

# THE WAY

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## GLIMPSES OF GOD



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*Tom Shufflebotham*

Growth in prayer can seem to involve increasingly complicated techniques to be learnt, remembered and mastered: *lectio divina*, imaginative contemplation, and a host of others. Here Tom Shufflebotham draws on tradition to show a simpler method, the prayer of faith—which he believes is nevertheless far from foreign to the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius.

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Dag Hammarskjöld, while secretary general of the United Nations, kept a diary, which was published posthumously under the title *Markings*. Louis Roy sees in it the influence of mystics, Christian and other, and in particular suggests that there are close links between the thought of Hammarskjöld and that of Meister Eckhart.

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Early in the seventeenth century a German Jesuit, Friedrich Spee von Langenfeld, was assigned to minister to women accused of witchcraft, before and after they were sentenced to death. He left writings condemning the trial process, which was often accompanied by torture. Michael Kirwan sees in this a foreshadowing of René Girard's work on the human tendency to create scapegoats.

*Thinking Faith*

**Anthony de Mello: On Fire** 39–44

*Karen Eliassen*

Anthony de Mello was an Indian Jesuit who perhaps did more than anyone to enable the spiritual techniques of Eastern religions to promote a deeper encounter with the Christian gospel. Much sought after as a giver of preached retreats, he was also, claims Karen Eliassen, an exemplary 'contemplative in action'. In this first article reprinted from *Thinking Faith*, she traces his quest 'to set the world on fire'.

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***Is Religion Good for Your Mental Health?***

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*Roger Dawson*

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***Transcendence and Immanence I: God in the Scriptures***

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Orthodox theology speaks of God as both 'transcendent', beyond all that has been created, and 'immanent', intimately connected to and active in all that is. It has been suggested that the Old Testament, Hebrew scripture, privileges the first of these and the New, particularly the Gospels, highlights the second. Rolphy Pinto argues for a more nuanced understanding of the biblical testimony.

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Across much of the Western world, recent decades have seen a decline in participation in organized religion among younger people. Yet many of them would claim to retain a strong sense of spirituality which is important in their lives. From a Roman Catholic perspective, John Zupez asks how the Mass might best be celebrated so as to speak to the experience of people such as these.

## ***Spiritual Direction, Experiential Focusing and the Examen of St Ignatius*** 101–110

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A psychotherapeutic method called ‘experiential focusing’ invites those seeking help to become aware of the physical sensations in their bodies as they explore the ideas and feelings with which they wish to work. Iain Radvan sees parallels with the movements experienced in the prayer of the Examen, and the role of the spiritual director in helping the directee to notice and stay with these.

### **Book Reviews**

**Paul Nicholson** on religious life

**Nicholas King** on the two thieves at the crucifixion

**Brendan Callaghan** on a collection of stories about forgiveness

**Michael Barnes** on three books about interreligious dialogue in India

**Hannah Caldwell and Augusto Zampini-Davies** on Latino/a theology

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### **FOR AUTHORS**

*The Way* warmly invites readers to submit articles with a view to publication. They should normally be about 4,000 words long, and be in keeping with the journal’s aims. The Editor is always ready to discuss possible ideas.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thanks to Peter Brook SJ for illustrations. The scripture quotations herein are generally from the New Revised Standard Version Bible © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, and are used by permission. All rights reserved.

### **ABBREVIATIONS**

<i>Autobiography</i>	‘Reminiscences (Autobiography)’, in <i>Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings</i> , translated by Philip Endean and Joseph A. Munitiz (London: Penguin, 1996)
<i>Constitutions</i>	in <i>The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms</i> (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996)
<i>Diary</i>	‘The Spiritual Diary’, in <i>Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings</i> , translated by Philip Endean and Joseph A. Munitiz (London: Penguin, 1996)
<i>Dir</i>	<i>On Giving the Spiritual Exercises: The Early Manuscript Directories and the Official Directory of 1599</i> , translated and edited by Martin E. Palmer (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996)
<i>Exx</i>	<i>The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius</i> , translated by George E. Ganss (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992)
<i>Jesuit Life and Mission Today</i>	<i>Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 31st – 35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus</i> (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009)
<i>MHSJ</i>	Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu, 157 volumes (Madrid and Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1898–)

## FOREWORD

IT IS NOT GIVEN to human beings, this side of the grave at least, to enjoy an uninterrupted view of God. The Christian life is more like climbing a mountain in mist, getting occasional glimpses of the summit and using those to orientate yourself, than gazing across broad sunny uplands on a clear day. Or, as St Paul says eloquently in the King James version of the first letter to the Corinthians, ‘now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face’. For now we must make do with glimpses of God.

One way of thinking about spirituality is to see it as helping to direct our attention towards those glimpses, so that they are not overlooked, considering what they can tell us about God. The authors of this issue of *The Way* contribute to this project in different ways. Rolphy Pinto lays out a basic distinction between looking for a God beyond creation, and for one who is intimately involved in all that God has made. He finds evidence of both throughout the biblical record. Norlan Julia, drawing on his work in a seminary in the Philippines, considers the experience of joy to be central to the ability to recognise God’s presence. By contrast Michael Kirwan writes of a seventeenth-century Jesuit who struggled to understand what God might be doing in the suffering of those condemned for witchcraft.

The fact that many younger people seem to retain a sense of spirituality even while they reject the practices of organized religion perhaps points to an innate human capacity to experience what believers call God. John Zupez, from a Catholic perspective, believes that the Eucharist can (and should) be celebrated in such a way as to foster this experience. Iain Radvan sees in a psychotherapeutic technique known as ‘experiential focusing’, which promotes a heightened awareness of bodily sensations, a tool which has much in common with the invitation issued by the prayer of the Examen to discover God in the midst of everyday life. Teresa White explores what the process of naming has to tell us about the glimpses of God that are granted to us.

Mysticism is the branch of spirituality which acknowledges most clearly the limits of what glimpses of God can reveal, or at least the impossibility of conceptualising adequately what can be learnt from them. Louis Roy situates the diaries of Dag Hammarskjöld, former secretary general of the United Nations, in that mystical tradition. Even when glimpses seem

entirely absent, when the summit of the mountain is least visible, prayer can continue; and Tom Shufflebotham outlines a ‘prayer of faith’ for those in that situation.

Finally in this issue we introduce a strand of articles that are new to *The Way*. The British Jesuits also publish an online journal, *Thinking Faith*. Described as offering ‘a Catholic and Ignatian perspective on scripture, culture, the Church, politics, spirituality and social justice’, it is often able to be a little more topical and responsive to current affairs than a quarterly journal, presenting shorter articles dealing with political, theological and social issues. Some of this work also concerns spirituality, and two of these pieces—in which Karen Eliassen glimpses God in the spiritual writings of Anthony de Mello and Roger Dawson explores how relationship with God through religious belief benefits mental health—are reprinted here as a taster, and to supplement our own complementary work.

There are warnings in scripture to those who would see God too clearly. These emphasize the greatness of God, and how far God is beyond the human capacity to grasp. Yet a series of glimpses, accumulated over years and decades, offers more than enough knowledge to navigate through the challenges that life presents. The need, in the words of the Canadian philosopher Bernard Lonergan, is to ‘be attentive’, and we hope that the articles printed here can help to focus the attention in that way.

**Paul Nicholson SJ**  
**Editor**

# THE PRAYER OF FAITH SEEKS UNDERSTANDING

## Simple Prayer and the Ignatian Exercises

*Tom Shufflebotham*

WHEN I WAS 27, my Provincial inflicted me as a teacher—untrained—on schoolboys in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. I say ‘untrained’ because a degree in history was no substitute for teacher training; moreover my pupils did not have the sort of speculative interest in pedagogy which might have caused them to observe patiently how the apprentice would handle his empty toolkit. I was unused to the heat and the altitude and, as just at that time the school was badly understaffed, I was quickly exhausted. In the mad round of chores there was no time for conscious prayer except for ten or fifteen minutes before throwing myself into bed. Flopping on a kneeler in the chapel I would immediately nod off. Thinking that this would not do, as God needed me awake, I would retreat to the lawn under the stars and walk up and down. I thought that if I could not manage first-class prayer, I had better take out my rosary, foolishly seeing this as third-class prayer. I was so tired that the beads felt like lumps of lead sliding through my weary fingers.

Quite literally, I now regard that as the best prayer I have ever prayed. It forced me to face the dilemma: either this is not prayer at all—or I have to take St Paul seriously: ‘the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words’ (Romans 8:26). Since I want to pray, the Holy Spirit is praying within me. Why demand more?

Returning after three years to Heythrop College to study theology, I clung to this conclusion but without much reflecting on it. After the theology in my Jesuit training came our year of tertianship and an experience of making the full Spiritual Exercises (for the second time—I had already made them as a novice): this for various reasons left me dissatisfied and, so to speak, none the wiser.

### ***What to Make of the Experience?***

In the following years I returned to schoolmastering, but also directed retreats during some of the vacation time. Now, at last, my African experience fell into place—and, incidentally, showed me why the word ‘director’ is less satisfactory than St Ignatius’ ‘the one who gives the Exercises’. Ignatius precisely did not want to be too ‘directive’: for him it was vital to ‘allow the Creator to deal immediately with the creature and the creature with its Creator and Lord’ (Exx 15).

My growing convictions were confirmed for me when I had on retreat a 73-year-old woman who was patently a good and sensible person, generous in the service of others, and who, over all the years, had been persevering doggedly in prayer. She did not seem depressed, but a little sad and resigned. Here she was, making her umpteenth annual retreat, but both now and throughout the year prayer was always ‘dry’, ‘empty’ and—despite persistent effort—‘getting nowhere’: it felt as if she was somehow ‘doing it wrong’ or God was not on her wavelength. She was a bit of an artist and fond of gardens. I advised that she feel free to make lots of use of the outdoors and let God speak to her through nature. I suggested two or three texts, but with the advice to loiter wherever a verse spoke to her. A week later she looked transformed. Instead of trying to marshal thoughts on which to base what she remembered of an Ignatian structure, she had—as it were—gently and slowly sucked one verse from the psalms like a lozenge while handing over the controls to the Holy Spirit.

A fortnight later I received a package. It contained a dozen notelets that she had made with drawings of a flower and a butterfly, and the





text ‘you give breath, fresh life begins, you keep renewing the world’ (from Psalm 104, which many of us would know from the Missal as ‘Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth’). This was the verse that had so held her.

### ***Towards Expressing the Inexpressible***

I began to realise that there was nothing unusual in this: it fitted well with the simplicity of the gospel references to prayer; and that passage from St Paul (Romans 8); and the constant insistence of St Augustine that ‘it is your heart’s desire that is your prayer’; and the traditional ‘if you cannot desire, then desire to desire’. And I would reflect on the way that so many of the deepest things in life, so much of human relationships, grow by simplification rather than complexity. There was encouragement, too, in many authors of that time. One book that was important to me was *The Prayer of Faith* by Leonard Boase: others, of course, had already used the expression, but here was Boase entitling a book thus in 1950, and reworking it after Vatican II in 1976, at just the time when I was doing my own modest pondering.<sup>1</sup>

Referring to the title, *The Prayer of Faith*, Dermot Mansfield remarks,

It is a good description, conveying the positive meaning of the condition and experience of many people who pray, who find themselves unable to concentrate in prayer, who try to accept as best they can their helplessness and offer the time to God in faith. Once it may not have been so for them, but was good and satisfying. Then gradually it changed, and the earlier sense of satisfaction began to evaporate. And usually now it is a matter of giving time, making space, being faithful. For periods, perhaps, this can be relatively easy, but it can also be very difficult and almost dreaded in anticipation.<sup>2</sup>

Mansfield’s 1980s article ‘The Prayer of Faith, Spiritual Direction, and the Exercises’ was the best of all, I think. Within a few pages he encapsulates the experience of so many and gives wise advice to retreat directors in the Ignatian tradition. The British Jesuit Jack Gillick puts it this way:

<sup>1</sup> Leonard Boase, *The Prayer of Faith* (Wimbledon: Apostleship of Prayer, 1950) and (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1976).

<sup>2</sup> Dermot Mansfield, ‘The Prayer of Faith, Spiritual Direction, and the Exercises’, *The Way*, 25/4 (October 1985), 315–324, here 316. Joseph Veale, himself highly regarded as a writer and speaker on Ignatian spirituality, rated the Mansfield article ‘the best treatment of the question I know of’ (‘Manifold Gifts’, in *Manifold Gifts* [Oxford: Way Books, 2006], 24 n.6). The literature, of course, is enormous, but I would particularly recommend Thomas H. Green, *When the Well Runs Dry* (Notre Dame, In: Ave Maria, 1979) and *Drinking from a Dry Well* (Notre Dame, In: Ave Maria, 1991). Green’s esteem for the Carmelite classics along with St Ignatius comes through to advantage.

The significant thing is the *wanting* to pray—then finding it impossible when one goes to pray: it won't work. So one looks for other 'techniques' .... Nothing seems to work .... So prayer is our biggest and most constant act of faith—and it is by faith that we grow.<sup>3</sup>

So far I have been recalling experiences and writings from the later decades of the last century. Since that time I have had the impression that writing or talking about the 'prayer of faith' has become markedly more rare, especially in Ignatian retreat circles, and have often wondered why this should be so. Actually, I doubt if the praying as such has altered (people still speak of it in private), but open discussion seems to have subsided and I am reflecting on possible reasons for this.<sup>4</sup>

### **Earthing Spirituality**

Praying in any particular way, or style, or 'school' will always be open to the suspicion that it is esoteric, a fad, 'out of this world', for people who have nothing better to do and who are inclined to prefer such fads and hobbies to the real Christian business of loving God in your neighbour.

'Like Goering whenever he heard the word "culture", I find myself reaching for my revolver when I hear the word "spirituality". Nowadays that means that my hand is rarely off the holster.' So wrote Eamon Duffy twenty years ago.<sup>5</sup> Although I have spent 26 years of my Jesuit life in one centre of Ignatian spirituality or another, I take no offence at what Duffy has to say; his writings (particularly his university sermons) have helped nourish my own spirit. I take it that he values what you and I

<sup>3</sup> John Gillick, in private correspondence. In similar vein Alban Goodier wrote: 'Every soul comes to prayer wanting something; it may not know what that "something" is, it may not "know what it asks for when it prays", but it longs and desires nevertheless; and often, for very many indeed, the whole of prayer consists in the expression of that desire and longing—"My God, I want"—"What do you want?"—"I know not what I want, but I want"—In how many is this the prayer of their whole lives! Beautiful and powerful prayer, truly contemplative prayer, though such souls, because they seem to get no farther, think they do not pray at all.' (*St Ignatius Loyola and Prayer: As Seen in the Book of the Spiritual Exercises* [London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1940], 165.) Goodier's writings sprang from a profound wisdom and spirituality, which could easily be overlooked because of his rather quaint style and because his works on the life of Christ antedated Pius XII's unshackling of Catholic scriptural scholarship (Goodier died in 1939).

<sup>4</sup> There are two very recent exceptions. Finbarr Lynch has followed up his book *When You Pray* (Dublin: Messenger, 2012) with *When You Can't Pray* (Dublin: Messenger, 2016), which has a very helpful section for directors. Lynch mentions the important possibility that the praying person may be best helped by pondering scripture (for example) *before* praying, but not worrying if in the actual prayer it seems to have evaporated. Michael Paul Gallagher's posthumous work *Into Extra Time* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2016) is particularly poignant and the more noteworthy because of his great insights into the cultures of non-belief and of youth. He writes, 'As life goes on many people experience more fog than clarity in their sense of God. But this fragility may be not only normal but fruitful, and the gateway to a different kind of prayer.' (51)

<sup>5</sup> Eamon Duffy, 'Postscript: An Excess of Spirituality?' *Priests and People* (November 1997).

would understand by 'spirituality', but is put off by such faddism and escapism as may shelter behind the word. Even the word 'retreat' may sometimes be unfortunate and do a disservice to 'real' spirituality.

Maisie Ward put her finger on the problem in her introduction to the collected letters of the spiritual writer Caryl Houselander:

Reading recently a French collection of spiritual letters, I wondered why I found them so spiritless. Presently I realized that they were written as though from and to someone living in a vacuum. Other people, daily events and surroundings were ignored: one bodiless spirit was trying to lead another to the God who had created them bodiless. There is nothing to show that God had set this man and woman, priest and nun, in a world of people—people to be thought about, to be helped, to be made helpful, whose hands could be clasped in a fellowship intended by Him to lead men to Him as what St Thomas More might have called a merry company.<sup>6</sup>

Houselander's letters, by contrast, strikingly pass the test implied in Ward's final sentence: they are spiritual, but they are grounded in humanity. When prayer becomes the subject of writing and discussion we need to beware of making it sound esoteric, out of touch with real human life, or abstract or (perish the thought!) snobbish. But, generally speaking, Ignatian spirituality has avoided such criticism. Herein perhaps lies a partial answer to the question about the relative eclipse of the prayer of faith.

There has been a tendency to speak as if Ignatian prayer were coterminous with what is variously called 'Gospel Contemplation' or 'Ignatian Contemplation', and this latter way of praying has flourished, especially when introduced in retreat centres or in parish weeks of accompanied prayer. It can engage the mind and heart, develop a sense of the closeness of God and provide material for a fruitful meeting with a person's accompanier or 'director'; and it sits easily with reflection on daily life, and on larger issues, too. When it comes to writing or talking about the experience of prayer, the prayer of faith can seem colourless by comparison, impossible to pin down—even 'un-Ignatian'.

'Un-Ignatian'? It is time to confront the objection that the very words of Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises* imply that the emptiness and monotony experienced in the prayer of faith make it unsuitable for anyone intending to pray in the Ignatian way, and particularly for anyone making the Exercises:

<sup>6</sup> Maisie Ward, 'Introduction', in *The Letters of Caryl Houselander: Her Spiritual Legacy* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1965).

When the one giving the Exercises notices that the exercitant is not experiencing any spiritual motions in his or her soul, such as consolations or desolations, or is not being moved one way or another by different spirits, the director should question the retreatant much about the Exercises: Whether he or she is making them at the appointed times, how they are being made, and whether the Additional Directives are being diligently observed. The director should ask about each of these items in particular. (Exx 6)

Dermot Mansfield's article cited above confronts this objection and, in my view, responds to it satisfactorily:

... it might be good to mention why I consider that such an approach is in keeping with the intentions of Ignatius. For it could be felt that an insistence on the prayer of faith, based especially on the teaching of John of the Cross regarding our growth in grace, seems to deny the richness of a more active and imaginative prayer and is out of place in Ignatian apostolic spirituality.<sup>7</sup> But I do not believe that this is the case. Rather, it is a question of noticing what is being opened up in the Exercises about prayer, and of appreciating the subsequent ways of God's leading, as really occur even in people whose lives are very active ....

In this way, the Exercises are being fulfilled in their deepest meaning, and there is no need to fear that some other path is being followed apart from that intended by Ignatius, who desired that those called to an active life would be truly contemplative.

Hence, he concludes: 'The director must beware especially of mistaken expectations which would force the retreatant to pray and report on the prayer in the more accepted manner'.<sup>8</sup>

St Ignatius is said by his friend and associate Pedro de Ribadeneira to have held that it is a great mistake to try to force others along one's own spiritual path. Often quoted is his advice to Francis Borgia in a letter dated 20 September 1548:

... what is best for each individual is that in which God Our Lord imparts Himself more fully, displaying His holiest of gifts and His spiritual graces. It is God who sees and knows what is better for a person, and God, knowing everything, shows the person the way forward.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Conversely St John of the Cross instructed his novices on the Ignatian 'method' of gospel contemplation.

<sup>8</sup> Mansfield, 'Prayer of Faith, Spiritual Direction, and the Exercises', 321–322. The late Michael Kyne used to remark that 'there seems to be a marked correlation between the expectations of the director and the reporting back of the directee'.

<sup>9</sup> Ignatius to Francis Borgia, 20 September 1548, in *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, edited and translated by Philip Endean and Joseph A. Munitiz (London: Penguin, 1996), 206.

As Joseph Veale remarked, ‘people pray in a thousand different ways’.<sup>10</sup>

I believe that Mansfield has given convincing reasons for holding both to Ignatius and to the prayer of faith without contradiction, though obviously retreat directors and (ongoing) spiritual directors will need sensitivity to avoid leading a person down one path if it is to another that he or she is being drawn. The compatibility of Ignatian spirituality with the prayer of faith is thrown into clearer relief if we take the historical background into account.

### ***St Ignatius in His Time, We in Ours***

Ignatius’ retreatants (those whom he was primarily targeting) would on average be much younger than ours. Obviously his fellow students at Paris University to whom he gave the Exercises were junior to himself; and some of the doctors and dons whom he would badger until they embarked on the Exercises would be no older than he was. In the years when Ignatius was the Jesuit General nearly half of those who entered the Society were under the age of 21 at their admission (and more than half under his successor Diego Laínez).<sup>11</sup> They would normally make the full Spiritual Exercises during their first year.

Compared with those making the full Exercises nowadays Ignatius’ retreatants would include relatively more people making a full Election of a state of life rather than aiming ‘to improve and reform’ (Exx 189) a state of life already chosen. Moreover they would normally not have made a retreat, short or long, before; most of ours have, some of them twenty, thirty or forty times. Ignatius’ retreatants would be more familiar with the outline of the life of Christ than most people today, but less familiar with *scripture* than our average retreatant (St Francis Borgia needed permission from Rome for even the Spanish Princess Regent to read the scriptures in the vernacular.)<sup>12</sup>

We know that Ignatius spent a very long time preparing his fellow student Francis Xavier to make the Spiritual Exercises, but clearly many of the retreatants that he and the early companions directed were jumping in at the deep end: they had not made a retreat before; probably vocal

<sup>10</sup> Note also Exx 238–260, the ‘Three Ways of Praying’, especially the third linking simple prayer with rhythmic breathing.

<sup>11</sup> See *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, edited by George Ganss (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970), 130 n. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Princess Juana’s request to make vows as a Jesuit was officially, but secretly, granted by Ignatius.

prayers and attendance at Mass were what had shaped them in so far as they *were* shaped, and Ignatius had to provide for them accordingly.

Such things are hard to judge, but I would argue that it is tricky to extrapolate from Ignatius' instructions in the Exercises about the movement of spirits to our own situation. His advocacy of review and reflection, and of repetition—'I should notice and dwell on those points where I felt greater consolation or desolation, or had a greater spiritual experience' (Exx 62)—surely applies always. But we need to reflect before drawing conclusions about people whose prayer sounds empty rather than lively, or suspiciously bland.

**The  
development  
of our faith-  
relationship  
with God**

Is it not the case that the fundamental task of our life—even if few people on the planet advert to it—is the deepening, the expansion, the development of our faith-relationship with God? Paul Edwards used to speak of the 'bright young clerics' whom Ignatius had mostly in mind when he was looking for his next retreatants in Paris.<sup>13</sup> As Paul would also say, these had their foot on the first rung of the clerical ladder. Within a few years their baccalaureates or higher degrees and their family influence would bring them a lucrative benefice. The expansion of their faith-relationship with God was far from their minds; certainly its *implications* were far from their minds.

Imagine what would happen if such clerics succumbed to Ignatius' insistence and embarked on the Exercises. The effect on the best of them would most likely be dramatic, even shattering, as it was on Francis Xavier. As one of Xavier's biographers, James Brodrick, remarks, 'Never did the Spiritual Exercises prove more effectually their power to transform a man than during that September of 1534 when Francis wrestled in solitude with angels of light and darkness'.<sup>14</sup> No wonder Ignatius looked for marked movements of the spirits. No wonder he told the director that if these did not surface, then discreet but careful enquiry should be made. Are they 'doing it right'? Are they giving the Holy Spirit a chance?

<sup>13</sup> Paul Edwards served as Master of Campion Hall in Oxford, and later was a member of the team at St Beuno's Ignatian Spirituality Centre.

<sup>14</sup> James Brodrick, *St Francis Xavier, 1506–1552* (London: Burns and Oates, 1952), 48. And another biographer, the indefatigable Georg Schurhammer, wrote: 'What Master Francis saw and experienced during these holy Exercises he was never again to forget. When he returned again to his companions after thirty days he was another man. Though he was the same cheerful and lovable companion as before, a holy fire illuminated his countenance. His heart was burning with an earnest longing and a holy love for the crucified Christ, his King and Lord' (*Francis Xavier, His Life, His Times* [Rome: Jesuit Historical Institute, 1973–1980], volume 1, 233). The first of Schurhammer's four volumes covers over 700 pages, by which time the Apostle of the Indies has not yet left Europe!

Suppose, for example, one of those ‘bright young clerics’ in the sixteenth century was really being drawn by God on retreat to offer himself for lifelong missionary work in South America or Japan. One could fairly imagine that he would be thrilled, exhilarated by the ideal of imitating Christ and living Christ’s values in this way—and the next day (even the next hour) shaken at the thought of the practical implications of such a choice. His soul would become the battleground of the ‘diverse spirits’; in this case ultra-calm reflection would be surprising, and Ignatius would want some investigation.

But with most of our retreatants the case is different. The corresponding dramatic effect on them may well come in instalments, so to speak, over many years. Some of them will have made many, perhaps very many, retreats (my first one came at the age of thirteen, and it was in *some* real sense a serious retreat). Is not the same principle of gradualness true of human relationships and many other aspects of life? It is hardly surprising that Jules Toner, in his *Commentary on Saint Ignatius’ Rules for the Discernment of Spirits*, remarks:

At other times than the Spiritual Exercises, [Ignatius] is not in the least uneasy with those who do not experience many consolations, so long as they are praying as best they can, doing their work with a pure intention, seeking only God’s will in everything, and growing in ‘solid virtues’.<sup>15</sup>

There is no incompatibility between the prayer of faith and Ignatian spirituality. And with Toner’s last phrase the great majority of witnesses would agree: the test of our prayer lies in how we live our lives and how we treat other people outside the times of prayer, putting ourselves at the service of God who, in Christ, ‘was reconciling the world to himself’ (2 Corinthians 5:19).

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<sup>15</sup> Jules Toner *Commentary on Saint Ignatius’ Rules for the Discernment of Spirits* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1982), 185. This has implications for discernment among other things; but that is another story.

# *In* Our Own WORDS

Religious Life in a  
Changing World



Edited by Juliet Mousseau, RSCJ,  
and Sarah Kohles, OSF

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# DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD AND THE MYSTICS

Louis Roy

THE SWEDISH STATESMAN Dag Hammarskjöld, secretary general of the United Nations from 1953 to 1961, is renowned for the aphorisms published in his diary, entitled *Markings*.<sup>1</sup> He drew profound inspiration for his own life from writers and poets—he was himself a poet—from the Bible, especially the Psalmists, and from Christ, while remaining critical of conventional religion.<sup>2</sup> He talked about his own ‘never abandoned effort frankly and squarely to build up a personal belief in the light of experience and honest thinking’.<sup>3</sup> Although there was no sudden change, but rather a development in his fundamental religious attitude, he nonetheless experienced ‘a decisive moment of transition’, as Henry Van Dusen puts it.<sup>4</sup> Van Dusen quotes this entry in Hammarskjöld’s *Markings*:

I don’t know Who—or what—put the question. I don’t know when it was put. I don’t even remember answering. But at some moment I did answer Yes to Someone—or Something—and from that hour I was certain that existence is meaningful and that, therefore, my life, in self-surrender, had a goal.

From that moment I have known what it means ‘not to look back’, and ‘to take no thought for the morrow’. (169)

<sup>1</sup> Dag Hammarskjöld, *Markings*, translated by Leif Sjöberg and W. H. Auden (London: Faber and Faber, 1964). Subsequent citations in the text; all italics are Hammarskjöld’s. The Swedish original was published in 1963.

<sup>2</sup> From writers and poets, see 39, 42, 68, 75, 83, 85, 87, 118, 122, 130, 132, 134, 168; Hammarskjöld himself as poet, 31, 51, 60, 61, 65, 75, 84, 85, 90, 103, 121, 141–146, 149–162, 165–167, 170–181; from the Bible, especially the Psalms, 94, 98, 99, 104, 168, 178, 103, 110, 111, 115, 118, 121, 123, 125, 131, 138, 147, 163, 164, 168; Christ, 36, 37, 50, 51, 56, 63, 72–73, 82, 88, 92, 95, 99, 101, 110–112, 114, 116, 117, 130, 132, 134, 140, 163, 169.

<sup>3</sup> Dag Hammarskjöld, ‘Old Creeds in a New World’, in *The Servant of Peace: A Selection of the Speeches and Statements of Dag Hammarskjöld*, edited by Wilder Foote (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 23.

<sup>4</sup> Henry P. Van Dusen, *Dag Hammarskjöld: The Statesman and His Faith* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 100.

### ***The Influence of the Mystics on Hammar skjöld***

A number of the thoughts set down in *Markings* are very close to the stark pronouncements of the medieval mystic Meister Eckhart, especially in his German sermons. They constitute a remarkable actualisation by a twentieth-century man of insights first expressed by a thirteenth-century contemplative-in-action.

Eckhart was not the only mystic to influence Hammar skjöld. In fact, he quotes a number of others, albeit not often: the Islamic Rumi (95), Blaise Pascal (111) and Tszé Sze (117)—each of them only once. There are also a couple of references to Thomas Aquinas (88, 98) and three to John of the Cross (91, 115, 139). In his commentary on *Markings*, Gustaf Aulén notes:

Hammar skjöld describes faith in many ways: two of these provide definitions. One from Saint John of the Cross: 'Faith is God's union with the soul'.<sup>5</sup> The other: faith, or the 'unheard-of', is 'to be in the hands of God' or 'under the hands of God'. Both 'definitions' are repeated several times in *Markings* ....

Two definitions of faith: one from the mystics, one from the Bible. By no means does this imply that the first definition has no roots in the Bible, and still less that Hammar skjöld saw that definition as unbiblical.<sup>6</sup>

In the last chapter of his book, Aulén asks, 'was Hammar skjöld himself a mystic?' He answers:

In light of the very ambiguity of the term, the question whether Hammar skjöld can be designated a mystic cannot be answered by a simple yes or no. The important thing for us, accordingly, is not to decide whether he was a mystic or not, but to ferret out what the mystics meant for him. He has himself clearly informed us that the mystics important to him were 'the great medieval mystics', and he has also explicitly said that the help they gave led to a better understanding of the Christian faith.<sup>7</sup>

The pages that follow in Aulén's complex discussion of this issue make it clear that Hammar skjöld was a man of *faith* to a high degree.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Aulén gives us here his revised translation of this excerpt from *Markings*, 91. See Gustaf Aulén, *Dag Hammar skjöld's White Book: An Analysis of Markings* (London: SPCK, 1970), 41–42.

<sup>6</sup> Aulén, *Dag Hammar skjöld's White Book*, 59.

<sup>7</sup> Aulén, *Dag Hammar skjöld's White Book*, 113 and 114; see also 112–124.

<sup>8</sup> See Aulén, *Dag Hammar skjöld's White Book*, 138–152 and Van Dusen, *Dag Hammar skjöld*, chapter 5.



*Dag Hammarskjöld*

As secretary general, he declared: ‘The United Nations stands outside—necessarily outside—all confessions but it is, nevertheless, an instrument of faith’.<sup>9</sup> In his diary he offered this prayer:

Give me a pure heart—that I may see Thee,  
 A humble heart—that I may hear Thee,  
 A heart of love—that I may serve thee,  
 A heart of faith—that I may abide in Thee (93, 176).

Obviously Hammarskjöld’s faith was marked by tinges of mysticism, for instance by his sense of an immediate divine presence. Furthermore, it was his relationship with God that prompted his engagement in human affairs, as was the case for Eckhart—and for Ignatius of Loyola. Thus he wrote:

The explanation of how man should live a life of active social service in full harmony with himself as a member of the community of the

<sup>9</sup> Hammarskjöld, ‘An Instrument of Faith’, in *Servant of Peace*, 56–57.

spirit, I found in the writings of those great medieval mystics for whom ‘self-surrender’ had been the way to self-realization, and who in ‘singleness of mind’ and ‘inwardness’ had found strength to say yes to every demand which the needs of their neighbors made them face, and to say yes also to every fate life had in store for them when they followed the call of duty, as they understood it.<sup>10</sup>

As secretary general of the United Nations, Hammarskjöld exemplified this kind of commitment. In his biography, Sven Stolpe refers to Hammarskjöld’s achievements, such as securing the release of eleven US airmen, shot down and imprisoned by the Chinese in 1953, his handling of the Suez crisis (1956) and the Congo crisis (1960–1961).<sup>11</sup> Such a contribution to world affairs could not have been made without hope. Accordingly, in a speech at the second assembly of the World Council of Churches, quoting the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:34) on worrying about tomorrow, Hammarskjöld said:

The Cross, although it is the unique fact on which the Christian Churches base their hope, should not separate those of Christian faith from others but should instead be that element in their lives which enables them to stretch out their hands to peoples of other creeds in the feeling of universal brotherhood which we hope one day to see reflected in a world of nations truly united.<sup>12</sup>

In an address at Johns Hopkins University Commencement Exercises, he elaborated:

International service requires of all of us first and foremost the courage to be ourselves. In other words, it requires that we should be true to none other than our ideals and interests—but these should be such as we can fully endorse after having opened our minds, with great honesty, to the many voices of the world. The greatest contribution to international life that any one can render—be it as a private citizen or as one professionally engaged in international work—is to represent frankly and consistently what survives or emerges as one’s own after

<sup>10</sup> Hammarskjöld, ‘Old Creeds in a New World’, 24.

<sup>11</sup> Sven Stolpe, *Dag Hammarskjöld: A Spiritual Portrait*, translated by Naomi Walford (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1966), 81.

<sup>12</sup> Hammarskjöld, ‘An Instrument of Faith’, 61.

such a test. Far from demanding that we abandon or desert ideals and interests basic to our personality, international service thus puts us under the obligation to let those ideals and interests reach maturity and fruition in a universal climate.<sup>13</sup>

Consequently, we must take account of the remark made by the poet W. H. Auden, one of his translators: 'If we read *Markings* without remembering all the time that it was written by a man who was a great "worldly" success, we shall fail to grasp the meaning of the sadness and "unworldliness" of many of the entries'.<sup>14</sup>

Sven Stolpe, who knew Hammarskjöld as a twenty-year-old, summed up his overall impression as follows: 'From the beginning I felt very strongly that this young man was purer than perhaps anyone I had ever met'. Of *Markings*, he wrote: 'In this book he gives youthful expression to his longing for purity, heroism, clarity, integrity'.<sup>15</sup> Hammarskjöld never ceased pursuing this ideal. However, he had to go beyond the limitations of this self-perfecting programme. Stolpe affirmed:

Throughout his youth and the early years of his manhood, Hammarskjöld—like all lonely idealists—had striven to shape and polish his personality towards perfection. This is humanism: faith in mankind. Now he sees—and rejoices with his soul at the discovery—that this battle is not the essential one. He becomes 'strong and free, because he no longer exists'.<sup>16</sup>

At this point, Hammarskjöld had indeed become a mystic.

I now invite my readers to meditate on some of the entries in his diary, taking into account my article on Eckhart published in an earlier issue of *The Way*, with a view to noting the similarity between these two mystics' convictions and pondering the profundity of their ruminations.<sup>17</sup> Since these thoughts are for the purpose of meditation, I will not comment on them at this point; only at the end shall I offer a comparison between Eckhart and Hammarskjöld.

<sup>13</sup> Hammarskjöld, 'An Instrument of Faith', 80–81.

<sup>14</sup> W. H. Auden, 'Foreword', in *Markings*, 12.

<sup>15</sup> Stolpe, *Dag Hammarskjöld*, 48, 49.

<sup>16</sup> Stolpe, *Dag Hammarskjöld*, 86. The English edition of *Markings* translates this, perhaps more clearly, as 'strong and free because *his self* no longer exists' (96).

<sup>17</sup> See Louis Roy, 'Meister Eckhart's Construal of Mysticism', *The Way*, 56/1 (January 2017), 77–88.

### **Hammar skjöld's Quotations from Eckhart<sup>18</sup>**

*'Only the hand that erases can write the true thing.'* (epigraph)

*'How can we ever be the sold short or the cheated, we who for every service have long ago been overpaid?'* (67)

*'But how, then, am I to love God?' 'You must love Him as if He were a Non-God, a Non-Spirit, a Non-Person, a Non-Substance: love Him simply as the One, the pure and absolute Unity in which is no trace of Duality. And into this One, we must let ourselves fall continually from being into non-being. God helps us to do this.'* (99)

*'There is a contingent and non-essential will: and there is, providential and creative, an habitual will. God has never given Himself, and never will, to a will alien to His own: where He finds His will, He gives Himself.'* (111)

*Semina motuum [seeds of movements]. In us the creative power became will. In order to grow beautifully like a tree, we have to attain that rest in the unity in which the creative will is re-transformed into instinct—Eckhart's 'habitual will'.*

*'—looking straight into one's own heart  
(as we can do in the mirror-image of the father)  
—watching with affection the way people grow—  
(as in imitation of the Son  
—coming to rest in perfect equity'  
(as in the fellowship of the Holy Ghost)*

*Like the ultimate experience, our ethical experience is the same for all. Even the Way of the Confucian world is a 'Trinity'. (117)<sup>19</sup>*

<sup>18</sup> See Manuel Froehlich, *Political Ethics and the United Nations: Dag Hammarskjöld as Secretary-General* (London: Routledge, 2008), 76: 'The sheer number of quotations from Meister Eckhart indicates the importance Hammarskjöld must have attached to this leading figure in German mysticism (1260–1327). Hammarskjöld quotes from a 1934 edition that he probably acquired shortly after it appeared. The book lay right next to his writing desk ....' The edition in question is *Meister Eckeharts Schriften zur Gesellschaftsphilosophie* (Jena: Fischer, 1934).

<sup>19</sup> I have adopted Aulén's emendations to the translation here (*Dag Hammarskjöld's White Book*, 48). In this passage Eckhart's phrases seem to be intertwined with Hammarskjöld's own.

*'It is in this abyss that you reveal me to myself—I am nothing and I did not know it.'*

*'If, without any side-glances, we have only God in view, it is He, indeed, who does what we do .... Such a man does not seek rest, for he is not troubled by any unrest .... He must acquire an inner solitude, no matter where or with whom he may be: he must learn to pierce the veil of things and comprehend God within them.'*

*'Of the Eternal Birth'—to me, this now says everything there is to be said about what I have learned and have still to learn.*

*'The soul that would experience this birth must detach herself from all outward things: within herself completely at one with herself .... You must have an exalted mind and a burning heart in which, nevertheless, reign silence and stillness.'* (123–124)

*'Believe me: this, too, belongs to perfection, that a man so undertakes works, that all his works fuse into one work. This must be done 'in the Kingdom of God'. For I tell you the truth: all works which man does outside of the Kingdom of God are dead, but those which he does in the Kingdom of God are alive ... just as God is not distracted or changed by any of his works, nor, too, is the soul so long as she works according to the law of God's kingdom. Such men, therefore, may do works or do them not, but remain all the while undisturbed. For works neither give them anything, nor take anything from them.'* (158).

*'In the Kingdom of God—; all works are equal there, my smallest is as my greatest, my greatest as my smallest.—About works in themselves there is something divisive which causes a division in the souls of men, and brings them to the brink of disquiet.'* (158)

### **An Entirely Free Person**

We find in Dag Hammarskjöld's diary many fundamental themes that are by and large the same as Eckhart's, for all the difference of vocabulary, and whether or not there is direct quotation. There are no traces of any sudden conversion in the writing of either, simply a continuous maturation; there are frequent quotations from the Bible; and great importance is given to the Trinity. The reality of God is presented as the absolute Unity, by contrast with the 'nothing' of the human individual.

There is a sense of the eternal now, the superabundant divine gift to us, freedom, detachment, nakedness, the abolition of the ego, an insistence on solitude, and contemplation in the midst of demanding engagement. Let us keep in mind that Hammarskjöld, as secretary general of the United Nations, and Eckhart, several times prior provincial of the Dominican Order in Germany, were capable of sustained prayerfulness while fulfilling exacting duties—which indicates an exceptional composure in both of them.

Finally, given that Luther had railed against most forms of mysticism,<sup>20</sup> I find that the *Lutheran* Hammarskjöld, by reaching back to the medieval Catholic mystics and by quoting non-Christian mystics, demonstrated (without even trying to do so) that he was an entirely free person—a rare specimen in the field of international politics.

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<sup>20</sup> Especially against Dionysius the pseudo-Areopagite. However, Luther praised Johannes Tauler and the anonymous author of the *Theologia Germanica*; he edited the latter.



# THE PARACLETE AND THE NIGHTINGALE

## The Vital Legacy of Friedrich Spee

*Michael Kirwan*

**D**URING THE 2016 US presidential campaign, Donald Trump made clear his advocacy of the use of torture against terrorist suspects, because ‘torture works’ and ‘we have to beat the savages’. On CBS’s *Face the Nation*, he vowed to ‘strengthen the laws so that we can better compete’ with the brutal tactics of such groups as ISIS:

We have to play the game the way they’re playing the game. You’re not going to win if we’re soft and they’re, they have no rules .... We’re not playing by—we are playing by rules, but they have no rules. It is very hard to win when that is the case ....<sup>1</sup>

It is chilling that Donald Trump regards ISIS’s way of ‘playing the game’ as taking a kind of unsporting advantage, just as countries with protectionist trade policies, for example, are operating by different ‘rules’. The solution, in each case, is for the US to ‘compete’ on their opponents’ terms. There is no awareness that the refusal to use torture is not merely a moral preference—to be dismissed as weakness or squeamishness—but precisely the distinction which legitimises the authority of the state in opposition to non-state agents. Meanwhile, in the Philippines, President Roddy Duterte has gone much further: declaring open contempt for judicial process and human rights in a war against narco-politicians which has seen over seven thousand ‘extrajudicial’ killings since his election in June 2016.

<sup>1</sup> Jenna Johnson, “Trump Says “Torture Works”, Backs Waterboarding and “Much Worse””, *Washington Post* (17 February 2016), available at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-says-torture-works-backs-waterboarding-and-much-worse/2016/02/17/4c9277be-d59c-11e5-b195-2e29a4e13425\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-says-torture-works-backs-waterboarding-and-much-worse/2016/02/17/4c9277be-d59c-11e5-b195-2e29a4e13425_story.html); Donald Trump, interview with John Dickerson, *Face the Nation* (6 March 2016), video available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93m-ZGWbXls>.

State politics appears to have undergone a fearful and tragic debasement. The classical view of politics, defined in terms of the rule of law, seems now to be under lethal threat. It seems we need to retrace our steps: laboriously to remind ourselves of why torture does not ‘work’, and why any polity worth the name must always be incompatible with frontier justice. But the problem runs far deeper than liberal alarm and indignation at the rise of populist alt-right politics—as is indicated by the comment of Hillary Clinton, Trump’s opponent, during the third televised presidential election debate: ‘... and on the day I was in the Situation Room monitoring *the raid that brought Osama bin Laden to justice* [Donald Trump] was hosting *Celebrity Apprentice*’.<sup>2</sup> To my knowledge, the claim that the execution of Osama bin Laden during a military operation counts as ‘bringing him to justice’ went without comment or challenge.

As Christians called to bear witness against this new political amorality, we can do worse than invoke the memory of a remarkable German Jesuit, Friedrich Spee von Langenfeld (1591–1635). Spee’s accomplishment as a Baroque poet and hymnodist—he was known as the ‘Nightingale of Trier’—lives on in German hymnals, in hymns and poems which praise the splendour of creation. Spee also wrote a book of spirituality intended primarily for women, and was comfortable describing God using feminine metaphors. His lasting significance, however, derives from his experiences when assigned to minister in the prisons to terrified women awaiting interrogation by torture and death by burning for alleged witchcraft. He attended the condemnation and execution of many wretched souls over a number of years, witnessing women forced to lie, confirming their inquisitors’ descriptions of the so-called ‘witches’ Sabbath’ and incriminating others.

Spee’s conviction that these victims were innocent, and that the coercive means used to get at the truth simply obscured it, led him to write *Cautio criminalis*, a treatise in which he narrated his experiences, denied the effectiveness of torture and argued for due process in the interrogation of suspects.<sup>3</sup> ‘I will state under oath that *I have not yet led any woman to the stake who, with all things considered, I could prudently state was guilty.*’ (126; emphasis in original) The book was published anonymously

<sup>2</sup> ‘Full Transcript: Third 2016 Presidential Debate’, *Politico* (20 October 2016), <http://www.politico.com/story/2016/10/full-transcript-third-2016-presidential-debate-230063>, accessed 13 September 2013 (my emphasis).

<sup>3</sup> Friedrich Spee, *Cautio criminalis, or a Book on Witch Trials*, translated by Marcus Hellyer (Charlottesville and London: U. of Virginia P, 2003 [1631/2]); subsequent references in the text.

in 1631 and without Spee's permission, though it was widely credited to him. This brought the disapproval of his religious superiors and other ecclesial authorities; more poignant is the harrowing effect of the experience upon his own psychological health. On 7 August 1635 Spee died, aged 44, while tending plague sufferers in a hospital in Trier.

The *Cautio* is structured in traditional disputational style, as 52 'questions' or doubts, including: 'whether witches, hags or sorcerers really exist' (question I), 'whether the princes of Germany act well when they proceed harshly against witchcraft' (VI), 'for what reasons one may proceed to torture' (XXXII), 'whether the devil can represent innocent people at witches' sabbaths' (XLVII) and so on. The final question, 'what can tortures and denunciations achieve' (LII), is an appendix summarising the argument of the treatise. The questions are a mixture of legal or procedural and theological queries, considered from various perspectives—scholarly opinions and consensus, scripture, 'common sense' reasoning and anecdotal evidence—either reported or directly observed by Spee. In his preface, he declares: 'I wrote this book for the rulers of Germany, at least for those who will not read it, not those who actually will read it ... those who will not read it, should read it; those who will, should not' (5).

The impact of Spee's book should not be overrated. Rather than being the work of a lone, pioneering voice, it is truer to say that the *Cautio* was



*Witches' sabbath, from a pamphlet printed in Trier, 1594*

written as the tide of scepticism was already turning against witch-hunts; or perhaps, as some scholars have suggested, the frenzy was burning itself out. Trials continued after the publication of the *Cautio* in 1631 and its second edition a year later, but this was nothing like the contagion that had gripped Germany in the 1620s. Prior to the *Cautio* voices had been raised, such as those of the Catholic priest Cornelius Loos (1546–1595) and the Calvinist pastor Anton Pretorius (1560–1613). The *Cautio* itself quotes extensively from Spee's Jesuit predecessor, Adam Tanner (1572–1632), whose four-volume *Universa theologia scholastica* reflected the scepticism towards witches which was widespread in Tanner's native Bavaria. All of these men faced down opposition to their views, sometimes in circumstances at least as heroic as Spee's.

The *Cautio* and its author were largely neglected for nearly a hundred years, though from the nineteenth century onwards came new appreciations of Spee: first as the torch-bearer of Enlightenment rationality opposing medieval superstition; secondly, in the aftermath of the Second World War, as a rare example of 'the good German', a lonely and heroic defender of the oppressed.<sup>4</sup> Neither view is entirely accurate; both overplay Spee's originality.

Spee was not a lone wolf. Even so, his significance as an articulate seventeenth-century ecclesial 'whistle-blower' cannot be over-esteemed. The *Cautio* stands out for its distinctive combination of common-sense reasoning, scriptural citation, legal precedent and personal testimony—delivered in a tone of measured but intense indignation. As Hellyer notes, Spee deploys experience, logic and rhetoric, but for a modern readership it is his appeal to first-hand experience which is most striking and moving.

Our new political context and its questioning of what we had come to regard as fundamental human rights, require us to look again at the *Cautio*, and to see how those rights can be robustly grounded once again. But Spee's fascinating and moving story is relevant to a more contentious claim: that the Christian impulse was one of the factors leading to the cessation of the European witch-trials. This is counter-intuitive, given the frenzy with which Christians of all denominations initiated these persecutions, above all in the heartland of Christendom. How can the very practice that was so enthusiastically embraced as a way of defending faith, be extinguished by the same faith? Can Satan indeed cast out Satan?

<sup>4</sup> See Marcus Hellyer, 'Introduction', in *Cautio criminalis*, xxxi.

The Christian cultural theorist René Girard (1923–2015) offers a startlingly broad thesis about the cultural historical development of the West. In the final chapter of his book *The Scapegoat* he suggests that we need to retell the story of how the modern world is different from what went before. We are used to being told that medieval society was steeped in backward superstitious beliefs and practices, often very violent ones, and that the growth of science and enlightened thinking enabled people to move beyond them. Girard argues the reverse: that a certain kind of religious awareness or consciousness—the awareness that victims are innocent—is needed for scientific thinking to come into being. Only through religion, therefore, can we be liberated from violent superstition. He argues that the release of the Holy Spirit into the world at Pentecost has brought about a gradual awareness of how and why Jesus, the Holy One of God, came to be put to death by ‘religious meaning-makers’, as Rowan Williams puts it.<sup>5</sup> Cultures exposed to the gospel revelation become impregnated, as it were, with a new consciousness of the workings of sacred violence. As a result, they gradually but unmistakably become partisan for the Lamb of God in their midst—the ‘victim’, whose innocence they can now discern—thanks to the example of Christ and of those who have witnessed to him.

***A new  
consciousness  
of the workings  
of sacred  
violence***

But Girard then has to address an obvious objection: namely, the record of historical Christianity and the failure of institutional Christianity to remain true to the gospel message. Crusades and colonialism, ‘holy wars’ directed both at non-Christians and co-religionists, the shameful record of pogroms, witch-hunts and enslavement—all justified from sacred texts—provide one long counter-example to the evangelical claims of Girard’s theory. How can he seriously maintain that the machinery of victimage has been definitively dismantled, when confronted with the evidence of the ‘butcher’s slab’ of history?

Girard responds to this challenge in two of his books: in a section of *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, and in the final chapter of *The Scapegoat*.<sup>6</sup> These passages offer a distinctive historical–theological thesis, stated as follows:

<sup>5</sup> Rowan Williams, ‘Introduction’, in *Theology and the Political: The New Debate*, edited by Creston Davis, John Milbank and Slavoj Žižek (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2005), 3.

<sup>6</sup> René Girard, ‘The Sacrificial Reading and Historical Christianity’, in *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, translated by Stephen Bann and Michael Matteer (London: Athone, 1987), 224–262; ‘History and the Paraclete’, in *The Scapegoat*, translated by Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1988), 198–212.

Instead of natural, distant and inaccessible causes, humanity has always preferred causes that are significant from a social perspective and which permit of corrective intervention—victims .... The invention of science is not the reason that there are no longer witch-hunts, but the fact that there are no longer witch-hunts is the reason that science has been invented. The scientific spirit, like the spirit of enterprise in an economy, is a by-product of the profound action of the Gospel text.<sup>7</sup>

People will undertake the patient scientific exploration of natural causes only when they have learnt to turn away from their victims; this, in turn, can only happen when the ineffectiveness of persecution is demonstrated.

The European witch-hysteria of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries would appear to offer a clear ‘laboratory’ setting for assessing the plausibility—or implausibility—of Girard’s theory. Put simply, does the historical and social evidence we have for the witch-craze, its origins and nature, and the reasons for its coming to an end, cohere with the Girardian account of ‘history and the Paraclete’? How are we to set about validating this account of Christianity’s role in Western culture?

No single causal factor explains the witch-hunt phenomenon of early modernity (1550–1650), comprising perhaps 110,000 trials and 60,000 executions, mainly in the Germanic lands. We may note here the usefulness of Charles Taylor’s distinction between the ‘porous’ self and the ‘buffered’ self.<sup>8</sup> For Taylor, what separates the modern secular age from the pre-modern period (up to five hundred years ago), is the hazy sense that our ancestors had of the boundary between mind and world. They experienced the self as ‘porous’, vulnerable to intrusion from ‘outside’ influences, such as spirits, demons and cosmic forces, and feared possession by them. In the paintings of Bosch we glimpse a world in the grip of this vulnerability and fear.<sup>9</sup>

Our own ‘buffered’ selves, by contrast, have been taken out of the world of this kind of fear. Modern Westerners have a clear boundary between mind and world, even mind and body. Moral and other meanings are ‘in the mind’. They cannot reside outside, and thus the boundary between self and other holds firm. Consequently we do not share the anxieties that terrorised the lives of our ancestors. The catastrophes of war, famine and epidemics created the conditions of existential anxiety under which

<sup>7</sup> Girard, *Scapgoat*, 204–205.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Ma: Belknap, 2007), 35–43. He sets out the distinction in a short article from 2008, entitled ‘Buffered and Porious Selves’ (2 September 2008), *The Immanent Frame*, <https://tif.ssrc.org/2008/09/02/buffered-and-porous-selves/>, accessed 28 October 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Taylor, *Secular Age*, 38.



The Vision of Tondal, attributed to Hieronymus Bosch, c.1450

a collective sense of mysterious imperilment could take root in a population. A clear correlation between a high incidence of witch-accusation and extreme social turmoil, caused not least by doctrinal antagonism, points to a *prima facie* confirmation of Girard's thesis. There is a complicity between social antagonism and sacralised violence—religious 'scapegoating'.

I wish to see whether there are convergences between Friedrich Spee and René Girard which may help us to discern this correlation more clearly. Some general points can be made, first about Spee's method in the *Cautio criminalis* and, secondly, about his use of scripture and theology, and his appeal to Jesus Christ.

We have noted the anomaly that Spee is directly addressing those who will not read his book. He hopes that those who do read it will be in a position to influence rulers, as their counsellors or spiritual directors. He is clear about the respect and deference to be shown to the secular powers, but also about the inalienable moral responsibilities of office, and the serious—eternal—consequences if these responsibilities are neglected. His arguments are a combination of legal opinions, classical authorities, some key scriptural texts and, most powerfully, eyewitness accounts: either his own, or from others 'on the ground'.

Spee is a skilled moral theologian; for example, he discusses the circumstances in which ‘probabilist’ arguments should hold sway. This is the doctrine that when there is a sufficient difference of opinion on a course of moral action, it is permissible to follow the less certain of two options if both are probable. This is not so, says Spee, if there is a danger of harm to or injustice to one’s neighbour; such a situation requires extra care and caution, and a greater emphasis on certainty is needed, not less—we would say that the ‘burden of proof’ needs to be greater. Spee cites lists of legal precedents and opinions, though these are taken from a few chosen sources rather than the fruit of his own scholarship. He refers us to Augustine’s lament on judicial torture in *The City of God* (19.6—though Augustine’s own position on this issue is, sadly, more complex and ambiguous).

There is a very modern ring to Spee’s discussion of whether the crime of witchcraft, being ‘of the excepted kind’, requires different treatment from other crimes. ‘Excepted’ refers to offences, such as treason, which are especially dangerous to the well-being of the state, and which therefore merit harsher punishment. Spee is sympathetic to this view, but does not concede that this justifies cutting corners in judicial investigation. Here is a strong parallel with the ‘state of exception’ argument, explored by the political theologian Giorgio Agamben, according to which the threat of terrorist extremism is used to legitimise extra-legal practices and situations (extraordinary rendition; Guantanamo Bay).<sup>10</sup>

Above all, however, Spee begs us to listen to the testimony of first-hand experience. He is contemptuous of clerics and judges who rule from the comfort of their mansions, and of theologians who do not venture outside the warmth of their studies. It is his experience as a pastor, above all in receiving the sacramental confessions of the accused, which convinces him of their innocence—at the same time as it renders him utterly helpless:

If the reader allows me to say something here, I confess that I myself have accompanied several women to their deaths in various places over the preceding years whose innocence even now I am so sure of that there could never be any effort and diligence too great that I would not undertake it in order to reveal this truth. Curiosity stimulated me (for why should I deny it?) and almost carried me beyond my goal of learning something certain in such an uncertain matter. Nevertheless, I did not ever perceive anything other than innocence everywhere,

<sup>10</sup> See Giorgio Agamben, *States of Exception*, translated by Kevin Attell (Chicago: U. of Chicago P, 2005).



which I had to accept as proven by arguments that were neither few nor feeble. Since (for manifest reasons) I was not permitted to intercede before the court, one can easily guess what feelings were in my soul when I was present at such miserable deaths. I am human and I can err; I will never deny it. However, after I had dealt so long and so often with prisoners, both inside and outside the sacrament of confession, considered their souls from all angles with all my ability, examined virtually all points, used human and divine help and advice, looked through the evidence and the records, discussed with the judges themselves, in so far as the confidentiality of the confessional could be maintained, carefully weighed everything and disputed particular arguments in my mind, I could not conclude anything other than that those who were thought to be guilty were in fact free from any guilt. I do not think that I speak lightly when I say that it is only with great difficulty that I can believe that I am wrong about this. (39–40)

Spee occasionally goes into detail about what he has witnessed, such as the use of an allegedly ‘mild’ form of torture: a wide iron press, forcefully pushed against the shin to flatten the flesh and make the blood spurt on both sides (77). In other places he draws an anguished veil across his experience: ‘I myself entered the prisons to observe if this was the case. It is not fitting to say what I saw there.’ (71)

Spee addresses his theme as a Christian of his time, not as an Enlightenment sceptic. He himself seems to have believed in the reality of witchcraft; what he does deny is the idea that such phenomena are as widely prevalent as contemporary persecutions would indicate, and that torture as practised by the secular authorities was an effective way of getting at the problem. He protests at judicial abuses and argues for alternative approaches; but coercion is not ruled out in principle.

It is interesting that he cites scriptural passages which reinforce the urgency of proper legal procedure. In question III (18) Spee cites the story of Susanna in the Book of Daniel: Susanna, having been accused of adultery by two false witnesses, is saved because Daniel urges a ‘return to the court’ (Daniel 13:49)—in other words, a more careful investigation of the alleged crime. If there is one overriding judicial principle in Spee’s book, it is yielded by the words of Jesus in Matthew 13:24–30, the parable of the wheat and the weeds (45–46). Jesus tells of the owner of a field, who restrains his servant from pulling up the weeds growing in it, since this would risk tearing up the good wheat as well; better to let them grow together until harvest-time, when they can be reaped together and then separated. Spee connects this teaching with the example of God following

Abraham's counsel (Genesis 18:25) to spare the city of Sodom for the sake of the small righteous minority who would be destroyed along with the wicked.

Spee writes movingly about the pastoral care of the accused and condemned. He gives nineteen instructions or 'lessons' on how a priest should conduct himself if called upon to minister to suspects (114–126). Such a pastor must be gentle and prudent, a man of prayer who can explain to the prisoner, 'with some emotion and Christian eloquence' (114), that,

... our God is not a god of the gentiles who cannot lay aside his wrath. He has been seized once and for all time by an incredible love for the human race which has advanced too far for him to be able now to renounce the pact of his love .... In the holy books there exists the oath of his eternal pact, irrevocable even for him. (114–115)

In the final 'lesson' (126), Spee suggests that such a pastor would find it beneficial to have read the *Cautio* in its entirety and at leisure, in the presence of God.

The christology of the *Cautio* is surprisingly low-key. Christ is never presented as the suffering victim, but as 'our Lawgiver'; the injunction in Matthew 13 to refrain from intervention against the wicked because of the risk of harming the innocent is held up as an authoritative legal principle. There is no sense of Jesus mysteriously identifying himself with the victim, such as we find in another Matthean parable, the Last Judgment (Matthew 25). At no point in the *Cautio* is any explicit connection made between the sufferings of accused victims and those of Christ.

There is an especially moving passage (question IX) in which Spee urges princes to gain more first-hand experience of what is happening in their prisons: if they could only hear the groans and sighs, they would ensure that trials are conducted differently. As it is, prisoners' feeling of utter abandonment by their prince is an affliction in itself:

I am accustomed to say that among all the prisoners' pains and miseries, the greatest is that they are denied the countenance of their princes forever, since they have been thrown into a corner where no ray from their prince will ever shine upon them, except through the eyes of another, as if through imperfect glass which yields light and objects of its own colour. (29)

There has only ever been one prince—the King of Kings—who has not deprived prisoners of the comforting illumination of his countenance. Once again, we have a curiously 'high' christology: Jesus is the channel

of mercy, not because he has been in the place of the tortured victim, but because he is a compassionate prince. The appendix does contain a powerful coda on martyrdom (224 following)—specifically the atrocious cruelty inflicted on the Christians of Rome under Nero. It is still surprising, however, that Spee does not point to Christ, and before him the ‘Servant’ of Deutero-Isaiah, as apparently cursed and crushed victims who are nevertheless vindicated by God.

One can cite here the ‘imagination’ referred to by George Bernard Shaw in the epilogue to *Saint Joan* (1924). Here are two clerics discussing the execution of Joan of Arc. One of them, de Stogumber, speaks of the traumatic effect upon him of witnessing St Joan’s martyrdom:

DE STOGUMBER: Well, you see, I did a very cruel thing once because I did not know what cruelty was like. I had not seen it, you know. That is the great thing; you must see it. And then you are redeemed and saved.

CAUCHON: Were not the sufferings of our Lord Christ enough for you?

DE STOGUMBER: No. Oh no: not at all. I had seen them in pictures, and read of them in books, and been greatly moved by them, as I thought. But it was no use: it was not our Lord that redeemed me, but a young woman whom I saw actually burned to death. It was dreadful: oh, most dreadful. But it saved me. I have been a different man ever since, though a little astray in my wits sometimes.

CAUCHON: Must then a Christ perish in torment in every age to save those that have no imagination?<sup>11</sup>

In Girard’s terms the gospel is total revelation without concealment, but our reception of it happens only gradually.<sup>12</sup> History in the West is a journey of desacralisation (Taylor speaks of ‘disenchantment’), with its twin effects of dismantling the configurations of sacralised violence and making us instinctively partisan for the innocent victim. This development is the product, not of scientific rationality, but of the evangelical impulse itself. The Holy Spirit has effected and continues to effect this change as ‘advocate for the defence’, the ‘Paraclete’ working subterraneously at the foundations of cultures.

<sup>11</sup> George Bernard Shaw, *Saint Joan* (London: Penguin, 2001 [1923]), 154.

<sup>12</sup> See René Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, translated by James G. Williams (Leominster: Gracewing, 2001), 144: ‘Violence has always existed, but until the biblical revelation it remained concealed in the infrastructure of mythology’.

Girard notes a tension between two aspects of society. First, as we have seen, he seeks to expose the tendency of social groups to organize themselves against marginal individuals or groups—scapegoats—in order to affirm their identity and maintain stability. This is the reality of the witch-craze that we have been discussing. And yet, if any society is to exist at all there needs to be social order. Groups need to find a way of restraining the forces of chaos or disorder: we recognise this when we allow the judiciary, police force and others a legitimate power of coercion or restraint over individuals, for the sake of the common good. In premodern times the Church played a role in this restraining or ordering function, together with the secular authorities; in the modern age, it is the exclusive task of the secular state to protect its citizens.

The crisis facing us now is that neither institutional Christianity nor the secular state is capable of carrying out the ‘restraining’ task, in the face of escalating threats: political, security, environmental and economic. The post-World War II attempts to create a stable world order by means of international collaboration—for example the United Nations and the European Union—are increasingly regarded with suspicion and even contempt. Part of the attraction and success of populist politicians such as Trump, Putin and Duterte is their ability to act without being overly concerned about, much less paralyzed by, this widely acknowledged ‘crisis of legitimacy’.

To propose a return to religious legitimation as a response to this crisis will not convince those progressives for whom the standard narrative of a scientific enlightenment is infallible. Science has exorcised once and for all the dark ‘medieval’ cruelty of religious intolerance and persecution. And yet. Hannah Arendt, a political theorist who sought to keep religious sentiment out of political life, nevertheless claimed that if people had still believed in Hell, the Holocaust would never have happened. Friedrich Spee continually calls the powerful—pastors, magistrates, princes—to account, reminding them that they will be subject to a higher tribunal where they will have to answer for the negligence, savagery and cupidity with which they hunted down witches. For Spee, Christ is a supreme ‘Legislator’ whose instruction in Matthew 13 to protect the innocent has been consistently and shamefully ignored throughout history—whether Christians have been ‘in charge’ or not.

I have examined Friedrich Spee’s *Cautio criminalis* as an important testimony in its own right, but also in relation to René Girard’s thesis in



Friedrich Spee, by Martin Mendgen, 1938 (detail)

*The Scapegoat* that ‘the scientific spirit cannot come first’.<sup>13</sup> According to Girard, only when people refuse a certain mode of causal explanation—the hunt for human scapegoats—are they freed up to investigate the natural world for alternative explanations. People have to stop hunting witches before they can do science. Much as I would like to affirm a complete coincidence between Girard’s theory and Spee’s analysis in the *Cautio*, it would be wrong to claim anything other than a loose fit. There is, surely, a strong convergence between the cocktail of social and religious factors—envy, fear, superstition, cupidity, intellectual indolence—that were so bitterly observed by Spee, and the social outworking of sacralised violence discerned by Girard. Both identify the wildly contagious nature of this terrifying persecutory phenomenon. Both urge us to look to the victim, to hear the victim’s cry, if we are truly to understand what is going on. There is clear common ground.

What is—surprisingly—less easy to discern in Spee is the theological-historical influence of the Paraclete for which Girard argues. Spee nowhere refers to the Holy Spirit, in fact, nor does he get as far as a typology of the victim. It is not quite the case, as it is for Girard, that *vox victima, vox Dei*. The Christ of the *Cautio* is not the Crucified and Vindicated One, but the Legislator, the compassionate King of Kings who models the

<sup>13</sup> Girard, *Scapegoat*, 204.

kind of governance which is beyond the capacity of most of the German princes. In Ignatian terms, it is the christology of the Second Week of the *Spiritual Exercises*, rather than the Third Week. Spee was not able or willing to foreground Christ the Suffering Servant, as an instant riposte to the more outlandish arguments concerning the phenomenology of torture—for example, that God would never allow an innocent person to suffer, or that fortitude under interrogation proves that the sufferer is possessed by the Devil.

As Cauchon puts it in Shaw's play: 'Must then a Christ perish in torment in every age to save those that have no imagination?' The absence in Spee of any mention of the Paschal Christ, suffering with and in the wretched victims, is a curious omission. It is the failure of 'imagination' of Spee's unhappy epoch, and—dare one say—of Spee himself. There is so much in the life and writing of this impressive cultured and courageous Jesuit priest which edges towards Girard's insights, but without quite completing the circle.

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## **ANTHONY DE MELLO**

### **On Fire**

*Karen Eliassen*

*In the first two articles of our new strand reprinted from the British Jesuits' online journal Thinking Faith (freely available at [www.thinkingfaith.org](http://www.thinkingfaith.org)), Karen Eliassen looks at the work of Anthony de Mello, and Roger Dawson writes about the impact of religious belief on mental health.*

THE FIRST TIME I came across Anthony de Mello's name was not through his writings themselves, but rather through the Vatican's official response to those writings. This response appeared in 1998, almost ten years after de Mello's death, in the form of a Notification put out by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith under the direction of the then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger.<sup>1</sup> Going through a phase of curiosity about just whose writings in my own times the Church finds objectionable, I found myself reading a brief entitled 'Concerning the Writings of Father Anthony de Mello, SJ'. I assumed that the issues so affronting the Vatican—too abstract an image of God, too little weight given to Jesus, too deep an undermining of authority—were coming from yet another hard-core but institutionally suspect theologian. But within a week of reading the Notification, the odd coincidence of a small article in a magazine coming my way convinced me otherwise—and I was hooked on de Mello.<sup>2</sup> The pastoral article, transcribed from one of de Mello's

This article first appeared on 19 June 2014, at <http://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/anthony-de-mello-fire>.

<sup>1</sup> See [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19980624\\_demello\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19980624_demello_en.html).

<sup>2</sup> Anthony de Mello, 'Quieting the Mind (3)', *Pastoral Review*, 6/5 (September–October 2010). These notes were otherwise left out of the recently published collection of de Mello talks, *Seek God Everywhere: Reflections on the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius* (New York: Image, 2010).



*Anthony de Mello*

unpublished lectures on the *Spiritual Exercises* given in the mid-1970s, had the title 'Quieting the Mind', but it was the heading in bold immediately underneath that made me want to read on: **Prayer is fire**. There is, I realise, nothing new here, as many centuries of Christian spiritual writing bear witness. What gives de Mello added appeal is that he is of my own time: the man is on YouTube,<sup>3</sup> which makes it all the more interesting to consider what sort of messenger delivers what sort of message. Was he walking the talk when he voiced that age-old insistence that prayer is fire? And if so, might that be what the Notification is really reacting to?

It is not that prayer is merely *like* fire; prayer *is* fire, and de Mello warns us to watch that fire intently because it is dangerous. Not just a metaphor for insight and drive, the fire of prayer is a power that transforms people and their lives for better or worse. All good and holy things have their dangers, and among these danger-laden good and holy things de Mello counts, alongside prayer, other familiar experiences (and de Mello is always far more interested in lived experiences than in argued concepts): love, contemplation, wisdom ... and, not least, truth. It is this last, truth,

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q57cFQkbBJQ>.



about which de Mello talks above all else—or rather, he talks about a ‘keen awareness’ as the transformative appreciation of and response to truth.

Unsettling for his hearers, he doesn’t hesitate to use the word ‘violence’ when talking about such keen awareness. Awareness, rather than concerted effort towards a desired goal, brings about transformation. And all transformation, de Mello points out, is violent; but he carefully differentiates between ego-violence, which springs from intolerance and hatred, and nature-violence, which is in obedience to ‘mysterious laws that seek the good of the whole universe’.<sup>4</sup> This quotation comes from one of de Mello’s later published series of talks, *The Way to Love*, in which he very simply spells out what he believes will transform the world towards that ‘good of the whole universe’, in other words ‘save’ it. In this scheme of things, intolerance and hatred are the antithesis of what de Mello calls clear thinking; so, contrarily to what we might at first glance conclude, it is not ever-larger quantities of tolerance and love (in spite of the book’s title) that will effect change, but clear thinking.

The bedrock of the kind of clear thinking de Mello has in mind is a keen awareness of the ‘abysmal ignorance’ in relation to truth in which we all participate—and de Mello never fails to include himself in this ‘all’.<sup>5</sup> None of us is exempt from this abysmal ignorance because, essentially, the truth is a mystery, and as mystery it is sensed rather than grasped and formulated. This keen awareness is not something to be striven for, or to be acquired through disciplined activity—be that techniques or repression. Rather, this awareness involves a simple letting go of things—or as de Mello refers to it, a ‘dropping’. A natural consequence of this attitude of dropping is behaviour characterized by tolerance and love, and a natural consequence of tolerance and love is a transformed world.

Dropping what exactly, then? Perhaps this is the point at which the Vatican begins to prick its ears in anticipation of the need for a Notification, for what de Mello specifically undermines here is our ‘programming’ by institutions (including the family) of all sizes and shapes, even if these offer the very best and wisest of traditions. What we have to drop is whatever we have taken in, so far, of all the traditions and teachings to which we have already been exposed, whatever the format or context, whatever the moral value.

<sup>4</sup> Anthony de Mello, *The Way to Love: Meditations for Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 62.

<sup>5</sup> De Mello, *Way to Love*, 137.

There is for de Mello something authentic and therefore powerful in the ‘here and now’ whose immediate perception is not fired by others’ take on either the past or the future, but by the alive-and-kicking present, experienced subjectively. That ‘subjectively’, however, is to be rooted in the keen awareness that de Mello reiterates as the source of any saving transformation. We are not just to swallow unquestioningly even the profoundest of others’ wisdoms; we are to drop everything and, in so doing, we can hope to find ourselves becoming keenly aware of the here and now. ‘An effortless activity’, de Mello encouragingly claims this to be, even as he recognises how scared we all are to do just that: ‘scared to lose the only world [we] know: the world of desires, attachments, fears, social pressures, tensions, ambitions, worries, guilt, with flashes of the pleasure and relief and excitement which these bring ...’, as one variation of de Mello’s litany runs, a litany familiar enough from the writings of many mystics.<sup>6</sup>

So, in discovering de Mello, I found myself engaging with someone hard-core, yes, but hard-core mystically rather than hard-core theologically. Those two qualifiers, mystically and theologically, are so often forced into opposition to one other by institutions that tend to regard their interdependence with suspicion. De Mello was not beyond claiming, on numerous occasions, that one of the biggest obstacles to truth is religion.<sup>7</sup> In their God-driven searches, mystics can roam far afield from the safety of institutional pronouncements, a roaming often interpreted from the outside as a kind of withdrawal from responsibilities to the world.

But de Mello himself was no shirker. Commenting on the role of spiritual directors as purveyors and inspirers of an authentic prayer life, he insists (in that **prayer is fire** article), ‘Our duty as spiritual directors is to ensure that the inner fire does not make people withdraw from human relations and make them lose their appetite for life’.<sup>8</sup> Our life always includes others, and ‘dropping’ in this context does not mean ‘withdrawing from’; dropping means responding to others with a keen awareness of the truth. In de Mello, I began to suspect, I was meeting a messenger who, with extraordinary and rare effectiveness, was living out his own message, and in that process instilling in the people with whom he interacted a deep-rooted desire to do likewise: to walk the talk.

<sup>6</sup> De Mello, *Way to Love*, 147, 8.

<sup>7</sup> Anthony de Mello, ‘La Iluminación es la espiritualidad: curso completo de autoliberación interior’, *Vida Nueva*, 1/590–591 (July 1987), 65. This was highlighted in the Notification.

<sup>8</sup> De Mello, ‘Quieting the Mind (3)’, 33.

For de Mello, prayer was the key practice that made possible, and nourished, a keen awareness of the truth; and by all accounts he himself had a provocative charisma that made people respond to his message from the bottom of their hearts. ‘When he spoke of prayer, he radiated a certain force around him that often awakened in the heart of his hearers a real taste for prayer’ (this is how the former Jesuit Anand Nayak puts it in his book on de Mello’s life and spirituality, written as a clear and sober counter to the Notification).<sup>9</sup> Prayer, with its fiery attributes, invites a movement towards a direct experience of God, and this is what empowers us to withdraw deeply inwardly so as to engage equally deeply outwardly. In the de Melloan universe, deeply is equated with truthfully, and the deeply inward and outward movements are almost experienced simultaneously—characterizing that familiar exemplar of Ignatian spirituality, the contemplative in action bid to set the world on fire.

***A movement  
towards a direct  
experience of  
God***

The ‘in action’ part of that equation readily fits de Mello himself according to all who met him, whether on retreat, on a course or socially. His younger brother Bill de Mello, author of a very readable account of Tony’s ‘life and message’ entitled *The Happy Wanderer*,<sup>10</sup> records the testimonies of people from all walks of life: testimonies to his extraordinary energy and *joie de vivre*; to his booming, contagious laughter; to his great and generous kindness. An ‘indefatigable talker’, he was consummately at ease giving retreat inputs lasting six to eight hours for days on end—but he was always lapped up as an exciting and gifted speaker who had an endless supply of wonderful stories to fit any occasion. He comes across in all these testimonies as almost larger than life yet at the same time highly accessible and non-judgmental in his dealings with everyone. Bill recollects his brother’s observation that people usually remember not what you have said, but how you made them feel. Tony de Mello excelled in a sustained ability to make people feel good about themselves at a very deep level, without in the least compromising the truth. He *was* a big talker, but his talking was deep and fired people up.

His refusal to compromise the truth meant that garden-variety niceness played no role whatsoever in de Mello’s big-heartedness. A good number of people have commented that he often seemed outright to enjoy shocking people, but that he always shocked them in a way that left

<sup>9</sup> Anand Nayak, *Anthony de Mello: His Life and His Spirituality* (Dublin: Columba, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> Bill de Mello, *The Happy Wanderer* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2013).

them enlightened, and feeling healed rather than feeling hurt. Perhaps it is in his compassionate way of shocking that we can find in de Mello the other, 'contemplative' half of the familiar equation. Whatever contemplation he was doing (he apparently always found time in the hour before bed to pray), the fruit was a penetrating and non-judgmental compassion that could shake people to their core. Shock tactics may come across as having more than a tinge of violence about them, but then that is what de Mello insists cannot be avoided in deep-rooted transformation.

But I will let de Mello the mystic, the one who provoked the Vatican's Notification, have the last word on that. It is taken from *The Way to Love*:

It is this kind of violence that arises within mystics who storm against ideas and structures that have become entrenched in their societies and cultures when awareness awakens them to evils their contemporaries are blind to.<sup>11</sup>

Such a man, too, was Anthony de Mello, a man of prayer setting the world on fire.

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<sup>11</sup> De Mello, *Way to Love*, 62.

## **IS RELIGION GOOD FOR YOUR MENTAL HEALTH?**

*Roger Dawson*

**T**HE RELATIONSHIP between psychology and religion historically has been tense and characterized by suspicion, with some famous psychologists claiming that religion is essentially pathological, while others have been more optimistic. But religion is a complex, multidimensional construct of varied forms and functions, which makes researching this relationship problematic. Researchers have tended to view religion from a distance and thus take an undifferentiated approach, which neglects its multifaceted nature. Moreover, there are other potentially confounding factors that may conceal the true relationship between religion and mental health, for example gender, socio-economic status and ethnicity.

Equally problematic is the variety of definitions of ‘mental health’: whether mental health is positively related, negatively related or unrelated to religion is determined by the criteria used to assess it.<sup>1</sup> In a review of over 100 articles, for example, seven different conceptions of mental health were identified: absence of mental illness; appropriate social behaviour; freedom from worry or guilt; personal competence and control; self-acceptance and self-actualisation; personality unification and organization; and open-mindedness and flexibility.<sup>2</sup> Mental health remains a difficult, elusive concept and it is unlikely that there is an adequate, all-encompassing definition.

Given such variety in definitions of both ‘mental health’ and ‘religion’, then, caution must be exercised in interpreting any findings about the

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<sup>1</sup> See C. Daniel Batson and W. Larry Ventis, *The Religious Experience: A Social-Psychological Perspective* (New York: Oxford UP, 1982).

<sup>2</sup> See C. Daniel Batson, Patricia Schoenrade and W. Larry Ventis, *Religion and the Individual: A Social Psychological Perspective* (New York: Oxford UP, 1993).

relationship between the two. In this article, I will look at one way in which religion may exert its effect on mental health: the role of religion as a coping mechanism.

There is an extensive literature on the relationship between coping and mental health.<sup>3</sup> Where we find stress and distress we often also find religion, since it is frequently used in difficult times to cope with and make sense of an experience; and stressful life events are known to be associated with mental health problems. Is religion a healthy, adaptive means of coping which promotes well-being, or is it the reverse? Kenneth Pargament's theory of the role of religion in coping offers a method of addressing this question.<sup>4</sup>

Pargament begins by offering accounts of coping and of religion that make it possible to explore their connections. The common feature of religion and coping is the search for significance, though not all coping is religious, and not all religion is about coping. 'No matter how it is defined, coping involves attempts to preserve, maintain or transform the things people care about most deeply';<sup>5</sup> and religion is a process which involves a special kind of search for significance, being special in that it involves 'the sacred'.<sup>6</sup>

There is general agreement among mental health workers that having a purpose for living and being guided by higher-level principles of living are beneficial to mental health.<sup>7</sup> Pargament focuses on the constructive role that religion can play in the complex process by which people try to comprehend and deal with various personal and situational problems in their lives.<sup>8</sup> Rather than being just a tool, religion's end is the finding of significance and meaning, and it also provides the means to that end. '[Religions] offer their members a vision of what they should strive for in living ... [and involve] finding and living close to the spiritual.'<sup>9</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See Richard Stanley Lazarus, *Psychological Stress and the Coping Process* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), and Richard Stanley Lazarus, Alan D. Kanner and Susan Folkman, 'Emotions: A Cognitive-Phenomenological Analysis', in *Emotion: Theory, Research and Experience*, volume 1, *Theories of Emotion*, edited by Robert Plutchik and Henry Kellerman (New York: Academic, 1980), 189–218.

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth I. Pargament and Crystal L. Park, 'In Times of Stress: The Religion-Coping Connection', in *The Psychology of Religion: Theoretical Approaches*, edited by Bernard Spilka and Daniel N. McIntosh (Oxford: Westview, 1997), 43–53.

<sup>5</sup> Pargament and Park, 'In Times of Stress', 44.

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth I. Pargament, 'Of Means and Ends: Religion and the Search for Significance', *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 2 (1992), 201–209.

<sup>7</sup> See Kevin S. Mastets and Allen E. Bergin 'Religious Orientation and Mental Health', in *Religion and Mental Health*, edited by John F. Schumaker (Oxford: OUP, 1992).

<sup>8</sup> See Pargament, 'Of Means and Ends'.

<sup>9</sup> Pargament and Park, 'In Times of Stress', 45.

By considering both ‘means’ and ‘ends’, Pargament therefore includes in his description of religion its social aspects and its content.

Cognitively, the task of dealing with life events is to make an external event an internal reality.<sup>10</sup> Religion involves cognition, since its beliefs, constructs and symbols seek to provide an ultimate foundation or an absolute reality. Its task is to transform and transcend earthly reality. If religious frameworks are available and used, then, they will have an impact on the coping and adjustment to major life events.

### **Religion and the Coping Process**

Pargament proposes that religion may influence the coping process in various ways.<sup>11</sup> The critical event may be religious in nature, or may be framed in a religious way; it may be seen as from God, or not from God. The person may include God’s help or the help of a faith community among their resources. The person may use religious coping responses; he or she may seek religious comfort or support; responses may be cognitive (what is God teaching me here?), emotional (how do I feel towards God?) or behavioural (how can I live a better life or make the world a better



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<sup>10</sup> Mardi J. Horowitz, *Stress Response Syndromes: PTSD, Grief, Adjustment, and Dissociative Disorders*, 3rd edn (New York: Jason Aronson, 1986).

<sup>11</sup> Kenneth I. Pargament, ‘God Help Me: Toward a Theoretical Framework of Coping for the Psychology of Religion’, *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion*, 2 (1990), 195–224.

place?). Outcomes can be religious, in that there may be changes in the person's religious beliefs, feelings and behaviour; or there may be changes in the direction of a person's life. Coping methods may include seeking spiritual guidance or support, doing good deeds, seeking support from clergy and/or the congregation, pleading for direct intervention from God, expressing religious discontent or distracting from the situation using religion.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, while a specific religious tradition may increase the resources available, it may also impose limits and constraints.

What determines the level and form of religious coping? Pargament and Park argue that two factors influence this:

- 'Religion must be *available*.' People cope using what is available: if someone has access to a framework of religious beliefs, and is actively involved in religious practices, then he or she is more likely to use them to understand and deal with the situation.<sup>13</sup> If religion plays a large part in a person's life, then it will be accessed more often and more easily.
- The 'solutions ... must be compelling'. Solutions must not just make sense cognitively, but also 'feel right' emotionally. In extreme situations individuals may be pushed beyond their normal personal and coping resources, and religion may appear the only viable route to significance.<sup>14</sup>

Both these factors will be influenced by individual, social and situational circumstances which determine whether religion becomes available or compelling. Type of religious orientation, the nature of attachment to God, type of life event and faith or denomination all affect the form of religious coping employed.

A simplified model of the mediating role of religion in coping involves life events, plus personal and social resources—which influence the level and type of religious coping response—leading to positive or negative adjustment to the crisis. Religion can be part of every element in the coping process and has the potential to influence appraisal, resources and responses at each stage of that model. As such, religious coping methods are potentially pivotal constructs which explain how a general orientation to the world can be translated into specific responses and resolutions.

<sup>12</sup> Pargament, 'Of Means and Ends'.

<sup>13</sup> See Sarah C. Johnson and Bernard Spilka, 'Religion and the Breast Cancer Patient: The Roles of Clergy and Faith', *Journal of Religion and Health*, 30 (1991), 21–33.

<sup>14</sup> Pargament and Park, 'In Times of Stress', 48.



### **Religious Coping Activities and Their Efficacy**

Pargament and his co-authors studied three religious approaches to achieving control and mastery.<sup>15</sup> Deferring-style coping involves placing the responsibility for problem-solving on an active God, while the individual takes a passive stance, waiting for solutions from God. Collaborative religious coping takes a problem-solving approach based on an active partnership with God in which both are agents. Self-directed religious coping emphasizes the freedom God gives individuals, along with the skills and resources (such as grace) to solve the problems; it stresses personal agency and involves lower levels of traditional religious involvement. It was found that deferring was associated with lower general psychosocial competence, while the other styles were associated with higher levels. The evidence thus far appears to suggest that ‘collaborative coping’ is the most effective.

Pargament and Park suggest that religious coping offers a response to the problem of ‘human insufficiency’.<sup>16</sup> Since we are human, limited and finite, we can at any moment be pushed beyond our immediate resources or left with our basic vulnerabilities exposed. Religion provides a number of special coping methods for the conservation of those things we care most deeply about, and methods for when conservation is not possible in order to help transform their significance—to give up objects of value, and create and discover new objects. It also holds a solution for the times when we lack mastery, agency and control, the usual guiding principles of coping: the language of the sacred becomes relevant when we are faced with the insurmountable, and spiritual support can be available when other forms of social support are lacking; when everything is out of control, ultimate control may be available via the Ultimate. As Pargament and Park conclude, ‘Religious coping complements non-religious coping by offering responses to the limits of personal power’.<sup>17</sup>

Coping theory, then, offers a framework for understanding the role of religion in dealing with stressful life events and is a possible explanation of some of the mental health benefits associated with religious belief. The evidence suggests that, rather than religious coping being just a subset of coping in general (for example, spiritual and congregational support may be just a type of social support) and therefore not meriting

<sup>15</sup> Kenneth I. Pargament and others, ‘Religion and the Problem-Solving Process: Three Styles of Coping’, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 27 (1988), 90–104.

<sup>16</sup> Pargament and Park, ‘In Times of Stress’, 51.

<sup>17</sup> Pargament and Park, ‘In Times of Stress’, 52.

any particular study, religious coping activities predict the outcomes of negative life events above and beyond the effects of more established non-religious measures of coping.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Is Religious Belief Good for Your Mental Health?***

From the research into the relationship between religion and mental health taken as a whole, the answer to the question 'Is religious belief good for your mental health?' is an unequivocal 'It depends'!

Based on the empirical evidence, a purely naturalistic explanation which does not invoke God indicates that, as a socio-cultural factor, religion can be a powerful beneficial force. Religious coping appears to be one of the mechanisms that mediates the benefits of religion to mental health, such as the provision of social stability and support, protection from loneliness and alienation, commandments that lead to a more disciplined life, and beliefs that are conducive to peace of mind and provide meaning for human existence including death.

Bernard Spilka argues that the negative features of religion, such as intolerance, dependence, self-denigration and loss of autonomy, are side-effects of 'dysfunctional modes of religion'.<sup>19</sup> Religion can reflect underlying disturbance and some institutions may be harmful to the mental health of some, but in most instances faith buttresses people's sense of control and self-esteem, offers meaning and hope, promotes social integration and socially approved behaviour, and enhances personal well-being.<sup>20</sup>

The generalised suspicion that psychologists have often held towards religion is therefore difficult to justify. It is true that religion may be used by a person as a defence mechanism, to protect the self from painful reality or anxiety. However, it is also true that religion can meet important needs for intimacy, meaning, self-actualisation and spiritual fulfilment. Those are outcomes that every mental health professional can appreciate and will want to promote.

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<sup>18</sup> See Kenneth I. Maton, 'The Stress-Buffering Role of Spiritual Support: Cross-Sectional and Prospective Investigations', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 28 (1989), 310–323; and Kenneth I. Pargament and others, 'God Help Me: I. Coping Efforts as Predictors of the Outcomes to Significant Negative Life Events', *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 18 (1990), 793–824.

<sup>19</sup> Bernard Spilka, 'Functional and Dysfunctional Roles of Religion: An Attribution Approach', *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 8 (1987), 5–15.

<sup>20</sup> Ralph W. Hood and others, *The Psychology of Religion: an Empirical Approach* (New York: Guilford, 1996).

# WHAT IS IN A NAME, THEN?

*Teresa White*

ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS parents do for their children is to give them a name. Through names, chosen and given, the existence of the newly born is confirmed and they receive an identity, a distinctive personhood. In the modern world these names are inserted into official records, and the bearers are registered as 'belonging' to the nation and country of their place of birth. The birth certificate then becomes a passport to essential services for the rest of the person's life: naming represents a symbolic contract between society and the individual. Through our names we become part of human history, and through them our deeds and endeavours exist separately from the deeds of others.

Not surprisingly, the anthropologists tell us that the giving of a name to a child is important in all human cultures and societies, and is typically accompanied by religious rituals. For Christians, it is the sacrament of baptism that seals a person's membership of the community of believers in Jesus Christ, and naming is a crucial part of that ceremony. This is especially evident in the baptism of babies and young children, when the priest greets the parents at the church door and asks, 'What name do you give your child?' The answer given, the name pronounced, the priest, family members and guests move into the main body of the church for the rest of the christening service, in which naming the child is included in the very action of baptizing. One poet obliquely and charmingly refers to the rite as 'A name sprinkled / on little heads'.<sup>1</sup> Although these words do not express the full meaning of baptism, the first of the sacraments of Christian initiation, they do throw light on the importance we give to the naming aspect of the ceremony. Perhaps that is why, as early as the third century, infant baptism became standard practice in the Church.

<sup>1</sup> This poem has not been identified, but is probably collected in Cor Barendrecht, *In a Strange Land* (Grand Rapids: Being, 1974).



Names point beyond themselves, so in a sense they are sacraments in their own right, outward signs of that inward grace—love—which binds us to God and to one another. Spoken or remembered with reverence and affection, they enable us to discover one another; they awaken friendship and intimacy. Names touch the vein of personality; they draw us into the mystery of the distinctiveness of each human soul. They are like a door leading into a home: anyone who stands at the door and knocks asks for us by name, calls us by our name and waits to be invited to enter.

That name is so much part of us that if we hear it, even at a distance or quietly whispered, even simply mentioned in passing, we are immediately alert, ready to respond. Many people involved in serious accidents find that it was when the paramedics called them by name that they came back to themselves and gradually returned to full consciousness. The same applies if we see our name in writing. It is often (even usually!) the case that we ourselves are not being referred to; nevertheless, if we see a written name and it happens to be the same as our own, it ‘jumps out’ at us and we find we cannot ignore it. I remember when I was a student there was a notice in the university library warning us to take care of our possessions. It read: ‘Watch out! There’s a thief about’. I do not spell my name with an ‘h’, but whenever I passed that notice, I saw my name in it: *There’s a* = Theresa. It made me realise how name-sensitive I was!

Names are more than descriptive labels. They have their own dynamism, so that when we pronounce them they bring the named person into our minds and hearts. They not only convey personal identity, but also declare each person’s uniqueness; they differentiate, distinguishing

this person from that one. Because of this, signatures are also important, as they have been in every culture throughout human history. Still recognised as a valid form of identification, even in our technological age, handwritten signatures continue to carry legal weight and indicate formal approval, authorisation, or obligation. They also denote informed consent as, for example, in the signing of the register by bride, groom and witnesses that is part of every wedding ceremony.

It is through names that it becomes possible to communicate with individuals: to speak to them directly, refer to them, appeal to them, remember them, love or hate them. It is through names that the strange or the unknown somehow becomes familiar and memorable. To name someone is to confer dignity on that person by acknowledging his or her existence. But ultimately, at its most profound level, to name is to love. Those who love us call us by our name and we call them by theirs, and they and we do so with respect and affection. There is something enormously comforting in being known by name, called by name; it seems to open us up to the tenderness of life, and that is liberating, redemptive. ‘Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine’, said God to the people of Israel (Isaiah 43:1). Everyone who loves us, if that love is genuine and unselfish, shapes our souls for heaven, and we do the same for all those we love. We are called by our names in life, and recalled by them after death. Something of our deeper selves lives in our names.

And yet, ‘What’s in a name?’ asked Juliet. After all, as she sagely continued, ‘That which we call a rose / by any other name would smell as sweet.’<sup>2</sup> I think I agree with her. Identity is not summed up in a name, or not completely. Roses, after all, do not exist in nature—only the flowers which we choose to characterize as ‘roses’. Yet the fact remains that acknowledging people is important, by gesture, by looking them in the eye and perhaps above all by addressing them by name. It is interesting that sales representatives are trained to remember and use a potential customer’s name, and they make good use of this information. When this happens to you, at some level you may be well aware that you are being worked on, but often you cannot help being disarmed, despite that knowledge. For some reason it makes all the difference in the world when someone calls you by your name, especially when you did not expect that person to know or remember you. And the opposite is

<sup>2</sup> *Romeo and Juliet*, II. ii. 43–44.

also true: if you are mistaken for someone else or, as sometimes happened to me as a child at school, called by the name of an older sibling, you are somehow thrown off-balance and feel obliged to register an immediate correction. The mispronunciation or misspelling of your name can be equally jarring.

During my years of teaching, at the beginning of a school year, as I moved from class to class, each with thirty or so pupils, I estimated that in an average week I could have before me about 200 new faces. I made it a point of honour to learn all their names before the autumn half-term break and, after a few notable errors, rarely made the unforgivable mistake of calling one of them by the name of another. I soon realised that, in my job, memorising names and recognising their owners was well worth the effort involved.

Like most teachers, I had a fair number of twins in my classes over the years. Once, in a Second Year French group, there were identical twins, girls, who looked so amazingly alike in their navy blue school uniforms that it took me longer than usual to discover a way to identify them individually. By careful observation, I managed it eventually, but it was not easy. These girls had an older brother, Donald, and I taught him too, and gradually got to know him quite well, mainly because of his aptitude for French and remarkably good accent. So after school one evening, when I saw him coming towards me in the street and opened my mouth to say hello, I certainly expected a response. To my bewilderment, he walked straight past me without a word of greeting, without any gesture of recognition. When I saw him the next day in class I asked him why he had ignored me the evening before. He laughed and said, 'That must have been my twin, Alan—he wouldn't know you, he doesn't come to this school'. I learnt that day that there were ten children in Donald's family, including two sets of identical twins. I sometimes wondered if those four children had to fight their own corner with one another or with their siblings. Did they feel obliged to assert their identity when they were in a group? How did they react if they were called by the wrong name?

Naming things, naming people, so the psychologists tell us, is a way of exercising power over them. If so, perhaps that is why, for the Hebrews, naming was a divine activity—why, for them, names were thought of as a direct link with the Creator. Genesis tells us that when the earth was 'a formless void' (1:2) there were no names; but, in the act of creation, God brought order to a chaotic and dynamic world by naming things. God called light 'day' and darkness 'night', named heaven and earth, created the seas

and all that is in them; and also, according to the psalmist, determined the number of the stars, giving 'to all of them their names' (Psalm 147:4). For the Old Testament writers this was a way for God to demonstrate omnipotence. The task of naming the animals was left to Adam (Genesis 2:19), who was also given 'dominion over' them (1:28).

In Middle Eastern countries in ancient times, great attention was paid to the symbolic meaning of names, which were thought to convey something of the experience or character of a person. This concern for symbolic meaning is clearly reflected in the Old Testament, where characters are given names that reflect something of significance or describe the course of their lives, and where a change of name often indicates a change of status. An obvious example is Abram ('father of nations'), whose name was changed to Abraham, 'father of many nations'—a change which encapsulates the patriarch's key role in the expansion of the people of God. After Isaac's conception, his wife's name was also changed, from Sarai ('quarrelsome'—because of her truculent relationship with Hagar, Abraham's second wife) to Sarah ('princess'), possibly indicating a step from a local to a more far-reaching function. The couple called their son Isaac ('laughter') not because of his sense of humour, but because Sarai had laughed aloud when she was told by an angel that she would conceive a child in her old age.

There are numerous other examples in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, of the importance given to the meanings of names. Abraham's nephew was known as Lot, which means 'covering' or 'veil'; this was because before the destruction of Sodom God instructed him to 'cover' his eyes—to flee the city without looking back. Jacob, 'the supplanter', was so called because twice he deprived his twin Esau of his rights as firstborn son. Pharaoh's daughter, who saved a Hebrew boy from death in the Nile and brought him up as her own son, called him Moses, 'pulled out of the water'. Aaron—'lofty', 'elevated'—an appropriate name for the first high priest of the Israelites, emphasizes the sacredness of the role entrusted to him. The name of Melchizedek, the somewhat mysterious character, also a high priest, mentioned in Genesis and the Psalms, combines the Hebrew words for 'king' and 'righteousness'; in addition, this man is presented as 'King of Peace' (Salem, derived from 'shalom', signifies 'peace'). Samuel, 'one who listens to God', began to do this listening as a young boy, when God spoke to him in sleep, and he continued to do it for the rest of his life. David means 'beloved', seeming to indicate that this youngest of eight sons had a special place in the heart not only of his father, Jesse, but also of God, who called him to be the

second king of Israel. Solomon's name is derived from 'shalom' (peace) and during his reign there was no major conflict with other nations.

In the New Testament names hold a similar symbolic significance, the most important of all being the name of Jesus. 'And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son', said Gabriel to Mary, 'and you will name him Jesus ['saviour']' (Luke 1:31), stressing the mission of the Messiah. The Baptist's name, John—'God has been gracious'—was not a family name but his parents insisted on giving it to him: they wanted their son's name to reflect the miraculous nature of his birth to a mother who was past the age of childbearing. Simon was given a new name by Jesus, Peter—'rock'—to symbolize his foundational role in the Church. Paul's original Hebrew name was Saul, but he changed it to Paul ('small' or 'humble' in Latin) because he saw himself as 'the least of the apostles' (1 Corinthians 15:9), having been a persecutor of the church before his conversion. Other disciples also had names with interesting meanings: Nathaniel, 'gift of God', was the man whom Jesus described as an Israelite without guile; the name of Timothy, one of Paul's faithful companions on his missionary journeys, means 'one who fears God', while that of Barnabas, another companion, means 'son of encouragement'.

Not many biblical names with significant meanings (and only one of those mentioned above) are female. In the Book of Ruth, however, a story which probably existed in oral form long before it was written down, two women, Ruth and Naomi, both widows, take centre stage. Life has not been kind to them, and in a patriarchal society the two show a remarkable resourcefulness and courage in facing and dealing with their grief and loss. Sometimes described as an extended parable, the book has four short chapters which are shaped from the start by the meanings hidden in the names of the main characters, and these names contribute to a richer understanding of the narrative which, interestingly, appears to be written from the viewpoint of a woman.

The events described in the Book of Ruth may well have had a historical foundation, but the question of whether all the details are 'true' is a matter of little relevance. The author's chief interest lies not in the facts themselves, not in the literalism of a single meaning, but in the sacred message of the story: the events recounted demonstrate God's providential care for Israel, and they point to the favoured place of the house of David in God's plan for the Jewish people. The story reveals the fruits of Ruth's life of fidelity and generosity. She, a Moabite woman, a foreigner, recognises the claim of Israel's God. She demonstrates in abundance the virtue of



*hesed*, loving-kindness, and in her filial devotion to her mother-in-law goes far beyond the requirements of duty. As a result she is fully received into the nation of Israel, and is privileged to become the great-grandmother of David. The purpose of the story seems to be to show how trust in God is rewarded.

The characters in the Book of Ruth are drawn with wonderful clarity, and it is through their names that this vivid portrayal is achieved. The story begins when a man, driven by famine to leave his home in Bethlehem of Judah, takes his wife and family to live in the neighbouring country of Moab. We know this man is a faithful believer, for his name is Elimelech, which means 'my God is king'. We know, too, that he is happily married to Naomi, for her name means 'my pleasantness' or, according to one translation, 'sweetheart'. Sadly, having settled in Moab, it is not long before Elimelech dies and Naomi is left with their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. The two young men marry Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah, and the family live together in Moab for about ten years, both couples being childless. Then they are plunged into further tragedy: Mahlon (whose name means 'sickness') and Chilion ('pining away') also die.

It is at this point that Naomi, hearing that the famine in Judah has ended, makes preparations to return to her home town, where her husband had owned a small piece of land that she could claim. The reasons for this decision are not given, but perhaps she is seeking the consolation of familiar surroundings, customs and cult after all that had happened to her family in Moab. At the same time she urges her two daughters-in-law to leave her and to go back to their families. Chilion's wife, Orpah (her name means 'she who turns away' or 'back of the neck'), takes Naomi's advice, regretfully but realistically, and goes back to her people. But Mahlon's wife, Ruth, whose name means 'companion', clings to her mother-in-law, begging to be allowed to stay with her and make the journey with her to Judah.

Ruth's unselfish loyalty to her mother-in-law introduces a glimmer of hope into the bleakness of the tale thus far. Her famous words, full of human and religious devotion, give lyrical expression to her fidelity to her dead husband's family, and to her steadfast faith in Israel's God: 'Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God' (1:16). As the two travellers make their way into Bethlehem, Naomi, greeted by friends and former neighbours, tells them her name is no longer 'pleasantness'; she has changed it to Mara—'bitterness'. She sees this as a more appropriate name, seeing all she has suffered in the intervening years as a punishment from God. At

this stage, Naomi's faith is still imperfect. Overcome by the family tragedies she has suffered, she is unable to see the hand of God's providentially guiding her along the road of life. But with Ruth as her companion, she gradually regains a sense of peace and serenity after the searing pain of her experiences in the land of Moab.

In the East, every woman belonged to some male, as wife, daughter or slave, and it is through Boaz, the final character in the drama, that the continuity and integrity of Elimelech's family is secured. Boaz means 'strong' and, as a kinsman of Naomi's dead husband, he invokes his right, under Jewish Levirate Law, to marry Ruth in order to ensure future offspring. Through Boaz, protective, respectful, generous and wise, Ruth's divine vocation is realised and, to Naomi's joy, she soon gives birth to a son, Obed ('worshipper'), who will grow up to be David's grandfather. For Jews, Ruth is celebrated as a convert to Judaism who fully accepted the Torah and took its principles to heart. For this reason, she is considered a worthy ancestor of David and (for Christians) of Jesus Christ, born many centuries later of the House of David.

So it seems that names held great symbolic significance for the ancient peoples, and the Book of Ruth illustrates this. For us, too, in the ordinary run of life, names are important, practical, often necessary. Yet



Naomi Entreating Ruth and Orpah to Return to the Land of Moab,  
by William Blake, 1795

there are times when names are redundant. If we really know and love someone, we do not always need to name that person, for love, as Romeo and Juliet knew, transcends names. I realised the truth of this many years ago in an RE class of twelve-year-olds. Having talked with them about prayer and looked at some examples of prayers written by young people like themselves, I asked them to write a paragraph about it and, for homework, suggested that they might like to compose a prayer of their own. One girl seemed to go to the heart of it. In her paragraph she said that when her little brother woke up in the morning or after a short nap during the day, her mother would look at him and greet him with a big smile, saying: 'Hello, You!', touching him on the nose. She said she thought God knew us like that, and her offering was a brief acrostic prayer: 'O God', she began:

PLEASE  
REMEMBER  
A GIRL  
YOU KNOW.

I have never forgotten this little prayer. I was touched by its simplicity, its humility and its anonymity. The girl (whose name I still remember, as surely God does too) seemed to be utterly confident that God knew her and was listening to her. She does not tell God her name, does not even refer to herself as 'I' or 'me'; and yet it is not an impersonal prayer. I find in it something of the spirit of the Magnificat ('He looks on his servant in her nothingness') and of Psalm 139 ('You ... are acquainted with all my ways').

I am reminded too of a poem by Victor Hugo, written three years after the death of his beloved daughter, Léopoldine, at the age of twenty. The young woman drowned in a tragic boat accident in 1843, during a freak storm on the Seine, and her husband, Charles, died too, trying to save her. The poem (known by its first line: 'Elle avait pris ce pli dans son âge enfantin') is dated November 1846, All Souls Day, and in it Hugo recalls his daughter's childhood years: how she would dance into his bedroom for a short time each morning, lighting up the room like a sunbeam, calling out 'Bonjour, mon petit père' as she entered.<sup>3</sup> She would sit on his bed, take his pen, open his books, mess up his papers, leave little marks on his manuscripts, and then, laughing, suddenly fly away like a bird. Her gaze, he said, reflected the beautiful transparency of her soul.

<sup>3</sup> Victor Hugo, *Les Contemplations*, 4.5, with English translation, in *Selected Poems of Victor Hugo: A Bilingual Edition*, translated by E. H. and A. M. Blackmore (Chicago: U. of Chicago P, 2004), 196–197.

Although all the poems in this part of *Les Contemplations* (under the subtitle, 'Pauca meae'), are dedicated to her memory, the poet does not name his Didine in any of them; he simply refers to her as 'elle'. Perhaps, although three years have passed since her death, the pain of her loss is still so intense that he simply cannot bear to pronounce her name or even to write it down. Whatever the reason, the absence of the name does not matter to the reader, for each poem, and this one in particular, is filled with his heart-knowledge of her. Hugo's love for his daughter is a love beyond names.

When we relate to people with love, as Hugo in this beautiful poem relates to his deceased daughter, we are recognising something of their innate essence, their personality, their unrepeatable selfhood. Symbolic names, such as those in the Book of Ruth, touch on that selfhood, which is why they are memorable: they express who we truly are, define our integrity. But all names, including symbolic ones, fade into insignificance without love. Love reminds us that, secure in the hands of God, we belong to a reality greater than ourselves, and without love, as Paul says, we are nothing at all. In a letter to his friend Robert Bridges, Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote, 'All things therefore are charged with love, are charged with God and if we knew how to touch them, give off sparks and take fire, yield drops and flow, ring and tell of him'.<sup>4</sup>

Love changes everything, makes us see things differently, as Mary of Magdala discovers on the first Easter Day. People in depression cannot see signs of life, and on that morning, three days after she has seen Jesus die on the cross, Mary is overcome with grief. Then she hears her name, spoken in love, in welcoming tenderness: 'Mary!' At first, she does not recognise the man who approaches her; she thinks he is the gardener. But once she hears his voice, she is in no doubt and responds immediately. Love is stronger than death. A name, spoken in love, is charged with God's presence, and leaps into flame.

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<sup>4</sup> *Notebooks and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, edited by Humphry House (Oxford: OUP, 1937), 342.

# THE OFFICE OF RECTOR AS A MINISTRY OF CONSOLATION

Norlan Julia

## **Consolation at the Core of Jesuit Mission**

**I**N HIS ADDRESS TO JESUITS gathered at the Thirty-Sixth General Congregation, Pope Francis reminded them of a ministry that goes to the heart of the Jesuit mission: the ministry of consolation. He said:

This is the true work of the Society: to console the faithful people of God and to help them through discernment so that the enemy of human nature does not rob us of our joy: the joy of evangelising, the joy of the family, the joy of the Church, the joy of creation.<sup>1</sup>

He referred them back to the Risen Christ of the *Spiritual Exercises*, who performs the office of a consoler (Exx 224). Pope Francis also called their attention to how he himself has taken up consolation as a key theme in his two landmark apostolic exhortations, *Evangelii gaudium* and *Laudato si'*. For Pope Francis, joy is a sure sign of the active presence of grace in one's life. Hence, in encouraging the Jesuits to move forward steadily in their mission, he exhorted them to ask insistently for consolation.

In his survey of the life and ministry of the early Jesuits, John O'Malley noted that the term 'consolation' appears particularly frequently in their documents. From the first years of the Society, the ministry of consolation emerged as a defining character of the Jesuit charism. The desire of Pierre Favre may be said to represent the sentiment of the early Jesuits:

With great devotion and new depth of feeling, I also hoped and begged for this [from God], that it finally be given to me to be the servant and minister of Christ the consoler .... Thus, it would happen

<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, address to the Thirty-Sixth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, 24 October 2016, available at [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/october/documents/papa-francesco\\_20161024\\_visita-compagnia-gesu.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/october/documents/papa-francesco_20161024_visita-compagnia-gesu.html).

that I might be able through him to help many—to console, to liberate, and give them courage; to bring them light not only for their spirit but also (if one may presume in the Lord) for their bodies, and bring as well other helps to the soul and body of each and every one of my neighbours whomsoever.<sup>2</sup>

O'Malley argues that the basic pastoral programme of the early Jesuits consisted in the triad word–sacraments–mercy, that is, the ministries of the Word, the ministries of the sacraments and the ministries of mercy.<sup>3</sup> The *Formula of the Institute* of 1550, which sums up the Society's key ministries, explicitly mentions 'the spiritual consolation of Christ's faithful through hearing confessions and administering other sacraments' (n.7). For Jerónimo Nadal, O'Malley says, 'Jesuits were not to rest content in their ministries with what was required for salvation but were always to strive for the spiritual improvement and consolation of those to whom they ministered'.<sup>4</sup>

As a Jesuit whose primary mission is governing a seminary and teaching theology, I wonder whether or not I am engaging in the ministry of consolation. Of course, being a seminary rector does not appear in the list of the early Jesuits' ministries as envisioned by the Formula. Yet, looking at the office of rector from an Ignatian point of view, and reviewing my first year in the post, I realise that the office of rector can be a ministry of consolation just as hearing confessions and administering the other sacraments are. The rector is not primarily or simply an administrator or a manager. He is, first of all, a minister of consolation.

### ***Jesuits in a Diocesan Seminary***

The seminary where I serve as rector is probably the only one of its kind where the formation team is a rare and effective combination of Jesuits and diocesan priests working together. Located in the southern Philippines, St John Vianney Theological Seminary (SJVTS) is an interdiocesan seminary owned by diocesan bishops but administered by the Jesuits. From its inception in 1985 until the present, the rector of SJVTS has always been a Jesuit. The formation team, however, is composed of two or three other Jesuits besides the rector, four or five diocesan priests and a woman counsellor. I assumed office as rector on 15 May 2016, at the end of my

<sup>2</sup> Pierre Favre, *Memoriale*, quoted in John O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard UP, 1999), 83.

<sup>3</sup> O'Malley, *First Jesuits*, 85, 91.

<sup>4</sup> O'Malley, *First Jesuits*, 141.

predecessor's six-year term. Before my appointment as rector, I had already been at SJVTS for a total of six years. Right after my priestly ordination in 2005, I was assigned to SJVTS and served there for four years, until I was sent to London in 2009 to pursue a doctorate in theology. Having completed my degree in 2013, and having done tertianship in Manila immediately upon returning from London, I was assigned back to SJVTS as a formator and professor of theology.

All of the diocesan priests and the counsellor also trained under the Jesuits. Most of our professors are alumni of either SJVTS or of the Jesuit-run Loyola School of Theology (LST) in Manila. Hence, despite the diversity of personalities and perspectives, the team is able to function well as a whole and move in the same direction because of the common Ignatian tradition under which they were all trained. During its first few years, SJVTS would 'borrow' Jesuit professors from LST, who came to teach theology courses for a month or two. In effect, SJVTS seminarians and LST students had the same professors for some of their courses. About five years after SJVTS opened, three alumni who were diocesan priests came to join the ranks of resident formators and professors, creating the present mixed formation team. It was a landmark for the seminary when the team's first female member joined as vocational growth counsellor in 2005. She also serves as member of the human and spiritual formation cluster.

From SJVTS's earliest years, the formation structure of the seminary has followed the Jesuit pattern. Besides a mandatory four-year theology



*The chapel, St John Vianney Theological Seminary*

course, the seminarians also do a year of teaching called Ministry Year after their first two years of theological studies within the seminary. Similar to the regency stage of Jesuit formation, Ministry Year is an opportunity to experience full-time work outside the strictly regimented seminary routine. After this the seminarians undergo a year of spiritual–pastoral formation called Galilee Year. This is similar to the Jesuit novitiate, during which they do experiments—short placements to gain experience and reaffirm their vocation—in hospitals, urban and rural settings, parish and diocesan missions. They also undergo psycho-spiritual preparation through personality, sexuality and family relations seminars. A highlight of the Galilee Year is the thirty-day retreat, when the seminarians make the full Spiritual Exercises. Our diocesan formators and seminarians are thus no strangers to Ignatian spirituality: the subject of consolation is something to which they can relate, and which has great resonance for them.

### ***Consolation in the Ignatian Exercises***

Ignatius deals with the meaning of consolation (and desolation) under the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits (Exx 313–336). The rules are grouped into two sets. The rules of the first set are intended for those who have just begun to be aware of the movements of the spirits within themselves. These movements might be coming from either the good or the evil spirit, and the rules are meant to help exercitants in the First Week familiarise themselves with the ways in which each spirit stirs the soul and steers it towards or away from God (Exx 313). The rules of the second set are for those who have passed through the First Week and have received the graces intended for that Week. These persons are steadily growing in the spiritual life and will need guidance on how to proceed on the path towards greater union with Christ. In the contemplations of the Second Week, exercitants turn their attention to Christ and beg for the grace of knowing him more intimately, loving him more dearly, and following him more closely (Exx 104).

Ignatius believes that as the soul feels greater attraction to Christ the enemy of our human nature becomes more subtle in his attacks. The ultimate aim of the enemy is to deceive the soul into believing that it is moving towards Christ when, in fact, it is not—hence the importance of discernment. As Michael Ivens says:

The discerning person not only recognises consolation and desolation in prayer, but learns in prayer to detect across the whole spectrum of our activity and consciousness the movements through which the



Holy Spirit leads and enlightens us, and those through which other influences, if given their head, work against that guiding and light.<sup>5</sup>

After explaining the actions of the good and the bad spirit, Ignatius defines consolation in this way:

By [this kind of] consolation I mean that which occurs when some interior motion is caused within the soul through which it comes to be inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord. As a result it can love no created thing on the face of the earth in itself, but only in the Creator of them all. Similarly, this consolation is experienced when the soul sheds tears which move it to love for its Lord—whether they are tears of grief for its own sins, or about the Passion of Christ our Lord, or about other matters directly ordered to his service and praise. Finally, under the word consolation I include every increase in hope, faith, and charity, and every interior joy which calls and attracts one toward heavenly things and to the salvation of one's soul, by bringing it tranquility and peace in its Creator and Lord. (Exx 316)

In an analysis of this text, Jules Toner observes three intimately connected elements of consolation understood in the wider sense. First, there is consolation in its proper or exclusive meaning. This refers to affective feelings such as peace or gladness. The second element refers to the causes or sources of these affective feelings, which may either be subjective or objective. Thirdly, there are the consequences of consolation properly speaking, as seen in our ways of thinking and acting affectively. The affective feelings of consolation, Toner says,

... dispose the person for, and so lead to, certain ways of perceiving, thinking, imagining, affectively responding, choosing .... Such feelings shape our present vision of past and future and our present perception of the concrete situation in which we are. They also dispose us for more intense and more enduring affective acts of love.<sup>6</sup>

Toner adds that the intense love for God aroused by the Holy Spirit in the heart of the person experiencing consolation,

... absorbs, as it were, all love for creatures so that they can be loved only in God and God in them. The flaming feeling in the

<sup>5</sup> Michael Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998), 207.

<sup>6</sup> Jules Toner, *A Commentary on St Ignatius' Rules for the Discernment of Spirits* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1982), 86.

sensibility more fully disposes for such love. Without loving creatures less, but rather loving them even more, all the love is love for God.<sup>7</sup>

For Michael Ivens, this is the perfection of love that consists in its being integrated into God's own love. The experience of loving God takes all other loves into itself.<sup>8</sup> In this way, as Ignatius says, God is loved 'in all creatures, and all of them in Him' (*Constitutions* III.1.26 [288]). William Peters, however, emphasizes that for Ignatius 'in God' (*en Dios*) means 'in the presence of'. For him, this implies 'closeness, almost local proximity; it conveys being in the presence of, and of being one with, the Creator and Lord, and having come to rest in him'.<sup>9</sup>

### **Consolation through Spiritual Conversation**

Ignatius began to be aware of the diverse movements of the spirits within him while he was in bed convalescing after being wounded at the siege of Pamplona. His inner battle intensified at Manresa, where he engaged in serious self-examination. He moved from tranquillity to turmoil to interior illumination. These are the three stages of his internal development leading to a fuller loving union with God.<sup>10</sup> Hence, it was in Manresa where he wrote the *Spiritual Exercises*, which now spells out the rules for the discernment of spirits and describes consolation as we have just seen.

While in Manresa, leading a life of penitence and devotion, Ignatius also performed works of charity for the poor and the sick. However,

... his chief apostolate was that of conversation, which won for him the goodwill of the people of Manresa. He was keen on finding persons with whom he might converse on spiritual topics .... It is very likely that the Pilgrim went at times up to the monastery of Montserrat to confer on things of the spirit with Jean Chanon, the monk to whom he has made his general confession.<sup>11</sup>

His experiences of consolation impelled him to share with others. He hoped that in spiritual conversation, he and his conversation partners would grow ever more in the love of God:

<sup>7</sup> Toner, *Commentary*, 96.

<sup>8</sup> Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, 215.

<sup>9</sup> William Peters, *The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius: Exposition and Interpretation* (Rome: Centrum Ignatium Spiritualitatis, 1978), 151.

<sup>10</sup> See Cándido de Dalmases, *Ignatius of Loyola, Founder of the Jesuits: His Life and Works* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1985), 57–58.

<sup>11</sup> De Dalmases, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 56. And see *Autobiography*, n. 21.

At this time he still used to talk sometimes with spiritual people, who thought he was genuine and wanted to talk to him, because, although he had no knowledge of spiritual things, still in his speaking he showed much fervour and a great will to go forward in the service of God.<sup>12</sup>

Just as in the early stages of Ignatius' spiritual life he delighted in talking about his consolations to people, so also among the first companions spiritual conversation was a fruitful means of encouragement and inspiration. Diego Laínez, for example, recalled how they gathered each year to renew their vows, celebrating with a picnic together and engaging in conversation:

And we used to do the same thing during the year, bringing each our own food and going to eat on certain days to the dwelling of one, then of another. And this together with frequent visits and spiritual conversations helped us a great deal to persevere.<sup>13</sup>

In Salamanca, Ignatius defended himself from the Dominicans, who doubted his orthodoxy. He answered them, 'We ... don't preach, but speak about things of God with certain people in an informal way, such as after a meal with some people who invite us'.<sup>14</sup>

O'Malley notes that in the second version of the *Formula*, where it includes among the means of achieving the Society of Jesus' aims, 'and any other ministration whatsoever of the word of God', *any other* was interpreted by Nadal to include devout conversation among the companions and with others. Nadal saw conversation as instrumental in the birth of the Society, for it was through spiritual conversation that Ignatius won over his first companions in Paris. Moreover:

Ignatius often spoke about such conversations and how to engage in them. He first required that one approach individuals with love and a desire for their well-being, while carefully observing each person's temperament and character. One began the conversation with subjects of interest to the other ... and only gradually did one bring the discussion around to matters of the spirit.<sup>15</sup>

It is quite clear that, for Ignatius, spiritual conversation was a means of bringing people to a greater awareness of God's presence in their lives and of moving them to repentance and faith. In other words, it

<sup>12</sup> *Autobiography*, n. 21, and see n. 34.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Thomas H. Clancy, *The Conversational Word of God: A Commentary on the Doctrine of Ignatius of Loyola concerning Spiritual Conversation* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970), 12.

<sup>14</sup> *Autobiography*, n. 65.

<sup>15</sup> O'Malley, *First Jesuits*, 111.

**The superior ...  
must be a  
minister of  
consolation**

was a ministry of consolation. In the *Constitutions*, he says, ‘they will endeavour to be profitable to individuals by spiritual conversation, by counselling and exhorting to good works, and by conducting Spiritual Exercises’ (VII.4.8 [648]). Ignatius so greatly valued spiritual conversation that he listed ‘the art of dealing and conversing with men’ (X.3 [814]) among the special means for preserving the unity of the Society and among the skills that the general of the Society must have.<sup>16</sup> For Ignatius, the superior general—or any superior, for that matter—must be a minister of consolation.

**The Rector: A Leader or a Listener?**

A cursory reading of some church documents on the role of the rector of a seminary suggests that emphasis is given to his task of leadership and governance. Pope Paul VI, in *Optatam totius*, speaks of the seminary as a closely knit community formed under the leadership of the rector.<sup>17</sup> The *Code of Canon Law* (1983) states: ‘In the conduct of all its affairs, the rector acts in the person of the seminary ... [he] is to ensure that the students faithfully observe the norms of the *Charter of Priestly Formation* and the rule of the seminary’.<sup>18</sup> The *Updated Philippine Program of Priestly Formation* describes the rector’s task thus:

He oversees the seminary community and the formation program. He builds up the formation team as a true human community, and not just as an administrative body. He has the authority that enhances the human qualities the seminary aims to foster among the seminarians.<sup>19</sup>

The administrative aspect of the office of the rector requires me to attend more meetings than I ever have before in my Jesuit life. At the seminary I am expected always to be present in meetings—especially if I am supposed to preside, as at the formators’ meeting every fortnight. We also have the board of trustees’ meetings three times in a year. This board is composed of the bishops of the region and the seminary formators. It is my task to prepare the agenda for both the formators’ and the board of trustees’ meetings. As rector, I am also called to various

<sup>16</sup> See *Constitutions* IX.2.6 [729], and Clancy, *Conversational Word of God*, 13.

<sup>17</sup> Paul VI, decree on priestly training, *Optatam totius* (28 October 1965), n. 5, available at [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651028\\_optatam-totius\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_optatam-totius_en.html).

<sup>18</sup> *The Code of Canon Law* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1983), n.238, available at [http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0017/\\_PV.HTM](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0017/_PV.HTM). See also n. 261.

<sup>19</sup> *Updated Philippine Program of Priestly Formation* (Manila: CBCP Episcopal Commission on Seminaries, 2006), n. 27.

other meetings outside the seminary: in the archdiocese, in the Province, and in a nearby Jesuit university. Nonetheless, I would not like to believe that conducting and attending all these meetings define the essence of my office. Hence, I have tried my best to keep their frequency and length to a minimum. Needless to say, sitting through all these meetings hardly evokes any feelings of consolation at all. There is another kind of meeting, though, which, for me, is a source of consolation. This is what started me thinking of the office of rector as ministry of consolation, rather than simply of governance and administration.

A task which takes up a good amount of my time as rector is to see each of the 45 seminarians for individual colloquium three times within every formation year. The individual colloquium with the rector happens at the beginning of the year, halfway through the year and again at the end. This colloquium is one of several avenues for the seminarians to seek guidance and accompaniment in their vocational journey. Unlike spiritual direction and psychological counselling, which belong to the internal forum, the colloquium with the rector is in the external forum.

Matters brought up in the internal forum are bound by absolute confidentiality, like that of confession. In the seminary setting, spiritual directors and counsellors do not participate in the seminarians' evaluation and promotional meetings. The matters discussed in the colloquium with the rector, however, may be considered as data for the evaluation and promotion of the seminarians. Hence, the challenge for me is how to foster an atmosphere of trust and confidence in which the seminarians can be honestly transparent about their experiences in the seminary. I find doing the individual colloquium with seminarians the most challenging part of being rector. Whereas in formators' and board meetings, a set agenda is prepared and followed, there is no way such a plan may be followed in an individual colloquium.

I just have to listen to what the seminarians bring to me for discussion. Usually, to start the conversation, I ask them to talk about the four pillars of seminary formation: human and community life, spiritual formation, academic formation and pastoral formation. Then I ask them how the various activities under each heading have fostered their growth as seminarians training to be priests. I ask them to identify what they have gained as well as their goals in each area for that specific formation year. I allot half an hour for each colloquium but, in practice, a good conversation can easily last for 45 minutes. Hence, if I have to see 45 seminarians, I spend 2,025 minutes, or 33.75 hours, on each round of individual colloquiums, listening to 45 individuals' different and unique stories!

### ***The Rector as a Minister of Consolation***

In the church documents cited above, the rector's office is seen mainly from an administrative perspective. The rector is a leader, an overseer, a supervisor. He directs the affairs of the seminary and influences the life of the seminarians. From the canonical point of view, he ensures the seminarians' compliance with the rules of the seminary as prescribed by the Church. In recent documents such as the *Updated Philippine Program for Priestly Formation* and the *Ratio Fundamental*, emphasis is placed on building up the seminary as a human community of which the rector is the primary responsible agent in cooperation with his co-formators. In all of these documents the rector stands before and above the seminarians and the other formators as their leader.

In the individual colloquium, however, the rector acts a companion along the vocational journey of the seminarian. The colloquium becomes a conversation, not only about the various activities of the seminary, but about the movements of the spirit in the seminarians' hearts urging them towards greater love of God and greater desire to serve God. Strictly speaking, matters pertaining to spiritual life belong to spiritual direction and matters pertaining to psychological, emotional and sexual development belong to counselling. Yet, if one sees formation as a holistic process, in which the motivations of the heart and intentions of the mind shape one's external actions, a seminarian cannot fully explain his actions without articulating what his affective feelings are and how these feelings determine the way he thinks and acts.

We always remind the seminarians that the formation process will only achieve its intended objectives to the extent that they are fully transparent about their difficulties and struggles as well as their joys and successes. As a one-year-old rector, I have been humbled by the trust and confidence given me by our seminarians. They have been truly honest about their inner life and candid about the real struggle of having to sift through the multiple movements in their hearts and follow those that strengthen their desire for the priesthood. Their openness has opened the way for me, not only to be a supervisor of seminary operations or executor of canon laws and prescriptions, but also, and more importantly, a minister of consolation.

As a minister of consolation to the seminarians, I am not quite satisfied with simply receiving their progress report on the pillars of formation: what their marks in the various academic courses are, or how frequently they have seen their spiritual directors, or how many children they have



*Seminarians outside the chapel*

prepared for first communion. Instead, I would like them ‘to draw profit’ from all their experiences. I would like them to relish and savour the joy of seeing the children they prepare for first communion actually queue before the altar to receive the Body of Christ for the first time. I would like them to dwell on the new insights from their theology courses which help them in their prayer life. I encourage them to engage more deeply in building deep yet mature friendships among themselves, rather than having many acquaintances and little meaningful friendship. I remind them of the Ignatian principle of *non multa sed multum*, not many but much. ‘For what fills and satisfies the soul consists, not in knowing much, but in our understanding the realities profoundly and in savoring them interiorly.’ (Exx 2)

Most of our seminarians are between 21 and 30 years old. Most come from middle-class families. Some have families who depend on farming or on the daily earnings of their parents. They have a great desire for the priesthood, but are also beset by many questions and doubts. Those who come from poor and large families are disturbed by the thought of living in a rather comfortable seminary setting while their parents struggle daily to feed their siblings and support their education. Quite a few have experienced psychological distress owing to the separation of their parents, or the death of a parent, or having a parent who is working overseas.

Many of them came to theology right after finishing a four-year philosophy degree in a college seminary. Hence, they have not really gone through a regular university where they could interact with female classmates. They feel envious of young adults outside the seminary who have started building careers and have close relationships with women. When they speak about their pains and sorrows, I find myself consoling and comforting them, commending them for the progress they have made and encouraging them in their difficulties and discouragement. And when in the course of the conversation they realise that even painful experiences can be occasions of grace, I too, am consoled at their awakening to the presence of God amid their struggles and strivings. As O'Malley says, 'consolation is indeed the best sign that a person is moving forward along the right path ... spiritual progress, and its correlate, consolation, holds first place and must be the Jesuit's primary intention and goal'.<sup>20</sup>

In my mission as seminary rector, I draw inspiration from Pope Francis' words to the Jesuits present at the General Congregation:

The Jesuit is a servant of the joy of the Gospel, both when he is working as an artisan, conversing and giving the spiritual exercises to a single person, helping him or her to encounter 'this interior forum whence comes the power of the Spirit, which guide, free and renew him' and when he is working with structures, organising works of formation, of mercy, or of reflection which are institutional expansions of those turning points where the individual will is broken down and the Spirit enters to act.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> O'Malley, *First Jesuits*, 141.

<sup>21</sup> Pope Francis, address to the Thirty-Sixth General Congregation.



# TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE I

## God in the Scriptures

*Rolphy Pinto*

THE SUPERNATURAL REALITY of God is an integral part of the lives and the human consciousness of believers in different faiths all over the world. But how can a contingent, finite human being have access to the supernatural infinite being? Moreover we, at least in the West, live in a secularised world where God can appear to be absent: ‘The believer lives amidst the provocation of secularization, in a world that seems to function perfectly *etsi deus non daretur* (“even though there were no God”).<sup>1</sup> In this context, how can we speak about a being who is beyond the scientific methods of verification? For Christians, incarnation is a mystery of God transcending God’s own transcendence and becoming immanent. While for some faiths such divine condescension would be a scandal, Christians marvel at it and wonder why God chose to reveal Godself in human form.

It would be a Herculean task to treat comprehensively of the transcendent–immanent nature of the God who is revealed in the Christian scriptures. But what we can say is that the scriptures speak of God in seemingly contradictory terms, as transcendent and immanent at once.

### **Some Key Texts**

The *New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* redirects the reader looking for an entry on ‘transcendence’ to ‘Old Testament view of God’ and on ‘immanence’ to ‘New Testament view of God’. It is true that texts affirming the transcendence of God abound in the Old Testament, and texts affirming God’s immanence abound in the New. But the God of the Old Testament is not exclusively transcendent, nor is the God of New Testament exclusively immanent. The people of Israel and the early Christians

<sup>1</sup> Félix-Alejandro Pastor, ‘God I: The God of Revelation’, in *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, edited by René Latourelle and Rino Fisichella (Middlegreen: St Pauls, 1994), 350.

experienced God as both transcendent and immanent. Thus the pages of the whole Bible affirm the transcendence and the immanence of God.

### *Transcendence Texts*

Throughout the Old Testament there is a pervasive concept of the deity as a creator God who is self-existent—that is, existence is essential to God's inherent nature—and transcendent:

The word 'transcendent' comes from a Latin term meaning 'to climb over, to go beyond'. It describes a relationship between two entities, one of which 'transcends' or goes beyond the other. In theology it describes the most basic relationship between God and his creatures. God as Creator transcends all created beings in the sense that he is distinct from them in the very essence of his being. God is 'beyond' the universe and every created entity.<sup>2</sup>

### **God surpasses all human understanding**

The transcendent God is encountered most particularly in the Pentateuch. A verse from the Song of Moses reads, 'Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendour, doing wonders?' (Exodus 15: 11). The 'holiness' of God here does not have any particular moral connotations. It sets the divine apart from the human, the common and the ordinary. What the verse describes is the *otherness* of God. God is the creator, but God is distinct from creation and creation is not an extension of God.<sup>3</sup> This God is unlike anything that humans can possibly know. The use of the language of holiness expresses God's transcendence.<sup>4</sup> God surpasses all human understanding. The book of Deuteronomy clearly insists upon God's absolute uniqueness (4: 32–39; 6: 4; 10: 17; 32: 39; 33: 26), eternity (33: 27), holiness (32: 51), justice and righteousness (32: 4), all of which point to God's transcendence: 'For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome' (Deuteronomy 10: 17).<sup>5</sup>

While the Pentateuch differentiates God from the gods of the nations that neighboured Israel, the prophets of the Old Testament profess a strict monotheism, denying the existence of other gods. 'There is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Saviour; there is no one besides me.

<sup>2</sup> Jack Cottrell, *The Faith Once for All: Bible Doctrine for Today* (Joplin: College, 2002), 79.

<sup>3</sup> See J. N. Oswalt, 'Theology of the Pentateuch', in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, edited by David Weston Baker and T. Desmond Alexander (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 846–847, 849.

<sup>4</sup> See Terence E. Fretheim, 'God, OT View of', in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006), volume 2, 608.

<sup>5</sup> See Daniel I. Block, 'Deuteronomy, Book of', in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* edited by Kevin Jonah Vanhoozer (London: SPCK, 2009), 171.

Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.' (Isaiah 45:21b–22) The supreme God of whom Isaiah speaks is a 'Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple' (Isaiah 6:1). The prophetic literature pushes the transcendence of God further by speaking of an absolute deity. If the God of the Pentateuch transcends the existence of other possible deities, the God of the prophets rules out the very existence of such deities.

The transcendent God of the Old Testament is also a God of covenant, one who is often the interlocutor in a dialogical relationship with human beings. Yet even in this covenantal relationship, the human being is aware of the otherness and transcendence of God. Though we are told that God 'used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend' (Exodus 33:11), Deuteronomy reminds Israel that they 'saw no form' when God spoke to them at Sinai (Deuteronomy 4:12, 15). God would not reveal any name to Moses when he asked for it (Exodus 3:14–15), answering with the declaration of self-existence: 'I AM WHO I AM'. Moses expresses his desire to see the glory of God, but he is told, 'you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live' (Exodus 33:18, 20). The people of Israel maintain a reverential fear towards their God, knowing well that they could not reduce God to a mere human being. This thought is clearly expressed in the words of the prophet Isaiah: 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.' (55:8–9)

Though they predominate in the Old Testament, the New Testament is not lacking in references to a transcendent God. These lines from Ephesians can be read as continuing where the declarations of Isaiah 45 left off:

God put [the immeasurable greatness of his] power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. (Ephesians 1:20–21)

The transcendence of God is here extended to Christ. By virtue of the resurrection and ascension, Christ shares in this transcendence. On the morning of the resurrection, Mary Magdalene wants to hold the resurrected, glorious body of Jesus. Jesus tells her, 'Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my



*The Adoration of the Trinity, by Vicente  
López y Portaña, 1791–1792*

God and your God”.<sup>6</sup> (John 20: 17) The christological hymn in Philippians confirms this transcendence of the risen Christ, saying, ‘Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name’ (2:9). The evangelist John makes Jesus speak of his own transcendence well before the resurrection: ‘You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world’ (John 8:23). John’s Gospel explicitly identifies the Son with the transcendent Godhead. Thus it is no surprise that these words of Jesus are in perfect consonance with those of Isaiah 55:8–9, ‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts ...’. God in the form

of man, the person of Jesus and the perfect image of the Father (Colossians 1:15), is transcendent.

However, the transcendent One of the Pentateuch is also fully personal. This, as J. N. Oswalt explains, is what makes the biblical transcendence of God unlike the kind of transcendence found in Greek philosophy.

The Pentateuch’s idea of transcendence differs from that of the classical Greek philosophers. And this difference almost certainly explains why the Pentateuch continues to shape world thought while Aristotle’s [idea] had little impact even in its own day. The difference is the Bible’s successful coupling of transcendence and personality. The Greek philosophers could imagine something utterly other than the cosmos but could only conceive of it as impersonal.<sup>7</sup>

The Greek idea of transcendence is of an impersonal abstract principle; the Brahman, or absolute, of the Hindu Vedas, too, is an impersonal abstract

<sup>6</sup> See Judith Gundry-Volf, ‘Pauline Epistles’, in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, 575.

<sup>7</sup> Oswalt, ‘Theology of the Pentateuch’, 847.

principle. But the God of Moses, by contrast, has attributes of personhood: 'a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin ...' (Exodus 34:6–7a).

The combination of transcendence and personality has consequences for the language that the Bible uses about God. God, as Oswalt continues 'is a person, and in human language it is impossible to speak of a person in gender-free terms'. He observes:

The Pentateuch, as well as the entire rest of the Bible, uses masculine pronouns and terms exclusively. Why is this? It is commonly suggested that this was a result of a patriarchal society .... However, reflection shows that this is much too easy an answer. In fact, every society in the ancient Near East was patriarchal .... The Israelites were no more prejudiced in favor of males than any of their peers.

However, Oswalt argues, where Israel's neighbours had female deities they were always characterized by sexuality, which,

... constantly underlines their oneness with the creation, perhaps because of the oneness of the mother and the child. If it is important to stress the separateness of God from creation, then it is impossible to describe him in anything other than male terms.<sup>8</sup>

### *Immanence Texts*

If the transcendent creator is also a personal God who intervenes in human history then the God of the Bible is an *immanent* God as well as a transcendent one.

Immanence is that attribute of God that describes his presence and activity within the created world. Sometimes immanence is contrasted with transcendence, as if they were opposites. But this is a serious error that is based on the false idea that transcendence is a spatial concept, i.e., that God occupies some kind of space outside the borders of our universe and is thus spatially distant from us. But transcendence is not about distance; it is about difference. It does not mean that God is spatially separated from the world, but that his essence is qualitatively different from it. His transcendence in no way excludes his immanence or presence within the world. In fact, his infinite essence is what makes his omnipresence and his immanence possible.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Oswalt, 'Theology of the Pentateuch', 848–849.

<sup>9</sup> Cottrell, *Faith Once for All*, 88.

In the Bible the concept of immanence is closely linked to God's intimate presence with the people. In the *primaeva* story, the prehistoric chapters of the book of Genesis, we encounter an intimate God who used to walk in the garden 'at the time of evening breeze' (Genesis 3:8). God wrestles with Jacob (Genesis 32:22–32) and speaks face to face with Moses (Genesis 33:11). Accompanying the people of Israel in the desert as they journey out of Egyptian slavery, God goes before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:21). God assures the chosen people, 'Have no dread ... for the Lord your God, who is present with you, is a great and awesome God' (Deuteronomy 7:21).

The prophets who formulated the sublime divine transcendence are even more vocal in affirming the immanence of God.<sup>10</sup> For Jeremiah, God is both near and far. The prophet expresses the intimacy and omnipresence (paradoxically both closely linked with immanence) of God: 'Who can hide in secret places so that I cannot see them? says the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth? says the Lord.' (Jeremiah 23: 24; and see Isaiah 40: 22) In chapter 43 of Isaiah, a hymn of love, God explicitly declares love for the people of Israel: 'I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you .... you are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you .... Do not fear, for I am with you ....' (43:2, 4, 5)

In the Psalms, the prayer book of Israel, the God addressed by the psalmists is both transcendent and immanent. 'The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. Who is like the Lord our God, who is seated on high, who looks far down on the heavens and the earth?' (Psalm 113:4–6).<sup>11</sup> But God is invoked in times of trouble and praised for infinite benevolence. Psalm 23 speaks of the Divine Shepherd who provides for, leads, protects and anoints the people, and who celebrates with them. Psalm 139 is an extraordinary example of the intimacy of God. The psalmist here expresses his astonishment at the overwhelming presence of God that penetrates both his innermost depths and outermost universe. He acknowledges being known by God inside and out. It is hard to find another text in the Bible that would express the immanence of God in clearer terms:

<sup>10</sup> The 'Holy' God of Hosea, Isaiah, Habakkuk, Ezekiel and Jeremiah (Hosea 11:9, Isaiah 6; 40:25 and 41: 14, Habakkuk 1: 12 and 3: 3, Ezekiel 1, Jeremiah 50: 29 and 51: 5 respectively) is not distant and indifferent to the human condition of the chosen people. God is the Lord and husband of Israel, ever willing to forgive her infidelity and to accept her (Hosea 2). YHWH is father (Hosea 11: 1–4; 8–9) and mother (Isaiah 49: 15–16) of Israel. See Paolo Merlo, *L'Antico testamento: introduzione storico-letteraria* (Rome: Carocci, 2008), 208.

<sup>11</sup> See also Psalms 71:19, 92:8, 97:9.



God the Father, by *Giovanni Battista Cima da Conegliano*, c. 1510–1517

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.  
You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern  
my thoughts from far away.  
You search out my path and my lying down, and are  
acquainted with all my ways.  
Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it  
completely.  
You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand  
upon me. (Psalm 139: 1–5)<sup>12</sup>

Many of the attributes of the immanent God in both Testaments are stereotypically feminine—closeness, tenderness, affection, mercy and intimacy—despite the fact that God is always grammatically masculine. The absence of feminine pronouns referring to God thus does not imply that the people of Israel and the New Testament Christians did not experience the motherly tenderness and intimacy of God. This can be inferred from the maternal metaphors used to refer to God. Deuteronomy 32: 11–12 compares God to a mother eagle: ‘As an eagle stirs up its nest,

<sup>12</sup> For an interesting treatment of how biblical exegesis can help with prayer, taking Psalm 139 as an example, see Juan Manuel Martín-Moreno, ‘La nueva hermenéutica y el uso de la Biblia en Ejercicios’, *Manresa*, 82 (2010), 325–339.

and hovers over its young; as it spreads its wings, takes them up, and bears them aloft on its pinions, the Lord alone guided him ...'.<sup>13</sup> A more direct image asks, 'Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands ...' (Isaiah 49: 15–16a) Luke reports these words of Jesus in his Gospel: 'How often have I desired to gather your [Jerusalem's] children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!' (Luke 13: 34b)

The reader of the New Testament encounters many references to an immanent God. The incarnation is undoubtedly the event that speaks most loudly and clearly of the immanence of God—Emmanuel, 'God is with us' (Matthew 1: 23).<sup>14</sup> John announces: 'And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth' (John 1: 14). In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus declares, 'The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, "Look, here it is!" or "There it is!" For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among [within] you' (Luke 17: 20b–21).

The disciples of Jesus testify to an intimate divine experience:

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us (1 John 1: 1–2).

The eternal Word goes beyond—transcends—transcendence itself and becomes immanent:

Though he was in the form of God, he 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. (Philippians 2: 6–8)

The immanence of God is a consequence of God's self-communication and self-emptying.

<sup>13</sup> Compare Exodus 19:4; and see *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty*, edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton: Scripture, 1983), 1985.

<sup>14</sup> See James D. G. Dunn, 'Incarnation', in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, volume 3, 37.



*Transcendence and Immanence Together*

The christological hymn of Philippians 2 is quoted above speaking both of God's transcendence (vv. 9–11) and immanence (vv. 6–8). The hymn describes the descent and the ascent of the Eternal Word. This is an example where both immanence and transcendence appear in the same pericope. There are more texts of this nature. In the Old Testament, Isaiah 57: 15 indicates the paradox of transcendence:

For thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite.

*Qadhosh*, the 'Holy One' expresses the otherness of God, yet this Holy One dwells in the midst of Israel (compare Isaiah 12:6), especially in the humble and contrite of heart. Holiness does not necessarily mean aloofness or distance. God is both far off and near at hand.<sup>15</sup>

A second text of this kind is found in St Paul's Areopagus discourse (Acts 17: 24–31). The God to whom Paul refers in vv. 24–26 is transcendent: 'The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth'. This God is self-sufficient, master of space and time, and cannot be confined by human schemes. But in v. 27 Paul makes a transition: human beings, he says, 'would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us'. Then comes the bible verse which perhaps best expresses the intimacy of God's immanence: 'For "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we too are his offspring"' (v. 28). This God who grounds our being is none other than the risen Christ.

***Finding the Presence***

Biblical texts such as these might give the impression that God's immanence comes at the cost of God's transcendence and vice versa, but, as Stratford Caldecott writes: 'God is not merely immanent (like a soul within a body) nor merely transcendent (like a Deist watchmaker). He is both, and he is immanent precisely because he is transcendent and, therefore, impossible to circumscribe or limit.' In a certain sense, the reverse is also true. God can be transcendent precisely by being immanent, omnipresent and

<sup>15</sup> See Fretheim, 'God, OT View of', 608. See also Ephesians 4: 6: 'one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all'.

all-pervading. It should be remembered, moreover, that transcendence *without* immanence would produce deism (as Caldecott affirms), and immanence without transcendence would lead to pantheism. Each requires the other to form a balanced theology.<sup>16</sup>

The so-called ‘fundamental axiom’ of Trinitarian theology proposed by Karl Rahner is helpful here. He writes: “The “economic Trinity” is the “immanent Trinity” and the “immanent Trinity” is the “economic Trinity””.<sup>17</sup> Alister McGrath offers an explanation of his words:

The basic distinction here is between the manner in which God is known through revelation in history (‘the economic Trinity’), and the manner in which God exists internally (‘the immanent Trinity’). The ‘economic Trinity’ can be thought of as the way in which we experience God’s self-disclosure in history, and the ‘immanent Trinity’ as God’s diversity and unity as [they are] within the Godhead itself.

So, in Rahner’s axiom, McGrath concludes, ‘the way God is revealed and experienced in history corresponds to the way in which God actually is’.<sup>18</sup> Thus before even becoming a concept or doctrine, the axiom is an experiential reality. It is the lived experience of the biblical community. They spoke of a transcendent and an immanent God because they experienced God as such. We know that the transcendent God is also immanent because that is how God revealed Godself to us.<sup>19</sup> The scriptures consistently maintain a tension between these two seemingly opposite views of God and do not resolve it.

Another, quite different source of tension within the scriptures is explored by Roland Meynet in his introduction to the synoptic Gospels.<sup>20</sup> Meynet speaks of the tensions that arise in the process of interpreting two or more biblical versions of similar material. The Bible retains, for example, two narratives of the creation (Genesis 1:1–2:4a and 2:4b–25) and two of the giving of the Decalogue (Deuteronomy 5:6–21 and Exodus 20:2–17). The synoptic Gospels provide many more such cases—notably, for Meynet, the two versions of the Lord’s Prayer. Would it not have been simpler to opt for one version over the other?

<sup>16</sup> Stratford Caldecott, “‘Lost in the Forest?’ Some Books on Ecology”, *Priests and People*, 9 (1995).

<sup>17</sup> Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, translated by Joseph Donceel (London: Burns and Oates, 2001 [1970]), 22.

<sup>18</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), 243.

<sup>19</sup> See Luis F. Ladaria, *The Living and True God: The Mystery of the Trinity*, translated by María Isabel Reyna (Miami: Convivium, 2010), 49 and n.2.

<sup>20</sup> Roland Meynet, *A New Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels* (Miami: Convivium, 2010), 220–223.

He explains the wisdom behind retaining both versions by using the image of the two cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant. Meynet gives an exegetical analysis of Exodus 22: 10–40, the description of the construction of the Ark. The two cherubim face each other on the Ark, and the space between them is empty. In the Ark are the tablets of the Law—the Decalogue, the words inscribed by the Lord on the stones. Where, then, does one find the presence of the Lord?

His word will not be shut up in the objects described, not even in the ark of the covenant or the Decalogue; his word will come out from the space between the two cherubim placed facing one another on the mercy seat: «from between the two cherubim», says the text, at the very heart of the central passage, the place of the *Shekina*, the Presence.<sup>21</sup>

A version of this argument could be used to explain the reason for the unresolved tension between opposing views of God in the Bible. Writing about the nature of biblical wisdom, Daniel Treier sheds light on the need to maintain the dynamic tension between the transcendence and the immanence of God:

The way of wisdom might foster a Christian theism that maintains transcendence via doctrines of creation and prevenient divine action without ignoring the immanent. The postmodern hope is that, in this manner, tensions connected to biblical wisdom—transcendence and immanence, divine and human action, creation and redemption, command and common sense—might be embraced in their movement rather than denied by prioritizing one side or the other in some linear procedure. Usually, such procedures have made God remote to, or expelled from, what is rational.<sup>22</sup>

It is important to maintain the tension between the two poles of transcendence and immanence because that tension is creative and, in the midst of it, one finds the Presence.

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<sup>21</sup> Meynet, *New Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels*, 222.

<sup>22</sup> Daniel J. Treier, 'Wisdom', in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, 846.

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## **OPEN WIDE YOUR HEARTS, BEGINNING WITH THE MASS**

### **Looking into the Future of the Catholic Eucharistic Celebration**

*John Zupez*

**T**HE FALLING OFF in Mass attendance today, especially among young people, presents pastors—and parents—with a challenging situation, but not one without hope. This hope emerges from a variety of sources. The decline in membership of organized religions is not matched by a rise in atheism, which in the United States remains constant at about 3 per cent.<sup>1</sup> Young adults who no longer attend church services almost invariably retain some spirituality. That spirituality deserves our attention. We ask here: why might young people find it difficult to find Christ in the Christian community? And what manner of celebrating the Mass might be most supportive of the spirituality of young people?

While the studies quoted in this article come from the United States, its concerns apply much more broadly in our global society. The pattern can be seen as a part of the signs of the times to which the bishops were already responding at the Second Vatican Council.

#### ***The Foresight of Vatican II***

In the first sentence of Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, the bishops anticipated the issues and the anguish that would only grow sharper over time. They recalled 'the joys and the

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Drescher, 'The Gospel According to the "Nones": Reading Scripture without Religion', *America* (8–15 June 2015), available at <https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/gospel-according-nones>. The figures for the rest of the world vary widely: see Ariela Keysar and Juhem Navarro-Rivera, 'A World of Atheism: Global Demographics', in *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*, edited by Steven Bullivant and Michael Rose (Oxford: OUP, 2013), 553–586.

hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.<sup>2</sup> Then, in 1971, the World Synod of Catholic Bishops would emphasize the importance of this theme for the future of the Church. They wrote:

Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.<sup>3</sup>

Over the years since the Council, the connection between faith and justice has drawn much attention, as a 'constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel', amid ever-widening awareness of other people's hopes and griefs in our time. Since the late 1960s many Catholic schools have involved all their students in service projects on behalf of the poor or needy. Volunteerism has grown immensely both inside and outside such schools. Jesuit schools worldwide have taken educating 'men and women for others' as central to their mission since 1973 when the Jesuit Father General Pedro Arrupe coined the phrase.<sup>4</sup> Also many Catholic

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*A student volunteering in a soup kitchen*

<sup>2</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, n. 1.

<sup>3</sup> World Synod of Catholic Bishops, *Justice in the World*, n. 6, available at <https://www1.villanova.edu/content/dam/villanova/mission/JusticeInTheWorld1971.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> See Pedro Arrupe, address to the Tenth International Congress of Jesuit Alumni of Europe, 31 July 1973, available at <http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/men-for-others.html>.

universities have created the post of vice-president for mission to foster attention to social justice in teaching and in outreach programmes. National and international volunteer corps now exist among Jesuit alumni as well as for retirees who would like to see life as the service of others.

We need to ask, then, how well our eucharistic celebrations each Sunday foster this expansive charity and justice for all? Do these celebrations inspire Roman Catholics to distinguish themselves because of their baptism into Christ? Is the witness of practising Catholics a force drawing others to the eucharistic celebration?

### **'Somes' and 'Nones'**

In 2015, a series of interviews and surveys was carried out by a professor at the Jesuit Santa Clara University in California to investigate what people considered 'spiritually meaningful'.<sup>5</sup> In the interviews a significant difference was observed between the responses of the *nones*, people who say they have no religious affiliation, and the views of *somes*, those who do identify themselves as religious. In general, the *nones* retained a spirituality characterized by universal charity, with their favourite bible passage often being the parable of the Good Samaritan. In this parable Jesus emphasizes that everyone is our neighbour, and he also makes another point: it was not the religious people, the priest and Levite, who passed the test. It was the Samaritan, despised by the Jews, who took compassion on the Jewish man who had been beaten by robbers and left to die.

On the other hand, many *somes*, who attend religious services, were so-called 'Golden Rule Christians', preferring a less expansive description of charity, the Golden Rule: do to others as you would have them do to you.<sup>6</sup> This can be interpreted in various ways, but it is not as inclusive as the Good Samaritan parable. It can be well satisfied by a more parochial charity towards those around us. We might focus on our relatives and friends, those who are like us and those in our own country—since if the law does not protect them then it does not protect us.

The psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg divides human moral development into six stages, from an initial orientation towards punishment and

<sup>5</sup> See Elizabeth Drescher, *Choosing Our Religion: The Spiritual Lives of America's Nones* (New York: Oxford UP, 2016), appendix A.

<sup>6</sup> See Nancy Ammerman, 'Golden Rule Christianity: Lived Religion in the American Mainstream', in *Lived Religion in America: Towards a History of Practice*, edited by David D. Hall (Princeton: PUP, 1997), 196–216; Drescher, *Choosing Our Religion*, 182–217.

obedience to the acquisition of ‘universal ethical principles’.<sup>7</sup> The narrow way of understanding the Golden Rule falls into his second stage, characterized by ‘individual instrumental purpose and exchange’: ‘at stage 2 the Golden Rule is integrated as concrete reciprocity, “return favor for favor and blow for blow”’.<sup>8</sup> We need to ask how far the attitudes of practising Catholics are located in this second stage. In it social awareness extends to those ‘like us’ (in familial, ethnic, racial, class or religious terms). There is an over-reliance on authority figures, and on a somewhat mechanical observance of the law. From this perspective mere attendance at Mass is a serious obligation; but active participation is not required. Other characteristics of this stage would be self-righteousness, deal-making (with the saints, perhaps?) and seeing suffering as punishment. By contrast, when we see *everyone* as our neighbour, we are operating at the highest stage of moral awareness. Such universal charity has strong roots in Christianity.

### **The Calling**

**Divine charity  
is most  
distinguished  
by its  
universality**

Jesus called on his followers to love God with all their heart, by loving as he did. And how did he love? He brought ‘good news to the poor’ (Luke 4: 18) by reaching out to the suffering and afflicted, the outcasts of his time. His whole life has been summed up in the description ‘Jesus, the Compassion of God’.<sup>9</sup> And his one, distinctive new commandment to his followers was: love one another as I have loved you. Jesus described this compassionate love as the whole substance of the judgment on our lives: how we have fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger, clothed the naked, cared for the sick and visited the prisoner (Matthew 25:35–36).

From this we can conclude that divine charity is most distinguished by its universality. It embraces all God’s children, not just those near or dear to us. As Jesus said: ‘If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.’ (Luke 6:32)

St Paul eloquently reinforces this in his description of charity as far superior to all other gifts: If I ‘do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a

<sup>7</sup> See Lawrence Kohlberg, *Essays on Moral Development*, volume 1, *The Philosophy of Moral Development: Moral Stages and the Idea of Justice* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), xxviii and throughout.

<sup>8</sup> Anne Colby, Lawrence Kohlberg, John Gibbs and Marcus Lieberman, ‘A Longitudinal Study of Moral Judgment’, in *New Research in Moral Development*, edited by Bill Puka (New York: Garland, 1994), 4.

<sup>9</sup> See Elizabeth Johnson and Susan Rakoczy, *Who Do You Say That I Am? Introducing Contemporary Christology* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 1997), 68.



clanging cymbal' (1 Corinthians 13: 1). Charity is all we take with us when we die. It is the determinant of our sanctity, the degree to which we reflect God to others through our glorified bodies. Calling it sanctifying grace and divine life has not helped clarify how we grow in this grace. Charity is simply unselfish love, the decision to keep doing good, not looking for any material advantage for ourselves. This charity is fostered by the Spirit that God has placed within the heart of every human person.

If I could suggest a warning, an addition to the list of snarky sayings that characterize Pope Francis, my contribution would be: the Church is not a private salvation club. We are baptized to be ambassadors of God's love for the whole world. The final cause or purpose of the Communion bread needs more emphasis in our homilising and manner of celebration: it is for our transformation into other Christs. During the eucharistic prayer at Mass the priest never prays in his own name; it is always 'we' who offer, 'we' who celebrate. And it is we who need to spend some quiet time after Communion listening to how God is calling us to speak and act so as to bring the face of Christ into our world, near and far. Pedro Arrupe wrote:

The rediscovery of what might be called the 'social dimension' of the Eucharist is of tremendous significance today. We once again see Holy Communion as the sacrament of brotherhood and unity .... In the Eucharist, in other words, we receive not only Christ, the head of the Body, but its members as well .... Wherever there is suffering in the body, wherever members of it are in want or oppressed, we, because we have received the same body and are part of it, must be directly involved. We cannot opt out or say to a brother or sister: 'I do not need you. I will not help you.'<sup>10</sup>

How far have we progressed since Vatican II in helping Catholics to see the deeper meaning of the communion bread, and the nature of Christian charity, which requires love for all peoples? Where are we now as Church, and what might be our next steps forward?

### **Testimony to Deficiencies**

At Vatican II, Cardinal De Smedt of Bruges described the evils bedeviling the Church today as clericalism, legalism and triumphalism.<sup>11</sup> These are not likely to attract young people to our parishes. And yet where

<sup>10</sup> Pedro Arrupe, 'The Eucharist and Hunger', in *Justice with Faith Today* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1980), 176–177.

<sup>11</sup> See Henri de Lubac, *Vatican Council Notebooks*, volume 1, translated by Andrew Stefanelli and Anne Englund Nash (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2015), 429.

are we on these, fifty years after Vatican II? In his apostolic exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis decried ‘an excessive clericalism which keeps [the laity] away from decision-making’.<sup>12</sup> He frequently criticizes the lavish lifestyles of some priests and religious, and deplors the cleric ‘worried more about himself, about organizations and structures, than about the true good of the People of God’.<sup>13</sup> Of legalism Francis has said that too often people ‘dilute’ the life-giving power of mercy with ‘abstract formulations and legalistic conditions’.<sup>14</sup> And of triumphalism he has stated: ‘When I hear about the Christian roots of Europe, I sometimes fear the tone, which can be triumphalist or vengeful. This then becomes colonialism.’<sup>15</sup> He has also said:

Triumphalism in the Church impedes the Church .... A triumphalist, half-way Church, that is a Church that is content with what it is or has, well sorted—well organized—with all its offices, everything in order, everything perfect.<sup>16</sup>

In spite of this image of the Church, which many in the hierarchy maintain, what we get from the media is more the image of the Peter who denied Christ. That everything is not ‘in order’ is apparent from the paedophilia scandal, from the revelations about the doings of some cardinals in the Vatican, and from the growing pains the Church is experiencing, with sharp disputes between its conservative wing and its progressive wing.

Yet, the Church is not the hierarchy but the Lord’s people, and this also must be our message. We have seen that many young adults, in particular, wish to maintain a more expansive and universalising understanding of what it means to be the People of God, the Body of Christ, than what they see at present in their local Christian communities. Just as Pope Francis comes across to people as another Christ, our brother,

<sup>12</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 102.

<sup>13</sup> Pope Francis, homily, Profession of Faith with the Bishops of the Italian Episcopal Conference, 24 May 2013, available at [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130523\\_omelia-professio-fidei-cei.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130523_omelia-professio-fidei-cei.html). And see his address to the meeting with seminarians and novices, 6 July 2013, at [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130706\\_incontro-seminaristi.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130706_incontro-seminaristi.html).

<sup>14</sup> Pope Francis, ‘Discourse of the Holy Father Francis to the Members of the 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus’, 4, available at [http://gc36.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/20161024\\_Discourse\\_Pope\\_GC36\\_EN.pdf](http://gc36.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/20161024_Discourse_Pope_GC36_EN.pdf), accessed 26 October 2017.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Pope Francis’, interview with Guillaume Goubert and Sébastien Maillard, *La Croix* (17 May 2016), translated by Stefan Gigacz, available at <https://www.la-croix.com/Religion/Pape/INTERVIEW-Pope-Francis-2016-05-17-1200760633>.

<sup>16</sup> ‘Pope at Mass: The Temptation of Triumphalism’, Vatican Radio (29 May 2013), available at <http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-at-mass-the-temptation-of-triumphalism>.

so can all the clergy and parishioners exhibit the compassionate and welcoming face of Christ as he would have us do. This most centrally involves our eucharistic celebrations, and so we ask how might these be improved. In order to understand where we are and the road forward, it helps to understand how we got here—the historical background.

### ***Historical Background***

That we are one people under God, all brothers and sisters, is a basic tenet of Christian faith. This became obscured during the Counter-Reformation period and remained so right up to Vatican II. By the 1960s most Catholics considered to be abhorrent practices that once seemed justifiable: the persecution of heretics, the mistreatment of indigenous peoples under colonialism, the inferior place assigned to women in society, and the exclusion of black people from Catholic universities in the United States right up to the 1940s. The social encyclicals that began with Leo XIII in 1891 saw the Church addressing new challenges in the public forum, and addressing old issues in new ways.

The Vatican II Declaration on Religious Freedom which called for freedom of conscience was hotly debated but, in the end, received an overwhelming majority of the bishops' votes. This was a turning point in the Church's history, given what some popes had said during the Counter-Reformation period. For centuries missionaries had risked their lives simply to baptize people, based on the prevalent belief that the baptism of desire—implicit baptism expressed in a Christian life and death—was a rare thing. Most of those not baptized were considered to be condemned to an eternity in Hell.<sup>17</sup> A God who would create most of the people in history in this frightful situation now seems more in accord with the earliest period of the Hebrew scripture than with what educated young adults today are prepared to accept.

Another stimulus to a more universal charity came from the study of Paul's epistles, which had been considered dangerous territory for Catholics since it was seen as having led other Christians to heresy since the Reformation. During my own studies for the priesthood at St Louis University Divinity School in the mid-1960s, all our professors had been educated at the Gregorian University in Rome, with one exception: for

<sup>17</sup> See Avery Dulles, "Who Can Be Saved?" *First Things* (February 2008), available at <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2008/02/001-who-can-be-saved-8>, accessed 26 October 2017.

Paul we had to look to Presbyterian scholar Keith F. Nickle (which made the local archbishop to remove his seminarians from the Divinity School!).

Catholics still do not hear as much as they should from the greatest Christian theologian. We need to hear more sermons on Paul's teaching about the body of Christ alongside Vatican II's teaching on the subject to understand the present moment in church history. The image of the body of Christ is not purely metaphorical but rather the most real presentation of what we are called to be, sons and daughters in the Son, now and for all eternity.<sup>18</sup> And it is difficult to escape the fact that all those who are living according to their consciences are a part of this body, which follows from God's universal salvific will.<sup>19</sup> Those who are baptized disciples of Christ do not have a free pass, but a talent to be used to show the face of Christ to the world. In this way Christians are to bring all peoples to a conscious understanding of the source of the Spirit in their hearts, and of their calling in Christ Jesus.

Pope Francis, with his accustomed empathy for how people feel, has decried an excessive focus on private morality:

If in the course of the liturgical year a parish priest speaks about temperance ten times but only mentions charity or justice two or three times, an imbalance results, and precisely those virtues which ought to be most present in preaching and catechesis are overlooked.<sup>20</sup>

Francis also exemplifies the teaching of Ignatius of Loyola in the *Spiritual Exercises*, that we should find God in all things (Exx 230–237). He is very ecumenical in his outreach and also very non-judgmental, seeing hope for salvation in even the most challenging situations. As Paul taught, 'Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more' (Romans 5:20). How then can the Eucharist be celebrated to inspire greater commitment to bring God's love to the world?

### **Challenges for our Eucharistic Celebration**

In brief, *ressourcement*, recapturing the spirit of the early church Eucharist, was behind the liturgical changes of Vatican II.<sup>21</sup> What early Christians celebrated in memory of Jesus was to be restored to its 'noble simplicity'

<sup>18</sup> *Lumen gentium*, 1. 7.

<sup>19</sup> *Lumen gentium*, 1. 16.

<sup>20</sup> *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 38.

<sup>21</sup> Keith Pecklers, 'The History of the Modern Liturgical Movement', at <http://religion.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-19> (paywall).

and forcefulness, free of distracting accretions.<sup>22</sup> It has been said that it has often taken a century to implement a church council, and that we are still only half way to implementing the liturgical renewal envisaged by many of the theologians at the council. Hans Urs von Balthasar has said:

We must make every effort to arouse the sense of community within the liturgy ... enlarging the scope of prayer, so often narrow and selfish, to embrace the concerns of the whole Church and, indeed—as in the Our Father—of God .... [This is] one of the conditions for the presence of the Eucharistic Lord: ‘Where two or three are gathered together ...’—that is, where individuals, in profound faith and obedience, desire to be and to realise the Church—‘there I am in the midst of you’.<sup>23</sup>

Vatican II called for full, active, conscious participation from the congregation. What suggestions have been made to foster this participation?

The cardinal in charge of the Congregation for the Divine Worship in 2016 advocated a return to Masses celebrated with the priest’s back to the people, in the name of ‘a more authentic implementation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*’.<sup>24</sup> This seems to me to be the wrong direction in which to go. A vibrant sharing among the congregation is facilitated by the priest facing the people and inviting them to take the active part to which they are called as one priestly people. There are also other ways in which a careful choice of options can facilitate participation. The *esprit de corps* experienced at youth congresses and pilgrimages and at Christmas



<sup>22</sup> *Sacrosanctum concilium*, n. 34.

<sup>23</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Church and World* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 32.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Full Text: Cardinal Sarah at Sacra Liturgia Conference’, *Catholic Herald* (12 July 2016), available at <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2016/07/12/full-text-cardinal-sarah-at-sacra-liturgia-conference/>.

Masses, when people are close together and singing with spirit, can be an experience that draws youth to weekly celebrations. This spirit must be our focus as we plan the liturgy, with the choir fully collaborating towards this goal. We can listen to beautiful sacred music at home, and God's redeeming love for us is constant, with or without our celebration. But sacraments appeal to our social nature, when we feel oneness with a community that, in baptism, promised to share its faith, and can fulfil this promise, either more or less, at the weekly Eucharist.

### **Parts of the Mass**

#### *The Meaning of the Communion*

At the beginning of the Mass, although turning in on ourselves and confessing our sinfulness is offered as an option, in the *New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship* Daniel Grigassy writes:

The penitential rite has been experienced in its various forms as a disturbance in the ritual flow of the liturgy, an afterthought between the greeting and gathering prayer. Many pastors and liturgists note this misplacement of the penitential rite. If the purpose of the introductory rites is to make the assembled people a unified community and to prepare them properly to listen to God's word and to celebrate the eucharist ... why run the risk of individualizing members of the assembly in a penitential mode after they have gathered precisely as a worshipping community?<sup>25</sup>

The same might be said of the *Lamb of God*, which can convey the idea that we make ourselves worthy by protestations of our sinfulness. We should rather see our imperfections as always remaining with us, with the love or true charity signified by the communion bread as the only remedy.

The *Lamb of God* accompanies the breaking of the communion bread and is repeated only 'as many times as necessary until the rite has reached its conclusion' (*GIRM*, 83). Often the priest has completed breaking the bread by the time the congregation has concluded the gesture of peace, and a spoken rather than sung *Lamb of God* is more than sufficient. Also, the priest is ordinarily not to go to the tabernacle for hosts: 'It is most desirable that the faithful ... receive the Lord's Body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass' (*GIRM*, 85). By focusing on the bread consecrated at this Eucharist,

<sup>25</sup> Daniel Grigassy, 'Penitential Rite at Mass', in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, edited by Peter E. Fink (Collegeville: Michael Glazier), 944–945, quoting *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (Washington DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011; hereafter *GIRM*), 47.

the message can be driven home that it is our own consecration, our own transformation into the body of Christ on earth that the bread signifies.

### *Music and Community*

The ritual also recommends that the communicants ‘by means of the unity of their voices ... highlight more clearly the “communitarian” nature of the procession to receive Communion’ (GIRM, 86). This leads to the question of how to enhance congregational singing. The chief task of the choir is to facilitate this congregational singing, not to introduce variety or enhance a narrowly defined theme for the particular Mass. As *Sacrosanctum concilium* affirms:

... fully conscious, and active participation ... is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy, ... the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit.<sup>26</sup>

Fostering this spirit needs to become our top priority if the Mass is to become again a serious force, cherished in the Christian life. For this it helps for the hymns to be well memorised, as is evident if the hymn is to be sung during the communion procession. And the singing is *at least* marginally better when people know the song by heart. It also makes for better liturgy when the people are not reading from books but listening to the proclamation of the Word and conscious of others close around them with whom they are united in song, not scared by the sound of their own voices.

To achieve this fulsome participation the ritual allows for the people’s use of *seasonal* responses to the responsorial psalm between the readings. Also, as the congregation come to understand what it means for Christ’s presence to be realised ‘where two or three are gathered in my name’ (Matthew 18: 20), they may be persuaded to sit together, at the front, close to the table of the Lord, the better to signify a community come to share their faith. Tabernacles can be removed from behind the table of the Lord, and the focus placed on Christ’s presence in Word and in community celebration. Placing fewer statues front and centre removes the atmosphere of a shrine and reminds us that we, the people, constitute Church.

<sup>26</sup> *Sacrosanctum concilium*, n.14. And see n.114: ‘Choirs must be diligently promoted, especially in cathedral churches; but bishops and other pastors of souls must be at pains to ensure that, whenever the sacred action is to be celebrated with song, the whole body of the faithful may be able to contribute that active participation which is rightly theirs’.

Early Christians huddled together to support one another in a hostile Roman empire. In our increasingly agnostic world, leery of superstition and credulity, we better realise the power of our faith if, as a believing community, we ‘lift up our hearts’ together in sincere *gratitude to God*, and so do not fall prey to indifference to the sufferings of our neighbours, near and far. This gratitude leading to a lived response of service is the fruit of a well-celebrated Eucharist. Even the quiet time after Communion, when priest and people together listen to the Lord in their hearts, can remain a meaningful experience of being one body in the Lord.

### *The Dismissal*

Pope Benedict called for amplification of the dismissal at Mass, to remind us that we are all disciples, sent forth to preach the good news of God’s love by our lives.<sup>27</sup> While there are places in the Mass where the priest is encouraged to personalise a transition, some would like to see this extended to the dismissal, where proposals have included one or other like the following, taken largely from 1 Thessalonians 5:

Go forth in peace, have courage, hold on to what is good, return no one evil for evil. Strengthen the fainthearted, support the weak, help the suffering, respect all persons. Love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of God’s Spirit in you, and give thanks to God in all circumstances.<sup>28</sup>

If this is truly the spirit of our celebration together, then we will be further encouraged to present the face of Christ to the world as Pope Francis has done, and his popularity will become the Church’s popularity.

### ***Sacrifice: A Sticking Point***

The Catholic Church has been changing and developing its understanding of sacrifice from at least the 1960s.<sup>29</sup> While the word ‘propitiate’ was restored in the 2007 GIRM in English, after being removed in 1971, in the

<sup>27</sup> Benedict XVI, *Sacrosanctum caritatis*, n.51. And see also Brian MacMichael, ‘The New Translation of the Holy Mass: The Concluding Rites’, *Today’s Catholic* (2 March 2011), available at <http://www.todaycatholicnews.org/2011/03/the-new-translation-of-the-holy-mass-13/>, accessed 27 October 2017.

<sup>28</sup> This form is used in the Church of England; see ‘Blessings’, in *Common Worship* (London: Church House, 2006), 299, available at <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/texts/principal-services/holy-communion/furtherblessings.aspx>.

<sup>29</sup> See *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, edited by Raymond E. Brown (Pearson, 1989), 82: 73; 76: 89–95. Also see Robert J. Daly, ‘Sacrifice: The Way to Enter the Paschal Mystery’, *America* (12 May 2003), available at <https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/433/article/sacrifice-way-enter-paschal-mystery>.



understanding of most theologians ‘expiation’ better expresses the purpose of Jesus’ self-offering in obedience to the Father. The primary effect of this sacrifice is to give us confidence and encouragement. The theme of confidence occurs thirteen times in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which explains how Jesus replaces superabundantly the earlier ideas of sacrifice.<sup>30</sup> Sacrifice in the New Testament is spiritualised: obedience to the Father’s will, and also lips that praise God’s name (Hebrews 5:8–9; 13:15). As Edward Kilmartin of the Gregorian University in Rome explains:

Sacrifice is not, in the first place, an activity of human beings directed to God and, in the second place, something that reaches its goal in the response of divine acceptance and bestowal of divine blessing on the cultic community. Rather, sacrifice in the New Testament understanding—and thus in its Christian understanding—is, in the first place, the self-offering of the Father in the gift of His Son, and in the second place the unique response of the Son in his humanity to the Father, and in the third place, the self-offering of believers in union with Christ by which they share in his covenant relationship with the Father.<sup>31</sup>

As long as we focus on what the priest is doing for us, we can remain passive, in mere attendance, and believe we are achieving the fruit of the



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<sup>30</sup> See John Zupez, ‘Salvation in the Epistle to the Hebrews’, *The Bible Today* (October 1968), 2590–2595.

<sup>31</sup> Edward J. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West, History and Theology* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1999), 381–382.

Mass. But when we accept that the effect of the Mass is proportionate to our own disposition and depends vitally on our active participation, we see liturgy in a new light. We recognise that, as social beings, we can profit from others' faith-filled participation in the Mass, and that we owe them our full and active participation. There is an anomaly in the situation, easily perceived by the young, when we sit apart in our own space and come close to 'strangers' only for the brief moment of the 'gesture of peace'. Joining together with strangers in the same pew can embolden us to be more Christlike to others outside church. Homilies, the liturgical committee, and the priest's column in the parish bulletin can assist in generating a renewed spirit at Mass.

### ***A Merciful and Loving God***

I can remember in the 1940s our revered pastor saying that one must attend Sunday Mass in one's own parish; to choose freely to go elsewhere failed to fulfil this serious obligation. In those days such warnings had their impact, even amid doubts, since there was little questioning of the eternity of hell fire. Today, many find it difficult to believe in a God who prepares an eternity of punishment for human beings—of finite intelligence—or for those who have no effective access to the gospel.

It is not church dogma that anyone is in hell. Also, the 1993 Catechism seems to allow room for new understanding.<sup>32</sup> In n.1033 it states: 'This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called "hell"'. Then, in n.1035, its use of quotation marks can imply the metaphorical nature of the description, and the words that follow are certainly open to interpretation: '... they suffer the punishments of hell, "eternal fire". The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God.' Theologians have proposed alternative understandings of hell, including denying the natural immortality of the soul, which was originally a Greek rather than a Hebrew notion.<sup>33</sup> God gives life, and continuation in being is constant creation. It is through a life of active charity that we grow in the hope that we will share in Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

In these times of transition, many bishops (unlike my priest back in the 1940s) advise people to find a celebrational community to which

<sup>32</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1993).

<sup>33</sup> See Robert Wild, *A Catholic Reading Guide to Conditional Immortality: The Third Alternative to Hell and Universalism* (Eugene: Resource, 2016).

they can relate, whether they worship in the more Tridentine style or so that close togetherness is experienced throughout the Mass and not just a gesture at the sign of peace. There is hope that people will find deeper meaning and support in a more renewed and participatory eucharistic celebration.

The Mass has always been the school of catechesis for our brethren in the Eastern and Orthodox Churches. Its Sunday celebration will continue to speak eloquently about our faith, surpassing even what can be achieved in religious education class. A principle stated in the 'Directory for Masses with Children' is that at adult Masses with children present 'it is necessary to take great care that the children present do not feel neglected'.<sup>34</sup> Just as important is the experience of the Mass that young people have as they grow up. Does the beauty, the clarity of truth in the Mass, warm our hearts each week with fresh realisation of the community of which we are a part, so that the gospel in its integrity becomes more and more a force in our lives?

I have tried to predict what our eucharistic celebration will look like in the future. I have assumed that solid historical and biblical studies will have a continuing influence on the Catholic Mass, even as they did at Vatican II. The Church will come to judge the effectiveness of the eucharistic celebration by the help it brings to future generations of Christians who wish to experience a genuine sense of community as they strive to present the face of Christ to the world.

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<sup>34</sup> 'Directory for Masses with Children', n. 17, in *The Liturgy Documents: A Parish Resource* (Chicago: Liturgy Training, 2004), volume 1, 294.

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# SPIRITUAL DIRECTION, EXPERIENTIAL FOCUSING AND THE EXAMEN OF ST IGNATIUS

*Iain Radvan*

I HAVE BEEN BLESSED to accompany men and women through the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius in their full, thirty-day form (Twentieth Annotation), and I have marvelled at the action of God in people who are generous, open and mature in faith. During those days of intense prayer and reflection they share their experiences of God, which bring them healing and transformation. Likewise, in monthly spiritual direction I have been witness to the remarkable growth of directees in their relationship with God. Their imagination enables them to connect with God, their senses (both inner and outer) are attuned to God, they grasp the meaning of the movement of spirits, they are filled with a surrendering love. My intervention as a director seems minimal since God is doing all the work.

Yet not all my exercitants and directees have been 'high flyers'. There are those who struggle with silence, with using their imagination, with naming their feelings. While they enter their prayer exercises with willingness, their capacity to hold or run with the rich gifts of God seems less developed. God is still at work, I am in no doubt of it, but I am aware of wishing to do more in my role as their director.<sup>1</sup>

To be honest, with one or two directees, I have wondered what is going on in our sessions of spiritual direction. I understand that my loving, attentive presence is fundamental to their relationship with God and to their spiritual growth, but I struggle to be satisfied with just that. I

<sup>1</sup> I recognise that the role of the director in guiding a person through the Spiritual Exercises, and that directing those who seek guidance in a less structured way once every four to six weeks, is not the same, though there are many similarities.



suggest particular exercises to the directees, and the directees either forget them or they do not seem to have any particular impact. Month follows month and I cannot see any change in their relationship with God. Introducing the art of the discernment of spirits would seem premature. They appear to be satisfied with the prayer life they have, and they express gratitude for my accompanying them as a person of faith, but I feel there is potential as yet untapped. I sit with them for the hour and catch myself wondering where the talk is going and what

its fruit is. I have even asked myself if I am actually being a spiritual director in such a session.

Two recent discoveries, however, have renewed my attentiveness towards those individuals and my sense of purpose in the more trying sessions. The first of these was seeing the relationship between spiritual direction and the Examen of St Ignatius, and the second was reading about the psychological practice of Elfie Hinterkopf. It is these two perspectives on spiritual direction that I wish to explore here.

Elfie Hinterkopf is clinical psychologist who has based her practice on a method known as 'Experiential Focusing'. She has developed a particular set of questions in her sessions that has helped her clients to recognise and eschew what brings stress and depression into their lives, and to acknowledge what brings them energy and life.<sup>2</sup> She has her clients pay attention to the sensations of their body and be open to the messages that their unconscious gives to them in images or analogies. When a client is able to stay with his or her initial 'felt sense' and can say more about it, a new understanding of the self and/or the situation emerges.

<sup>2</sup> Elfie Hinterkopf, *Integrating Spirituality in Counselling: A Manual for Using the Experiential Focusing Method* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2015). The distinction between focusing and the 'inner critic' reads just like the symptoms of the good and bad spirits in Ignatian discernment (in my contact with her she has acknowledged her familiarity with the *Spiritual Exercises*).

This insight usually brings a ‘felt shift’, a change in the bodily sensations of the client, which gives that person a new and energizing perspective on the issue at hand. In a chapter about the client’s religious or spiritual orientation, Hinterkopf applies the same questions to the client’s relationship with God, for example, asking how that relationship feels now in the body in relation to the presenting issue. I will return to Hinterkopf’s practice when I look at the Examen in more detail.

### **The Examen**

Ignatius drew up two Examens in the *Spiritual Exercises*: the Particular and Daily Examen (Exx 24–31) and the General Examen (Exx 32–43).<sup>3</sup> While their methods are different (drawing lines and dots in one and following a five-step schema in the other), their practice and intent are similar. Both of them direct the person to identify some sin or defect to be monitored (Exx 24, 43). And as David Townsend points out, they are both done twice a day.<sup>4</sup>

However Joseph Tetlow has identified a significant difference between the two Examens: the General Examen ‘keeps me reflecting on how things stand between me and the Lord ... I keep up with the larger movements in my interior life’, while the Particular Examen aims at reflection on particular acts that the exercitant does or wants to do in his or her day. He says, ‘the two exercises embody slightly differing senses of sin and ways of interrelating with God our Creator and Lord’.<sup>5</sup>

In 1994 Tetlow published an article on the history of the Examen in the twentieth century in the context of US Catholicism.<sup>6</sup> He traced its roots back to the early Directories and the Constitutions of the Society. It seems that while both types of Examen from the *Spiritual Exercises* were taught, at that time there was little distinction made between them. Tetlow explains how every practice of the Examen is influenced greatly by the community and church culture of its time. In the early twentieth century in the USA, Christian holiness was based on a continuous fight against sin.

<sup>3</sup> I am using Mullan’s translation and the paragraph numbering provided by David Fleming in *Draw Me into Your Friendship: The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius. A Literal Translation and Contemporary Reading* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1978).

<sup>4</sup> David Townsend, ‘The Examen and the Exercises’, *The Way Supplement*, 52 (Spring 1985), 53–63.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Tetlow, *Choosing Christ in the World* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1999), 210.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Tetlow, ‘The Most Postmodern Prayer: American Jesuit Identity and the Examen of Conscience, 1920–1990’, *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 26/1 (January 1994). Mark Argent identifies Aschenbrenner’s Examen with Ignatius’ General Examen. See Mark Argent, ‘Reclaiming the Particular Examen’, *The Way*, 52/4 (October 2013), 57–69.

Sin was a violation of the law, which had an almost inexhaustible list of sinful actions and thoughts. The Examen was an exercise in monitoring one's attitudes and governing one's habits. What Ignatius had instructed exercitants to do in the *Spiritual Exercises*—to make an account of themselves (Exx 43) and to 'strive to amend' (Exx 25)—the US Jesuits of the early twentieth century made the focus of every Examen.

In the mid-twentieth century, with developments in psychology that recognised the interior dynamics of a human person, a new, more subjective sense of sin emerged. The methods of counselling developed by Carl Rogers, Alfred Adler and other humanistic psychologists were applied to spiritual direction. Both sin and grace were seen to be operating through the individual's natural human desires and needs.

The practice of discernment was rediscovered as Jesuits, and Catholics in general, were challenged to respond in a just way to contemporary social problems. In 1972 George Aschenbrenner published a seminal article about the Examen that opened up its potential as an exercise in discernment, showing how God is 'speaking' through the myriad relationships each of us has with family, friends, work colleagues, our civil community and our global community. He re-presented the Examen as a way of monitoring how each person is either working with God in creation or resisting that work in his or her actions and attitudes.<sup>7</sup> The General Congregation of the Society of Jesus held in 1974–1975 also reflected a new understanding of the value of the Examen, less for controlling sin and more for discerning the mission of the Society.<sup>8</sup>

Aschenbrenner's article marked a radical change in how those who pray in the Ignatian way understand and use the Examen. I shall draw out some of its main points. Aschenbrenner moves the person making the Examen from compiling a list of faults and striving to 'do better' to becoming,

... sensitive to our interior feelings, moods, and slightest urgings ... [because] it is here in the depths of our affectivity, so spontaneous, strong, and shadowy at times, that God moves us and deals with us most intimately.

He wants the one doing the Examen to ask 'what has been happening in us, how has the Lord been working in us, what has He been asking us'.<sup>9</sup> These questions imply an active relationship with God. The Examen is

<sup>7</sup> George Aschenbrenner, 'Consciousness Examen', *Review for Religious*, 31/1 (January 1972), 14–21.

<sup>8</sup> General Congregation 32, decree 32, n. 13, 58–9, 106, 238, in *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*.

<sup>9</sup> Aschenbrenner, 'Consciousness Examen', 18.



an exercise that builds on the person's life of prayer as well as his or her daily work and play.

Aschenbrenner also points out that while the time of contemplative prayer is vital to our relationship with God, without the Examen it can become isolated from the rest of our day. 'The examen gives our daily contemplative experience of God real bite into all our daily living; it is an important means to finding God in everything and not just in the time of formal prayer.' The final part of the General Examen, Aschenbrenner writes, brings the one making it to have more hope for the future, a continuing or greater dependence upon God to lead and enable, and the desire to conform more and more to the image of Christ.<sup>10</sup>

Donald St Louis later reviewed the five points of the General Examen (Exx 43) in a similar way, drawing out its capacity to help a person become aware of and intentional about his or her relationship to God and how he or she is invited to become more like Christ. The Examen, he writes, is fundamentally 'a prayer of discernment' which 'celebrates and enhances one's awareness of and response to the Lord ... in our world of human experience'.<sup>11</sup> He does not address the topic of 'sin' as specified in the Second Point ('the grace to know my sins') but, turning to the Fourth Point, with its focus on a person's sins and failings ('to ask pardon of God our Lord for my faults'), he emphasizes that for Ignatius, reflection on such issues is never to take place without a simultaneous awareness of God's mercy, as experienced in the First Week of the Exercises.<sup>12</sup>

More than forty years after he wrote, Aschenbrenner's understanding and practice of the General Examen have become the norm for Jesuits and other Ignatians at prayer.<sup>13</sup> Most recently, Mark Thibodeaux published a set of Examen which 'went viral' when presented as an application online.<sup>14</sup> Before I draw any connections between the Examen and spiritual

<sup>10</sup> Aschenbrenner, 'Consciousness Examen', 16, 20.

<sup>11</sup> Donald St Louis, 'The Ignatian Examen: A Way of Theological Reflection', *The Way Supplement*, 55 (Spring 1986), 66–76, here 67. And see also Townsend, 'The Examen and the Exercises', 55: 'In the course of the Full Exercises, the role of the Examen is to increase a person's awareness, putting him in affective touch with each half-day's experiences, so that he might better know, own and appropriate these experiences in a heart-felt manner'. Michael Ivens writes, 'Exponents of the Examen today emphasise the need to ask where one has responded or failed to respond to God, rather than to look simply for right or wrong actions' (*Understanding the Spiritual Exercises* [Leominster: Gracewing, 1998], 40).

<sup>12</sup> St Louis, 'The Ignatian Examen', 74.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, <http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen>.

<sup>14</sup> Mark Thibodeaux, 'Reimagining the Examen', available at Google Play and the Apple iStore. It should be noted, however, that in the introduction to the app ('About'), the basic model presented directs the person praying explicitly to 'repent of any mistake or failures' which seems to me to fall back on the previous understanding of the Examen as a time to list my faults and strive to do better.

direction, let me outline the structure of contemporary practice. There have been many variations published on the basic five-step process of the General Examen. My own formulation is typical:

*As the person at prayer I start by (A) asking God to help me to see myself as I really am, in God's eyes, as I look back over the day (or since the last time I did the Examen). Then (B) I give thanks to God for the good things that I recall (relationships, events, situations, places). Then (C) I start paying more attention to the feelings and attitudes that emerged from significant events of my day, comforting or discomfoting. This step leads into the next: (D) as far as possible (following the traces of the movements of the good and bad spirits) I try to find the origin of these inner sensations, perhaps finding them in God or in some disordered or unredeemed part of myself. Finally, (E) I ask God's grace to assist me in growing into the person I want to become (more free from the bad spirit, more responsive to the good spirit).*

### **Spiritual Direction**

Let us now look at the function of spiritual direction in the Ignatian tradition. Just as the Examen offers people of faith a time to become aware of how they are at present and to reflect on their interaction with God during one day, so spiritual direction offers them the opportunity to become aware of how they have been and to reflect on their relationship with God over a longer period of time and with another person of faith.

Spiritual direction can be described in broad and generic terms that apply to all faith traditions, and it can also be described more specifically in ways that fit a particular faith tradition, such as Christian or, more specifically still, Ignatian. The *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* defines a spiritual director as 'A person of innate gifts, aptitude, learning and experience who becomes involved in the guidance of others regarding prayer and the things of the spirit'.<sup>15</sup> Joe McHugh writes that 'spiritual direction helps a person find and embrace his or her own direction in, with, and toward God'; it is 'help that one believer offers to another to notice, understand, and respond to the personal word of resurrected life that God speaks into our lives'.<sup>16</sup> This emphasis on 'noticing' is shared by Richard Pearce, who links what he calls the 'spiritual discipline of

<sup>15</sup> M. Thornton, 'Spiritual Director', in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, edited by Rodney Hunter (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 1215. See also 'Spiritual Guide' in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, edited by Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987), volume 14, 29–37.

<sup>16</sup> Joe McHugh, 'The Power of Spiritual Direction', *St Anthony Messenger*, 122/3 (August 2014), 36–39.

noticing God' both to spiritual direction and to the Ignatian Examen.<sup>17</sup> 'Our task is to learn to notice', he writes. 'And by noticing with discernment over time we gain a sense of God's reality and presence.'<sup>18</sup> He has found spiritual direction useful to him in that task and, as he says, 'the examen proved to be a great way to begin noticing God'.<sup>19</sup>

The Jesuits William Barry and William Connolly write that the purpose of a spiritual director is to help a person 'to pay attention to God's personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship'.<sup>20</sup> Elsewhere Barry explains that relationship with God includes all the events, relationships and feelings that are part of anyone's day at work or at home. He emphasizes that a director needs to pay close attention to the experiences of the directee, even reliving them, before attempting to elicit any meaning from them.<sup>21</sup> Likewise Philip Sheldrake notes that a director should 'focus on the present and most especially on inner experiences or feelings, for direction is essentially a response to these (Exx 6, 17)'.<sup>22</sup>

Robert Marsh has offered spiritual directors in the Ignatian tradition a practical model of direction based on the structure of the hour of prayer designed by Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises* (presence, intention, story, repetition, desire, conversation).<sup>23</sup> As a director, Marsh invites the directee to focus on one pattern or issue that emerges from the person's life over the last month and to revisit a particular instance of that. From there the person may be able to bring into the present a hitherto unnoticed encounter with God. The director may then be able to see which spirit is at work ('good' or 'bad') and make this explicit to the directee as part of learning to discern for him- or herself. The session takes the person from remembering an encounter with God three weeks ago to meeting God again here and now.

The parallels between the Examen and spiritual direction are evident. My proposal is that the elements of the Examen may fruitfully be used as tools in spiritual direction: I shall make this explicit by referring to each

<sup>17</sup> Richard Pearce, *Noticing God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012), 14, 41.

<sup>18</sup> Pearce, *Noticing God*, 18.

<sup>19</sup> Pearce, *Noticing God*, 18, 48.

<sup>20</sup> William Barry and William Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, quoted in William Barry, 'Spiritual Direction in Daily Life', *Review of Ignatian Spirituality (CIS)*, 36/1 (2005), 62–72, here 62–63.

<sup>21</sup> Barry, 'Spiritual Direction in Daily Life', 66.

<sup>22</sup> Philip Sheldrake, 'St Ignatius Loyola and Spiritual Direction, I', *The Way*, 24/4 (October 1984), 315.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Marsh, 'Imagining Ignatian Spiritual Direction', *The Way*, 48/3 (July 2009), 27–42.

part of the Examen in turn, using the contemporary version outlined above. I shall also return to the ‘focusing’ exercises of Elfie Hinterkopf.

### ***The Examen in Spiritual Direction***

The Examen begins by instructing us to ask God to give us guidance and insight as we are doing the exercise (A). This is something that I personally do as the director before every session. Should I begin a session by bringing this to the directee’s attention as well? If you are a director who has the habit of starting a session with prayer, this is entirely suitable and helpful. The Examen then directs us to notice the blessings of life and to give God thanks for them (B). This is certainly a valuable exercise within spiritual direction. If the directee is not fully aware of these blessings at the start of the session, the director can draw his or her attention to the good experienced, which can re-energize the directee’s faith in God’s care.

It is natural once directees have begun to understand how spiritual direction works that they will review the highlights of their life since the last session. As director I try to see what patterns emerge or what particular incident seems significant enough to return to and explore more deeply. If there is more than one, then I will return to that which seems to have the most energy in it (be it comforting or discomfoting). I will guide the directee into expressing the deeper parts of this experience with reference specifically to how they feel about it (C and D).

It is my desire as a spiritual director for my directees to become more aware of their feelings and to be able to put words to them and accept them as indications of their deeper selves or their whole person (not just what they think or want to believe about themselves). In my attempts to make the prayer of Examen an opportunity for beginners in Ignatian prayer to learn and practise discernment of spirits, I give them a version of the Examen, sourced from the website [practicetribes.com](http://www.practicetribes.com), that draws the person’s attention to his or her feelings.<sup>24</sup> The text reads:

**Review the feelings that surface.** Now ask yourself what feelings surfaced throughout the last 24 hours. Did you feel frustrated? Ashamed? Disappointed? Excited? Joyful? Pained? Name the negative and positive feelings.

<sup>24</sup> Aaron Niequiat, ‘Kingdom Practice: Prayer of Examen’, at <http://www.practicetribes.com/kingdom-practice-prayer-of-examen/>, accessed 8 November 2017. This website describes itself as ‘an experimental gathering where we immerse ourselves in God’s dream for humanity, practice the historic disciplines that align us with His dream, and carry each other along the way’.

**Choose one or two feelings and pray from it.** Choose a negative feeling and a positive feeling and simply talk to God about those feelings. Then listen to him. As you do this, go ahead and let God surprise you. Behold Jesus beholding you as you present your feelings to him.

Elfie Hinterkopf enables her clients to discover what brings energy and joy into their lives by getting them to attend to their immediate physical sensations ('felt sense') as they focus on an issue. After the client has identified a specific issue, Hinterkopf asks 'How does this *whole* thing feel in your body?' It is important that the client is open and caring about whatever may emerge. Sensations can be described in images or as movement or sounds or smells. Hinterkopf encourages clients to enrich their felt sense, asking them if there are other words or images they can name. Then they are invited to attend further to the issue, noticing what in particular about the issue leaves them with these particular feelings.<sup>25</sup> Some helpful questions for the client at this point include: 'What does this whole thing need right now?' or 'How would this whole thing feel if it were all OK?' At this point Hinterkopf expects the client to experience the 'felt shift', a breaking away from discomforting and de-energizing feelings to comforting and energizing ones. Again it is important for the client to name the sensations and welcome them. Hinterkopf repeats a key question: 'How does this feel in your body right now?'<sup>26</sup>



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<sup>25</sup> Hinterkopf, *Integrating Spirituality in Counselling*, 22–25.

<sup>26</sup> Hinterkopf, *Integrating Spirituality in Counselling*, 72–74.

I have found Hinterkopf's method helpful for me as spiritual director with directees who are not very articulate or who have a limited capacity to enter into their own inner depths. Professionally I have to be prepared to accept their responses, whatever they are, just as God does with me, but with these tools I do feel more empowered to invite directees into their experience in a way that can bring them into deeper contact with themselves, and hence with God.

Returning to the final part of the Examen (E) (desires and future intentions), at some stage in the session I will ask directees if they have spoken with God about the issue we have explored together. Usually they have not, and I recommend this dialogue with God for their next time of prayer. Implicitly I am giving them the opportunity to express their desires or their 'blocks' with regard to who they want to be and to what sort of relationship they want with God.

Just as in the Examen a person may spend more time on one part rather than another, sometimes not praying through all the parts, so too in spiritual direction the directee and I may find ourselves spending more time on 'desires' rather than 'experience', for example. The Examen does not work as intended without the one praying being honest about his or her experiences and feelings. It can be hard for any person to confront what is discomfiting within him or herself even in a session of spiritual direction. But spiritual direction has this advantage over the Examen on its own, that the director can be a gentle and loving companion for a directee stepping into any dark places in his or her life.

When as a spiritual director I cannot see where a directee may be moving with God, and the directee does not seem to be carried with energy by the spirit of God, I keep in mind the elements of the Examen as a way to keep myself, and the directee, focused on his or her experience of God. Ultimately, however, I recognise that God is always willing to stand by a person who may be spiritually 'stuck'. As long as directees feel there is value in seeing me, and my supervisor has not raised issues about how I am directing them, I pray to be able to continue to serve them as their spiritual director.

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## RECENT BOOKS

**Brian O'Leary, *Radical and Free: Musings on the Religious Life* (Dublin: Messenger Publications, 2016). 978 1 9102 4838 6, pp.96, €10.99.**

This is a brief book (ninety pages of text) with a great scope: the history and current understanding of religious life, particularly as expressed in the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, exemplified in scripture and in contemporary practice. The author, Brian O'Leary, is well placed to muse on these matters. Aged eighty, he has been a Jesuit for more than sixty years, and has taught, written and led retreats about this topic for the last several decades. The book itself presents material from two preached retreats that he gave to mark the Year of Consecrated Life proclaimed by Pope Francis in 2015.



O'Leary's starting point is a reflection on the irony of the fact that within the Roman Catholic Church there has been, in the years since the Second Vatican Council, a widespread renewal (*aggiornamento*, in the language of the Council) in the theory and practice of religious life. Yet this has coincided with a time when, in the Western world at least, numbers of vowed religious are in steep decline. However, for the author one consequence of this decline is that religious themselves share the experience of the wider Church which, again in the West, has in recent decades seen a large-scale fall in numbers, status and influence. If religious are able to react to this situation with joyful trust in God, he argues, they may still be able to offer a powerful witness to others in the Church.

His discussion of the vows is prefaced by a brief early history of religious life, likely to be largely familiar to most readers. He includes, though, an interesting discussion of the link between monks and martyrs in the time of the Desert Fathers and Mothers. O'Leary acknowledges the presence of analogues to the religious life in other faiths, but is clear that here he is confining himself to discussing its Christian (and, indeed, mainly Catholic and Orthodox) variants. The rest of the book (apart from a brief coda) is made up of paired chapters on each of the vows in turn. The first describes

the biblical roots of the vow under consideration, while the second looks at the contemporary experience of those who live it, focusing particularly on the values that the vow enshrines.

This structure has the virtue of clarity, but the results are necessarily variable. Celibacy is scarcely thought of as a positive way of life in the Old Testament, whereas poverty is much discussed there. O'Leary's presentation of the current understanding of obedience is notable for giving priority to its corporate dimension rather than the individual's response. The second chapter on poverty argues that this vow encompasses a synthesis of different (although related) values, given varied emphases in different religious congregations. In addressing the perennial question of the relationship between chastity and celibacy in the vowed life, he is at pains to stress that the one espousing this must be committed to growth into human maturity, and not simply a negative renunciation.

The coda usefully returns to a point that had been suggested already in the early part of the book: that, ultimately, the three vows are aspects of a single process. It is a process by which the one who adopts them continues throughout life to abandon himself or herself ever more fully into the hands of God. This is, O'Leary believes, what the desert monks and hermits of the early Christian centuries principally meant in their talk of renunciation, and it is still as relevant today. Religious life has taken many different forms in the last two millennia, and exists in varying patterns today, but this self-abandonment remains at its core.

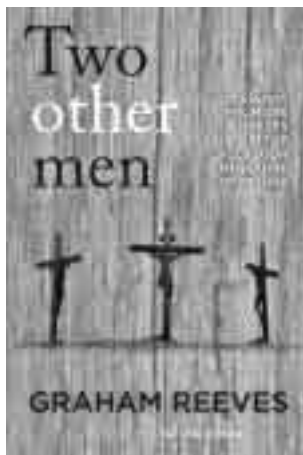
Overall, I found the book inspiring and frustrating in equal measure. Inspiring, because O'Leary writes well and succinctly, in a way clearly rooted in both his own experience and that of the many religious whom he has accompanied on their spiritual journeys over many years. Frustrating, because the brevity of the book means that interesting ideas are just touched on briefly before he rushes on to the next topic. An example: in the 'contemporary' chapter on chastity, he alludes to work done in California on Jungian archetypes which he finds illuminating. But this gets scarcely a page of description before he moves on to a discussion of Swinburne and Nietzsche. Some of these topics O'Leary has discussed at greater length elsewhere (and the book has a section of helpful references). For others, readers would have to seek out other authors themselves.

It is no doubt a recommendation to finish a book wishing that it had been twice the length that it is. If, for your desert island experience, you are allowed a single work to sustain your reflection on religious life today, you could do much worse than to choose this volume.



**Graham Reeves, *Two Other Men: Lessons from the Thieves in the Crucifixion Narrative of St Luke* (Watford: Instant Apostle, 2017). 978 1 9097 2859 2, pp.160, £8.99.**

This is a delightful book, encouraging us to read a passage that is beloved of many Christians, namely Luke 23: 39–43, the story of the dialogue between Jesus and the two thieves crucified with him. Graham Reeves regards this as a pivotal moment in the Gospel for the message and meaning of the life of Jesus: ‘a fallen world reflected and a new world glimpsed’ (p. 16). He points to Luke’s familiar technique of using contrasting pairs (think of Zechariah and Mary, or Jesus and John the Baptist) as a way of presenting his message. You may feel that there is nothing more to be said of these verses; but scripture has an inexhaustible freshness about it, and Reeves will certainly help you to see the story in a way that has never previously occurred to you.



Very often Reeves does this by drawing to our attention unfamiliar readings (such as those found in the Arabic Infancy Gospel and the Gospel of Peter, not to mention a meditation from Anselm and another from Blessed Anne Catherine Emerich). One pleasing element of freshness in Reeves’s account of these verses is that he refuses to accept the simple reading of the pericope that goes ‘one thief good, other thief bad’. Luke, he argues, is going rather deeper than that, and in chapter 2 he shows how deftly Luke uses his characteristic ‘pairings’, so that in chapter 1, Mary is willing to discover, whereas Zachariah does not believe; John the Baptist cannot see (in prison) what is before his eyes in chapter 11 and Jesus has to remind him; the elder brother, in the story of the Prodigal Son, is likewise blind to the love that is extended to both sons in equal measure; and the Pharisee (look at Luke 18: 9–14) denies his own creatureliness where the tax-collector knows that he has sinned.

In the third chapter Reeves puts before us the gentleness of Jesus, and how this allows the impossible to become possible, with the characteristic Lucan emphasis on Jesus’ presence to the ‘least, the last and the lost’; and he also mentions (I do not think he is stretching his interpretation too far) a ‘Eucharistic’ feel (p. 74) to the words of the penitent thief and those of the centurion at Luke 7: 1–10. He speaks, daringly, perhaps, of Jesus’ ‘shadow side’—two seductive voices of temptation speaking to him—as a part of this story, and the importance for all of us of integrating our own shadow side.

Interestingly, Reeves invites us to pay attention to the impenitent thief, and not necessarily to regard him as ‘lost’. He is offering ‘intercession’, and

shows how anger and hatred can, if we express them in prayer, become a doorway to God: 'the three crosses reflect back to the world its own experience, its own reality' (p.142). What is the fate of the 'impenitent thief'? God cannot possibly predestine us for Hell, so if anyone ends up there it must be by a free choice. In our story, Jesus is silent, but has just prayed 'Father, forgive them'. The impenitent thief is not culpable for his ignorance: there are still three hours to go, and God will look hard for the smallest of openings in his heart. Is he, for example, 'sorry that he is not sorry'?

So this is a charming book, spiritually rich though often untidy—it is not always clear how some excellent chapters fit with what has gone before or follows. Pedants will be discouraged by a few mistakes in translation from Greek; but the heart of this book is very much in the right place. With its occasional piercing insights that suddenly make sense, even when we cannot quite see how we got there, this book will repay prayerful and reflective attention.

**Nicholas King SJ**

***The Forgiveness Project: Stories for a Vengeful Age*, edited by Marina Cantacuzino (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2015). 978 1 8490 5566 6, pp.208, £8.99.**



Your reviewer's incapacitating illness, now happily in the past, results in this review appearing some three years after *The Forgiveness Project* was originally published. Don't let the time lag distract you: what the contributors to this unique book have to say is in no way time-bound.

Academic studies of forgiveness abound, and some of these have helped us understand a little more about this quite particular area of human experience, as reflected upon within one or another theoretical discipline, ranging from the theological via the psychological to the sociological. *The Forgiveness Project* doesn't belong

in any such category. It doesn't provide an analysis of forgiveness in scriptural terms, nor does it apply the conceptual tools of the contemporary social sciences.

There have been numerous projects involving individuals, groups and whole national communities in working for reconciliation, ranging from bringing together criminal offenders and those they have hurt in facilitated one-to-one restorative justice conversations, to exercises such as the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission or the re-establishment of the traditional community Gacaca courts in post-genocide Rwanda. While referring to a

number of these, *The Forgiveness Project* does not give a sequential or structured history of such enterprises.

What this important book does is to present, without comment, short testimonies from individuals who have experienced forgiveness. Some have been hurt by others and have found a way to offer forgiveness; some have received forgiveness from those they have hurt; some tell us how they are not yet able to forgive, or not yet able to accept the forgiveness offered, but are looking towards a future when that will become possible. Some draw on their faith background; others do not. Some speak fluently; others struggle to tell of the appalling hurt they have experienced or inflicted; a very few fall back on clichés. Some have been involved in one or other of the many projects aimed at facilitating forgiveness and reconciliation; others have taken their own steps unaided.

No one account tells us ‘what forgiveness is’: as quickly becomes clear, that would be an impossibility, since each person’s encounter with forgiveness is unique. But the cumulative effect of listening to these individuals enables readers both to deepen and expand their own understanding and personal experience of forgiveness: that, as I understand it, is the purpose of the book. There is no ‘grand argument’ presented: simply forty carefully selected and succinct stories. The introductory material (from the editor and founder of the project, Marina Cantacuzino, from Desmond Tutu, and from Alexander McCall Smith) frames helpfully the range of the individual experiences without attempting to corral them into neat groups or to suggest that one approach or attitude to forgiveness is better than another.

To convey something of the extraordinary quality of this book is difficult—perhaps, essentially, impossible. I frequently found myself intrigued, enlightened or puzzled by how people spoke about their experiences; I sometimes found myself inspired, and just occasionally irritated. But what stays with me are the moments of awe in hearing of acts of courage and generosity that might be called ‘superhuman’ but are in fact utterly human. A few brief selections may indicate the flavour of the whole, and encourage you to find and read this unique book.

By meeting together we are able to restore each other’s humanity. (p.54)

Forgiveness is not about forgiving the act but forgiving the imperfections that are inherent in all of us. (p.85)

[Sometimes] I can experience empathy, and in that moment there is no judgement. (p.79)

[Forgiveness] changes shape; some days growing, others withering. It is heart work of the highest order. (p.94)

The most dangerous thing in life is to let people become convinced that truth has just one face. (p.136)

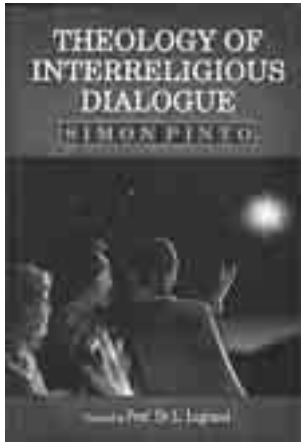
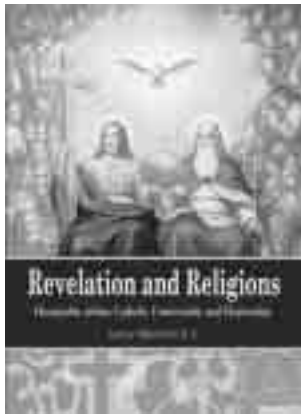
We all want certainty, and often what we need is grace on the journey. (p.17)

**Brendan Callaghan SJ**

**Lancy Monteiro, *Revelation and Religions: Hospitality within Catholic Universality and Rationality* (Bengaluru: Asian Trading Corporation, 2016). 978 8 1708 6740 1, pp.xxi + 351, \$20.05.**

**Simon Pinto, *Theology of Interreligious Dialogue* (Bengaluru: Asian Trading Corporation, 2016). 978 8 1708 6785 2, pp.xvi + 295, \$16.85.**

**David J. Fleming, *Rays of the One Truth: Themes of Intra-Religious Dialogue* (Bengaluru: Asian Trading Corporation, 2016). 978 8 1708 6726 5, pp.183, \$11.20.**

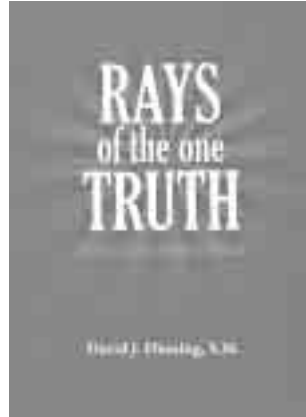


These three books reflect something of the current debate among Indian Catholic theologians about religious pluralism and interreligious dialogue. Two of the three are by native-born Indians and originate in doctoral theses written in Rome. The third is by a US missionary with years of experience as a university teacher and spiritual guide. In many ways they are very different in style and focus, yet all are driven by the same underlying concerns: the challenge that Asian religions, and specifically Hinduism, make to Christian faith. Each has value as a sort of snapshot of an ever-fascinating scene. But, as always in interreligious relations, that scene is rapidly changing.

Monteiro's book is the most ambitious. Using the central theme of revelation, he seeks to extend the Christian account of salvific truth as taught by the Catholic magisterium to other persons of faith. His lucid discussion of many familiar debates within the theology of religions has much to commend it, not least his sensitive commentary on Rahner's theological anthropology and Pieris's liberative christology. The dialogue between the two probes into questions of method and 'theological fundamentals'. Without pushing back boundaries, Monteiro lays down a few markers for future work, drawing attention to the questions which must frame any account of an orthodox yet hospitable Christianity.

Although very similar in scope, Pinto works the other way round. Beginning where Monteiro ends, he concentrates not on theology of religions as a response to the magisterial teaching of the Church but on the practice of dialogue as a dimension of the Church's wider commitment to mission in the

particular multi-religious context of India. The first half of the book explores the familiar theological and cultural hinterland; the second focuses on some important themes, such as the salvific value of other religions and the presence of Christ and the Spirit. He considers influential theologians such as Michael Amaladoss, Felix Wilfred, Jacques Dupuis and Raimon Panikkar, but none of them is given the intense scrutiny that Monteiro affords to Pieris. The book reads more like a set of introductory articles than a sustained argument. Having begun promisingly with the all-important *Missio Dei* theme, little effort is made to interrogate the intrinsically *missionary* nature of 'dialogue' as a theological practice.



While retaining the judicious expository style of the doctoral thesis, both of these books are accessible examples of what has come to be known as the 'dialogue of theological exchange'. Some of what Fleming has to say, particularly in his first chapter, entitled 'Guideposts along the Way', fits into the same genre. The main emphasis, however, lies elsewhere, with the 'dialogue of religious experience'. Describing the spiritual context for his lifelong engagement with Hinduism, Fleming sketches out a series of meditations on such topics as the goals of human existence, grace and effort, and the divine-human encounter. Curiously this book turns out to be more satisfactory than the other two, maybe because it straddles the complex divide that both joins and separates 'the West' and the pluralist religious culture of Asia.

The religious world with which these three authors engage is dominated by the Sanskritic tradition, which for centuries has acted as Christianity's 'other'. Hence there is a focus on the philosophy of the *Upanisads* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, and influential figures such as Brahmabandabh Upadhyay and Swami Abhishiktananda. None of this has been rendered irrelevant by recent cultural and political shifts; indeed, without the classical heritage, which has given rise to a rich and diverse aesthetic and philosophical culture, interreligious dialogue in India would be that much poorer. Nevertheless, the type of Indian theology formed in dialogue with the brahmanical elite, from the Jesuit Bengal school of Christian Vedanta in the 1920s to the idiosyncratic yet extraordinarily imaginative synthesis of Panikkar in the last few decades, now needs to be set in a new context, namely the rise of insurgent groups among the scheduled tribes and castes. Cultural anthropologists and historians of religion draw attention to the sheer multiplicity of religious practices and spiritualities that make up what has been known since the early nineteenth century as 'Hinduism'. The days when vernacular and popular movements

could be assimilated within some overarching 'Great Tradition' are long gone. If these three books are typical, it seems that theologians are slow to catch up.

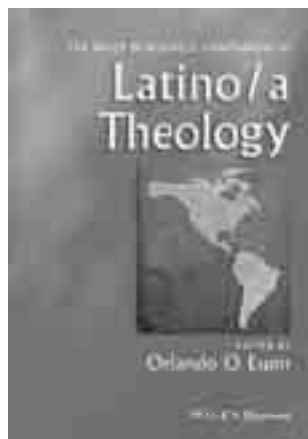
The 'dialogue of common action' is given some attention. Pinto, for instance, focuses on Wilfred as 'the 21st century prophet of the subalterns', a theologian committed to the needs of those disadvantaged by the entrenched forces of vested interest lying at the heart of caste-based Indian society. Wilfred is probably the nearest India has got to a political or public theologian, along the lines of David Tracy in the USA or J. B. Metz in Germany. Yet in India the context of religion in the public arena is quite different and requires a much deeper analysis than the familiar listings of classical stereotypes. Once theologians had to contend with the benign secular pluralism enshrined in the Indian Constitution. The emergence of what is sometimes called '*dalit* consciousness' changed all that. In more recent years has come an even more dramatic shift. The more strident forces of *Hindutva* nationalism, the identity politics that backs the rise of the BJP, increasingly dominate public debate.

It is this contested political phenomenon that makes the 'dialogue of common life' central to the future of interreligious relations in the subcontinent. Seventy years ago, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs were traumatically torn apart by the imposition of a border that made enemies of communities which had long been used to an uneasy, yet fairly stable, *status quo*. Christians find themselves caught in the middle of this fractured world, having to face the accusation that they are not genuinely Indian, but scheming foreigners whose conversion tactics threaten the future of the State. Which way to move? And which India to identify with? Public theology has to contend with difficult ethical and political, as much as theological, questions. At stake here is not just the future of the Church but the very integrity of the religious culture of India.

At its best this culture preserves a particular wisdom, the accommodation of subgroups of all kinds within an overarching framework of what Gandhi immortalised in terms of the visionary virtues of *ahimsa*—less 'non-violence' than 'wishing no harm'—and *satyagraha*, literally 'holding fast to truth'. Today that tradition is under threat—and not just because Gandhi's paternalism is regarded with suspicion by so many *dalit* communities. For the Church in India to become the Church of India (to adapt a distinction of Aloysius Pieris) more is involved than a conscientious variation on the hospitality motif or the renewal of familiar missionary endeavours, from education to social action. These all remain important dimensions of Christian mission, but the future will be more risky. If the Church is to become fully inculturated, yet also prophetic in its commitment to Christian truth, it has to find more robust ways of engaging with distinctly un-Indian forms of sectarian and chauvinist 'Hinduism'. As in other parts of the world, the interreligious debate is now less about some disembodied concept called 'religious pluralism' and more about the politics of faith.

**Michael Barnes SJ**

***The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology*, edited by Orlando O. Espin (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015). 978 1 1187 1866 7, pp.520, £120.00.**



*The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology* gives a comprehensive overview of the history, current issues and future questions facing the Latino/a community. It is a welcome publication, both for those already involved in the collaborative conversations within Latino/a theology and those who are new to the field. It would also prove a fruitful resource for those interested in sociology, history, culture and the socio-economic climate in the United States.

The *Companion* brings together a diverse group of influential voices, with a strong Latina input as well as both Catholic and Protestant perspectives. Each author focuses on the daily reality of Latino/a people, addressing the specifics of context while also looking at the interaction with the wider world, demanding social justice in a spirit of communal theology, or *teología de conjunto*.

In contrast to a typical academic approach, which the editor describes as ‘books speaking with books’ (p.8), the authors in this collection firmly insist on their theology being in, with, from and for the people. Interestingly, this echoes Pope Francis’s theological and pastoral style, always closer to people’s actual ordinary experiences (*lo cotidiano*). Yet for those who are reluctant to accept the Pope’s background of Theology of the People, this book provides a robust intellectual case for understanding God’s revelation, and reflecting on it (theo-logizing) through the lens of people’s lives, especially the lives of those who suffer most.

Perhaps reinforcing the idea of *teología de conjunto* and of the people, several contributors make their points using personal testimony or drawing upon creative analogies with relatable experiences such as eating, sports and popular culture. In this spirit of *lo cotidiano*, let us approach the book as a nourishing meal, as a family of theologians bring their contributions to the table to be shared and savoured. Each chapter is like a substantial dish that can satisfy as a presentation of a specific area, but taken together, the dishes are a feast of issues relevant to Latino/a communities.

As our first course, the *Companion* whets the appetite by providing an overview of the fundamental characteristics of Latino/a theology and the history that has helped shape it. Carmen Nanko-Fernández explores daily lived experience—where all Latino/a theology begins—through a tapas spread

of hybridity/*mestizaje*, Latina survival, movement and popular faith. Daisy Machado challenges the dominant narrative imposed on Latino/as and instead promotes a historical imaginary that bolsters identity by reclaiming the past and building the future. Both Rubén Rosario-Rodríguez and José Irizarry explain Latino/a theology's commitment to communal investigative approaches. Such theology is not carried out in isolation, and involves not only theologians, but also pastors and laity, as well as drawing upon other sources such as the social sciences. There is also an inclination within Latino/a theology towards ecumenism, both naturally—thanks to the Latino/a bilingual disposition and diaspora—and intentionally, in order to have a stronger voice.

Readers can then sink their teeth into the second course, as the *Companion* goes on to present how the Latino/a way of doing and living theology is illustrated in specific theological principles related to revelation, scripture, christology, ecclesiology and liturgy, eschatology, grace and ethics. The central themes emerge of a deeply incarnational faith, intimate but always bringing about communal expression and social action; the necessity of always working collaboratively, connected to experience and committed to justice; and the psyche of a people that sees itself profoundly reflected in both the suffering God and the active and present hope of the resurrection. What Jean-Pierre Ruiz says of biblical interpretation can be extended to each of the theological 'dishes' offered in this section: that the approaches of Latino/a theology are not exclusive to Latino/as but are rather relevant and beneficial for all theologians, and indeed for the wider Church and society as a whole.

An example of this can be found in Roberto Goizueta's exploration of how God's grace, although preferentially encountered in the experience of the poor, is universally offered. The author reminds us that salvation from sin necessarily includes a social dimension, in which the transformation of the person is inextricably linked with the transformation of those structures that marginalise brothers and sisters from society. Grace is never a 'thing', but always an interactive act of God's love that regenerates fruitful relationships with all of God's creation. While sin fosters isolation and alienation, grace creates and fosters communion. This communion is not merely social but is also ecological, even cosmic. The questions of how to improve social structures and how better to acknowledge God's gift of creation are not ones restricted to Latinos/as; indeed, as Pope Francis reminds us in his encyclical *Laudato si'*, they are a challenge for all people. A Latino/a approach can help others to reflect on their own social and ecological conundrums.

The third course gives a sharp taste of current events and future challenges, as the contributors address areas of practical theology and the implications of recent developments in society, politics and culture. A wide variety of key



themes are presented, including race, immigration, feminist theory, economic and political situations, and popular expressions of faith. Since they are a people so immersed in religion, it is particularly pertinent to address the wide range of issues affecting Latino/as (and the United States more generally) from a theological perspective. Moreover, at a time when churches and communities in the United States are at a crossroads, especially regarding social and ecological issues, this section of the *Companion* provides a helpful insight into how to learn from history and experience to forge a future of grasped hope, a *mañana church* whose experience can benefit society as a whole.

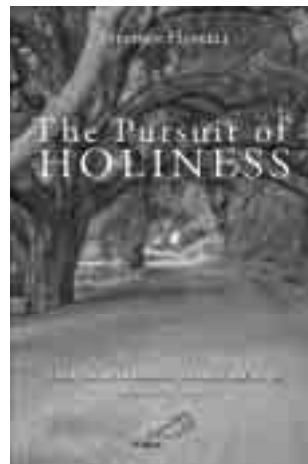
The contributors to this substantial shared meal are aware of the challenges that Latino/a theology faces—a relevant one being the risk of belittling the preferential option of the poor as many Latino/as in the United States experience socio-economic advancement. However, faithful to their *teología de conjunto*, they call for further collaboration between denominations, religions and those experiencing any kind of marginalisation. Gary Riebe-Estrella's question—'what kind of church will [the Latino/a Church] become?' (p. 196)—and Maria Teresa Dávila's—'how did we get we here? What do we do now?'—are perhaps now on many lips: how will the Church remain faithful to its history and to the marginalised while embracing the future and the hope it offers? As Espín makes clear in his introduction, the *Companion* serves as a 'launching pad' for continued discovery.

**Hannah Caldwell and Augusto Zampini-Davies**

**Stephen Haskell, *The Pursuit of Holiness* (London: St Paul's, 2016).  
978 1 9103 6505 2, pp. 223, £9.95.**

This book is an excellent exposition of the Carmelite spirituality of John of the Cross, Teresa of Ávila and Thérèse of Lisieux, and an explanation of certain classic features of the interior life in the light of those three authors. The foreword from Rowan Williams offers a massive endorsement of a work 'of profound pastoral theology accessible to all, coming out of a deep, contemplative encounter with God'.

The thirteen chapters can be grouped into four sections: the Tradition (chapters one to three), the Context (chapters four to six), Behaviour (chapters seven to nine) and the



Journey (chapters ten to thirteen). The inspiration for the whole work comes from that often neglected but critical fifth chapter of *Lumen gentium*, 'The Universal Call to Holiness'

Haskell's premise is that holiness is no longer the preserve of a few 'professionals'. He acknowledges the value of John of the Cross and Teresa of Ávila to the mapping of the spiritual journey and, on the other hand, the contribution made by Thérèse of Lisieux to a promotion of a 'direct, short, new path' to holiness in her Little Way. He might have noted, perhaps, that it is this latter way which has ultimately caught the imagination of a large number of people.

The 'context' of Carmelite spirituality—indeed Christian spirituality—is the exercise of charity within the family, engaged in a relationship with the outside world beyond it. Here Haskell introduces the dimensions of charity, prayer and the Church. The exercise of charity is depicted as an interpersonal skill in which vulnerability is implied and accepted in an attentive listening, and speaking is aimed at showing an interest in the other in a non-competitive way. He observes the temptation to comment on everything that we experience in a critical, negative way. From time to time, there is great value in silence ... the prerequisite not only for human relationships but also for the divine in prayer.

John and Teresa map out the prayer journey in a sublime way, but perhaps, ventures Haskell, their methods are really those found in traditional, monastic texts. It is here that Thérèse of Lisieux makes her decisive contribution in the 'simple, direct and new' way of love. Her spiritual journey is not only an instance of what John and Teresa describe, but it also adds something new and fresh. Her discovery of her own vocation as love at the heart of the Church has repercussions for all who would set out on such a journey.

This is a very appropriate model for busy laypeople who do not have enough time to spend in monastic exercises. Moreover, daily life for most people throws up many 'distractions' which cannot simply be pushed to one side. Instead, Thérèse shows how they can be integrated into prayer and be seen more as 'going off at a tangent' than a disturbance in our conversation and prayer with God. The spiritual life is not, however, a solitary or individual journey: it is situated in a community and in a collective experience. It is the Church that has received a guarantee of truth and the Church of which we become a part when we are baptized into the Body of Christ. This consideration leads Haskell to an appreciation of both the Church of the Trinity and the Church of the Incarnation as an entrance into truth and into community.

Towards the end of his treatment, Haskell devotes some space to the topic of mortification—something not found in many books on the spiritual life today. Indeed, he observes that John and Teresa would be astonished at the scarcity of mortification in contemporary Christian life, at least as they understood it. The classic triad of prayer, fasting and almsgiving is emphasized in a balanced picture of asceticism. Certainly, the self-sacrificial element of fasting is important, but so are the more external and practical forms of prayer and social solidarity.

The final three chapters touch on the real nub of the matter: knowledge of God, the Dark Night and union with God. All three hinge on an important distinction between contemplation as a method (contemplative prayer) and contemplation as a goal (mystical union). Contemplative prayer focuses on a loving, silent conversation with God; whereas the goal of union might never be achieved, no matter how much we desire it. Again, the universal call to holiness is relevant here: God wishes to be known, and allows Godself to be known, by all people, not just professional ‘religious’ people. But there is a growing ‘gap’ here between the attraction to God and the sense of the presence of God.

John of the Cross observes that as the soul allows itself to be purged of all extraneous elements that might detract from God, paradoxically it feels a growing sense of loss and the absence of God. In this ‘dark night of the soul’ nothing can be done to ‘bring God back’. According to John, the only strategy that can console us is persevering faith. For Teresa, it is dedication to works of charity and external engagements. Both Teresa and John use a form of nuptial imagery to convey a sense of what union with God might be like. For John, in this union the soul is made into God by participation and because of this union the soul becomes ‘deiform’. For Teresa, there is a continuation of the charitable acts she has recommended as an antidote to the sense of loss in the period of purification before union. Now the active Martha is blended with the contemplative Mary. Haskell might have added here that, again, Thérèse offers a much simpler and more direct vision of ‘union’ without using terms such as ‘mystical’ or ‘contemplative’.

This is a most useful book at a number of levels, suitable for the general reader, as well as for those looking to deepen their appreciation of Carmelite spirituality. One idea that emerges from the comparison between John and Teresa on the one hand and Thérèse on the other is that the two Spanish saints tend to assume that those who will follow their path have a lot of time available. Thérèse’s approach is more direct and much simpler. But all three are fine exponents of Carmelite spirituality.

**Robert Fruehwirth, *The Drawing of this Love* (Norwich: Canterbury, 2016). 978 1 8482 5836 5, pp. 178, £12.99.**



Formerly a monk in the US-based Order of Julian of Norwich, Robert Fruehwirth was the priest-director of the Julian Centre in Norwich from 2013 to 2015. He is now a priest in the Episcopal Church, working and teaching as a person-centred counsellor; and he has been reading, praying with and leading retreats focused on Julian's *Revelation of Love* for over twenty years.

Fruehwirth's most recent book—whose title is aptly taken from T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*—takes as its starting point perhaps the best-known and most loved phrase from Julian's writings, 'All shall be well'. When Julian herself first heard these words spoken to her by our Lord, her

reaction was, 'Good Lord, how can all be well when great harm has come to your creatures through sin?' Yet she came to perceive that this challenging statement depended on her—and our—growth in faith and trust. At a time when each one of us should, at the very least, try always to be inclusive, reflecting on Christ's words can enable us to accept the fact that everyone is open to the possibility of God's healing, whether of body, mind or spirit. And Fruehwirth's book helps us on our way.

Part one of *The Drawing of This Love*, headed 'Julian's Experience: A Showing of Love and the Emergence of Faith', looks at the first 12 *Showings* and the first 26 chapters of her *Revelation*. Julian's direct experience of God and her faith come under the microscope and, as throughout the book, questions for reflection and discussion—spiritual exercises—are offered at the end of the chapter to help us engage with the growth of faith. The second part, 'Julian's Questioning: The Critical Testing and Deepening of Faith', explores two more *Showings* and chapters 27–51 of the *Revelation*. In it some of Julian's profoundest psychological, spiritual and theological writings are discussed in depth, as Julian seeks to understand more and more coherently what she has experienced so far. The final part, 'Julian's Counsel: Wisdom and Imagery for the Journey of Faith', examines the two final *Showings* and chapters 52–86, containing Julian's counsel to those 'seeking to live a life of faith in response to a God of love' (p.xii).

Fruehwirth makes good use of Barry Windeatt's new translation (OUP, 2015) and also, at times, that of John-Julian Swanson, the founder of the Order of Julian of Norwich, although del Maestro's 1994 and Spearing's 1998 versions are included in the bibliography. A great deal is packed into this

book and the chapters, though short, repay slow, meditative reading. The questions provided may happily invite group reading and discussion.

One of the real joys of the book is that, although new titles are added to the already extensive bibliography on Julian of Norwich each year, it offers a fresh approach which, while not expecting the reader to have much prior knowledge of the *Revelation of Love*, draws those of us who have meditated on Julian's writings for a number of years Godwards with newer and yet newer insights.

**Luke Penkett**

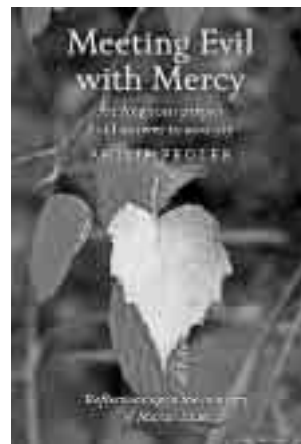
**Philip Pegler, *Meeting Evil with Mercy: An Anglican Priest's Bold Answer to Atrocity. Reflections upon the Ministry of Martin Israel* (Winchester: Christian Alternative, 2016). 978 1 7853 5306 2, pp.192, £11.99.**

Philip Pegler tells us early on in his book about Martin Israel—medical doctor, priest, writer and psychotherapist—that his account will be a 'biographical study' (p.14). But towards the end he has to concede that what he has written has been 'short on biographical detail' (p.170). His interest is in the experiences that shaped Martin's mind and determined the priorities of his ministry. He does not tell us what his subject liked for breakfast.

Martin Israel was born into an affluent Jewish family in South Africa. He was an intensely sensitive child, gifted already in his earliest years with acute spiritual awareness. At the age of three he sensed, as he later said, a radiant light piercing his inner darkness. That light was incontrovertibly real, but the darkness was not banished, either in his childhood or in an adult life dogged by deep depression. His parents were uncomprehending. (Late in life he disclosed that his father had abused him sexually.) This desperately troubled little boy was eventually to learn that the light he had seen had a name. One of the household servants gave him an evangelical tract that spoke of someone called Jesus.

A yet more formative 'peak experience' followed. Aged sixteen, listening to the radio in his bedroom, he was, as he said, 'bathed in a light of iridescent radiance' and taken to a 'situation beyond creation' (p.56). The young Martin kept this experience to himself. Such epiphanies were not to be 'cast before the profane gaze of the worldly ones' (p.57)—such, presumably, as his parents.

Having trained as a doctor, Martin Israel came to England for postgraduate studies. Professionally he was successful, becoming a lecturer in pathology



and the author of standard medical texts, but inwardly the menacing shadows still threatened. Notwithstanding his eminence in mainstream medicine he was increasingly drawn to complementary therapies. After recourse to a series of counsellors, some seriously weird, he gained sufficient—if precarious—control of his demons to embark on his own healing ministry. Neither for the first time nor for the last, someone with huge needs of his own discovered his vocation in sorting out other people's problems.

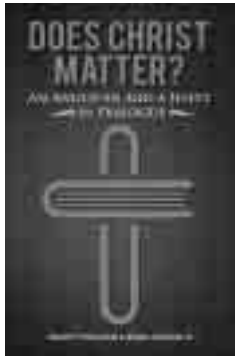
Israel travelled far and wide on his spiritual journey, testing many esoteric paths, but it was the merciful figure of Jesus Christ, first encountered when he was a toddler, who finally claimed his allegiance. So it was that this maverick figure, long distrustful of institutional religion, came to drop anchor in the Church of England, and it was as an Anglican priest that he thenceforth exercised his extraordinarily influential ministry as a counsellor and 'physician of the soul'.

This is the fascinating story that Philip Pegler unfolds in his well-crafted study of someone who, one fears, is slipping from our memory. Pegler tells us about the milestones on Israel's spiritual pilgrimage, but the very great value of his book is its exposition of the central themes of Israel's teaching and writing. Martin Israel held that we all bear in our own souls the stamp of God's being. We must choose either to collaborate with the divine spirit present and active within us or set ourselves up in competition with it. Our flourishing is found only in conscious self-giving to God. Suffering is inescapable but, through the love of God in Christ, that suffering may be transfigured. Love is the balm that will heal every wound. Heaven awaits us and angels will help us on our way.

Such principles are heard from every pulpit, but the testimony of those who listened to him, especially on the retreats he gave, was that Martin Israel spoke of these familiar foundational tenets of Christian discipleship with exceptional authority and persuasiveness. Though neurotically shy and tongue-tied from childhood, and inaudible as a lecturer in medical school, he could speak for an hour without notes on the grace of God in Christ, touching hearts and moving the minds of all who heard him.

There are some Christian teachers who, for reasons hard to define, attract an unusual personal following. One thinks of Metropolitan Anthony Bloom in the Orthodox tradition, Frank Lake—another Anglican psychotherapist—and Dr Martin Lloyd-Jones in the reformed tradition. The grateful students of such teachers sometimes become disciples. Martin Israel drew that kind of following, and Philip Pegler, who personally owes much to him, is of their company. That is not a criticism of his work—Pegler does not skate over his subject's foibles—but it does perhaps explain the tenor of the book. Dedicated to the memory of a possibly saintly and certainly extremely complicated man, it is sometimes almost devotional in tone. And none the worse for that.

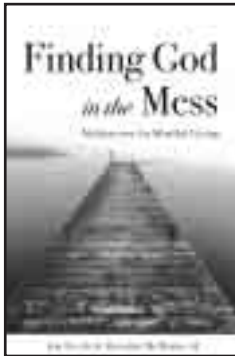
**John Pridmore**



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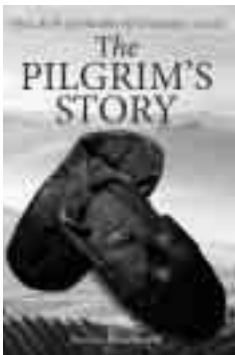
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