

THE WAY

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

Among particular concerns of *The Way* are:

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

The Way warmly invites readers to submit articles with a view to publication. They should normally be about 4,000 words long, and be in keeping with the journal's aims. The Editor is always ready to discuss possible ideas. Further details can be found on *The Way*'s website, www.theway.org.uk. The Special Number for 2004 will be entitled *Commitment and Freedom*. It will mark the centenaries of three distinguished Jesuit theologians (Rahner, Lonergan, John Courtney Murray) by exploring how Ignatian and other traditions of spirituality can expand the possibilities of Christian living and discipleship. Contributions to that issue would be especially welcome.



Paul Nicholson SJ, Loyola Hall

The earth brought forth vegetation:
plants yielding seed of every kind,
and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it.
And God saw that it was good. (Genesis 1:12)

... to look how God dwells in creatures,
in the elements giving being, in the plants growth,
in the animals feeling,
in people giving understanding. (Exx 235.1)

FOREWORD

IGNATIUS BEGINS THE *SPIRITUAL EXERCISES* proper with a famous statement:

Humanity is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save its soul. And the other things on the face of the earth are created for humanity, that they may help it in pursuing the end for which it is created. (Exx 23.2-3)

It follows that we have to deal with these creatures ‘rightly’: to use them as much as they help us attain our end, and to rid ourselves of them in so far as they hinder us.

Commentators ancient and modern have been struck by the plainness of this statement: it does not mention Jesus Christ; it seems oddly cerebral. It might well help explain why people have often thought Ignatian spirituality irredeemably prosy, functional, even manipulative; and in the light of modern ecological sensitivities, the language of ‘use’ at least appears unfortunate.

‘Sometimes’, we read in an early Directory, ‘from just the consideration of the Foundation alone a whole soul is amended and reformed as it recollects itself and sticks at speculation on its end’.¹ That comment can be read as confirming the critics’ worst suspicions; it can also be taken as a pointer towards something richer hidden in Ignatius’ text. The articles in this issue of *The Way* draw on various resources to expand our understanding of God’s creative presence. Thus Trileigh Tucker eloquently draws our attention to how Ignatian spirituality can take up ecological concerns, while John English sets the Ignatian text within the discoveries of modern science and more recent Trinitarian theology. Antony Campbell suggests that Ignatius’ reticence is deliberate, and must be understood in the light of what comes later, notably in what Campbell calls the Contemplation for Recognising Love. Meanwhile this issue’s piece ‘from the Ignatian tradition’ shows how Jerónimo Nadal, even in Ignatius’ lifetime, had a

¹ Everard Mercurian, Dir 19.4.

sense of God as creator of all things that was strong enough for him at least to be able to begin imagining how the Exercises could be given to ‘infidels’ and ‘heretics’.

It is often claimed that classical Christian statements about creation are too static—creation is a process, and God acts dynamically. The three articles which follow—by Peter Feldmeier, Gerald M. Fagin and Vilma Seelaus—in different ways explore how our relationship with the creating and sustaining God changes over our lifetime. David Coghlan, for his part, shows how Ignatian ideas dovetail very well with ‘action research’, with new developments in social science centred not on abstract theory or generalisation, but on the practical wisdom we can draw from our ongoing busyness and activity.

Finally, in ‘Theological Trends’, Margaret Barker calls seriously into question the idea that the early Christians had to complicate or change a Judaism that worshipped one creator God. She suggests, rather, that the Temple rituals of early Judaism centred on a God who had a son present among us as priest and king, and that both Jesus and the early Church were drawing on these traditions as they developed what we know as Christianity. If she is correct, then we Christians must approach dialogue with Jews and Muslims in a new way, and rethink radically our understanding of our own origins. And even if her theories turn out not to be right, this kind of new idea is itself one of the ways in which our sense of creation is expanded and deepened.

Philip Endean SJ

ECOLOGY AND THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Trileigh Tucker

TAKE A DEEP BREATH. Notice how your whole body relaxes. Now take another deep breath. This time, notice that the air coming into your lungs through your nose is free and plentiful: even if you're in a large crowd, there's more than enough for everyone.

Finally, another deep breath. The atoms of air that you breathe in and out are a shared gift: shared both with other humans and with the creatures and plants in the immediate area. This air constitutes a radical physical connectedness with all other living beings. Statistically, it is extremely likely that several of the atoms you took into your lungs during that last breath also passed through Jesus' lungs: a direct and potentially profound physical connection.¹

Because of our intricate interconnectedness with each other in and through the natural world, what has been called environmentalism—concern for that which is *around* us—becomes *ecological awareness*. The word 'ecology' comes from two Greek roots: *oikos*, meaning 'house', and *logos*, meaning 'reason' or 'discourse'. When we shift from speaking of the environment (that which is around us but does not include us) to speaking of ecology, then, we are thinking in a new way: not about a distanced object, but rather about the network of relationships within which we live: our own house, our home.

Why should someone interested in Ignatian spirituality care about its intersections with ecology and ecological awareness?

Creation is God's gift to us of home and context. It is one of the oldest of God's gifts, predating even our own existence according to both Genesis and modern science, and the largest in size and scope. Ecology (the science) and ecological awareness (our personal

¹ Guy Murchie, *The Seven Mysteries of Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), 320. Murchie presents a beautifully written and compelling analysis of this surprising statistic.

understanding of the roles of creation in our own lives) are two important ways of coming to understand the nature of this gift.

Many of us feel God's presence especially strongly through nature. We may sit under a tree for prayer; we may go for a walk to reflect on a problem; we may watch a sunset for inspiration; we may go to the beach to grieve. For spiritual directors, understanding the various potential dimensions of a retreatant's relationship with creation may provide fruitful insights and suggest new paths for spiritual movement.

Creation is also communal. When we use or misuse it, we affect others, both humans and God's other creatures. With whom, and how, should we share it? And how should we care for this loving gift of home? How should we avoid mistreating it?

***Ignatius offers
wisdom to
the ecological
community***

Creation awareness can greatly enhance the experience of the Spiritual Exercises. But this also works the other way: the Exercises offer to the ecological community Ignatian wisdom of a kind much needed in our critical time. In structuring the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius asks us gradually to broaden our awareness and understanding from physical settings ('compositions of place'), to self-awareness, to our wider community, and then to our responsibilities, both to that community and to God. In

this way, Ignatius demonstrates his intuitive comprehension of ecological principles of interconnectedness, and of the critical role of the individual in contributing to a whole. One of Ignatius' special gifts to Christian spirituality is his integration of the analytical, as found in the carefully structured progress of the Spiritual Exercises, with the imaginative and sensory dimensions of human existence. The wisdom of the Spiritual Exercises can offer new ways of entering into environmental concerns and of addressing our current ecological crisis.

In this article, I will address in turn each of the four 'Weeks' or movements of the Spiritual Exercises, showing how their approach and their content reflect insights from modern ecological thought and enable us to take those insights further.

Ecology and Incarnation

I begin, as Ignatius does, with a composition. Remember the first natural place to which you felt connected as a child, or another natural place to which you've felt a strong connection. Imagine you're in that place again. What do you notice with your senses? Is there

something particular in that place—a tree or a stream or an animal—to which you have a special attachment? How do you feel as you return there?

For most people, this ‘First Place’ comes back in full sensory detail, often with a strong sense of consolation. It seems to me that the strength of such feelings tells us something about who we are as human beings. Ignatius understood that our physical being-in-this-world is fundamental to who we are. Numbed in our own epoch by television and by the hours we spend daily in our cars, we forget that we are sensory beings, tied to the land, to place.

Ignatius reminds us of our connectedness to place through his frequent use of compositions; meaningful stories are often most deeply understood in the context of their landscapes. The understanding that human psychology and spirituality are intimately connected with landscape is particularly distinctive to Ignatian spirituality, and it has a unique resonance for those concerned with ecological well-being.

This interconnectedness occurs on physical as well as on psychological levels. Between five and ten billion years ago, the explosion of a supernova generated the heavier atoms that make up our bodies: we are quite literally made of stardust.² Or—to move closer to our home, the Earth—a geologist colleague of mine loves to point out that every atom of our bodies is borrowed temporarily from a rock. (Think of this next time you hold a rock: your relationship with it will be transformed.) God tells us over and over again in Genesis, that as God shaped creation, God saw that it was good. Our *oikos*, our house, is good from its creation: not because it is useful, not because it is the stage for the human drama, but simply because God made it.

Our lack of a sense of place means that we do not know our neighbours, whether human or nonhuman. We usually do not know where our most basic sustenance comes from: our water, energy, food. We are homeless while nominally living at home, because we do not *abide* there. This venerable word, with its Anglo-Saxon root, has its meaning of ‘remain’ deepened by an association with ‘wait for’. Jesus says ‘abide in me as I abide in you’ (John 15:4); ‘abide in my love’ (John 15:9). Psychically, we modern Westerners are always moving on to the next thing (task, place, meeting or goal), instead of developing

² Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992).

roots in one place and coming to know its seasons through close and caring attention. Our homes and land become places where we pause briefly, instead of being our waiting-places for God. This rootlessness, I believe, is one source of our widespread loneliness and sense of disconnection.

Lessons from the Book of Creation

If we come to understand what it is to live in the flesh, as creatures dwelling in a place, we can also more deeply understand creation as an expression of God's nature. Augustine invites us into this understanding:

Some people, in order to discover God, read books. But there is a great book: the very appearance of created things. Look above you! Look below you! Note it. Read it. God, whom you want to discover, never wrote that book with ink. Instead, he set before your eyes the things that He had made. Can you ask for a louder voice than that? Why, heaven and earth shout to you: 'God made me!'³

Ignatius invites us to go deeper. He encourages us to make an 'exclamation of wonder with deep feeling':

Going through all creatures, how they have left me in life and preserved me in it ... [the Angels and the Saints] ... and the heavens, sun, moon, stars and elements, fruits, birds, fishes and animals. (Exx 60)

Ignatius recognised, and entreats us to recognise, how profoundly loved we are by God through God's creation, that both teaches and sustains us.

This understanding is amplified during the first day of the Second Week, when we are called to contemplate 'the great capacity and circuit of the world, in which are so many and such different people' (Exx 103.1), and,

... the various persons: and first those on the surface of the earth, in such variety, in dress as in actions: some white and others black; some in peace and others in war; some weeping and others

³ *City of God*, 11.22.

laughing; some well, others ill; some being born and others dying, etc. (Exx 106.1)

Ignatius' appreciation of diversity echoes the insight of Aquinas:

Because the divine goodness could not be adequately represented by one creature alone, God produced many and diverse creatures, that what was wanting in one in the representation of divine goodness might be supplied by another. For goodness, which in God is simple and uniform, in creatures is manifest and divided. Thus the whole universe together participates in divine goodness more perfectly and represents it better than any single creature whatever.⁴

Aquinas emphasizes not only the diversity of divine goodness but also its interconnectedness: the whole represents God better than any of its parts. This insight is deepened by the discoveries of modern ecology. Imagine for a moment the three most different creatures you can—for me, a hummingbird, a cactus and a great blue whale come to mind. Biologists have distinguished about 1.7 million species on Earth—yet, as vast as this array of 'various persons' is, scientists estimate that there are at least as many yet undiscovered, perhaps as many as 30 million species.⁵ Each of these represents a unique insight into God's complexity and divine goodness. And each species holds a unique place in the intricate web of life: each is a page in the book of creation.

Sin and the Gift of Creation

In the First Week, Ignatius calls us,

... to bring to memory all the sins of life, looking from year to year, or from period to period. For this three things are helpful: first, to look at the place and the house where I have lived; second, the relations I have had with others; third, the occupations in which I have lived. (Exx 56)

In an ecological context, we might focus especially on 'the place where I have lived' by making an inventory of our 'stuff'. In my sustainability

⁴ *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 47, a. 1.

⁵ William P. Cunningham, *Understanding Our Environment* (Dubuque: William C. Brown, 1994).

course, I ask my students to choose one room in their home, perhaps their college room, and briefly:

- List the things in that room: for instance, bed, desk, lamp, books, computer, CDs, clothes.

Then, for each item or category of items:

- Describe the original materials from which the item was made: paper from Pacific North West trees, metal from Australian ore, polyester and plastic from Middle Eastern petroleum.
- Estimate how long you will use it, and how long it will be used by others after you have finished with it.
- Determine where it will go after its useful life is over: will it become landfill, or be burnt in the incinerator, or be cast into the ocean?

After seeing each other's lists, students begin to realise the extent of their intricate interconnectedness with other parts of the world, simply through their belongings. Other appropriate inventories for all of us, along the lines of the example above, might focus on the use of energy or of water.

Later in the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius places significant emphasis on thoughtfulness in food choices (Exx 210-217). It is in our relationship with food that our connectedness with creation, and with each other through creation, becomes most powerfully clear. For example, in our own times, production of a quarter-pound hamburger requires 600 gallons of water and 300 square feet of land, if one reckons not only with the cow's own direct needs, but also with the grain that feeds her. The grain that feeds the cow cannot go to feed people directly; a single quarter-pound hamburger, consumed in one meal, takes the place of two and a half loaves of bread.⁶ Worldwide, 670 million tons of grain a year is fed to livestock. If this amount were

⁶ Paul Hawken, 'McDonald's and Corporate Social Responsibility?', www.foodfirst.org/media/press/2002/mcdresponsibility.html (2002).

reduced by even ten per cent, that grain could feed 225 million people.⁷

An 'ecological footprint' is the total acreage of land required to produce an item or to sustain a person or group of people.⁸ It includes land of different kinds: energy land (devoted to fossil fuel production and recovery); built-up land (developed land and roads); croplands and gardens; pasture; and managed forest. The ecological footprint of a person, therefore, includes all the land required to produce the food, material products, and energy that sustain that person. An average Chinese person's ecological footprint is four acres, and a Thai person's five acres. Were this the worldwide average, the situation would be sustainable. But a French person's ecological footprint is thirteen acres, and a US resident requires no less than 27 acres—more than five times the sustainable land allocation.

Consumption and the Two Standards

In the Second Week Ignatius introduces us to the Two Standards, that of Satan and that of Christ. In Ignatius' framework, Satan lures people to his banner through riches, worldly honour, and pride. Surely none of us reading this article would consider ourselves to be primarily motivated by these. But in our ignorance of the implications of our overconsumptive patterns, the effects of our actions and way of life are the same as if we were motivated by these things. The 21 per cent of the world's population who live in industrialised countries use:

- 86% of the world's aluminum
- 81% of the world's paper
- 80% of the world's iron and steel
- 75% of the world's energy⁹

⁷ Worldwatch Institute, 'United States Leads World Meat Stampede', Worldwatch Press Briefing on the Global Trends in Meat Consumption (2 July 1998).

⁸ The concept was developed by Mathis Wackernagel and William Rees, in *Our Ecological Footprint* (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 1996).

⁹ Aaron Sachs, 'Eco-Justice: Linking Human Rights and the Environment', Worldwatch Paper 127 (Washington, DC: Worldwatch Institute, 1995), 35.

Such consumption not only depletes the earth's natural resources in an unsustainable way, but also creates other serious problems in the extraction, use and disposal of associated products. We have the problems of the hazardous waste produced, of the greenhouse gases generated, of the massive erosion and loss of topsoil caused by the destruction of forests. And these are by no means the only such problems.

When we understand the interconnections revealed by ecological awareness, the issue of consumption—whether of beef, energy, materials or water—becomes an issue of justice. When we choose the standard of Christ—simplicity, a focus on the spiritual as opposed to the worldly, and humility—we shift toward a more just allocation of the earth's resources.

Ecology and Suffering

Who is it that suffers from the abuse of creation? St Paul reminds us:

... creation awaits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God.... We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now. (Romans 8: 19, 22)

Because of human activities, the nonhuman beings with whom we dwell in our home—all made by God and seen to be good by Him at every step of their creation (Genesis 1)—suffer the loss of their own homes through habitat destruction. They suffer the loss and poisoning of their food, and the loss of one another through the eradication of species. Of course, all species, human and nonhuman, survive at the expense of something else that is alive. But the suffering brought to creation by humans is often unnecessary suffering caused by greed, or at least by ignorance of the implications of our desires and our actions, especially our purchases. Most of us would probably agree that causing unnecessary suffering is wrong. And Christ calls us always to greater compassion with the marginalised and the voiceless. Can we expand our hearts enough to include the voiceless nonhuman creatures on the margin of our overdeveloped human societies?

Our unreflective use of creation also has a profound impact on the human part of creation. As Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, the current Jesuit General, has pointed out, 'The first victims of any ecological imbalance

are and always will be the poor'.¹⁰ Through our destructive exploitation of the natural world, the human poor are deprived of abundant and clean air, water, earth, energy and food. The human poor are also the victims of violence from political struggles that are in part the result of imbalances in the availability of natural resources.

In an effort to consider the needs of others compassionately, my students often suggest that the world's poor are too concerned with daily survival to be able to be attentive to ecological issues. However, this generalisation has been shown to be profoundly inadequate. Riley Dunlap, of Washington State University, studied survey data from 24 nations ranging from the wealthy (USA and Japan) to the poor (India and Nigeria).¹¹ He found the correlation between income and concern for the environment to be an *inverse* one: that is, citizens of the least-developed countries expressed the most concern for ecological well-being—perhaps because they are the first to feel the effects of environmental degradation, and the least able to shift damaging activities off their own soil to other parts of the world.

Finally, in addition to the suffering of creation and the suffering of the human poor, mistreatment of God's gift of the natural world also has another immense cost. There are millions and millions of printed copies of biblical Scripture, in all languages, distributed around the world. But for a moment, imagine that there is only *one* copy of this sacred text, so rich in written knowledge of God. Imagine that a group of people got hold of that single, irreplaceable copy and began tearing



¹⁰ Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, 'Our Responsibility for God's Creation', Address at Opening of Arrupe College, Jesuit School of Philosophy and Humanities, Harare, Zimbabwe, 22 August 1998 (http://www.jesuits.ca/justicecr/EcoProj_Jc/KolvenbachLetter/KolvenbachLetter5_Eco.html).

¹¹ Riley E. Dunlap, 'Differing Views of Sustainable Development: Public Perceptions in Wealthy and Poor Nations', presented at 'Planetary Stewardship: an interdisciplinary conference on the environment', Borah Foundation, Martin Institute, University of Idaho, 16 April 1998; Riley E. Dunlap, George Gallup, Jr, Alec M. Gallup, 'Health of the Planet. Results of a 1992 International Environmental Opinion Survey of Citizens in 24 Nations', The George H. Gallup International Institute, Princeton, NJ (May 1993).

and then burning its pages, first one by one and then in clumps. Imagine your sense of anguish at the permanent loss of this solitary Book of God.

With Scripture, this scenario is implausible. But God's one book of creation is being destroyed by burning, and those of us who live in the overdeveloped world are contributing to the process. It is mostly our addiction to fossil fuel, raw materials, and cows that is destroying forests and other ecosystems worldwide, along with the species that dwell in them. Every lost species is lost forever: no amount of time or careful ecological restoration can recall a lost species back to creation. God commanded Noah to preserve every living creature and, when the flood was over, to,

... bring out with you every living thing ... birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—so that they may abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.
(Genesis 8:17)

God established the covenant not only with Noah, but also with every living creature that was on the ark with him, and promised never again to destroy them by flood (Genesis 9:10). Shall we then destroy them by greed, and by our persistent ignorance?

With the loss of every species and every ecosystem, we lose manifold ways of coming to know our God. Neither we, nor our children nor any other creature, human or nonhuman, can any longer read the destroyed pages that could have revealed to us yet another expression of God's beauty and creativity and glory. And not only are these species and ecosystems lost: all of the future individuals, species and ecosystems that might have evolved from them as future manifestations of God's work are also lost.

Paths Towards Healing, Consolation and Resurrection

In the Fourth Week, Ignatius calls us toward healing and new life in his beautiful 'Contemplation to Attain Love'. In its second point, he asks us once more, as he did at the beginning of the Spiritual Exercises, to consider how God dwells in creation: beginning (as Genesis tells us God did) with the elements, then moving on to the plants, animals and human beings. Again in the third point, he calls us to remember,

... how God works and labours for me in all things created on the face of the earth ... as in the heavens, elements, plants, fruits, cattle, etc., giving them being, preserving them, giving them vegetation and sensation, etc. (Exx 236)

In what ways can we interact with the natural world to bring forth the consolation, the sense of God's presence, that leads us to resurrection? James E. Hug, executive director of the Jesuit Center of Concern, stated in his address to the 2002 Ignatian Spirituality Conference the importance of 'becoming fully conscious of the *context* in which we encounter God'.¹² The created world is perhaps the oldest and one of the most powerful contexts for our encounters with God. We can move toward greater consciousness of this context in three ways: personal, communal and spiritual.

On a *personal* level, we can spend contemplative time in natural environments as human creatures, focusing consciously (as Ignatius suggests) on our five senses. We become more deeply enfleshed beings—more full of the life that is God's gift to us—when we are aware of what we are seeing in a place, and also of what we hear, smell, taste and touch. We can acknowledge, honour and thank our brothers and sisters, our fellow creatures, for their work in our world; we thereby grow in gratitude to God for his work through them. John Paul II calls us in this direction:

This capacity for contemplation and knowledge, this discovery of a transcendent presence in creation, must also lead us to rediscover our kinship with the earth, to which we have been linked since creation.¹³

We can grow in *communal* consciousness when we not only become aware of our global interconnectedness, but also take responsibility for it. Because of modern ecological awareness, we know that we can hurt each other from across the world. But this also means that we can heal each other from great distances: we now have the possibility of authentically loving each other in ways that were unavailable during Ignatius' time.

¹² James E. Hug, Panel on 'The Spiritual Exercises: Adapting to Today's Issues', 2002 Conference on Ignatian Spirituality, St Louis, 25 July 2002. My italics.

¹³ John Paul II, General Audience, 26 January 2000.

For instance, if US Americans reduced their meat consumption by just 5 per cent (perhaps one fewer meat meal per week), they could save enough grain to feed 25 million people—the number who go hungry in the US daily.¹⁴ All Westerners could drive less, generating fewer of the greenhouse gases that raise sea levels and ruin coastal agriculture on Pacific islands. Knowing that we have these opportunities to love and to heal, how can we not take them?

Finally, we can be healed *spiritually* through our interaction with the natural world. God's creation is immensely graced with a capacity for rebirth and renewal. Only a year after the Chernobyl disaster, wild creatures were making homes in the vicinity. After centuries of denudation, the Appalachian mountains are again rich with forests from Georgia to Maine. On Hamm Creek, a small tributary to the Duwamish River that empties into Seattle's Elliott Bay, one man's work over twenty years has helped the stream recover from being a tyre-dump to providing a path for migrating salmon. Stories of recovery and healing from all over the world can renew and refresh our spirits. And creating our own new stories of creation and resurrection brings us closer to the Creator, so that we 'sing with Francis the glory of God and to discern prayerfully with Ignatius the love of God shining through the environment'.¹⁵

Trileigh Tucker received her PhD in geology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She teaches in the interdisciplinary Ecological Studies Program at Seattle University, where she has also served as Director of the General Science Program and of the Ecological Studies Program. Her research concerns interactions between Catholic theology, spirituality and the natural world.

¹⁴ http://library.thinkquest.org/c004833/environment_en.shtml.

¹⁵ Kolvenbach, 'Our Responsibility for God's Creation'.

DIALOGUING WITH THE DANCE OF CREATION

John English

WHAT A MAGNIFICENT SIGHT THE PANORAMA OF THE HEAVENS makes on a clear night—the myriads of planets, stars and galaxies, as they move across the heavens before us! Psalmists, troubadours, poets, have all expressed amazement at the sight. Scientist and theologians, in spite of their differences, are united by wonder and awe, and by the desire to know and understand the heavens. We read in Psalm 8:

When I look at the heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are humans that you are mindful of them, mortals that you should care for them? (Psalm 8:3-4)

And Psalm 139 suggests that God is in a dance with creation: ‘Even there your hand shall lead me, and your right shall hold me fast’ (Psalm 139:10).

Scientists have made it possible for us to view the heavens in new and fascinating ways. Telescopes and space stations show us the circling of planets and gases in the universe, leading to the creation of new stars and planets. They tell us that the universe is constantly expanding, in an activity like a choral dance.

What scientists say finds an echo in theologians speaking of a dance in the Trinity:

... the love which is God emerged more clearly as the trinity of Father, Son and Spirit engaged in *perichoresis*, a permanent dance of love into which human beings are invited and empowered to join.



The love which is God has been made available to all willing to join the dance, willing to draw others into the dance, willing to make place for others in the dance.¹

John O'Donnell, drawing on the work of Eberhard Jüngel, develops the image of *perichoresis* in a book on the Trinity:

The concept of the trinitarian God who is love implies the eternal newness according to which the eternal Lord is always his own future. God and love never grow old. Their being is and remains one that is coming.²

We can imagine the dynamic activity within the Trinity, its dance or *perichoresis*, overflowing into the dance of the heavens. We are caught up in this marvel of motion, sound and light which is the movement of the stars, the variations of light and of sound coming from beyond our earth. We are part of the Trinity's dance.

¹ Enda McDonagh, 'Love', in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins and Dermot A. Lane (Collegeville, Mn: Liturgical Press, 1987), 615.

² John J. O'Donnell, *The Mystery of the Triune God* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1988), 170, quoting Eberhard Jüngel.

What, then, does it mean to be a creature? 'Humanity is created' is more than a simple statement of fact. To be created is to be taking part in the divine dance, to be in relationship with all other creatures, human and non-human, to be in communion with the three persons of the Trinity.

Even scientists recognise that there is more to reality than molecules, atoms and minute quanta. Rupert Sheldrake, an eminent biologist, understands the existence and phenomenon of being a creature in terms of the *interaction* of living beings. The mechanistic view of things does not explain memory in cells (morphogenesis), or instinctive behaviour and learning. It cannot define life. Nor does it account for the sacredness of times and places. He has come to a view of the universe which is both scientific and spiritual. He has made it his goal in life to demonstrate the vital principle in the universe, and to speculate about forms of consciousness in the creation other than the human:

My interest is in a new view of science, where we see the universe as alive, and in an exploration of what it could mean to see that there are forms of consciousness above the human consciousness. If one thinks of a divine consciousness embracing all things, and then this human consciousness here, the traditional view is that there are many, many other levels and kinds of consciousness in between.³

Then of course there is our spiritual sense of being a creature. As we become aware of the temporality and tenuousness of life, as we begin to seek the meaning of life, we come to recognise ourselves as creatures of a creator. As we question further we might ask, 'Is this creator a person?' Then we might reason: 'If we are persons then there is a personal creator'. Or we might turn to the wisdom of our ancestors and their inspired sacred writings that proclaim the presence of a personal creator. If we acknowledge that the creator is a person and has a personal relationship to us, our experience of being a creature takes on a deeper quality, even

³ Hal Blacker, "Maybe Angels: A Confluence of Imagination and Rational Enquiry": An Interview with Rupert Sheldrake, in *What is Enlightenment?* 6/1 (Spring/Summer 1997), reproduced at <http://www.wie.org/j11/sheldrake.asp>.

if our image of a personal creator may need much refinement theologically and spiritually.

The experience of being a personal creature is a spiritual experience. We sense that we have been brought into existence by a personal creator, and that even now our relationship with that creator is what is sustaining us in being. The experience is interpersonal: we know that our being is dependent on the benevolent love of a transcendent person, or rather of the community of persons that is the Trinity. Even Jesus, in his humanity, had a sense of creaturehood. The Gospels record his praying to the Father, and both Paul and the author of Hebrews stress his vulnerability.

This experience is not simply intellectual, but also affective. It involves not just an acknowledgment that we are dependent, but also a response of gratitude. Again, we might listen to Rupert Sheldrake:

It is hard to feel a sense of gratitude for an inanimate, mechanical world proceeding inexorably in accordance with eternal laws of nature and blind chance. And this is a great spiritual loss, for it is through gratitude that we acknowledge the living powers on which our own lives depend; through gratitude we enter into a conscious relationship to them; through gratitude we can find ourselves in a state of grace.⁴

A sense of limitedness and dependency, of fragility and contingency, can—depending on the quality of a person's faith and sensitivity—lead to a relationship of gratitude. A person can grow in deep awareness of the giftedness of our lives and respond to the Creator in wonder, gratitude, humility and love.

As I recognise the transcendent, I am carried beyond my everyday sensory life to the creator of all. I am taken out of myself. When this happens I have entered into the realm of mystery, the mystery of my relationship with the person of the Godhead, with the persons of the Trinity. This entry into God's mystery is the basis of every other spiritual experience, even as these seem to centre on other realities such as Jesus Christ or the communion of saints.

⁴ Rupert Sheldrake, *The Rebirth of Nature: Science and God* (Rochester, Vt: Park Street Press, 1994), 221. For more background, see Jean Mouroux, *The Christian Experience*, translated by George Lamb (London: Sheed and Ward, 1955 [1952]).

When our sense of creaturehood carries us into the love of God, we are being given an experience of spiritual consolation as Ignatius describes it:

I use the word 'consolation' when any interior movement is produced in the soul that leads her to become inflamed with the love of her Creator and Lord ... when one sheds tears that lead to love of one's Lord, and to every increase of hope, faith, and charity, to all interior happiness that calls and attracts a person towards heavenly things and to the soul's salvation, leaving the soul quiet and at peace in the Creator and Lord.⁵

Creaturehood in the Spiritual Exercises

Ignatius observed the heavens as a way of appreciating the handiwork of the Creator. He tells us that shortly after his conversion,

... the greatest consolation he used to receive was to look at the sky and the stars, which he did often and for a long time, because with this he used to feel in himself a great impetus towards serving Our Lord. (Autobiography 11)

In the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius first approaches the theme of creation in the Principle and Foundation (Exx 23). In the first sentence of this statement he writes:

The human person is created to praise, reverence and serve God Our Lord, and by so doing to save his or her soul.

Ignatius saw life as the continual creative personal presence of the Trinity, of the Trinity coming to us. Indeed he refers to Christ not only as our Lord but also as our Creator in many places in the *Spiritual Exercises*, echoing the teaching of the Johannine prologue, and of the hymn we find at the opening of the letter to the Colossians.⁶

Here is a modern rendition of Ignatius' Principle and Foundation:

⁵ Exx 316. Ignatian sources in this article are taken from Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *Personal Writings*, edited and translated by Joseph A. Munitiz and Philip Endean (London: Penguin, 1996).

⁶ Exx 5, 15, 16, 50, 52, 229, 317, 351.

As a response to the overflowing love of the Trinity, we humans, in kinship with all other things of the universe, are created to praise, reverence and serve the Trinity in all our life endeavours, and so to discover the fullness of our lives on earth (and in heaven). In our praising, reverencing and serving the Trinity, we establish a new awareness of connectedness and relationship with all the rest of nature and the need to develop a free loving attitude, even as we use them for our livelihood in all that is left to our free will and is not prohibited. This requires true spiritual freedom on our part. This is the basic attitude toward all of the community of life and is necessary for true love. Such freedom extends to our relationship to everything. So we need to find this freedom in order to develop a right relationship with creation: human, animal, plants, matter. This gives us the freedom necessary to live with honour or disgrace, in poverty or riches, with a long or short life, in sickness or in health and so of all other matters. Our one desire is to choose what will better help us praise reverence and serve the Three Divine Persons.⁷

It is important to note how Ignatius here links humans to other creatures in their personal salvation. 'The other things on the face of the earth are created for human beings' to help them attain salvation. Today, we would say that all creatures of the universe gain salvation collectively, a position which we find expressed in Paul's letter to the Romans:

We know that the whole of creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for the adoption, the redemption of our bodies. (Romans 8:22-23)

We need to ponder deeply our connectedness with all the other creatures of the universe and our dependence on them. How often do we realise the significance of the sun and other celestial beings for our

⁷ Compare Ignatius' own text: 'The human person is created to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord, and by doing so save his or her soul. The other things on the face of the earth are created for human beings in order to help them pursue the end for which they are created. It follows from this that one must use other created things in so far as they help towards one's end, and free oneself from them in so far as they are obstacles to one's end. To do this we need to make ourselves indifferent to all created things, provided the matter is subject to our free choice and there is no prohibition. Thus as far as we are concerned, we should not want health more than illness, wealth more than poverty, fame more than disgrace, a long life more than a short one, and similarly for all the rest, but we should desire and choose only what helps us more towards the end for which we are created.'

existence and ongoing life? Do we, like the aboriginal hunter, thank the deer for giving up its life to feed us? When we acknowledge that other creatures too are created, we recognise that they are more than mindless matter. We should approach them as companions on our spiritual journey to God. This helps us understand anew Ignatius' entreaty to us to become free in our relationships with them, free in the sense of giving them growth and meaning. We are not saved alone but in union with other humans and indeed with the rest of the universe.

At the end of his *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius once again places our relationship with God against the background of other creatures. He suggests that we are to consider how the Holy Spirit dwells in creatures: the elements, the plants, the animals and humanity (Exx 235). This text as it stands does not necessarily foster the full sense of spiritual creaturehood which is the concern of this article. For it is possible to consider oneself as a creature before God, the Creator from a detached, 'head' position. From there one can certainly accept that our existence is a mystery, and indeed that the whole universe is rooted in mystery. But such understanding has not yet reached the 'heart'; it has not fully gripped our subjectivity. A heart awareness requires a surrender of self, a sense of wonder at one's existence. The mystery of oneself before the Creator then leads one to prayer. We come to enter deeply into the personal activity of the Trinity, into the interpersonal relationship which is the Trinity—the activity and relationship which call us into being and sustain us in our personhood.⁸ Some readers may find helpful the exercises on creaturehood placed at the end of this article.

The Principle and Foundation expresses our purpose and goal in life. It tells us that we are creatures of a benevolent Creator, and then insists on the need for freedom (in Ignatius' language 'indifference') in our relationships with other creatures. Ignatian spiritual freedom involves a correct relationship with all the creatures of the earth; conversely it is undermined by the abuse of our companions on the

⁸ An intimate sense of creaturehood can be attained by using the experiences of creaturehood as the subject of prayer with one's life as part of the 'Story of One's Life as an Experience of Graced History'. See my *Choosing Life: The Significance of Personal History in Decision-Making* (New York: Paulist, 1978); and *Spiritual Freedom*, second edition (Chicago: Loyola UP, 1995 [1973]), 261-273.

way to union with God. We must seek an awareness of our connectedness with other creatures in order to praise, reverence and serve the Trinity in all things.

For Ignatius, God is present at all times and in all things. We are to be loving companions as we relate to other creatures and use them for their salvation as well as our own. In Romans, Paul speaks of our groanings as we wait for resurrection, while all around us creation is groaning too. We are to be brought to a sense of connectedness with all the other creatures of the universe. If, as Sheldrake and others believe,⁹ the stars and galaxies are like angels and have a consciousness, then we can acknowledge our connectedness with them and our dependence on them as we might with pet animals.

Early Christian doctrine saw a closer relationship between creation and salvation than was later envisioned. Created reality never exists without its actual ordering to grace and salvation. The creative act of Christ extends to all humanity and even reaches the cosmic realm. Other created things are to be valued in themselves and not just their use.¹⁰ Ignatius' text itself goes beyond the strictly utilitarian.

The Principle and Foundation has often been presented as referring to the individual. But Ignatius was speaking of 'humanity' as a whole, and was linking human beings with the whole range of creation. We might say, 'we are saved as a people', or even 'we are saved as a planet'. We are to approach other creatures as our companions on our journey to the Trinity.

A Prayer Exercise on Creaturehood

Now I give some ways to enter into my experiences of creaturehood. Before beginning this exercise, I should recall that my whole life story is an experience of grace. It expresses the continuous activity of the Trinity through other creatures who sustain me and who constantly

⁹ See the interview with Sheldrake referred to above in n. 3.

¹⁰ See Zachary Hayes, 'Creation', in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, edited by Michael A. Downey (Collegeville, Mn: Liturgical Press, 1993), 239-240. Scriptural corroboration can be found in Colossians 1: 15-20, Romans 8: 18-28, Job 38-39, Psalm 104. See also Joann Wolski Conn, 'Toward Spiritual Maturity', in *Freeing Theology*, edited by Catherine Mowry LaCugna (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 235-258; and 'Self', in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, 865-866.

give me new life. These other things are an expression of the Creator's loving presence to me and to the whole universe.

I read the following Scripture text as a way of entering into the mystery of creaturehood:

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God ... in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for the adoption, the redemption of our bodies. (Romans 8:19-25)

The Desire of My Heart

I ask for the grace to discover and appreciate my sense of creaturehood as an intimate act of the Trinity's loving, evolving presence with me throughout my life within the universal community that is the universe.

Point 1

I look over my life story, searching out experiences of creaturehood, of my dependence on the other creatures of the earth, and of my connection with them:

- how my physical body is made up of the chemical components of the earth
- how water and air are essential for my life
- how the plants, fish, birds and animals give me my sustenance, etc.

I consider how the other creatures of the earth sacrifice themselves for my existence.

Point 2

I reflect on the various things of beauty in the world as an expression of the Beautiful:

- the beauty of form in other humans, plants, fish, birds and animals, etc.

- the beauty of colour in the sky, mountains, lakes, flowers, etc.

I consider how all these beauties nurture and uplift my soul.

Point 3

I reflect on the sounds that are present on the earth calling to me. I put my ear to the earth and hear its heartbeats:

- sounds of the wind on the earth
- sounds of the ocean
- the silence of plants growing
- sounds of human voices, of singing by humans, birds and animals, etc.

I consider that these sounds are a means of communication between myself and the Trinity.

Point 4

I look over my life story searching out those experiences of identity with the other creatures of the community of life in the universe:

- the elements of my body as variations of the elements in many other creatures
- the ways in which our instincts work
- the ways in which we adjust and meet new situations in life, etc.

I consider how the other creatures of the earth give identity to me.

Point 5

I reflect on the ways in which various creatures show affection towards me and call me to express myself in a compassionate and heartfelt way:

- the ways in which I see other creatures achieving things that I would like to do, such as flying, swimming, etc.
- the sense of real connection through colour, odour and graceful movement, etc.

I consider how all these experiences give me compassion for other creatures.

Point 6

I reflect on the ways that other creatures enhance my being by affectionate communication, work and protection, etc.

I consider that these experiences are expressions of the Trinity to me.

Point 7

I look over my life story, searching out those experiences with other creatures that highlight my awareness that I am the beloved of the Trinity:

- I recall the experiences of the grandeur of the mountains, valleys and streams as if they were created only for me
- I recall trees and plants that have called me to a sense of awe before the Trinity
- I recall various house pets which have protected me and shown great affection to me, etc.

I consider how the other creatures of the earth reflect the love of the Trinity for me.

Point 8

I look over my life story with the other creatures of the universe, searching out those experiences of light that have consoled me and lifted me up.

I consider how the other creatures of the universe have been a source of enlightenment and truth to me.

Point 9

I look over my life story in terms of the other creatures of the universe, searching out those experiences of chaos, suffering, disorder, dysfunction and shadow that give me an appreciation of the marvellous compliance of other creatures with the mysterious actions of the Trinity, as well as the ways in which newness and hope arise in the universe and in me.

I reflect on my own need for this kind of attitude and I think of Christ's acceptance of the weather, the land and other creatures.

I consider how all these shadow experiences have been a grace to me.

Point 10

I look over my life story with the other creatures of the universe, searching out those experiences of light that have consoled me and lifted me up:

- I consider how the other creatures of the universe have been a source of enlightenment and truth to me
- I ponder on the joyous, new elements as well as on painful and chaotic ones

My life is an experience of being loved (graced) by the Trinity whether in light, shadow, suffering or hope-filled experience with the community of life in the universe.

Dialogues

I let my sense of dependence, and of connectedness with the rest of creation, emerge into conversation with the Creator of all. I express whatever surfaces: amazement, insight, awe, appreciation, gratitude, humility, etc. I pray to offer myself to the Creator in ways that will enhance their beautiful expression of love to me in this evolving universe.

I close with the prayer Jesus taught us.

John English SJ, a Jesuit from Canada, is a well-known authority on the Spiritual Exercises, and one of the pioneers of the directed retreat movement in North America. He served as Director of Loyola House, Guelph, for eight years, and is now a member of the Jesuit community in Winnipeg.

IGNATIUS LOYOLA AND GOD'S UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

Antony F. Campbell

HOW CAN WE SAY GOD LOVES US? What does it mean to use that language? The fine tissue of the life of spirit needs constant attention and regular revising of its language to express what is sometimes so faintly felt, so easily swamped, and yet is at the core of human life. We need words that move us, words of wonder, words of wisdom. It can happen, though, that what sounds right at one moment may have implications that in the long term are not right. Love is one of those words that touches us deeply. The need has been in us since the beginning: 'it is not good that the man should be alone' (Genesis 2:18). Yet do we need the love of God? Does God need our love? What does it mean to say that God loves us?

Language of a loving God is commonplace in today's spirituality. One could be forgiven for wondering whether, sometimes at least, the language of an unconditionally loving God might be almost the equivalent of a useful code for refusal to believe in hell-fire and purgatorial punishment. On the other hand, acceptance of God's unconditional love is an invitation to us to rise above the oldest archaism of the human spirit. In my own words elsewhere:

The invitation is to aspire to a level of spirit-filled existence that so far too few have managed to sustain for more than fleeting moments: a disclaimer of self-interest in divine order and a freedom to be loved and to love in the disorder of life's experience, to accept in faith God's unconditional love and faithfully respond to it.¹

Throughout our lives today, faith and experience may require that we hold together, as a paradox in the mystery of the divine, both the

¹ Antony F. Campbell, *God First Loved Us: The Challenge of Accepting Unconditional Love* (New York: Paulist, 2000), xi.

powerlessness of a loving God—who rages, weeps and rejoices *with* us—and the ‘otherness’ of God. Perhaps we have to hold together in one faith the God who is ‘utterly other’ (of whom we can hardly speak and had best be silent), and the God who has been and is ‘here among us’ (with whom we must engage).

This challenge apart, in an earlier day God’s love was seldom expressed in terms of unconditional love. The language of an unconditionally loving God is absent from the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius Loyola. Does its reality, nevertheless, have a place in his thought and prayer? Using his text, can we find it there for ourselves? I think we can. I would like to suggest that the Fourth Week’s *Contemplatio* throws helpful light on what precedes it.

Unconditional love might have been wrapped for Ignatius in the mystic heights of courtly romance; he dreamed about it. Whoever she was (possibly the Infanta Catarina), he was not in her league.² Fortunately for the future, Ignatius’ daydreams moved beyond the romantic imaginings and took a turn for the spiritual. Ignatius Loyola came to the life of the spirit from the life of a soldier. In those days,

Kizysztof M del SJ



unconditional loyalty was something every soldier knew about; you died for it. Three of Ignatius’ brothers died for it. Ignatius starts with loyalty and moves towards love.

The unconditional in the life of Ignatius before his conversion was the loyalty a knight owed his lord. Ignatius’ first lord was Juan Velázquez, ‘a noble in the finest traditions of old Spain’,³ who, however,

² W. W. Meissner, *Ignatius of Loyola: The Psychology of a Saint* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 240-241.

³ Meissner, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 18, and n. 4.

died in disfavour. With the death of Velázquez, Ignatius transferred his services to the duke of Nájera and was facing the French on his behalf at Pamplona, capital of Navarre, when the cannonball shattered his leg. Ignatius knew the loyalty of the soldier. As anyone at the time knew, it was a two-way loyalty. The soldier was expected to be loyal to his lord; the lord was expected to be loyal to his vassal. Ignatius was brought up at court and was enamoured of the Infanta; this was the air that Ignatius breathed. The ideal of chivalry articulated ideas of honour, loyalty and disinterested self-sacrifice, and 'softened the harshness of the military code which was its heart'.⁴ If we are pained by the martial imagery, we need to remember that somewhere around the turn of the nineteenth into the twentieth century the emotional and intellectual attitude to the activity of war changed. As we well know, Ignatius Loyola lived, experienced, and wrote several centuries before that. The ideals of chivalry then were the structures of Ignatius' world; veiled in these structures may be his understanding of the love of God.

A Loving God

All language about God has to work with analogies. We can only speak of God by analogy, by comparison with something else, applying the appropriate safeguards. Whatever faith-claims may be made, as a rule we do not have direct sense-experience of God. Language about God's love for us is necessarily figurative. When faith has made the leap to the existence of God (or from the end-point of an argument for the existence of God to the actual commitment of oneself to the acceptance of God), what does it mean to say God loves us?

For us human beings, at a first level at least, love implies extensive involvement of the senses: sight, touch, hearing, taste and smell. Aspects and circumstances vary so much, but so often there is a glance, a touch, a kiss, holding, hugging, sexual play and bonding; there's a closeness physically and emotionally. And, of course, there is so much more: understanding, intimacy, acceptance, commitment.... It is the sense-experience that is lacking with God: no glance, no touch, no sound. In the context of faith, God's impact on us may be felt; it is our own sensory contact with God that is lacking. How do we

⁴ J. M. Roberts, *The Penguin History of Europe* (London: Penguin, 1996), 160.

talk of love where mutuality is so stretched, where the disparity is as wide as that between creator and creature?

**Can we speak
of God
needing us?**

We rightly speak of our needing God; can we also speak of God needing us? Perhaps yes, but if so it shakes up a lot of classical theological understanding. If not, it puts an enormous weight on the analogical or metaphorical aspect of our language about God's love. What might it mean to love someone and not need them? Acceptance, benevolence, commitment (the ABC of love) are all very well, but most of us need something more—something somewhere along the spectrum from affection to passion. Even at the extreme end of the spectrum, passion need not be excluded from our relationship with God. Not from our side. Our being passionately in love with God may take many forms, but it is possible. The faith-statement often attributed to St Teresa of Avila, 'though you damn me I will love you still', is as good an example as we get of such passionate love. Not from God's side either. I've heard those I'd trust—the wise and theologically well-informed—speak of our being passionately loved by God.

If we find all this passionate love a bit far away from where we are, it may help to go back to the opposite: cold indifference. Yet, although it is not, of course, the whole story, there is much to be said for imaging our God as accepting of us, benevolent toward us, committed to us—where it is OK for us to be in the divine doghouse because we believe that, despite our flaws, our frailty, our failures, God is committed to us. Deeply displeased (there are other ways of putting that), but committed to us.

Put bluntly: it is tricky to say God loves us when normally the experience of the senses is out of the question. A possible balance to the coldness early in the text of the *Spiritual Exercises* lies in our awareness that Ignatius Loyola was a highly emotional man. His spiritual diary is awash with his tears. The emotion was felt; it was evidently there in the man, available to him in his reflection on his experience.

The Spiritual Exercises

Ignatius starts his Contemplation for Obtaining Love (Exx 230-237) with the dry note that love is more a matter of works than words (*más en las obras que en las palabras*). He goes on to talk about mutual

communication (*comunicación de las dos partes*). We need to push the idea of communication further than his examples of knowledge, honours, wealth and so on; we need to be alert to the 'mutual', which Ignatius brings out in his repeated prayer: you, O God, have given to me, so I give to you.

We can broaden the prayer massively; we can also feel its sheer terror—at least in some of its words. For example, 'Take and receive ... all my memory'—'not on your sweet nelly, dear Lord; it sounds like the equivalent to Alzheimer's, and I don't want that.' Unfolding the contemplation itself, before the prayer or colloquy at the end of each point, Ignatius talks about remembering the benefits we have received from God (creation, salvation, special gifts); he talks about life and all the ways we can experience that in the environment (plants, animal kingdom, humanity); from there he moves out to the whole of creation, daring to speak of a working God just as Genesis dared speak of a resting God, and ending up with God as the source of all goodness. He dares even to speak of a God who '*desea dárseme*', who longs to give God's own self to me. That is love. The bulk of the contemplation is a reflection on the love of God, a reflection that operates out of faith, that invites our senses to play on the objects of our sense-experience and tie these in faith into God.

Ignatius does not sidestep what it means to talk about God loving us; rather, he comes at it from a particular angle. For Ignatius, as we have seen, love is grounded in deeds more than words and is a mutual communication between lover and beloved. Not surprisingly, therefore, the evidence of God's love for us is sketched in the facts, available to the eye of the believer, rather than in the weaving of words. We can see what we believe God does for us and around us; it is a further step in faith to attempt to find words for the emotions of God, to speak of God's love for us. It is interesting that the process of the Spiritual Exercises begins with God (Principle and Foundation, First Week), turns to Jesus Christ for his life, death and resurrection (Second to Fourth Weeks) and at the end of this introduces the Contemplation for Obtaining Love (*para alcanzar amor*). The implications require reflection.

The Principle and Foundation

The Principle and Foundation, at the beginning of the *Spiritual Exercises*, is surprisingly loveless—the text is devoid of any mention of the word. In the Gospel parable, Jesus suggests that builders and warriors prudently count the costs before committing themselves (Luke 14:28-32). From the start of the Exercises, with the Principle and Foundation, the process of counting the cost begins. Later in the Exercises, during the Second Week (above all, in the Kingdom and the Two Standards), Ignatius asks for chivalrous commitment to Jesus' cause. Costs must still be counted, and cost-counting is a hard-headed business.

The opening statement is one that we could hardly make today. Ignatius says: man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord (Exx 23—*El hombre es criado para alabar, hacer reverencia y servir a Dios nuestro Señor*). The issue is not inclusive language; that is important, but it is easy: 'We are created ...'. The more significant change is massive and facing it is not easy. To be responsible today, we would have to preface this sentence with 'we believe': 'We believe that we are created ...'. There is a deep gulf between an age when an affirmation of faith could be made as a matter of fact, without any thought of faith, and an age when accuracy demands the avowal of faith.

***In our age,
faith cannot
be taken
for granted***

We might also wonder whether the absence of love from Ignatius' sentences reflects the gulf between the sixteenth century and now. Not so. In 1570, Mary Queen of Scots wrote to her four-year-old son that she hoped he would know that he had in her 'a loving mother that wishes you to learn in time to love, know and fear God'.⁵

The First Week

The First Week of the *Spiritual Exercises* is taken up with what is today the immensely unpopular theme of sin: first the angels, Adam and Eve, the single lost soul; then my own sins and my own insignificance; finally the horrors of hell-fire. For many a modern, such thoughts and imaginings are miles away from reality—and miles away from the idea of an unconditionally loving God. What they can hold to is the utter

⁵ Antonia Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1969), 421.

seriousness of human life. Christian faith tells us that we are not on this earth for the fun of it. Today, with global communications, we know enough of the horrors inflicted by humans or by nature not to take this life lightly. There are no easy answers, unless we stay with superficiality; at a level of depth, we face either absurdity or mystery.

The imagery of Ignatius is pretty brutal; it is the imagery of the time. Dr Johnson's observation that the knowledge that you are to be hanged concentrates the mind wonderfully may be true; it is certainly unduly blunt and, to many today, highly insensitive. But that was over two centuries ago. Early in the last century, James Joyce, in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, could have a preacher say: 'God would not be God if He did not punish the transgressor', even if for some today, God would not be God if God did. So we recognise in Ignatius the thought and language of his time. We cannot let it obscure for us the essential: if we believe there is a God, then nothing is more central in life.

Being central is not the same thing as being certain. For Ignatius, the sinfulness of specific actions was certain. The consequences of such sinfulness were equally certain. For many of those who believe in a world with God, there is no proposition so certain in today's world as to warrant staking eternal salvation on it. For a chivalrous soldier in the sixteenth century, there was one thing certain enough to die for: loyalty to one's liege lord.

Commitment to Christ

The Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises opens with a prayer of deliberate commitment to the cause of Christ. The imagery of chivalry is everywhere. The human king is there, at the pinnacle of earthly prestige. His offer is irresistible; the cause is unquestioned, and the burdens will be shared by followers and king alike. Any soldier with the slightest sense of honour would sign up to the cause without hesitation.

The whole fabric of the world of chivalry is the background against which Ignatius portrays Christ's call for commitment. The irresistible offer is made. Those signing up are admired. The soldier with any sense of honour will set out to distinguish himself. Unspoken here, but utterly real, is the conviction that the follower's commitment to Christ is matched by Christ's commitment to the follower. As anyone at the

time knew, loyalty was two-way: the soldier was expected to be loyal to the lord and the lord was expected to be loyal to the vassal. Christ's commitment could be counted on and taken for granted. Readers today will be aware of the masculinity of much of this imagery from centuries long past, but perhaps not of its mutuality.

**Readers must
find Ignatius'
meaning for
themselves**

What is wonderfully liberating about the text of the *Exercises* is that at certain key points Ignatius does not spell out his meaning in detail. It is left for readers to do it for themselves. So here. The 'cause of Christ' is put in broad general terms: to conquer the whole world and all the enemies, and so to enter into the glory of my Father (Exx 95.4—*conquistar todo el mundo y todos los enemigos, y así entrar en la gloria de mi Padre*). The nature of the 'conquest' is not spelled out; neither is 'the glory of my Father'.

We are free to fill these out for ourselves. We are not bound to images of redemption; we can be free for images of salvation. 'The glory of my Father' can be our recognition of who we are, our recognition of the achievement involved in our becoming who we are, and our recognition of the value that is ours in the eyes of our God. At least, that is a good start.

In what follows in the *Exercises*, hell and redemption do have a part to play, even if a restricted one; this is sixteenth-century theology after all. But right at the beginning, we are free to make our choices. We can envisage a conquest that is free of negative overtones and that instead involves the overwhelming conviction of God's commitment to this 'whole world and all the enemies'—God's seeing a value in us that can so often be hidden from us in all the horrors of too much human life. In such an understanding, we are not so much redeemed from a power that holds us bound and must be conquered. Rather, we are saved, overwhelmed, by the awareness of our right relationship with God that is truly called salvation. For Ignatius, the Trinity contemplate the human fate of hell and the human need for redemption and they decide on the Incarnation. Ignatius does not spell out a theology of this incarnation and redemption. For us, the incarnation—Christ's becoming 'God here among us'—can be the expression of God's commitment to us, of God's capacity to value and hold precious all that is human (see Isaiah 43:4). Must God punish the transgressor? Isaiah does not seem to think so (Isaiah 43:25) and nor does Job (Job 7:20-21).

The Life, Death and Resurrection of Christ

Subsequent prayer in the Spiritual Exercises, with a few exceptions, is dedicated to contemplating the life, death and resurrection of Christ. The commitment to Christ has been made. The leader is put under the microscope and studied in minute detail. The aim is to enhance the follower's commitment. The assumption of the leader's commitment is automatic.

In contemplating the events of Christ's Passion, the petition of the first contemplation in particular notes that it is 'for my sins' that Christ suffers (Exx 193—*porque por mis peccados va el Señor a la pasión*). Quite rightly, this can be understood in terms of my need for redemption from sin. Interestingly though, in the second contemplation Ignatius shifts the focus from sin and speaks simply of the suffering Christ bore 'for me' (Exx 203—*tanta pena que Christo pasó por mí*). Without claiming to know precisely what Ignatius might have meant by the shift, we are entitled to put our emphasis on the incarnation as God's great saving act, from which Christ's passion and death follow as the natural results of sharing our human life to the full. To put this sharply: Christ's incarnation need not be seen as merely the necessary prelude to his suffering and death which alone are what redeem us; instead, Christ's incarnation itself—his becoming one of us—can be seen as the expression of God's commitment to humanity, and Christ's suffering and death are then the inevitable consequence of his life, of his values, and of the way he lived them in that particular period of time. This is 'suffering for my sins'. It is a sharing in human life that, in the 'sinfulness' of that life, can have violent and appalling consequences.

Psychologically, it makes good sense to have the process of the contemplation of Jesus' life precede the Contemplation for Obtaining Love (or 'for recognising love', as we shall see below). When we have absorbed through all the senses what human life and suffering meant to Jesus, how deeply Jesus must have found value in all the ordinariness and burden that is part and parcel of human living, at that point we are better prepared to accept the extraordinary faith-claim of God's love for us. As at the transfiguration, so in the resurrection appearances, some hint is given of the value God puts on human life. Against the background of the resurrection, it is appropriate to become increasingly aware of the love of God for us. What has gone before is

not Christ's suffering in order to free us from sin. It is the fullness of salvation—the awareness of the value God sets on human life, the awareness of the love God has for us—that frees us to live abundantly.

The Contemplation for Recognising Love

It is against this background that we come to the Contemplation for Obtaining Love. The Spanish has '*para alcanzar amor*'. I believe it is best understood as 'for recognising love', becoming fully aware of, coming to grips with God's love, grasping or reaching an understanding of God's love for us—before turning to the immensity involved in our response. The Spanish title is suitably ambiguous; it has the advantage of making space for the dual focus of the contemplation as a whole: primarily on God's love for us; secondarily on our response.

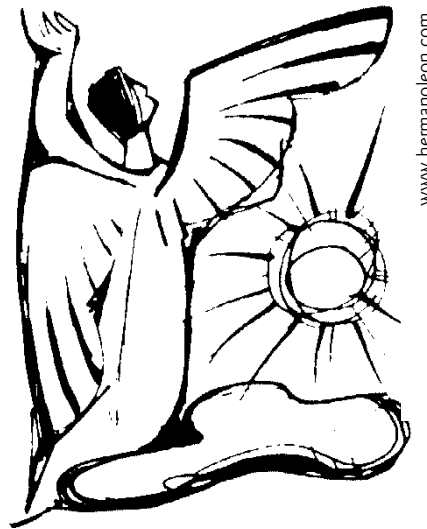
'Obtaining love' is a traditional English rendering; it is loaded and too easily misunderstood. 'Obtaining' or 'attaining' or 'arousing' are all focused on the prayer we are to make within the exercise; they do not take adequate account of the contemplation itself that Ignatius wrote, which in each part precedes the prayer. In Ignatius' preamble, the inner recognition (*cognoscimiento interno*) of God's goodness to us and love for us precedes the concern for our response. The prayer, repeated at the end of each part, is focused on our return of love to God, balanced by 'give me only your love and your grace' at the prayer's end. Fr Caswall's rendering in one of his hymns does justice to the core of the contemplation:

I love thee, O thou Lord most high,
Because thou first hast lovèd me.

The contemplation itself, in its core, focuses on God's love for us. We do not 'obtain' love; it has been given us. This contemplation does not invite us to 'obtain' God's love; it invites us to contemplate and realise the love from God that has been given us and continues to be given us, not as reward but as a free gift—like the sun from above and the waters from a spring. We are entitled to speak in faith of the experience of God's commitment to us, God's love for us.

It may be that in Ignatius' eyes, we are not justified in calling that commitment and that love unconditional—although the sun and the spring are. The fate of the sinner, as portrayed by Ignatius, argues against the unconditional. In feudal eyes, treachery wiped out any

obligation on the part of the liege lord. Such reality had to be present to Ignatius' mind. There is an uncertainty that only a commitment in faith eradicates. Even today we know that we cannot argue our way to the acceptance of love, much less to God's unconditional love; we believe it, and rejoice. We do not know that there is a God; we may believe. We do not know whether our God saves the few, saves the many, or saves the lot—all of us, including those we don't approve of. We choose, we believe, we may hope.



From the beginning, Scripture can give us hope: 'Never again will I doom the earth because of human sin, *since the desires of the human heart are evil from the start*; nor will I ever again strike down all living beings, as I have done'⁶—God is committed to us in all of our frailty (see Isaiah 54:9-10). We are able to love each other, despite knowing the flaws of those we love and who love us. Dare we deny that God, who knows our flaws far better than we do, is able to love us too? As with any love, we cannot argue our way to God's love for us. We can eliminate some of the obstacles and then hope for the leap of faith. The invitation is not to look on the miseries of Ignatius' world or ours; it is rather the invitation to look for the goodness of God within us and around us—to see ourselves as God would see us.

What Ignatius offers to God repeatedly in this prayer—'Take, Lord, and receive (*Tomad, Señor, y recibid*)'—is worth noting. It is basically everything: liberty, memory, understanding, will, possessions. If God took us up on this offer literally, we would be in for a shock, left with life and little else. In the context of this prayer, we are entitled to reflect on just how much Ignatius must have experienced as God's giving and loving. Ignatius' phrase was 'your love and your grace (*vuestro amor y gracia*)'. For us, perhaps that may bear reformulation:

⁶Genesis 8:21, translation adapted from the *New American Bible* and emphasis added.

‘your free gift of unconditional love’. Even further: is the unconditional quality of that love precisely what enables us to hear the invitation to accept and to respond?

Exercises in prayer are not studies in theology. The underlying theology may be visible; it is not explicitly addressed. Here, in the *Spiritual Exercises*, we may note that sin is present early in the piece without an explicit focus on God’s love for the sinner. We may also note that in the final reflection on God’s love there is not an explicit focus on the sinfulness of those who are so loved. That the two are in the same little book suggests that Ignatius could hold them together. The invitation today to Christian faith, and to each one of us, may be to hold together explicitly both God’s love and human sinfulness: we are loved, sinners though we are.

Once the Principle and Foundation and the prayer associated with it have enabled someone to establish the place of God in their life, the Second, Third and Fourth Weeks of the *Spiritual Exercises* take them into the life of Jesus Christ. At the end of this journeying, the person may be more ready to appreciate God’s love for them that has been there from the outset—like the sun. Like the sun, God’s love for us has not been offered as a reward to be earned but is presented as a given to be treasured. Like the sun, it is there.

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From the Ignatian Tradition

EXERCISES FOR INFIDELS, HERETICS AND SINNERS

Jerónimo Nadal

*In the last issue of **The Way**, we reproduced a passage from Jerónimo Nadal's **Apology** for the Ignatian Exercises. Nadal wrote this document between 1554 and 1556 in angry reaction to a critical report from an inquisitorial committee in Spain chaired by the Dominican theologian Tomás Pedroche. In this issue, we take another extract, in which Nadal faces the accusation that Ignatius removes any basis for people outside a state of grace making a good Christian choice.¹*

Nadal initially answers the charge by reminding his hostile readers that any good Election is made on the basis of the First Week, on the basis of repentance from obvious sin. For infidels, heretics and sinners, the appropriate pastoral care is sound instruction. But as Nadal's enthusiasm for the Exercises, and his pride in them, begins to run away with him, he changes tone. Perhaps Ignatius' text can be 'accommodated' for infidels, heretics and sinners. And Nadal sets out in some detail how this might be done (though Iparraguirre's inventory of exercitants in Ignatius' lifetime suggests that that these speculations were never put into practice, and that such few Lutherans as did make the Exercises were speedily reconciled to Catholicism).²

The passage is interesting for reasons that go beyond its obvious attractiveness in ecumenical and inter-faith contexts. Its ambivalence is

¹ The passage translated here comes from MHSJ MN 4, 848-852. For Pedroche's criticisms of Ignatius' statement about elections being made on the basis of God's love coming from above, see MHSJ Pol Chron 3, 515-516.

² Ignacio Iparraguirre, *Práctica de los Ejercicios de San Ignacio de Loyola en vida de su autor (1522-1526)* (Rome: Jesuit Historical Institute, 1946), 267-307, 136.

itself striking. Nadal affirms the importance both of direct instruction and of the more reciprocal, open-ended pedagogy of the Exercises, without resolving the implicit theological and practical conflicts between these two positions. Contemporary Christians have arguably not taken the matter significantly forward. In the context of this collection, it is also worth noting the generous theology of creation and of God's love informing at least some of what Nadal says about the Exercises and those outside the Church, and inspiring him to develop Ignatius' guidelines. All can be brought to recognise that God exists and that the love of this God is the source and end of our being. On that basis, at least some sort of Election is possible for anyone.

Ignatius' Statement

'Since it is necessary that an Election be made through an affection infused from heaven, out of the love of God ... (Exx 184.2, Vulgate)'

Pedroche's Criticism

This assertion is a presupposition, presented as if it were unquestionable, very well known, and wholly acceptable—as that particle 'since' shows. Moreover, as can be established from the express words of this assertion, what is being talked about is that love which charity—a theological virtue—makes flow within us; for it says 'infused from heaven, out of the love of God'. How do the Gentiles, and others

**How are
heretics
supposed to
make an
Election?**

who—to put it negatively—are infidels, make an Election, since they don't have that love infused from heaven, nor that theological virtue of charity? And how do the heretics, who also are lacking that charity communicated to them, make an Election? And how do believers who are in mortal sin make an Election? And how does conversion occur for all these people, if to start with they cannot make an Election since they are quite deprived of charity and that infused love, given that, after all, charity and infused love are the principles of the Election?

Moreover, from this assertion it seems evidently to follow that an Election cannot come about on the basis of fear. This is against the sacred texts by which, in many places, humanity is encouraged to making evidently licit and holy choices, as can be seen when it says,

‘unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did’; and also ‘learn discipline, in case the Lord be angry and you perish from His way’.³

Nadal’s Comment

What so far is there that can so displease the theologian? What, in that which is presented here, can give such offence that so vehemently he pronounces this statement not only rash and scandalous, but also truly heretical? What are the grounds that the learned man adduces for saying that the statement is rash, scandalous, heretical? ‘How’, he says, ‘do the Gentiles make an Election, and those who—to put it negatively—are unbelievers? How do the heretics do it? How do those faithful who are in a state of mortal sin?’

Do you want me to give you a simple answer? It’s not through this means but in another way. For we don’t teach infidels, heretics, or Catholics in mortal sin to make a choice through these Exercises. Rather—if you allow yourself to remember properly what we said above and what cries out from every page of the *Exercises*—we give Elections of this kind to people who, after a general confession and holy communion, are examining their conscience as often as daily, who are going to confession and attending Mass regularly, who are giving themselves to devout meditation on the sacred gospel, who have set aside all the impediments that could alienate them from holiness, and thus are approaching the Election devoutly and piously. First convert the infidels and heretics, first set the wayward faithful in order and give them the proper dispositions so that they have the capacity for our Elections; then we’ll teach them.

Can you then, with your theology, regard us as heretics, if the only people whom we are teaching to make an Election are those whom we have, in Christ Jesus, first exhorted and helped to get rid of their sins, and to obtain grace from heaven by sacraments, by sacred meditations, and by prayers. Who, I beg you, are you ever going to regard as Catholic if

³ Luke 13:5; Psalm 2:12 (Vulgate). The manuscript has marginal notes which, as a later Jesuit cataloguer states, ‘do not seem to come from anyone in the Society’—perhaps they have been made by some kind of defence lawyer in the Inquisitorial offices. On this paragraph, the note runs: ‘The reasoning of this text is clear, because from love of the end comes love of the means. Obviously a person who greatly loves a canonry goes to Rome post haste rather than on a mule to get it—and so, in order that the Election be ordered to the supernatural end that we desire, it cannot be perfect or adequate unless it proceeds from charity.’

someone doing this is a heretic? Hold off, brother, hold off from making such facile pronouncements—it might lead to your losing your liberty and facility of judgment, and to my in turn demanding retribution. Hold on, I beg you, Father. For is there anything more lenient to be said about a person who declares as heretical what is so obviously Catholic and orthodox? Of course I won't ever think you deserve quite to be described that way—but you're not very careful, you most learned man.

If you say, 'when do you teach that infidels, heretics and bad Christians can properly undertake Elections?', the answer is: not in Exercises of this kind, but in preaching, disputations, exhortations and every kind of pious and orthodox arts—arts through which the heavenly and most merciful Father, in Christ Jesus, has given in such a short time such great spiritual effectiveness to the Society with peoples everywhere, be they infidel, heretic or faithful.

Accommodation to Infidels

And so much so, if you want to hear my opinion, that this is my belief: for all of these our Exercises can be accommodated, even for infidels, if we draw on the principles of the law of nature in the teaching of Paul (Romans 1 and Acts 17—the speech to the people on the Areopagus). Positively, they need only to be persuaded that they are being carried towards God; there is no need to persuade them of any negative. In other words, they need to be invoking the one God and not denying the triune God; and to be conforming themselves to that one God. The whole Foundation of the Exercises can indeed be easily accommodated on this basis.

Then the meditations of the First Week: confession is not to be laid down for them, nor communion, but they are to be brought to the kind of contrition that was necessary for the Gentiles even before the Gospel of Christ. Thus meditations are to be added drawing on the law of nature and on the Catholic truths confessed by the infidel, wherever there is a good affinity between the infidel and orthodox faith, or wherever some truths can be presented to them convincingly. Nothing, then, about the Trinity to start with, nothing about Christ is to be proposed to them; their meditations are to be given in an accommodated way at their true time, taking as a model the

meditations on the temporal king and the standards,⁴ and referred to the one God.

Then the Elections are to be got across to them, tempered to what they can take and understand—assuming that they have gone through the particular exercises we have mentioned properly, and provided that they entrust themselves to God, and do not deny any of those things which Christian faith confesses and preaches. On this it doesn't seem hard to imagine Muslims being persuaded, since they hold that both our law and their Koran lead to salvation.

But any infidel, provided they are willing to give assent to logical thought, will easily be persuaded to hold onto only these things which are either manifest through the law of nature and reason, or else to what they confess particularly through their own law. For if anyone commits themselves to the one supreme truth, they really can't go wrong.

The Election is to be proposed to them in really general terms—it is not that we should command them to be doubtful about the persuasion of their own law or their faith, but rather that, setting aside any law, they should invoke and take counsel with God, that He may open the truth to them. If, however, they can be brought to having three laws put forward to them, that of the Jews, that of the Christians, and that of the Muslims, and to reflecting on these, this will be far more useful. And when this person has been brought to the point that they love God above all things, then I will tell them that out of this love they should tackle the Elections.⁵



Ars Jesuitica ©Institute of Jesuit Sources

⁴ The phrase is obscure. Nadal seems to be suggesting that a retreat-giver working outside Christianity should, where the biblical content of the Exercises might raise problems, imitate Ignatius' imaginative developments of Gospel tradition as exemplified in the Kingdom and the Two Standards.

⁵ Here Nadal is directly addressing Pedroche's objection.

Accommodation to Heretics

Of the heretics, given their perversity, it is really much more difficult to speak. But they too can perhaps be reached through these Exercises. Indeed, they will easily receive the whole Foundation and the whole First Week. And if there is no compulsion arising from its being Holy Week and Easter, they can accomplish the First Week without confession or communion—it is not, however, necessary for them to deal with the truths in which they offend, just as has been said regarding the infidels. At this point, if they have really exercised themselves in penitence, I hope they will manage this anyway. For as they move away from these sins, which are the reason why God gave them over into error and into perverse feeling, they will be the more fit to recognise the error of their understanding, and to admit the light of faith.

If this plan doesn't work, the heretic is to be exercised in meditations on the life of Christ, always abstracting from these errors into which they have fallen. Moreover, the straightforward story of the contemplation and the Application of the Senses is to be used, not an inquisitive investigation seeking out subtle insights: it is in humility that their spirit is to be primarily exercised. If by these meditations they do not become more free from what has taken their fancy, then peacefully and quietly we should move on to disputation. In this case, as if according to the third 'time' of Elections, the person should put their arguments forward, and the instructor set Catholic truth against that. The two should be put together by the instructor, and the conclusion drawn. If this does no good, we must resort to prayer, provided that they truly desire or expect to be helped. Finally, if no movement occurs, they are to be shunned, unless they can be handed over to the judge; for they are condemned by their own judgment.⁶

⁶ It is noticeable that Nadal is less generous to Protestants than to infidels: his strategy is to reconcile the heretics; Protestantism arises from a moral fault rather than from a serious set of theological convictions; if the gentle approach of the Exercises fails, civil punishment as the best final recourse. Another passage on the topic, from Nadal's *Spiritual Diary*, is worth quoting here: 'The Society's Exercises can be accommodated to Lutherans, since they are based on things that are universal. Nor is it necessary to make a general confession or take the Eucharist. They need only to place themselves under the Spirit of the Lord and the Church, or at least not to fight against that Spirit; but they should take their stand on seeking what is common to us and to them. "One faith", says Paul, "one baptism". Whatever faith, therefore, there is in the Church of God is one; this truly Catholic faith is hardly questionable. Therefore it is a figment of the Lutherans' imagination that they might be saved by another faith.' (MHSJ MN *Orationis observationes*, nn. 228-229)

Accommodation for Sinners

You see how our Exercises can be extended just anywhere, to the infidels and also to heretics. About those who are in mortal sin, it is really easy to say what happens. For these we lead to the right Exercises, and when they have been purged and justified, we will give them the Elections. If they want to take counsel about their state of life before they have wept over their sins and before they have come to the sacraments of penance and of holy communion, then we confront them. For they should not be asking questions about how they are going through life, and about the path along which they might go to heaven, if they are not first alive, and alive in such a way that they can make the journey. For with a dead person what is there to give them as counsel except that they should be alive? And in this matter nothing is controversial and nothing can be doubted. You are dead in sin: ‘Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you’; ‘do penance, for the kingdom of heaven has drawn near’.⁷ Do you want to live, feel, walk in death? Is it in darkness that you want to see the light? Recover your life, take up the light by which you will see where you are to go, and receive the strength which will enable you to move forward.

The Importance of Love

I have given teaching about how infidels, heretics and sinners should and can make an Election. However, I will add a few extra points about these things. Again I confirm that for these people everything has to be elected out of love. For all things are to be understood in terms of their purpose; it is on that basis that we must embark on our deliberations, elections, on all that we do, so that the Election be whole, that what we do be whole and absolute. For, if someone is led by some other principle, such as fear, coercion, affection or argument, the value of any of these can only be to lead the person to achieve their end and contribute to showing what the perfection of an election consists in. Actions like this are, after all, the beginnings; they are, so to speak, unformed and not yet whole; this is plain in the sinner who acts from

⁷ Ephesians 5:14; Matthew 3:2 (Vulgate)—note that the Greek’s use of ‘repent’ rather than the Vulgate ‘do penance’ was a significant point in the Reformation controversies on justification.

the servile fear by which the sinner is impelled to attrition,⁸ and in the infidel, who is led to baptism by being terrified at the sinners amidst whom they see themselves trapped, as the Council of Trent clearly explains. And finally in the heretic, when through the horror of the fire and the force of argument they begin to see the path to salvation and to make confession.

Given all this, it is plain: even though there are other bases on which Elections can begin or be fostered, nevertheless this principle is what is to be desired, taught and alone sought—that there is one beginning and end of all things, which is true and solid and perfect. And who is there who should not encourage all people to this principle? What else did Christ teach, what else did the apostles teach, what else did the saints teach, what else has the Church always taught, what else does it, will it teach, except that mortals should love God above all things, love God out of their whole heart, their whole mind, their whole soul, their whole strength? What else is this, you most learned man, apart from the establishment of the first command, the first principle, the first end from which all things come and to which all things are being led?



⁸ This technical term denotes an imperfect form of contrition, motivated by fear. See Council of Trent, *Decree on Justification*, c. 6; Exx 370.

SPIRITUALITY IN ADULTHOOD

Development and Fruition

Peter Feldmeier

MOST OF US BELIEVE TWO SAYINGS about the evening of our lives that seem to be at odds. We might often say, 'there's no fool like an old fool', but we also know that 'age brings wisdom'. We know that the best wisdom often comes from those who have a seasoned perspective and a breadth of experience. Every traditional society reverences the wisdom of the elders, and it is only recently in our modern technological culture that this truth has been, sadly, disregarded.

One striking example of mature wisdom comes to mind. In my first pastoral assignment I noticed an elderly woman named Mabel who came to daily Mass. She was unassuming and softly spoken. But there was something about her. She seemed to radiate holiness. Later I discovered that Mabel was the volunteer librarian at our parish school. And I also learnt that when children were acting up in class, their teachers didn't always send them to the principal's office. More often they were sent to the library, just to hang out with Mabel.

She didn't try to be their therapist and she certainly wasn't their disciplinarian. She just let them hang out. And almost always they would tell her what was going on in their lives. After a while, when they were ready, she would suggest they go back to class. When they did they were different. A gentle healing power resided with Mabel. What I saw was a woman who was enjoying the fruits of a lifetime lived in the love of Jesus Christ. Recently I was telling the story of Mabel at Mass, and a woman told me that she had known Mabel throughout their adulthood. I wasn't surprised to find out that her whole life had been one of gentle, loving care.

Sometimes, however, the saying, 'there's no fool like an old fool', is all too accurate. People who throughout their adulthood were afraid to open their spirits to inner growth, who were attached to status or control or self-indulgence, often live in the evening of their lives in an

even more impoverished way than they did in their prime. Their lack of self-awareness, their resistance to growth, haunts them even more in their old age.

What we sow, we reap 'Age brings wisdom' but 'there's no fool like an old fool': both are true for the same reason. As another saying has it: '*what we sow, we reap*'. In the evening of our lives we can either reap a harvest of virtue, prayer, love and generosity, or else lead a trivial existence which becomes ever more ridiculous. Carl Jung described those who did not renounce superficial *personae* in the latter years of their lives, and who did not engage the deeper dynamics of their souls, as 'hypochondriacs, niggards, doctrinaires, applauders of the past, or eternal adolescents'.¹ This article investigates what is cultivated along the way to old age. I give special attention to the elderly because they can, like Mabel, illustrate the fruition of a good life, a fully human and fully spiritual life. But it is also critically important to understand how such people became wise, loving and life-giving elders.

Erik Erikson and the Life Cycle

One helpful way to understand this cultivation of either virtue or folly is to look at Erik Erikson's famous outline of the life cycle. Erikson believed that inner development had to be aligned to critical eras in life. The soul or self, he argued, is intertwined with our physical, social, biological and cognitive growth. Collectively, these form a kind of acculturation from which no one is exempt. Each stage of the life cycle is marked by a specific challenge, and handling each challenge skilfully gives a person a particular strength. Further, each of these strengths becomes the foundation for the successful negotiation of new challenges. If the challenge of a particular stage is not well negotiated, subsequent stages will be more difficult.² On the other hand, every time a new life-challenge presents itself, it is necessary, according to Erikson, to go through a revision of all the previous challenges. We deal again, at a more sophisticated level, with the same issues that were dealt with before. Such revisiting of past challenges, while

¹ As cited in Patrick Carroll and Katherine Dyckman, *Chaos or Creation: Spirituality at Mid-Life* (New York: Paulist, 1986), 30.

² Erik H. Erikson, *Life Cycle Completed* (New York: Norton, 1982), 70.

seemingly arduous, gives us an opportunity to reconstitute and redevelop strengths that were poorly formed as a result of how we faced a previous challenge.³

Some have criticized Erikson for linking psychological, biological and social maturation so closely, since human development (for example the development of the ego, or moral development) is not at all age-specific.⁴ But Erikson argued that life itself forces the issues of growth on each person. When we are of school age, we necessarily have to deal with questions of socialisation and achievement in a way we did not or could not as young children.⁵

For the newborn, the first psychological issue at hand is to ascertain, albeit unconsciously, whether or not the world can be trusted. This trustworthiness is established by the degree to which a child's needs are met. The strength that Erikson attributed to this stage is a sense of *hope*. Specific later hopes need this primitive and essential seed to have been planted well. Gradually, the toddler exercises a new control over life. If the child is allowed appropriate self-direction, then they incorporate the strength of *will*. 'Will', said Erikson, 'is the unbroken determination to exercise free choice as well as self-restraint ...'.⁶

Erikson described the young child's challenge as that of initiative as against guilt, that is the ability freely to express oneself rather than to be paralyzed by a sense of shame or inadequacy. Play becomes an important activity here, since it confronts children with the need for cooperation, for mutual support, and even for planning as to how games might be played. It brings the child a sense of *purpose*. At school age, children can take their own specific initiatives. Erikson noted that in all cultures this is the period of life where durable achievements first occur. The emerging strength that corresponds to this stage is a sense of *competence*.

³ Erikson, *Life Cycle Completed*, 29; Erik H. Erikson, Joan M. Erikson and Helen Q. Kivnick, *Vital Involvement in Old Age* (New York: Norton, 1964), 138.

⁴ See Jane Loevinger, *Ego Development: Conceptions and Theories* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1976), 174.

⁵ Erik H. Erikson, *Identity, Youth, and Crisis* (New York: Norton, 1968), 19. Erikson details the stages of development in several of his writings. The following is a synthesis of those descriptions which can be found in *Life Cycle Completed*, 63-79; *Insight and Responsibility* (New York: Norton, 1964), 115-133; and *Identity, Youth, and Crisis*, 91-141.

⁶ Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility*, 119.

Erikson believed that adolescence is the time to come to terms with one's identity. It is a liminal time, a kind of moratorium in our lives, during which we seek out and identify who we want to be in the world. The strength arising out of the challenge of identity is that of *fidelity*, that is, of being true to oneself. The adolescent has the foundation for adult virtues, but has not yet acquired them.

The next developmental stage is for the young adult to make life-directing choices. Only this type of self-determined commitment allows us to enter into true intimacy with another person. If we have really developed a sense of identity, then we now become free to love and to commit ourselves. This intimacy that Erikson described is the strength of *love*.

Middle age presents a new challenge in human development, that is, of becoming generative. How can we make sure that what we have produced and fostered will continue? Middle age, Erikson argued, needs a kind of self-verification, the assurance that our commitments and sense of purpose are worthwhile, and that they are going to be carried on. Failure to become generative leads to stagnation. The strength that Erikson relates to this stage is a sense of *care*.

In old age, Erikson believed that we return to the place where we started, to a *childlikeness*. The task of this stage is not to regress to *childishness*, with its concomitant narcissism, but to a childlike state in which one can delight in the world. The final stage of life brings with it concern and love in the face of death itself. Erikson called the strength arising from completing this task *wisdom*. The wisdom that an elderly person gains comes from embracing life in the midst of facing death. Erikson described this challenge as discovering integrity in contrast to despair. Those who have found integrity are largely tolerant of the world; they are understanding, open-minded and compassionate. Sometimes this state represents a new way of being compared to one's earlier years.

What This Looks Like Religiously

People often quote the famous saying of St Irenaeus of Lyon: 'The glory of God is the human being fully alive, and the life of the person is the

vision of God'.⁷ In Jesus Christ, God has given human life and dignity a radically high status by literally incorporating human nature into the divine life. Thus, a fully human life glorifies God. It follows that a Christian spirituality can and must learn from developmental psychology. But the Christian knows that our lives, to be truly human, must also be wholly spiritual. This points us to the second part of Irenaeus' statement: 'and the life of the person is the vision of God'. For Christians, holiness cannot simply be collapsed into psychological concepts of individuation or self-acceptance. Christian spirituality ultimately points to union with God, and to the paschal mystery.

Paul's letter to the Philippians expresses something of this mystery. Either in his own words or by borrowing an older text, Paul encourages us to take on the posture of Jesus:

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11)

We see the pattern: for the sake of serving God and the world, Christ emptied himself of all he might cling to. Paradoxically, this brought him to glorification. Jesus himself frequently put the same paradox before us: 'Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it' (Matthew 10:39). Obviously Jesus is not using the term 'life' in the same way in both parts of the teaching; he is evoking a paradox. Thomas Merton frequently spoke of our *false self* and our *true self*, the latter ultimately being an identity indistinguishable from the mystery of God and dwelling within it.⁸

⁷ *Against Heresies*, 4.20.7. The text is, *Gloria enim Dei vivens homo, vita autem hominis visio Dei*. Literally it would translate, 'The glory of God is a live human being, and a truly human life is the vision of God'. Most, however translate it as I have, particularly in light of the fact that Irenaeus is arguing here against a gnostic dualism that challenges living a fully integrated human life.

⁸ See Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Direction Books, 1961), especially 7, 31-33, 47. For an interesting study on Merton's sense of self see Anne Carr, *A Search for*

The trick is that this dying or emptying should not neglect the first part of Irenaeus' dictum, 'The glory of God is the human being fully alive'. Dying to oneself is not equivalent to renouncing authentic human needs. That would be to set psychological health in opposition to spiritual maturity. Joann Wolski Conn wisely comments:

To cut ourselves off from the maturing process, to shirk personal growth under the cover of the cliché *God alone*, is in fact to escape from God because God is not glorified in half-persons.⁹

How can we bring together the paradoxes of Christian spiritual growth with the human challenges outlined by Erikson? I would like to suggest that we can use three traditional spiritual terms: the *purgative way*, the *illuminative way* and the *unitive way*.¹⁰ While these terms are normally used to describe a linear progression in the contemplative life, and mysticism on a high level, I believe they can also describe the progression of Christian faith in terms of a 'style' of being faithful. They represent forms or postures of being spiritual throughout the life cycle.

Early Adulthood and the Purgative Way

We saw that early adulthood is the chance to consolidate the identity one develops in adolescence. One strikes out, takes charge of one's life, and defines oneself by one's commitments and relationships. Religiously, it is still a time of learning what it means to be an adult with spiritual integrity. Young adults test out their resources and their ideals for generous service. These are the people in the Church who, in the midst of intense family duties, can often be counted on to do energetic, short-term parish projects.¹¹

I suggest that this is also a classic time for the purgative way. Classically, the purgative way has been described as the ascetical path. This need not include donning hair shirts and the like, for life itself

Wisdom and Spirit: Thomas Merton's Theology of Self (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).

⁹ Joann Wolski Conn, *Spirituality and Personal Maturity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 8.

¹⁰ We also see this approach in a somewhat different form in Benedict Groeschel, *Spiritual Passages: The Psychology of Spiritual Development* (New York: Crossroad, 1983).

¹¹ Evelyn Eaton Whitehead and James Whitehead, *Christian Life Patterns: The Psychological Challenges and Religious Invitations of Adulthood* (New York: Crossroad, 1979), 139.

demands a great deal of purging from our adolescent self-absorption. Parents have children, whose many needs constantly force them to be generous and self-sacrificing. And spouses challenge us to love them not only when they are attractive to us, but also, and all the more, when they are not.

Morally, the purgative way calls us to follow Christ more zealously in every dimension of our lives. One cannot separate one's religious life from one's engagement in the world. And as we grow, we necessarily come to recognise and confront destructive and disordered parts of ourselves that in adolescence were rationalised or even denied.

Early adulthood can also be a time of religious zeal, as Christians embrace their religious identity seriously. Religious zeal can occur in adolescence or adulthood, but whenever it occurs, it can all too easily take on the tone of fundamentalism, or even of self-righteousness. St John of the Cross suggests that early zeal can never avoid some level of this.¹² So the challenge of adulthood is to distinguish between a true heart for Jesus and religious judgmentalism, impatience, anger, and so on. Distinguishing between true and false piety is an intrinsic part of the purgative way.

**Early adulthood
is a time of
religious zeal**

Early adulthood is marked by this responsibility of making concrete our identities; it also involves our learning more about our faith. The young adult is still a learner, and prayer is often experienced as a kind of learning. We read and meditate on the scriptures. God is truly present, but often experienced indirectly through what spiritually inspires us or gives us insight. The great limitation of this stage is that one's faith tends to be intellectual, energized by what is exterior to the self.

The idea of the purgative way enriches Erikson's vision of strengths arising out of conflicts. It enables us to see the transitions as expressions of a paschal life, as a kind of dying to oneself leading to something new. Teilhard de Chardin describes this dynamic, particularly as it relates to young adulthood, as a radical detachment in the midst of action, a divinising of our activities, recreating our life-world and aligning it more fully to the Kingdom of God. The challenge

¹² See *Dark Night*, 1.2.7.

is to live only for God, but in the context of embracing life fully.¹³ Teilhard writes:

Each reality attained and left behind gives us access to the discovery and pursuit of an ideal of higher spiritual content.¹⁴

Mid-Life and the Illuminative Way

In the middle years many move to a greater sense of stewardship and mature leadership, particularly in their faith communities. This corresponds with Erikson's idea of generativity. In the family, leadership and generativity are usually expressed in parenting. In a religious community, it may be expressed as care for the whole church. Those in mid-life have often been involved in parish life for years on different levels. These years of commitment often give them a true sense of what is important. The task now is to be a steward of these central values and of their concrete expressions in church life.

The mid-life crisis takes on many forms, but it usually revolves around confronting one's youthful idealism and reassessing one's values and satisfactions. This reassessment is not only typical; it is necessary. It allows one to come to greater interiority, to a greater understanding of one's inner landscape. Jung saw the move to interiority in mid-life as absolutely necessary.¹⁵ While many young adults have a difficult time being alone, people in mid-life often find that solitude and introspection are exactly what they need.

Typically, one's prayer life should follow this desire for interiority. Instead of wanting to know *about* God, the second half of life is about knowing God personally, that is, coming to some intimacy with God. Reading the Bible should move from emphasis on learning *about* the Lord and the gospel to experiencing God's actual presence in the Word. The Bible no longer functions merely as an instruction book, but becomes also a sacrament of encounter with the living God. And this deeper intimacy with God leads to

¹³ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 56-62.

¹⁴ Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu*, 72.

¹⁵ Mary Wolff-Salin, *No Other Light: Points of Convergence in Psychology and Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 21.

more authentic care for others. Mid-life can either be very self-absorbed, or it can be an opportunity to love with an interior depth that one simply did not have as a young adult. People become more aligned with the Spirit in their lives.

There are some parallels between the illuminative way and the life-tasks of middle age. The barriers to freedom have fallen and the most powerful defences have been relinquished; the fruits of the purgative way are ripe. But now the virtues also become more *infused*. They become less something we strive to extend, and more a natural extension of an emerging spiritual self. Generosity increases now, not because one *ought* to do this or that good thing or because one needs to perpetuate a self-identity as a *good Christian*. Rather, one is generous because this represents the very self one is becoming in grace. This parallels what Erikson says about the emerging strength of care. One cares and is generative simply because acting like this represents one's truest self. Prayer, too, changes. In early adulthood, prayer was principally an inner dialogue with the self and a measuring of oneself against the teachings of the gospel. Now prayer becomes more of a being with Christ, characterized by substance rather than words. One's sense of identity enters into a greater mystery. Clearly, this characteristic of greater interiority and more infused prayer is something that grows throughout middle age.

***Mid-life and
the emergence
of a spiritual
self***

At the beginning of Augustine's *Confessions* we find the famous saying, 'you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you'; the narrative speaks of a God 'more inward than my most inward part'; even as Augustine was seeking the God of his heart outside himself, 'I was wholly ignorant of what it is in ourselves which gives us being, and how scripture is correct in saying that we are in God's image'.¹⁶ Of course, such profound spiritual insight usually comes about slowly, with the process lasting for the rest of a person's life. But it is most likely to begin in mid-life. The greater our interiority and intimacy with God, the more does our inner life take on this

¹⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.1; 3.6; 10.22; 3.27.

additional dimension. This is part of the mystery Augustine was referring to.¹⁷

There are convergences between Erikson's idea of generativity and the changes and deepening in ministry that are normal in a healthy middle age. But here too, there are also depths of the spiritual life which Erikson's language does not fully express. Erikson believed that one of the main concerns driving generativity is self-verification: did I make my mark? For Christians, the spiritual challenge of mid-life is to let go of ego concerns. We are being led into a new kind of identification with Christ, where such ego-interests are exposed as part of one's false self. A truly spiritual mid-life is generative, but not self-preoccupied. It is the time of a new, deeper cooperation with the indwelling God.

The Elderly and the Unitive Way

The unitive way, as presented in traditional spiritual language, is extraordinary and rare. Teresa of Avila will define it as a kind of total forgetting of self in espousal to Christ,¹⁸ and John of the Cross will identify it in terms of a divinised soul living out of the very love of God.¹⁹ Few elderly people will easily identify with such language. But I believe that there are properly unitive dynamics in many elderly people, evincing a profound freedom in the Spirit and a palpable knowledge of God in their lives.

Even Erikson describes possibilities of profound wholeness in elderhood, a wholeness that is no longer dependent on exterior roles. Elderly people can come to accept their own weaknesses. There are striking parallels here with what is said in the tradition about the unitive way.

¹⁷ Theophilus of Antioch was asked by a pagan, 'Show me your God'. He replied, 'Show me yourself and I will show you my God'. Theophilus means here, I believe, that human nature reflects the divine mystery and that the two are unutterable. See Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love*, translated by Anthony P. Gythiel and Victoria Steadman (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 50.

¹⁸ *Interior Castle*, 7.3.2: 'the first effect [of union] is a forgetfulness of self, for truly the soul, seemingly, no longer is'.

¹⁹ *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, 2.5.7: '... so great a union is caused that all the things of both God and the soul become one in participant transformation, and the soul appears to be God more than a soul. Indeed, it is God by participation'. See also Teresa, *Interior Castle*, 7.2.4: 'Let us say that the union is like the joining of two wax candles to such an extent that the flame coming from them is but one, or that the wick, the flame, and the wax are all one'.

The ultimate weakness inherent in all of life, but ever more clear now, is our own mortality. The philosopher Martin Heidegger taught that everything in life moves toward death, and he is not alone.²⁰ This truth is not something that resonates with a young adult. Few of them think much about death, and when they do it is mostly with aversion. A faith-filled older person faces it quite directly, without fear. If the elderly have negotiated well the problem of integrity and affirmed the meaning of their own lives and of life in general, they will be able to reach beyond selfish concerns and nostalgia, and to continue giving of themselves freely.

***A faith-filled
older person
faces death
without fear***

What is the role of the elderly for the church and for the world? In a word, they provide *wisdom*, Erikson's final strength. Their sheer breadth of experience and love should make them a presence that inspires, heals, and models a faithful existence. Their experience of God's love and their trust makes them living witnesses to God's providence.

What should one's prayer life be like in the *unitive way*? Now, it is simply a matter of being with God, an intimacy that can sustain one at every moment of day-to-day life. There is a well-known story of St John Vianney, who regularly found one of the older men in his parish in the church in the middle of the day just sitting in a pew. Finally John Vianney asked the man, 'What are you praying about?' He responded, 'I'm not praying *about* anything. I just look at God and he looks at me.' Fully integrated elderly people not only know about God; they also know this mysterious presence of God intimately. The growing intimacy characterizing development through middle age often comes to a greater flowering here in the evening of our lives.

Once again, Erikson's account of old age is helpful, but leaves important Christian dimensions unnamed. There is indeed a new form of integrity possible, even and especially in the face of death. But this integrity comes from intimately knowing the Lord of Life who has himself passed through death. For Teilhard, the diminishments

²⁰ Augustine says it succinctly: 'Everyone is in death from the moment that they begin their bodily existence. For what else is going on, every day, every hour, every minute, but this process of death?' (*City of God*, 13.1.1)



Old Woman Frying Eggs (detail), by Diego Velázquez

that come particularly with old age are the very vehicle God uses to transfigure our sufferings, allowing God fully to deliver us from the bondage of all attachments:

The more deeply and incurably the evil is encrusted in my flesh, the more it will be you that I am harbouring—you as a loving, active principle of purification and detachment.²¹

Even as one faces death physically, and indeed in the context of all the losses that accompany elderhood, a deep life in the Spirit recognises God's mercy. Teilhard's prayer is this:

O God, grant that I may understand that it is you who are painfully parting the fibres of my being in order to penetrate to the very marrow of my substance and bear me away within yourself.²²

²¹ Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu*, 90.

²² Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu*, 89-90.

There is another important point of difference between Erikson's wise elderhood and a full Christian spirituality. A unitive knowledge of God draws us really to *lose* our identity in God. Erikson describes elderhood in terms of new challenges that enable us to develop an authentic identity.²³ Those who go along the unitive way realise that any attempt to construct our identity misses the mark. In the paschal mystery, we so align ourselves with and in God that we recognise no real distinction between our truest selves and God's grace. In *New Seeds of Contemplation*, perhaps Merton's most mature book, he repeatedly describes this fullest reality of the unitive life:

The secret of my full identity is hidden in Him....

To say that I am made in the image of God is to say that love is the reason for my existence, for God is love. Love is my true identity. Selflessness is my true self. Love is my true character, Love is my name ...

... [one] lives in emptiness and freedom, as if one had no longer a limited and exclusive *self* that distinguished one from God and others....

What happens is that the separate identity that is you apparently disappears and nothing seems to be left but a pure freedom indistinguishable from the infinite Freedom, love identified with Love ...

He is the *I* who acts there. He is the one Who loves and knows and rejoices.²⁴

Perhaps this account of a humanly and spiritually developed elderly person lacks nuance; perhaps it is even a little glib. One elderly person told me recently, 'this inner strength Erikson speaks of is hardly a compensation for the breakdown of our health'. Another colleague suggested that many elderly people she knows have a terrible time with pain and personal loss. For them, prayer, if they can pray at all, is more an act of blind faith than an experience of intimacy with God. Of course, this presentation is somewhat idealized, as are Erikson's stages.

²³ See Erikson and others, *Vital Involvement in Old Age*.

²⁴ Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Direction Books, 1961), 33, 60, 210, 283, 286-287, exclusive language corrected.

Of course too, the challenges of aging and loss are daunting. But an actualised, unitive life is indeed possible. In my ministry to elderly parishioners, to nursing home residents, to a large group of semi-retired sisters, and to a convent of mostly elderly contemplative nuns, I have often witnessed profound faith, wisdom and witness.

When Mabel died I had the honour of presiding over her funeral. She was not a public presence in the social or civic community. Even in church she kept a low profile. So I was amazed when the funeral started and I saw the church packed with people. They came to honour not a woman who had *done* anything extraordinary, but a woman who had *become transformed into* something extraordinary—even as her life was simple. Is the evening of life one of fruition or folly? I know that fruition is a real possibility. It is exemplified by the likes of Mabel. It expresses itself as a gentle, humble, gracious, loving wisdom. This is the challenge and the gift of a fully human and fully spiritual life lived well.

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CORPUS CHRISTI

Her body, like an Oxford college,
has been made venerable through decay.
I have come, where once she taught me to read,
to anoint her head and hands, to celebrate Mass
and feed broken bread into Dorothy's broken body.

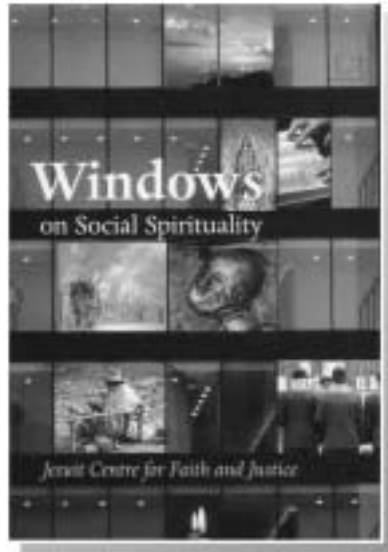
Shriven, riven by years more than four score, she
was born before the Great War and knows, no, once
knew, more from Chaucer to the modern novel
than anyone could tell, except to say she was a
legend, being so well read.

You need not read the text closely
to see deep holiness, to discern
her Maker's powerful caress, to know
in her disfigurement surpassing loveliness.

And now, surrounded by tokens of devotion
from those who first thought in her presence,
she reads Ephesians to me and thanks God
when I take bread and bless.

Domine, digna est.

This poem was written by **Michael F. Suarez SJ**, who teaches English literature in New York and Oxford, in honour of his tutor, **Dorothy Bednarowska** (1915-2003), who was widely influential and much loved throughout her distinguished career at St Anne's College and in the Faculty of English at Oxford.



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THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES AND A SPIRITUALITY FOR THE LATER YEARS

Gerald M. Fagin

A FEW MONTHS AGO, I RECEIVED MY MEDICARE card in the mail, an acknowledgment of my sixty-fifth birthday. It is one of those secular life transitions that raise spiritual questions as well. Officially achieving the status of a senior citizen implies, at least in theory, a shift from mid-life questions to questions of old age. Some sociologists name us the 'young-old' as opposed to the 'middle-old' or the 'old-old'. Whatever title best describes us, the transition is an invitation to reflect on the challenges and graces that await us in later years.

In middle and later life we are challenged to face many inevitable realities. These realities gradually invade our consciousness, and, as we grow older, they become more and more central to our experience. But although there are significant differences between mid-life and our later years, there are also questions and concerns that remain constant throughout the second half of our lives. My purpose here is not to summarise or criticize the many excellent writings by developmental psychologists on mid-life and the stages of growth beyond mid-life. Nor can I do justice to the flood of writings and reflections on mid-life spirituality and spirituality for the wisdom years. My more modest goal is to sketch very briefly some of the realities on which I have begun to reflect, and the realities that others have shared with me in their own journeys through their later years. Then I will describe some elements of a spirituality for this time of life, and relate those elements to the graces of the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola.

The Realities of the Later Years

The first reality to be faced in later life is the simple fact that there is more past than future. In mid-life and after we acknowledge that we have more yesterdays than tomorrows. Though we spend a great deal of time talking about the past, there is also a growing awareness of the

limited number of years we have left. Each day becomes more of a gift to be cherished than a given to be presumed.

Our later years also invite us to be at peace about the roads not taken. At the beginning of mid-life, people may choose to change commitments or careers, and set out on new roads that seem more life-giving and authentic. This can happen even much later in life, but as we grow older it is no longer possible to take many of these roads. As the young struggle to choose from too many possibilities, older people have fewer opportunities, fewer choices that are realistic.

The later years are a time to acknowledge decisions made in the past—decisions that we cannot change, and that have set a direction for our lives. Many of them may well have been wise and loving, but some decisions we may now regret, and carry as a burden. They may have harmed others, or excluded possibilities for growth in our lives. We would choose differently now, but the choices we have made cannot be erased or denied. We must come to peace with these decisions, seek forgiveness when possible, and surrender them to God.

As we grow older, we also become more aware that certain things will be left undone. We must let go of many of the dreams we had in adolescence and early adulthood, and accept that there are many things we will not do in our lives. The future has boundaries that set limits on our goals and hopes.

Ageing brings the experience of physical limitation. There is a keen awareness of diminishment, and a growing sense of mortality. More and more time is spent at doctors' appointments. The inevitability of death is harder to escape. The deaths of parents and even siblings lead our thoughts to our own death. We become more in touch with the things we cannot control, the basic existential realities of our birth and life and death. The call to surrender to God's plan becomes more persistent.

The second half of life is often described as the journey within, as a time to search for our true selves and inner worth and values more than for the external achievements that motivate the first half of life. In the early adult and middle years we can be intensely involved in activity, in taking charge and making things happen. As we grow older, we may find ourselves stopping to reflect, and discovering a greater concern with wisdom than with generativity. Being at peace with ourselves takes on more importance. We become more focused on who

we are and on who we are becoming than on what we are accomplishing or what we will accomplish.

At first glance, the above description may seem sobering, if not bleak. But, in the light of faith, old age emerges as a rich time of life, a time of growth in interiority and inner resourcefulness, a time to harvest the gifts of our past life and to foster a new and deeper relationship with God.

A Spirituality for the Later Years

We can name seven features of a spirituality for our later years that will invite us and challenge us to live our relationship with God more fully—features that can be nourished by the graces and movements of the Spiritual Exercises.

Gratitude

First, a spirituality of our later years will be a spirituality of gratitude. Gratitude remains the foundation and source of our spiritual lives. The second half of life is an especially good time to grow in awareness of the gift of life itself, of health, friends, vocation and ministry. It is a time to remember and savour all the other gifts we have received—gifts that have sustained us on the road we have taken in life. As we look back on our lives, we recognise the many times when we have taken things for granted, and claimed things as our own that were clearly gifts. Our lack of gratitude may have led us to lose touch with the Giver of all gifts. Our later years are a time to acknowledge and cherish the gifts that have been given to us, and the wonders that God has worked in and through us during our lives. It is a great temptation to devalue what we have done in life, to compare our achievements with those of others whom we admire or with the great dreams of our youth. We begin to ask questions. What difference have I made? What have I done of lasting value? How have I responded to the graces given to me? We may fail to celebrate and treasure the everyday but extraordinary moments of friendship, ministry and prayer. The second half of life calls us to true humility, and to the recognition of our gifts as gifts from the hands of a loving God.

***To grow in
awareness
of the gift
of life itself***

This sense of gratitude is a grace elicited by Ignatius' Principle and Foundation: the consideration of our creaturehood, and of the purpose

of our lives. Ignatius reminds us that we are created out of love, and sustained in existence in love; everything in our lives is a gift from a gracious and generous God. The Principle and Foundation of our spiritual lives is the freeing experience of knowing that we are loved unconditionally by God.

Forgiveness

A second characteristic of a spirituality of later life is the grace of forgiveness. This is a time for letting go of life's hurts, a time to forgive others, especially those significant people in our lives who have formed and shaped us. In the first part of life, the temptation often occurs to scapegoat parents, or teachers, or religious superiors, or spouses, or friends: 'if only they had loved me better, or understood me better, or given me the opportunity to ...'. We trace our lack of success or our psychological wounds to the failures of others, to their insensitivity or lack of appreciation of us. We recognise their human imperfection and its impact on our lives. Naming the sources of our hurts in this way is a necessary and potentially healing exercise. We have to come to terms with our superego, and uncover the conscious and unconscious roots of our anger and pain. As we grow older, however, we must move towards forgiveness, towards letting go and accepting responsibility for our lives at the present moment. This means letting go of grudges and resentments that drag us back into the past and sap our enthusiasm for the present and future. Forgiveness and letting go free us from the endless repetition of past stories of injustice and hurt that we tell as if they were the events of yesterday.

We pray for the grace to experience and accept God's forgiveness of our own brokenness and infidelity. We pray that this grace of forgiveness will transform our hearts into forgiving hearts that can share our experience of forgiveness with others. But perhaps the greatest and most difficult challenge of later life is to forgive ourselves. We are called upon to forgive our own failings and mistakes and sins, and to love ourselves as God loves us. Forgiving ourselves means letting go of our regrets, accepting our limitations, and coming to peace with the decisions and actions that we can no longer change. Forgiving ourselves is the final fruit of accepting God's forgiveness, and the only path to peace.

Ignatius, in the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises, invites us to pray for the grace of knowing that we are loved sinners. We pray to see

ourselves through God's eyes, and to experience true sorrow for our sins, as well as the unfailing mercy of God. In later life, the grace of this First Week, or of any such moment, becomes more and more focused on the forgiveness of others and of ourselves.

Fidelity and Recommitment

The later years are a time to say 'yes' again, but now with the wisdom and realism of years of life experience. Knowing what we now know about the joys and struggles of our lived commitments, we re-embrace them. We decide anew to be faithful. In mid-life, this experience has been named the 'second call', a reaffirmation of the first call with a deepened awareness of what it means. And for some, of course, mid-life becomes a time to re-examine and perhaps change the commitments or directions of their lives, to begin anew in response to what is perceived as a new call. But in the later years, our recommitment takes the form of the graced acceptance of the choices that we have made and lived, and of a desire to persevere to the end. It does not exclude the searching questions: 'If I knew then what I know now, would I have made different choices? Would I now choose this same way again?' Whatever our answers to these questions, the later years demand that we acknowledge decisions made in the past, and make peace with them. The 'yes' of youth, the 'yes' of mid-life and the 'yes' of the later years are dramatized in the 'yeses' of the wedding day or the first vows, the twenty-fifth anniversary and the fiftieth anniversary. Each 'yes' is equally valid, and has a distinctive meaning that demands different resources and offers different rewards.

**A time to
say 'yes'
again**

The wisdom of the later years leads to the humble recognition that, in the end, we will be saved by God's fidelity, not by our own. We know from experience that, left to our own resources, we will too often be unfaithful, or less than total in our self-giving. The freedom that we experience in our later years comes from a deepened awareness of God's faithfulness, of God's never ending willingness to begin again no matter how often we fail, or compromise, or lose sight of our goal, or simply do not respond to grace. Our God is a God of patience who awaits our response, but also a God who is persistent in searching us out.

The later years are the time to respond again to the question of Jesus: 'Who do you say that I am?' In youth, Jesus may appeal to us as



Francis Borja, *by Diego Velázquez*

the leader of a great adventure, the one who inspires us to dream great dreams and explore exciting possibilities. We hope never to lose that inspiration, but in later life Jesus may take on new roles for us. We may think of him as the revealer, who assures us of who God is for us. We may think of him as the redeemer, who assures us that God saves us from our own brokenness and limitations, but who also challenges us to reach out to others in need of help and consolation. Finally, we may simply encounter Jesus as an old friend, who walks with us, supports us, and empowers us to carry on his ministry. We must each find out who Jesus is for us at this time in our lives, and who Jesus desires to be for us.

The later years are a time to revisit the story of Martha and Mary, and to recognise that Jesus calls us to be friends, not simply ministers. We claim the value of our ministry to be the service and care of others; yet we hear the call to be more like Mary, as a friend at the feet of Jesus, and less like Martha, as a servant compulsively at work in the kitchen. In our younger days, we identified with the parable of the servant who works all day in the fields and returns to prepare the Master's dinner. Now we may identify more with the parable of the

servant who returns at the end of the day to discover that the Master invites him to sit down and be served. If our earlier days called us to find God in extraordinary, if not heroic, acts of service, now we are inclined to find God in the everyday joys and struggles of our lives. The challenge now is to redeem the ordinary, and to acknowledge that God is found in the acts of each day that shape and define our lives and touch in simple ways the lives of others.

In relation to the Spiritual Exercises, the Election or life choice made earlier in life (a choice made in the Second Week of the Exercises) must be reaffirmed or deepened in the later years. The Election is no longer the discernment of a fundamental vocation, or of the direction in which God is calling us in life. The Second Week of the Exercises now becomes an invitation to embrace the life choice that we have already made with a matured sense of realism, with a 'yes' tempered by past successes and failures and by a new awareness that God is the one who takes the initiative while we respond, at times reluctantly, at times generously. The dream born in youth and purified in mid-life is now, in the later years, confirmed. It is less like Ignatius' experiences at Loyola and Manresa and more like his later experience at La Storta, when God confirmed that Ignatius had been on the right path for all the years that he had laboured with Jesus, carrying his cross.

The grace that is prayed for throughout the Second Week is the grace to know Jesus more intimately, to love him more ardently and to follow him more closely. The later years give us the opportunity of a more mature friendship with Jesus, rooted in a more intimate knowledge and a more seasoned love. The growing knowledge and love of Jesus lay the foundation for continued and faithful service. We may be less stirred by the dramatic Call of the King, and more at home with the daily ministry of Jesus as he touches a few individuals who are in need of healing and consolation. The Second Week of the Exercises addresses us more as a long-time disciple than as a new recruit.

Hospitality

The temptation of the later years is to settle down, to define our world by the limited horizons that have become the boundaries of our lives. We become comfortable, and we expect little that is new. We lack the vision and the energy to explore new ways of doing things. We are content where we are, and we would prefer to live out our lives in the

ways to which we have become accustomed. The challenge at this time of life is to expand the landscape of our hearts, to find new perspectives, and to dare to redefine our world. We pray for the grace to resist the hardening of our categories of thought, to remain open to thinking and dreaming in new ways, and to include in our view of the world what we have previously ignored. The later years take on new life when we dare to step across the boundaries of what we know, and to discover new people and experiences and ministries that we were afraid to encounter in the past.

Hospitality is about welcoming the stranger, and about making a space for those who are without a home. It is about creating a place where people can feel accepted as they are, and not feel judged by standards other than their own. It is about not demanding that others conform to our own conventions and judgments. It is what makes the alien into a friend. And this is true not only of unfamiliar people, but also of new ideas and new ways of doing things.

The Second Week of the Exercises invites us to contemplate the ministry of Jesus, a ministry of inclusion that refused to be restricted by the limited world of laws and social structures. Jesus met and welcomed the 'unclean', those on the edges of society who were excluded by arbitrary social taboos. He ate with sinners and people ignorant of the Law. He touched lepers and Gentiles, which made him unclean too, according to the Law. To know and love Jesus is to know and love someone who challenged all the structures of his society. The Second Week of the Exercises is thus a call, not only to share in Jesus' ministry in the traditional and conventional ways, but to be prophetic and innovative. If our later years call us to remain open to new worlds, and to new ways of approaching them, Jesus offers us a model of someone who refused to be defined by structures and expectations that stood in the way of creative ministry.

Limits and Surrender

The later years are a time to let go of illusions, of unrealistic expectations about ourselves and others. There is a temptation, of course, to become disillusioned, to lose heart and become cynical. Was it all just an adolescent dream that came to nothing? They are also a time to empty ourselves and surrender to the work of God within us.

In a new sense, we accept the things that we cannot change, and the things that we will not be able to do in our lives. We come to terms

with the dreams that will never be realised and the mid-life resolutions that will never be carried out. We continue to find God in our successes, but we also discover that we often experience God even more profoundly and authentically in our failures. We can look back over our lives and acknowledge that the presence of God has been more tangible and believable in the places where we have struggled or failed, where we have had to face our limitations and inadequacies, than where we have succeeded. We have learned from experience that success is finally in God's hands and not in our own. We have embraced the truth of the psalm: 'Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain' (Psalm 127:1). Our experience has called us to a new and more radical dependence on God and trust in God's promises. We have known Peter's experience of fishing all night and catching nothing, but we have also known the surprising and gratuitous gift of a boat full of fish when we have allowed Jesus to direct the casting of our nets.

**Success is in
God's hands,
not in our own**

The temptation at this time in life is to become discouraged at our lack of progress and at our meagre efforts to respond to the opportunities of grace. We may have a paralyzing sense of the impossibility of living the ideal or achieving the dream, but we also have the humble awareness that God continues to do great things in us and through us. We have walked boldly on the water, but we know the terrifying experience of beginning to sink. And ultimately we know that such lapses are an invitation—an invitation to trust in faith that Jesus is there to hold us up.

The Third Week of the Exercises invites us into the suffering and death of Jesus. We are to experience the cost of discipleship by sharing in the passion of Jesus, his rejection and the seeming failure of his mission. The passion takes on a new meaning in our later lives as we struggle with our own failures, and with the limited scope of our ministry. Yes, there is much that we will leave undone. We can identify in a new way with Jesus' experience of his death. We can glory in our weakness; we can accept our own experience of being an earthenware vessel; we can answer the call to take up our cross and die each day so that others might live. Only in our later years do these rich biblical ideas take on their fullest significance in our lives.

Hope

Hope is a central virtue in the later years, not simply because of the awareness that death is growing more imminent and that we are called to hope in God's promises of eternal life. We also need to continue hoping in what God can do in and through us in the years we have left. There is a temptation passively to accept that what we have is all there is. We may settle down and resign ourselves to our present level of competence or sanctity. We may have little hope that God can do more for us, or that we can respond to God in any new or more generous way. We may become content, though disappointed, that we have reached a plateau in our relationship with God, and in our ability to learn radically new things or to take surprising new directions in our lives.

***The grace
of believing
that God can
do new things
in us and
through us***

The grace at this time is to believe that God can do new things in us and through us. Significant changes are still possible in prayer and ministry. This grace manifests itself in our openness to new ministries later in life—not just in the sense of finding other activities to do after years in one ministry, but in the sense of seeing a new way to serve that captures our hearts and imaginations. The world is full of stories of people discovering new careers and new activities in society, and new ministries in the Church, as they pass from middle into later life. These are people who search out further education or discover new ways of sharing their gifts with others. They are people of hope who embrace new possibilities, who refuse to restrict their options to things already tried. Hope does not allow people in their later years to think only in terms of what God has already done in their lives. Hope opens us to the unexpected and unimagined.

I am reminded of the sage advice of an elderly African-American, whose wisdom came not from books but from life. He shared his experience of God with someone much younger, a spiritual director anxious to know more about the ways of the Spirit. The older man reflected: 'God be slow. God be slow. God be very slow, but God always gets done on time'. The later years are years of hope, because we believe that God is not finished yet, but that God will get done on time, and that what God plans to do is beyond our most optimistic expectations.

Joy

‘Grumpy old men and women’, ‘cynical and negative curmudgeons’—these descriptions are usually reserved for those well on in years who see only the dark side of life, but they can also apply to the ‘young-old’ who have lost a sense of hope and joy. An enlivening grace of the later years is the sense of rejoicing in what God has done and in what God continues to do within us. This grace calls forth not only gratitude for the gifts of a lifetime, but also a deeper sense of God’s continuing presence and faithful love. Joy expands our hearts and sends us forth to share the good news. Joy is contagious and leads others to discover God in their own experience. A joyful person in later years is a wonderful witness to faith in God’s graciousness and goodness.

The Fourth Week of the Exercises focuses our prayer and reflection on the resurrection of Jesus and on his resurrection appearances. We pray for the grace to rejoice with Jesus who has been raised and suffers no more. As we contemplate the resurrection appearances, we know the gift of peace that the risen Christ offers to his disciples, and we experience Jesus’ ministry of consolation to those who are discouraged and confused. The resurrection of Jesus is the source and foundation of our hope, the assurance that God can truly make all things new, that even death is a way to new life. In our later years, the graces of the Fourth Week of the Exercises take on a richer meaning. The Fourth Week inspires hope in our own resurrection, but even more it now invites us to identify with the risen Christ and his ministry of consolation. The wisdom that comes from many years of sharing in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus’ dying and rising becomes a grace to share with others. The gospel stories describe how the disciples who encountered the risen Christ were empowered with a new sense of mission to carry on Jesus’ ministry. The risen Christ was their model for a ministry of forgiveness and consolation, and of new beginnings.

But the prayerful encounter with Christ risen also assures us of the lasting value of our life’s work. Jesus was raised as a whole person, not as a disembodied spirit. He retained his humanity, and thus affirmed the eternal significance of whatever has been an expression of human love. His resurrection witnesses to the fact that whatever we have done in prayer, in creativity and in service will last forever. As we look back on our lives, and ahead into the future, what greater reason can

we find for joy than Jesus' promise that the fruit of our lives will not simply disappear but will be a permanent part of the reign of God?

Growing in Grace

Though Ignatius Loyola envisaged the Exercises as an experience to be had only once, the Exercises nevertheless articulate the whole pattern of our spiritual lives and of the ongoing journey of our growth into holiness. They continue to evoke within us the invitations of God to grow into a deeper relationship with God in the various stages of our lives. I suggest that the experience of the Exercises is quite different for someone starting on the road of discipleship, and for someone well travelled on that road. As we grow into our later years, the Exercises take on a new meaning and significance, and they invite us to a spirituality appropriate to this stage of our lives. The Exercises call everyone to gratitude, forgiveness, commitment, hospitality, surrender, hope and joy, but for the Christian in their later years each one of these graces has developed a distinct character and texture. We pray the final 'Take, Lord, receive' of the Exercises in quite different ways at twenty-five, thirty-five, forty-five, fifty-five, sixty-five and seventy-five. When we say these words later in life, it is not necessarily better or more profound, but it does reflect a specific and changing relationship with God.

I conclude with a prayer I composed shortly after turning sixty. Now, five years later, it seems even more true to our stance before God in our later years:

Lord, I am growing old.

I do not want to be old before my time. I do not want to be an early retiree or to fail to give all my energy to your service in my remaining years, but I cannot deny the decades gone and the limited years ahead. I feel more fragile, more vulnerable.

In my youth, there were so many days, months, yes years that seemed to lie ahead that I fooled myself with illusions of immortality. Now I know the years are numbered, and I sense in a new way that each day is a gift not to be presumed but to be cherished.

My relationship with you has always sustained me, directed me, and given me hope, but too often I have neglected it, presumed it was there, and failed to nourish it. Even my commitment to

ministry seemed too often a product of compulsion rather than zeal, of a desire to be esteemed rather than a desire to serve.

But this is less a time for regrets and self-criticisms and more a time for gratitude and renewed commitments.

This is a time to deepen my relationship with you and to be more attentive to your presence in my everyday life.

This is a time to be with you, Lord, and to invite you to be with me.

This is a time to surrender my life into your hands and to discover that my name is written on the palm of your hand.

This is a time to tend to my deepest desires so that I can discover your desires for me.

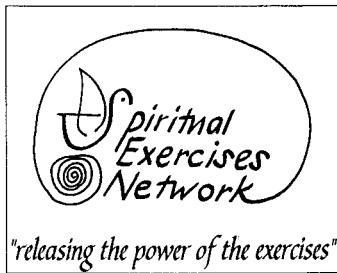
This is a time to think about home and where my heart is and to unearth my treasure.

This is a time for abiding in you and noticing how you abide in me.

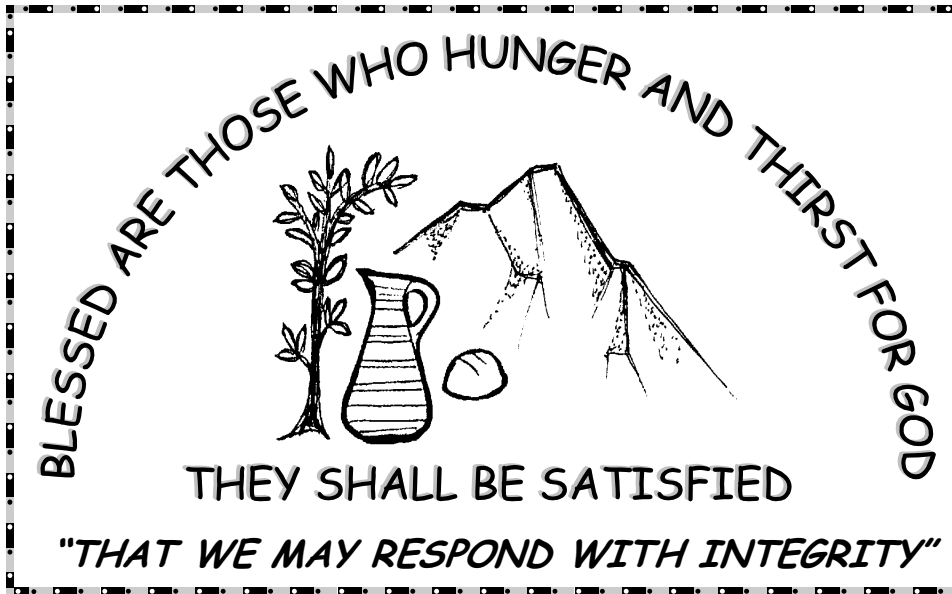
This is a time for harvesting and a time for planting new seeds in the sure hope that you will give them growth.

Jesus, you said to Peter: 'When you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go' (John 21:18). Lord, be with me as I grow old. Lead me, guide me and draw me ever closer to your heart for only there will I find peace and the assurance of life eternal. Amen.

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CRISIS AND TRANSFORMATION

Turning Over the Compost Heap

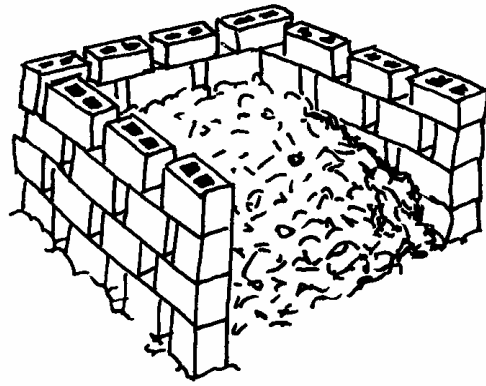
Vilma Seelaus

THE COMPOST HEAP HAS A MYSTERIOUS INNER LIFE. It can offer deepened understanding, fresh meaning for our present dark times. This article explores the marvels of composting and the writings of Teresa of Avila. It reflects too on the profound significance of our own daily struggles, and shows how our individual lives can contribute towards global transformation.

Compost as Symbol of Transformation

Since I can find no better image than that of the compost heap to symbolize the potential for transformation contained within life's struggles and dark times, I shall take up my pitchfork and begin turning over the compost, with special attention to its message for us today. How can compost, seemingly so full of disintegration and decay, speak to our lives and to our prayer? Ripe compost waits to be spread around the garden. It finds its fulfilment in nourishing the soil, in enriching new plant life, and in sustaining and strengthening growth in our garden. Should contemplation likewise always issue in meaningful action? This question demands an answer, but first we need to ask a simpler question. How does one make compost? Why is compost such a convincing image for God's transforming energy present within the very things that trouble us?

Many years ago I became fascinated with the concept of organic gardening. As I studied it, I learned that integral to organic gardening is dark, rich compost. So, at my monastery, a special container was designated for vegetable and fruit peelings and other such appropriate matter. I learned to see weeds in a new light, as having a higher destiny when they landed on the compost heap. Raking leaves also took on new meaning as I tossed them onto the pile. For this rich, dark conglomeration



of organic ingredients, heaped up with layers of soil, begins a mysterious process of transformation.

I learned that compost contains bacteria that effect an incredible change without my doing anything apart from gathering the right ingredients. Before long, steam begins to rise from the unappealing

heap of refuse. The bacteria generate heat, and gradually the contents of the heap begin to break down. The banana skins turn dark; distinctive weeds become unrecognisable; and everything seems to become part of everything else. Gradually the pile settles; and after a few months, before my amazed eyes, it turns into pure organic soil, waiting to be distributed to the vegetable garden or to enhance the bloom of roses. The banana skins, weeds, and all the stuff of the compost, in dying to themselves and becoming one with things different from themselves, become a source of enrichment for other plant life. The excellent taste of our organically grown vegetables keeps us faithful year after year to this process.

The compost heap shows us that the other side of breakdown, of the dark times when life seems to be falling apart, is energy for transformation. Just as the disparate elements of the compost eventually become one reality, so our dark times can issue in a deepened solidarity and compassionate communion with others, especially with those who might seem different from us. The example of the compost also invites us to a deepened sense of oneness with the universe itself.

Nature is pregnant with the glory of God, and therefore working in the garden is always a contemplative experience for me. Being attentive to nature's mysteries attunes me anew to the creating God ever present in our midst. We are conditioned to think of God as somehow located outside the universe. Yet at the heart of the Christian message is the vision of a God whose very life is invested in the creation. Thus a theologian such as Sallie McFague can envision the universe as the body of God with the Spirit of God animating all of

matter.¹ This same Divine Spirit marvellously dwells within the human heart, and creates a radical interconnectedness not only among human beings but also between us and our planet earth. The one Spirit of God that flows through us flows through every part of God's incredible, ever expanding universe.

At present, we humans are nature's finest achievement. Nature now contemplates itself and reflects back on itself through human eyes. Physicists tell us that the same elements that make up the farthest star are also in the human body. We always remain connected to the world of nature that brought us forth. Attentiveness to God and attentiveness to nature's mysteries are integral to each other. Everything around us is pregnant with God and with meaning for our lives—full of potential for growth and transformation, like a compost heap!

Nature actually makes its own compost through the changes of the seasons. In autumn trees drop their leaves on to the ground where they decay, so that they can enrich the earth with another layer of pure organic soil. When I walk through woods, I like to dig the toe of my shoe into the earth, knowing that many an autumn's yield of leaves is beneath my feet. The philosopher Mircea Eliade claims that the cycle of life, death and re-birth is the deepest myth of all of reality. Nature itself announces the good news that new life can be found within diminishment and decay. The paschal mystery of Christ's death and resurrection points to nature's own paschal mystery. A seed buried in the ground sprouts into a tree; a caterpillar becomes a butterfly; a tiny fertilised egg becomes a human being. Something must always give way for new life to emerge. So as I meditate anew on the compost heap, I find myself asking what, in our troubled times, needs to change, to be let go of, for new life to appear?

Compost, as Lived Out in Teresa's Life

Our Carmelite mystics lived the mystery of compost. Instinctively I turn to Teresa, whose life and writings, like those of John of the Cross, clearly illustrate the spiritual growth that comes through trials and dark times.

¹ Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

**God was
transforming
Teresa**

The Book of Her Life is about God transforming Teresa. Teresa repeatedly writes of having changed, of having become a different person: ‘my soul was completely changed’; ‘my soul became another’; ‘I saw that I was another person’.² God was working in Teresa through events unique to her. Everything that constituted life for Teresa provided material for her spiritual compost heap—for change and transformation. God, whom Teresa experienced as both fire and water, was the energy that generated the heat and moisture necessary for the process to begin. The warmth of God’s indwelling Spirit rose in the heart of Teresa; transformation was under way. Often, she just had to go on, surrendering to the darkness and pain of not understanding, yet remaining faithful. We recall her struggles with being a woman at a time in history when women were not considered to be worth much, and her anguish at having her relationship with God judged to be illusory. She writes:

I believe there were five or six of them, all great servants of God; and my confessor told me that they all came to the decision that my experience was from the devil, that I shouldn’t receive communion so often, and that I should try to distract myself in such a way that I would not be alone. (25.14)

We know now that she also carried the secret of her Jewish ancestry.

When Teresa felt that she was held in the palm of God’s hand, nothing in life was troublesome. But as the transformation process continued, and Teresa again experienced darkness and pain, she prayed for deliverance. Finally, as the compost heap of her life settled into a pile of rich, productive earth, Teresa, fully sensitised to the generative value of suffering, no longer prayed for deliverance but for the gift to serve the Crucified. Her entire being was now one with the living energy of God, and became a life-giving spirit enriching others. The cycle had completed itself.

Teresa’s writings bear this out. Notice the progression in the endings of her three major works. At the end of *The Book of Her Life* she describes her life in the house of the reform as follows:

² See, for example, chapter 20, nn. 23, 25, 26, 28; chapter 21, nn. 8, 9; chapter 25, nn. 18, 19.

... the Lord has been pleased that all my desires converge upon this one desire. And He has given me a kind of sleep in life, or it almost always seems to me that I am dreaming what I see. I am aware in myself of neither happiness nor pain, however great. If certain things do give me either of these, the happiness or pain passes so quickly I marvel, and the feeling left me is that it was like a dream. This is the complete truth; for even though afterward I may want to rejoice over that happiness or be sad about that pain, it is not in my power to do so; just as a prudent person is unable to delight in or grieve over a dream that was had. (40.22)

In this same chapter Teresa also recounts two visions in which she sees the Divinity in her soul to be like a very clear diamond in which everything is visible.³ Teresa writes that, within this brilliantly polished diamond mirror, she sees herself, her Lord, and all that is fragile in life. From this perspective, happiness and pain seem relative. Everything is viewed through the prism of life beyond this mortal life, and she longs for the vision of God. But this is not the end of Teresa's story.

The Way of Perfection, written only a year later, immediately shows Teresa enmeshed in conflicts and difficulties as she founds other monasteries of the reform. So great are her trials that *The Way of Perfection* concludes with a lengthy, impassioned prayer for deliverance. I quote just a small section:

Deliver me, Lord, from this shadow of death, deliver me from so many trials, deliver me from so many sufferings, deliver me from so many changes, from so many compliments that we are forced to receive while still living, from so many, many, many things that tire and weary me, and that would tire anyone reading this if I mentioned them all. (42.2)

In the midst of all her trials, Christ is still present as her intimate friend. Christ is both fire, which enkindles love, and living water, the flow of which mysteriously enkindles the fire. Together these elements enrich even as they seem to destroy, just as compost breaks down only to nurture new life.

When we turn to Teresa's masterpiece, *Interior Castle*, she is in the last stages of her life journey. The soil of her soul has become rich

³ *The Book of Her Life*, 40.5, 10.

earth. Christ's presence is so real to her that Teresa experiences her soul as a reliquary that Christ opens at will in order to show it clearly 'His most sacred humanity in the way He desires'. (VI.9.2-3)

The brilliance of this inner vision is like that of an infused light coming from a sun covered by something as transparent as a properly cut diamond. (VI.9.4)

Teresa's inner being reflects the divine Sun. Her transformation is fully realised. Using the image of a cocoon and a butterfly, she says:

Now then, we are saying that this little butterfly has already died with supreme happiness for having found repose and because Christ lives in it. (VII.3.1)

She no longer seems to live more in heaven than on earth. Instead,

... everything is such that this soul doesn't know or recall that there will be heaven or life or honour for it, because it employs all it has in procuring the honour of God. (VII.3.2)

Teresa now looks after what is Christ's, just as Christ looks after what is Teresa's. She no longer prays for deliverance; trials now have a new meaning. She tells us:

You have already seen the trials and afflictions these souls have experienced in order to die so as to enjoy our Lord. What surprises me most of all is that they have just as great a desire to serve Him and that through them He be praised and that they may benefit some soul if they can. For not only do they not desire to die but they desire to live very many years suffering the greatest trials if through these they can help that the Lord be praised, even though in something very small.... They do not desire at that time to be in glory. Their glory lies in being able some way to help the Crucified, especially when they see He is so offended and that few there are who ... really look after His honour. (VII.3.6)

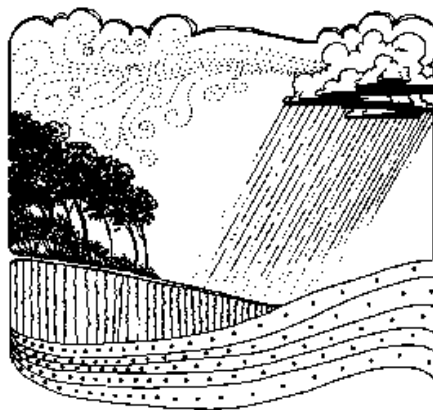
Teresa's life has been so transformed that the inner and outer life are now at one with the divine presence. She no longer feels ambivalent about conflicting values. Her ongoing struggle with honour is put to rest. God is the central focus of her heart's desire, and she sees everything through the eyes of God's all-absorbing love. The honour of Christ, not concern for her own honour, now motivates her. Teresa no

longer desires the glory of heaven; her glory is in helping her Beloved, the crucified Christ. The richness of her life continues through time to fertilise the spiritual lives of people—including those with beliefs different from her own—who sincerely seek God.

Teresa's Life and Our Life

The lives of mystics such as Teresa connect with ours. Christ, who transformed Teresa, is present and active in us, and in all the tragic events of these dark days. In the Gospels, Jesus shows the kingdom of God to be fashioned like the mysteries of the universe; it encompasses both life and death, dying and rising to new life. It is like a tiny mustard seed that falls to the ground and dies, but then sprouts forth the largest of the shrubs; it is like the yeast which leavens the entire mass of the dough; it is a search for something of value which involves the pain of loss and the joy of discovery, as when the woman finds her lost coin. The breaking down of our lives, whatever shapes their reality, reminds us that they are integrally connected both with the mysteries of nature and with the mysteries of Christ. Like the Eucharist, our daily dying and rising proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

When we are suffering or troubled, we easily lose hope. At such times, our preoccupations tend to reduce our awareness of Christ's abiding presence and of the Christ-life that is ours. As our prayer deepens, and God's self-communication becomes stronger, we begin to experience pain and suffering. The intensity of the divine light blinds the eyes of the soul so that the soul feels plunged into darkness. Some years ago I attended a meeting at a monastery in the mountains of Pennsylvania. Early in the morning, before dawn, I would venture out to watch the sunrise. As the darkness lifted, the trees, meadows and surrounding mountains gradually came into view. However, as soon as the sun's fire appeared over the mountain-top directly before my eyes, a remarkable phenomenon occurred. The sky was brilliant with colour, yet the slope directly beneath the



place where the sun appeared became shrouded in darkness again. The few houses, the trees and the sharp rise of the land were no longer visible. I saw only darkness and heavy mist. Only as the sun mounted higher in the sky did the mist rise and the darkness gradually give way, so that the trees and houses on the mountain slope again became visible.

Something similar happens in the domain of the spirit. Our inner being is unprepared for the brilliance of the divine presence. The light of God blinds the soul as God increasingly reveals Godself to us. And yet the presence of God is as vital to us as the sun is vital to our planet earth. We cannot escape the presence of God, because as Karl Rahner puts it, 'God is the horizon of human consciousness, and is intimately present to all of human knowing and loving'.⁴

Think about this awesome reality: God is present in all of our knowing and our loving. At the same time, God is the God of incomprehensible mystery; it seems we cannot take too much of God so that God has to prepare us for God. Trials are a way in which this can happen, since only through a deepened faith can we find meaning in our dark times. John of the Cross gives poignant descriptions of what happens when the rays of the Divine Sun penetrate the horizon of finite consciousness. We become blinded by the intensity of the light; the very nearness of the Divine Presence blinds the soul with its brilliance. The immediate experience is one of darkness, until the soul's inner eye is transformed and its vision is cleared by the development of pure faith.

Faith, transformed through love, enables the soul to see itself, others and all things through the eyes of God. Just as it takes faith to believe that the unsightly pile of blackened banana skins and the other half-rotted ingredients of the compost heap will eventually be rich soil, so it takes faith to strengthen love in our souls, and to maintain the daring hope and belief that the piled up ingredients of struggles, failures, losses, sufferings and even sins in our lives can actually be transformed by God into something life-giving for others.

The interaction of God with human finitude necessitates a faith response. While God is infinitely near and 'always present as abiding

⁴ Karl Rahner, 'Experience of Self and Experience of God' (1971), in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 13, translated by David Bourke (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1975), 124.

offer' (Rahner), God is at the same time infinitely beyond our human capacity for encounter, except through faith. Through faith, hope and love, God empowers us to stretch courageously beyond the horizon of our limited finitude into communion with One who is mother, father, beloved and friend. Just as the rising sun darkens the mountain slope below, the Divine Sun becomes at times like night to the soul. But as faith increasingly enlightens the inner eye, and as God increasingly becomes the transcendent centre of one's life, love born of hope gives new sight and confident speech to the heart, leading to ever deeper communion with God. All of human experience, its feelings, activities and encounters, ultimately becomes one in Christ. As John of the Cross puts it,

... the soul united and transformed in God, breathes out in God to God the very divine spiration that God—she being transformed in Him—breathes out in Himself to her.⁵

The mysticism of the heart has found its realisation.

At the same time, as Teresa in particular makes clear in her seventh dwelling places, the experience of union with God is never ours as a private possession. Ripe compost needs to be spread around. With intense enthusiasm, Teresa insists:

All its concern is taken up with how to please Him more and how or where it will show Him the love it bears Him. This is the reason for prayer, my daughters, the purpose of this spiritual marriage: the birth always of good works, good works. (VII.4.6)

As if to be sure she will be understood, she repeats:

This is what I want us to strive for, my sisters; and let us desire and be occupied in prayer not for the sake of our enjoyment but so as to have this strength to serve. (VII.4.12)

Hers is no introverted mysticism. Martha and Mary have joined together in showing hospitality to the Lord.

⁵ *Spiritual Canticle*, 39.3.

Contemplation and Today's Crisis

Contemplation necessarily calls forth a response to the crisis of our times. As I ponder what Teresa might have to say to us today, she leads me to her *Way of Perfection*. The words 'be mindful' demand attention. In her reflection on the Our Father, Teresa insists that to pray well, we must 'be mindful' of the one with whom we are speaking. The importance of having a recollected heart in order to pray well repeats itself throughout the text of her chapters on prayer. In her challenging book, *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance*, Dorothee Sölle echoes Teresa:

There is no experience of God that can be so privatised that it becomes and remains the property of one owner, the privilege of a person of leisure, the esoteric domain of the initiated.⁶

Sölle refuses to separate prayer and politics. She argues for the importance of mysticism in countering the destructive aspects of ego, group bias, materialism and violence. Like Rahner before her, Sölle believes that religion in the third millennium will either be mystical or it will be dead. Moreover, attentiveness to God in prayer inevitably makes us more attentive to the concerns of our world.

The media constantly bring before us the serious conflicts within both church and world. The question is: how do we integrate these disturbing realities into our prayer and into our life with God? The dictionary defines awareness as being watchful, vigilant, guarded, knowing, cognisant, informed, conscious. All of these qualities, in varying degrees, play themselves out in our prayer-relationship with God, as we live God's presence in everyday life. We need to be watchful, attentive, vigilant and guarded in the face of the overwhelming potential for distraction in our media-saturated society. If we are to live mindfully the Carmelite Elijan motto, *the Lord God lives in whose sight I stand*, we need to be knowing, cognisant, and conscious of the inner movements of the heart. Inordinate desires and dishonest thinking cannot withstand the gaze of the divine presence.

⁶ (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 3.

Attachments lessen our capacity for God by shrinking the soul. Fortunately for us, our attachments, the things we cling to, are the very stuff of God's transforming action, like the leaves and weeds in a compost heap. The riches of a transformed heart are hidden within the darkness, the sufferings and the constriction of the soul's unfreedom. This may be either the darkness of despair, or the darkness before dawn. Energy for transformation is deep within the darkness and chaos itself, whatever its name or cause. Within the soul is new life, like an unborn child awaiting birth. An inner space is being cleared for God, so that the womb of our life may carry Christ to full term. Christ becomes, as it were, the soul of our soul, the life of our life, the eye of our mind, and the strength of our patience. Human consciousness is thus transformed in Christ. Such transformation allows us to look at personal and world events through the prism of Christ's compassionate, merciful love. Harsh judgments loose their grip, because the soul sees beneath the surface of things. Its attentiveness has reached a deeper, divine level of awareness. Inevitably, suffering will present itself in various ways, but now, suffering no longer has the last word. As Sölle puts it,

***The riches
of a
transformed
heart are
hidden
within the
darkness***

It is not patience with or acquiescence in suffering that is taught, but an active, self-determined acceptance of reality that cannot destroy one's being lost-in-God.⁷

How Does Teresa Respond to the Ills of Society?

In 1571, while in the process of founding monasteries of her reformed Carmels, Teresa was called back to the monastery of the Incarnation as prioress. During her years there, she received the grace of spiritual marriage, which gave birth to good works in her own life. Though remaining lost-in-God, she showed self-determination in the face of suffering and an active interest in the events of her day. Along with concerns over the affairs of her foundations, her letters reveal her broad interest in current affairs. In a letter to Gracian, dated 19 August 1578, she laments the death of the King of Portugal, and her

⁷ Sölle, *The Silent Cry*, 179.

dissatisfaction with the country's potential annexation. In other letters she expresses her concern over religious wars in France, and over the suspected rebellion of the Moriscos of Seville. She shows anxiety about the spiralling inflation which created extreme hardship and threatened the financial survival of some of her monasteries.⁸

Teresa often grieved over events, but she did not stop there. Where possible, she entered into active resistance. Social protest was behind many of the characteristics of her monasteries—small, unpretentious buildings, and a disregard, even a disdain, for the overwhelming class distinctions in the Spain of her day. She allowed people of so-called 'impure blood'—Jewish Christians or *conversas*—to enter her monasteries. And amid great furore, she allowed a *converso* benefactor to be buried in one of her churches (although only after a stern admonition from Our Lord).

These examples show a few of the ways in which Teresa actively resisted the overriding system of honour that determined social life throughout Spain. Her writings reveal her lifetime struggle to be personally free, and then to resist within her foundations the harmful expectations of an honour-bound society.⁹

From Teresa's life experience, and from turning over the compost heap, two things become clear. First, everything, absolutely everything, that constitutes our individual, personal lives, contains within itself potential for transformation in Christ. Even our sins and failings, no matter how great these may appear in our own eyes, or how great they may actually be, are not an obstacle, but instead are integral to the process of transformation. In a profound and thought-provoking Easter reflection, Karl Rahner writes of Christ as the victor over sin and death:

He is not one who ascended into heaven in order to disappear from world history as if he had never been in it. He ascended into heaven after he had descended into the depth of sin, death, and the lost world, and came out of this abyss, which contained everything, alive. More: there in the ultimate lostness, where all viciousness springs and where all streams of tears have their origin and where the last source of all hatred and self-seeking abides—

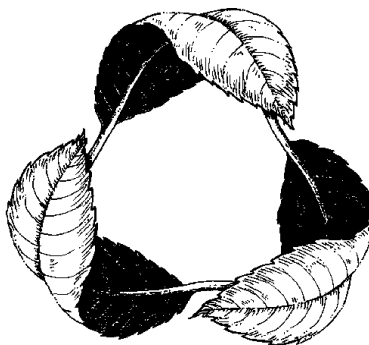
⁸ See letters 22 July 1579; 4 July 1580; 31 October 1575—to list but a few such references.

⁹ See Teofanes Egido, 'The Historical Setting of St Teresa's Life', *Carmelite Studies*, 1 (1980), 122-182.

that is where he has won the victory. He won it not by shoving the world from himself and by heaving it away, but by the fact that by losing himself, he forced his way into the innermost centre whence its entire destiny springs forth, seized this centre, and accepted it for all eternity.¹⁰

The risen Christ is the energy that has already transformed the compost of our lives into rich soil. Can we dare to believe that He who has entered into the place where all tears have their origin, from where all viciousness springs, has also entered into the darkness in our personal lives? Is this what it means when we say that we have been redeemed in Christ and our sins have been taken away? That every dark event is now a privileged place of encounter with the risen Christ? If so, the compost heap can become a genuine symbol of resurrection, reminding us that Christ is indeed the heart of the world, whether of spirit or of matter. The risen Christ permeates the entire universe, as its ultimate finality and its most secret strength. Dare we believe in the redemptive possibilities of every human situation, even the most desperate one?

Teresa's mystical awareness of all things taking place in God—powerfully described in chapter ten of the sixth dwelling places—reminds us that presence to God is inseparable from presence to one another, and also from presence to both the beauty and the evils of our postmodern world. Teresa has a vision in which no longer the soul, but God's own self is 'like an immense and beautiful dwelling or palace'. When we commit sin we do not leave the palace—'no, certainly not'. It is rather 'within the palace itself, that is with God Himself' that 'the abominations, indecent actions and evil deeds committed by us sinners take place' (VI.10.3). Rahner is only echoing Teresa. With Christ's descent into the very heart of the earth, into the deepest depth of both good and evil, all things are now in God through the risen Christ.



¹⁰ 'Our Easter Faith', in Karl Rahner, *The Great Church Year*, edited by Albert Raffelt, translation edited by Harvey D. Egan (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 178.

What might this profound reality mean for people like us? If mysticism is indeed crucial in countering the destructive forces of violence and all the other ways in which gospel living may break down, how do we connect attentiveness to God in prayer with everyday life? What is being asked of us? Does resistance mean that we have to stand on picket lines or offer up our bodies as human shields before powerful weapons of war, as some have felt called to do?

Again I turn to Teresa. She begins her *Way of Perfection* by grieving over the serious problems of her time, and especially over the havoc created by religious wars. She recognises that human forces are not sufficient to stop these evils. Teresa's recommendations might seem simplistic, but what they demand is the stuff of holiness:

All my longing was and still is that since He has so many enemies and so few friends that these few friends be good ones. (1.2)

... I shall enlarge on only three things ... [that help us] to possess inwardly and outwardly the peace Our Lord recommended so highly to us. The first of these is love for one another; the second is detachment from all created things; the third is true humility, which even though I speak of it last, is the main practice, and embraces all the others. (4.4)

Teresa did not abandon her intense desire to resist the evils of her day and to be of service to her Lord; instead she re-fashioned it into what was realistic for her as a woman in her culture. Each one of us is similarly faced with inevitable limitations, not necessarily because our culture limits us, but because none of us has unlimited potential. Every choice in life, every 'yes' to something, necessitates a 'no' to something else. Yet Teresa's invitation to mindfulness in prayer and mindfulness of God's abiding presence, along with the living-out of love, detachment and humility, provide an agenda of resistance to the dark side of our postmodern world—an agenda that can lead to both personal and societal transformation.

We live in a consumer society. While many people throughout the world are starving, the ego of the consumer in the West is constantly being bombarded with propaganda. We must have it; have it now; have it more often; have it faster. Nature itself has become like a global



shopping mall. Its resources are being consumed by technology without regard for the consequences to future generations. Our complicity, to the extent that we are imprisoned within the demand always to be having more, creates a crisis of the heart that threatens the very presence of God in our lives. How can we be attentive to God if we are consumed by consumerism itself? Throwing our need for over-consumption on the compost heap necessitates a growth in detachment, in genuine humility grounded in truth and reality, and in love for others and for our planet earth (which inevitably suffers from human exploitation).

The Need for Attentiveness

Some years ago I read a fascinating book by the biochemist Rupert Sheldrake, entitled *The Presence of the Past*. Sheldrake explores the possibility that memory is inherent in all of nature through what he calls 'morphic resonance'. Previous structures of activity influence subsequent, similar ones, providing a kind of memory for nature's present state.¹¹ If we apply Sheldrake's theory to human life, we can see how significant the quality of our attentiveness to God is, and we can also see the significance of living out the three virtues (love, detachment and humility) that Teresa proposes as most important for spiritual growth.

Sheldrake's theory of morphic resonance suggests that the evolution of a deepened God-consciousness for future generations depends on how far we live in a way deliberately attentive to God's abiding presence. Such attentiveness will often be lived out in bare faith. When the brilliance of the Divine Sun casts its shadow of darkness, the resulting pain demands of us a spirit of profound detachment and an unconditional commitment to love. This profound

¹¹ Rupert Sheldrake, *The Presence of the Past: Morphic Resonance and the Habits of Nature* (New York: Times Books, 1988).

detachment can only be sustained by a humility which makes no demands on God, and which abandons all distinction between oppressed and oppressor, between the prodigal and the one who appears faithful. Mystical love, a sun that is shining on the horizon of our darkness, expands the heart in such a way that the heart can love the sinner and the saint, both within itself and in others, and ‘possess inwardly and outwardly the peace Our Lord recommended so highly to us’.¹² This peace generates a divine, universal energy that is like steam rising from the compost heap of the world toward its ultimate transformation.

Teresa concludes her *Interior Castle* by grounding the mystical life in firm reality. The journey ends where it began—in the first dwelling places. Teresa reminds us that God’s life is incarnate in fragile humanity:

In sum, my sisters, what I conclude with is that we shouldn’t build castles in the air. The Lord doesn’t look so much at the greatness of our works as at the love with which they are done.... Thus even though our works are small they will have the value our love for Him would have merited had they been great. (VII.4.15)

Attentiveness to Christ, who is intimately present to all that is human; resistance through love to everything that dehumanises; detachment; humility—all these enable a daring trust that our participation, whether great or small, in the sufferings of the crucified Christ will not destroy us. Instead, the energies of the risen Christ, like the bacteria in the compost heap, will transform the apparent mess of our lives into ripe compost, enriching the lives of others and thus bringing our world closer to the final realisation of what eye has not yet seen or ear heard.

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¹² *The Way of Perfection*, 4. 4.

SEEKING GOD IN ALL THINGS

Ignatian Spirituality as Action Research

David Coghlan

THE IGNATIAN APPROACH TO SPIRITUALITY VIEWS GOD as active in the world, inviting us to ever closer collaboration. God can be sought and found in our own experience. The Ignatian God is a busy God, and is to be found not—or at least not only—in some static bliss, but rather in acting, in creating.¹ In the Contemplation for Learning to Love Like God, found at the end of the Spiritual Exercises, we pray to find God in the gifts of our world and in how God ‘works and labours’ for me (Exx 236). We seek to love as God loves—and, since love is expressed in action (Exx 230), this means we seek to act as God acts, responding according to the grace we receive. In Ignatian spirituality there is an integral link between prayer and activity. Ignatius offers us a structured set of methods for developing the interaction between the two.

It could be said, therefore, that Ignatian spirituality promotes a form of what is now known as *action research*. This term is used in the world of the social sciences—social work, community development, organization development, nursing, management and so on—to denote an approach to research which integrates the inquiry proper to research with ongoing action. People typically present action and reflection as occurring in a cycle: one moves from planning, to the action itself, to evaluation, and then to planning something new.² We learn from our reflection on experience. Knowledge and action are organically connected: knowledge is generated through reflection in and on action.

¹ David L. Fleming, ‘Finding a Busy God’, in *A Spirituality for Contemporary Life* (St Louis: Review for Religious, 1991), 21-30.

² David Coghlan and Teresa Brannick, *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization* (London: Sage, 2001).

In recent years, social science researchers have come to recognise the close connections between knowledge and action. In this context, they have also come to acknowledge the value of spirituality. Recent contributions to the literature have commended a simple awareness of the sacred,³ transpersonal forms of spirituality,⁴ and the Buddhist emphasis on mindful inquiry.⁵ But perhaps they have not yet fully recognised the potential of mainstream Christianity.

**There are
striking overlaps
between action
research and
Ignatian
spirituality**

In this article, I shall try to redress the balance by pointing to some striking overlaps between motifs of Ignatian spirituality—a spirituality in which ‘action’ is a central motif—and the features of this new pattern of thinking in the social sciences known as action research. Action research is having an increasing influence on the study of spirituality, particularly in its applied forms, and it may be both useful and timely to draw out its similarities to at least one major school of Christian spirituality. Moreover, the technical concepts developed by action research theory might help sharpen the processes of reflection encouraged by Ignatian spirituality. Though the methods of the social sciences are sometimes reductive, either bracketing the religious or else translating it into other—allegedly more accurate—terms, the processes of action research are quite appropriate to the knowledge born of grace and of religious faith.

What is Action Research?

The word ‘research’ is associated in most people’s minds with ideas, with theories. Research is conducted in the world of ideas and their formulation. It was this standard, seemingly common-sense notion of research that shaped the social sciences as they were being first developed. Research, on this model, examines an ‘objective’ truth which exists outside the world of the researcher and which is disconnected from the action of everyday life. Research techniques

³ Peter Reason, ‘Reflections on Sacred Experience and Sacred Science’, *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 2/3 (1993), 273-283.

⁴ John Heron, ‘Transpersonal Cooperative Inquiry’, in *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*, edited by Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury (London: Sage, 2001), 333-339.

⁵ Valerie Malhotra Bentz and Jeremy J. Shapiro, *Mindful Inquiry in Social Research* (Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage, 1997).

were thus concerned with objective impartiality, with forms of knowledge that were 'valid' and which applied universally.

Social science no longer works with this model alone. When postmodernism began to emerge some thirty years ago, people became more aware of language, and in particular of how our experience is influenced as much by the language we use as by any 'objective' reality. Others have come to regard the purpose of human inquiry not simply as the creation of knowledge for itself, but rather the *enhancement of good practice* in everyday life. The knowledge sought contributes to relationships, to aesthetics, to ecology and to human flourishing.⁶ Now, it is argued, is a time for science *in* action rather than science *about* action.

It is in this context that the idea of 'action research' has come to the fore. In the words of two of its leading advocates, action research aims,

... to forge a more direct link between intellectual knowledge and moment to moment personal and social action, so that inquiry contributes directly to the flourishing of human persons, their communities and the ecosystems of which they are part.⁷

Action research has roots in the work of Kurt Lewin, one of the founding fathers of social psychology; in Paolo Freire's work on consciousness-raising; and in various schools of liberation thought, notably Marxist and feminist. We can identify four central characteristics:

- a focus on practical issues, aiming to produce knowledge-in-action
- a participatory mode of doing research *with* people rather than *on* people
- an awareness that truth emerges over time, and that the process may be as important as the outcomes

⁶ *Human Inquiry: A Sourcebook of New Paradigm Research*, edited by Peter Reason and John Rowan (Chichester: Wiley, 1981); Reason and Bradbury, *Handbook of Action Research*.

⁷ Peter Reason and William R. Torbert, 'The Action Turn: Toward a Transformational Social Science', *Concepts and Transformation*, 6/1 (2001), 1-37, here 6.

- a concern that new knowledge should lead people into a dynamic of emancipation.⁸

Ignatian Sources

Ignatius, as is well known, spoke of finding God in all things. His close confidant, Jerónimo Nadal, who did much to disseminate Ignatian teaching among the early Jesuits, once described Ignatius as ‘contemplative in action’, and developed a sustained doctrine of the circle of prayer and action. He spoke of the necessity ‘of returning often to prayer and of realising a circular movement passing from prayer to action and from action back to prayer’. In a recent discussion of these ideas, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, the current Jesuit General, points out that Nadal’s cycle does not imply two different, competing realities, one of which would detract from the other. Rather, people following this path are to be penetrated by ‘the one divine grace’. Kolvenbach then develops the idea:

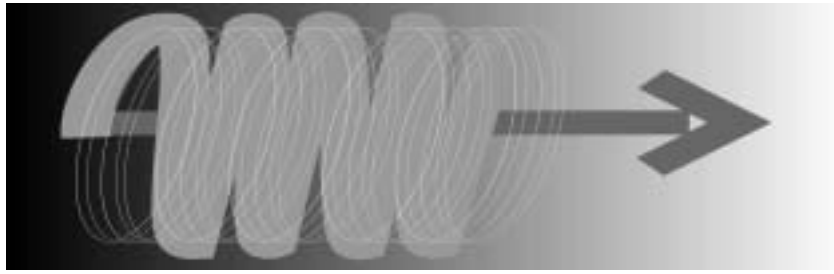
Keeping the image of the cycle, one might say that, in the spiritual progression of the apostolic life, the circle ceaselessly contracts until the two components—prayer and action—mutually penetrate in a harmony by which our human activity becomes the activity of God within us.

The whole reality of human existence becomes the setting where God’s action reveals itself.⁹

In these ideas we find remarkable convergences with action research. Action research does not recognise the distinction between theory and action in the way that traditional social science research does. Rather it reflects Kurt Lewin’s maxim that there should be no theory without action and no action without theory. The central

⁸ This classification draws on Reason and Bradbury, *Handbook of Action Research*, 2.

⁹ The immediate source for this paragraph is Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, ‘On the Effectiveness of the Spiritual Exercises’, written for the Ignatian centenary in 1991 and reproduced in *The Road from La Storta*, edited by Carl F. Starkloff, (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2000), 189-199, here 196-197. Fuller references and background are to be found in Emerich Coreth, ‘Contemplation in Action’ (1954), in *Contemporary Spirituality*, edited by Robert W. Gleason (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 184-211; Raymond Hostie, ‘The Circle of Prayer and Action’ (1955), in *Finding God in All Things*, translated by William J. Young (Chicago: Regnery, 1958), 153-165; Philip Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), 68-93.



dynamic of action research is the enactment of cycles of reflection and action, where the development is from reflection *about* action to critical inquiry *in* action, aiming at 'timely, voluntary, mutual, validity-testing, transformative action at all moments of living'.¹⁰ Clearly there are theological convictions underlying the Ignatian vision which theorists of action research do not express and to which they may well not subscribe. For Christians formed in the Ignatian tradition, the reflection in question here is an inquiry into how God is at work in their lives and in the world, and into how God might shape appropriate responses and reactions for here and now. But both Ignatian spirituality and action research involve a close integration of action and reflection. Just as believers may find that Ignatian spirituality enables a full theological understanding of the processes of action research, so the concepts and ideas developed in action research theory may well enrich and sharpen our understanding of what happens in Ignatian reflection, indeed in an everyday Examen. In the remainder of this article, I propose to introduce various other ideas from action research theory and to show how this enrichment and sharpening might take place.

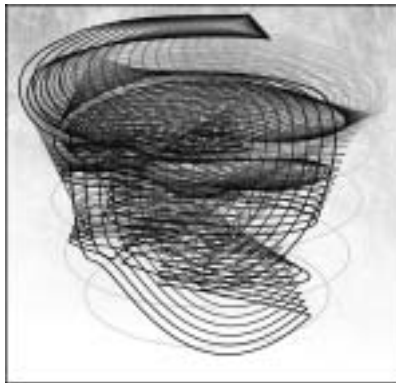
Forms of Knowing

Action research theory sometimes distinguishes four kinds of knowing, reflecting different ways in which we deal with and act within the world:

¹⁰ Reason and Torbert, 'The Action Turn', 6.

- *Experiential knowing*: the knowledge arising as we encounter the realities around us
- *Presentational knowing*: the knowledge expressed in our giving form to this experiential knowing, through language, images, music, painting and the like
- *Propositional knowing*: the knowledge distilling our experiential and presentational knowing into theories, statements and propositions
- *Practical knowing*: the knowledge that brings the other three forms of knowing to full fruition by *doing* appropriate things, skilfully and competently.¹¹

This scheme of four kinds of knowing—experience, expression, understanding, practice—can be applied to our relations with God. What for the Christian is the knowledge born of faith and prayer (*experiential* knowing) is expressed in *presentational* form through our images of God, through the language of our prayers, through religious art and music. That experiential and presentational knowing is articulated in *propositional* form in the statements of our faith, in the Creed, in how our beliefs are formulated and understood through theology. All this is expressed in *practical* knowing as we apply ourselves to trying to live the Christian faith. In terms of the Exercises,



these forms of knowing involve attending to our experience of a personal God, who sent the Son to redeem us and who invites us to love in the way that God loves and to serve God in the world. It means attending to how that love shapes our experience, to how we express and try to understand it and to how it guides our living and acting in the world.¹²

¹¹ Reason and Torbert, 'The Action Turn', 13.

¹² Tad Dunne, 'Spiritual Integration in Ignatius of Loyola', *Review for Religious*, 45 (1986), 856-869.

Phases

Action research also typically distinguishes between four phases in human projects.

- *Intentions*: purpose, goals, aims and vision
- *Planning*: plans, strategy, tactics, schemes
- *Action*: implementation, performance
- *Outcomes*: results, consequences and effects.¹³

Action research aims to develop our awareness, understanding and skills across all these phases. We try to understand our intentions, to develop appropriate plans and strategies, to be skilled at carrying them out, to reflect on how well we have carried them out, and to evaluate their results. We can also inquire about the connections between these phases. We might, for example, begin with the outcomes, and explore how our actions caused these outcomes. Or we may take the inquiry further, and look at how our intentions and plans shaped our actions.

Ignatian spirituality encourages us to reflect in the same kind of way. The Exercises are concerned above all with ‘what I want and desire’ (Exx 48.1) and with how these desires lead us to act in co-operation with God. The reflection on experience characteristic of Ignatian spirituality typically encourages us to become aware of how our behaviour and its results are rooted in our intentions and desires.

Audiences

Perhaps, however, the most helpful contribution that action research theory can make to Ignatian spirituality comes from the idea that an integrative approach to research incorporates three different *audiences*, which are called ‘first person’, ‘second person’ and ‘third person’.¹⁴ First person inquiry-practice centres on what is happening for the individual researcher. Second person inquiry-practice focuses on the quality of relationships the researcher forms. Third person inquiry-practice disseminates the research to the wider impersonal community.

¹³ Reason and Torbert, ‘The Action Turn’, 14.

¹⁴ Reason and Bradbury, *Handbook of Action Research*, 14.

The classical methods of research worked with 'third person' procedures: a researcher did research on third persons and wrote a report for other third persons. Perhaps postmodern theory introduced 'second person' procedures: researchers became aware of their 'positionality', of how their observation itself involved them in the reality being observed. Action research, however, involves all three audiences, all three voices.

First Person Inquiry-Practice

First person inquiry-practice is typically characterized as the forms of inquiry-practice that one does on one's own. It fosters the ability of the individual to develop an inquiring approach to their own life, to act in ways that are informed, aware and purposeful. First person inquiry can take us 'upstream', when we inquire into our basic assumptions, desires, intentions and philosophy of life. It can also take us 'downstream', when we inquire into our behaviour, ways of relating, and action in the world. First person inquiry-practice typically finds expression in autobiographical writing: diaries, journals, records of dreams and so on. It also occurs through meditation and prayer.

Ignatius' *Autobiography* well illustrates first person inquiry-practice. Experience was the main catalyst of change in his life.¹⁵ As Ignatius reflected on his experiences he saw the patterns of God's action, and that insight directed him to future action. Throughout his life Ignatius knew how he was subjected to different ways of being stirred to act. He devoted a lot of attention to finding out what moved him in each situation and what kind of action the movement was leading to. He became a master of discernment: he learnt to distinguish and clarify his motivations and the reasons behind his judgements, to probe the causes and implications of what he had experienced, and to weigh and evaluate the likely consequences of the alternatives before him in order to discover what would best lead to the desired goal. For instance, his accounts of the movements of his spirit while on his sickbed in Loyola illustrate both his attention to his moods and his sense of how God was leading him.

**Ignatius as
master of
discernment**

¹⁵ David Lonsdale, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear: An Introduction to Ignatian Spirituality* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2000 [1991]).

Whenever individuals seek to find God in their lives, they are undertaking first person research. This form of inquiry involves seeking God both in times of prayer and in the events of daily life. The *Spiritual Exercises* articulate the process more fully. We discover and acknowledge sin, both our own sin and the world's social sin. We learn that we are nevertheless forgiven, and become desirous to respond to Christ's call, a call to 'love and serve in all things'. Spiritual development occurs in the events of everyday life as the individual attends to experience, makes judgements and assumes responsibility for actions. The whole process occurs within the context of a growing conversion to God's loving action in the world.

A vivid example of first person inquiry is to be found in a reflective essay by Timothy Toohig, a Jesuit physicist who died in 2001.¹⁶ Drawing on Karl Rahner's thought, Toohig views his physics as a deeper penetration into the mystery of creation, and he therefore regards research in physics as praise of God. He uses two words to capture the integration of his physics research and his spirituality: 'honesty' as he confronts the data; and 'authenticity' as he acknowledges the mystery. Honesty and authenticity colour his whole life, not just his physics.

The Ignatian Examen, too, can be seen as a paradigm of first person inquiry. We recall the experiences of the day; we notice our responses and probe what was happening within us, what God might have been telling us in a particular incident; we wonder about what we might do next—whether to repent, to give thanks, or to take some further action.¹⁷ We look not only at the immediate details, but also at their motivational roots. The process moves freely between the two: 'upstream' from action to motivation, and 'downstream' from reflection to thoughts about how I might do something new.

Second Person Inquiry-Practice

Second person inquiry-practice occurs as we inquire with others into issues of mutual concern, through face-to-face dialogue and conversation.

¹⁶ Timothy E. Toohig, 'Physics Research: A Search for God', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 21/2 (March 1999).

¹⁷ See, for example, Joseph A. Tetlow, 'The Examen of Particulars', *Review for Religious*, 56 (1997), 230-250, here 248-250.

A clear example of second person inquiry-practice in Ignatius' lifetime can be found in the 1539 formal deliberation that occurred when Ignatius and his companions came together to discern what God wanted of them, and in particular whether they should constitute themselves as a permanent group.¹⁸ During the Deliberation, the companions engaged in first person prayer and meditation and then in second person sharing. Over the period of time they lived through questions and uncertainties, exploring the advantages and disadvantages of particular options until they reached unanimity. The outcome was the foundation of the Society of Jesus.

A Christian living in the spirit of Ignatius will be involved in second person inquiry-practice by virtue of their being engaged in a community of faith, whether it be formally in religious life, or in something like a Christian Life Community group, or in an informal network of friends which meets to share faith and support its members. In such contexts individuals share something of their own first person inquiry while the others listen. Then the group attempts to draw together its sense of where God is leading the group. Any form of discernment in common involves second person inquiry-practice.

Second person inquiry-practice also takes place in spiritual direction. The individual and their spiritual director engage in conversation about the individual's life-experience and about how they are seeking to find God in it. Second person inquiry-practice may also find expression in task-oriented teamwork, where the team's purpose, the means of achieving it, the team's procedures, and the development of the individual can all be understood in Ignatian terms.¹⁹

Third Person Inquiry-Practice

Third person inquiry-practice also takes place within a community of inquiry. But here the bonds are more impersonal, going beyond the kind of contact fostered by direct mutual collaboration. It involves reporting, publishing, and extrapolating from the concrete to the general.

¹⁸ See Jules J. Toner, 'The Deliberation that Started the Jesuits', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 6/4 (September 1974).

¹⁹ David Coghlan, 'Ignatian Teamwork: An Emergent Framework from the Instructions for the Team at Trent', *Review of Ignatian Spirituality*, no. 98 (2001), 65-74.

Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*, his *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, and many of his letters illustrate third person inquiry-practice. Now his own experience in personal and interpersonal settings is presented in a form that can be taken up by others whom he has never met. The contact becomes impersonal. In the Christian life more generally, third person inquiry-practice becomes visible in the corporate life of the Church, and in the progress of the planet as a whole. We try to help build up communities of faith; we seek to promote God's action in the world at the institutional and structural levels. Much writing and teaching in Ignatian spirituality centres on theology, on instruction on spirituality, on the promotion of justice, on pedagogy, on organizational processes²⁰ and the like. This material expresses third person inquiry-practice.



The Three Audiences

In terms of action research, therefore, we can see Ignatian spirituality as involving all three styles of inquiry-practice, all three audiences. We begin with a first person response to the Call of the King, the Two Standards and the Contemplation for Learning to Love Like God, rooted in the individual's enquiry about how God is found in their experience. We then engage in second person inquiry with others who are living their Christian life in particular circumstances. Finally, this may bear fruit in a wisdom articulated impersonally, in structural and institutional terms—in other words, in third person inquiry-practice. All these processes require us to attend to the different forms and phases of knowing mentioned above, as they are informed by our religious faith, and as our knowledge is discerned and confirmed through action.

²⁰ David Coghlan, *Good Instruments: Ignatian Spirituality, Organisation Development and the Renewal of Ministries* (Rome: CIS, 1999).

Converging Traditions

In this article I have attempted to bring two traditions together, Ignatian spirituality and action research. I have explored how the Ignatian cycles of prayer and action find an echo in the cycles of action and reflection articulated in action research theory. Action research works with a richer and more differentiated account of knowledge than those implicit in more classical models of social science, and can therefore accommodate the Ignatian conviction that our prayer and action are grounded in grace, in the reality of being in love with God. The framework of first, second and third person forms of inquiry-practice can yield helpful insight both into Ignatius' own life and into the life of a contemporary Christian.

The worlds of Ignatian spirituality and the world of social research have not often been in close contact. Yet there are many who have been transformed by the Exercises and who live out of a spirituality which can be termed Ignatian—people whose commitment to seeking God in all things leads them to a cycle of action within the world, to reflection, and to prayer. This Ignatian commitment may well be nourished and enhanced by the rigorous methods of action research. For social science itself is now moving towards a concern for action. It is coming to see itself as actively responding to reality, as committed to creating a more meaningful and just world. And thus it has begun to acknowledge and draw on the spirituality of individuals and groups who engage in such action. If the two traditions can converse and cross-fertilise, the fruit may well be both abundant and rich.

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THE SECOND PERSON

Margaret Barker

WHEN CHRISTIANS IN THE WESTERN CHURCHES read the Old Testament, they assume that it is about One God, the God of Israel, whose Name was revealed to Moses in the burning bush:

YHWH, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob has sent me to you. This is my name for ever.... (Exodus 3:15)

The sacred name YHWH was rarely pronounced; it was usually replaced by 'the LORD', and even today, when the Hebrew text is read, the Name is not pronounced. In most English versions of the Bible, the Name is still indicated by 'the LORD', but the Jerusalem Bible chose to leave the Name as 'Yahweh'.

When Christians began to speak of the Trinity, what happened to YHWH? How was it possible for the first followers of Jesus, who were good Jews, to talk of Three? Paul, also a good Jew, explained that other nations had many gods, but the Christians had One God, the Father, and One Lord, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 8:6). How was it possible for good Jews to *worship* a human being, someone they had known as a Friend and Teacher? For people did 'worship' Jesus.¹

This way of putting the question suggests that the Christian belief about Jesus as the Second Person of the Trinity sprang from nowhere

¹ See, for example Matthew 14:33: 'And those in the boat worshipped him saying "Truly you are the Son of God"'; also Matthew 22:22; Matthew 28:9; Mark 5:6; John 9:38. *Proskunein*, the verb used in these texts, means to fall down and worship, and is used in connection with the gods or their images. It is also used of temple worship, for example of the Greeks who came to worship at the temple (John 12:20), and the early Christians used this word to translate Deuteronomy 6:13: 'Worship the Lord your God ...' (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8). The Septuagint uses a different verb—*proskunein* must have been the Christians' own choice of verb.

during the first century CE.² Modern research, however, has shown that the religious scene in Palestine at that time was very diverse. Monotheism had been a feature of Jewish tradition for centuries, but only as one feature among others: there had been other ways of describing God. The usual Hebrew word for God is *'elohim*, which is a plural form, although the point is so familiar that it passes without comment. Until the end of the seventh century BCE, when a movement influenced by the ideals of Deuteronomy came to dominate the religion of Judah and Jerusalem, there had been not only God Most High but also his sons, the great angels. The Firstborn of these angels was YHWH, who was appointed the guardian of Jacob/Israel.

When the Old Testament is read with the presupposition that it is about One God, it is assumed that all the various titles—God Most High, YHWH, *El*, *'elohim* and so on—refer to the One God. But this is not the case. Texts in the Second Isaiah, who lived shortly after the changes in Jerusalem introduced under King Josiah at the end of the seventh century BCE (2 Kings 23), show that both the names and the theologies were changing. Belief in God Most High *and* his son YHWH was being *replaced* by the monotheism that we now regard as familiar.³ In the older faith, YHWH had been present with his people in the person of the king, who had been known as Immanuel, 'God with us' (see for example Isaiah 8:8). The promised royal child had the same title (Isaiah 7:14). The psalmist described a procession going into the temple in which, among the singers and musicians, he saw 'My God, my King' going into the sanctuary (Psalm 68:24). In some way, the human king was divine.

The king was also the 'priest for ever, according to the order of Melchizedek' (Psalm 110:4). Solomon *blessed* the people (2 Chronicles 6:3) and he *consecrated* the temple courts (2 Chronicles 7:7). The account of the high priest's regalia confirms that he had been YHWH with his people. On his forehead he wore the Name YHWH engraved on a small golden tablet (Exodus 28:36).⁴ The worship of the temple

² CE stands for 'common era', and BCE for 'before the common era'—this terminology is to be preferred to the more conventional BC and AD.

³ We shall return to this.

⁴ Thus for example Philo, *Life of Moses*, II. 114; *Aristeas*, 98; also Josephus, *Jewish War*, 4. 164 has the high priest say 'I am called by the most venerable Name'. The standard translation of Exodus, as '... engrave on it like the engraving of a signet "Holy to YHWH"', is misleading. In the time of Jesus it was

replicated the worship of heaven; the priests were the angels,⁵ and the high priest was the chief of the angels, the LORD. About 300 BCE the Greek writer Hecataeus said that the Jewish high priest was an angel, and that when he spoke, 'they [the Jews] immediately fall to the ground and *worship* the high priest as he explains the commandments to them'.⁶ It was possible, then, for a Jew to worship a human being: the LORD, the high priest.

The older faith was not forgotten, even though we cannot be certain exactly how it was preserved and by whom. Traces of it can be found in many of the ancient texts which did not become part of the Hebrew Bible, texts such as those preserved among the scrolls found at Qumran and other sites near the Dead Sea, or those preserved only by Christian scribes even though they were written long before the time of Jesus.⁷ The study of this background material, such as the Enoch texts,⁸ is now the fastest growing area in biblical studies. This older faith illuminates many aspects of Christian origins, and shows that much of what had been thought to be additions from Greek culture or accretions from Greek philosophy were no such thing. They were drawn from the faith of the Jerusalem temple. Suddenly our patterns of worship and tradition fall into place as a development of the ancient temple practices, and our understanding of Christology is revolutionised. We also have a new basis for Jewish-Christian dialogue.

**Christology
is linked
to an older
faith in Israel**

Early Christian Understandings of the Old Testament

The fifth-century Christian historian Sozomen explained why Constantine had a basilica built at Mamre, and why it was a Christian holy place, even though it is not mentioned in the Gospels:

It is recorded that here (the oak of Mamre) the Son of God appeared to Abraham, with two angels, who had been sent against Sodom and foretold the birth of his son ... (Constantine)

understood to mean that the high priest simply wore the four letters of the Name, and so the Hebrew would have been read as 'Engrave on it YHWH like the engravings of a holy seal'.

⁵ See Malachi 2:7 which says, literally, 'a priest ... is the angel of the LORD of Hosts'.

⁶ Quoted in Diodorus of Sicily, *Bibliotheca Historica*, 40.3.5-6. 'Worship' here is again *proskunein*.

⁷ Many of these texts can be found in James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 volumes (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1983 and 1985).

⁸ 1 Enoch, quoted in verse 14 of the Letter of Jude, was Scripture for the early Church.

commanded the bishops ... to erect a church worthy of so ancient and so holy a place.⁹

The account of Abraham at Mamre (Genesis 18) says that 'the LORD' appeared to him, that is, that Abraham had a vision of the God of Israel. Yet in the fourth century, the Christians of Palestine were holding an annual celebration at Mamre, because '*he who was born of a Virgin* appeared there to a godly man'. The Palestinian Christians had been celebrating the appearance to Abraham of the Second Person of the Trinity.¹⁰ Constantine rebuked the bishops of Palestine for allowing this celebration to become an unseemly carnival; instead, a great church was to be built there.

***The Second
Person and
the Old
Testament***

It was, then, established practice amongst ordinary Christians in fourth century Palestine to identify the One who appeared in the Old Testament as the Second Person of the Trinity, and not—as we might spontaneously imagine today—as God the Father. It was in fact the universal belief of the earliest church that the Old Testament recorded appearances of the Second Person of the Trinity; this is the position assumed by the New Testament and attributed to Jesus himself. Losing sight of this has created huge problems for the understanding of Christian origins. John's Jesus declared that the Old Testament bore witness to him (John 5:37); Isaiah had seen him enthroned in the temple (John 12:41); Moses had written about him (John 5:46); Abraham had known him and seen him (John 8:56-58). Paul, too, applied to Jesus texts from the Old Testament which had originally referred to the God of Israel. Thus 'Everyone who calls upon the name of the LORD' (Joel 2:32) was used of Jesus (Romans 10:13); as was 'Blessed is the one against whom the LORD will reckon no sin'.¹¹ When Israel had been wandering in the desert, the rock accompanying them had been Christ (1 Corinthians 10:1-11)—and 'the rock' is one of the names of the LORD in Deuteronomy.¹² In Romans 10:20-21, Paul used prophecy

⁹ Sozomen, *History of the Church*, 2.4.

¹⁰ See John 8:57: "... have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "... before Abraham was, I am". This is but one example of how John has an authentic record of Jesus.

¹¹ Psalm 32:2 translating the Hebrew literally, quoted in Romans 4:8.

¹² Deuteronomy 32:4,31.

to show that Israel's rejection of the LORD in former times had been repeated in their rejection of Jesus.¹³

The early Christians understood the appearances of the LORD in the Old Testament as appearances of the pre-incarnate Jesus. Justin, born in Palestine but writing in Rome in the middle of the second century, had no doubt that that the Old Testament appearances of the LORD or of the angel of the LORD had been theophanies of the Second Person of the Trinity, the Messiah. He concluded his long list of examples by saying:

Therefore neither Abraham, nor Isaac, nor Jacob, nor any other man, saw the Father and ineffable Lord of all, and also of Christ; but [saw] Him who was according to His will His Son, being God, and the Angel because He ministered to His will.¹⁴

Irenaeus, writing at the end of the second century CE, had been a disciple of Justin in Rome and read the Old Testament in the same way. Since he also saw himself as a guardian of the true faith—he wrote a massive work *Against Heresies*—this way of reading the Old Testament must have been what he considered the norm. Novatian, writing in Rome in the mid third century, had the same understanding of the Old Testament theophanies:

He who calls to Hagar out of heaven was God, and yet He is called Angel.... The only intelligible explanation is that He is both Angel and God. Such a description cannot be appropriate and suitable to the Father, who is God only: but it can appropriately be applied to Christ, who has been declared to be not only God but also Angel. It is obvious therefore that it was not the Father who spoke to Hagar in this present passage, but Christ....¹⁵

The clearest exposition of this understanding of the Old Testament theophanies is found in the writings of Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea early in the fourth century. Throughout his massive works *The Preparation of the Gospel* and *The Demonstration of the Gospel*, he both

¹³ Paul interprets (and modifies!) Isaiah 65: 1-2. The LORD had been found by those who did not seek him, but his own people had been rebellious. This was true in the time of the Third Isaiah, and it was true in Paul's own time.

¹⁴ *Dialogue with Trypho*, 127.

¹⁵ *On the Trinity*, 18. The reference at the beginning is to Genesis 16: 7-14.



Yahweh introduces Adam to Eve, from the frescos in St Mark's, Venice

(Note how Yahweh is wearing a cross-halo.)

assumes, and argues systematically for, the belief that the God of the Jews was the Second Person of the Trinity, who appeared in human form throughout the Old Testament, and was finally and fully manifested in Jesus:

Remember how Moses calls the Being, who appeared to the patriarchs and often delivered to them oracles written down in Scripture, sometimes God and LORD, and sometimes the Angel of the LORD. He clearly implies that this was not the Omnipotent God, but a secondary being, rightly called the God and LORD of holy men, but the Angel of the Most High his Father.¹⁶

¹⁶ *Demonstration of the Gospel*, 1.5.

There are plenty of similar texts,¹⁷ and it would be unwise to dismiss them as curiosities, influenced by what was later to be labelled the Arian heresy—the teaching that the Son was not eternal but a creature. This is how the first Christians understood the Old Testament. This is why Constantine had a great church built at Mamre, where the LORD appeared to Abraham.

Evidence in Jewish Sources

This way of understanding the Old Testament was not invented by the Christians. Philo, an exact contemporary of Jesus, was a highly regarded Jewish scholar living in Alexandria. He was chosen as a spokesman for the city's Jewish community before the Roman emperor, and so it is unlikely that the Judaism he expounded was regarded as heretical. Commenting on Genesis 9:6, 'In the image of God (*'elohim*, the plural form) made he man', Philo wrote: 'Nothing mortal can be made in the likeness of the Most High One and Father of the universe, but [only] in that of the Second God, who is his Logos'.¹⁸ The Judaism of Philo is remarkable for the fact that it has a Second God, to whom he gives various names and titles: Word (Logos), Image of God, Covenant, Seal of the Universe, the High Priest, King, Shepherd, Archangel, Firstborn Son.¹⁹ Scholars tend to assume that Philo had introduced a substantial amount of contemporary Greek thought into his Judaism, rather than considering the alternative possibility: that he was expressing in the Greek language an ancient form of Judaism which can be traced to the priests of the first Temple.²⁰

Philo's titles seem to have originated in the first Temple, when there were priest-kings (called messiahs!) in Jerusalem.²¹ For Philo, the Logos was appointed 'judge and mediator, set before the Face'—the

¹⁷ Theophilus of Antioch (*To Autolycus*, 2. 10. 22), Hippolytus of Rome (*On Daniel*, 10), and Clement of Alexandria (*The Instructor*, 1. 2, 7 *passim*) all read the Old Testament in this way.

¹⁸ *Questions on Genesis*, 2. 62. The Genesis text here is quoted in the Authorised Version, which renders the Hebrew accurately and agrees with the Septuagint. The NRSV 'In his own image God made humankind' imports an interpretation into the text, since there is no 'his own' in the Hebrew. The Hebrew '*adam*', here 'man', means 'human' rather than 'male'.

¹⁹ For further details see my book *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (London: SPCK, 1992), 114-133.

²⁰ See my *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London: T. and T. Clark, 2003), 262-293.

²¹ There were no anointed Davidic kings in the second temple, from the sixth century BCE until its destruction in 70 CE.

Face of God, situated within the Holy of Holies that only the high priest could enter. The Logos was at once 'high priest and king'; his temple was the whole universe.²² The Logos also 'pleads with the Immortal as suppliant for afflicted mortality, and acts as ambassador of the ruler to the subject', which was Philo's flowery way of saying what we find also in Hebrews 3:1: Jesus is 'the apostle and high priest'. These titles could well preserve valuable information about the faith in Jerusalem during the era of the anointed kings. For Philo, the Logos was, as we have seen, the Second God, implying that wherever Philo's titles originated, there had been the Second God who was king and high priest, the Firstborn and the Image of God. Philo even warns against confusing the two Gods:

For just as those who are unable to see the sun itself see the gleam of the parhelion and take it for the sun, and take the halo around the moon for that luminary itself, so some regard the Image of God, His Angel the Logos, as His very Self.²³

The Targums (the Aramaic versions of the Hebrew Scriptures), also suggest that there are aspects of the Hebrew Scriptures which we no longer understand. They often render the Hebrew LORD by 'Memra of the LORD', and 'Memra' is then rendered into English as 'Word'. Scholars have debated the significance of this word 'Memra', and have often only drawn the conclusion concealed in their premises: namely, that it cannot have represented a Second God like Philo's Logos, because such a concept was unknown in Judaism (except in Philo, who is said to have been contaminated by Greek ideas). It must, however, be significant that Logos, 'Word', is the only one of Philo's titles with no obvious basis in the Old Testament—it would seem that both Logos and Memra represent an understanding of the Old Testament which we have lost.²⁴ Since the Targums were made to help ordinary people understand the Scriptures, any term in them must have been in

²² *Questions on Exodus*, 2.13; *On Flight*, 118; *On Dreams*, 1.215.

²³ *On Dreams*, 1.239. A parhelion is 'a spot on a solar halo ... formerly supposed to be a reflected image of the sun' (OED).

²⁴ Memra in the Targums indicates the presence of YHWH, and may in fact derive from the Hebrew for 'appearance', *mar'eh*. In theophanies, the appearance is distinguished from the 'form', e.g. Ezekiel 1:26, 28. See my books *The Great Angel*, 135-136 and *The Great High Priest*, 178-184. The Memra in itself is not evidence of the Second God, since it indicates the presence of YHWH rather than his emissary.

common use and readily understood. Our difficulty with 'Memra' shows how little we actually know about the beliefs of ordinary people in the time of Jesus, especially what they believed about YHWH.

It is no longer wise to assume that the Judaism of the later rabbis was the Judaism that Jesus knew. Many things changed after the advent of Christianity and the war against Rome which resulted in the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. The Rabbinic writings dating from the early Christian centuries reveal a bitter controversy. Their unnamed opponents taught that there were 'two powers in heaven'. They lived in Palestine; they taught about a far God and a near God; and one of their key texts was the vision of the Man in Daniel 7.²⁵

These unnamed people must have been the Christians, with their claim that YHWH, the Son of God Most High, had been incarnate and then returned to heaven. The complexity and duration of the debate shows that there were indeed texts in the Hebrew Scriptures which needed explanation if the claim that there were 'two powers in heaven' was to be refuted. The result of this controversy can be detected even in the text of the Hebrew Scriptures, which had existed in a variety of forms before the advent of Christianity, but which was 'stabilised' around 100 CE when certain key texts were excluded. We shall return to this.

***A debate
about two
powers in
heaven***

There are also echoes of the controversy in some ancient Jewish mystical texts, known as *merkavah* texts because they record visions of the *merkavah*, the heavenly chariot throne. These were expanded so as to exclude any support for Christian claims. One of them describes the vision of Aher—a word which means simply 'the other one'. This rabbi was regarded as so heretical that his real name (Elisha ben Abuya) could not be spoken. In a vision he saw, enthroned in the heavenly court, the great angel Metatron, who in his earthly life had been the prophet Enoch. Aher claimed that he had seen the second power. Then the text describes what happened:

²⁵ 'As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed' (Daniel 7:13-14). The first major treatment of this problem was A.F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven* (Leiden: Brill, 1978).

When Aher came to gaze upon the vision of the *merkavah*, he looked at me [Metatron] and was afraid and trembled before me.... At that moment Aher opened his mouth and he said, 'It is true—there are two powers in heaven'. (3 Enoch 16)

There were terrible consequences. The voice of God was heard, saying 'come back to me, apostate sons, apart from Aher', and the great angel Metatron was removed from his throne.

'Apostate sons' shows that those who believed in two powers *were* regarded officially as Jewish apostates. Yet this account of the demotion of Metatron is contrary to everything else in 3 Enoch, which describes how Enoch became the great angel Metatron and was given the most glorious place in heaven. The *merkavah* tradition must have had pre-Christian origins. How could a Jewish group, after the advent of Christianity, originate ideas so similar to the Christian claims for Jesus? There must have been ancient beliefs about a human figure who became divine and was enthroned in heaven, beliefs like those in Daniel's vision (Daniel 7:9-14). In reaction to Christianity the tradition was modified by the account of Metatron's demotion. But the fact that these traditions were not obliterated is an interesting indication of their abiding status in the Jewish community.

The Texts of Scripture

Traces of this conflict over the plurality of divinity can also be seen in the development of the text of Scripture. There have long been problems as to how the Old Greek text of the Scriptures, often called the Septuagint (LXX—the name derives from a tradition that there were seventy translators) relates to the Hebrew text (known as the Masoretic text) on which most modern English translations are based—a text that dates from after the time of Jesus.²⁶ These problems have increased with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, among which have been found pieces of the Hebrew Scriptures which correspond to the Old Greek text rather than to the Masoretic Hebrew. This suggests that there had been various different versions of

²⁶ The Masoretic text on which English translations of the Old Testament are based is the Leningrad Codex of 1008 CE. The *Masorah* is the system of signs written around the Hebrew consonants to fix the pronunciation and meaning of the words. The consonantal text, and the content of the Hebrew canon, was fixed about 100 CE.

the Hebrew Scriptures, and that the text which became the ‘standard’ Hebrew text was one which disagreed at several points with the version used by the first Christians.

Let us take two examples from Deuteronomy 32. Deuteronomy 32:8 says, in the Old Greek version:

When the Most High divided the nations, as he dispersed the sons of Adam he established the boundaries of the nations *according to the number of the angels of God*. The LORD’s portion was his people, Jacob his allotted share.

The Qumran Hebrew text²⁷ has ‘according to the number of the sons of God’—simply a change in formulation, since the sons of God are the angels. The Masoretic Hebrew, however, says something different: ‘according to the number of the sons of Israel’. This reading makes little sense in the original context, but it can be explained as a reaction against the idea of a Son of God. When the original continues, ‘the LORD’s portion was his people’, it implies that the LORD was one of the sons of God; the point is obscured by the Masoretic Hebrew. A key text for understanding Gabriel’s words to Mary that her son ‘will be called the Son of God Most High’ (Luke 1:32) has not survived in the Hebrew Scriptures after the time of Jesus.

***The Dead
Sea Scrolls
and their
importance***

The second example is Deuteronomy 32:43, which describes YHWH coming on the Day of Atonement to bring judgement and healing. It is twice as long in the Old Greek as in the Masoretic Hebrew: the texts are 8 and 4 lines long respectively. A Qumran fragment of Deuteronomy in Hebrew has the longer text,²⁸ which we find also in NRSV:

Praise, O heavens, his people,
worship him all you gods (*’elohim*),
for he will avenge the blood of his children
and take vengeance on his adversaries;
he will repay those who hate him
and cleanse the land for his people.

²⁷ 4Q Deut ^j.

²⁸ 4Q Deut ^q.

This last line should probably be 'atone the land for his people'.²⁹ The Authorised Version was based on the shorter Masoretic text:

Rejoice, O you nations, with his people:
for he will avenge the blood of his servants,
and will render vengeance to his adversaries,
and will be merciful unto his land and to his people.³⁰

Crucial elements are different in the shorter text: the *'elohim* worshipping YHWH, and the children (literally 'sons'), are missing; the description of atonement is obscured. Yet this text in its longer version was a crucial messianic proof text for the Christians; it is quoted in Hebrews to prove that the One who was to come on the Day of Judgement, the LORD, was Jesus:

For to which of the angels did God ever say, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you'? Or again, 'I will be his Father, and he will be my Son'? And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him'. (Hebrews 1:5-6)

There is no way of making this link using the present Hebrew text, and until the Qumran text was found, there had been a suspicion that the Christians had expanded the text of Deuteronomy 32:43 to suit their own purposes.

Another example comes with the figure of Melchizedek. The ancient Melchizedek, priest of God Most High (Genesis 14:18-22), was a key figure for the Christians, since Jesus was declared to be like Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:15-22). All the ancient versions except the Masoretic Hebrew say that Melchizedek was the priest of God Most High. The Masoretic text, however, has 'priest of the LORD God Most High', conflating the LORD and God Most High; it imposes a monotheism, and obscures the true identity of Melchizedek's God.

Analyses such as these raise a broader question. The earliest acclamation of the first Christians was 'Jesus is the LORD'³¹—they believed that Jesus was the God of Israel. How many other Old

²⁹ Compare Leviticus 16: 19, which suggests that 'atone' must mean 'cleanse and hallow'.

³⁰ This reading makes the best possible sense of the Masoretic Hebrew. The verb *kpr* is the root for the word translated 'mercy seat', hence 'be merciful'. A better rendering is 'atone', and so 'mercy seat' is the 'place of atonement'.

³¹ 1 Corinthians 12:3; Philippians 2:11.

Testament texts did the first Christians use to demonstrate this belief, in ways now lost to us because the versions available to them did not survive into the Hebrew text underlying our Old Testament?

In the early centuries, when Christians tried to discuss their faith with Jews, they were accused of having false Scriptures. Around 100 CE, when the form and content of the Hebrew Scriptures was settled, several texts which were important for the Christians were not included. For example, the form of Deuteronomy 32:43 which was found at Qumran did not survive in the Masoretic text, but there can be no doubt that it was in use. Early in the third century CE, the great Christian biblical scholar Origen set out to establish the true text of the Old Testament, as the basis for Jewish-Christian discussion. He took the post-Christian form of the Hebrew text as the norm. Jerome (around 400 CE) opted for the post-Christian Hebrew text as the basis for his Latin translation which eventually became the Vulgate. He believed it to be *hebraica veritas*. Thus 'our' Old Testament, in which we look for the antecedents of Christianity, is translated from a Hebrew text that was established partially *in reaction to* Christianity.

Our 'Old Testament' represents a reaction against Christianity

The Older Faith

A careful study of the ancient materials shows, therefore, that Judaism had not always been monotheistic in the way that we now understand that word. There had never been dynasties of warring gods such as we find in the Greek legends, but there had always been ranks of angels and beings known as the sons of God, some of whom had rebelled. In Genesis 6 we glimpse the rebellion of some of the sons of God, and how they came to earth, corrupted it and brought disaster. The rebel sons of God were used to explain the conflicts in society and in politics. Isaiah begins, 'Sons have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me' (Isaiah 1:2), and the prophet depicts his own society under the influence of the fallen angels. Jesus spoke of the devil and his angels, and of the judgement that awaited them (Matthew 25:41). There was, as we have seen, sensitivity about the term 'sons of God' in the period after the advent of Christianity. The Targums translated it 'sons of nobles' or 'sons of judges',³² and Rabbi Simeon ben

³² Onkelos and Ps Jonathan 'sons of nobles': Neofiti 'sons of judges', but Neofiti margin has 'angels'.

Yoçai in the middle of the second century CE cursed all who called the angels sons of God.³³

The older faith of Israel had known God Most High and the mighty angels described as the sons of God Most High. The Firstborn of these sons had been the LORD, the God of Israel, sometimes described as ‘the Holy One of Israel’ (Isaiah 1:4), ‘Holy One’ simply meaning ‘angel’. The LORD and the angel of the LORD were the identical.

It was not until the end of the seventh century BCE that some declared God Most High and the LORD to be One. There are verses in the Second Isaiah can only mean that the LORD was proclaiming himself to be *El*, the High God. ‘I am *El*, there is no other ...’.³⁴ What we think of as *the* religion of the Old Testament, monotheism, originated at this point, but not everyone accepted the changes. Traces of the conflict—for conflict it was—can still be found in the texts, as we have seen.

The idea of ‘God the Father’ was not invented by Jesus or by the early Christians; it was a retrieval of the older faith of Israel that is largely suppressed in the Old Testament we now read. The older role of God Most High as the *Father* of heaven and earth came to be replaced by the declaration that the LORD was the *Maker* of heaven and earth, obscuring the idea of divine fatherhood and sonship. The ancient title had been ‘God Most High begetter of heaven and earth’ (translating Genesis 14:19 literally). In the Psalter and in Second Isaiah it became ‘the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth’.³⁵ Just as the ‘sons of God’ were removed from the tradition, so the image of fatherhood was abandoned. Christianity can be seen as having recovered it.

‘God the Father’ is not a Christian discovery

The names and titles of Philo’s Second God—high priest, archangel, king, firstborn son, shepherd, seal, covenant—go back to a time before ‘God Most High’ and ‘the LORD’ had been merged. They suggest that the Second God had been present in the person of the Davidic king, one of whose titles had been Immanuel, God with Us (Isaiah 7:14; 8:8). The royal figure had been the Great Angel, the divine Son and the shepherd of his people. The familiar titles of Isaiah 9:6—‘wonderful counsellor, mighty God, everlasting

³³ *Genesis Rabbah*, 35.15.

³⁴ Isaiah 45:22; 43:12-13—there are many other examples.

³⁵ See for example, Psalms 115:15; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; 146:55-56; Isaiah 44:24; 51:13.

Father, prince of peace’—were translated into Greek simply as ‘the Angel of Great Counsel’. In 1 Enoch we see that ‘shepherd’ was the title given to the guardian angels of the nations (1 Enoch 89:59); and so Jesus’ claim to be the good shepherd (John 10:11) was his claim to be the Guardian Angel, the God of Israel. A passage attributed to Peter explained that God Most High divided the nations among 72 angel princes, and allotted Israel to the greatest of these angels.³⁶

Coronation and Deification

When they became kings, the Davidic monarchs were ‘born’ as divine sons or angels in the Holy of Holies. The Holy of Holies housed not only the anointing oil but also the golden chariot throne of the cherubim, the throne of the LORD.³⁷ It represented a state outside time and matter, ‘beyond’ the visible creation. The king would enter the Holy of Holies as a mortal and emerge as the Angel of Great Counsel, having been transformed by the anointing oil. He would then pass through the great hall of the temple which represented the visible and temporal creation, ‘our’ world. His passage was an act of purification and renewal, ritually enacted in ceremonies marking the New Year, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Here may well lie the roots of some central Christian ideas: a Son of God generated in eternity, and then emerging into the visible creation as a royal and priestly figure to renew the world and take away the effects of sin—this was the original meaning of atonement. It is against this background that the early Christians could call Jesus the ‘Author of Life’ (Acts 3:15).

One of the Enoch texts has preserved a remarkable account of entering the Holy of Holies. When Enoch as high priest ‘ascended to stand before the throne’, the LORD commanded the archangel Michael to remove Enoch’s earthly clothing—that is, his mortal body—and to dress him in garments of the LORD’s glory—that is in his high priestly vestment of white linen, and in a body that was a resurrection body. Enoch was then anointed:

The appearance of that oil is greater than the greatest light, its ointment is like sweet dew, and its fragrance like myrrh. Its shining

³⁶ *Clementine Recognitions*, 2. 42.

³⁷ *Tosefta Kippurim*, 2. 15; 1 Chronicles 28: 18; 29: 23.

is like the sun. I gazed at myself and I had become like one of the glorious ones. (2 Enoch 22)

Enoch the high priest, anointed and vested, had become an angel—Jesus described angels as ‘children of God, children of the resurrection’ (Luke 20:36), and a white garment was the symbol of the resurrected state, hence a garment of glory. Enoch then returned to the world of time and matter, the high priest emerging from the Holy of Holies as the Angel, the resurrected and anointed (*Messiah*) son of God. The idea of resurrection has its roots in the liturgy of the Temple, and signified chiefly a transformation from the human to the divine state, *theosis*. It was not necessarily something which happened after death. It is against this background that we can read, for example, the exhortation in Colossians:

If you *have been raised* with Christ, seek the things that are above where Christ is.... (Colossians 3:1)

So too, Jesus can respond to his critics by describing himself as the great high priest:

Do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world ‘You are blaspheming’ because I said ‘I am the Son of God?’³⁸

The temple process—‘sacrament’ would be an appropriate word—of resurrection as the Messiah, the divine son, was the setting for several psalms. Psalm 110—one of the most frequently quoted Old Testament passages in the New Testament—describes how the king was begotten as the divine son in the glory of the holy ones, in other words among the angels of the Holy of Holies: the human king had become ‘a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek’. In Psalm 89 the anointed one is made the Firstborn, and calls on God as his Father:

Then you spoke in a vision to your faithful one, and said: ‘I have set the crown on one who is mighty, I have exalted one chosen from the people. I have found my servant David; with my holy oil I have anointed him ... He shall cry to me, ‘You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation!’ I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. (Psalm 89:19-27)

³⁸ John 10:36—‘consecrated’ here is the technical term for making the high priest used in Leviticus 8:12.

**I HAVE FOUND MY SERVANT DAVID;
WITH MY HOLY OIL I HAVE ANOINTED HIM.
HE SHALL CRY TO ME,**

**YOU ARE MY FATHER,
MY GOD, AND THE
ROCK OF MY SALVATION!**

**I WILL MAKE HIM THE FIRSTBORN,
THE HIGHEST OF THE KINGS
OF THE EARTH.**

It was on such an occasion that the angels sang in the Holy of Holies:

Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called ... the Angel of Great Counsel.³⁹

The account of the coronation of Solomon shows clearly that when the king sat on the throne of the LORD, he became the LORD, and was *worshipped* by his people: 'all the assembly blessed the LORD, the God of their fathers, and worshipped the LORD, the king'.⁴⁰ Solomon had become 'the LORD'.

It is quite clear that the early Christians were aware of these ideas. This is how Bishop Eusebius, writing in the fourth century CE, understood the difficult passage, 'Thy throne O God is for ever and ever ... wherefore God thy God has anointed thee ...'⁴¹ He discusses the nuances of the Hebrew at this point and concludes:

The Anointer, being the Supreme, God, is far above the Anointed, he being God in a different sense. And this would be clear to anyone who knew Hebrew. Therefore in these words you have it clearly stated that God was anointed and became the Christ.... And this is he who was the beloved of the Father and his Offspring

³⁹ Isaiah 9:6, LXX.

⁴⁰ 1 Chronicles 29:20, literally translated.

⁴¹ Psalm 45:6-7, Authorised Version.

and the Eternal Priest and the being called the Sharer of the Father's throne.⁴²

The human king was enthroned and became 'the LORD'. This was all part of the ancient ritual of the New Year, when the king was (re-) enthroned and when he symbolically offered his life to renew the creation.⁴³ Too much has disappeared for us to be able to reconstruct the detail with any confidence, but there are patterns in surviving texts. The Man figure in Daniel 7 ascends to the throne, that is, enters the Holy of Holies, and is then 'offered before the Ancient of Days'.⁴⁴ The Man is then enthroned and given an everlasting kingdom. 1 Enoch 47 describes the blood of the Righteous One being offered in the Holy of Holies, and then the judgment beginning. A more familiar example is the scene at the beginning of Revelation, where John sees the slain Lamb enthroned. The Lamb becomes the One on the throne, and later verses use singular forms of 'the-one-who-is-seated-on-the-throne-and-the-Lamb'.⁴⁵ There is also the passage in Philippians 2, where Paul seems to be quoting something well known to the recipients of the letter:

He humbled himself and became obedient unto death.... *Therefore* God has highly exalted him and bestowed upon him the Name which is above every name that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow ... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is LORD.... (Philippians 2:9-11)

'The Name' bestowed here must be the Sacred Name, YHWH, bestowed on the king before he was enthroned and acknowledged as the LORD.

Other Christian ideas, too, can be traced back to these early kingship rituals and symbols. The king becoming the presence of the Second Person at his enthronement, which was his resurrection and his divinisation, is the deepest root of the Eucharist. The throne in the Holy of Holies, which corresponded to the mercy seat in the desert tabernacle,

⁴² *Demonstration of the Gospel*, 4. 15.

⁴³ For further elaboration, see my *Temple Theology* (London: SPCK, 2004—forthcoming).

⁴⁴ Daniel 7: 13, literally translated.

⁴⁵ Singular forms at 7:11; 11:15; 20:6; 22:1, 3. See my *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 2000), 140-141.



became the Christian altar; and the temple rituals of the altar and the Holy of Holies became the most sacred rites of the Church.

Similarly, at the root of our Christian belief that we are all one in Christ there probably lies the ancient belief that the Great Angel was a pluriform figure. The *Shema* implies something similar. In English we say, 'The LORD our God is one LORD' (Deuteronomy 6:4)—but the term used for God, 'elohim, is plural. When the Jewish writer Josephus, a younger contemporary of Jesus, retold the story of the

theophany at Mamre, he said that Abraham saw three angels; 'the LORD' is not mentioned.⁴⁶ This implies that in the time of Jesus the presence of three angels was considered to be the presence of the LORD. The seven-branched lamp in the temple was also a symbol of the presence of the LORD.⁴⁷

This article can only be the briefest of introductions to a vast area. Recovering the original understanding of the claim 'Jesus is the LORD' is essential to any meaningful dialogue with Jews and Muslims, as is recovering the temple understanding of divine sonship, resurrection and atonement. It is unfortunate that the Jerusalem Bible uses 'the Lord' in the New Testament, but 'Yahweh' in the Old Testament, (rather than the traditional 'the LORD'), because in so doing it obscures an important continuity in the Scripture that modern Christians have in any case been conditioned to overlook. Traditional icons of Christ, however, have 'HO N' in the halo, the Greek form of the Name revealed to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14):

⁴⁶ *Antiquities*, 1. 11. *Genesis Rabbah*, 50. 2 is similar—Michael, Gabriel and Raphael came to Abraham.

⁴⁷ *Numbers Rabbah*, 15. 9: 'The holy One, blessed be He, was constrained to dwell with mortals in the light of a lamp'.

Christ is represented as the YHWH of the Old Testament. Conversely, the God of the Old Testament is depicted as Christ; in the mosaics of the creation story in St Mark's, Venice, 'the LORD' in Eden has a cross in his halo.

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RECENT BOOKS

Colin Thompson, *St John of the Cross: Songs in the Night* (London: SPCK, 2002). 0 281 05506 8, pp. xii + 307, £35.

Colin Thompson brings a lifetime of knowledge to this subject. His previous book on John of the Cross, *The Poet and the Mystic: A Study of the Cántico Espiritual of San Juan de la Cruz* (Oxford: OUP, 1977), was an important survey of that single major work, the *Spiritual Canticle*, and of the relationship between John of the Cross' poetry and prose.

This book is a broader introduction. It includes much important material from his earlier book, and provides considerable further study of both John's life and his writings. It is probably now the best introduction to John of the Cross in English. I say 'probably', because this depends on what you want. This is the best introduction to John in his historical and literary context, but if you are looking for something more practical, Iain Matthew's *The Impact of God: Soundings from St John of the Cross* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1995) will be more suitable.

A special strength of this book is Thompson's grasp of the Spanish literary tradition. He is able to point out exactly where John is conventional as a writer and poet, and where he is not. He tells us, for instance, that John's poems,

... take commonplace concepts, like the blindness of love and dying for love, but offer versions of them which are alien to secular poetry. They turn positive ideas like knowledge and light inside out, opening them out to new and unconventional readings. (p.66)

This understanding is vital in interpreting what John means and what his special insights are, and Thompson is alone among writers in English in having such an extensive literary background.

Thompson weaves the history of John's life nicely into his study. At an early stage he makes the point that 'much of what has been read as biography in the past properly belongs to the genre of hagiography' (p.24). As with so many saints, we have very little in the way of contemporary sources for John's life, and most of what we do have has been embroidered to further the canonisation process many decades after his death. As a result, many of the good stories included in the great biographies, such as

those by Crisógono and Bruno, are probably fiction. Thompson's sketch reduces this material to the barest and most carefully distilled of historical outlines, but it is nevertheless full of life; he uses his knowledge of the institutions and life of sixteenth-century Spain to flesh out the picture. His caution with the sources is welcome and makes this part of the book a valuable contribution to historical scholarship in its own right.

Thompson's greatest strength is his detailed perspective on John's poetry, but he also brings considerable skill to his consideration of the relationship between the poetry and the prose. This takes up the thread of his argument from his earlier book, *The Poet and the Mystic*. To separate the poetry from the prose, as if either could be fully interpreted without the other, is to separate aesthetics from intellect and art from spirituality, he argues. It is contrary to John's incarnational teaching, which uses the paradoxes and puzzles of poetry, worked through and extended in his commentaries, as 'a linguistic analogue of the impossible joining of the human and the divine in the incarnation' (p.19). That is to say, the power of images, paradox and rhetoric is necessary to John's understanding of the activity of God in the world. Indeed, the poetry is the primary theological element: Hans Urs von Balthasar's comment that John's poems are 'the decisive statement' of his work (p.276) is quoted with approval. Thompson criticizes the many theologians of the past who have treated John as a scholastic theologian and paid no attention to his poetry—thinking, no doubt, of the great neo-scholastic interpreters such as Garrigou-Lagrange and Maritain. But he also has no time for those, mainly Spanish literary scholars, who regard the 'theological John' of the commentaries as alien to the poetry, preferring to look at the poetry on its own.

The only minor weakness in this book is the section on the background to John's thought in the Christian mystical tradition. In the space of a few pages Thompson moves unsatisfactorily from the assertion of a possible mystical 'core experience' among all people to a range of examples: Plato's cave, Augustine's Ostia vision, Dionysius, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Julian of Norwich, and finally Bernard of Clairvaux's *Sermons on the Song of Songs*. Dionysius and Bernard are important influences on John, but this is a rag-bag, and much is left out.

There are many delightful things in this book which a short review cannot mention. I recommend it wholeheartedly. In summary, it is the work of a seasoned scholar of John of the Cross, combining the accessibility of an introductory text with the rigours of first class scholarship. For the more academically interested there are numerous notes and a full bibliography to pursue. It is, to me, disappointingly reticent on the subject

of John's theology, but richly informative about his life, language and writings, turning me back to the texts with renewed enthusiasm. It is a commentary on the whole of John's works in the best sense—not a line-by-line list of facts, but a carefully charted path through the texts which illuminates their meaning at every point.

Edward Howells

Jacques Dupuis SJ, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, translated by Phillip Berryman (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2002). 0 232 52482 3, pp. xii + 276, £15.95.

Can Christians hold together the uniqueness of Christ with a positive attitude towards other religious traditions in their wholeness? This question lies at the centre of Jacques Dupuis' book, a question to which he answers yes. And, if that yes is right, he argues, then those Christians who accuse inter-faith enthusiasts of compromising the historic faith of the Church must think again.

Dupuis' argument begins with the attitude that Vatican II took towards other religions. He accepts that it was pioneering. Through appealing to the universal working of the Spirit of God, the Council affirmed that people of other faiths could be led to salvation. It also accepted that other religions contained values that were 'holy and true' (p.63). What it remained vague about, according to Dupuis, was the proper theological quality of non-Christian religions—in other words, whether other religions, in their own integrity, could be vehicles of salvation.

It is this vagueness that Dupuis seeks to meet with robust theology. In doing so, he vehemently distances himself from two contemporary schools of thought. The first is the pluralist position of writers such as Paul Knitter and John Hick, who, according to Dupuis, place God, the Reign of God or 'the Real' at the centre and range all religions around this equally. The second is that represented by Mark Heim, which argues that there is no unifying goal or concept in the centre, but rather—as Dupuis puts it—'a real multiplicity of religious ends' (p.182). In answer to the first group, Dupuis places Jesus Christ at the centre. Pluralism, he argues, seems to declare that there are two economies of salvation. It would split away the Word of God, the Spirit of God or the Reign of God from Jesus Christ. For Dupuis, Christianity is incompatible with such views: there can be only one economy of salvation, the one that is rooted in the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ; and the function of the Spirit is to allow people to become

sharers in *this* mystery. The Word of God is personally identical with Jesus Christ. However different religious practices may be, a Christian theology of religions must understand them in Christian terms. As for the idea of multiple religious ends, Dupuis believes this contradicts Christian tradition. There can only be one end: 'personal union and sharing of life with the God who revealed Godself in Jesus Christ' (p. 182).

What is the key, then, to Dupuis' argument for a positive evaluation of other religions? It is that the event of Jesus Christ was 'constitutive' within God's 'unique, divine plan for humanity' (p. 159), but not final. It did 'not exhaust the power of the Word of God' (p. 160) or its salvific programme. It was, in fact, limited, because of the particularity of Jesus of Nazareth, the human being. Outside of this event, Dupuis argues, God, through His divine Word and the universal action of the Spirit, was and remains active within the whole of the history of humankind, far beyond the boundaries of Christianity. In other words, the events surrounding Jesus of Nazareth, although unique, were not the only expression of God's will.

So Dupuis presents his reader with what he terms a 'Spirit Christology' that leads to an 'inclusive pluralism' holding together respect for diversity with unyielding allegiance to the centrality of Jesus Christ. For what follows from Dupuis' argument is that other religions, *in their plurality*, can be valued for themselves as salvific. Saving figures within other religions can be inspired by the Spirit. And all religions are participants in the Reign of God, a subject that is given particular stress (pp. 195-217). But, he continues, 'That all are co-members in the Reign of God means that all share in the same mystery of salvation in Him' (p. 224): an inclusive stance.

This leads to the question of complementarity. For, if all the world's religions can be inspired by the same Spirit, it must be asked whether the different insights they present complement each other. Dupuis' answer is yes, but with one major qualification: this complementarity is asymmetrical. In other words, it cannot cancel out the centrality of Jesus Christ in God's revelation or the fundamental values expressed by this event. Differences between religions, he argues, should therefore be seriously engaged with. Christians need other religions for enrichment and purification. The fulfilment theory—that other religions await fulfilment through Christianity—is rejected. As for why religious diversity exists, Dupuis avoids a categorical answer:

If, however, religion and the religions originate in a self-manifestation of God to human beings, the primary foundation for the principle of multiplicity is the superabundant riches and variety of God's self-manifestation to humankind. (p. 255)

Dupuis' style is dense. In presenting his argument, he draws extensively on contemporary theologians, on the documents of the Church, and on some remarkably creative statements, theologically speaking, from Bishops' Conferences, notably in Asia. It is as though Dupuis is continually stressing, 'this is not my argument alone'. And he is right in this. Yet the total message has a breadth and intensity that presses beyond previous formulations.

Dupuis does not concentrate on what people of other faiths believe or practise. This is not surprising in a book that is rooted in theology rather than religious studies. Yet, such an approach has its drawbacks. For when Dupuis refers to other faiths, a certain lack of experiential knowledge is evident. For instance, I was unhappy with his division of the world's religions into the monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) on one side, and the mystical Indian traditions (Buddhism and Hinduism) on the other. I ask myself what Zoroastrians, Sikhs, Baha'i's, also followers of monotheistic faiths, would think of that, or indeed many Hindus.

At the beginning Dupuis states that the book seeks to put in a more accessible and pastoral way the message of his earlier book, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Orbis, 1997). It seems to me that there is a further aim. In 2001, the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith published a *Notification* about the 1997 book, raising serious questions about the soundness of its theology. Although the present book was completed before the publication of this document, Dupuis was well aware of what it was likely to contain. There is an understandable defensiveness behind the book's vigorous and repetitive stress on the centrality of Jesus Christ.

This book is a *tour de force*, nevertheless. Its theological stance will please neither those who see Jesus of Nazareth as God's only and final revelation nor those whose awareness of the integrity of 'the other' makes them wary of unifying narratives rooted in Christian terminology. Few Christians, however, will be able to brush aside Dupuis' basic challenge: that Christians are under an obligation to think theologically in the face of religious plurality. And Dupuis has made an excellent contribution that will help us face the task.

Elizabeth J. Harris

Leslie Griffiths, *Voices from the Desert* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2002). I 85311 491 X, pp. xvi + 144, £7.99.

Robin Gill, *Changing Worlds: Can the Church Respond?* (London: Continuum, 2002). 0 567 08875 8, pp. xiii + 174, £14.99.

To many of our agnostic contemporaries, Christian faith can seem outdated, a relic of a pre-scientific world-view. Acknowledging this challenge, Christian writers frequently strive to show the relevance of their beliefs for our times. This effort can tend in one of two directions. Faith can be seen as counter-cultural, standing in judgment upon contemporary secular thinking and challenging it; or it can attempt to be inculturated, presenting timeless truths in ways more readily comprehensible to people of the 21st century. Given that both approaches are necessary, it is the balance between them that these two books explore.

Leslie Griffiths, in *Voices from the Desert*, offers an autobiographical account of some of the influences that have shaped his approach to God. As a Methodist minister, theologian and broadcaster, he has engaged deeply in the task of inculturation. He shows how elements of popular culture from the second half of the twentieth century, that might appear at first glance as inimical to Christianity, can help to sharpen an appreciation of the gospel message. The work of Jack Kerouac and of other members of the Beat generation, for instance, might seem nihilistic, but it has much to teach people of faith about God's radical identification with the poor and dispossessed. Griffiths also analyzes the experience of immigration in Britain. He points up how it disrupted existing communities that were already often suffering a disproportionate share of society's ills; more positively, he shows how it might stimulate dialogue between cultures and religions. For Griffiths, such a situation enables Christians to understand more fully the place of Christ in God's plan for the world.

This quite brief book draws on its author's pastoral experience both in Britain and overseas, and on his wide reading—from Kerouac to Hans Küng! It was originally recommended by Rowan Williams (when he was Archbishop of Wales) for Lenten reading in 2003, and so it presents reflective material suitable for group use at the end of each chapter. It ends with a recommendation, not necessarily to contend with the cultural factors that have influenced Griffiths' thinking, but to recognise their parallels in one's own experience, and to become more fully aware of how one has been moulded by them.

Robin Gill's *Changing Worlds: Can the Church Respond?* is a heavier work in several senses. Gill presents a number of originally independent studies,

linked by an interest in how the Christian church can and should respond to a rapidly changing society. He focuses on three areas: evolving moral perceptions (such issues as the arms trade and environmental concerns); the decline in church-going in Britain (discussed with the help of parallel examples from overseas); and how theology itself might move beyond confessional ghettos to engage more productively with secular analyses of contemporary society. The whole work was revised in the light of the events of 11 September 2001, which threw its concerns into high relief.

There is a positive note that sounds throughout the book, with an initial sense of surprise: the realisation that many engaged in secular ethical debates welcome the contribution of people of faith and the particular insights that faith can bring. Of course, these insights need to be presented in a way that listens at least as much as it contributes—there is no room here for theological stances which claim a monopoly of truth. But a positive effect of postmodernism is the passing of a time when a religious outlook had to be either strident or apologetic in order to be granted a hearing. Gill can thus call all the more sharply for theology to be done in a specific way: through engagement with people from very different backgrounds who nevertheless share a commitment to the quest for truth.

Pedro Arrupe, the Society of Jesus' last Superior General, urged the Jesuits to accept one of liberation theology's central insights: the geographical and social location of individuals is likely to be more influential on their theological outlook than any abstract ideas or even any convictions that they explicitly profess. These books make the same point from their two different perspectives. Neither theology, nor that practical living-out of theology which we call spirituality, ever occur in a vacuum. If people of faith are to live in a rapidly changing society, they must allow their faith to be challenged, influenced and even changed by that society. In turn, through open dialogue, their faith will challenge, influence and even change those around them, whether or not those others claim any religious allegiance. These two books describe something of this two-way process, and invite their readers to further the dialogue that they begin.

Paul Nicholson SJ

Andrew Moore, *Realism and Christian Faith: God, Grammar, and Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). 0 521 52415 6, pp. xi + 274, £17.95.

For much of the last century the prevailing orthodoxy among Christians was that philosophers—predominantly those known as ‘analytic’—were so hostile to religion that it simply was not possible to have any dialogue between philosophers and religious believers. Christians who saw the importance of philosophy in articulating and defending religious belief had to resort to some version of neo-Thomism or to the various forms of existentialism popular in continental Europe. It is all the more remarkable, then, that the last thirty years or so have seen an energetic revival of philosophy among English-speaking Christians.

Two factors have contributed to this shift. In the first place, the more narrowly empiricist versions of analytic philosophy—the kinds of views defended by A. J. Ayer, or Gilbert Ryle, or Bertrand Russell—have been shown to be internally inconsistent, and untenable for many other reasons. Indeed, these philosophers, despite their intentions, could not give a satisfactory account even of truth and knowledge in the physical sciences. Secondly, the study of ancient philosophy, especially of Aristotle’s works, which had for long been the preserve of a few specialists in Oxford and Cambridge, has suddenly burgeoned. Scholars such as Gregor Vlastos in the USA and G. E. L. Owen in Britain rediscovered the philosophical riches to be found not only in Plato and Aristotle, but in the post-Aristotelians and the medieval philosophers as well. Metaphysics, now taking advantage of modern philosophical techniques, is back in business. English-speaking Christians can once again engage in that fruitful dialogue with secular philosophy which has been characteristic of Western Christianity since the days of St Paul.

The revival has been led above all by Christian scholars in the United States—Alvin Plantinga, Ernan McMullin, William Alston, Eleonore Stump and the late Norman Kretzmann, to mention but a few—as well as by writers like Janet Martin Soskice and John Polkinghorne here in Britain. It has been characterized by both the factors named above. Some of these authors are or were philosophers of science in their own right, and themselves helped discredit empiricism. All of them have drawn on classical metaphysical traditions to answer the questions that Russell and Ayer could not. Their approach offers the promise of expressing Christian beliefs in terms which fit well into contemporary scientific culture, and of ending the unnecessary conflicts between science and religion which have bedevilled theology since the days of Darwin and before.

Andrew Moore will have nothing to do with any of this. His book is an out-and-out polemic in the name of Christian orthodoxy against this entire trend. Take, for instance, the following kind of argument. Just as in physics we find ourselves having to postulate unobservable entities, such as black holes (at the large end of things) or quarks (at the sub-microscopic end), in order to give a satisfactory explanation of the evidence before our eyes, so, the contemporary Christian philosopher might argue, we have to postulate a being not directly accessible to us, in order to explain both the existence of the universe as a whole, and some particular experiences of many people in it. If we take this view, God is beyond our literal description, ineffable and mysterious, but nevertheless a reality that must exist because otherwise nothing else makes ultimate sense. On Moore's view, however, this seemingly attractive approach leads to an idolatrous distortion of Christian faith. The Christian God is not some shaky postulate, a possible interpretation of some of the evidence we care to gather; nor is the Christian God ineffable, beyond our grasp. In Jesus we see the glory of God (though not his essence); through Jesus and the Scriptures, God in person has taught us how we should speak of Him. It is only believers who can recognise the true sense in which God is mystery, since it is only believers who have seen the glory of God in Jesus. This, Moore argues, is quite unlike the way in which scientists might speak of unobservable entities on the basis of evidence available to everyone.

It is not as though Moore believes that philosophers and true believers speak of the same God, albeit perhaps in language which differs in adequacy or appropriateness. The philosophers can only succeed in speaking of *a different god*. The only access we have to the true God is through the grace of God's revelation. A god reached by any other means—say, by philosophical argument—is the wrong god. Moore does see a role for philosophy in articulating faith; but, 'a perennial danger here is to think that philosophy can help [faith] attain a knowledge of God which is greater or more ultimate than that given in Christ and the biblical witness to him'. There is no need, because there is no way, to 'get behind' God's revelation in Jesus in order to validate it, or defend it, or spell out the preconditions which make it acceptable. The kind of transcendental arguments used by Karl Rahner are just as objectionable as the more scientific approaches put forward by figures such as Richard Swinburne or John Polkinghorne.

The book displays a great deal of knowledge of the work of contemporary Christian philosophers and theologians with a philosophical bent. But, at least in my own view, the argument is beset by two major faults. The first is a theological one. There is a tacit assumption that God's

self-revelation occurs *only* in Jesus and in the biblical witness to Jesus, and that this revelation is both self-authenticating and self-explanatory. Along with this goes the view that grace is given *only* to believers in Jesus Christ as Lord. I think the sounder view is that God's self-revelation is occurring in every created thing; and since creation is creation in Christ, *everything* exists in the order of grace, including the works of 'secular' philosophers. The gift of our minds is a matter of grace just as much as the revelation of God in Jesus and the gift of Christian faith. Secondly, Moore's stress upon the 'prevenience' of God does, it seems to me, have the effect of isolating religious faith from the rest of our knowledge. It is as though Paul, chastened by his failure to win the minds of the Athenians by appealing to their pre-existing beliefs and showing how they were fulfilled in Christianity, generalised that local failure into a universal theological dogma. To do that, is, I believe, to abandon any attempt to conduct a dialogue with our fellow humans in terms we can all share, and to imply a picture of a God whose gifts of grace and faith are arbitrarily distributed. Theological certainty is bought at far too high a price.

Few books that I have read manage to delineate the battle lines between contemporary philosophy of religion and Barthian theology with as much clarity as Moore's. It is a technical book, replete with detailed discussions of highly nuanced philosophical and theological positions. It touches upon one central nerve of contemporary theology very accurately indeed. If it fails to convince, it still contains a great deal that is useful and well worth saying.

Gerard J. Hughes SJ

***The Gospel of Thomas Annotated and Explained*, translated and annotated by Stevan Davies (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2003). 0 232 52501 3, pp. xxvi + 142, £8.95.**

The Gospel of Thomas (which is neither a gospel nor, in all probability, by Thomas) was discovered in 1945 near Nag Hammadi in Egypt, in a jar containing twelve books, which yielded a total of 52 texts written in Coptic. The Gospel of Thomas (hereafter GT) is the most interesting of these; it was known to third-century church fathers, and fragments in the original Greek were discovered elsewhere in Egypt in the nineteenth century. Stevan Davies offers us an annotated translation and two introductions.

Why might readers of *The Way* be interested in this text? For one thing, the 114 (or 150, depending on how you count them) sayings of which it consists, in no particular order, are all attributed to Jesus, and are allegedly written down by 'Didymus Judas Thomas'. The work indeed claims for Thomas an exalted status, possibly equal to that of Jesus himself. Half of these sayings, or something resembling them, are found in Matthew, Mark or Luke, and none in the Gospel of John. Davies, and many other scholars today, argue that GT is an early collection of sayings, perhaps going back to before AD 62, the date of the death of James. In that case, it would be our earliest witness to the teachings of Jesus. Davies thinks that GT is one of the sources of Mark's gospel. He is, however, coy about explaining the teaching of GT, beyond a consistent emphasis that it is a 'present-oriented, self-reflective Christianity'. By this he means that for GT the kingdom is 'within', not something that is still to come; all you have to do is seek, 'and you shall find'.

What will readers of *The Way* find to disagree with in this book? They may wonder, as I wonder, whether it is really true that 'for those interested in Jesus of Nazareth and the origins of Christianity, the Gospel of Thomas is the most important discovery ever made'. For Davies, the narrative presentation of Jesus' teaching to which we are accustomed in the gospels is an invention of Mark, who is followed by his revisers, Luke and Matthew. Another invention of Mark, and also of Paul, according to Davies, is the business of 'unearned grace', which most *Way* readers may have supposed to be central to Christianity. Davies will have no truck with this: for him, the merit of GT's message is that it offers a do-it-yourself spirituality, based on the wisdom of the ancients, rather like what you will find by the shelf-load in the Self-Improvement section of your local bookstore. Fasting, prayer, and giving to charity are banned, some may be glad to know. Sayings vary between worthy platitudes ('The situation you are expecting will come; let a person who understands be with you') and tantalizing gnomic opacities ('When your strip naked without shame and trample your clothing underfoot just as little children do, then you will look at the son of the living one without being afraid'; or even 'Jesus said: When you give rise to that which is within you, what you have will save you. If you do not give rise to it, what you do not have will destroy you'). The book is clearly aimed at the non-specialist reader, and it tells them:

... through the discovery of the Gospel of Thomas, we have, for the first time in nearly two thousand years, the opportunity to hear Jesus' voice 'speaking in parables' without the intervening community of evangelists and preachers and church tradition.

It is no good readers of *The Way* objecting that the New Testament is the inspired word of God, and that sin and salvation, not to mention the death and resurrection of Jesus, are fairly central to Christianity. These notions are simply not there in GT, and all the better for that, thinks Davies. For Davies,

it has become clear ... as it is to most people who study the matter, that every one of the Christian documents we have from the first centuries was developed by Christians intending to promote their own agendas, usually by directly or indirectly attributing their ideas to Jesus.

The New Testament is, in other words, a pack of lies.

Are there other books on which readers of *The Way* might more profitably spend their resources and time? Undoubtedly.

Nicholas King SJ

Thomas F. Martin OSA, *Our Restless Heart: The Augustinian Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2003). 0 232 52410 6, pp. 176, £8.95.

Spiritualities are like swallows. We all recognise swallows as they dart through our gardens, but when they are captured they languish in cages. Similarly, it is easy to isolate central themes and to find quotations that illustrate the spirituality of individuals. But to appreciate a living spirituality entails noticing the grace and articulation of the spirit's movement, the ways in which it is caught between fight and flight.

This is doubly true of St Augustine. He is so intellectually acute, so theologically centred, and shows such virtuosity in argument, that we can readily find a number of pithy aphorisms that summarise his spirituality. But as we then organize them, and build them up into a scheme of ideas, his face and spirit fade away. What is most characteristic of Augustine's spiritual vision lies in the surprising, richly textured connections he makes between argument and imagination, between the surface of scripture and its possibilities, between introspection and office, between solitude and community. Augustine's imagination shapes and moulds the associations that words trigger, plays with images, welds explanation and affection. The living spirituality of Augustine can be caught only in a prose that sparks with an energy like his. And yet he was much more than a sensitive and skilled writer; he was also a theologian. The centre of his interest was

God's relationship to us in Jesus Christ, which for him necessarily found expression in firm and complex beliefs.

In a review, a preamble of this kind usually implies that the book under discussion has failed to do justice to the subject-matter, and suggests that the reviewer alone is capable of writing adequately on the subject. Martin, however, is an admirably modest and competent guide to Augustine's thought. He names the themes which need to be included in a full account of Augustine, linking them by the image of the pilgrim journey. I found his treatment helpful in offering a check-list of categories that should be included in any discussion of Augustine. But to bring Augustine alive, we must also evoke. Martin's treatment does not perhaps represent the high tension within which Augustine holds together these categories. Although, for example, the image of pilgrimage and journey is central in Augustine's account of human and Christian life, it has been blunted and domesticated by long use. We are likely to associate pilgrimage with tourism; Augustine identified it with seasickness and homelessness.

The most illuminating part of Martin's book deals with Augustine's influence on those who followed him. He deals particularly well with the flourishing of Augustinian thought in contemplative orders during the middle ages. These orders produced writings that were based in contemplation, were freely creative within the tradition, and were driven neither by a polemical nor by a systematizing urge.

Martin also treats in an open and exploratory way Augustine's influence on writers who at first seem opposed to him. He shows how Augustine influenced a range of important figures, including Reformers like Calvin and Luther, rigorist Catholics such as Cornelius Jansen in the seventeenth century; and philosophers whom we think of as secular, such as Descartes and Derrida.

The panorama of so many and such diverse thinkers inspired by Augustine leads us to ask again where is the heart of the Augustinian spiritual tradition. It is not to be found simply through learning and close attention to the text. Jansen, for example, was easily the best Augustinian scholar of his age; but, as his interest became fixed on the correct interpretation of Augustine's theology, he lost contact with Augustine's expansive imagination and spiritual depth. Derrida echoes splendidly Augustine's rhetorical force, but the heart of Augustine's spirituality cannot be understood independently of the faith that gathered the strands of his life together.

Perhaps the heart of Augustine's spirituality lies in the recognition that his own heart was not a resting place but a signpost. Augustine's heart points his readers' hearts towards God. He brings before us the journey

along which God accompanies and calls each human being; he evokes the playfulness and seriousness of the process; he reminds us of the importance of finding God as the destination of every journey.

Andrew Hamilton SJ

Jeff Astley, *Ordinary Theology: Looking, Listening and Learning in Theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003). 0 7546 0584 1, pp. 210, £15.99.

'Ordinary theology' sounds like an oxymoron. Theology normally appears as something studied in esoteric institutions, written about in arcane books and journals, enjoyed by a tiny coterie of seriously unusual people. Jeff Astley holds that theology is not to be understood so narrowly. There is indeed the systematic academic discipline of theology, but theology has its home not only—or not primarily—in the rarefied atmosphere of the seminary or the university, but also in the hearts and lives of those who have had little or no formal theological education. Ordinary theology, for Astley, is simply the theology of those who have not been taught theology.

Astley fleshes out this bare-boned definition by suggesting some of the characteristics of ordinary theology. Such theology may not have been taught, but none the less it has been learned—learned from life, not from lectures. It is a tentative theology; ordinary theologians stammer, and so much the better that they do. It is necessarily a lay theology. Not only is it untutored; it also reflects and expresses an unclericalised culture. Ordinary theology is significant and meaningful, of huge consequence for the one who believes in it, even if not for the counsels (or the Councils) of the church. It is also, to use David Martin's term, 'subterranean', a theology hidden from the library or the study but openly discussed in the pub or the bus queue. It is a theology—the image is von Balthasar's—done more naturally kneeling than sitting. (I'm not sure about this. People do not normally kneel in pubs or bus queues.) Its language (and now Astley turns to Ursula Le Guin) is a 'mother tongue'—warm, subjective, relational, engaged—not a 'father-tongue'—cool, dispassionate, disinterested, analytical. Ordinary theology is 'onlook theology', a way of seeing that is not yet conceptualised, but is none the less insightful.

Such is ordinary theology, and so far so good. We might now expect some examples of this theology. We might hope for instances of things 'hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed to babes'. If so, we should be disappointed. We should also have forgotten Astley's preface, in which

he makes it clear that he has no intention of illustrating what ordinary theologians have to say about anything.

Readers will question the wisdom of Astley's decision not to provide examples of the kind of theology he is talking about. Passages in this book, particularly in the author's extended and meticulous analysis of alternative methods of studying ordinary theology, are dense and demanding. Many of the five hundred or so titles in the bibliography are touched on in the text. Names of 'extraordinary theologians' crowd the pages, and the weight of these names, while lending authority to the discussion, adds to the reader's burden. It would have been not only a concession to the flesh, but also, and more importantly, an illumination of the argument, if Astley had illustrated how far 'Wittgensteinian methodology', say, elucidated 'bus queue theology'. It cannot be quite right that a book which insists that we attend to ordinary theologians does not allow them a hearing.

Astley is well aware that many will be deeply suspicious of the exercise he is undertaking, among them those people whose ecclesiology requires of them submission to a magisterium not located in bus queues. Moreover, the cult of the expert is now so powerful that even Churches which make much of the priesthood of all believers are just as likely to regard ordinary theology with disdain. In his concluding chapter Astley responds to the criticisms he anticipates. He suggests that many of those criticisms, for example that ordinary theology is too varied or too uncritical, might equally be levelled against much academic theology. Other criticisms, he contends, such as the allegations that ordinary theology is too concrete or too personal, reflect more on the limitations and defects of the theology of the scholars than on anything wrong with the theology of ordinary people.

'To take ordinary theology more seriously ... is all that I am asking for', Astley writes in a disarming 'Epilogue'. It is a request we can scarcely refuse.

John Pridmore

Fintan Creaven SJ, *Body and Soul: A Spirituality of Imaginative Creativity* (London: SPCK, 2003). 0 281 05524 6, pp. xii + 116, £8.99.

Body and Soul is a companionable book: 116 attractively organized pages, pocket size, packed with profound insights, with appropriate anecdotes and, above all, with practical exercises. It draws both on Ignatian resources and on what is now called 'Celtic Spirituality'. It repays frequent and prayerful re-reading. Being a Jesuit of many years' standing, Fintan Creaven

is very well qualified for his subject—not only is he a born Celt but also an experienced populariser of Ignatian spirituality.

Some might groan at yet another book riding the Celtic spirituality bandwagon. But this one avoids superficiality and anachronism. It merely makes some plausible suggestions. It is well known, for example, that Teilhard drew on his scientific researches to develop the Ignatian vision expressed in the *Contemplation to Attain Love*—Creaven adds that his achievement may owe something to his Celtic roots (the people of the Auvergne, from where Teilhard came, are linked to the Celts). Similarly the Welsh Celtic ancestry in which Gerard Manley Hopkins rejoiced may have contributed to the shaping of his Scotist vision, expressed in the many apt quotations from Hopkins scattered throughout Creaven's book. After all, Duns Scotus himself was also a Celt.

The style is attractively informal. But don't be deceived: there is a breadth of reading, as well as reflection on a depth of experience, solidly underpinning Creaven's genial, often humorous, expression. Despite the easy informality, there is a strong structure to each of the six chapters. Creaven begins by telling us briefly what he is going to say. He then develops three or four points with a variety of explicit and implicit references, including not only Hopkins and Teilhard, but also Rilke, Solovyev, John V. Taylor, and many others. But don't get the impression that this is in any way a rarefied work. References to popular TV programmes and to *The House at Pooh Corner* keep it always down to earth. At the end of each chapter is a contemplative reworking of its themes, laid out in semi-poetic form: this is very much Creaven's original work and clearly the fruit of his own prayer.

Creaven also refers, all too briefly, to the 'Focusing' technique of Eugene T. Gendlin—perhaps more widely known under the unattractive name of 'bio-spirituality'. But don't be put off by either name. As Creaven remarks: 'it could well be that bio-spiritual focusing is at the root of Ignatian discernment' (63). Indeed it could; Gendlin's techniques need to be far more widely known and practised. Unfortunately, but understandably, this book can fit in only four brief paragraphs about bio-spirituality, tantalizingly praising it but not really telling us what it is, let alone how to practise it.

An important element in each chapter is the practical exercises which appear scattered throughout. These are excellent. Perhaps it would have been even better if they had been gathered together at the end of each chapter for easier reference for group or personal use. But these are small criticisms of a most attractive, informative, reliable and practical book.

William Hewett SJ

Ignacio Cacho SJ, *Iñigo de Loyola. Ese Enigma* (Bilbao: Mensajero, 2003). 84 271 2511 9, pp. xii + 484, €30.

The 'enigma' of Ignatius of Loyola has struck many of those acquainted with the founder of the Jesuits, but few have been prepared to analyze the enigmatic features which stare them in the face. A mystic turned bureaucrat, this 'saint' was frequently arraigned before the Inquisition; trained to be a courtier, he chose to work with down-and-outs, but found himself writing numerous letters to heads of state; beloved and admired by some, he was hated and vilified by others. The list of paradoxes could be extended indefinitely. Now, for the first time, a Jesuit—in this case a Basque former Provincial—has had the nerve to acknowledge the difficulties and to struggle with an exposition and analysis of them.

The present book (nearly 500 pages long) is only the first in a massive and ambitious two-volume work; the second volume will examine the writings of Ignatius in detail, and deal more specifically with the charges of heresy brought against him. Here the author first presents a series of contrasts, seeing Ignatius in relation to the accounts of him given by Pierre Favre, Francis Xavier, Diego Laínez, Alfonso Salmerón, Simão Rodrigues and Bobadilla—six of the 'first companions', all of whom were with Ignatius for the crucial promises of Montmartre (1534) and in the subsequent founding of the Society of Jesus (1540). After this come two parts devoted respectively to the 'demonization' and the 'canonisation' of Ignatius, and a final part in which Fr Cacho contrasts Luther and Loyola in their attitude to ecclesiastical reform, in particular to the question of 'obedience' in the Church.

Fr Cacho has the great advantage of having read and assimilated the immense hoard of information contained in the *Monumenta Historica*, that extraordinary collection of over 150 volumes of historical sources published by the Jesuits in the course of the twentieth century. Thus his book is a continuous patchwork of quotations, which give it a sound historical basis. The detailed accounts of the first companions make fascinating reading, especially those in which Rodrigues and Bobadilla figure, since they were also the first to give rise, within the Society, to bitter criticisms of the founder.

Perhaps the second most striking feature of the work is the space given to Basque reactions to the saint, declared the 'patron' of Guipuzcoa where he was born. Two of the great writers of Castilian literature, Pío Baroja and Unamuno, who were both Basques, were fascinated by the personality of Ignatius, but appalled by what they considered the Frankenstein's monster he brought to life. Even more unusual is the amount of space given to the

eccentric but genial sculptor Jorge de Oteiza, who wrote wild pages of praise and blame in honour of Ignatius. Fr Cacho suggests that Ignatius functioned for Oteiza as the 'father' whom he wanted but could not have.

Fr Cacho is convinced that the greatest obstacle to an objective appraisal of Ignatius comes from the 'golden legend' rather than from his denigrators; an unbalanced hagiography presenting itself as historical fact produced texts that misled as much as they informed. The worst culprit according to Fr Cacho is Gonçalves da Câmara (his *Memoriale* has not been published yet in English), but at the same time he considers da Câmara to be the writer who presents the most revealing information about the 'real' Ignatius.

The psychological analysis that might reveal some of the causes of the 'enigma' is only hinted at in this volume (thus the work of W. W. Meissner is not mentioned), but the accounts given of Ignatius' relations with his followers, and of his attitudes to such delicate matters as chastity and mental obedience, all seem to point in the direction of such analysis. One may hope that the second volume will come up to the expectations raised by the first, but also that it will be graced by better copy-editing and fewer errata.

Joseph A. Munitiz SJ

George P. Schnier SJ, *Essays Catholic and Critical*, edited by Philip G. Ziegler and Mark Husbands (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003). 0 7546 3334 9, pp. 216, £16.99.

George Schnier was a Canadian Jesuit educated at Yale, whose theological career came to an abrupt end with his untimely death in the late autumn of 2000. His work was unfinished, and largely unpublished. His theological influence had been exercised primarily through decades of teaching, a task which he carried out with consummate skill and with great regard for his students. *Essays Catholic and Critical* is an edited collection of Schnier's work. It not only distils years of rigorous academic study, but also makes a substantial contribution to the post-Conciliar theological landscape. What Schnier says about the well-known Yale theologian Hans Frei, who also died prematurely, so easily applies to Schnier himself: Frei's 'consideration of the interconnection of philosophy, Scripture, tradition and doctrine', depends crucially on 'his remarks on revelation and the Holy Spirit, few though they may be' (p. 149). Schnier too addresses the interconnected

themes of philosophy, Scripture, tradition and doctrine by developing a thoroughgoing trinitarian theology which begins with revelation. The theological terrain was shaped quite decisively for Schnier by the Vatican II 'rediscovery of the Word of God as norm for Church life and teaching' (p.42).

For Schnier the parameters of theology in the post-Conciliar church are set forth by the Conciliar doctrine of revelation. He suggests that *Dei verbum*, the Council's decree on revelation, can be read as a 'statement of rules of Christian discourse'. Interpreted thus, it establishes certain norms of 'theological construction'. First, the theme of revelation, of the Word of God, is not one theological idea among others, but 'the focus of all theological foundations and the way in which matters of the authority of scripture and tradition are discussed'. Second, 'the Word of God, as expressed in the Scriptures' has a primacy in constructive theology. Third, these norms hold not only for theology but for the restructuring of 'liturgical, educational and devotional practice in the church as a whole' (p.41).

For Schnier, teaching is an essential activity of the Christian community; and what is being taught is a person, Jesus (p.4). Inspired by *Dei verbum* and by his sense of the educational mission of the Church, Schnier understood that his task as theologian was to 'set forth Christ', a task which he undertook with extraordinary acuteness. He taught by reading because theology is always situated within a tradition, a community that hands on wisdom from one generation to the next. He considered reading and teaching to be 'vital opportunities for a tradition of human action, reflection and fellowship to retrieve its past, orient itself in the present, and move into the future' (p. xii).

Schnier once apologised for the 'somewhat cryptic character of remarks made to fit some 20 pages which have taken some 20 years to discover' (p. 171). Though some of Schnier's essays are brief, and though his work ended abruptly, this anthology nevertheless indicates that over many years of teaching and many years of careful exegesis Schnier forged a clear sense of the task of theology itself. And it is in both of these activities, in reading and in teaching, that Schnier understood and practised the task of theology. He was most at home in the classroom, much less at home as a writer; the careful exegesis of texts was always his preferred method of proceeding (p. 170). He valued the 'skills of careful reading' (p. 127), and practised them with patience and energy, finding in this art a constructive relation between the old and the new, between classic text and contemporary debate.

The reading, and indeed the re-reading of texts—philosophical, ecclesial, theological—gave rise for Schnier to ‘fundamental moments of questioning’, exemplified eloquently in his reading of Hume (chapter 4). He read critically, attentive to the ‘textual problems of ambiguities, mixed metaphors, and inconsistencies’, always prepared to identify false ‘ideological harmonies’, as in his reading of *Fides et ratio* (chapter 2). And he brought to his reading a subtle intellect, which allowed him to identify reductionist tendencies within a text, and hence to deepen its meaning by expanding upon either concepts or contexts, as in his reading of Frei’s *Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (chapter 10). But for Schnier the fundamentally serious point was the primacy of the biblical text, and he was sharply critical of theology when it abandoned its own tradition, most especially when it undercut the primacy of Scripture by appeal to philosophical foundations, a criticism which he directs at *Veritatis splendor* (chapter 1). All Schnier’s skills and exegetical commitments were placed at the service of his teaching, for teaching was simply ‘reading in common’, and reading was ‘the path to insight’ (p. xi).

Schnier was a Jesuit theologian and hence it is not at all surprising that in one of his reflections about the *Spiritual Exercises* we find a wonderfully apt description of his own concerns as a reader and his influence as a teacher. ‘What is essential to the *Spiritual Exercises* is their formative relationships with habits of thought and speech essential to Christianity.’ (p. 68) It is precisely this quality which makes George Schnier’s own theology so compelling and this collection of essays so attractive: in reading and in teaching—and in writing, however reluctantly—he was concerned always with the habits of thought and speech essential to Christianity.

Jennifer Cooper

***Spiritualität im Wandel: Leben aus Gottes Geist*, edited by Andreas Schönfeld (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 2002). 3 429 02473 0, pp. 450, €24.80.**

2002 marked the 75th volume of the German-speaking Jesuits’ review of spirituality, *Geist und Leben*—until 1944, the *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Mystik*. To celebrate the occasion, the editor-designate, Andreas Schönfeld, has produced this wide-ranging volume, charting the changes in spirituality that have taken place through the journal’s history by reprinting representative contributions from each period. There is also

strong background material: a significant foreword from Cardinal Lehmann; a rich open letter from Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, the current Jesuit General; useful bibliographical information; and accounts both of the journal's history and of its Ignatian vision.

The *Zeitschrift* started in 1925 in Austria, though it soon moved to Munich. The catastrophe of World War I had enabled institutional Catholic life in Germany to start on a new footing after the persecution of the Bismarckian period. More generally, a number of such journals and projects began in mainland Europe at this time. The interesting question for an English-speaking reader is why our cultures were behind: *The Way*, like other similar initiatives, began only in the 1960s. Perhaps this is because France and Germany had suffered far more severely from the war; perhaps, also, English-speaking religion was too much shaped by polemical versions of classical Protestantism for an appeal to spirituality to be possible until the opening-up that came with the 1960s and Vatican II.

The editor had much to choose from, and hence the selections he could make, though they may show their age, are still worth reading. Behind the early contributions—which include, notably, a reflection on the Annotations by Erich Przywara—stands the spectre of Nazism. For example, the philosopher Johannes Baptist Lotz offers a powerful interpretation of Ignatian meditation ‘in the light of a wholesome theory of values’. The language may be that of scholasticism and spirituality, but the political significance is unmistakable. As August Brunner put the matter, in a 1947 essay that re-launched the journal after the war and explained the change of title, ‘a humanity that controls atomic power will survive only if it esteems love and benevolence, powers of the spirit, even more’ (p. 162). The centrepiece of the whole volume comes from the Vatican II period: the essay of Karl Rahner’s which includes the dictum about the Christian of the future necessarily being a mystic. But there is also a remarkable piece of cultural and spiritual analysis by the Frankfurt theologian, Erhard Kunz. Elegantly and simply, it interprets the ferment of the early 1970s in terms of Nietzsche’s philosophy, before charting a way forward between naïve restorationism and cultural sell-out. Later pieces become more sensitive to feminist, interreligious and artistic themes.

If you have any German at all, it is worth reading this book. It provides a striking overview of how the Ignatian tradition has interacted with German culture over three-quarters of a century. And perhaps, if our colleagues in Munich show their normal kindness in giving permission, *The Way* may be able to make some of this material available in English before too long.

Philip Endean SJ

Kees Waajiman, *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods*, translated by John Vriend (Leuven: Peeters, 2002). 90 429 1183 2, pp.viii + 970, €45.

Kees Waajiman is a Dutch Carmelite, and a leading figure in the Titus Brandsma Institute at the University of Nijmegen. This Institute was founded in 1968, in the wake of Vatican II, in order to promote the academic study of spirituality, and it is now flourishing with its own journal, *Studies in Spirituality*. This massive, encyclopaedic volume, published both in English and in Dutch, sets out Waajiman's position on the nature of spirituality as an academic discipline, and furnishes his version of a foundational textbook.

The book falls into three main sections. The first proposes a threefold typology of 'forms of spirituality': a 'lay spirituality' which occurs in the context of the family; an 'institutional spirituality' centred on schools, and carried forward by a 'clergy' in public space; and subversive countermovements. Waajiman identifies six examples of these three forms, giving some introductory information on each example. The second section suggests that the academic study of spirituality should be concerned with 'the divine-human relational process ... considered from the viewpoint of transformation' (p.6). Through a study of discernment as 'prescientific', Waajiman argues that the two major philosophical tools for contemporary work in spirituality are phenomenology, taking up spirituality's focus on experience, and the dialogic philosophy developed by such figures as Buber and Levinas, which can nourish spirituality's 'orientation to alterity', spirituality's insistence that the self is in dialogue with an Other beyond its control. In the third part, Waajiman argues that research in the field of spirituality will take one of four related forms: simple description; interpretation (which he insists on calling hermeneutics); systematic reflection; and mystagogy, aiming to lead students more deeply into transformative relationship.

No specialist in the study of spirituality can ignore this book, and every library with any claim to cover the field will need to obtain it. Its range and its bibliographies will make it an important reference tool, particularly given the author's fondness for filling out his theoretical points with handy treatments of a wide range of material. But its claims to be a 'textbook' are intelligible perhaps only when one takes into account the particular characteristics of Dutch academia, notably its tendency to develop 'scientific method' in the study of the humanities. A foundational textbook in spirituality for the English-speaking world would be aimed at beginners, and would in various ways be encouraging them to value their own intuitions and life experience. The sheer opacity of Waajiman's text limits

its usefulness in such a context, and he may be open to more theoretical criticism as well. Wherever he takes up a theoretical discussion in the English-speaking world (for example the questions raised by Sandra Schneiders' seminal essays or by the preface to the *World Spirituality* series), he seems to sidestep the issues. More seriously, there is a lack of serious engagement with how the epithet 'Christian' should shape the study of spirituality. The action of the Spirit is not confined to what 'phenomenologists' classify as 'religious' or 'spiritual'. An openness to 'mystagogy', particularly if inspired by the memory of Jesus crucified and risen, entails a permanent willingness to have our categories broken.

Philip Endean SJ

***Readings in Church Authority: Gifts and Challenges for Contemporary Catholicism*, edited by Gerard Mannion, Richard Gaillardetz, Jan Kerkhofs and Kenneth Wilson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).
0 7546 0530 2, pp. 590, £69.95.**

This massive reader in modern Roman Catholic writing on authority in the Church emerged from a project sponsored by the Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education in Birmingham, England, during the late 1990s. The project consulted widely, with a view to developing insights that might help adapt pastoral policy and practice. Despite the ecumenical sponsorship of the project, and indeed the fact that one of the editors is a Methodist minister, the collection focuses almost exclusively on Roman Catholic writing. There are several extracts from papal documents, and from a wide range of contemporary theologians—though Congar, Karl Rahner and Dulles are, understandably, given special prominence. The reader is divided into eight major parts: the nature of the Church; the magisterium; collegiality; the papacy; reception; the theologian; tradition; renewal. Each part begins with an editorial introduction, and is followed by discussion questions and an extensive bibliography.

This collection will clearly be a most helpful resource. Perhaps a thinner book would have served the purpose better, since the price of this volume is just ridiculous when set alongside the amount that the people it might help can afford to spend on books, and the essays seem sometimes to repeat each other. Nevertheless, the sheer range and competence of this volume is impressive. So much so, that perhaps the volume shows that the problems come not from a lack of theological education but from

unconverted hearts, and possibly from psychological immaturity. Roman Catholicism has had perfectly serviceable theologies of authority for a generation. The problems arise because these theologies seem too difficult to live by.

Philip Endean SJ

John Perry SJ, *Food for Thought: Catholic Insights into the Modified Food Debate* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2002). 2 89507 241 8, pp. 156, £10.50.

This clearly written book raises some interesting areas for discussion, especially for those unfamiliar with the debates surrounding the genetic modification of food. Perry endorses and approves much of the GM technology, and presents his views as representing *the* Roman Catholic perspective. Since this book was written, however, there have been more explicit, often critical, papal comments specifically related to the social justice issues inherent in the GM food debate. These are not dealt with adequately here. Nevertheless, the book does enter some important areas of debate, including that of intellectual property rights or patenting with regard to GM food. Perry's generally permissive line invokes the tradition of probabilism: the view that in cases of doubt an action is allowed, provided a reasonable case can be made for it. He does so, however, in a way that is hard for the non-specialist; and I am less convinced than he is that his arguments work. Perry's advocacy of biotechnology, by appealing to the idea of transubstantiation, seems, quite simply, odd.

Celia Deane-Drummond