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.' (14:32-42)

Here Jesus dominates; he is the subject of every sentence. The one who calmed storms, cast out demons, cured the sick, raised the dead (Mark 4:34-5:43) was 'greatly distressed and troubled', like the

Psalmist whose soul was cast down (Psalm 42:6). Translators struggle with these words. Vincent Taylor quotes the German scholar, Ernst Lohmeyer:

> The Greek words depict the utmost degree of unbounded horror and suffering …. The intensity of the anguish drives him from the disciples to seek peace before the face of his Father.[3]

One recalls the intensity of Ignatius' own expression (Exx 203)—'shatteredness with Christ shattered' (*quebranto con Cristo quebrantado*).

Mark has already shown Jesus at prayer at times of crisis: after his day of activity in Capernaum (1:35), and after his feeding of the multitudes (6:46). Now we hear the words of his prayer. He addresses God as Father, and speaks of the hour and of the cup. He struggles between his own will and the will of God, about which he had taught with such authority: 'whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother' (3:35). He experiences the conflict between spirit and flesh. He prays this prayer three times, to a God who seemingly remains deaf. We hear echoes of the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13); this ordeal in Gethsemane can fill us with a new sense of its meaning.

And yet Jesus has come through. His has been the experience of the Psalmist: 'Hope in God; for I shall again praise Him, my help and my God' (Psalm 42:11). He has the last word, 'Rise, let us be going'. Mark's vision is akin to what we find in the Letter to the Hebrews: 'Jesus offered up prayers and supplications

[3] Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1969 [1952]), 552.

… and he was heard for his reverent submission' (5:7). In Hebrews, there is a clear message for ourselves as well:

> … we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (4:15-16)

The sleeping and silent disciples play an integral part in the narrative. Their story in Mark has been almost as long as the story of Jesus. Though they have been edifying in their response to their call (1:16-20; 3:13-19) and in their enthusiasm for mission (6:7-13,30), they have more often than not failed. Jesus has lamented their blindness, deafness and hardness of heart (8:14-21). Here in Gethsemane they sleep, ignoring Jesus' repeated pleas for watchfulness and prayer. The final words of his farewell discourse, 'What I say to you I say to all: keep awake' (13:37), have fallen on deaf ears.

Then we have Mark's narrative of the *arrest*:

> Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard'. So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, 'Rabbi!' and kissed him. Then they laid hands on him and arrested him.
>
> But one of those who stood near drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to them, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled.'
>
> All of them deserted him and fled. A certain young man was following him, wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They caught hold of him, but he left the linen cloth and ran off naked. (14:43-52)

Now Jesus recedes into the background. Judas arrives and takes the initiative. For three verses it is he who is the subject of the verbs. He speaks and Jesus is silent. Shamefully, Judas kisses Jesus. Then violence takes over. Jesus is seized and the ear of the high priest's servant is cut off. Finally Jesus does speak, and his words sum up the situation: they

The Arrest of Jesus *by Ugolino di Nerio (1487-1564)*

were treating the one who had been their teacher day after day as a bandit.

The only explanation suggested for this shame and violence is the fulfilment of scripture. Previously Jesus had quoted the verse in Zechariah about the striking of the shepherd and the scattering of the sheep (Zechariah 13:7). But the context is one of divine promise: those who come through the trial will find God near. Similarly, after the bleakness of the crucifixion as Mark recounts it, there are suggestive, if ambiguous, hints of God's sustaining presence: the tearing of the temple veil opening up the holy of holies (15:38); the confession of the centurion (15:39); the empty tomb, with the young man proclaiming that the risen Jesus has gone on before the disciples to Galilee (16:7).

Mark does not name any of the disciples, and indeed their failure to behave like disciples leads him to deprive them even of that title. Doubtless one of them struck the ear of the high priest's slave; certainly all of them fled. The mysterious young man, who joins them naked in their flight, symbolizes the nakedness of their discipleship. They model the Ignatian 'grief, feeling and confusion' (Exx 193).

Mark's picture is a bleak one. Judas is still alive and well in our world, and so is Satan. Jesus meets with silence from God, but continues forward, in an austere isolation beyond anyone's

comprehension. And yet, for all the sense of challenge and reproach to their infidelity, the disciples are promised a meeting with Jesus in Galilee once he is raised up (14:28; 16:7). For all the enormity of our sin, God can cope with it.

The 'History' According to Matthew

A decade or so later, Matthew brought out a revision of Mark's Gospel. He clarified and compressed narrative material, while elevating the person of Jesus and expanding his words. He may well have been seeking to provide a resource for catechists and teachers, offering explanations for the meaning of events. He may also have been in conflict with the Pharisees of his own time, and may therefore have sought to give justifications for Jesus' words and actions in terms of Jewish law.

Matthew maintains the three-part narrative structure developed by Mark. He makes few changes to Mark's account of the *journey*, while in the *prayer* scene, he merely describes the distress of Jesus in gentler language and gives a fuller version of his prayer. It is in the account of the *arrest*, and in particular after the high priest's servant loses his ear, that we find some characteristic additions from Matthew:

> Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him. Suddenly, one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. *Then Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?'* (26:50b-54)

Whereas Mark presents the scandal of Jesus' arrest and suffering starkly, with only muted hints about the fulfilment of Scripture, Matthew's Jesus is more overt on that point, and gives us further explanations. 'All who take the sword will perish by the sword'—Jesus was living out what he had taught in the Sermon on the Mount about non-resistance (5:39). 'Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father?'—we recall Jesus' striking claim about his unique identity, 'No one knows the Father except the Son' (11:27).

The changes Matthew makes are relatively small, but they alter the tone of the whole episode. The Jesus who suffers remains the great

teacher. If we pray with this narrative, the stress is not, as in Mark, on the sheer inadequacy of the disciples when set against the mystery of Jesus, but rather on the moral and spiritual teaching that Jesus exemplifies. Jesus had warned in his Parable chapter, 'When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches it away' (13:19). Matthew makes this less likely. Someone praying the Third Week through his Gospel will be encouraged to see Christ's grief and anguish as the consequence of the new way of life that Christ has taught. The Third Week brings out what is meant by 'the true doctrine of Christ our Lord' (Exx 164).

The 'History' According to Luke

Though Luke too retains the structure of journey, prayer and arrest, he reduces the *journey* to a sentence: 'He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him' (22:39). His account of the *prayer*, however, is notably different from what we find in Mark and Matthew:

> When he reached the place, he said to them, 'Pray that you may not come into the time of trial'.
>
> Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed, 'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done'. Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.
>
> When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, and he said to them, 'Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial.' (22:40-46)

Here all the disciples are present; Jesus prays only once, and his prayer is answered. The narrative forms a kind of triptych: Jesus' own prayer comes between two occasions when he encourages the disciples to pray not 'to come into the time of trial', which in Luke means to lose faith and apostasize.[4] The disciples' sleep is not a matter of reproach, arising

[4] See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV)* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 1441, 906-907.

The Agony in the Garden *by El Greco (1541-1614)*

from their not knowing what to say—it is presented as a sign of grief, a grief which Jesus consoles rather than rebukes. Jesus himself prays about the cup, about what he wants and about what the Father wants. Prayer is a major theme of Luke's Gospel. The disciples had asked Jesus to teach them how to pray (11:1); his answer was not only the Lord's prayer (11:2-4), but his own habit of prayer at all the major turning points of his life. This prayer on the Mount of Olives is part of the lesson.

Though not all the manuscripts of Luke contain the relevant verses, Luke's Jesus has his prayer answered by the Father. The angel strengthens Jesus in his agony and in his subsequent sweating of blood. Just as Jesus strengthened Simon (22:31), so the angel strengthens Jesus. The word *agonia* in Greek is related to *agon*, which means a contest. Paul and the Letter to the Hebrews compare the Christian life to a race (1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Hebrews 12:1). As Jesus enters into his passion, he is like an athlete at the beginning of a race. He is tense,

worried and excited. The angel enables him to face up to what lies ahead, as Luke's subsequent portrayal of Jesus in his passion testifies.

For Luke, it is not Judas but Jesus who is the dominating figure in the *arrest* story:

> While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him; but Jesus said to him, 'Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?'
>
> When those who were around him saw what was coming, they asked, 'Lord, should we strike with the sword?' Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, 'No more of this!' And he touched his ear and healed him.
>
> Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple police, and the elders who had come for him, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs as if I were a bandit? When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!' (22:47-53)

Jesus here has the initiative; the divinity does not, despite what Ignatius says, hide itself (Exx 196). It is Jesus who speaks first in the Judas scene, addressing him by name, and making a final personal appeal to him. He heals the ear of the servant, continuing the healing mission of his ministry. Finally he addresses the 'high priests and the officers of the temple and the elders', reproaching them for their actions but excusing them because it was their 'hour and the power of darkness', just as he will later ask the Father to forgive his executioners because they do not know what they are doing (23:34). Luke is also kind about the disciples; he does not refer to their flight. They do their best to protect Jesus by drawing their swords, and only desist at his word. Jesus had prayed for them (22:32).

Whereas Mark's disciples are thrown into shame and confusion before a Jesus who is beyond their grasp, Luke's disciples are comforted and consoled in their grief (22:45) by a Jesus who is himself comforted by God. Jesus will die saying, 'into your hands I commend my spirit' (23:46). The grace expressed in Luke's account is a consolation that encourages us to entrust to God a situation of inevitable horror and death. A Third Week prayed in a Lukan style may start with grief, tears and pain (Exx 203). But the grief will be a grief *with Christ*. As such, it may well change into something more serene.

The 'History' According to John

John does not follow Mark's three-part narrative. The *prayer* takes place before the Last Supper. This is far more confident; there is no sense of Jesus renouncing his own will; and the prayer is publicly answered:

> 'Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—"Father, save me from this hour?" No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.' Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again'. (12:27-28)

As in Luke, the *journey* occupies a single verse (18:1);[5] but here alone we are told that the destination is a garden, with obvious echoes of Paradise (Genesis 2-3). It is with the *arrest* that John rejoins the structure of the other Gospels, but his account differs notably from theirs:

> Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples. So Judas brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.
>
> Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, 'Whom are you looking for?' They answered, 'Jesus of Nazareth'. Jesus replied, 'I AM'. Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When Jesus said to them, 'I AM', they stepped back and fell to the ground.
>
> Again he asked them, 'Whom are you looking for?' And they said, 'Jesus of Nazareth'. Jesus answered, 'I told you that I AM he. So if you are looking for me, let these men go.' This was to fulfil the word that he had spoken, 'I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me'.
>
> Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus. Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?' So the

[5] 'After Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered.' The reference to the Kidron valley may echo the account of David's flight from Jerusalem (2 Samuel 15:23).

soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him. (18:2-12)

Roman soldiers take part in the events; their lanterns and torches stand in ironic contrast to the 'light of the world' (8:12) whom they are arresting. Jesus claims for himself the holy name 'I AM' (Exodus 3:14), and the whole arresting posse falls down. As a good shepherd (10:1-18), Jesus arranges for the safe departure of his disciples. He speaks of his willingness to drink of the cup which the Father had given him. Jesus has the initiative throughout; he gives permission for his own arrest.

The arrest is a theophany, the beginning of Jesus' glorification. It may seem as though Jesus is the victim of a sordid conspiracy, but the truth is different. John presents the passion as a narrative to be read on two levels. Those who are in the know see the cruel events as the exaltation of the Son of Man, who draws all people to himself.

If we pray the Third Week in a Johannine way, we will indeed be aware of the divine nature going into hiding, and of Christ allowing himself 'in his sacred human nature to suffer most cruelly' (Exx 196), but our prayer will be centred on this hidden divinity. And we may, paradoxically, experience the suffering of the passion as a source of triumphant, radiant consolation. It is in this spirit that we will 'believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God', and 'through believing …

have life in his name' (20:31). We will identify with the disciples whom Jesus protects in the moment of danger; we too will receive the gifts that Christ had asked the Father to send them—'sanctify them in the truth: Your word is truth' (17:17). If we pray the passion in this way, it will help us come to know how we are loved by Christ, just as the Father loved him (17:20-26).

The 'History' According to Ignatius

Ignatius' own 'history' of these events (Exx 201) is much shorter, and lacks the detail of the gospel accounts. He too follows Mark's structure, and begins with the *journey*:

> The first prelude is the history. Here it will be how Christ our Lord with his eleven disciples came down from Mount Sion, where the supper had been taken, to the valley of Josaphat; here he left eight of them in a place in the valley and the other three in a part of the garden.

No evangelist gives Jesus the title 'Christ our Lord'. It represents Ignatius' own understanding of Jesus, already met with in the meditations of the Second Week (Exx 130). Mount Sion is not found in the Gospels, nor is the valley of Josaphat. It is only Mark and Matthew who mention that three disciples were separated from the rest; it is only John who speaks of a garden.

Ignatius' account of the *prayer* is much briefer:

> And putting himself in prayer, his sweat became like drops of blood. He then prayed three times to the Father and awakened his disciples.

Ignatius here is closer to the Gospels, but he leaves out significant details, and smoothes over the differences between the four accounts. The account of the *arrest* is similarly unnuanced and uncritical:

> Next, at his voice, his enemies fell to the ground, and Judas gave him the kiss of peace; St Peter cut off the ear of Malchus and Christ put it back in place. He was arrested as a criminal, and they led him down into the valley and up the slope to the house of Annas.

There is no mention here of the 'I AM' before the enemies of Jesus fall to the ground, or of how each synoptic Gospel begins its account with the kiss of Judas. All four Gospels mention the ear, but only John includes the names of those involved, namely Peter and Malchus, and only Luke tells us that Jesus restored it. The valley and the slope are Ignatius' own contribution, perhaps drawing on medieval tradition. It is only John who informs us that Jesus was taken to Annas.

We could be critical of Ignatius for failing to distinguish the four gospel accounts in his 'history', for mixing up details from each, and for adding matter of his own. Compared with the evangelists, he gives so little material for the retreatant to carry out his programme of considering the persons, their words and their actions. He is unappreciative of Irenaeus' teaching that the foundation of our faith is the 'fourfold gospel, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John'.[6] He makes no attempt to approach the Gospels along the lines illustrated above.

But a less critical, and less anachronistic, reading of Ignatius' text is also possible. Ignatius is not really committed to his history as such, and indeed he gives an alternative, expanded one in the 'Mysteries of the Life of Jesus' later (Exx 290). He is simply giving what he takes to be a conventional account, in the hope that the retreatant will build something personal on the 'foundation' that he gives. He wants to keep his own imagination out of the reckoning, and to allow full scope to the retreatant's, because this will prove much more effective that anything that he can suggest. The retreatant has to do what the evangelists did, and produce their own story of the events from the Last Supper to the Garden. Each account is special and so will that of the retreatant be, nourished by 'the inner feeling and relish of things' (Exx 2).

Ignatius is simply being conventional

What, then, are we to do in practice? Perhaps we can name three possibilities.

- If we find the vision of one evangelist particularly suggestive, we can keep to just his account. With Mark we can enter into the desolation of Jesus in prayer, and pray for the quality of watchfulness which he seeks in his

[6] *Dei verbum*, n. 18, quoting Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 3. 21. 3.

disciples. With Matthew we can ponder the words of explanation that Jesus gives his disciples. With Luke we can consider the human qualities of Jesus displayed in his personal relationships, and enter into a deeper sense of trust in God's providence. With John we can contemplate the hidden majesty of God's self-revelation amid the deepest pain. Perhaps indeed we can stay with one evangelist throughout the whole process of our Exercises.

- There is no reason, even given what we learn from biblical scholarship, why we cannot follow Ignatius' example and throw together details from each of the Gospels. There is abundant precedent for such an approach in Christian devotional tradition. The Stations of the Cross do this. Authors who write books on the Seven Last Sayings of Jesus continue to do it, even though these sayings come from different Gospels.
- Alternatively, we may, in the light of our knowledge, draw eclectically on the four accounts, and develop our own response, our own narrative, just as the evangelists themselves did.[7] We may trust in the Spirit to be with us in the process. We each respond to these mysteries in our own way and according to our own circumstances and needs.

Whatever path we take, this history is to lead into prayer for a particular grace, for what we desire. Ignatius names the desire vividly:

> … grief with Christ in grief, to be broken with Christ broken, tears and interior suffering on account of the great suffering that Christ endured for me. (Exx 203)

Vatican II speaks of 'the food of the Scriptures' as 'enlightening minds, strengthening wills and firing hearts with the love of God'.[8] Perhaps the

[7] See the opening verses of Luke: 'Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.' (Luke 1: 1-4)
[8] *Dei verbum*, n. 23.

experiences of colloquy, reflection and repetition will lead us to formulate the desire in our own way. We really do not know where our contemplation may take us. The texts we inherit from the earliest Christians reflect their responses to the traditions about Jesus. As we continue to read, to ponder and to contemplate, there is further light still to dawn.

Peter Edmonds SJ was born and educated in England, and is a priest belonging to the Zimbabwe Jesuit Province. After studies at the Biblical Institute in Rome, he taught New Testament, first at the regional seminary in Harare, Zimbabwe, and then at Hekima College, the Jesuit school of theology in Nairobi, Kenya. More recently he has been in the UK, spending a year on the team at Loyola Hall, the Jesuit spirituality centre near Liverpool, before joining the staff at Campion Hall, Oxford.

IGNATIAN CONTEMPLATION AND MODERN BIBLICAL STUDIES

Helmut Gabel

IN RECENT DECADES, DISCUSSIONS ABOUT HOW TO INTERPRET the Bible have been marked by an increasing openness to different methods. There was a time when the historical-critical method was the only one allowed, but now people accept a certain pluralism. An example of this can be found in the document 'The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church', issued by the Pontifical Biblical Commission in 1993.[1] This gives a full, sympathetically critical survey of the different methods of scriptural interpretation. Gradually it is being recognised that the interpretation of the Bible is not exclusively a matter of scholarship and analysis; there is also a place for meditative and creative approaches.

As yet, however, no real attention has been paid to a way of handling the Bible that has been highly influential over the last four centuries: Ignatian scriptural meditation. Over the last decades there has been a rediscovery of the Ignatian Exercises in their original form as an individually directed experiential process. They have acquired a high reputation, and many believers have found them helpful—there is considerable demand for them well beyond the boundaries of Catholicism, especially when offered in daily life.

Now, these Exercises embody a particular way of dealing with Scripture. The literature about the Exercises, however, is largely

This essay was first published in a *Festschrift* for Bishop Paul-Werner Scheele, and subsequently in the German journal published by the Christian Life Communities: *Korrespondenz zur Spiritualität der Exerzitien*. We are grateful to the author and the German editor for permission to produce this slightly shortened English version.

[1] The full text is most easily available on the internet, for example at http://myweb.lmu.edu/fjust/Docs//PBC_Interp.htm.

concerned with practical details and with the implicit systematic theology. But there is seldom any discussion of how the Ignatian method of scriptural meditation relates to other styles of scriptural interpretation. It is not that other methods of dealing with Scripture, notably the historical-critical method, are being undervalued or rejected—most of those who are leading Ignatian programmes are theologically educated and have internalised modern biblical scholarship. What is lacking, rather, is a conscious reflection on how the Ignatian way of handling Scripture relates to other methods, notably the more analytic approaches pursued in the academy.

What follows is an attempt to stimulate reflection of this kind. I shall try, so to speak, to build a bridge from both ends. After giving an account of what we might call the Ignatian method of scriptural interpretation, I shall look at Ignatius' use of Scripture from the standpoint of modern biblical scholarship, and then see how Ignatian spirituality might help us understand what is currently happening in academic biblical exegesis. And I will try to draw out some implications for our own prayer, for spiritual direction, and for the training of directors.

Ignatius' 'Method'

There is almost a resistance to talk of method when it comes to Ignatius' handling of Scripture. After all, Ignatius is not trying to come to terms with an objective text out there; his concern is to facilitate an event of encounter that cannot be manufactured or forced. Nevertheless, the process does depend on a method, even if 'method' here has rather different connotations from those of the 'methods' used in the academy.

Ignatian scriptural meditation takes place within the process and dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises, in an experiential process culminating in a decision. Exercitants are trying to discover God's will for their lives, and to be ready to respond to what they discover. Everything emerges from a relationship to which exercitants entrust themselves—one in which the creator will communicate Himself directly to His devout soul (Exx 15).

We find the method of what is called 'Ignatian contemplation' principally in Ignatius' indications for prayer around the figure of Christ in the Second, Third and Fourth Weeks. There is always a

preparatory prayer, that 'all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to the service and praise of His Divine Majesty' (Exx 46). There follows a first prelude, of 'composition, seeing the place'. Exercitants seek somehow to place themselves alongside the reality on which they are meditating—the process is something like a day-dream.[2] Ignatius then invites us to name what we desire, something which varies according to the different stages of the process. The aim is thus never detached factual knowledge, but rather encounter: a loving, personal, existential self-incorporation into the story.

In the meditation proper, what is striking in Ignatius' directives is that they are more concerned with the inner readiness of the person than with the working over of the texts. The one giving the Exercises should be brief (Exx 2); Ignatius relies more on the exercitant's own dispositions and on divine enlightenment. The meditation is an event of grace, of encounter between the creator and the one meditating, between Christ and the exercitant. The Gospel passages are thus reduced to three brief points. By contrast, Ignatius gives the exercitants rather fuller instructions. He invites them quite deliberately to include the body within the process by attending to posture (Exx 76). Attention should be paid to one's biorhythm, to the weather, and to the level of light (Exx 128-130). All three of the Augustinian 'powers of the soul'—memory, understanding and will—should play their part (Exx 50). Ignatius invites one to see what the people look like, hear what they are saying, imagine what they are

[2] The phrase comes from a comment in Peter Knauer's German translation of the *Exercises* (Würzburg: Echter, 1998), 48.

doing—and indeed to bring oneself within the scene. So, in the account of Christ's birth, we find:

> … I making myself a poor creature and a wretch of an unworthy slave, looking at them and serving them in their needs, with all possible respect and reverence, as if I found myself present. (Exx 124)

What happens is something like an interior bibliodrama.[3] The concern is always with the connection between the event being meditated and my own person—'and thereafter to reflect and draw profit', as Ignatius says repeatedly. The scriptural meditation is supposed to bring about something within me, something which I am meant to notice and to deepen through the 're-seekings' (repetitions) and the prayer of the senses.

Ignatian meditation is a holistic event: the whole human person should be involved. And every meditation ends with a prayer of colloquy, 'speaking personally, as one friend speaks to another, or as a servant to his master' (Exx 54). The text is meant to be drawing me into relationship with Christ, and therefore also with God.

What Biblical Scholarship Might Find in Ignatian Contemplation

It might seem that this way of dealing with Scripture is a rather eccentric one, with no place at all on the contemporary academic scene. It might seem that there is an unbridgeable gulf between Ignatian contemplation and the analytic approaches now taken by biblical scholars. Whereas scholarship is methodical and objective, Ignatian contemplation depends on some nebulous talk of relationship and event. Whereas scholarship is strictly rational, Ignatian contemplation involves all kinds of irrational forces.

The temptation to think in this way is particularly strong if one sees contemporary biblical scholarship as offering the truest and closest approach to biblical texts. However, the discussions about method over the past decades have shown that approaches centred on the original authors and on how texts came to be put together, for all the

[3] *Trans*: on this style of engagement with the Bible, better known in German-speaking countries than in Britain or the US, see Eckhard Frick, 'Psychodrama and the Spiritual Exercises', *The Way*, 42/3 (July 2003), 151-160.

indisputable gains and the irrevocable, indispensable advances they have achieved, also have limitations and biases.[4] Linguistic and structural methods have made it quite clear that there is more to a text than what the author intended to say with it. Once the text has been written, the author lets go of it, and it comes to stand between the author and the readers with a life of its own. It has a kind of surplus of meaning over and above what the author intended; what the text means is more than what the author meant. Thus other methods of approaching Scripture have developed, besides those which ask about the author's intention and how the text was put together—methods which set aside questions about composition history, and instead focus on the text we have before us, on the text functioning as a whole.

These methods pay more attention to the text's readers and to their encounters with the text. This concern is taken further by other methods: so-called reader-response criticism, expressly, but also depth-psychological or symbolic interpretations, feminist and liberationist exegesis, and bibliodrama. All of these question the ideal of objectivity latent in methods centred on the author and on the text. All of these take seriously the claim that interpretation always is shaped also by readers and their concerns—admittedly often in ways that are just as one-sided and exaggerated as what one finds in some historical-critical work. Some time ago, the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer showed that all understanding depends on a fusion of horizon between the one understanding and what is understood, and that the preconceptions of the person seeking to understand play an important role. For all that such methods have a tendency towards subjectivism and arbitrariness, it can hardly be disputed that readers' preconceptions, situations and contexts play an important part in any event of interpretation. It follows that methods focusing on the reader have made an important contribution to the discussions about exegetical method.

The ideal of objectivity in biblical interpretation is now widely questioned

[4] This cannot be the place to give a full review of the literature regarding spiritual interpretation of the Bible. The classic work is Henri de Lubac's *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, translated by Mark Sebanc and E. M. Macierowski, 2 volumes (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1998 [1959]). English-speaking readers may find helpful the anthology *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture*, edited by Stephen E. Fowl (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

If we follow Manfred Oeming[5] in making a distinction between methods centred on the author, on the text, and on the reader, then Ignatian contemplation is a reader-centred method. The central point is not how the different passages were written and put together in a particular situation, nor the structure of the text in the form in which we have it, but rather the reader's encounter with it. What I bring to the text—a prior belief that God encounters me in the Bible as my creator and redeemer, that God calls me personally through Jesus and gives me a mission—is taken seriously, and deliberately evoked at the outset of every meditation. 'Reader' here means 'reader opening themselves in faith, reader convinced that Christ meets people in the texts of the Gospels, and, through Christ, God, reader convinced that this encounter will help people to make appropriate decisions for their situations'.

But we can also follow Oeming further, and put forward a fourth kind of method alongside those centred on the author, on the text and on the reader: a method centred on the biblical *reality*, on that to which the texts bear witness, the reality of God.[6] If so, then Ignatian contemplation can fit here too. For Ignatius is always concerned with the reality to which texts point, and Ignatian contemplation is simply impossible unless there is a recognition of God's reality and an explicit openness to it, whereas the other methods can all be used by a non-believing researcher or reader. Ignatian contemplation is not about an objective confrontation with what the text somehow conveys or describes; it centres on a personal encounter with this reality, implicating the reader.

Ignatian prayer is impossible without a recognition of God's reality

For his part, Thomas Söding writes of four kinds of approach to the Bible: those which break down the text into its constituent pieces, those which reconstruct the intention of the biblical author, those which try to put together an overall historical account out of biblical materials, and those concerned with what the New Testament means in the present. Under that last heading, Söding includes the preached

[5] This classification comes from Manfred Oeming, *Biblische Hermeneutik: Eine Einführung* (Darmstadt: Primus, 1998).
[6] Oeming, *Biblische Hermeneutik*, 140-174.

word, contextual interpretation, and spiritual interpretation. A contextual interpretation serves,

> … to interpret one's own life-situation in the light of a word from Scripture, and to draw consequences from this for how one's practice of the faith should change. … Individual words and texts, and indeed also whole books and bodies of Scripture, are set within personal, ecclesial or even political current situations.

Spiritual interpretation serves,

> … as a way of finding one's way to encounter with God. … You read Scripture not so much in order to free up your own ideas and associations, but rather to see the Spirit's truth in the letters on the page.

Within this classification, Ignatian contemplation is both contextual and spiritual. Its primary goal is encounter with God: readers entrusting themselves to Scripture's reality and becoming permeated by it. But for Ignatius this never happens independently of the reader's context, without reference to their personal situation. The goal is not some kind of timeless sinking into God's eternal mystery, bur rather a feeling for God's will as it bears on the decision I am making. To put it another way: the context in which I do contextual interpretation is that of my own life. I look at the passage as a person who needs to make, to ratify or to deepen a decision, who wants to do this in accord with God, and who is therefore exercising themselves in order to become more sensitive to God.

It is in this that we find what is specific to Ignatian contextual interpretation, where other forms of contextual interpretation have different concerns. A liberationist interpretation would take as its context a socio-political situation of oppression; a feminist one would start from women's struggles for emancipation; a depth-psychological interpretation would look at the individual's process of maturation and individuation. None of these contexts are in any way excluded by Ignatian contemplation—a Latin American liberationist will make the Exercises in a liberationist way; a feminist will be influenced by their feminism. Ignatian contemplation is open to all of this, because the personal situation of any exercitant will be coloured in different ways, and will be conditioned by different social settings. Nor is Ignatian contemplation in any way individualistic, for all that it is primarily

St Matthew *from the Lindisfarne Gospels*

done by an individual in personal relationship to God. There is always a social connection present, through the contact with the one giving the Exercises, or with a faith-community. The sense of mission that one comes to recognise always sends one out to one's ecclesial, social or political surroundings.

In general, Ignatian contemplation thus appears as a very open method, one that is hospitable to other approaches, and excludes none of them from the outset.

What an Ignatian Exercitant Might Find in Academic Biblical Study

So far our question has been why a biblical exegete today might want to take Ignatian contemplation seriously. Now we can turn the question round: why should anyone who practises or teaches Ignatian contemplation bother about other approaches to the text, and especially the analytical forms of exegesis standard among scholars? The question could be put more sharply: if I know what God's will is by opening myself in meditation to God's Spirit, and by trusting that the creator deals directly with the creature just as Ignatius says, why do I need anything else?

For one answer, we can begin with Ignatius himself. Nadal tells us:

> Ignatius used books and the whole of theological reasoning, at least when he decided to put together those Exercises, so that all the books, theologians, all the sacred writings, could confirm what he had taken more from divine inspiration than from books. [7]

It was a foreign idea to Ignatius to invoke a spiritual experience that somehow went beyond what intellectual reflection and rational efforts could yield. He set all that he experienced spiritually within the theological knowledge of his time. It is therefore not just arbitrary speculation if we assume that Ignatius would have engaged very thoroughly with today's different academic approaches to the Bible, had he known them.

Moreover, there is a good theological justification for this. The spiritual interpretation of scripture and analytical methods cannot be separated, if only because the Bible is God's Word in human words. If you rely simply on 'spiritual' interpretation, you are falling victim to a biblical version of monophysitism, the belief that Christ was a divine being only and not a human one too. Conversely, if you never get beyond the analytical approaches characteristic of contemporary scholarship, you are not taking seriously the inspiration of Scripture: its status as Word of God. What these errors have in common is a sense of contradiction between a supposedly divine spirit that enlightens the one meditating, and a supposedly human one that struggles to understand the Bible with human methods. Against such ways of

[7] MHSJ Pol Chron 3. 529-530.

thinking, we must insist that God's Spirit does not stand in any kind of competition with what human beings do of themselves—rather God's Spirit empowers, stimulates and incorporates human initiative. Vatican II spoke of God as the author of Scripture, and at the same time of the human writers as 'true authors'.[8] This way of thinking can be transferred to what happens in meditation. Human meditators are—however much they are dependent on God's leading—'true readers', and everything involved in their being human flows into the process of contemplation. The Spirit inspiring the reader works only in and through the person's mental faculties, and therefore there is no place for fundamentalism or irrationalism. At the same time, the Spirit surpasses anything that human beings can achieve of themselves; that is why we can meaningfully speak of 'spiritual approaches'.

The basic theological point being made here is rooted in many different kinds of faith-experience, and corresponds to the regular experience of those who give the Exercises. What happens in meditation does not occur independently of what people bring to the experience. Their personal temperament, their historical situation, their theology and spirituality, mediated through how they have been brought up, their personal life-history and faith-history—all of this flows into how they open themselves to God's working, and none of it is removed by the Creator and Lord 'imparting Himself to His devout soul' (Exx 15). The principle applies, too, to what the one making the Exercises brings to them by way of biblical knowledge. If a person knows something about exegesis, and therefore reads Jesus' miracles as signs of God's inbreaking Reign, they will meditate in a different way from a person who has imbibed from old-fashioned apologetics a sense of the miracles as primarily proofs of Jesus' divinity. Moreover, the person with biblical education will be more open to a sense of God's saving and liberating presence in their own life. Again, if you have a person who follows Ignatius himself in identifying the woman who was a sinner in Luke 7 with Mary Magdalen (Exx 282), and another who has learnt better from modern biblical study, meditation will affect the way these two people think about women in correspondingly different ways. If follows that the one giving the Exercises has to be

What happens in meditation depends on what people bring to the experience

[8] *Dei verbum*, n. 11.

theologically—and therefore also exegetically—responsible. How a person's meditation goes will be influenced by how the one giving the Exercises presents the material. Anyone writing on Scripture as used in prayer needs an appropriate level of biblical knowledge. And no training programme for those giving the Exercises can afford to neglect basic exegetical knowledge as a fundamental element.

Anyone helping others to do Ignatian contemplation against the background of more recent biblical interpretation will need to take seriously the point that the Gospels are not historical writings in the modern sense, but testimonies of faith. In the way they present the Mysteries of the Life of Jesus, they will make it quite clear that the texts are not simply history. Rather, their principal aim is to express how the evangelists and their communities see Jesus, and what he means to them. Moreover, it is only through these images that we have access to Jesus and to his significance for us. What happens when we meditate on Jesus' life can be compared with what happens as we contemplate a work of art—say an older painting of the Cross or of the birth of Christ—that includes both the artist and the person who commissioned the work. The aim of such a work is to encourage the beholders too to situate themselves within the scene. As Josef Sudbrack has written:

> People will have to take on board the new methods of approach to the figure of Jesus opened up by modern exegesis—in the long term, they will not be able to carry on working with the simple 'life of Christ' offered by an older exegesis; people need exegetically justified approaches to the historical figure of Jesus.[9]

One further implication of taking modern biblical study seriously is that a person presenting the so-called meditations on Christ's life needs to be self-aware. I am always working from one particular Gospel and its specific picture of Jesus. If I follow Ignatius in starting with the Annunciation and ending with the Ascension (Exx 261-312), I am being shaped by Luke's account. It would be just as legitimate to follow, say, Mark's account, and start with Jesus' baptism—or Matthew's, or John's. An exercitant may encounter Jesus through the

[9] Josef Sudbrack, 'Mystik des Konkreten: Die Anwendung der Sinne in den Exerzitien des heiligen Ignatius', *Geist und Leben*, 63 (1990), 367-372, here 372.

image presented by any of the four evangelists, and Ignatius himself counsels great freedom with the sequence of meditations he proposes (Exx 162). Ignatius wants the person not to follow slavishly an order laid down, but rather to have an eye open for whatever they can 'draw profit' from. The decisive point is that people should keep their eye on the basic tendency informing Ignatius' image of Jesus, a tendency which governs Ignatius' choice of gospel texts, and which becomes particularly evident in the key Second Week meditations: the Kingdom and the Two Standards. Ignatius is always concerned with a tension in Jesus between exaltedness and lowliness, between divinity and humanity, and with a Lord who humbles himself for us, who calls me into his discipleship, who sends me, who gifts me with his love, and who yearns for me to give myself in loving response.[10]

Convergences

It follows from what we have said that the different approaches to the Bible are not in competition—rather they complement and enrich each other.

Analytical academic exegesis in its various forms needs to be supplemented by more personal, experiential methods, more prayerful and faith-shaped approaches—otherwise it will remain a head-trip, something distanced and detached. Conversely, Ignatian contemplation needs to keep an eye on exegetical knowledge—otherwise it will

[10] On this general issue, see Hugo Rahner, 'The Christology of the Spiritual Exercises' (1962), in *Ignatius the Theologian*, translated by Michael Barry (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968), 53-135.

unconsciously perpetuate and solidify conventional patterns of thought and receptivity that have come to be associated with particular biblical passages. What the reader makes of the text needs to refer both to the text itself and to the author's intention as a source from which it can be corrected—otherwise it will fall into either pure subjectivism or else into unreflective dependence on conventional interpretation.

The various forms of creative interaction with the Bible, such as bibliodrama, could usefully allow themselves to be enriched through the more introverted, less exuberant practice of Ignatian contemplation. Conversely, they may be able to give people who regularly meditate in an Ignatian way a new and less conventional kind of stimulus, and to open up some new possibilities for their experience and sensitivity.[11]

We need to avoid playing off the different ways of dealing with Scripture against each other. Instead we need to appreciate and use each one for what it is, and let them come into dialogue. If we can manage that, then we will know the full enlightening power of the biblical texts. They will become for us as a 'word like fire' (Jeremiah 23:29).

Helmut Gabel is a priest of the diocese of Würzburg, in the northern part of Bavaria, Germany. He wrote a doctoral thesis on how the theology of biblical inspiration has changed in the wake of Vatican II. He has been spiritual director in the diocesan seminary, and is regularly active as a spiritual director. Since 1998, he has been in charge of the diocese's adult education office.

[11] In this context, we need also to consider the relationship between the individual meditating and the community of faith and interpretation that we call 'Church'—one on which Ignatius reflects at some length (for example in Exx 352-370). But this is another topic.

ON PREPARING AFFECTIVE MOVEMENTS IN PRAYER

Diego Alvarez de Paz

Diego Alvarez de Paz (1560-1620) was born in Spain, and was sent as a young Jesuit to Peru. As a student, he had drawn deeply on the early Christian and medieval spiritual traditions, as well as on Jesuit sources and on mystical currents in sixteenth-century Spain. During his time in Peru he taught theology, and also served in various posts of Jesuit government. At the same time he wrote three large Latin treatises on spiritual theology that were published in Lyon between 1608 and 1615. He is the first person to have published extensively on 'affective prayer', and his work was greatly influential on later Jesuit writers.[1]

The passage given here comes from ***On the Quest of Peace*** *(*De inquisitione pacis*), book 2, chapter 9. At one level it is presenting a firm position—couched in a rather unfamiliar dualism of heart and head—on the need for preparation in prayer. Prayer is not an end in itself: we undertake it so as to grow in relationship with God and in habits of right action (virtues). At another level, the passage is illustrating in its own way how, in the Ignatian tradition, our desires properly shape the way we read the biblical text. It is presenting one account of what it is for the Word of God to be active among us, in different ways depending on our different situations.*

[1] The best source of further information is Joseph de Guibert, *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*, translated by William J. Young (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1986 [1942]), 264-266. The present extract—taken from the six-volume edition published in Paris by Vivès in 1875-1876 (volume 5, 325-328)—was inspired by a similar publication in *Christus*, no. 202 HS (May 2004). Even admirers of Alvarez de Paz note his prolixity and his fondness for elaborate schematizations, and a short extract such as the one presented here needs to be cut for a modern readership. The sub-headings are editorial.

The passage also points up some questions. Alvarez de Paz is certainly not prepared to say that the text means what we want it to mean: the understanding has its place. But he does not resolve the questions about how the affective, subjective response he stresses here relates to the more objective, detached reading that he also advocates. And just as his stress on preparation for prayer might seem too rigorist, too controlling, so his approach to the Scriptures perhaps fails to allow for the possibility that God's work among us through the text might be different from what we consciously desire. The Ignatian prayer for what we want stands in counterpoint with 'the usual preparatory prayer': 'that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely in the service and praise of His Divine Majesty' (Exx 46). Perhaps we need to leave more space for God's unexpected action than Alvarez de Paz seems to allow.

MENTAL PRAYER … CONSISTS IN TWO THINGS, namely the intellect's thoughts and the will's affective movements. And just as we do preliminary work on the material of our thoughts by reading, so we prepare for the affective movements by an attentiveness to what we are reading, and by focusing within ourselves on our particular need. It is not enough to look ahead at the points for meditation on which we are to reflect, or to recall those points that we had read previously. Rather we must also have in view the affective movement to be elicited from our thoughts on the points. For just as the understanding, unless we offer it something definite to think about, wanders in distraction hither and thither from one thing to another, so the will, if we set nothing specifically before it such as hatred for sin or love for God or something similar, is brought fruitlessly—or with very little enrichment—to different movements, movements of which we have rather little need.

To support this point, a text from Paul can be adduced (though in a transferred sense): 'and if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle?'[2] To explain: if our thoughts (the bugle) are leading us towards an affective movement that is all over the place, because we are not seeking anything established by the thoughts, anything fixed, but rather whatever has first come into our heads, what fruit will we gain from our thoughts?

[2] 1 Corinthians 14: 18.

But you are not sure about how to prepare the affective movement, because whether we are touched by one movement or another seems to be something beyond our control. To deal with this difficulty, we need to remember that prayer … should be taken up for the sake of perfection and purity of life. For we are not meditating or contemplating for contemplation's sake, but rather so as to emerge humbler, purer, more fervent, more observant of the divine law. This we attain by desires and affective movements on the one hand, and by the holy deeds proper to all the virtues on the other. And we expand the desires and affective movements in the very act of prayer—it is as though they are warmed by the fire of the thoughts; and we do the deeds by making efforts in every aspect of our life. Therefore, the immediate aim of all our meditation is to awaken affective movements in the will—movements from which, as the need arises, deeds of virtue emerge and holy, pure dealings with others come forth.

We notice here also that the meditation which is part of mental prayer must be shaped with a view to persuading ourselves of something. When we are preparing a sermon to be given to the people, we think about the arguments by which the people will be stirred to hatred of sin and love of virtue. And the more we come down to details, and encourage people to escape from *this* sin or to acquire *that* virtue, the more useful our sermon will be, other things being equal. So too, when we withdraw to meditation, we must think about what will stir up, not other people, but ourselves, to the hatred of evil and to the love of a particular good.

It is in this sense, therefore, that we need to prepare the affective movement to be drawn out of our prayer. You, man[3] of God, should consider your state of mind and level of virtue, and make an effort to note what you need by way of conquest of some passion or of virtue.

[3] The original is *vir*, gender specific.

And you should wonder discriminatingly about how you will draw out from the material to be meditated on the affective movements which are appropriate to your position or your need.

For example: perhaps you are a beginner—you have only recently cut yourself away from the thickets of this world, and have not yet wept for your sins abundantly; rather, hatred and grief for your sins are still things you need to seek in order to bring this about. Think, then, a little, when you are preparing the material for meditation by reading, how you might be touched during this thought by detestation for your sins, or how, as you are chipping away at the hardness of your heart with an iron chisel, you can draw out a spark of contrition.

Now let's suppose you have moved forward a bit—you have felt great grief at your sin and poured forth abundant floods of tears, and now you see in yourself that some tiny movement of anger or vainglory or the like is pent up within you, a movement that will later cause you problems. When you are reading the material for meditation, think about how I will stir myself from this particular point to do this passion to death. And you will proceed in the same way if you want to move yourself to some virtue, such as humility, or fraternal charity, or obedience, or something else.

Preparing affective movement, then, is not so much trying to foresee the affective movement that we want from our meditation. After all, this, if we are meditating usefully, will be one and the same over many days, and even if we are changing the points of our meditation every day, we will not be changing the affective movement until the victory over our viciousness, or the acquisition of a virtue, shines forth. It's not, as I say, so much that we foresee the affective movement. Rather we briefly note how we will stir up the movement in ourselves from the particular point that we are thinking about. This is what it means to consider one's particular need regarding amendment of life, and to apply a remedy to it, and to ask in our prayers not for something which has nothing to do with us, but rather for what we need. …

Not to foresee the movement, but to note how we will stir it up

Express Desires Repeatedly

Paul was tormented by an angel of Satan, and rather often asked the Lord that he be liberated from it: 'Three times I asked the Lord that it

would leave me'.[4] Three times—in other words, often. But a person who asked often also desired often—and underwent many and repeated affective movements in keeping with that need. Christ in the garden lay stretched three times in prayer, not with different affective movements but with the same ones. And he prayed three times, saying the same words.[5] For why else do we think that the same words were said by the Lord, other than to lay open to the Father the same desires of his nature, to have the same affective movements of resignation, and to repeat the same petition? The same thing can be seen in David, who, when he praises God in the Psalms, offers his praise in a thousand ways. When he gives thanks, he stretches out the same affective movement of thanksgiving over many words; when he weeps over his sin, or brings out another affective movement, he does not desist from repeating that same thing in various ways. For the nail is driven in, not by one blow, but by many; the body is refreshed, not by one repast, but by many, so that it can live over a long time; and the earth is watered so that it can bring forth fruit, not by one light shower, but by a great abundance of rain. So we should dispose ourselves for any one virtue, not by one affective movement or interior act, but by several, ardently practised, thus bringing it into our minds. Since, therefore, the same affective movement is to be repeated in prayer, and to become perfect in a way suited to the kind of person we are, it is not so much that we are to foresee it—rather, we are to search out the means by which we will draw it from our meditation.

The reason for understanding these matters in this way is to recognise that it is not what we do, but what we are aiming at, on which we should focus. Indeed, each person is called by God to a different affectivity, corresponding to their state. …

Complementary Desires

But though all this is so, the just person, following the Lord's call and action, intersperses other affective movements, so that prayer may be more joyfully and usefully grounded. For if we try all the time to stay with one affective movement, then we will become weary at the sheer length of time, or from repetitions of the same act. We will surely find

[4] 2 Corinthians 12: 8 (Vulgate).
[5] Matthew 26: 44.

it bothersome that the same food is being brought to the will's mouth so often; and we will do other deeds of virtue, deeds that are not to be omitted, less often than we should.

In keeping, therefore, with what various thoughts demand, many different affective movements pour forth in one and the same prayer. Now a person feels themselves moved to the praise of God; now it's thanksgiving; now it's the imitation of some virtue that is resplendent in Christ, now the love of God or grief for sin.

For prayer is like a splendid party, where many different foods, prepared in the best possible way, are set before the diners' desires. Truly it is a 'feast of well-aged wines',[6] where each person finds not only food to meet their needs, but also obtains a range of flavours for their delight. It is like an armoury where there is a diverse range of weapons (in other words many affective movements to virtue) which we brandish at our enemy (namely the whole range of vices). It is like a garden where not only the roses or the violets but all the flowers are born redolent of gentle fragrance; and the field, which the Lord has blessed, is full of fruit.

But these affective movements are to be exercised in such a way that the soul, concerned for its own progress, moves more diligently towards that affective movement which it knows itself more to need, and which it has prepared for in reading. It should order the other affective movements to that one, and its efforts to seek and promote that movement should be greater. After all, it is healthy food that is primarily given to a sick person, food suitable for getting rid of the disease and for the recuperation of health. But it is not just healthy food that is given; other foods are offered too, that will make the healthy food (that must at all costs be taken) gentler and easier to swallow. So we too should be more concerned with that affective movement which we need—that is what will be healthiest for us. But the other movements we will

[6] Isaiah 25:6.

also use freely, so that we do not get tired of the central one, and sometimes also so that the central one be strengthened by the addition of others.

Affective Movements and Spiritual Progress

I say quite openly that these things I've been speaking about do not come easily. They are being spoken of here, however, so that everyone can know what they should be trying to aim at in prayer: namely to work harder at drawing frequently on the particular affective movement that is most necessary for their state and progress …. If a person has not managed to fit themselves in to this mode of prayer, they should not for that reason become sad, but rather follow the lead of the Spirit as He is teaching them. They should be striving ever more carefully, not in any way to get stuck in the intellect's thoughts, but rather to turn themselves to the will's desires and pious affective movements. However, this should be taken here as settled … in reading, we should be looking not only for points for meditation, so as to keep our understanding occupied, but also for affective movements; for it is by assiduously dwelling on these, and coming back to them, that the will is nourished.

THE NEW TESTAMENT AS HOLY GROUND

Nicholas King

FOR A GOOD MANY YEARS NOW, perhaps for as long as two centuries (depending on how you do your calculations), the historical-critical method has ruled the roost in Scripture scholarship. It is, however, misleading to refer to it in the singular, as if it were just one method. The term refers, rather, to a whole hatful of techniques used in the scientific and academic reading of Scripture, including at least the following:

- *text criticism*, which tries to establish as nearly as possible, on the basis of the existing manuscripts, the original text of the New Testament documents;
- *source criticism*, which tries, for instance, to establish the relations between the Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke;
- *form criticism*, which takes individual episodes (in the Gospels, for example) and tries to determine their literary form so as to locate them in the original setting that might have produced them;
- *redaction criticism*, which seeks to isolate the individual genius of the different evangelists.

These different methods have done yeoman service, and they have still a great deal to offer. They originated in the Enlightenment, and in the desire, especially perhaps among scholars of the Reformed tradition of Christianity, to defend the Bible against its assailants. Clear out all that is 'unhistorical', the argument ran, and what is left will be 'the real thing', of which you can be sure. In the sixty years since Pius XII's

The Way, 44/2 (April 2005), 57-69

encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu*, Roman Catholic scholars have also joined in the fun, with distinguished contributions from such figures as the Sulpician, Raymond E. Brown, and the Jesuit, Joseph A. Fitzmyer.

However, the historical-critical paradigm (if we can call it that), for all its dominance, has never gone completely unchallenged. One problem, especially for Catholics, is that it tends to set up the Bible as an authority as against subsequent tradition. My Jesuit colleague George Tyrrell devotes a chapter to 'The Christ of Liberal Protestantism' in the last book he ever wrote, one that is still worth reading today. The writing is a model of careful argument, studded with some memorable phrases. Tyrrell characterizes the view of Harnack, champion of the Liberal Protestants in the nineteenth century, as follows:

> … between Christ and early Catholicism there is not a bridge but a chasm. Christianity did not cross the bridge; it fell into the chasm and remained there, stunned, for nineteen centuries.[1]

Note the contrast here between what is really authentic and 'early Catholicism'—one that has been quite seriously adopted, even within New Testament studies, by later and respected Protestant figures such as Ernst Käsemann.[2]

A second criticism is that historical critics are, often unconsciously, dependent on the conventions and fashions of their own time. Again, Tyrrell made the point tellingly:

> The Christ that Harnack sees, looking back through nineteen centuries of Catholic darkness, is only the reflection of a Liberal Protestant face, seen at the bottom of a deep well.[3]

Alongside Tyrrell we may place the great Protestant polymath and doctor, Albert Schweitzer, for whom there was 'nothing more negative than the result of the critical study of the Life of Jesus', and for whom the Jesus of Nazareth emerging from such work was merely,

[1] *Christianity at the Crossroads* (London: Longmans Green, 1909), 41. Tyrrell deserved better than to be attacked by power politicians in Rome, obsessed and paranoid about 'Modernism'.
[2] See his classic 1963 essay, 'Paul and Early Catholicism', in *New Testament Questions of Today*, translated by W. J. Montague (London: SCM, 1969), 236-251.
[3] *Christianity at the Crossroads*, 44.

> … a figure designed by rationalism, endowed with life by liberalism, and clothed by modern theology in a historical garb.[4]

Thirdly, the historical-critical paradigm appears too reductive to be of use for theology. It treats the Bible like any other ancient text; it reduces the living reality of the biblical text to the mere sum of its parts; and it marginalises—partly in the hope of demonstrating to our non-believing contemporaries that Christianity is intellectually responsible—the element of faith and commitment. The distinguished Swiss Protestant exegete, Ulrich Luz, speaks of 'the methodological atheism of the historico-critical method'; such an approach is 'in principle atheist … it finds itself in tension with the biblical texts'; and he quotes a sharp observation by Ernst Fuchs:

> The academic exegete goes about his or her task like a vet, who, in order to find out what is wrong with the cow, has to start off by killing it.[5]

Add to all this a dose of postmodernism and deconstruction, and it becomes easy to see why many are happy to echo the opening phrase of Walter Wink's *The Bible in Human Transformation*: 'historical biblical criticism is bankrupt'.[6] Paul Joyce, an Old Testament scholar at Oxford University, speaks for many when he suggests in a recent article that the guild of Old Testament scholars may have made the Bible 'just another historical text, a relic of a bygone age', so that non-experts 'come to feel de-skilled' and biblical students feel 'alienated'.

But Joyce speaks for many when he nevertheless insists that the rigour associated with the historical-critical method has brought gains, even at the spiritual level, that we must not simply abandon:

> … it is not only for academic reasons that I wish to champion the historical-critical method. There is even a spiritual dimension for me in being confronted by the 'other' of the text as laid bare by historical criticism. The text is not me, it is not my projection or an

[4] Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*, translated by various hands (London: SCM, 2000 [1913]), 478.

[5] *La Bible: une pomme de discorde* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1992), 37. I am grateful to Dr Mark Elliot of St Andrews for having drawn my attention to this striking passage.

[6] (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 1.

> extension of my own psychology; rather it challenges me from beyond myself in a way that commands humility.[7]

In what follows, I want to look at various ways in which some contemporary theologians and readers of the Bible are trying to read the text today—thinkers who are glad to have learnt from the historical-critical paradigm, but who are also seeking to move beyond its limitations.

Liberationist Exegesis

Liberation theology shares with the historical-critical method a reluctance to take texts at face value. But whereas historical method in its classical form may seem to be arid, and to remove the life from the biblical text, the liberationists suggest that life is to be found in Scripture in so far as people are inspired by it to change society. Thus Gerald West, professor of Old Testament at the University of Natal, begins a book on biblical interpretation:

> I dedicate this study to ordinary readers, who will probably not read it, but who will, I hope, teach me how to serve them with it.[8]

West was quite consciously writing from within 'the South African situation of struggle … the struggle of the poor and oppressed in South Africa for liberation from apartheid' (p. 2). His unease about the historical-critical method, even as he still wants to draw on it, arises partly from the widespread sense of 'the demise of the objective object' (p. 12) in contemporary scholarly enquiry, leading to his perception that 'the text and the reader will never be the same again' (p. 29). But his primary and abiding concern is for what he calls 'active and transformative solidarity with the poor and oppressed' as a way out of the crisis, not simply in South African political life as it was in the early 1990s, but also in South African biblical studies. The crisis is simply that of irrelevance: in South Africa, one section of the professional guild, on the whole Afrikaans-speaking, 'never took the historical-

[7] 'Proverbs 8 in Interpretation (1)' in *Reading Texts, Seeking Wisdom: Scripture and Theology*, edited by David F. Ford and Graham Stanton (London: SCM Press, 2003), 89-101, here 96, 95.
[8] Gerald O. West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1991), 1.

Chateau apartheid vs Cabernet globalisation

critical paradigm fully seriously', while the other section, on the whole English-speaking, made it appear,

> … in the mantle of science, thereby keeping actual power relations inaccessible to analysis and to public consciousness.[9]

The problem is that the Bible has been perceived within the black community in South Africa as both oppressor and liberator. West examines the work of several black exegetes, in particular Allan Boesak and Itumeleng Motsala, and argues for the importance of having a hermeneutics that is not only theoretically well-grounded but also, and at the same time, accountable to the poor. Scripture scholars shift uncomfortably when they hear this sort of talk, but they need to take it seriously if they are to persuade the rest of the world that their trade is one that is worth pursuing.

Another work in the same vein is *Liberating Exegesis,* by Christopher Rowland and Mark Corner, a book to which far too little attention has been paid. The authors raise the fundamental and deeply

[9] W. R. Herzog, quoted in West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 33.

unsettling question, 'whose side should one be on?'[10] They ask whether it is really possible to understand Jesus without sharing the vision that the Hebrew Scriptures had given him (p.98). In their liberationist exegesis of the Matthean parable of the sheep and the goats at the last judgment, they assert that 'bible study is above all understanding what God is saying *today*' (p.12). Like many others, they stress they are not seeking to outlaw or abolish the historical-critical method. But they insist that it needs to be supplemented:

> … a prime task of the exegete is to watch the way in which the biblical material is being and has been *used*. (p.5)

In Latin American base communities, they argue, the text,

> … becomes a catalyst in the exploration of pressing contemporary issues relevant to the community; it offers a language so that the voice of the voiceless may be heard ….

And the point stands, even if 'to those of us brought up on the historical-critical method the interpretations may often appear cavalier' (p.45).

There is no mistaking, however, the light that radiates from such readings, as they bring together the oppressed and marginalised from the ancient world and from the contemporary scene. Rowland finds a perhaps unexpected ally in Bultmann, who had his own reservations about treating the Bible as 'only an historical document' instead of 'a means to hear the truth about our life and our soul' (p.72). They bring Fernando Belo[11] into the matter too; he is heavy going, but Rowland and Corner offer a challenging account of the implications of a 'materialist'[12] reading of the Gospel of Mark (pp.94-114).

[10] Christopher Rowland and Mark Corner, *Liberating Exegesis: The Challenge of Liberation Theology to Biblical Studies* (London: SPCK, 1990), 11; it is worth noting our reactions to this question.

[11] Fernando Belo, *A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1981).

[12] A 'materialist' reading is a borrowing from Marxist literary criticism; it involves analysing a text as a 'product', whose 'producer' is part of a complex economic system, and therefore reveals a good deal about the writer's world, seen in terms of oppression and the struggle for power. Such a reading would have correspondingly less interest in reading Mark for information about the life of Jesus or the Markan community.

Rowland and Corner are perhaps at their most telling on the biblical book of Revelation as 'subversive memory' (pp.141-155). An important idea here is that of 'picture':

> An attraction of the book of Revelation for those whose way of thinking is so different from the particularly rational theological discourses of the First World is that its discourse consists of picture and symbol rather than depending on systematic argument. (p.134)

At one point, they admirably express their central contention:

> Once disconnected from a historical-critical approach which thinks only in terms of capturing the author's original intention, the liberation theologian is able to introduce the socio-political context of his or her own day into the process of exegesis. (p.195)

In other words, liberationist exegesis allows the biblical text to come alive because it connects the Word with the emancipation and liberation of those who hear and read it.

Holy Scripture

A more Barthian account is offered by John Webster, professor of systematic theology at Aberdeen His *Holy Scripture* is an austere and difficult work, seeking to articulate the special character of Scripture, to name the theological status which it has and which other texts lack. Of this special character he is in absolutely no doubt. He describes his book as,

> … an ontology of Holy Scripture: an account of what Holy Scripture *is* in the saving economy of God's loving and regenerative self-communication.[13]

As this sentence indicates, Webster is not afraid of bold answers, such as would make many biblical specialists want to change the subject. Webster speaks easily of a 'faithful reading of Holy Scripture in the economy of grace' and describes this as 'an episode in the history of sin

[13] John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), 2.

and its overcoming' (pp.86-87). He uses language that secular students of the Bible will scarcely be able to understand:

> The act of reading Scripture is … in the last analysis determined not out of its similarities to the acts of other agents who do not share the Christian confession, but by the formative economy of salvation in which it has its origin and end …. The act of reading Holy Scripture thus contains a certain self-negation.

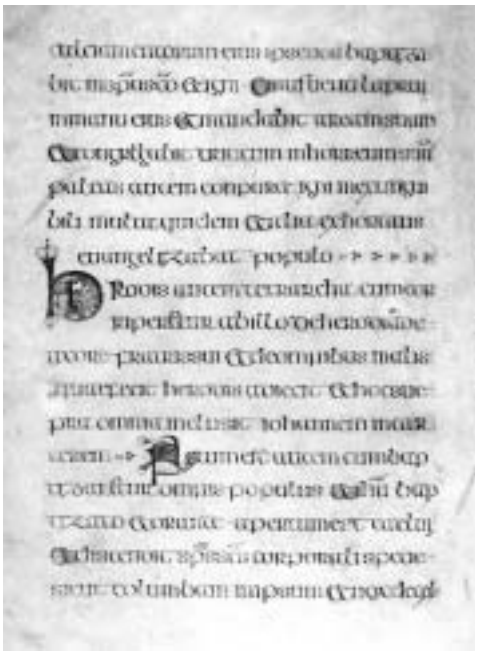
Webster is suggesting that Scripture needs to be read in faith, in an unconditional acceptance that it represents the Word of God in some special sense. The scientific world of biblical exegesis can sometimes encourage a certain arrogance, and lead us to dominance and control of the text, rather than humility before it. Webster argues for a different attitude:

> To read Scripture as one caught up by the reconciling work of God is to abandon mastery of the text, and, instead, to be schooled into docility. (p.101)

Let me make three observations on this gallant attempt to challenge tha standard approaches. Firstly, Webster sees Scripture as a printed word that people read. This is after all his experience, and such a vision is closely linked to the Protestant Reformation, of which he is so valiant a champion. But for the greater part of the Church's history, and certainly in the time when the 27 texts of the New Testament were composed, the majority of its audience will have heard the texts proclaimed, rather than seeing them as marks on paper. Literacy was not widespread, nor was the written text widely accessible prior to the introduction of movable type.

Secondly, Webster combines an insistence on faith with a determined resistance, though he never quite expresses it, to a Catholic approach to revelation—one which depends on more than Scripture, and invokes the Church's tradition as a place of God's self-revelation.

Thirdly, Webster really needs a 'theology of canon' in order to substantiate his position: an explanation of why it is *these* texts, and not any others, that express the economy of grace.



From the Book of Kells

One theologian who has treated Webster's work with the seriousness it deserves is Gavin D'Costa, a Roman Catholic who teaches in the Theology Faculty at Bristol University.[14] While agreeing with Webster on many points, D'Costa raises more sharply the issues about Scripture and tradition. Webster rejects the nuanced sense of authority vested in a tradition that we find in writers such as the Dominican Yves Congar. Yet Reformed theology, for all its insistence on the priority of Scripture, requires creeds, a teaching office, and an authoritative liturgy. Unless theology invokes tradition, it becomes individualistic—and, for D'Costa, Webster does not in fact succeed in securing his defences against that charge. Moreover, D'Costa argues, Webster overlooks the very powerful defences that *Dei verbum,* the Second Vatican Council's decree on revelation, erects against the abuse of magisterial authority. Sharply, he observes that Webster is in danger of a kind of docetism, a failure to recognise that God's truth is always mediated through created reality.[15] For D'Costa, the fact that revelation and Scripture are not identical means that you have to add tradition into the mix: revelation is the self-communication of the triune God; Scripture mediates that revelation, bears witness to it, serves, if you like, as its material principle.

[14] See 'Revelation, Scripture and Tradition: Some Comments on John Webster's Conception of "Holy Scripture"', *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 6 (2004), 337-350, especially 340-343.
[15] D'Costa, 'Revelation, Scripture and Tradition', 347.

In a forthcoming book,[16] D'Costa develops his position. Here, the reading of Scripture is situated within the diversity and pluralism of the postmodern academy. D'Costa calls for,

> … a postliberal plurality of universities with different traditions of enquiry and, within such institutions, the renewal of tradition-specific ecclesial forms of theological enquiry. (p. 166)

Within such a setting, he argues more generally for 'the unity of theology with prayer and practice' (p. 7). D'Costa also introduces what seems potentially an important notion, which he names, effectively if not very attractively, 'performativity': the 'cash value', so to say, of the text in real life. At this point, of course, he runs close to the insistence of feminist or liberationist exegetes that the text should make a difference. Moreover, for D'Costa, '… the meanings of Scripture are never exhausted …. Closure of meaning is precluded' (p. 160).

Luke Timothy Johnson is a fish from a similar kettle. In his recent book, *The Future of Catholic Biblical Scholarship*,[17] he is arguing for a reintegration of biblical studies into the life of the Church, and for connections to be made between contemporary scripture scholarship and patristic and medieval traditions of biblical reading. At the end of an excellent chapter on Augustine's reading of Scripture, Johnson lays down a challenge to the guild of biblical exegetes:

> Intellectual honesty and the need to account for the place that we claim in the world demand that Christians seriously engage the question of how the Bible is true, and how the Bible is truly read. A biblical scholarship that evades these questions through research into *arcana*, or through assembling learned opinions in ever larger compendia and commentaries, or by playing within the safe boundaries of convention without being willing to take on the truth or falsity of Scripture, has relinquished the right to be taken seriously. (pp. 117-118)

The strong and challenging language here carries a consequence:

[16] *Theology: Queen of the Sciences, Servant of the Church, Prophet to the Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, forthcoming).
[17] (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) co-authored with William S. Kurz SJ.

> If Scripture is ever again to be a living source for theology, those who practise theology must become less preoccupied with the world that produced the Scripture and learn again to live in the world that Scripture produces. (p. 119)

For Johnson, the historical-critical paradigm is in danger of driving 'an implacable wedge between the world imagined by Scripture and the world view of the biblical critic' (p. 127); moreover, it can often fail to 'connect with experience':

> Part of contemporary theology's impoverished sense of God's presence is due to its inattention to the places where that presence is most obvious, namely, in the human drama of idolatry and sin, grace and faith. As that drama is played out in every human story it can become, if properly heard, revelatory. The same inattention to the human experience of God characterizes the reading of Scripture within the academic guild. Yet the experience of the Living God is the most obvious element in the construction of the imaginary world of Scripture. (p. 141)

Like many of the other authors discussed here, Johnson demands that we take the biblical text seriously at precisely the point where it has the capacity to give us energy.[18]

Performing the Scriptures

Before concluding this rather flighty survey of how modern theologians are trying to find life and energy in the biblical text, I should like to draw attention to the four essays by the Cambridge theologian Nicholas Lash on the use of Scripture that constitute Part II of his collection, *Theology on the Way to Emmaus*.[19] The first, suggestively, is called 'Performing the Scriptures'. Lash draws a parallel between the Scriptures on the one hand and a musical score or a dramatic script on the other. This enables Lash to suggest that the Scriptures have to be *performed*. The text of *King Lear* is written, fundamentally, for actors to

[18] More recently, Johnson has given this view more accessible expression in his collection of articles, *The Living Gospel* (London: Continuum, 2004). See especially the opening chapter, 'Theology and the Spiritual Life'.

[19] (London: SCM Press, 1986). I am grateful to Professor Christopher Rowland for repeatedly insisting on the importance of these articles, entitled 'Performing the Scriptures'; 'What Authority Has Our Past?'; 'How Do We Know Where We Are?'; and 'What Might Martyrdom Mean?' In what follows I focus especially on pp. 40-43.

present it on a stage. A good production, a good interpretation, will be performed by one group of people for another, by actors for audience. It will enable all concerned to discover new elements of truth, truth both about the text and about themselves. Something similar might be said about Scripture. The principal function of the Scriptures is to facilitate the re-enactment of Christ's story among his followers, in such a way as to foster 'the life, activity and organization of the believing community'. There remains a vital place for historical scholarship and critical reflection—but the model of scripture as text-for-performance to nourish the community of faith keeps 'the experts firmly in their place'. It is 'not, in the last analysis, written texts' that are central to Christian interpretation,

> … but patterns of human action: what was said and done and suffered, then, by Jesus and his disciples, and what is said and done and suffered, now, by those who seek to share his obedience and his hope.

Lash's chapters are so richly allusive as to defy summary—my hope is that this account of a few paragraphs will drive readers to consult the book for themselves. We cannot, so it seems to me, find life and energy in our reading of the New Testament until we are prepared to treat it as 'holy ground', rather than with the analytic detachment proper to an archaeologist about to dig a site. And Lash's focus on personal responses to the performed history of Jesus provides a useful clue as to just what 'holy ground' might mean. The retelling of the Scriptures in performance stimulates ever new forms of holiness among Christian disciples here and now. The original history remains normative, and what the historical experts tell us may be vitally important in helping us use the Scriptures well—but the full meaning specifically of Scripture goes beyond mere history. It is something which we continue to play out.[20]

Energy, Life and Meaning

I am suggesting, therefore, that the New Testament is most appropriately read from within the believing community, or at least

[20] Elsewhere in this number of *The Way*, Helmut Gabel offers some reflections on Ignatius that may serve to amplify and develop Lash's suggestions.

from a standpoint of openness to being changed by the text. Only so will it have life and energy. As the Pontifical Biblical Commission put the matter in their 1993 document, 'The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church':

> United to the living tradition which preceded it, which accompanies it and is nourished by it … the Bible is the privileged means which God uses yet again in our own day to shape the building up and the growth of the Church as the people of God.[21]

Such a view may draw on the historical-critical paradigm, but it goes beyond any exclusive concern with historical reconstruction. Scripture claims to give both life and meaning; any adequate study of Scripture has to ask how this might be so. We need to use Scripture contemplatively and imaginatively, considering at once the limits and constraints it puts on us, and also, more importantly, the ways in which its text invites us to 'perform' it.

Nicholas King SJ taught the New Testament in South Africa for many years, and now continues to do so at Oxford University. His translation of the New Testament has just appeared (Stowmarket: Kevin Mayhew, 2005).

[21] n. 101. The document can be found in an edition by J. L. Houlden (London: SCM, 1995), and also on various websites, such as that of Felix Just at Loyola Marymount University: http://myweb.lmu.edu/fjust/Docs//PBC_Interp.htm.

MATTEO RICCI IN POST-CHRISTIAN EUROPE

Gerard J. Hughes

JUST OVER 400 YEARS AGO, IN 1582, the Jesuit Matteo Ricci arrived in China as a missionary. Faced with a highly sophisticated and complex culture, he had to decide—or discover—how to make his Christian beliefs even intelligible, let alone attractive, to the Chinese. The strategy he developed was a model example of what today would be called 'inculturation'. He became a mandarin, an important figure at the court of the Emperor, and an author of works which even today are regarded as Chinese literary classics. Only then—many years later, in 1603—did he publish what was in effect a Chinese catechism, a work which embodied painstaking research into the meaning of the several Chinese ideograms which might conceivably be used to translate the word 'God'. Only after a long process of learning did he trust himself to talk accurately to Chinese people about his religious beliefs and practices, as someone who was at the same time an Italian Jesuit and a cultivated peer of his Chinese fellow-scholars. He did so in terms which he had learnt from the Chinese themselves; and he integrated Chinese practices such as paying reverence to one's ancestors into Christian liturgical practice.[1]

Both at the time and subsequently, Ricci was strongly criticized. He was said to be watering down the Christian message, and to have corrupted Christian practice with elements of pagan worship. He had, for instance, avoided the public use of images of the naked crucifix in deference to Chinese sensibilities; other missionaries, about to be deported for parading the crucifix, bitterly said to Ricci that at least they had been willing to preach Christ crucified. He was criticized by

[1] For information on Ricci, it is still worth reading Vincent Cronin, *The Wise Man from the West* (London: Hart Davis, 1955). See also Jonathan D. Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (London: Faber, 1985). Ricci's own work has been published in a bilingual edition: *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven (T'ien-chu Shih-i)*, translated by Douglas Lancashire and Peter Hu Kuo-chen (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1985).

The Way, 44/2 (April 2005), 71-82

Matteo Ricci

his Christian contemporaries for interpreting as mere reverence for the ancestors what was in fact the outright worship of the ancestors as gods. Translation of the verbal expressions of Christian belief into Chinese from Italian or Latin, and the use of Chinese rites within Christian liturgy, were, so the critics alleged, radically misleading. A marketing strategy, and an eagerness to be understood and accepted, had led to serious mistranslation and to a total misrepresentation of the faith.[2]

History has a way of repeating itself. I suggest that a similar conflict over pastoral policy can be found in our own day. It is hardly news that policies like Ricci's are still a matter of dispute in what used to be called 'missionary lands'. Less obviously, they are also occurring now in Europe, as Christians try to respond to the post-Christian culture now prevalent here. Now, as in Ricci's time, violent disagreements about pastoral practice are underpinned by sharply contrasting theological positions. Many official Church responses to the post-Christian culture of Europe resemble what Ricci's critics typically said: we must remain faithful in belief and in practice to the integrity of the gospel. The suggestion that we need to begin by listening to the post-Christian position of most of our contemporaries, and see how things go from there, will seem enlightened to some; but others will see it as inevitably watering down the Christian message for the sake of a specious popular appeal. The problem is real and far from simple, whether in theory or in practice. The dispute is just as acrid as it was in Ricci's day. How are we to proceed?

[2] The case for the critics of Ricci's approach is well reported by J. S. Cummins, *A Question of Rites: Friar Domingo Navarrete and the Jesuits in China* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993).

Portrait of the Post-Christian European

I suggest that we might begin as Ricci did, and try simply to acquaint ourselves with what post-Christian Europe is actually like.

For a start, contemporary Europe is multi-cultural; gone are the days of a Christianity which, despite the differences between Catholics and Protestants, could still claim to constitute a world-view shared by all right-thinking people. The cultures of many Europeans owe little or nothing to Christianity. Some are unchurched Christians; others are Sikhs or Hindus or Muslims, to list only a few of the possibilities. This multiplicity itself, with Christianity only one strand in a very complex cultural web, is crucially important; for it surely challenges the simple picture held by some early missionaries, and repeated by some Christians and some Muslims today, that there is obviously just one true religion, surrounded by a whole chaos of confused superstition and ignorance. Even the belief that there is some one religion in a privileged position cannot be maintained in *that* over-simple way. There are many viable ways of life, to put it no more strongly, in which religion plays no part at all, as well as many in which different religions play different parts. The diversity of contemporary Europe can be seen as a rich cultural cornucopia or as a fatally open Pandora's box; but it cannot reasonably be read as a culture still fundamentally Christian that needs at most a little tidying up, a quick ecumenical polish.

Diversity and Disillusion

Let me outline something of the attitudes of those who have a generally Christian background. I will draw upon a survey of religious belief in Britain conducted by the state broadcasting organization, the BBC, in association with the religious weekly *The Tablet* in 2000. I will supplement this with my personal experience of such people as my university colleagues, or students whom I have taught, or people to whom I have offered some spiritual direction.

There is an important distinction to be drawn between people to whom Christianity has never in fact been a live option, and those for whom Christian belief has been tried and in one way or another found wanting.

The first group can hold a bewildering variety of beliefs, only some of which have any close relationship to Christianity. More of them believe in a Life Force than in a personal God; more believe in the

devil than believe in God; almost twice as many people think of themselves as 'spiritual' than would admit to belief in God; many would claim that their most significant religious experiences occur in prayer. Jesus is thought to be just a man, or even just a character in a story. Of the teachings of Jesus (except perhaps for the duty to love one another and the threat of Hell), they remain largely ignorant. Almost all European post-Christians can recall a certain amount of Christian vocabulary. They can very roughly describe what Christians celebrate at Christmas, or at Easter—they can (more or less) tell the Christmas and Easter 'stories'. They know that there are various Christian denominations, which they believe are divided largely by differences over the status of the Pope, controversies about sexual ethics and abortion, and, bizarrely, by their different views about uninhibited singing and dancing in church. In all this we can easily see the decayed fall-out from the implosion of Christianity which occurred some considerable time ago, before most of these people were born. They perceive Christianity as somehow long discredited, without themselves having sufficient experience or knowledge to enable them to justify this view.

People who have tried Christianity and found it wanting often have a much better knowledge of Christianity,[3] but for a variety of reasons they find it very unsatisfactory, and they explicitly reject some central Christian beliefs—or at least refuse to commit themselves to them. They may dismiss various theological discussions as concerned with useless technicalities; examples might be the doctrines of the Trinity, the claim that Jesus is 'of one being with the Father', transubstantiation, and resurrection. It is not only theological technicalities which are rejected; for along with them go adherence to the beliefs which those technicalities are intended to express, in the divinity of Christ, the real presence in the Eucharist, and life after death. I suspect that people often feel that the very technicality of theological discussion has served to undermine the doctrines. However, they do not necessarily reject Christianity entirely. Their

[3] Indeed, better than that of some practising Christians: I was told of a sixteen-year-old Roman Catholic girl who, when asked what it meant to her to be a Catholic, replied, 'You can't have sex before marriage, you can't use birth control after marriage, you can't have an abortion, and you have to send for the priest when you are dead'. It is not just the unchurched who have almost no idea about Catholicism or even Christianity.

rejection is selective, and the selection varies from individual to individual. In addition, such people may well incorporate among their religious views elements from non-Christian religions, such as Sufism, Buddhism or one of the several varieties of nature religion.

The Desire for Spirituality

By their own admission, what many post-Christian Europeans have in common is a desire for a deeper spirituality. This desire is not necessarily obvious, nor even always clearly acknowledged or understood; and it is very variously expressed. Post-Christian Europeans, like any other large group, include extroverts and introverts, mystics and charismatics. Their immediate religious needs are notably different from each other, even if it might be argued that they are at some deep level the same. But the desire for a deeper spirituality is to a considerable degree free from ties to any particular form of religious belief; indeed it can co-exist with a denial of religious belief.

The desire for a deeper spirituality

To illustrate: I have asked several groups of students in their last year at secondary school whether they have had anything in the previous three months which they would term in some sense a religious experience. Usually about seventy percent say that they have; but they are normally quite unable to say why they think it 'religious'.[4] Again, I taught one student who was very impressed by the traditional proofs for the existence of God and by other philosophical discussions about the nature of God; but she said both that she still could not believe in God, and that she very much wished that she could. Note the combination of desire and frustration.

In post-Christian Europe, there is a general sense that Christianity has failed to respond to important needs. Those who have had little effective contact with Christianity simply have no sense of how the gospel could possibly be relevant to their lives; those who have moved beyond Christianity often have a more focused view, and sometimes an angrier one, both of their own spiritual needs and of Christianity's utter failure to satisfy them.

[4] The percentage is a rough approximation, but it does not seem to vary much between faith schools and others.

Sharing the Gospel

Practising Christians are prone to regard post-Christians primarily in negative terms; either they have been deprived of the faith, or else they have lost it. Like Ricci's critics, they regard the people among whom they live as religiously inadequate.

Ricci's first response was quite different; he saw that he could only share the Gospel with people if he first learnt from them. This suggestion seemed outlandish at the time. But perhaps we contemporary Christians have to be outlandish in just this way. What do today's post-Christians have to offer us? Is there anything which they might have learned, facets of religious and moral truth that they might teach us in virtue of *their* culture?

To share the Gospel is to share in a mutual learning experience, in which I discover what I mean through the process of discovering how what I say strikes others, and of finding out what they might want to say on a roughly similar topic. One cannot simply explain to them the truths in which one believes. One cannot 'preach the gospel' in that sense to someone whose culture, and therefore whose language also, is not ours, even if they happen to use many words that seem to correspond to ours.

Before we start, we, like Ricci, have to get to grips with the complexities involved. Ricci took more than ten years before he felt confident enough to translate *Deus* into Mandarin without being misunderstood, and his choice of *T'ien-chu* is still controversial. We ourselves might reflect on what mainstream Catholic Christians mean when they speak of eating Christ's body and drinking his blood in the Eucharist. It may be obvious enough to their fellow-believers that they are not describing some horrendous cannibalistic ritual; but what do people from outside a Christian culture make of it? What comes across to outsiders when Christians say that Jesus is God and not simply a human person, or when we use expressions such as 'the word of God' or 'being redeemed by the blood of Christ?' No simple dictionary will be able to teach people outside our faith-communities the nuances which are involved in figurative and extended expressions such as these. It is only through an empathy, learnt through patient observation or even participation, that someone who begins from outside a Christian religious culture will grasp what we really mean. A wooden, allegedly

To understand a religion requires empathy and patience

simple, understanding of the words used is thoroughly misleading. We need to be much more aware of the fact that what we say may come across to others as hopelessly crude, or even nonsensical, and be rejected for that reason.

Equally patient and sensitive negotiation is essential when we discover that many, perhaps most, post-Christian Europeans claim to have had religious experiences and to be spiritual people, interested in finding words with which to express their experience. The same issues about translation and mutual understanding arise again, this time on perhaps a more personal level. When they say that they do not believe in God, exactly what are they denying? What exactly do they mean when they speak of 'a religious experience', or when they describe themselves as spiritual but not religious, or when they say that they cannot imagine a life after death?

Given the difficulties here, one may well understand why Ricci's critics wanted to insist that things were much more straightforward: you just had to tell people what to believe. But Ricci's approach seems, in the long run, far more realistic and far more promising.

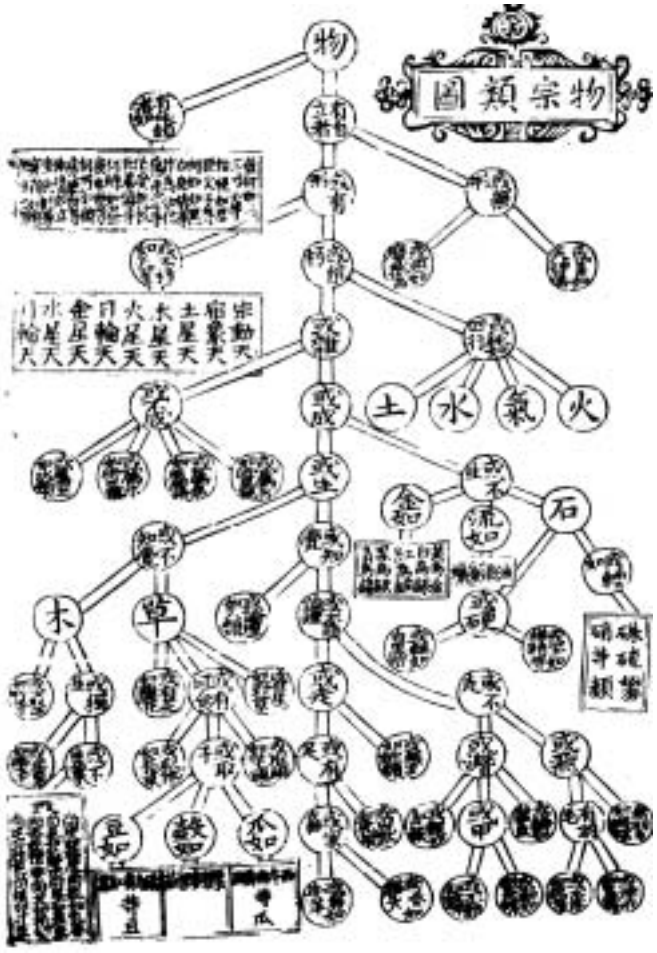
The Nature of Christian Truth

It is of course deceptively easy to talk about growth in mutual understanding, about learning from one another, and about the development of a new language in which to communicate more effectively. But there are important theological issues which need to be settled. If we all have to learn from one another and speak anew about our beliefs, is the result not inevitable going to be a minimalist 'common ground', a vague religiosity in which Christianity is no longer recognisable, and has perhaps disappeared altogether? What will happen to Christian truth if such an approach is taken to its implied conclusion?

We must remember that truth is not somehow a Thing in Itself. Truth belongs to (some of the) statements we make; what we say is true if it corresponds to the way in which things really are. Religious statements will be true if they correctly describe some aspect of the relationships between ourselves and God. True religious statements can be made in any one of hundreds of human languages; they may set out to describe any of the multitude of ways in which God can be said to relate to us; and, if God is ultimately a mystery beyond our complete

grasp, even our true statements are going to be inadequate, incomplete, leaving much more unsaid. In principle, then, in order to understand the religious statements of others—other Christians, members of other faiths, unchurched post-Christians—we need to tackle all the problems about translation; we need to discover whether what others are saying is true or false, and to ask whether they might be truly describing an aspect of God's relationship to us which we have not thought to express. Answering those questions is not at all easy in practice.

I believe that the one God revealed in Christ through the Spirit is fundamental and unchanging. But, in so saying, I am speaking in the Christian terms which are familiar to me and to most of you, my readers. If asked what that statement means, I might well point to the nearest Christian theological library. But might not a Buddhist or a European post-Christian also have ways of expressing that same reality? And indeed, might there not be other aspects of the reality of God upon which they have been particularly drawn to reflect? It is, after all, part of our Christian belief that the Spirit of God is offered to everyone, not just to those who have assimilated Christian preaching; the description of Pentecost makes it clear that those who have received the Spirit will not all be saying the same things. In the early years of Christianity we can see, for instance in the Gospel of Matthew, that some Christians spoke in largely Jewish terms against a background of traditional Jewish imagery, and retained many Jewish practices. Other Christians, as is clear from the letters of Paul, had very different practices, and spoke in very different terms about what God had done in Christ and how we should respond to it. The early Christians found their differences disquieting; but over the centuries we have learned to value all these early traditions and to resist crude attempts to harmonize them. 'Who was right, Paul or Matthew?' is a question to which the answer is 'both'; but *not* because they are uttering the same truths, for they clearly are not. The early Christian Churches had to learn from one another—and that was a slow, painstaking and at times painful process. Paul was no less controversial in his day than Ricci in his, and for very similar reasons. Both were involved in an enormous culture-shift; and both resisted over-simple solutions to the problems of sharing Christianity in a new and challenging environment.



Ricci's Diagram of the Different Kinds of Being, from the 1603 Beijing edition of **The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven**

In Acts, Luke describes Paul's efforts to meet the Athenian philosophers on their own ground (Acts 17:16-34). Luke goes out of his way to present Paul's approach in an entirely favourable light: the reason why some of the audience were not convinced was the superficial nature of their interest, in contrast to those who wished to hear more. It is interesting to contrast this account of Paul's approach in Athens with what Luke's Paul had said to members of the Jewish

Diaspora in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:14-50). Paul varied his message for different audiences. Our post-Christian world, with its increasingly rapid technological change, and its interest in spirituality rather than in the Church, presents us with a similar challenge which we need to take equally seriously.[5]

Learning in Dialogue

If we listen attentively to today's post-Christians, they will, of course, also enrich our understanding of our own Christianity. The contribution made by the largely post-Christian feminist movement is surely an excellent, and as yet not fully assimilated, contribution of this kind. Perhaps, too, our contact with post-Christians will reveal places where our own understanding of Christianity was not merely incomplete, but positively mistaken. We have as precedents for this the Enlightenment views on science, and hence on cosmogony and evolution, which were and still are taken by many post-Christians to be reasons for rejecting Christianity. Many Christians still cannot assimilate the results of scholarship over the last 150 years concerning the nature and meaning of biblical texts.

Christians have already had to learn not to burn witches or execute heretics. Much more controversially, it is accepted in most post-Christian circles that some second marriages may be morally admirable, even though the first spouse is still alive. Surely it cannot be denied that Christians may well have more to learn. And some of it they will need to learn from post-Christians. Of course, to admit this much will raise fears that we have started down a slippery slope, and that at the bottom there is but a minimalist religion—one which might have historical roots in Christianity, but which is Christian no longer. It is in these terms that people like Ricci's critics can mount an emotionally powerful argument. But unless we continue the process of patient listening, Christianity will become even more sidelined than it already is.

We can observe a similar dynamic occurring in our own day, with the various ecumenical dialogues, notably those between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. Once real care had been taken to articulate

[5] The variety of problems is well exhibited by the essays in the first part of *Comparative Theology: Essays for Keith Ward*, edited by T. W. Bartel (SPCK: London, 2003).

Roman Catholic and Anglican beliefs on eucharist, or papal primacy, or holy orders, apparently obvious contradictions between the two positions tended to disappear. The resulting statements proved to be mutually acceptable to all those who took part in the lengthy conversations.[6] Throughout the discussion of each topic there had to be some careful translation in order to avoid mutual misunderstanding. Perhaps more strikingly, in the end *neither* side simply repeated word for word what they started with. Both had learned more about their respective beliefs.

As with inter-Church dialogue, so with dialogue with post-Christians. The outcome cannot be determined in advance. Just as we believe that there is much of importance that we have to offer, we must also make it clear that we are willing to learn from them, with the presupposition that they will have much to contribute to our understanding of Christianity. If it seems that many contemporary post-Christians have a kind of 'pick and mix' approach to religious beliefs and practices, we Christians need to ask:

- Are they perhaps right to reject some things which we have mistakenly accepted without really thinking them through?
- Have some of the practices which they reject genuinely outlived their usefulness? Might it be that they are no longer helpful to people seeking to deepen their relationship with God?
- What can we learn from the non-Christian practices taken from Zen Buddhism or Sufism, for example, which post-Christians sometimes import into their spiritual lives precisely because they find them helpful?

One sometimes has the impression that Christians are apt to be especially hard on post-Christians. They seem to be responding to the perceived 'pick and mix' approach with an insistence on 'all or

[6] Significantly, though their reports were widely accepted in both Churches, what dissatisfaction there was came from people who had *not* had first-hand experience of the discussions which led to those reports. The critics would claim to have understood what the reports were saying, and on that basis to have disagreed with various points. I would seriously contest their claim to have understood the reports at all adequately.

nothing'. Like ourselves, post-Christians will have their shortcomings of one kind or another. But it is at least as likely that they, like us, are sincerely seeking God as best they can, and that they have found their experience of this or that Christian community an impediment rather than a help. We need to give an unconditional welcome to those who are interested enough to establish contact.

We would do well, therefore, to remember the long history of Christianity and the enormous changes, both cultural and theological, which have taken place within that culture down the ages. Creeds—in the plural—have been formulated; mistaken views abandoned; different aspects emphasized. History has no end, and cultural change will always be with us. Moreover, dialogue will never come to a complete and final conclusion. But, to put the matter in Christian terms, it is part of our faith that we have to preach the gospel to all nations, and that our attempts to do so as sensitively and respectfully as we can will be supported by the gift of the Spirit. For the Spirit is given to everyone who seeks a deeper understanding of the unfathomable riches of God. In coming to understand who God is for others we will surely come to know better who God is for us. If we fail to take post-Christians seriously, our words will fall on deaf ears and our own faith will suffer.

Gerard J. Hughes SJ taught philosophy at Heythrop College, University of London, for many years before becoming Master of Campion Hall, Oxford, in 1998. He has published books on ethical theory, on philosophical issues regarding God, and on Aristotle; he is also an enthusiastic gardener.

SACRED SPACE AND ONLINE COMMUNITIES

Róisín Pye

WHAT POSSIBILITIES DOES THE INTERNET offer for people to interact on religious and spiritual matters? How can the internet help Christians establish a sense of community online?

These are not questions which can be answered easily. Media studies is a comparatively new discipline, and internet research is a new branch of media studies. We are still struggling to find basic conventions for discussion. There are many different opinions, offered on the basis of wildly different forms of evidence, and with varying degrees of reflectiveness. Here I want merely to sample these opinions, and to take one website, *Sacred Space*, as a test case. I also want to highlight some of the outstanding questions that remain unanswered.

Differing Opinions

'That the net means something for religion is undeniable. What that something is is the question.'[1] Some Christians welcome the internet as a promised land of communication and exchange, or as a new medium enhancing our knowledge of the world and of people around us; others see it as an electronic chaos where the possibility of meaningful communication is lost in an anarchic pluralism.

Among the commentators, the internet has its critics, its friends and its critical friends.[2] My aim is to be a critical friend, writing from a Christian perspective—one who assesses both the good and bad aspects of the internet and who is aware of the new questions which it raises.

[1] *Religion on the Internet: Research Prospects and Promises*, edited by J. K. Hadden and D. E. Cowan (New York: JAI Elsevier Science, 2000), 8.

[2] For an in-depth treatment of these terms, see Heidi Campbell, 'Approaches to Religious Research in Computer-Mediated Communication', in *Mediating Religion: Conversations in Media, Religion and Culture*, edited by Jolyon Mitchell and Sophia Marriage (London: T. and T. Clark, 2003), especially 214-216.

The Way, 44/2 (April 2005), 83-92

Douglas Groothuis is an example of a critical friend when he reminds us that,

> … technologies affect our sensibilities, often deadening them to truth, but technologies have not destroyed our objective reality or the possibility of knowing it.[3]

A recent papal document, too, seems to be encouraging critical friendship with regard to the internet:

> … the new media are powerful tools for education and cultural enrichment, for commercial activity and political participation, for intercultural dialogue and understanding; and … they also can serve the cause of religion. Yet this coin has another side. Media of communication that can be used for the good of persons and communities can be used to exploit, manipulate, dominate, and corrupt.[4]

Can we, then, make a worthwhile use of the internet and, if so, under what conditions? Can we use it to communicate meaningfully and constructively in a religious context? Can we establish authentic relationships within an online Christian community? How far can and should the Church encourage and promote online community?

Understandings of Community

But what do we mean by community? Often it seems that the critics of the internet, those who see it as a 'breeding ground for delusion',[5] are effectively defining community in terms of relationships established in a particular physical space—the village or neighbourhood. Relationships of this kind clearly rely in large part on face-to-face communication. For Groothuis, the internet contributes to what he calls 'cocooning'. Individuals online are isolated from others, 'when they could be playing with their children, talking to neighbours over the fence, or attending musical concerts, houses of worship or block parties'.[6]

[3] Douglas Groothuis, *The Soul in Cyberspace* (Michigan: Baker Books, 1997), 86.
[4] Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Ethics in Internet*, available at www.daughtersofstpaul.com/mediastudies/churchdocs/churchininternet.html and at www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_ councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_20020228_ethics-internet_en.html (2002), section 1.
[5] See Campbell, 'Approaches to Religious Research', 215.
[6] Groothuis, *The Soul in Cyberspace,* 122.

In contrast, other 'critical friends' of the internet would argue that such an account of community reflects merely a nostalgia for a way of life which may (or indeed may not) have existed, say, in the rural Ireland of the 1950s. They argue that modern life is based more on social networks that span space and time, and that the internet is one mode of communicating which facilitates this lifestyle.[7] We do not depend on a small, tight group of neighbours and family for all our physical, emotional, economic, spiritual or other needs. We rely rather on a network of people spread over various locations, and sometimes spread over different time-zones. We affiliate ourselves with them because of shared interests or needs. These relationships develop over time, in different degrees of strength and intensity.

Thus we can find on the internet, for example, groups of people who are bound together by the need to discuss technical issues, or who want to debate the latest political achievements of Tony Blair. And we can also find those who come together to pray. 'Such groups are a technologically supported continuation of a long-term shift to communities organized by shared interests rather than by shared place or shared ancestry.'[8] These shared interests foster a sense of community, whether its ties are weak or strong; and individuals develop bonds of friendship and trust over time.

Some researchers have affirmed that an authentic and real community can indeed exist under these conditions; Lorne Dawson, for example, says, 'a sense of community with real consequences for the behaviour of participants can be created online'.[9] However, we must acknowledge that this is a slow process, one that is dependent on a number of supporting circumstances. The development of trust,

[7] See Barry Wellman and Milena Gulia, 'Virtual Communities as Communities: Net Surfers Don't Surf Alone', in *Communities in Cyberspace*, edited by Marc Smith and Peter Kollock (London: Routledge, 1999).

[8] Wellman and Gulia, 'Virtual Communities as Communities', 172.

[9] Lorne L. Dawson, 'Researching Religion in Cyberspace: Issues and Strategies', in Hadden and Cowan, *Religion on the Internet*, 40.

which is a key element in relationships, can take time, especially in a technological environment.[10]

Community Online: A Case Study

One interesting case in point, no doubt well known to many readers of *The Way*, is *Sacred Space*, a website which offers people an opportunity to pray online. It uses the resources of Ignatian spirituality, offering a different passage of scripture as a basis for prayer each day. It was started by the Irish Jesuits as a temporary project for Lent 1999, and has continued ever since. It quickly attracted a response way beyond the developers' expectations. On its first day, 1,000 people logged on; currently it gets about 10,000 hits daily.[11] The project initially sought to help people find some kind of guidance and structure in prayer without taking too much time in their day, and within a 'space' that they were occupying frequently: their computers and the online medium of the internet. Users receive guidance and instruction on how to use the site, and they are encouraged to make it part of their daily lives. The invitation to pray proceeds like this:

> It might seem strange to pray at your computer, in front of a screen, especially if there are other people around you, or distracting noises. But God is everywhere, all around us, constantly reaching out to us, even in the most unlikely situations. When we know this, and with a bit of practice, we can pray anywhere! … Although they are written in the first person—'I'—the prayers are for doing, rather than for reading out. Each stage is a kind of exercise or meditation aimed at helping you get in touch with God and God's presence in your life.

Can we see a sense of community in all of this? The website seems, on the face of it, to be focused on the prayer-life of the individual, to be concentrating on the regular, everyday relationship between the individual and God. The website is quite static; there is no online chat room attached, or even an e-mail discussion list. But there is a feedback

[10] Alf Linderman and Mia Lovheim, 'Internet, Religion and the Attribution of Social Trust', in *Mediating Religion*, 229-240.

[11] E-mail(1 Dec 2003). 'During the month of November, we had 262,886 visitors; on average 8,766 per day. On weekdays, we had 198,084 visitors, which averages for 20 days, 9,904 per day. On Saturdays and Sundays, 64,802 visitors; average for 10 such days, 6,408 per day.' (Hits are the records of people accessing a page/site.)

> ***Thank you for a calm serene prayer site and the sense of being part of a worldwide community. Half an hour ago I was in despair. Your site made me able to believe again.***
>
> ***Hartlepool, England***

facility, so that people can e-mail their responses to the site or the prayer session; and some of the feedback is published. It is here, in what the users themselves write, that we can find constant reference to community.

What are the users saying? What do they feel is happening while they are logged on to the site? One of the recurring themes is that the sheer statistics encourage users to build a sense of community. The large number of people praying online simultaneously (an average of seven per minute) gives each individual a sense of joining in a common action with others from all over the world. It is this which encourages them to imagine a network of believers praying together. One user describes her experience:

> I appreciate the way you have created a sense of family through this endeavour. It not only increases the closeness I feel with my God, but also clearly connects me with others in this world. Everything seems closer, more personal.

Another user puts it very simply:

> A place where people get together and pray instils a sense of community. To enrich your spiritual growth this is very important. Thank you for starting my day off with this feeling of community.

A user from Ontario, Canada, says:

> It is very obvious that the Spirit is working through *Sacred Space*. I always believed that the more people pray together, the stronger the prayer. My day does not seem significantly peaceful and comforted till I share my prayers with *Sacred Space*.

This person believes that there is an 'us': people gathered for a purpose, people sharing cyberspace together in a special way that helps them bond. And he feels supported by this belief.

The feedback itself is another factor in strengthening the experience of online community. People can read other users' experiences online and get a glimpse into their lives, into the issues with which they are struggling and into the joys that they are experiencing. One user from Blackpool, England, said:

> Thank you for being there. I have just been reading the feedback and found myself weeping. Such wonderful folk are also praying.

And another from Myanmar said:

> I want you to know that I get inspiration reading others' notes. Gives me strength not to push the Lord out of my life.

Occasionally users will respond to a feedback that they have read and will write back out of generosity or friendship with advice and encouragement. Even in this very limited form of communication online (there are many more dynamic and interactive ways to communicate, such as discussion boards and chat rooms), people find a sense of community, of being in a relationship together, through this praying experience.

The site expands its services from time to time, linking to extra sections which give further spiritual resources or to new websites which can help in other areas of spiritual and Christian development. The *Sacred Space* team send out an electronic newsletter to all those who contribute feedback to the site, and this helps maintain and develop the sense of community. The newsletter gives information about plans for the future, and about who is working on the website. It provides further feedback, and also occasional contributions from users of the site, for example poetry.

It is very obvious that the Spirit is working through 'Sacred Space'. I always believed that the more people pray together, the stronger the prayer. My day does not seem significantly peaceful and comforted till I share my prayers with Sacred Space.
Windsor, Ontario, Canada

Here we can see the element of generosity which often features on community sites, with people sharing information and support despite very limited contact with the other users. This finding is supported by research

evidence from other online community sites. Barry Wellman and Melena Gulia speak of a 'reciprocal supportiveness on the Net':[12]

> The accumulation of small, individual acts of assistance can sustain a large community because each act is seen by the entire group and helps perpetuate an image of generalised reciprocity and mutual aid.[13]

Through their shared interest in taking time for spiritual inspiration and in developing their relationship with God, the users of *Sacred Space* are bound together in a way that transcends physical space and that brings together Irish and Indian, Australian and American, including people from different denominations.

Moreover, the community is not confined to English-speakers—a frequent limitation of the internet. *Sacred Space* is available in seventeen different languages, through translations made by volunteers who use the site, and who are enthusiastic and generous enough to take on this task for the good of others and for the development of an even wider community.

Gives me strength not to push the Lord out of my life.
Yangon, Myanmar

I appreciate the way you have created a sense of family through this endeavour.
Address not given

Sacred Space is thus a social meaning-system in which people share a particular world-view, in this case Christianity, online. There are clearly elements of community emerging among the users of the site, and these are acknowledged as such.[14]

However, *Sacred Space* has its limitations. It does not exploit all the possibilities of computer-mediated communication. It has none of the user-to-user communication that is possible through e-mail lists, newsgroups, discussion boards or chat rooms. Because it is a static site, as opposed to a dynamic one, there are many aspects of community that it lacks. There is no facility for the users to engage in dialogue together, building up the interpersonal relationships that are normally

[12] Wellman and Gulia, 'Virtual Communities as Communities', 177.
[13] Wellman and Gulia, 'Virtual Communities as Communities', 178.
[14] See Linderman and Lovheim, 'Internet, Religion and the Attribution of Social Trust', 233.

essential to community. Self-disclosure and communication is not possible here, except when stories are shared in the feedback. The users have only limited opportunities for exploring together what their shared experience actually means for each of them, or for finding further areas of common interest and belief. What Wellman and Gulia identify as one of the key uses of the internet, that of 'maintaining intermediate-strength ties between people who cannot see each other frequently', is not a factor in *Sacred Space*.[15]

Questions for the Future

It is undeniable, then, that religious websites are generating new and powerful forms of community online. Strong ties between people, a shared vision or meaning, a willingness to be honest and generous with time—these are some of the common traits in communities formed around religious websites or discussion groups. *Sacred Space* illustrates all these, if in a limited way.

But there are many questions still unanswered about how community interaction online might develop. How, for example, might *Sacred Space* grow further? What would happen if the team introduced a means of interpersonal communication between the users? How would that transform people's experience of the site? The research mentioned above suggests that this change would enrich that experience for many people, giving them an extra depth of community and relationship in their lives. And indeed, there are questions about how far religious sites of this kind in general can be developed. Will the use of video technology in online communication bring us closer together in years to come?

Religious web sites are generating new and powerful forms of community

There is a particularly interesting issue about the relationship between online community and the sense of community generated by conventional offline worship. Campbell talks about the experience of gathering together for worship in a standard church. Despite the efforts made to gather people into a worshipping community, 'individual members and visitors often enter alone, sit alone, leave

[15] Wellman and Gulia, 'Virtual Communities as Communities', 185.

alone'.[16] People can experience a sense of isolation in a church, despite being surrounded by a believing community; by contrast, there seems to be a sense of togetherness and sharing in online communities, although each user sits on their own in front of the screen.

What are the Churches to make of this? Can church leaders learn from this form of communication something about how to enhance offline worship? Can they be 'critical friends', and explore further the possibilities that the internet offers to believers? The key question is whether the traits we have seen in online communities amount to a version of community strong enough to fit with how the Church understands itself communally. But far more research needs to be done before we can answer this question satisfactorily.

Present research suggests that online communities enhance offline engagement. As Douglas Groothuis concedes:

> … despite the many hazards to community that cyberspace presents, the medium can help create and solidify community when it is used carefully and tethered to the real world in tangible ways.[17]

But we need to acknowledge the 'chocolate chip cookie factor'—the need for physical connection.[18] And Groothuis also cautions about the 'eerie and precarious combination of presence and absence, of involvement and disengagement' that the internet involves.[19] We must be careful about how much priority we give to relationships online, to be ready to accept the limitations of technology, and to prevent the internet from being mistaken for the 'highest possible form of human attainment'.[20]

[16] Heidi Campbell, '"Gimme that Online Religion": Spiritual Pilgrimage Online and Implications for the Culture of Religion', unpublished paper for New Media Arts in Advanced Technology Culture, International Conference, University of Luton (1999).
[17] Groothuis, *The Soul of Cyberspace*, 141.
[18] It is impossible to give someone a plate of chocolate chip cookies online. See Heidi Campbell, 'Plug In, Log On, and Drop Out? The Impact of the Internet on the Religious Community', available at http://homepages.ed.ac.uk/ewcv24/BASR.html.
[19] Groothuis, *The Soul of Cyberspace*, 123.
[20] Groothuis, *The Soul of Cyberspace*, 156.

There is surely important work for the Church to do here. If Christians can reflect carefully and realistically on what is happening on the internet, and can study it thoroughly from within a strong sense of Church teaching, they may be able to make a valuable contribution, at once supportive and critical, to the new forms of human community that are undoubtedly emerging from the internet—especially those which are explicitly religious in character.

Róisín Pye helped to run the *Sacred Space* website at the Jesuit Communication Centre in Dublin from 1999 to 2002. She recently completed a Masters in Theology and Media at the University of Edinburgh, and is currently working as a freelance web editor for CAFOD in London.

DIPLOMACY WITH BENEDICT

David Goodall

THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A GAP between the language of Christian belief and practice on the one hand, and the language of the secular professions on the other. But in today's non-believing society, the gap has widened to such an extent that Christian categories of thought, in so far as they are adverted to at all, tend to be regarded as irrelevant to the serious business of ordinary living. The bottom line is what matters. Only in the caring professions, such as medicine, nursing and teaching, is there an evident correspondence between Christian precept and professional practice, since caring for others is part of the definition of what those professions are about. But what of other professions and occupations? The principles of right conduct, of course, apply whatever one may be doing; and in George Herbert's familiar words,

> Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws
> Makes that and th'action fine.

But are there particular Christian values specific to, or consistent with, the non-caring professions? If so, how do they find expression? In particular, how do they find expression in what was for thirty-five years my own profession, diplomacy?

Diplomacy and Discretio

A year or two ago I was asked to take part in a discussion '*De discretione*': an exploration of the importance of the virtue of *discretio*, as that term is used in St Benedict's Rule, for a range of non-monastic, lay occupations.

The title derives, with apologies, from that of the recent book *Business with Benedict*, by Abbot Timothy Wright of Ampleforth, written in collaboration with Kit Dollard and Dom Anthony Marett-Crosby (London: Continuum, 2002)—a book which examines the relevance of St Benedict's Rule for the business world.

The Way, 44/2 (April 2005), 93-104

At first sight, any comparison between the life of a diplomat and the Christian life as envisaged in the Rule of St Benedict may seem too far-fetched to be useful. Diplomats, after all, have status and (in normal circumstances) security, and they enjoy a comfortable and relatively privileged lifestyle. As Lord Macaulay observed:

> There is no injustice in saying that diplomatists, as a class, have always been more distinguished by their address, by the art with which they win the confidence of those with whom they have to deal, and by the ease with which they catch the tone of every society to which they are admitted, than by generous enthusiasm or austere rectitude.[1]

So, if they are to be compared to monks at all, diplomats would seem to fall into the category of the 'gyrovagues', who spend their time 'flitting from country to country' and of whom St Benedict says in the first chapter of his Rule that 'it is better to keep silent than to speak'.

Nevertheless, a consideration of what St Benedict means by *discretio* reveals some interesting parallels. The Latin word has a much wider connotation than its English counterpart, 'discretion'—as in 'discretion is the better part of valour', or in the sense of tactful reticence. (The word is also important in the Ignatian tradition, where it is conventionally translated as 'discernment', although there are some who render it as 'discrimination'.) St Benedict calls it 'the mother of the virtues', and, although he uses the word only once, its spirit pervades the whole Rule. Essentially it describes a blend of two key concepts: moderation and discernment.

St Benedict Writing His Rule

[1] Thomas Babington Macaulay, *The History of England from the Accession of James II*, chapter 2, cited at http://www.strecorsoc.org/macaulay/mo2e.html.

In this sense it may be said to be central, not just to the Rule, but to the Christian life in whatever form it is lived. As I hope to show, it has particular relevance to the practice of diplomacy.

To a great extent, of course, the problems facing a diplomat in trying to live the Christian life today are the same as those facing any lay Christian who is pursuing a demanding and absorbing professional career. There is the problem of ethos, and there is the problem of time. In what has become a profoundly—and often aggressively—secular environment, believing Christians in Britain are what the sociologists call a 'cognitive minority': their theocentric assumptions are no longer shared by the society in which they live and work. By some of the most articulate representatives of the media and the intelligentsia they are treated as quaint, reactionary and superstitious, if not positively malign. Irrespective of whether they are true or false, beliefs which run counter to the majority world-view *ipso facto* lose their plausibility. While operating from within the *Zeitgeist,* therefore, the believing Christian has at the same time to be able to judge it and resist it; and this is never easy or comfortable.

All Christians need not just to hold on to their faith, but also to develop and retain an inner sensitivity to Our Lord's voice. To do this requires time: time to nourish one's faith spiritually by prayer and the sacraments; time to nourish it intellectually by reading and reflection; and time and opportunity to strengthen it by association and discussion with those whom one respects and who share one's faith. The manifold pressures and distractions of modern life—professional, family, financial, cultural—leave very little time for any of this; and in this respect, diplomacy is no different from any other profession. The search for God, which is what concerned St Benedict, is not part of the definition of what diplomacy is about.

Negotiation

In the words of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, diplomacy 'is the management of international relations by negotiation'. And the key word here is 'negotiation'. The diplomat's defining task is the settling of disputes or conflicts of interest by negotiation, that is, by seeking agreement—in itself an activity akin to the Christian virtue of peacemaking. It is from this task that all his or her other functions derive.

In order to help his government to achieve agreements by negotiation, a diplomat needs to understand the culture and attitudes of the country to which he is accredited, or with which he is dealing. This is necessary if he is to report accurately on the situation there, on the objectives of the foreign government concerned, and on the constraints under which it is operating. He has to meet, to entertain and to get to know people so as to identify those who matter in decision-making and those who are the most reliable sources of information, and if possible to win their confidence. In order to influence foreign opinion in favour of his own country, he must be able to represent that country, and its government, in a way which will generate respect for it as a worthwhile partner, whether commercially, politically or militarily. Moreover, the diplomat needs to have the strength of character to be able to give his own government unpalatable advice when its policies are perceived as unfriendly, or when its objectives are either unattainable or patently unjust.

This latter obligation is complicated by the perception—not entirely unjustified—that diplomats are liable to acquire an undue sympathy for the country in which they are serving. Its association with foreigners does not endear the diplomatic profession to the public, and this aversion is sometimes shared, at a more sophisticated level, by the diplomat's political masters. Diplomats cannot advise their own government on how best to promote its objectives unless they understand and report truthfully on the motives of the foreign government with which they are dealing. Although ministers recognise this intellectually, they find it frustrating. Preoccupied with their own pressing domestic problems, they tend to regard the domestic constraints affecting foreign governments as unwelcome and unnecessary complications. From this point, it is a short step to thinking that those who explain such constraints are somehow endorsing them. The inclination to shoot the messenger who brings the bad news is, after all, part of human nature. Lady Thatcher, for example, who was unfailingly courteous to her diplomatic officials individually, made no secret of her belief that the Foreign Office took too much account of foreign interests and was always looking for premature compromises when it should have been driving hard bargains.

This view of the diplomat as someone more noted for smoothness and readiness to compromise than for toughness and honesty has been

The French Embassy in New Delhi

with us for a long time, as Macaulay's observation demonstrates. It must be admitted that the objectivity diplomats must cultivate can degenerate into a kind of smooth insincerity, just as their primary concern with the governing classes of the countries with which they deal can anaesthetize them to the sufferings of the poor, insulate them from the views of 'ordinary people', and generally give them ideas above their station.

Not that diplomatic life abroad is without its hardships, climatic and otherwise. These include health risks, separation from children, and sometimes physical threat. In the concluding years of the last century, one British ambassador was blown up by the IRA and another was shot on the steps of his embassy. The Deputy High Commissioner in Bombay was assassinated by Abu Nidal terrorists shortly before I arrived in Delhi, and at least three other British diplomats in different parts of the world have been kidnapped and held hostage at different times. The diplomat abroad is one of a close-knit group of compatriots which is dedicated to a common purpose, and whose members (and their spouses) are heavily dependent on one another for companionship and support, especially in smaller and more remote posts. The diplomatic life is thus a community life, with plenty of

opportunity for the exercise of generosity, mutual help and forbearance.

Diplomatic Virtues

The late Sir Harold Nicolson, one of the few British diplomats to have theorized about the practice of diplomacy, offered the following catalogue of qualities to be looked for in his ideal diplomat:

> Truth, accuracy, calm, patience, good temper, modesty and loyalty …. But, the reader may object, you have forgotten intelligence, hospitality, charm, industry, courage and even tact. I have not forgotten them. I have taken them for granted.[2]

Nicolson, no doubt, had his tongue a little in his cheek when compiling his list, and he probably saw nothing specifically Christian about it. It is nevertheless striking to see how many of the qualities he identifies either express Christian virtues or are consistent with them. How do they work out in practice?

The tact which Nicolson takes for granted is more than just smoothness and urbanity. It requires a mixture of sympathy and understanding for the other side's point of view in a negotiation, and an ability to stick both to the truth and to the essentials of one's own government's position. Instructions are not always comfortable to carry out, nor are negotiating positions comfortable to defend. Nothing is easier than to allow one's personal sympathy with the views of a foreign interlocutor to blunt the force of one's instructions and weaken the position of one's own government—or even to indicate by nods and winks that that position is unreasonable. A diplomat who behaves like this, except in the direst circumstances, may make himself more acceptable to his hosts, but he is likely to be guilty of dishonesty.

At the same time, however, diplomats are not automatons: they have to use their judgment. There can be occasions when it is right to tone down, or even to ignore, one's instructions. The speed of modern communications now makes it possible for diplomats overseas to contribute to the formulation of their instructions or to query them if they seem unreasonable. Even so, it is not wholly unknown for

[2] Harold Nicolson, *Diplomacy* (London: Butterworth, 1939), 126.

instructions to be so fatuous or misconceived as to be patently counter-productive. In such circumstances the recipient should remember the dictum attributed to Lord Palmerston:

> The only use of a plenipotentiary is to disobey his instructions. A clerk or messenger would do if it is necessary strictly to follow them.

But any diplomat who disobeys or fudges instructions simply because they are uncomfortable is compromising professional integrity and letting down the government whose mouthpiece he is supposed to be.

Modesty and loyalty, which rank high on Nicolson's list, are also integral to the practice of diplomacy, as is patience. The diplomat has always to remember that he is the servant, not the rival, of the elected politician. His business, for the most part, is to work as part of a team. An ambassador's successes are almost always those of the mission as a whole, rather than his or her own personal achievements. The diplomat has to bring all his skill and intelligence to bear on the shaping of small bricks to be fitted into buildings—buildings for which others (normally the politicians) will take the credit. And he must always remember that the access he may enjoy to great people is afforded him because those people want to know the views of his government, not because they like the diplomat personally or value his own opinions, however cogent those may be. A certain humility is therefore in order.

The diplomat works as part of a team

Loyalty and Conscience

Loyalty, of course, has its limits, and a discussion of those limits raises the issue of conscience. All members of the public service owe loyalty to the government they serve, and are required to implement its policies as well as to help shape them. This obligation weighs particularly heavily on diplomats, who have to defend and justify their government's actions even when they may personally consider these actions to be mistaken or unwise (just as barristers must make the best case for a client whom privately they believe to be guilty). If the public servant judges a particular policy which he or she must directly implement to be unequivocally and gravely immoral, conscience will leave no alternative but resignation. But the person who is determined to see a moral problem in every issue is probably just as out of place in

the public service as the pragmatist concerned solely with what seems expedient. As long as they judge the government they serve to be both democratic and fundamentally decent, public servants will be disposed to give it the benefit of the doubt.

When issues arise which undoubtedly pose questions of conscience—for example the invasion of Iraq—it is not always easy to distinguish a policy that has unacceptable moral consequences from one that is simply unwise or mistaken, or to foresee where a mistaken policy may lead. Many young German diplomats were persuaded to stay on when Hitler came to power on the grounds that the country would have even greater need of public servants of probity under the Nazis than it did before, only to find, as time went on, that they became inextricably implicated in immoral policies.

The language in which policy decisions in international affairs are discussed is normally prudential rather than moral: the question is usually whether a given course of action promotes the national (or governmental) interest rather than whether it is right or wrong. This can make it difficult to inject moral considerations into the debate. But in my own career, I think the only issue which confronted me with a serious *moral* dilemma was the policy of nuclear deterrence. People

The US Embassy in Dublin

whose views I respected took opposite sides, though I myself came to think that the policy was justified.

In international relations the border between what is unwise and what is immoral is seldom clear cut. Loyalty to one's government and one's colleagues is of critical importance; but the diplomat must recognise that, in the last resort, it has to be conditional. He or she must exercise discernment on those rare occasions when loyalty may have to be withheld.

Patience, Confidence and Truth

Alongside loyalty comes patience. This too is essential, because resolving international disputes by agreement is a painfully slow business—often a matter of decades rather than years. Diplomats have to accept that their own small contribution will probably have been long forgotten by the time the process is brought to completion. For example, the 1998 Belfast or 'Good Friday' Agreement between Britain, the Republic of Ireland, and the political parties in Northern Ireland was the culmination of a process which included the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, and which arguably began with the abortive Sunningdale Agreement of 1973.[3]

Nicolson rightly highlights the related qualities of truth and accuracy. There is a popular view that the role of a diplomat is to be secretive and evasive, a master of the art of finding phrases which mean different things to different people. In reality, nothing could be more disastrous in negotiating an agreement than this kind of trickery or fudging, which is bound to be exposed the moment the agreement is put to the test. Good agreements depend on precision, and therefore on truthfulness. Under the stress of a difficult negotiation, however, this principle tends to be pushed aside. The 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement, for example, affirmed that there would be no change in 'the status of Northern Ireland' against the wishes of a majority of its inhabitants, without specifying that its status was within the United Kingdom. This accommodated Irish constitutional concerns, but it enraged Unionists. The 1998 Belfast Agreement was even more fatally imprecise on the central issue of the decommissioning of IRA weapons.

[3] Seamus Mallon referred to the 1998 Agreement as 'Sunningdale for slow learners'.

It was formulated in such a way as to enable Sinn Fein to claim that there was no obligation for the IRA to lay down its arms within a specified period, while at the same time permitting the British Prime Minister to win the support of the Unionist community by claiming that the Agreement required prompt decommissioning.

Defenders of the Agreement argue that without this crucial fudge there would have been no Agreement, and that, for all its flaws, the Agreement has brought a precarious peace to Northern Ireland. It has laid the foundations for a more stable future in the province, and has brought relations between Britain and the Republic into closer harmony than at any time since Irish independence. Critics point to the IRA's continued procrastination over the comprehensive decommissioning of its weapons and cessation of criminal activity; to the Unionist community's deep disillusionment and loss of trust in the good faith of the British Government; and to the polarization of opinion within Northern Ireland which has so far made the reintroduction of devolved government there impossible. Only time will tell whether it would have been better to have forgone agreement for the sake of precision and truth, in the hope of achieving a less ambiguous agreement later.

The key quality in a diplomatic negotiating partner is that he should generate confidence: confidence in his own good faith, and in that of his government He must generate confidence that he is accurately reflecting the views and concerns of his government and not offering more than he can subsequently deliver—truth again. Conversely, the negotiator must have the courage to state the facts honestly to his own political masters (who may be reluctant to hear them); and he must have the skill and tact to do so in a way which will win reluctant acquiescence rather than explosive rejection. And while discretion is obviously important, nothing is achieved by the diplomat who is so afraid of being betrayed into an indiscretion that his utterances are confined to banalities. Diplomacy is more about communication than suppression.

Diplomats must generate confidence

The need for truthfulness and accuracy is not confined to the negotiation of agreements. Although ultimate responsibility for policy decisions lies with the politician, it is the official who has to set out the facts and frame the recommendation on which the politician's judgment will be based. If the diplomat gets the facts wrong or presents them in a slapdash way, the whole process of decision-making will be

vitiated. But there are many different ways of presenting the truth. Edmund Burke's phrase 'economy with the truth' has acquired a negative connotation, but it is an essential requirement for the conduct of business. No submission to a busy minister, no report on a complex international situation, no record of a conversation, can tell the whole story down to the last detail. If it did, no one would ever read it. Rigorous selection is required; and yet the result must still do full justice to its subject.

This is not simply a question of being able to write a good précis. The writer must constantly have in mind the attitude and preoccupations, both governmental and personal, of the recipient. Otherwise a truthful account may be ignored, or a sound recommendation disregarded. Good judgment is essential to the work of the negotiator, the analyst and the drafter alike. And not only good judgment, but also the kind of imaginative sensitivity to the concerns of an interlocutor which falls under the heading of tact: another dimension of *discretio.*

Humanity and Depth

Perhaps, therefore, it is not as far-fetched as it may appear to see similarities between the role of the diplomat and that of the monk. Both are members of a community. Both are bearers of a message which is not their own. In the case of monks, this is a divine message; in the case of diplomats, more prosaically, it is the views of the government they represent. Both are valued less for themselves than for the message they bring. And they earn respect to the extent that they are faithful to that message, present it convincingly, and do not dilute or distort it with messages or opinions of their own. Both need discernment. Both need tact, sympathy, honesty and skill to get their message across.

Initiative and a capacity for original thought are not mentioned in Nicolson's list, but they should certainly be included. So, needless to say, should a sense of humour. Equally important is an interest in people as people and a liking for them, with all their differences, quirks and weaknesses. Diplomacy is a gregarious profession, and no one can understand human motivation who does not enjoy the company of other human beings and feel an instinctive—I might say a Christian—sympathy with them.

By the same token, good diplomats will be people of cultivated interests. While being aware and proud of what is good in their own culture, they will be eager to learn from the culture of the people among whom they are serving, and to respond generously to it. For without the sympathy which this eagerness generates, no real understanding or mutual confidence, let alone affection, will ever be established. It seems to me that this sympathy with other people and sensitivity to them is closely related to the sympathy and sensitivity which St Benedict looks for in Chapter 64 of his Rule, when he requires the Abbot to 'reflect on the discretion (*discretio*) of Jacob' and 'so attune everything that there be both scope for the strong to want more and the weak not to turn tail'.

The final quality to be hoped for is the most elusive, and in a sense it subsumes all the others. I will call it 'depth'. By depth, I mean a feeling for history, an awareness of the importance of wisdom and reflection, and a mistrust of the glib, the ephemeral and the superficial. I mean also a richness of interests and wide human sympathies; firm but unobtrusive moral principles combined with the ability to hold them against the tide of popular opinion; an ability to moderate legitimate ambition not only with sensitivity to others' needs and feelings, but also with sufficient detachment and objectivity for worldly success to appear ultimately as of only secondary importance.

Some of the key elements in what I think St Benedict meant by *discretio* are here. But there are also echoes of everything that his Rule, as a model for the Christian life, has contributed to the development of European civilisation over the past fifteen centuries. Whether individually or collectively, these elements are not the exclusive prerogative of diplomats; but the practice of diplomacy affords ample scope for the exercise of all of them.

Sir David Goodall was educated by the Benedictines at Ampleforth. After Oxford and two years in the British Army, he joined the Diplomatic Service, retiring in 1991 as British High Commissioner to India. He was subsequently Chairman of the Leonard Cheshire Foundation (Britain's largest disability charity), and is currently Chairman of the Governors of Heythrop College, University of London.

TRADITION, SPIRITUAL DIRECTION, AND SUPERVISION

Brian Noble

'I DON'T KNOW HOW I'D MANAGE without my spiritual director, my counsellor and my supervisor.' When a colleague said this to me some years ago, my first reaction was to panic, since at the time I had neither a counsellor nor even a spiritual director, let alone a pastoral supervisor. But, once I got beyond that reaction, I began to wonder. Was I really being so irresponsible in trying to minister without this trio of support persons in place? And if so, how was it that we had survived down the centuries, given that only spiritual direction can be documented as an ancient and well-established practice?

Counselling as a profession in its own right has developed with the growth of psychology in the twentieth century, and supervision has followed in its wake. I do not want in any way to deny the benefits that counselling and supervision have brought us. My aim is only to suggest that they are less new than they seem. In the last century or so, counselling and supervision have emerged as distinct activities, with their own aims and skills, and with professional codifications. But what they are about has never been totally absent from Christian practice. Christian spiritual direction has always been given within the community, and within an overall vision of what life is for. In a Christian culture, this supervisory context could remain tacit and unacknowledged. If we are to understand properly the enrichment which the modern development of supervision has brought us, we need to state more explicitly this wider Christian vision and situate the technical wisdom of modern psychology within this context.

Common-Sense Wisdom

Much that is regarded as essential in counselling must surely have been operative for as long as human beings have been around. Central to all counselling, irrespective of theory, is a concern for the other, supported

The Way, 44/2 (April 2005),105-112

by capacities for listening and for empathy, by a degree of objectivity, and by an ability to help the other grow in self-understanding. Age-old sayings such as 'a trouble shared is a trouble halved' express the effectiveness of such basic human involvement. The wealth of psychological insight that is now available has certainly improved counselling techniques and the expected outcome of counselling. It has also given counselling a status in its own right. But from time immemorial what we now call 'counselling' has, at least in rudimentary fashion, always taken place in friendships, in family relationships, in spiritual direction and in many other informal encounters. And it continues to do so even now.

Something similar might be said about supervision. In the textbooks, supervision is understood as the practice of overseeing, guiding and assessing the relationship between the client and the helper. The relationship may occur in ordinary pastoral care, in counselling, or indeed in spiritual direction. A standard reference book speaks of the supervisor standing

> … at the centre of a triangle which involves the needs and demands of (a) the agency (counselling centre or church etc.), (b) the student (counsellor, therapist), and (c) the client.[1]

Such formal third-party involvement is a comparatively recent development even in the counselling world. But, just as informal counselling has always been around, surely there have also been informal mechanisms of supervision. People have always consulted a third party on aspects of what has occurred during their ministry. In particular, they may well have explored how they themselves have been affected by their encounters with others, and how such effects may in turn be influencing the process as it continues—all of which are central to supervision as we now understand it.

Moreover, there is an element of supervision even when there is no third-party involvement. For something akin to supervision can emerge from the accepted values and principles according to which the care is being given. These parameters represent an inbuilt, implicit form of supervision. Furthermore, even when supervision is formalised through

[1] John P. Millar, 'Pastoral Supervision', in *A Dictionary of Pastoral Care*, edited by Alastair V. Campbell (London: SPCK, 1987), 272-273, here 272.

the involvement of a third party, their agreed values and principles surely provide the criteria by which the progress of the counselling can be assessed.

The point remains valid, I think, within the specific context of spiritual direction. Supervision for spiritual directors is a comparatively recent development—even though Ignatius did recommend some more formal third-party involvement for those learning to give the Exercises.[2] But elements of supervision were, surely, always operative. Quite apart from informal third-party consultation, there was a degree of supervision arising from the very nature of the activity, from what spiritual direction is about.

The director is there to assist in the growth of another's relationship with God. That simple formulation already says much about the relationship between director and directee. For example, the director is there not to tell, not to order, not to dominate, but to assist in what is essentially a matter between God and the other. The relationship between director and directee is at the service of that relationship with God. The fact that spiritual direction exists at all expresses a belief in God and in the possibility of a human relationship with God. Such beliefs set parameters which offer a degree of inbuilt supervision. Perhaps Ignatius' Principle and Foundation is there as much for the giver of the Exercises as for the receiver. It offers a clear 'super-vision', expressing the faith according to which both director and directee are operating.

Spiritual direction expresses convictions about God's action

'Religion' and 'Spirituality'

This brings us to the important issue of the relationship between religion and spirituality. It seems to be increasingly common today to consider the two quite separately, especially when religion is equated with institutional religion. But perhaps there is need here for caution. There simply cannot be a serious involvement in education, a coherent practice of teaching, without an underpinning philosophy of education that includes at least an implicit view of what it is to be human. By the same token, there cannot be serious involvement in spirituality, coherent spiritual practice, without a view of the nature and purpose

[2] *Constitutions* 4.8.E [409].

'The Bible … that would be in self-help'

of human existence. Without some such background, the spiritual journey is directionless, and talk of spiritual growth is meaningless. Hence spirituality *depends* on religion, because it is within the beliefs and teachings of the great religions that such foundational questions are addressed. Thus, any tendency to set up spirituality in opposition to religion would seem unwise and misguided—all the more so when a religion claims to be articulating not merely a particular philosophy, but a revelation from God.

There are obviously many reasons why it has become so attractive to suppose that there is a great gulf between religion and spirituality. When faith's philosophical underpinning (whether real or supposed) is called into question, faith needs to become more rooted in personal experience. Society has become increasingly secular, increasingly less supportive of a faith-vision and a religious way of life. But perhaps Roman Catholics have felt this pressure particularly acutely. The dominance of doctrine, the importance given to orthodoxy, the centrality of the liturgy—these characteristic features of Catholicism have all too easily led to an outward observance which has left

unfulfilled deeper and more personal needs. And when this vigorous corporate life fails to resonate in any meaningful way with the wider culture, we can easily be tempted to think in terms of religion being public and hollow while spirituality is personal and authentic.

There is, obviously, an element of discovery, of growth and process, in the spiritual life which goes far beyond mere knowledge of the catechism. Anthony D'Mello made the point memorably:

> To a visitor who claimed he had no need
> to search for Truth
> because he found it
> in the beliefs of his religion
> the Master said:
>
> 'There was once a student
> who never became a mathematician
> because he blindly believed the answers he found
> at the back of his maths textbook
> —and, ironically, the answers were correct.'[3]

Clearly the road map is no substitute for the journey. But the map has an important and significant place. The maps for the spiritual life provided by doctrine and liturgy reflect the insights of others who have already made the journey. They have a crucial role in guiding us, and without them, perhaps, our journey is simply impossible. The spiritual journey will inevitably be personal, but it can never be solitary, purely private.

The element of mutual dependence in an authentic spiritual life contrasts sharply with the current dominance of individualism in our society. Undoubtedly this individualism is another factor encouraging us to think of religion and spirituality as somehow separate, and of spirituality as something to be pursued not as an essential part of religion, but as an alternative to it. Against this, we might do well to remember the trenchant claim of Jonathan Sacks, the Chief Rabbi, in Britain, published in a major national newspaper:

> The great religions are more than spirituality. They pose the question: how do we translate our private experiences into the

[3] *One Minute Wisdom* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1985), 132.

> public world we share and make? How do we turn our intimations of eternity into a more gracious order of acts, relationships and institutions? How do we escape not from but into reality? How do we move from soul to society? That is why, while spirituality changes our mood, religion changes our life.
>
> Yes, there is much positive about our search for spirituality, but there is also something escapist, shallow and self-indulgent. Just as street protest is the attempt to achieve the results of politics without the hard work of politics, so the current cult of spirituality is the attempt to achieve the results of religion without the disciplines, codes and commitments of religion. That is not good news.[4]

Spirituality and Authenticity

It is in this light that we can appreciate Ronald Rolheiser's account of what he calls the four non-negotiable essentials for an authentic twenty-first-century Christian spirituality. Drawing on Matthew 6, Rolheiser identifies three key activities named in Jesus' teaching on discipleship: prayer, fasting and almsgiving. He then spells out, in the light of Jesus' wider teaching, what each of these might amount to. Prayer should include not only prayer on one's own but also prayer in common. Fasting involves the keeping of the commandments, and the asceticism 'demanded by living a life of joy'. Almsgiving implies a commitment to justice as well as to charity.[5] On the basis of all this, Rolheiser lists his non-negotiables:

- the practice of private prayer and a commitment to personal moral integrity;
- a serious involvement with issues of social justice;
- what he calls mellowness of heart and spirit;
- an involvement in community as a constitutive element of true worship.

[4] *The Times* (24 August 2002); see also http://www.chiefrabbi.org/articles/credo/august2002.html.
[5] Ronald Rolheiser, *Seeking Spirituality* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1998), 51.

For Rolheiser, all four are essential for a contemporary spirituality. To the extent that any one of the four is neglected, one's spirituality is out of kilter.

But, for our present purpose, the interesting point in Rolheiser's account is the insistence, implicit throughout, on the inescapable importance of activities closely associated with 'religion': involvement with a community, communal worship, adherence to a common moral code, and commitment to the wider world through a concern for social justice. He is at once challenging the tendency to separate spirituality and religion, and also, more importantly, pointing out the implicit supervision in matters spiritual which the practice of religion can and surely does offer.

It would be foolhardy not to welcome the enrichment which recent developments in counselling and supervision have brought to spiritual direction. But we also need to recognise that commitment to a religious tradition, rooted in Scripture, has provided a form of supervision in the spiritual direction relationship—albeit without being named as such, and without formal third-party involvement. And surely it is this commitment which is distinctively characteristic, both of Christian spiritual direction itself, and of supervision in such direction.

Many who come our way feel themselves to be on a solitary journey. For such people, one of the fruits of Christian spiritual direction will be a growing ability to see their experience within the tradition that has been handed on to us, and thus in time to become more deeply rooted. Certainly we have much to gain from formal supervision of the kind that has been developed in the therapeutic professions. But the Christian tradition itself also provides an element of supervision—often implicit, but indispensable if spiritual direction

and other Christian ministries are to retain their specific character. This we need to acknowledge, maintain and cherish.[6]

Brian Noble has worked in parish ministry, as a university chaplain in the north of England, and as a teacher of pastoral theology at the Beda College in Rome. Since 1995, he has been Roman Catholic Bishop of Shrewsbury, and is currently Chairman of the Spirituality Committee of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

[6] This article is an edited version of an address given to the Spiritual Exercises Network Conference at Swanwick, Derbyshire, in August 2004.

OSCAR ROMERO, RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

J. Matthew Ashley

An article marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of Oscar Romero's martyrdom, 24 March 1980.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO ARCHBISHOP OSCAR ROMERO was shot dead. He was celebrating Mass in the chapel of the Divine Providence Hospital, in the grounds of which he had his residence. It was no surprise that he died in this way. Throughout the three years of his tenure as Archbishop of San Salvador he had spoken out consistently on behalf of the poor majority of Salvadorans as they were being subjected to an escalating and brutal campaign of repression and terror—a campaign mounted by the security forces and right-wing death squads. He had looked critically at the turbulent social and political conditions of his country as it lurched towards civil war, and had pinpointed the common factor causing the unrest among the people at large, the insurrectionary violence from the left, and the savage retaliatory response from the right. The root of all three, he insisted, lay in the systemic injustice that left the vast majority of Salvadorans without jobs, without access to the barest essentials of life, and without hope that they or their children could ever enjoy a better life. Faced with this situation, he believed that the chief task required of him by his episcopal vocation was to shed the light of Christ on 'even the most hideous caverns of the human person: torture, jail, plunder, want, chronic illness'.[1] For that reason he named names: the security forces; the presidential and judicial branches of the government; and the wealthy 'fourteen families' who had run the

[1] Oscar Romero, *The Violence of Love: The Pastoral Wisdom of Archbishop Oscar Romero*, edited by James Brockman (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 198. The source is a homily preached on 23 October 1979.

The Way, 44/2 (April 2005), 113-133

country with impunity for so long. It was because of all this that he was murdered.[2]

If, by March 1980, no one was surprised by how Romero died, many had nevertheless been astonished by how he had lived in those last three years. Up until 1977 he had been a rather timid, conservative prelate. He had identified himself with the structures and interests of an institutional Church in El Salvador, and therefore also with the wealthy oligarchy and with the military that enforced the oligarchy's rule. In his last three years he was different. He was a fiery prophet. Deeply in love with his people, he confronted the ruling elite even at grave risk to the very institution over which he presided. The Church's facilities were bombed; more seriously, its priests and lay leaders were deported, tortured or murdered. What changed?

Many have asked this question, and it is not uncommon to read of a 'conversion', often connected with the murder of Romero's friend, the Jesuit priest and pastor Rutilio Grande, on 12 March 1977, barely three weeks into Romero's tenure as Archbishop.[3] Romero, however, did not like calling what had happened to him a 'conversion', preferring instead to speak of 'an evolution of the same desire that I have always had to be faithful to what God asks of me':

> … and if earlier I gave the impression of being more 'spiritual', it was because I sincerely believed that in that way I responded to the gospel, because the circumstances of my ministry were not as demanding as those when I became Archbishop.[4]

What is beyond question is Romero's commitment to the Church as an institution, which he served—often overworking himself to the point of exhaustion—as priest, as Auxiliary Bishop of San Salvador, as Bishop of the neighbouring diocese of Santiago de María, and as Archbishop of San Salvador. Romero's commitment to the institutional Church found particular focus in a dedication to the

[2] The UN Truth Commission has established that Colonel Roberto D'Aubisson, a member of one of the 'families' and founder of the Arena party, was responsible for Romero's death.

[3] Romero's auxiliary and successor as Archbishop, Arturo Rivera y Damas, who went with Romero to view Grande's body in Aguilares, is one of those who endorsed calling this change a 'conversion'. See his preface to Jesús Delgado, *Oscar A. Romero: Biografía* (Madrid: Ediciones Paulinas, 1986), 3.

[4] Letter to Cardinal Sebastiano Baggio, quoted in Douglas Marcouiller, 'Archbishop with an Attitude: Oscar Romero's *Sentir con la Iglesia*', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 35/3 (May 2003), 23.

papacy and its magisterium. This dedication has led his archiepiscopal vicar, Ricardo Urioste, to name him a 'martyr for the magisterium'. Romero's death, Urioste contends, was a result of his fidelity to papal social teachings.

Yet this cannot be the whole story. Romero was certainly aware of the Church's social teachings long before his 'conversion' in 1977, and of how the Latin American Catholic Bishops had appropriated them for Latin America at Medellín in 1968. But Romero's acceptance of these teachings had been abstract and theoretical. He had often shown himself suspicious, not to say hostile, when it came to their implementation in concrete circumstances, even when this implementation was supported by his predecessor and ecclesial superior, Archbishop Luis Chávez y González.[5] While warm and compassionate in one-to-one encounters, he had seemed to many aloof and stubborn in his exercise of ecclesial office. Though fiercely loyal to the Church universal, he had been unable to appreciate the local Church, and had appeared quite deaf to observations and criticisms from others. One observer spoke of him as having 'his head in the clouds, away from reality, up in the trees like avocados'.[6] But as Archbishop, Romero listened carefully to others,

[5] For example, in 1973 Romero wrote a stinging rebuke of the Jesuits' reconfiguration of their secondary school, the Externado San José, in line with the principles of Medellín. Romero was instrumental in the Salvadoran Bishops' Conference's removal of the Jesuits from supervision of the national seminary in 1972, again because of their implementation of reforms based on Vatican II and Medellín. He also attacked certain 'radical Christologies', intending primarily the work of the Jesuit liberation theologian, Jon Sobrino. See James Brockman, *Romero: A Life* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1989), 41-42, 48-49, 51-52, 60.

[6] María López Vigil, *Memories in Mosaic*, translated by Kathy Ogle (London: CAFOD, 2000), 54.

particularly to the poor. He was persuaded that the Spirit was to be found and respected everywhere in the Church, especially among simple believers, with their wisdom and with their knowledge of their own reality. He was so different after 1977. What changed?

It is perhaps inevitable that we cannot answer this question fully. It is not given to us to see into the deepest recesses of the human heart; we must stop short at the boundaries of that inner sanctuary where, as Ignatius reminds us, God deals directly with the human soul (Exx 15). Yet perhaps the fact that we cannot easily pinpoint the change tells us something important about the kind of change it was. Romero's conversion was not one that could be described in juridical terms, a conversion from unbelief to belief, or from manifest and serious sin to repentance and amendment. Rather he went through the kind of ongoing conversion that the masters of the spiritual life tell us is a constitutive part of the Christian life *in statu viae*. This is the judgment of the Archbishop of Tegucigalpa, Oscar Cardinal Rodríguez. Rodríguez glosses Romero's own statement that his 'conversion' was really just 'an evolution of the same desire that I have always had to be faithful to what God asks of me', with the observation that this 'is the natural "evolution" of those who live in a permanent state of conversion, in total openness to God and neighbour'.[7] However deep and ineradicable Romero's commitment to the Church was, this state of openness was more profound. As Jon Sobrino, a Jesuit who knew and worked with Romero, puts it:

The change in Romero emerged from his constant desire to be faithful

> The *ultimate ultimacy* (it is worth being redundant here) of God relativises and locates all the rest, including the Church …. Monsignor Romero was a creature before God, naked and unconditionally before God; and he let God be God, however God wanted to make Godself present to him, and wherever God would take him.[8]

[7] Oscar Cardinal Rodríguez, 'Monsignor Romero: A Bishop for the Third Millennium', in *Monsignor Romero: A Bishop for the Third Millennium*, edited by Robert Pelton (Notre Dame: U. of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 19.

[8] See Jon Sobrino's 'Prólogo', in Douglas Marcouiller, *El Sentir con la Iglesia de Monseñor Romero* (Santander: Sal Terrae, 2004), 27, 28. Translation mine.

Romero was a churchman, first and last; his ecclesial motto was *Sentir con la Iglesia*, 'to be of one mind with the Church'.[9] Yet this commitment to the Church was not inflexible or rigid, because he had a relationship to God that was more fundamental still.

Among sociologists of religion in the United States, as well as in popular parlance, it is common to make this kind of distinction in terms of 'spirituality' and 'religion'. 'Spirituality' refers to a person's most intimate and personal relationship to God (or to some other version of 'the sacred'); 'religion' refers to the shared cultural frameworks, with their associated institutional structures, that publicly claim to express and manage this relationship. The distinction is unstable at best and, given the protean character of its terms, often rife with ambiguity. Yet the phenomenon to which it refers is undeniable, as astute observers such as Robert Wuthnow and Wade Clark Roof have established.[10] There are a substantial number of people who claim to be spiritual without being committed to a religion, and others who seem to go through the motions of religious commitment without being nourished by a genuinely spiritual experience. Spirituality and religion are often seen as mutually exclusive, or at best as uneasy associates.

In what follows, I want to suggest that this kind of distinction between spirituality and religion sheds light on Romero's 'conversion'. If we take Romero's allegiance to the Church as religion, and the 'ultimate ultimacy' of his relationship to God to be spirituality, then the change in the former (more precisely, the way that he lived out this allegiance as churchman) was shaped by the latter. At the same time, however, Romero models powerfully the connections that will always be present when religion and spirituality are both healthy. Romero's case undermines the strong distinction between spirituality and religion that is often assumed theoretically and lived out practically in the United States. It would have been unthinkable to Romero to live a 'churchless spirituality'. His spirituality was creatively expressed through his religion. Far from competing with his spirituality, far from

[9] For an extended analysis of this element of Romero's spirituality, also of Ignatian provenance, see Marcouiller, 'Archbishop with an Attitude'.

[10] See Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950s* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1998), and Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999).

being a 'necessary evil' to be tolerated, Romero's religion was the necessary framework within which his spirituality flourished.

Spirituality and Religion

In a recent article, Sandra Schneiders has analyzed the differences between 'spirituality' and 'religion' as they appear on the North American scene, as well as the different ways in which they interact, which range from mutual indifference, via competition, to at least the possibility of partnership.[11] Her exploration of the distinction provides a valuable framework for understanding how Oscar Romero was both 'spiritual' and 'religious'. In Schneiders' view, spirituality is a constitutive dimension of human being:

> … the capacity of persons to transcend themselves through knowledge and love, to reach beyond themselves in relationship to others.

Usually, however, 'spirituality' denotes a mature expression of this capacity:

> … a relatively developed relationship to self, others, world, and the Transcendent, whether the last is called God or designated by some other term.[12]

A mature spirituality is defined by four features:

- it is focused on *personal experience*, having both a passive dimension (experience as something given to me) and an active one (experience as what I construct out of the linguistic, symbolic and ritual resources available to me);
- it requires *conscious involvement in a project*—it is not episodic or sporadic, but rather entails consistent and extended commitment to a certain set of practices;
- it is *life-integrative*, defining in large measure how one relates to oneself, to other persons, and to the world in general;

[11] Sandra Schneiders, 'Religion vs. Spirituality: A Contemporary Conundrum', *Spiritus*, 3/2 (Fall 2003), 163-185.
[12] Schneiders, 'Religion vs. Spirituality', 165.

- it is orientated towards a transcendent *source of ultimate meaning and value* (variously construed), which one takes to be foundational to all that is.[13]

A religion, too, is concerned with relationships and with ultimate reality, whether or not this is to be conceptualised as God. But there is more to religion than individual commitment. Religions are 'cultural systems'. They are 'organized in particular patterns of creed, code and cult'.[14] A given religion has its historical origin in a particular revelatory experience. An experience of this kind is, as we have seen, also at the heart of a given spirituality. To the degree that it fully incarnates itself in the historical and cultural milieu in which it occurs, such an experience can form or reshape a religious tradition. This gives the spirituality greater stability and broader availability. However, if the religious tradition and the spirituality it makes available are to outlast the originating generation, that tradition must, at least to some extent, become an institutionalised religion, with a defined cult, creed and code. Moreover, it must develop structures of authority for interpreting and enforcing its beliefs and practices, and for passing them on to subsequent generations.

There is more to religion than individual commitment

For Schneiders, the ideal relationship between spirituality and religion is a creative partnership:

> … *institutionalisation* as an organized religion is what makes *spirituality* as a daily experience of participation in a *religious tradition* possible for the majority of people.[15]

She contends that mutual indifference or hostility between religion and spirituality is ultimately destructive to both.

On these terms, if spirituality fails to find a place in an organized religion, it dissipates into an amorphous cultural ethos and is absorbed into other cultural formations. Lacking the checks and balances offered by institutional structures, 'uninstitutionalised spiritualities' also run the risk of extremism and instability, or of being ghettoized

[13] Schneiders, 'Religion vs. Spirituality', 167.
[14] Schneiders, 'Religion vs. Spirituality', 169.
[15] Schneiders, 'Religion vs. Spirituality', 171.

into 'lifestyle enclaves of the like-minded', with little leverage or impact on the broader culture (an all too common feature of spirituality in North America). I would add that, without *religious* institutionalisation, spirituality inevitably falls victim to the alternative institutionalisation offered by the culture industry in the United States. It is shaped by the forces of the marketplace. As the flood of books, cassettes, workshops, films and lectures on 'spirituality' proves, it is, in these terms, tremendously successful. But we would do well to heed Wuthnow's caution: 'Spirituality has become big business, and big business finds many of its best markets by putting things in small, easy-to-consume packages'.[16]

If, however, an institutionalised religion loses connection with the spirituality arising from the revelatory experience at its origins, it will either die out altogether, or survive only in a fossilised form that makes an absolute of the institution. It will end up making normative claims based more and more on coercion, and less and less on the transformative power of the revelatory experience that is made available by its traditions and appropriated by individuals through their

[16] Wuthnow, *After Heaven*, 132. For further reflections on this theme, see Vince Miller, *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture* (New York: Continuum, 2004).

spiritualities. The result is too often an alienation of believers and non-believers alike, not only from the particular religion in question, but from religions (as institutions with normative creeds, etc.) in general. If it is enough to be 'spiritual', then why bother with religion? At the same time, the institution suffers an erosion, not just of membership (although often 'spiritual' people continue to assert nominal membership in a religion), but also of the social capital that might enable it to influence (or, to use theological language, evangelize) its social-cultural milieu.[17] This latter is the scenario being tragically played out in the US Roman Catholic Church today.

Somehow, then, spirituality and religion need to be integrated and brought together in fruitful partnership. What might Romero's spirituality offer in this regard?

Romero's Spirituality

We must first define Romero's spirituality, before using Schneiders' framework to see how it meshed with his commitment to the institutional Church ('religion'). A full description and analysis of his spirituality would exceed the scope of this essay. What we can say is that it was part of the long tradition, going back at least to Augustine, of the *vita mixta*—spiritualities that bring together contemplation and action. We can become a little more specific by noting elements in Romero's biography that point to two important members of this general family of spiritualities. First of all, while he was a member of the diocesan clergy, Romero was trained by Jesuits for much of his priestly formation, and he was profoundly influenced by the Spiritual Exercises. He made the Exercises in their full thirty-day form in the mid-fifties, and continued to make them in the abbreviated form up to the year of his death.[18] Second, Romero's spirituality (and his theology

[17] Wade Clark Roof is optimistic about this development. He points sanguinely to Churches that have 'caught on' to the popularity of spirituality in this culture as examples of how religion can continue to survive in the postmodern cultural milieu. John Coleman sounds (correctly, in my view) a more sombre note about these experiments. See his review of Roof's book in *Spiritus*, 1/1 (Spring 2001), 109-112, especially 111-112.

[18] He made an eight-day retreat a month before he was killed. His notes from that retreat are available, in 'El último retiro espiritual de Monseñor Romero', *Revista latinoamericana de teología*, 13 (January-April 1988). His thirty-day retreat was directed by Miguel Elizondo, one of that remarkable generation of Jesuits who forcefully advocated (and applied) the practice of Ignatian spirituality based on the original documents and practices of the first generation, including directed rather than

for that matter) is most clearly and forcefully expressed in his preaching. This suggests that we can also draw on the Dominican tradition, with its focus on preaching and its ideal of *contemplata aliis tradere*, to understand important elements in Romero's spirituality. Thus, in what follows I present Romero's spirituality as a form of 'contemplation in action', understood first in Dominican and then in Jesuit terms, before returning to the theme of spirituality and religion.

Preaching and Contemplation

It is easy to see in Romero's preaching as Archbishop how he was exemplifying the Dominican ideal, 'handing on to others what one has found in contemplation'. Romero's spirituality of the preached Word included, demanded, a concrete incarnation in his life and ecclesial practice. Romero made the point clear in a homily he preached in 1978, describing a recent visit to Rome during which he had defended his actions and policies as Archbishop:

> I told them: it's easy to preach his teachings theoretically. To follow faithfully the pope's magisterium in theory is very easy. But when you try to live, try to incarnate, try to make reality in the history of

preached retreats. On Elizondo, see Teresa Whitfield, *Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 21-24.

> a suffering people like ours those saving teachings, that is when conflicts arise. Not that I have been unfaithful—never! I think that today I am more faithful than ever, because I experience the trial, the suffering—and the intimate joy—of proclaiming with more than words and lip-service a teaching that I have always believed and loved. I am trying to give it life in this community, which the Lord has entrusted to me ….[19]

And, a year earlier:

> We cannot segregate God's word from the historical reality in which it is proclaimed. It would not then be God's word. It would be history, it would be a pious book, a Bible that is just a book in our library. It becomes God's word because it vivifies, enlightens, contrasts, repudiates, praises what is going on today in this society.[20]

These quotations shed light on Romero's 'conversion'. He was always faithful 'in theory' to the teachings of the magisterium. But he set off on the path to being a 'martyr for the magisterium' when he began incarnating those teachings in Sunday homilies, taking them up in order to vivify, enlighten, contrast, repudiate and praise what was going on in his country. And he did this precisely because of a deeper engagement with the suffering of the people in his Church. This is clear from an answer he gave when asked in Rome by César Jérez, at the time the Jesuit Provincial of Central America, about the change that had happened to him. It is worth quoting at length:

> It's just that we all have our roots, you know …. I was born into a poor family. I've suffered hunger. I know what it's like to work from the time you're a little kid …. When I went to seminary and started my studies, and then they sent me to finish studying here in Rome, I spent years and years absorbed in my books, and I started to forget about where I came from. I started creating another world. When I went back to El Salvador, they made me the Bishop's secretary in San Miguel. I was a parish priest for 23 years there, but I was still buried under paperwork …. Then they sent me to Santiago de María, and I ran into extreme poverty again. Those children that were dying just because of the water they were drinking, those

[19] *The Violence of Love*, 70.
[20] *The Violence of Love*, 14.

> *campesinos*[21] killing themselves in the harvest …. You know Father, when a piece of charcoal has already been lit once, you don't have to blow on it much to get it to flame up again. And everything that happened to us when I got to the archdiocese, and what happened to Father Grande and all … it was a lot. You know how much I admired him. When I saw Rutilio dead, I thought, 'if they killed him for what he was doing, it's my job to go down that same road' …. So yes, I changed. But I also came back home again.[22]

It was direct engagement with people, a coming home again to the concerns of the poor majority of El Salvador, that caused Romero's spirituality to 'flame up again'. Romero always insisted that it was the people of the Church of El Salvador who were the source of his strength and his vision. 'With this people it is not hard to be a good shepherd', he said.[23] If Romero's spirituality was about 'handing on to others' the gifts of contemplation, a crucial way in which he received these gifts was through the people of the Church, God's people:

> With admiration I give thanks to God that so many gifts of the Spirit are present in you, God's people, religious communities, grass-roots church communities, ordinary people, peasants. If I were envious, like the persons in the gospel or in today's first reading, I would say, 'Stop them! Don't let them say anything! Only I, the Bishop, can speak.' No, I have to listen to what the Spirit says through His people. Only then do I receive it from the people and analyze it and, along with the people, turn it into construction of the Church. So it is we must build our Church, respecting the charism of the Bishop, who discerns and who unifies, who brings into one the variety of different charisms. And the hierarchy and priests must respect the grand deposit of faith that the Spirit entrusts to God's people …. When I visit the communities I respect them and I try to give direction to the great spiritual wealth

[21] 'Country people'.

[22] López Vigil, *Memories in Mosaic*, 158-159. Jerez was accompanying Romero and Urioste on Romero's first trip to Rome as Archbishop, when he was defending himself in the face of the controversy stirred up by his forceful dealings with the government after Rutilio Grande's assassination. See Brockman, *Romero*, 19-21. The judgment that he had begun to change already in the diocese of Santiago de María, where he served as Bishop for two years, is confirmed by the testimony of two Passionist priests who worked under him there: Zacarías Diez, Juan Macho, '"*En Santiago de María me topé con la miseria*": *dos años de la vida de Mons. Romero* (1975-1976)' (private Salvadoran publication, no details given).

[23] *The Violence of Love*, 207.

> that I find even in the humblest and simplest of people. This building in harmony is what the Lord asks of us.[24]

Schneiders, as we have seen, suggests that the first element of a mature spirituality is personal experience. For Romero as Archbishop, this was the experience of finding in his people the voice of the Spirit, in their joys, hopes, grief and anguish.[25] The point was, however, to give these fruits back: *aliis tradere*. That entailed a further vitally important element, the interweaving of what he learned from the people with what he learned from Scripture. Pulling together the threads of Scripture with those of 'the events of the week' was an essential goal of Romero's prayer, often achieved in long hours of solitary prayer during the night prior to his Sunday morning homilies.[26] It was not that Romero gave, in a spirit of *noblesse oblige*, a 'spiritual commodity' over which he had exclusive control to those who did not have it. What he gave them, rather, was an invitation and a challenge to experience and to immerse themselves in the presence of God in their midst. He issued this invitation by pressing upon them the intimate connection, indeed the identity, between the God disclosed in Scripture and the God at work among them. The Scripture, he urged on them Sunday after Sunday, served to illuminate God's presence among them, enabling them more surely to find the God whose gratuitous self-gift was the centre of Romero's own spiritual life.

[24] *The Violence of Love*, 201. The Scripture passages from the Sunday lectionary to which he refers are Numbers 11: 25-29 and Mark 9: 37-42, 46-47.

[25] *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 1.

[26] According to one witness, Rafael Urrutia, Romero would meet with advisers to discuss the events of the previous week, which he would always weave into his homily. He would then retire to solitary prayer, sometimes praying from 10 pm until 4 am in preparation for the homily at the 8am Mass in the Cathedral (López Vigil, *Memories in Mosaic*, 225).

Scripture and Discernment

At this point, Romero's spirituality demonstrates some Ignatian features. His use of Scripture follows Ignatius' proposals for the Second Week of the *Spiritual Exercises*. One enters imaginatively into Scripture in order to come to a deeper knowledge of Christ and follow him more deeply. The goal is a correlation of the gospel history with one's own history, in order to facilitate the discernment of the direction one's history ought to take in the future, as changed or ratified by some life-determining choice or 'election'.

Consider in this light the following excerpt from a homily preached on Christmas Eve, 1978:

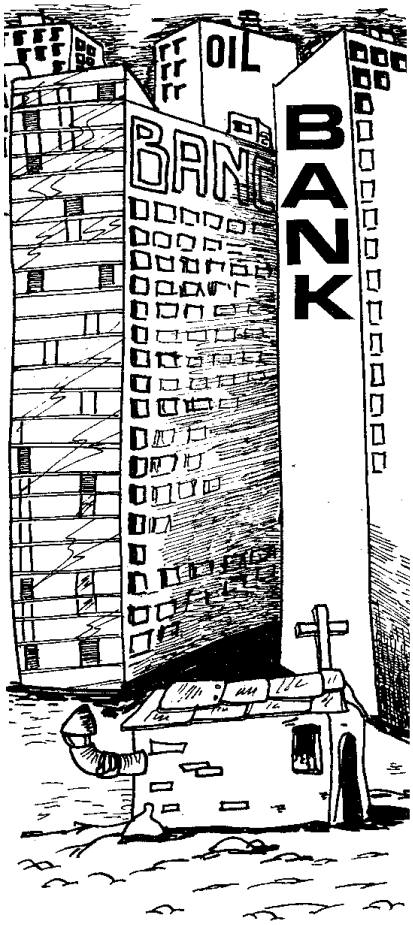
> God keeps on saving in history. And so, in turning once again to the episode of Christ's birth at Bethlehem, we come not to recall Christ's birth twenty centuries ago, but to live that birth here in the twentieth century, this year, in our own Christmas here in El Salvador. By the light of these Bible readings we must continue all the history that God knows eternally, has in his eternal mind, even to the concrete events of our abductions, of our tortures, of our own sad history. That is where we are to find our God.[27]

Romero had received the grace of the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises: a deep sense of sin as real, devastating and death-dealing, and at the same time a grateful recognition that God's salvific response is nevertheless more powerful, more comprehensive. Having had that insight, received that grace, the task is to understand how *we* as a Church are called to participate in the continuation of that salvific response today. Which is also to ask how one finds God in all things, how to be *contemplativus in actione*.

Spirituality, Maturity and Church

In Romero we can see all the features of a spirituality as articulated by Schneiders, integrated into a robust way of participating in one's religion—which for Romero meant exercising ecclesial leadership. Romero's spirituality led him to the conscious involvement in a life-project that Schneiders mentions. But this project was also shaped ecclesially, by Romero's prayerful reading, interpretation and preaching

[27] *The Violence of Love*, 133.



of Scripture, as well as by his understanding of what the magisterium required of him and his Church. He understood this work to be the project of evangelization, and inextricably connected with integral liberation, as laid out in what was probably Romero's favourite papal writing, Paul VI's *Evangelii nuntiandi*. It was a project to which he thought that the *Spiritual Exercises* made an indispensable contribution.[28]

The touchstone, what Schneiders calls the 'transcendent source of ultimate meaning and value' orientating everything else, was God, of course, as Jon Sobrino also insists. But for Romero this was a God whose glory is present and fully alive in the human being. Or, paraphrasing Irenaeus more freely, Romero came to see that it was the glory of God shining through in the poor person fully alive: *Gloria Dei, vivens pauper*.[29] Here too he drew on Ignatian resources:

> St Ignatius, so practical in his considerations about God, about eternity, about Christ, would ask us, as an evident sign, to serve people, defending their rights and defending respect for God's

[28] See the interview he gave, 'Some Reflections on the Spiritual Exercises', reproduced in *The Way Supplement*, 55 (May 1986), 100-106, especially 104.

[29] See the address he gave on the occasion of the conferral of a doctorate *honoris causa* by the University of Leuven, 2 February 1980: Oscar Romero, 'The Political Dimension of the Faith from the Perspective of the Option for the Poor', in *Voice of the Voiceless: Four Pastoral Letters and Other Statements* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985), 187.

> image. We would see, through the Exercises, that human persons are truly God's glory on earth.[30]

Needless to say, he also found confirmation of these convict-ions in the Church's social teachings. Conversely, those teachings shaped, focused and nurtured his spirituality. His entire pastoral work as Archbishop revolved round these principles.

This brings us back to the first element of a mature spirituality: an originating experience. For Romero, as for any Christian, this was and had to be the experience of the God who took flesh in Jesus of Nazareth two thousand years ago—the God of Jesus Christ who is definitively disclosed for us in Scripture, and who is present for us in the hopes, anxieties and grief of human beings today, especially those of the poor. Finding his way back to this experience reignited the smouldering core of Romero's spirituality. That core probably burst anew into flame when Romero gazed upon the body of Rutilio Grande and his two parishioners, since Grande was a pastor faithful to the Church, and, as pastor, represented a Church faithful to the cries of the poor.[31]

The Funeral of Rutilio Grande—Oscar Romero is in the centre

[30] Romero, 'Some Reflections', 103.

[31] There are other affinities. Grande had, like Romero, grown up in poverty. He had been painfully shy and often unsure of himself until he returned to his own roots as pastor of a parish that included his

But again, this spirituality, once inflamed, animated and purified Romero's participation in the Church (his 'religion'). By, as Sobrino puts it, 'locating and relativising everything', it led him away from an absolutisation of a Church too closely linked with a sinful social and political order. He could endure, even welcome, the bombing of church buildings and the expropriation of church property, the murders of priests and lay church leaders, as long as this persecution was a result of the Church being a Church of 'Christian liberators', made up of Christians of sincere heart who were seeking God, seeking to make Salvadoran history resemble more a history of salvation and less a history of sin and death.[32] At the same time, Romero's participation in the institutional Church gave a creative outlet and impetus to his spirituality, and great joy. He was never happier, he said, than he was as Archbishop during those tense, exhausting years—this despite often cruel and humiliating treatment by his fellow Bishops, by the papal nuncio, and by Vatican officials.[33] He was never more sure of God's enlivening presence, never more sure of the 'rightness' of his ecclesial vocation.[34] To be a spiritual person was precisely, for him, to be religious, ecclesial; and he could neither be nor remain religious without being spiritual. In him spirituality and religion interpenetrated, to their mutual enrichment.

A New Gift from God's Spirit

It might be objected at this point that Romero integrated spirituality and religion only because for his time and place their separation was never really an option, as it is so manifestly is in late-modern or postmodern societies like that of the United States, with its high levels of social mobility and religious pluralism. But that claim is not entirely

home town of El Paisnal, working to help the poor there experience their dignity as God's children. For more on the relationship between Romero and Grande, see Dean Brackley, 'Rutilio and Romero: Martyrs for Our Time', in *Monsignor Romero*, 79-100.

[32] *The Violence of Love*, 25, 29, 43, 207.

[33] For the story of Romero's painful experience with other members of the hierarchy, see Marcouiller, 'Archbishop with an Attitude', 38-50.

[34] Just a few days before he died he told a friend: 'I don't want to die. At least not now. I've never had so much love for life. And honestly, I don't think I was meant to be a martyr. I don't feel that calling. Of course, if that's what God asks of me, then there's nothing I can do. I only ask that the circumstances of my death not leave any doubt as to what my true vocation is: to serve God and to serve the people. But I don't want to die now. I want a little more time.' (López Vigil, *Memories in Mosaic*, 397)

true. Romero may not have spoken in terms of a divide between spirituality and religion, but he was certainly worried about a privatised spirituality, divorced from the Church as it had defined itself in the documents of Vatican II, Medellín and Puebla: that is, as a community of faith for which the promotion of justice in history was an integral part of that faith.[35] Yet, for all the differences between contemporary North America and the El Salvador of Romero's time, and for all that each people must (as Romero himself would be the first to admit) discern how God is calling them to bring the reality of salvation into their own particular history,[36] Romero's inspiring example has much to say to us as we struggle with the perilous separation of spirituality and religion in North America. There are some formal features of Romero's integration of spirituality and religion which, I contend, are valid for any situation.

We struggle with the separation of spirituality and religion

Rooted Spirituality

Firstly, the Church cannot afford to promote a spirituality that does not face, as Romero's did, both the positive *and* the negative aspects of its historical reality. Romero's example recommends to us what Johann Baptist Metz has called a 'mysticism of open eyes', open to suffering both here and abroad, particularly of the poor and marginalised.

Secondly, and related to this, we must promote spiritualities that emphasize the unity of contemplation and action in history: whether it be a model of *contemplata aliis tradere*, *contemplativus in actione*, or some other model from another tradition.[37] We must insist, with Augustine,[38] that a full relationship to Christ must include *both* being fed by Jesus in the Holy Spirit and ministering to the needs of Jesus, particularly as he

[35] Romero did not disparage the importance of personal transformation, of feeling interiorly the grace of forgiveness and being a child of God. However, he looked for a 'social radiation' from this internal transformation. Speaking of the many retreats in El Salvador he worried that they 'remain on the level of individualistic piety, since I have not seen many effects of a social nature. I would measure the effectiveness or the ineffectiveness of retreats by the degree to which the people who come out of these profound reflections are really the sort that Latin America needs: new persons able to organize new structures according to their capacities.' (Romero, 'Some Reflections', 102)

[36] *The Violence of Love*, 230-231.

[37] For a further elaboration of this point, see J. Matthew Ashley, 'Contemplation in Prophetic Action: Oscar Romero's Challenge to Spirituality in North America', *Christian Spirituality Bulletin,* 8/2 (Spring/Summer 2000), 6-13.

[38] See his two sermons on Luke 10: 38-42 in Augustine of Hippo, *Sermons 103, 104*, from *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1990-), volume III, part 5: 76-87.

is present to us in the most needy—both Mary's part and Martha's part.

Thirdly, Romero's example urges on us a spirituality informed by Scripture, and unafraid to draw on the doctrinal riches of the Church, especially its social teachings. Indeed, if one takes spiritual transformation ultimately to include one's society and the redemption of its history, then one cannot afford *not* to bring to that task the resources that only a long tradition can offer. Bricolage might suffice in the short term for dealing with challenges to one's individual identity, but it is quite inadequate to the more difficult task of responding creatively to the pressing social challenges we face today.

Church and Inclusiveness

Romero also has important things to say about what religion, what Church, should be. The Church must, as Romero did, invite *everyone* to join in the work of evangelizing, of transforming its local culture and history.[39] It must take all its members seriously, recognising the potential for prophecy anywhere in its ranks, even when this prophecy may be directed at the failings of the Church itself. It must be prepared in principle to follow authentic leads from any of its members. Otherwise it cannot expect people to draw on its structures for spiritual impetus, sustenance and direction.

To live by such a vision is difficult and risky; it demands that people indeed 'let God be God', and allow themselves to be taken wherever God will. It requires developed skills in dialogue, and a

[39] See *The Violence of Love*, 104, 200.

courageous willingness to follow Ignatius in 'putting the best interpretation' on what others say and do (Exx 22). Romero abundantly demonstrated such gifts in those final three years. His willingness to conduct dialogue and to collaborate with others did not dilute his leadership—rather it strengthened it. The proofs of this are the many occasions on which his clergy and religious came to his defence when he was attacked in either ecclesial or secular circles. Ultimately, these attitudes of Romero's derived from a deeply held conviction about the Church that was nourished at once by the Second Vatican Council, and (at least in Romero's mind) by his appropriation of Ignatian spirituality. Together they defined his understanding of his episcopal motto, as he made clear from this comment on the ecclesial character of the Spiritual Exercises:

Authority rooted in dialogue

> There is also an ecclesiological substance … [to the Exercises]: 'to be of one mind with the Church (*sentir con la Iglesia*)'. St Ignatius would present it today as a Church that the Holy Spirit is stirring up in our people, in our communities, a Church that means not only the teaching of the magisterium, and fidelity to the pope, but also service to this people and the discernment of the signs of the times in the light of the gospel.[40]

Romero offers no easy answer to the question of how we move forward through a history that often seems to be a dark night. He professed only a conviction that 'all histories must move toward the resurrection', and a perception of the light of Christ dawning on the horizon of history.[41]

In one sense, there is nothing radical or new in the way that Romero brought together spirituality and religion. His spirituality was nourished by Scripture and tradition, and tested by long practice through success and failure, joy and disappointment, desolation and consolation. His understanding of the Church was defined by the Second Vatican Council's vision, as applied to the reality of Latin America by the documents of Medellín and Puebla. Romero's creativity was deeply traditional.

[40] Romero, 'Some Reflections', 103.
[41] *The Violence of Love*, 87, 199, 231.

But in another sense, Romero's 'ecclesial spirituality' *was* radical and new, because of the absolute consistency with which he lived it, no matter what the cost, in all aspects of his life, including as a Church leader and as a Salvadoran. Perhaps Karl Rahner, speaking of the spiritual masters and saints of the past, best describes what Romero offers us today: 'a creative and generative way of appropriating God's revelation in Christ'. Romero made this perennial divine gift his own in such a way as to release a power within it that was previously only latent: 'a way that sets a pattern … that serves as a generative model'.[42]

J. Matthew Ashley is Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana, and the book review editor for *Spiritus: A Journal in Christian Spirituality*. He is currently writing a book on the interplay between Ignatian spirituality and academic theology in three twentieth-century Jesuit theologians.

[42] From 'The Logic of Concrete Existential Knowledge in Ignatius Loyola' (1956)—translation here based on the version in Rahner's *Spiritual Writings*, edited and translated by Philip Endean (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004), 140.

From THE WAY
IGNATIAN BOOK SERVICE

Mary Wright, *Mary Ward's Institute: The Struggle for Identity*

This is the first comprehensive history of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, founded by Mary Ward as a new kind of unenclosed women's religious congregation with a rule based on the Jesuit Constitutions. Although the Institute initially excited fierce opposition and was suppressed, it has survived into the present day, and this history will be welcomed by anyone who is interested in women's religious life and their role in the Church today.

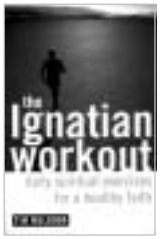
pb. xvi + 248pp. ISBN 0 9586713 3 8 **£15.00**

Thérèse Daly, *Faith and Freedom: Religious Education through Ignatian Spirituality*

Drawing on her experience of teaching in Australia, Thérèse Daly has developed a programme for approaching Religious Education in secondary schools through the Spiritual Exercises. *Faith and Freedom* is an accessible account of this programme, which has been shared with teachers from all over the world.

pb. viii + 270pp. ISBN 0 867863 78 1 **£19.95**

Paul Muldoon, *The Ignatian Workout: Daily Spiritual Exercises for a Healthy Faith*



The Ignatian Workout presents the wisdom of St Ignatius in the language of today in the form of a daily programme of 'workouts' for achieving spiritual fitness, designed for people with busy schedules. It shows us how to recognise and respond to a God who is already at work in us, inviting us into a deeper relationship with God and into richer lives of love and service.

pb. xxviii + 210pp. ISBN 0 8294 1979 9 **£10.99**

Ronald Modras, *Ignatian Humanism: A Dynamic Spirituality for the 21st Century*

This book contains vivid portraits of Ignatius of Loyola and five other important Jesuit figures. It presents Ignatian spirituality as a humanism which defends human rights, values learning from other cultures, seeks common ground between science and religion, struggles for justice, and honours a God who is actively at work in creation.

pb. xxii + 346pp. ISBN 0 8294 1986 1 **£12.50**

These titles may be purchased from The Way Ignatian Book Service (www.theway.org.uk/bookservice.shtml), or from the editorial office: The Way, Campion Hall, Oxford, OX1 1QS, UK • (44/0 1865) 286117 • the.way@campion.ox.ac.uk.

RECENT BOOKS

Tim Muldoon, *The Ignatian Workout: Daily Spiritual Exercises for a Healthy Faith* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2004). 0 8294 1979 9, pp. viii + 210, £10.99.

Just as Ignatius devised spiritual exercises, so Tim Muldoon uses the metaphor of physical fitness to talk about how we develop an active prayer life. He draws on his experience of rowing, both as an athlete and as a coach, to explain the need for discipline in the life of prayer. The physical metaphor works well within its limits—limits of which the author is well aware. In the conclusion he reminds us that prayer is ultimately about relationship with God—a relationship which cannot be attained by sheer willpower, a relationship which is grace. The overall approach is refreshing. Whilst the book is aimed at young adults, its language is never patronising. The author makes uses of many personal examples, and draws readers to reflect on their own experience.

Many physical-training manuals are divided into two parts. The first part in such books is largely theoretical: it explains the basics of the sport and the equipment, and how best to tune the equipment to one's own physical needs. The second part then focuses on the actual training programme, with the expectation that if one follows the regime, results will follow.

Muldoon follows the same pattern. The first part of his book explains what prayer is and why it is important. He also discusses different tools that might be useful when one begins to engage in prayer. The first chapter details the principles of prayer: openness and honesty are fundamental; spiritual direction—or 'coaching'—is very important; there is no progress without dedication. Most importantly, discernment is vital. There may be a place in the spiritual life for the slogan 'no pain, no gain', but pain is not always a sign that something good has happened—just as there is a difference between the pain indicating the damage of a pulled muscle and the burning in the lungs that follows a wholesome cardio-vascular workout. Subsequent chapters present various elements of the Ignatian spiritual tradition: the examination of consciousness; the Principle and Foundation; the method of Ignatian contemplation—its preparation, the expression of desires, the colloquy, the idea of repetition. The writing here is excellent; the approach is fresh, and the appeal to the

image of physical exertion says much to young adults today, familiar as they are with gym culture.

The second part of the book describes four 'workouts', based on the four Weeks of the Exercises. Muldoon's presentation of the First Week deals well with the consequences of personal sin, while keeping us firmly fixed on the image of a loving God. He gives us a deft treatment of the life of Jesus in the Second Week, and neatly handles the well-known difficulties with Third Week material, drawing the reader's personal experience into the process in a way that is helpful but not all-consuming. Inevitably there are some omissions. Sometimes, these seem insignificant—there is, for example, no mention of the hypothetical person in mortal sin in the First Week. At other points, the lack seems more damaging, as in the adaptations of the Kingdom and of the Two Standards. The notion that the latter can help in discernment of spirits is completely lacking. This is disappointing in what is otherwise a thorough and novel presentation of the Exercises.

This second part of the book is not quite as successful as the first. The reason for this lies not so much in any error or omission on the author's part, but rather in the very nature of the Spiritual Exercises. They are meant to be done with the guidance of a director, and any text which tries to lead the reader through the process misses something quite fundamental. That said, the author goes to some lengths to explain the need for a spiritual director and gives a useful appendix of Jesuit retreat houses in the United States to aid those who wish to find one. He is careful to explain that the book can only do so much, and is no substitute for doing the Exercises. Within these limits, however, Muldoon has provided a good and down-to-earth grounding in Ignatian prayer, in a way that is both exciting and impressive.

Margaret Blackie

Thérèse Daly, *Faith and Freedom: Religious Education through Ignatian Spirituality* (Richmond, Vic.: Spectrum Publications, 2004). 0 867863 78 1, pp. viii + 270, £19.95.

In his masterly *Man's Search for Meaning*, the psychiatrist Viktor Frankl drew on his years of torment in the Nazi camps, and concluded that the sole purpose of schooling should be to train people to make decisions. Even a world-beating industrialist might agree with that much. But what Frankl meant was decisions that were honest, unswayed by selfish

attachments, truly free. This was also precisely what St Ignatius intended his Exercises to accomplish: to make individuals reasonable, and to develop their sense of responsibility, both to themselves and to God.

In this volume, the late Thérèse Daly presents an admirable method of infusing the goals and methods of Ignatius into the religious education curriculum. Even if departments and teachers are not ready to adopt the approach fully, it still provides insights and approaches which any teacher could adapt to a given syllabus and thus truly make it 'education in the Ignatian tradition'.

Daly draws on the *Spiritual Exercises*, and in particular on how they were interpreted by Mary Ward, the seventeenth-century founder of the Ignatian order of women to which she belonged. She also introduces ideas from Bernard Lonergan, John Dewey and the Harvard educationalist Jerome Bruner, among many others. Her ideas have been tested for a generation with students and teachers in her native Australia, as well as in South Africa, Kenya, Ireland, India and Germany. She begins with a painstaking justification of her method, and then offers a more specific series of resources for the secondary curriculum. These aim to help students *interiorise* human and religious truths, rather than merely submitting dutifully.

If I was asked today, at the age of 73, what Chalcedon was all about, or what the differences were between Aquinas and Scotus, or any of the other questions that bother only professional theologians, I'd have to look them up—and this after 28 years of formal education, seven years of scholastic philosophy and theology (in Latin), 52 years in religion, and 43 years of teaching religious education to high-school seniors. Why? Because these questions don't *really* matter—not to the young in our classes, nor to their parents in our pews, nor, frankly, to me. They matter only to people in Rome who make up syllabuses. As Karl Rahner wrote, 'Content selection in religious education should be much more radical'. So should method be.

Instead of going for the head, Thérèse Daly goes for the heart, just as Jesus did, interested more in a change of attitudes and values than in indoctrination. Her method begins in the only place where true education can begin: in the students' own *felt* needs. As Bruner says, education begins in wonder—in puzzlement—or it never begins at all. In the first stage (in Ignatian terms the First Week): Who am I? Where do I fit into all this? Who knows what 'value' really means? Why do I feel frustrated? Why do I undermine my own best interests? In the second stage: What can Christ's life tell me about answering those questions, using the imagination, inserting myself into scenes of Scripture and unearthing the

answers for myself? The third stage: Why do people suffer? What does it mean to be truly a 'success'? How does a crucifix embody God's answer to those questions? And finally (though it is never final): What does 'happy' mean? Where does joy come from?

Both Daly's aim and her method are directly opposed to the catechetical aims and methods of the last umpteen years, aims and methods which our graduates' actual values and behaviour prove to be quite inadequate. She calls for conversion rather than indoctrination, for a 'feminine' yielding in order to assimilate rather than a 'masculine' mastery of forgettable data. She is sensitive to the needs of the taught rather than to the needs of the teaching; she sees the teacher as fellow pilgrim rather than as drill-master. She begins humbly, as Jesus approached blind Bartimaeus, asking: 'What do you want me to do for you?'

'My teacher, let me see' (Mark 10:51). Not define, not memorise, not pass, but see. Help me to *understand*, at least in some less confused way, what my life is *for*. Help me to be less confused, less afraid beneath the bravado, less a walking reaction to everybody else's expectations.

In 'To the Youth of the World', Pope John Paul paralleled Frankl: 'This whole youthful experience will be useful to the extent that it gives you the ability to make critical judgments and above all the capacity of discernment in all things human'. For those who want genuinely to assist in that wondrous process, this fine book has a great many suggestions on how to do it better.

William J. O'Malley SJ

Readers outside Australia may like to know that Faith and Freedom *is available from* The Way. *It can be ordered by mail or phone, or else online at www.theway.org.uk.*

Ronald Modras, *Ignatian Humanism: A Dynamic Spirituality for the 21st Century* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2004). 0 8294 1986 1, pp. xxii + 346, £12.50.

This book is friendly—affectionate towards the Society of Jesus and considerate of the reader. After a brief opening discussion of three key words—spirituality, humanism, and Ignatian—it moves on to recount the early life and conversion of Ignatius Loyola as the background to an account of Ignatian spirituality. That spirituality is rightly described in terms of the Spiritual Exercises. As Modras emphasizes, the originality of the Exercises lies not in their content but in their method. This method is

rooted in the personal experience of Ignatius, and it is one which has proved, despite an apparent rigidity, surprisingly open to adaptation and refurbishment.

More important to Modras' argument is the chapter on 'The Renaissance Origins of Ignatian Humanism'. Modras argues that the Society of Jesus, as an educational force, as a Counter-Reformation movement, and as a body of men making and giving the Exercises, was shaped by a particular version of Renaissance humanism. 'Humanism' here means classicism as a particular elegance of style, a commitment to the education of the whole person; a civic competence that includes a public persona; a sense of individualism which is nevertheless situated within the wider community; a belief in human dignity and freedom; and a conviction of the unity and universality of truth. Modras has little difficulty in establishing that any spirituality holding that grace builds on nature can be called humanist in this sense, and, moreover, that such fundamental principles were basic both to the Exercises and to the development of Jesuit ministries and institutions.

This vision is attractive, but Modras' claims about humanism and about Jesuit apostolic practice are perhaps somewhat ingenuous. The *Spiritual Exercises*, particularly the Principle and Foundation, have often been interpreted in a rationalistic manner. People have sometimes wondered if they are a form of spiritual brainwashing—Jesuits who escaped from the Soviet bloc saw some striking parallels. Today's enlightened Ignatian practices surely depend on more recent discoveries, on a religious culture in which spiritual psychology is better understood and Scripture better appreciated than they were at the time of the Renaissance. Furthermore Jesuit papalism has often been overemphatic, in spite of Modras' attempts to suggest otherwise. The Jesuits may indeed be proud of their educational practice, but the codification in the *Ratio studiorum* fails to reflect that practice at its liberal best. Moreover, as Fr Kolvenbach, the present General, once suggested, the early Jesuits' option to develop a network of schools perhaps led them to institutionalise their mechanisms of government more than they should have done.

Modras then takes the lives of five individual Jesuits as a way of illustrating how humanist spiritual insight inspired their apostolate. Matteo Ricci is chosen as the first hero of Jesuit humanism. His early education in classical culture gave him the scholarly ability and philosophical sensibility properly to relate to Confucian scholarship and to further the work of St Francis Xavier, whose own progress had been hampered both by a rigid belief that there was no salvation outside the Church, and by his not learning until late in his career the need for

accommodation to those being evangelized. Ricci's work was paralleled by that of Roberto de Nobili in India, and it was carried on by men of comparable calibre. Needless to say, such missionary methods provoked much ecclesiastical opposition.

The seventeenth-century German poet and moral theologian Frederick Spee showed great courage in standing up to both Church and state over the blatant injustice that condoned the torture of those suspected of witchcraft and the burning of those condemned. A mass hysteria had overtaken much of Europe at that time, and the voice of reason was rarely heard either by Catholics or Protestants. How encouraging it is to know that Spee's *Cautio criminalis*, his thorough analysis of proper judicial process, was eventually backed by his superiors and that his stand against injustice was fruitful.

Though his work was already known in the 1940s, it took many years before Pierre Teilhard de Chardin achieved respectability. *Le Milieu divin* and *Le Phénomène humain* have influenced many who remain ignorant of his scientific work, and who tend to rely on secondary studies of his teaching. He remains an inspiration rather than a source, one who helped less by his mystical and poetic prose than by his undermining what were excessively definite distinctions between matter and spirit, body and soul, nature and grace. Modras documents his suffering at the hands of those who claimed to be guarding orthodoxy.

Karl Rahner deserves his place in the pantheon of great theologians of the twentieth century. In some 38 pages, Modras gives a typically humane account of what influenced Rahner and of the external circumstances of his life and spirituality, together with an appreciation of the originality that redirected our way of addressing so many theological topics. By marrying neo-scholastic language to existential thought, Rahner produced an intelligent Christian anthropology. One might imagine presentations of Rahner's abundant material different from that given here, but Modras is surely right that Rahner's most important insight is that which sees grace as our relationship with Father, Son and Holy Spirit as they are in themselves. Grace now is already eschatological, a reality only to be completed hereafter. Our membership of the sacramental Church is a participation in a community of persons redeemed by Christ. And the idea of 'anonymous Christians' remains important too, despite the criticisms that have been made of it.

Pedro Arrupe, Jesuit General between 1965 and 1983, completes the five. That his own prayerful experience made a great contribution to Jesuit life is beyond doubt. Perhaps, however, his retrieval of ideas such as 'our way of proceeding' may have encouraged an element of corporate

self-aggrandisement among some Jesuits; and his stress on 'the promotion of faith through the struggle for justice', though rightly emphasized by Modras, can become too ideological. The 1995 Jesuit General Congregation modified this language somewhat.

Modras concludes this well-researched book with an overview of some more modern preoccupations of the Society of Jesus, introduced by an admission of his own partiality—and indeed he has, I think, been too generous in his judgments and interpretation. But reading the accounts of Jesuit originality provokes another reflection. Is it not odd that the more original the apostolate, the more opposition it calls forth? Why is it that Roman Catholicism, in particular, cannot long abide, let alone tolerate, Christian initiative?

Peter Hackett SJ

Rowan Williams, *Anglican Identities* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2004). 0 232 052527 7, pp. viii + 152, £7.95.

Rowan Williams tells us that unkind critics of Michael Ramsey, the one-hundredth Archbishop of Canterbury, suggested that in his later years he ceased to be receptive to new theological ideas. The present Archbishop dismisses this claim as unfair but adds, 'Ramsey's reading was not much less restricted than that of most bishops tends to become after a few years (shades of the prison house …)'. A remarkable feature of this collection is that the essays in it were all written after Rowan Williams had himself been made a bishop, and some indeed were written after he had become an Archbishop. The prison house of Dr Williams' present post has not meant the end of his reading or writing. This is cause for rejoicing, for Rowan Williams is by far the most learned Archbishop of Canterbury of modern times. It would be an immeasurable tragedy for the Church—and not only for the Anglican Church—if a mind so acute and well-furnished were exhausted by the cares of high office.

This book brings together three lectures now published for the first time, and five articles which originally appeared in other places. The focus of these papers—all of them major contributions to our understanding of their subjects—is on figures whose ideas have shaped or reflected that elusive entity, the Anglican tradition. We are invited to consider whether what distinguishes Anglicanism from other Christian traditions can be identified in something that these figures have in common.

The first of these figures—though it is anachronistic to call him an Anglican—is William Tyndale, famous for his translation of the Bible, but claiming our attention for his theological writings too. Williams directs us to a great work which has been unjustly neglected: *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon*, Tyndale's meditation on 'the parable of the dishonest steward'. Rowan Williams regards this treatise as 'the most powerful treatment of social morality to come from the Reformation era in Britain'. Wealth, Tyndale teaches, is there for making friends, and those friends are the poor on your doorstep. Tyndale claims, moreover, that such friends are not confined to those of your own religious persuasion, a sentiment which much embarrassed his defenders.

Williams devotes two magisterial essays to Richard Hooker. These are brilliant pieces, written by someone whose ear for the cadences of the English language is as sure as his mastery of ideas. It is not difficult to see why Williams is attracted by Hooker's 'contemplative pragmatism', as he calls it. The twenty-first-century Archbishop and the sixteenth-century divine speak with the same subtlety, delicacy, and sweet reasonableness—and with the same reticence. 'Our safest eloquence concerning God', says Hooker, 'is our silence'. The tones of this theological language are characteristically Anglican; it is a discourse which is clear about our final ends as human beings, but which is sceptical of comprehensive formulations. Williams sees this theological approach as 'sapiential', as an heir to the wisdom tradition of the Biblical writers, with their down-to-earth appreciation of the contingent and the mutable.

Rowan Williams, himself an accomplished poet, is alert to the resonances between Hooker and George Herbert. The Archbishop's acute poetic sensibility enriches his account of Herbert's four extraordinary poems, each entitled 'Affliction'. The poems are cries of deep despair yet, paradoxically, they are not a denial but an affirmation of grace.

In discussing 'the fate of liberal Anglicanism', the Archbishop reminds us that there are many strands of liberalism, and that the Anglican tradition is not equally hospitable to all of them. The liberalism to which he is drawn is well represented by the great biblical scholar Bishop Brooke Foss Westcott. Westcott regarded every syllable of Scripture as demanding the closest scrutiny, but at the same time he insisted on the need to read Scripture as a whole. Westcott was cautious about hermeneutical—or indeed dogmatic—closure. But his liberalism, unlike some other kinds, did not admit contempt for what we have received. Williams suggests that the important lesson to be learned from Westcott is that it is wiser for us to converse with tradition than to take leave of it.

Williams returns to Westcott in a chapter on 'Anglican Approaches to the Fourth Gospel', in which he discusses, together with Westcott's famous commentary on the Gospel, the contributions to Johannine studies of E. C. Hoskyns, William Temple and John A. T. Robinson. All four turn to Browning's dramatic monologue 'A Death in the Desert', a poem which conveys what is less easily said in prose: the irreducible otherness of the history in which the divine walks among us. John Robinson was primarily a New Testament scholar, with substantial exegetical studies to his name, but it is for one slight paperback that his name is well known. Williams' shrewd verdict on the author of *Honest to God* is that 'his own transparent goodness and optimism made him a flawed reader of his times—though a brilliant mirror to them'.

A far weightier work than *Honest to God* is Michael Ramsey's *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*. Like the present Archbishop, Ramsey was much influenced by the Orthodox Church. Ramsey believed that 'the Church exists to radiate the glory of God'. Williams suggests that it is rather more important that the Western Churches recover this understanding of the Church as epiphany than that they agree on cleverly worded statements on disputed doctrinal issues. Not that Ramsey was indifferent to doctrine. Williams cites Ramsey's memorable observation: 'Catholicism always stands at the church door at Wittenberg to read the truth by which she is created and by which also she is judged'.

Has Rowan Williams succeeded in showing that there is an 'Anglican identity'? His title, with 'identities' in the plural, could be construed as an admission that any attempt to capture the essence of Anglicanism is bound to fail. If there is something characteristically Anglican, it is a matter less of doctrine than of disposition, a disposition exemplified most winningly in the writer to whom Williams constantly defers and to whom this volume bids us return. Richard Hooker's unswerving gaze was towards our goal in God, a vision which allowed him to sit more lightly to matters disciplinary, or even doctrinal, which do not serve that great end. We do well to go back to Hooker if we wish to know what it means to be an Anglican—and, more importantly, if we seek light and a sense of direction in our disagreements within the household of God.

John Pridmore

John Drane and Olive M. Fleming Drane, *Family Fortunes: Faith-full Caring for Today's Families* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2004). 0 232 52542 0, pp. x + 214, £9.95.

This book comes to us at a time when there are frequent clamours from Christian pressure groups calling for a return to the 'family values' of an earlier era. These clamours express a nostalgia for an idealized model of family life, in which the man worked full-time outside the home and the woman looked after the housework, the children, and the comfort of her husband. The man was the head of the household and the breadwinner; his wife had responsibility for the care of their children, and for the everyday running of the household. Marriage was for life. Roles, responsibilities and power within family relationships were prescribed. Many people believe this model of the nuclear family to be the only authentic, Bible-based model for Christian family life.

Not so, according to John Drane and Olive M. Fleming Drane. In this new book, which revises, updates and expands their earlier work, *Happy Families? Building Healthy Families* (1995), the authors point out that such a model did not exist in biblical families. Families in those times consisted of several generations living together, and included widows, orphans and servants. The model of the nuclear family developed in response to the demands of industrialisation. Further changes to family structure have come about with the impact of modern technology, the need for mobility, and the rise of individualism.

The authors have led parenting courses and taught on the family and spirituality. Having been married for more than thirty years, and having raised three children, they bring both academic knowledge and practical experience to the field. In this book, they describe the fragmentation and diversity of the postmodern family, and some of its problems. Understanding these is a necessary prelude to searching for a way of living that both incorporates Christian values and sustains family life

Today's families include more than just the traditional nuclear model. There are one-parent families, blended families (that is, families with children from different relationships), cohabiting couples with or without children, same-sex families, extended families, families in transition from one model to another, and individuals on their own. A high proportion of married women are now in paid employment. The authors suggest that bemoaning the disappearance of the nuclear family and insisting on a return to 'family values' is to miss an opportunity for developing values that can make a positive contribution to the family structures that are emerging.

For example, Jesus' words about children can provide a distinctively Christian attitude towards children and their well-being. Thankfully the days have passed when harsh discipline, justified by certain passages of Scripture, was dealt out to children. Parents now have the problem of trying to establish an adequate disciplinary framework. This is especially difficult in situations of marital breakdown. Christian families are not immune. They have crises like other families in the community, including eruptions of physical and emotional violence. The challenge is to find new Christian ways of living and relating to one another within the family, and within the wider Church community.

Many changes have affected the ways in which men and women relate to each other in Western society. These include economic pressures, the sexual revolution, and women's control of their own fertility. As a consequence we experience greater conflict between work and family life, bringing new challenges for both women and men. Christian values can contribute to a renegotiation of family roles and responsibilities, and to the promotion of family rules that are flexible, transparent and fair, applying to parents as much as to their children.

A valuable part of this book is the authors' careful examination of the difficulties of turning to the Bible for guidance on family life. What is relevant and what is no longer so? What are the true and abiding values of the Gospels? There are difficult New Testament texts that appear to demand the submission of women to their husbands. These need to be addressed openly, together with all other texts that appear to promote control, exploitation and even violence by men towards women and children. Such texts reflect the patriarchal structure of society at the time when they were written. Our culture and our language have moved on. Male domination in marriage is not a Christian value, and it goes against deeper biblical principles.

The first half of this book is a summary of modern sociological research into family structure and family life. The second half explores practical ways in which families may be supported in the church community. Noting that many young people leave the Church as soon as they can, many never to return, the question is what to do about it. How is the Church failing families?

The authors explore what practical support can be offered to families, suggesting after-school care, parenting groups, and family-friendly Church services. The needs of teenagers and of aging family members are discussed. A whole chapter is devoted to issues of domestic violence and the abuse of children, whether physical, emotional or sexual, and to the question of what support can be offered to families.

Solid, written in a non-academic style but amply referenced, this is a very practical book for the pastoral worker and general reader who knows that family life is rapidly changing and wants to understand those changes. It moves towards developing an authentic Christian perspective on family life, and to identifying how families can be supported within the Christian community.

Sue Delaney

Paul Mommaers and Elisabeth Dutton, *Hadewijch: Writer—Beguine—Love Mystic* (Leuven: Peeters, 2004). 90 429 1392 4, pp. xiv + 160, €18.00.

This book is basically an English translation of Paul Mommaers' *Hadewijch —Schrijfster, Begijn, Mystica*, which was published in 1989 and immediately won the prestigious Flemish award, *Prijs de Standaard*, for the 'most remarkable book published in the Dutch language' in that year. The bibliography has been updated to include works published since 1989, and abbreviated by the omission of some publications in Dutch. In addition, a Foreword by Veerle Fraeters outlines the main findings of Hadewijch scholarship in the last fifteen years. The works of Hadewijch have been available to English readers since the 1980s, principally through *Hadewijch: The Complete Works* in the 'Classics of Western Spirituality' series. Anglophones can now appreciate the thoughts of today's leading Hadewijch scholar in this compact and attractively-written paperback. The contribution of Elisabeth Dutton is not indicated, but if it had to do with the work of translation, she is to be congratulated.

Hadewijch lived in Brabant, in modern Belgium, in the early thirteenth century. The precise dates of her life and of her writings are unclear. Little is known for certain about her and for the most part it is necessary to conjecture from allusions in her writings. 'Beguine' was then used as a general term for pious women, so that the traditional description of Hadewijch as a Beguine seems reasonable, even though she was not explicitly called so in her lifetime. It seems clear that she was the leader of a group of pious women, 'Beguines' in at least a general sense, living in some kind of community outside the structures of the established women's religious orders, probably in Antwerp. She was evidently well educated and highly intelligent, with a knowledge of Latin and French as well as her

native Dutch/Flemish. Her interest in courtly love and troubadour literature is one of a number of factors which suggest an aristocratic background.

Hadewijch was one of the earliest writers in Dutch, and superbly skilled in that language; she was also the first person in western European literature to write mystical love lyrics. Her interest for today is both literary and religious. Her writings divide into three principal categories: letters, poems and accounts of her visions. All three kinds of work were written at least partly for reading out loud to a group and not just for individual reading in private.

Mommaers is principally interested in her mystical writings. Hadewijch is an early and key figure in the remarkable flowering of mystical literature, by both men and women, in the medieval West. Whereas many of the works of female mystics were actually written down, and often reinterpreted, by clerics or male scribes, Hadewijch appears to have done the writing herself. This gives her work a remarkable directness and freshness, which are apparent even in English translation. Various pairs, with their dynamic and resonant relationships, are central to her thought: abundance and rejection (*weelde* and *wee*), working and resting (*werken* and *rusten*), speaking and keeping silence (*spreken* and *swighen*), falling short and enjoying (*ghebreken* and *ghebruken*), God and humans.

It is rightly called 'love' mysticism, centring around the idea that *die Minne es al* (Love is all), and some of the language is sensual. Thus 'enjoyment' (*ghebruken*) of God is described as, 'mouth in mouth, heart in heart, body in body, and soul in soul' (p. 106, quoting from a letter). Yet Hadewijch is severe with the self-indulgent, with those who seek only enjoyment from God. The withdrawal of God's presence and consolations from us, and our acceptance of this apparent abandonment, is crucial for our growth in holiness. Work, too—both ordinary labour and works of charity towards our neighbours—and proper engagement in human society are essential. So the mysticism recommended does not involve being cocooned or living in an ivory tower. We should be busy, but not obsessed with our work or lost in it. A certain emptiness is necessary for our spiritual wellbeing, so that God has time and space to speak and come to us. 'When God lived as a man' was Hadewijch's favourite expression (p. 123). God's humanity thus makes Jesus central. With Jesus come his sufferings and his entering fully into our human situation; and these in turn give meaning to our struggles in life. Hadewijch is assured by Christ, 'you shall be shown the glory of your exile' (p. 137).

Mommaers has done well to examine the influences of other spiritual writers and theologians upon Hadewijch: Origen, Augustine, Bernard of

Clairvaux, William of Saint-Thierry, Richard of Saint-Victor, and probably Abelard. All these influences are men. Moreover, surprisingly, no Dutch writer can be identified as a source, although Hadewijch had a wide network of friends in the Dutch-speaking lands as well as in Germany, Denmark, Bohemia, France and England (p. 11).

In the last twenty years Hadewijch has acquired the status of a cult figure: she is among the best-known women mystics in medieval northern Europe, alongside Hildegard of Bingen and Julian of Norwich. She had what we would see today as a strong but inclusive feminism. Her writings and choice of lifestyle were bold, and seemed to some to threaten not only the role of the clergy but also the institution of marriage. But she appears as a friend of men, and her balance and good sense, as well as her loyalty to the ordinary institutions of the Church, protected her from any suggestion of heresy. She has come to be an inspiration and a role-model for many women today, both Christians and others. Indeed, as women search for forms of committed Christian life outside the structures of the traditional religious orders, they may find inspiration and help from the Beguine movement to which Hadewijch belonged with such distinction and in such an attractive way. Mommaers and Dutton, and publisher Peeters, are to be thanked for bringing these insights to Anglophone readers.

Norman Tanner SJ

James McCaffrey OCD, *The Carmelite Charism: Exploring the Biblical Roots* (Veritas, Dublin, 2004). 1 85390 737 5, pp. 127, £10.95.

***Ascending the Mountain: The Carmelite Rule Today*, edited by Eltin Griffin O.Carm. (The Columba Press, Dublin, 2004). 1 85607 449 8, pp. 138, £6.99.**

In January 1999 the first meeting of the Joint Carmelite Forum on Spirituality took place in Oxford. This event brought together people from the two branches of the Carmelite family—the Ancient Observance (O.Carm.) and the Discalced Reform (OCD)—in order to discuss how best to make known Carmelite spirituality in Britain and Ireland today. The Forum continues to meet, and has organized a number of seminars and conferences. The collection of essays edited by Eltin Griffin began life as a series of talks given at the Irish component of the forum in August 2002. The collaborative spirit manifest at these meetings has encouraged

James McCaffrey to reflect on the specifically biblical roots of Carmelite spirituality, taking account of scholarly and popular works from both traditions of the family.

For McCaffrey, Carmelite spirituality is about prayer, and his treatment of the Gospels, Elijah, the Rule, St Joseph, Mary and the Saints of Carmel is from this perspective. The gospel texts reveal the person of Jesus, the one at the heart of the Carmelite's life, and the practice of *lectio divina* translates the scriptural texts into living prayer. The complete dedication of the Carmelite to prayer is inspired by the Old Testament figure of Elijah, who experiences abandonment in the desert, and the presence of God on Horeb. Interestingly, at the Transfiguration it is Elijah who discusses with Moses the *exodus* that Jesus must experience in Jerusalem. Carmelite spirituality, which for McCaffrey is inspired by Elijah, ultimately leads to the Paschal Mystery.

For McCaffrey, the Carmelite Rule (given by the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Albert of Vercelli, some time between 1206 and 1214) is not only a mosaic of biblical and patristic quotations, but also a mirror of the community's values. The figures of hermit, cenobite and friar are all found, or implied in this early text. Silence and solitude have a special place; the community shares the altar and the table; hints of activity and ministry for the benefit of a wider public are the basis for the Carmelites' transformation into a mendicant order by the middle of the thirteenth century. While St Joseph has long been regarded as the Protector of the Order, not much has been written about him in recent Carmelite literature. McCaffrey sees in this figure a model of strength and protection, and a collaborator in God's plan whom Carmelites would do well to imitate. Mary is above all the 'woman of prayer' who treasures her experiences and teaches Carmelites the value of silent meditation.

Clearly, one of the characteristics of the forum discussions has been a desire to examine afresh the sources of Carmelite spirituality, especially the Rule. Both McCaffrey and Griffin give prominence to this theme: McCaffrey in his chapter on the Rule, Griffin in the theme of the 2002 Forum. The contents of the book are a slightly mixed bag: there are notes from workshops, comments on talks and homilies, as well as fully-fledged conference papers. In this latter category, the articles of Christopher O'Donnell and Patrick Mullins are particularly significant. O'Donnell guides the reader through questions of the eastern roots of the Rule, the place of work and a later commentary by John Baconthorpe. Mullins gives an account of the background to the Rule and to the figure of Albert. Other shorter contributions offer more personal reflections and reactions on subjects such as the cell, hospitality and spiritual armour. The

usefulness of these shorter papers is, as Griffin notes in his editorial introduction, a little uneven in places, largely owing to their origins as workshops or personal reflections.

McCaffrey and Griffin have both produced interesting and useful works which show the fruit of co-operation among the various members of the Carmelite family. These books chart the development of several key concepts in Carmelite spirituality, such as the cell, solitude and community. They do not pretend to be or to reflect the latest scholarship in the field, and readers looking for more specialised studies should bear this in mind. Nonetheless, for students of spirituality wishing to keep up to date with recent thinking, these two works would be ideal reading.

Kevin Alban O. Carm.

Robert Ellsberg, *The Saints' Guide to Happiness: Everyday Wisdom from the Lives of the Saints* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2003). 0 232 52543 9, pp. xx + 223, £8.95.

Flat-pack furniture and self-help books often promise much and deliver little. If we only follow the instructions, our lives will be improved. Such thoughts were uppermost in my mind when I began reading *The Saints' Guide to Happiness.* With a painting of a bowl of cherries on the cover, this book looks as if it has much potential to be facile and glib. But in fact, this is a book for mature Christians who have experienced life's complexities, and have outgrown formulaic and prescriptive answers. Such readers may find their experience reflected in the often far from straightforward lives of the saints. For Robert Ellsberg, holy people are saints irrespective of any wider recognition they may have received. Some have been formally canonised; others are known through their works or their writings (for example, Thomas Merton and Oscar Romero); others have no public profile at all. Ellsberg writes about saints of all three kinds.

Ellsberg uses the saints' stories to tease out a path to happiness. But Ellsberg's version of happiness is not a matter of fun-fairs, parties and other frivolities. Happiness is rather something which emerges from a set of lessons, from learning to be alive, to let go, to work, to sit still, to love, to suffer, to die and to see. The lessons themselves will often be painful, since they force us to confront things that we would rather not acknowledge about ourselves. Yet it may be impossible truly to experience what Ignatius termed consolation without learning at least some of these lessons.

As Ellsberg himself acknowledges, promulgating an easy guide to happiness would have been an anathema to many of the saints he writes about. Of Dorothy Day, with whom he had close contact over several years through the Catholic Worker community in New York, he writes:

> It was Dorothy herself who first made me suspect that holiness and happiness were related. She was a person of extraordinary vitality—steeped in prayer, yet totally present to the person beside her. Keenly attuned to the suffering of others, she remained equally sensitive to signs of beauty and ever mindful of what she called 'the duty of delight'. She read the daily news in the light of eternity. And she had the remarkable effect, when you were with her, of making you feel that you could change the world, and be a better person, and that such an undertaking would be an enormous adventure. (p. xvii)

Yet, like most, if not all, of those who grace Ellsberg's pages, Day had no desire to be a saint; rather she simply endeavoured to live out a life in which seeking to do God's will was the priority. Elsewhere in the book, Ellsberg quotes her as remarking what a miserable existence many of the saints had, depriving themselves of so much that makes life more than a battle for mere existence. Nevertheless, this book's overall picture of the saints suggests that we have much in common with them, and that our attempts to emulate them in placing God at the centre of our lives will be far from futile.

From an author who is also the editor-in-chief of Orbis Books, a leading theological publisher, one may well expect a work that is well written and demonstrates academic rigour. But what I really enjoyed about this book was that it was written by someone obviously engaged with the issues, not just on an academic level, but in his own life. Ellsberg's admission that it was learning about the lives of the saints that led to his becoming a Roman Catholic, is one of the more exquisite statements I have read on this subject. Ordinarily a book this size might be read in a sitting or two; but with so much to make the reader pause, this is a volume to be read over many sittings, punctuated by prayer and reflection.

Beth R. Crisp

***Lamplighters: Exploring Spirituality in New Contexts*, edited by Bernadette Flanagan and David Kelly (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2004). 1 85390 762 6, pp. 190, £16.80.**

Lamplighters is very much a collection of essays. It is the outcome of a millennium project, based in the department of spirituality at the

Milltown Institute in Dublin, which set out to explore and reflect on the changing forms and expressions of spirituality in Ireland (and elsewhere) at the beginning of this new century. The first half of the book contains six essays on current issues in applied spirituality written by members of the department and other academics; the second consists of seven practical case-studies written up, it appears, by students.

Between them, the first six essays explore the nature and meaning of applied spirituality, the relationship between Ignatian spirituality and action research, the significance of gender issues in spiritual direction, the implications for spirituality of a radical option for the poor, intercultural spirituality, and religious pluralism. These are clearly issues of importance for anyone engaged in spirituality today, and the authors have much to contribute. Unfortunately I found the writing somewhat uneven, and sometimes it seemed to me that the academic jargon was a hindrance to real communication.

The case studies I found more engaging and immediately thought-provoking. They are written in a concrete and direct way and explore the meaning and significance of spirituality for refugees and asylum seekers in Ireland, for people with mental disabilities and their carers, for people who are mentally ill, and for people alienated from church membership as they come to face death. One case study examines the presentation of Scripture through drama; another looks at ecological spirituality; and another makes a plea for the reconnection of sexuality and gender with spirituality. Again, the style and quality of writing is patchy; but somehow this seemed less inappropriate in a set of studies of particular groups of people and of their struggle to find a meaningful spiritual environment.

One disturbing theme that is repeated in case study after case study is the negative experience of the local, parochial Church. None of the liminal groups already mentioned—those seeking asylum, those with mental disabilities, those suffering from depression and mental illness—experienced the local Church as a place of welcome, understanding or hospitality. They felt excluded and unwanted, and many were obliged to look elsewhere for spiritual experiences and encounters that nourished, encouraged and sustained. This surely provides pause for thought: what is the local Church if people look to it for support and spiritual enrichment and find none? In the language of applied spirituality and action research that is employed in this book: how will the Church cross the gulf that separates it from the everyday human experience of people in these groups?

Judith Lancaster SHCJ