

THE WAY

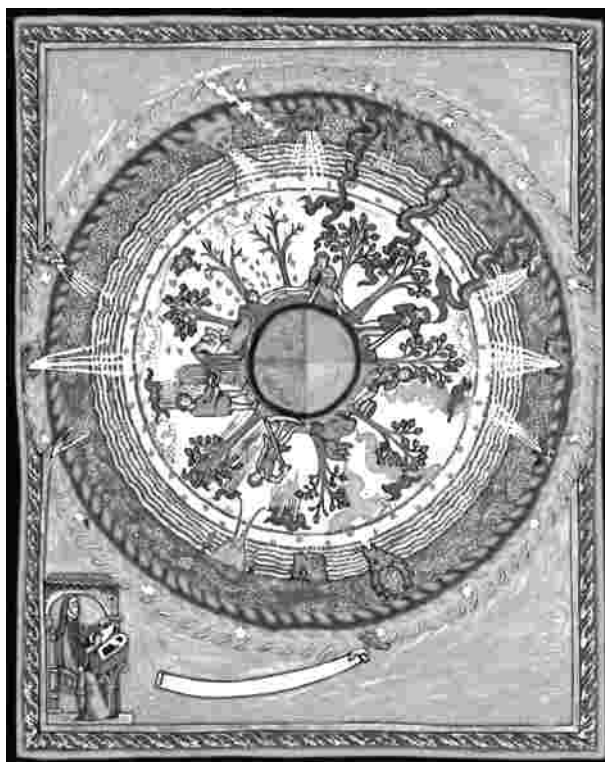
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TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

*this issue of The Way is dedicated
to the memory of Paul L. Younger (1962–2018)*



*Illustration from a manuscript of Liber divinatorum operum by
Hildegard of Bingen, early thirteenth century*

Foreword 5–6**Striving for Perfection or Growing into Fruitfulness?** 7–17*Christopher Chapman*

Any understanding of spiritual growth will be influenced by the images chosen to illustrate it. Is this growth more like climbing a ladder to ever-higher states of perfection, or slowly unfolding as a developing organism does? Christopher Chapman explores this question in terms of four stages of organic growth.

The Light of Consciousness and the Light of Christ 19–30*Meredith Secomb*

Meredith Secomb is a clinical psychologist who has reflected deeply on the challenge of human suffering. In supporting her clients as they deal with difficult experiences, she has found that by sitting with these experiences in silence they find a luminous core within themselves, and that this in turn leads them to God. Here she describes this process, and considers its meaning.

St Teresa of Jesus, Mental Prayer and the Humanity of Jesus 31–39*Joanna Farrugia*

St Teresa of Ávila advocated mental prayer for her Carmelite sisters at a time when this laid women open to suspicion from the Church authorities. Joanna Farrugia explains why this was important to Teresa, and how it was inextricably linked for her to a life dedicated to loving service of others.

*Thinking Faith***Ecology and Ignatian Spirituality** 41–44*José A. García*

José Antonio García believes that caring for the earth transcends different religious and cultural traditions, but that each of these traditions can make a distinctive contribution to the work that needs to be done. In this short essay, reproduced from the online Jesuit journal *Thinking Faith*, he outlines what Ignatian spirituality might have to offer to this work.

*Spirituality and Living***Confessors and Parents** 45–48*George B. Wilson*

It is common in gatherings of middle-aged Roman Catholics to hear parents questioning why their children no longer go to Mass or ‘practise the faith’. Does this mean that the older generation has failed in its duty of upbringing? George Wilson suggests that the question is a much more complex one than it would appear at first sight, and so should not be given such a simple answer.

The Riches of Our Human Poverty: Insights into the Mystery of the Trinity from Ruth Burrows 49–56

Michelle Jones

Ruth Burrows is a mystic and writer who has lived as a Discalced Carmelite nun for over 75 years. Her autobiographical writings reveal how it has been her sense of her own poverty and need that has, over the decades, led her to share ever more deeply in the life of the Trinity. Michelle Jones traces this lifelong journey.

Thinking Faith

Pierre Favre: ‘Everywhere There Is Good to Be Done’ 57–65

Edel McClean

Pierre Favre was the ‘third man’ of the early Jesuits, the close companion of Ignatius Loyola and Francis Xavier during their studies at the University of Paris. Yet it would take the advent of the first Jesuit Pope to get him canonized. In this second article taken from *Thinking Faith* Edel McClean introduces a Jesuit who is still relatively little known, focusing on his distinctive approach to ministry.

Transcendence and Immanence II: Ignatian Spirituality and Spiritual Conversation 67–79

Rolphy Pinto

In this second of two linked articles Rolphy Pinto shows how profoundly the experience of immanence and transcendence affects the language that human beings use in speaking of God. The two poles of this experience can be felt to be in tension, a tension with St Ignatius worked in an apostolic tool that he called ‘spiritual conversation’.

The Spirit in Contemporary Culture

Godly Play: An Ignatian Way of Proceeding with Children? 80–90

Brenda Leigh Timmer

Godly Play is the name given to a series of linked techniques by which children are helped to engage with, and reflect upon, the scriptures. Brenda Leigh Timmer, who employs Godly Play in her Methodist ministry, finds parallels between them and certain aspects of Ignatian spirituality. ‘It is not Godly Play, however, unless all involved expect God to come and play.’

Hell and the Image of God in the Spiritual Exercises 91–102

Eric Jensen

The fifth exercise in the First Week of St Ignatius’ Spiritual Exercises takes the form of a meditation on, or contemplation of, hell. Eric Jensen asks how, in a world that is culturally and theologically so different from that of the sixteenth century, we can still use this material in a way that will be profitable for a contemporary retreatant. The parable of the Prodigal Son offers him a way to approach this task.

Book Reviews

Iona Reid-DalGLISH on a new introduction to the practice of spiritual direction

Michael Smith on seven personal testimonies from refugees

John Pridmore on the history of the *Book of Common Prayer*

Anna Abram on the role of the Church in the public square

Stephen Schloesser on the Jesuits and globalisation

Bruno Niederbacher on a study of Catholic moral philosophy

Mark A. Lewis on a Spanish biography of Nicolás de Bobadilla

Richard Lennan on an edition of Bernard Cooke's theological writings

Michael Sherman on a study of church leadership and discernment, and a collection of writings by Walter Kasper

Luke Penkett on Margery Kempe

Nicholas King on a reading of Mark's Gospel

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

We are grateful to Sr M. Caritas Müller for permission to print a photograph of her ceramic *The Merciful Trinity*. 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>	<i>Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu</i> , 157 volumes (Madrid and Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1898–)

FOREWORD

THERE ARE, PERHAPS, two ways of getting any human approach to God wrong. The first is to believe that it all depends on me. Unless I pray at the right time, using the correct words and adopting a suitably reverent posture, I will have no chance of entering into God's presence. The other wrong path is just the opposite: to hold that it is all down to God and there is nothing special that I need to do. The truth of the matter is that prayer at its best, like any good conversation, requires all who participate to play their part. I can trust that God is wanting to do all that it takes to get in touch with me; and there is a range of tools and techniques that I can use to help foster an encounter with God. Some of these tools and techniques are considered in this issue of *The Way*.

Meredith Secomb begins from what might seem like an unpromising starting point: the experience of human suffering. In her clinical practice as a psychologist, she has found that if she can help her clients sit quietly with their painful experiences they will make contact with a luminous core within themselves, a core that is itself deeply in touch with God. George Wilson also considers a painful experience, that of Christian parents whose children appear to have rejected their faith. He finds in it a call to deepening trust—in God, in the disappointed parents themselves, and in the children whom they have raised. Brenda Leigh Timmer employs a technique called 'Godly Play' to help younger children enter more deeply into the scriptures, in a way that recalls some of the patterns to be found in Ignatian spirituality.

A key aspect of Ignatian spirituality is the practice of spiritual conversation, a tool that Ignatius himself used to draw people further into the experience of God and which, as Rolphy Pinto shows, he commended to his followers. One of the earliest to deploy it, to great effect, was a companion of Ignatius, Pierre Favre, whose relatively little-known life is described here by Edel McClean. Even meditating on hell, as prescribed in the First Week of the *Spiritual Exercises*, can lead retreatants closer to the God who is love, as Eric Jenner demonstrates through his reading of the parable of the Prodigal Son.

The Carmelite tradition has its own tools and techniques to help people encounter the living God. Teresa of Ávila encouraged her sisters to

engage in mental prayer, even though at the time it laid them open to the suspicion of heresy; Joanna Farrugia explains why this was so important to her. Michelle Jones shows how the awareness of her own emptiness and poverty, sustained over many decades, has led the contemporary Carmelite Ruth Burrows ever more deeply into sharing the life of the Trinity.

Today any worthwhile spirituality is challenged to develop tools that will help those following its path to care more fully for the earth and for the whole of God's creation. José Antonio García outlines one way in which this may be achieved. Creation itself furnishes images of spiritual growth and development that are, in the eyes of Christopher Chapman, much richer and more fruitful than some other, more mechanical and hierarchical, ways of picturing the process.

The advantage of tools and techniques is that they can be learned, to help us dispose ourselves to meet the God who is reaching out to us. You are invited, as you read, to sample them, retaining and employing those you discover to be useful, and leaving aside others for another time or another person. None offers a guarantee of spiritual encounter; but all are worth attempting and offer experience that can be built upon in the great enterprise of spiritual growth.

Paul Nicholson SJ
Editor

STRIVING FOR PERFECTION OR GROWING INTO FRUITFULNESS?

Christopher Chapman

LANGUAGE AND IMAGERY have their own potency. They not only describe understanding, they also create it. Are we climbing upwards towards perfection through a series of stages, or are we growing into fruitfulness through soil, sunlight and rain? In society and Church, development is often described in terms of linear progress towards excellence. While such imagery can also be found within the Bible, it interweaves with another narrative: that of earth, seeds, shoots and harvest.

My perception is that without a grounding in this biblical imagery of growth we are prone to put too much weight on the work of human minds and hands, at the expense of cooperating with God in our own becoming and in the creative work of divine love. Soil, seed, shoot and harvest keep us down to earth, where the incarnate God chooses to be. Going further: what new perspective do we gain on the purpose and potential outcomes of the Spiritual Exercises if we see them as grounded in the rhythms of creation rather than echoing the drumbeats of man-made progress?

The Ladder of Perfection

In the Christianity of my upbringing, emphasis rested firmly on the doing of good works and the acquisition of personal holiness. The image in my mind was of a many-runged ladder. At the top of the ladder lay perfection: a state of purity where weakness was definitively overcome and goodness perpetually shone. Rung by rung I was to pull myself up towards this goal through effort, prayer and penitence.

I am not sure anyone ever gave me this picture of spiritual development in its complete form. Instead I pieced it together from my education in family, church and school. Stories of the saints emphasized the purity of their hearts and minds. Good behaviour was praised and bad behaviour was



punished. At school I gained a new, brightly coloured star for each times-table I mastered. Progress was measured competitively through grades, upper or lower 'sets' for classes, and prize-giving ceremonies. The path of sanctity likewise led, straight and true, along the line of obedience to external expectations. There was a threshold to be crossed dividing achievement from failure, renown from obscurity.

Where was God within this picture? The whole construction purported to be about developing closeness to God and to a degree

worked within these terms. Being in church, practising good deeds or struggling with self-denial had me looking in the right direction. But for me, God was also beyond the system—sometimes uncomfortably so. For as difficult as my received understanding of the process of growth was, at least it left me believing that progress was in my own hands. But then God would break the rules, turning up at the very base of the ladder, when I was incapable of anything. How also was I to explain my experience of God as a presence within, pressing towards freedom from any oppressive self-preoccupation: inviting me into larger life, rather than driving me down the narrow corridors of perfectionism?

Defining the Path towards Holiness

My understanding of spiritual life as a self-empowered ascent towards holiness had its roots in attitudes found in the immediate surroundings of my family and school; but it was also shaped by wider influences in society and the Church. Paradoxically—for a body that had its roots in the transcendence of God—in early modern times the Roman Catholic Church grew more uncomfortable with mystery. As a preserver of orthodoxy and orthopraxis in an age of enquiry and experimentation, the Church resorted to close definition of normative patterns of Christian living.

Practices of prayer and expositions of the process of spiritual growth became increasingly regulated. It was for the Church to discern whether

experience—and the insights that came from reflection on experience—were legitimate. Manuals of spiritual growth outlined step-by-step itineraries of progress towards holiness. Higher spiritual states were for the few; for the majority the way to God lay along predetermined paths that were predictable and approved.

I exaggerate and simplify what was a far more complex picture, but the trends were there. In the early twentieth century Pierre Pourrat defined spirituality as ‘that part of theology which deals with Christian perfection and the ways that lead to it’.¹ And what was ‘perfection’? And who decided what manner of ‘ways’ led to it? The Church had the answers. The ‘ascetical’ path of discipline, self-denial and prescribed practice was for the many; for the few came ‘the revered and chilly reward of grace after untold ascetical struggle’.² Now and then during my ordination training, a lecture ventured into the rarefied air of ‘mystical’ experience, leaving no doubt that such spiritual heights were as remote from anyone in the class as a Himalayan high plateau was from our setting amidst the genteel comforts of the Surrey countryside. Holiness was for the holy; the higher levels of prayer were set apart for the select few.

Much has changed in recent times in the ways we talk about our life in God. Spiritual experience is commonly understood as an essential dimension of what it is to be human. In a postmodern world any system that attempts to prescribe universally applicable patterns of growth is treated with scepticism. And yet we have not lost our love of linear descriptions of development. As a society we seem addicted to performance targets, self-help manuals and grading systems. After all, these are frameworks we feel we can manage, even if we often become their victims. We worry about what level we are on. We become self-absorbed, taken up with the climbing of our individual mountain where we will one day dwell in the splendid isolation of our achievement—or, more likely, give the whole thing up in sheer frustration.

In summary, if movement towards spiritual maturity is considered in terms of linear progress towards excellence, what follows?

¹ Pierre Pourrat, *Christian Spirituality*, translated by William Henry Mitchell, S. Jacques and D. Attwater (Westminster: Newman, 1953–1955), volume 1, v.

² Mark A. McIntosh, *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 8.

- Progress is achieved through effort, combined with innate talent.
- People will vary in their capacity to move upwards.
- Progress is measured in stages.
- Stages are successive: once one level is achieved, attention moves on to reaching the next.
- There will be a sense of hierarchy: some will be at a higher level than others.
- Focus is given to individual development, with at least the suggestion that this is an end in itself.

Coming Down to Earth

The Bible is a grounded book. It emerged from a people comfortable with their dependence on the earth. Familiarity perhaps dulls our recognition of the prevalence in it of the imagery of natural growth: fruits of the Spirit, wilderness and garden, a vine and its branches, a seed that falls to the ground and dies for the sake of a harvest to come. Jesus bade his hearers contemplate the lilies of the field so as to know their own place within the generosity of God. Growth is a mysterious cooperation with the creativity of God: seed is actively sown and nurtured by human hands, but its hidden, inner wonder unfurls by gift; seen and unseen, by day and by night.

What the Bible presents through this imagery is not a manual of growth but a parable—or better—layer upon layer of parables. Manuals provide a detailed itinerary of progress: steps that can be studied, predicted and achieved. Parables unfold meaning when approached contemplatively. Truth is not grasped from the page, but received through relationship with the object of our gaze.

Four Movements of Growth

The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow; he does not know how. The earth produces of itself: first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. (Mark 4: 26–28)

Here and elsewhere within the biblical narrative I discern four recurring movements of growth: rooting and grounding, the emergence of new shoots, the complex and mysterious development of what has begun to reveal itself, and the generous bearing of fruit. While—as the parable

expresses—there is a sense of progression between these movements, they are not linear stages where one is left behind for another to begin. For fruit to develop a plant must maintain its rootedness in the ground; and it is to the earth that the fruit will return, where new seeds will break forth, emerge and grow.

Rooting and Grounding

The seed finds ground, and here its transformation begins. We, like plants, need depth: a place to belong, to know ourselves, to find rest and to grow. As the letter to the Ephesians (3:14–21) suggests, it is through rooting and grounding in love that our inner being begins to grow strong, and that Christ dwells in our hearts. When a seed falls to the earth, the mysterious process of its transformation into a fully grown tree or flower is set in motion. The soil provides an anchor: a resting place after drifting through the air. And the soil is also a means of sustenance, providing the water and nutrients that enable cells to divide, roots to be formed and the first tentative shoot to pierce its way into the sunlight.

God is the ground of our being and becoming. Our roots must go deep. Without the stability of being in relationship with one who loves us, there can be no movement. Without the sustenance of God's giving, there will be no growth. If we are not rooted we will be all over the place, unable to flourish and ignorant of who we are. So a first, but ever-present, movement of spiritual growth is the intentional grounding of our lives in God through prayer and humility.

The very term 'humility' draws us back to our origins in *humus*: earth. As with Adam, God stoops to take and form us from the dust of our ground: our personality, circumstances and history. Growth begins with accepting what 'is'—however unpromising our reality may be—in trust that the movement of God is always to take this ground and go on working it into being. God's humility invites our own. In



facing ourselves—how things are, what we feel, our discomforts and our desires—we find we are also facing God—or rather that God is with us and in us as we face these truths. God is working this ground with us, and invites our trust and cooperation as this labour of love continues.

Emergence: A Response to An Invitation

A shoot shall come from the stock of Jesse. And a branch shall grow out of his roots. (Isaiah 11:1)

For all that is created, to ‘be’ is to experience the desire to ‘become’. By day and by night the scattered seed sprouts and grows; a new shoot breaks from the cut-down tree. This invitation to growth often seems to come externally, but the deeper reality is the awakening of hidden life within. It is not just longer days and warmer soil that bring about transformation; growth is intrinsic to the very DNA of the plant.

Rooted in God, we experience fresh invitations to grow. Sometimes it is a stir of new energy, hope and possibility; sometimes we feel disturbed out of a previously settled set of assumptions about ourselves, the shape of our life or the reality of God. I think of the discomfort of Nicodemus, seeking out Jesus by night, unable to make sense of his talk of new birth and the hidden paths of the Spirit, but experiencing these very things through his uncertainty (John 3:1–9). We are drawn towards the ‘more’ than we now know not just by some external invitation, but through God’s Spirit in our spirit.

Our emergence into life depends on attentiveness and daring. Growth takes place through a free response to a generous and loving invitation. Our cooperation will always be wanted and needed. The beginning is to choose all means at our disposal that help us recognise the invitation. The emergence of a new shoot is not the revelation of the full-grown plant. What we sense as we listen is the draw towards a particular movement: a stepping out or a letting go. We rarely know where this movement will take us; it takes daring to respond.

The Struggle towards Abundance

Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold. (Mark 4:7–8)

The sower and the seed, the mustard seed that despite its size grows into a home for the birds, the weeds among the wheat: all tell of the wonder of growth, but also of obstacles that lie in its way. Perhaps we need to

rid ourselves of perspectives gained from modern models of efficient agriculture. The sower who scatters seed amidst rocks, birds and thorns is not being wasteful: this is how the field is. But the sower also knows there are pockets of good soil and so is liberal in the sowing.

As we begin to respond to God's invitation, we discover everything in us that opposes such movement. Resistance is in itself a manifestation of growth, just as we become aware of the impact of rocks and thorns because now the plants are pushing towards their maturity. We are being drawn beyond well-worn patterns of thought and behaviour that may have protected us from harm in the past but now keep us in confinement. Discernment is needed to see from where our resistance stems and what fear it expresses, and also to trust—and then go with—the larger life that is waking within us. There are rocks, birds and thorns; but some seed finds good soil and yields thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.

Fruitfulness and Fall

My Father is glorified in this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples (John 15:8).

Rather than a movement towards perfection that is individual, self-generated and has overtones of personal achievement, rooting and grounding in God moves us into fruitfulness that is generous and expressive of mutual interdependence. The soil that nurtures growth is formed through the breaking down of former generations of plant matter and the work of myriad micro-organisms and insects. Fertilisation relies on the activity of bees, butterflies and moths, attracted and fed by a flower's nectar. Birds feed on the hedgerow berries in late summer and autumn, and return the gift by distributing seed. Fruit forms, falls and gives seed for generations of life beyond itself.

We are made in the image and likeness of God, whose being is ever fruitful. God is love, and love goes beyond itself to give life to another. The common life of the Trinity—our true life, not just as individuals but in our wider relationships—rests on such generosity and self-transcendence. But we must learn to receive as well as give. We find salvation, not as individuals, but in, with and through one another. Competitive holiness has no place here.

Searching for a metaphor to describe the movement that has run through the whole of his life, and is now drawn from him in the face of death, Jesus says: 'Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it

remains but a single grain, but if it dies, it bears much fruit' (John 12:24). The realisation of the fullness of being lies not in self-protection or self-aggrandisement but in relationship. As we let our self-absorption fall we find our true self in the giving and receiving of love. This generosity is the defining shape of God's life and our life—as individuals, as community, and in our choices.

* * *

In summary, if we explore the source, goal and means of our movement towards spiritual maturity through biblical imagery of growth what emerges?

- Spiritual growth is a cooperative process; our engagement is necessary, but growth rests on freely responding to God's invitation to us, as we perceive this in the moment.
- There are recurring movements of growth: grounding, emergence (with all its related struggles), bearing fruit and choosing to fall. These are ongoing movements that are interdependent, rather than successive stages.
- Growth takes place within and through relationship. Instead of being the individual pursuit of excellence, the source, means and goal of growth is participation in the generous giving and receiving of the life of the Trinity, expressed in all creation. Rather than a hierarchy of relative excellence, such growth expresses itself in the formation of community.

Encountering the Spiritual Exercises

Perfection or fruitfulness? A linear and self-made progress or the experience of cooperating with different recurring movements? The imagery we choose (or receive) will shape our understanding of the source, means and goal of spiritual maturity. At a practical level it will also shape how we approach prayer and the expectations we have of ourselves and the process when we go on retreat. How does what I have explored thus far relate to Ignatius' understanding of the purpose and potential fruit of the Spiritual Exercises?

The Spiritual Exercises have structure. Ignatius asks us to pray for different graces at different moments. There is movement through the exercises of each day, and over the Weeks of the process. But rather than imposing a framework—as one might in designing a training package to

attain a new skill—Ignatius intuited the pattern of the Spirit’s working and then expressed this in the forms and rhythm of his writing. And he did so out of reflection on his own experience of inner transformation and the experiences of those he listened to and guided. Looking at the Spiritual Exercises from the outside there appears to be a linear path with regular stages: the different exercises and Weeks through which exercitants pass in turn, which they ‘master’ and then move on. But from the inside the experience is different.

I was 29 when I first experienced the Spiritual Exercises. I was a priest in my first parish, and struggling. The motivation to express the persistence and depth of God’s love was strong; but I was awash with loneliness and fear. The rector of the seminary where I had received my ordination training had singled me out to return there one day as a spiritual director. Going to St Beuno’s Spirituality Centre for a three-month programme that included participation in the Exercises was to be the first stage of my preparation. I knew next to nothing about what I was entering into, but I needed God, and so came as wide open as the stretched, bare limbs of the winter trees.

When I reflect on what took place within me during the retreat, I recognise the shape of a trajectory that was fresh to me at that time, and yet familiar. The movements I experienced then have continued to play through my life. The silence and structure allowed me space to own my longing for completeness, and gave no place to hide from the pain of my fractured life. I was in a knot of contradictions, craving acceptance and fiercely resisting it, drawn to God but also finding ways to withdraw, unsure if God wanted me.

What made movement more difficult was my belief that if anything was going to change it was down to me. If prayer was not fruitful it was because I was not able to master the techniques that would make God ‘happen’—or perhaps I was not one of those people who could do prayer. And then God was there—and by complete gift, cutting through my anxiety about worth or performance. With this presence came invitation: to begin to welcome who I was and trust who I might become through this surprising love.

Like Levi at the tax collector’s booth, I sensed Jesus calling me to ‘Come!’, and my response was both free and liberating. I could put aside my labour to meet the unattainable expectations I had of myself—or imagined that others had of me—and begin to befriend the ‘me’ who was emerging from within. As I moved outwards I was confounded by

***A sense of
the shape of
God's
working***

the deeply ingrained layers of my resistance. My guide helped me trace the patterns of my fear: where it began, where it led me and how it drove me. I learnt to welcome and go with the less familiar voice of God's Spirit in my spirit, drawing me into freedom and hope. And this movement led me beyond my self-absorption and towards more generous living. I completed the Exercises, left the retreat house and returned home. Rather than helping me climb a few more rungs of the ladder towards holiness, those weeks gave me a sense of the shape of God's working. Rather than mastering more stages of growth, I came away more familiar with the movements of growth that recur within the lifelong process of cooperation with the Spirit.

The Exercises are about a moment in our life: gaining a true perspective on that pivotal point and the choices it presents, through attentiveness to the Spirit. But, more than this, they open up awareness of those movements of our spirits and God's Spirit that continue to play throughout our years. They provide orientation by drawing us to be rooted in God, the source of our being and becoming. They support us in experiencing, in and with Christ, the direction of our existence in fruitful and generous self-expression. They help us get in touch with the means of our growth in God's life by way of cooperation with the Holy Spirit within our spirit, just as the seed experiences the inward beckoning towards shoot, stalk, flower and fruit. They enable us to explore the sources and expressions of our resistance to sharing in the freedom and joy of God. There is good soil that the sower continues to seek amidst the birds, rocks and thorns.

Order and Freedom

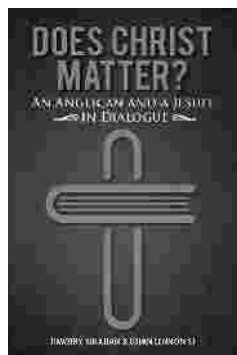
There was a time when the Spiritual Exercises were delivered in a very different way: as point-by-point meditations, given to a group rather than to an individual, and with the expectation of particular results. Perhaps that was the infection of humankind's desire for close control: a preference for predictability and uniformity over the risk of the Spirit who honours our individuality and works with our particular ground. An ordered march towards perfection is more manageable than allowing the riot of colour, form and texture that goes with the forming of fruit in all its variety.

But the biblical narratives of growth, and the recurring movements they suggest, allow both order and freedom. The 'order' does not take the form of close control; rather it is the 'ordering' of life towards relationship

with God and the generosity of fruit and fall that this awakens through the gift of God. The ‘freedom’ is not self-indulgence, but the liberty of the Spirit, free from the rocks, birds and thorns of a thousand fears. The order that exists within the Spiritual Exercises—with their Weeks and the associated methods and objects of prayer—serves the freedom of discerning and cooperating with the movement of the Spirit that goes where it wills in each person’s life. Ignatius is not given to horticultural imagery, but he is aware that everything begins with and leads to the shape of the relationship between Creator and Creation. From the Principle and Foundation to the Contemplation to Attain Love one truth is expressed: our grounding is God, whose life is ever fruitful in the giving and receiving of love.

What biblical imagery of growth provides is not a detailed itinerary of progress towards perfection but glimpses into the continuing work of the Creator and the recurring rhythms of our cooperation. We will sense afresh the call to sink our roots into rich, deep earth. Old or young, God will dare us once more to emerge into being. The Spirit will lead us beyond ourselves in fruitful generosity. This too—perhaps—is the gift of the Spiritual Exercises. We do not know where the wind comes from or where it will go but we do begin to recognise its sound.

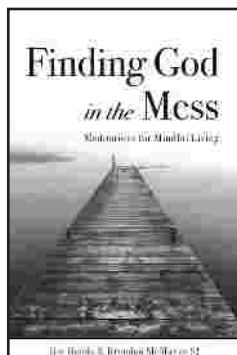
Christopher Chapman has been involved in spiritual direction since the later 1980s, following study at St Beuno’s and Heythrop College in London, where he completed an MA in Christian spirituality. More recently he has worked in spiritual direction training and has taught spirituality-related modules for St Augustine’s College of Theology in Kent. He is the author of *Seeing in the Dark: Pastoral Perspectives on Suffering from the Christian Spiritual Tradition* (2013) and *Earthed in God: Four Movements of Spiritual Growth* (2018).



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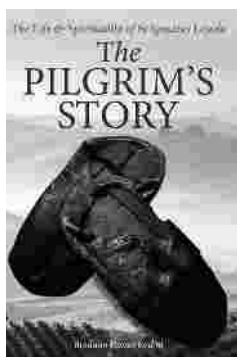
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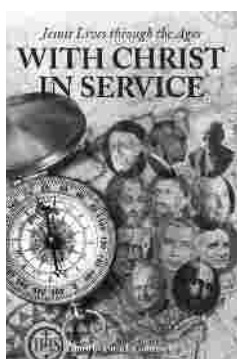
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THE LIGHT OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

Meredith Secomb

PEOPLE ARE SUFFERING. Such a commonplace does not need elaboration. We see all around us the pain undergone by those torn apart in conflicts within and between nations, conflicts of race, religion and gender within societies, abuse and exploitation within institutions, and domestic violence within families. In these circumstances people are usually the victims of gross injustice, the inequities of which only systemic change can amend. It is not this form of suffering that I am addressing here.

There are other forms of suffering. We suffer, for instance, when we do not know who we are. For some, this kind of suffering so intrudes on their lives that they seek professional help. I have been privileged to serve such people in my work as a psychologist in private practice. The people who came to me would often speak of feeling 'lost' and of being separated from others in ways that were distressing to them. Their suffering challenged their former 'felt sense' of presence to themselves.¹ It also challenged their relationship with God, who often appeared painfully absent. They had been stripped of previous roles and personas. Their self-concepts had changed and they had no new concepts with which to replace them. Socially, emotionally, cognitively, somatically and spiritually they were in new and unfamiliar territory. Unable to make sense of who they were, my clients had become strangers to themselves. It was a disconcerting and frightening experience.

One does not, however, have to be so exposed to trouble that visiting a psychologist is warranted. Such suffering is the stuff of life. Hans Urs von Balthasar observes that for all of us there is a discrepancy between our interior experience of ourselves and our exterior experience in

This is a significantly edited version of an article previously published in the *Australian eJournal of Theology*, 22/2 (2015), 66–80.

¹ For the notion of a bodily 'felt sense' see Eugene T. Gendlin, *Focusing* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981).

engagement with others.² By mid life the experience of discrepancy can reach breaking point. Dante renders it well in the opening to the *Inferno*: ‘Midway in the journey of our life I came to myself in a dark wood, for the straight way was lost’.³

Before this time of coming to oneself, of insight and awareness, the suffering is typically managed with distractions—whether work and busyness, or entertainment, drugs or alcohol. However, distractions cannot be a solution. As the philosopher and writer Peter Kreeft insightfully observes, ‘Evasion is always temporary, a matter of time. Truth is a matter of eternity, whether it is truth evaded or truth faced.’⁴ Kreeft encourages us to look within, to look at the depths of our unhappiness, and he cites Malcolm Muggeridge as an example of someone who found his deepest fulfilment in confronting his deepest distress. For Muggeridge the experience of ‘lostness’, of ‘alienation’, of being ‘a stranger in a strange land’, was the pathway to his true home: heaven. As Kreeft explains:

... spiritual birth is free, up to us. Even God cannot force our free choice But he can and will do anything to ‘tempt’ us to accept his invitation, especially by making us feel deep dissatisfaction with everything else, by the great gift of unhappiness.⁵

I too encouraged my clients to look within, to be aware of and to accept their interior experience of emotional pain in a non-evaluative manner. Eventually they learnt to sit with the experiences of ‘not knowing’, of feeling ‘empty’, and of having a ‘vast void’ within. Through the prayerful, faith-filled acceptance of their interior pain, my clients discovered that a profound and mysterious dimension existed as their core experience of Self.⁶ When they learnt to hold that place open before God in faith, not only did their suffering gain spiritual meaning and value, but a new, albeit inexplicable, sense of Self arose, with a capacity to be attentive to the impact of grace felt at the level of embodied consciousness. Their experience of Self had been transformed and they

² Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, volume 1, *Prolegomena* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988), 264.

³ Dante Alighieri, *The Inferno*, translated by Robert and Jean Hollander (New York: Anchor, 2002), 3.

⁴ Peter Kreeft, *Heaven: The Heart's Deepest Longing* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989), 62.

⁵ Kreeft, *Heaven*, 62–63; and see Malcolm Muggeridge, *Jesus Rediscovered* (New York: Doubleday, 1969), 30–31.

⁶ Note that I capitalise the term ‘Self’ in order to distinguish it from the ego, which is merely a managerial component of the Self. In adopting this distinction I follow the work of Carl Jung, for which see Carl Jung, *Aion: Researches in the Phenomenology of the Self* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1959).

had discovered the hidden core of themselves: a deep, indeed infinite, well of silence, of stillness, residing at the centre of their being.

Two major insights can arise from attention to this silence.⁷ The first is that the core of our being, our centre, our heart, is *luminous*; a second insight is that this luminous centre leads us to God. When we focus intentionally on the depths of our interiority we find a luminous space that lies below our thoughts and our emotions, yet also penetrates these very thoughts and emotions. This is a dimension that can only be described in the paradoxical terms, typically found in spiritual literature, that draw on the notions of both light and darkness.⁸ I give greater emphasis here to the imagery of light, although there is a significant literature that refers also to the darkness experienced as lovers of God pursue their interior journey.⁹

A luminous space that lies below our thoughts

I explore how the discovery of this luminous centre provides an answer to the question 'Who am I?'. It is not a cognitively derived answer. It is an existentially embodied answer that opens into the peaceful, loving silence of God. In so doing I draw on reflections from Christianity and Hinduism. From the Christian tradition I look to the work of the Jesuit philosopher and theologian Bernard Lonergan (1904–1984). From the Hindu tradition I consider the teaching of the Indian sage Ramana Maharshi (1879–1950). I consider that both the Christian and Hindu traditions can help us to fathom the luminous core of the Self. There are, however, important differences in where its luminousness and the imagery of light can lead us in each tradition.

The Light of Consciousness

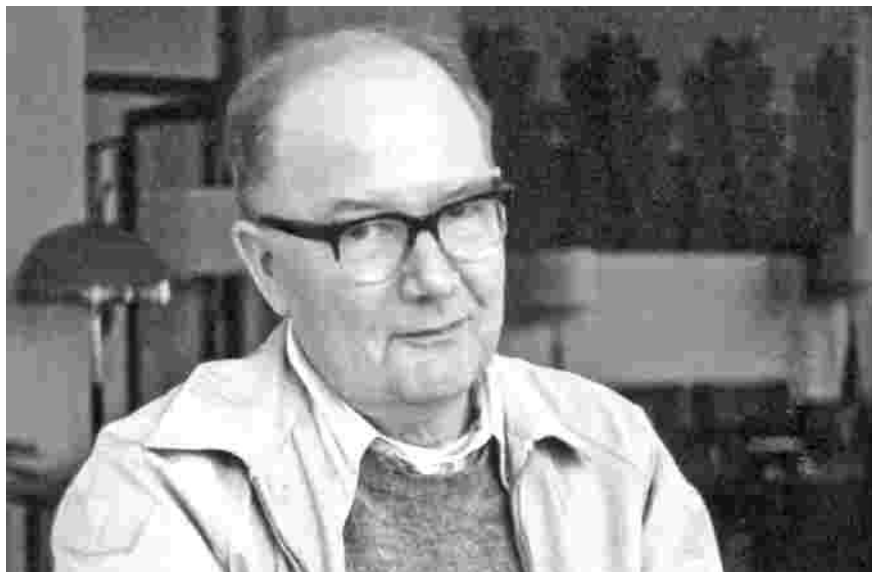
Bernard Lonergan

As well as being a theologian and philosopher, Bernard Lonergan was psychologically astute. He examined the phenomenology of consciousness and demarcated its topography in a way that nicely complements the experiential discoveries of those great explorers of consciousness from

⁷ See also Meredith Secomb, 'Being Attentive to Silence', *The Way*, 56/2 (April 2016), 27–42.

⁸ The contemplative tradition typically distinguishes between 'kataphatic' and 'apophatic' experiences of God, the former using very specific imagery and describing God by way of affirmation and the latter describing God by way of negation. However, while apophatic experiences are typically and simplistically described as having no imagery, they do in fact use imagery, although of a paradoxical nature. Gregory of Nyssa speaks of entering a 'luminous darkness' on his journey into God, for which see *The Life of Moses* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2006), 80–81.

⁹ See, for example, St John of the Cross, 'The Dark Night', in *The Collected Works of St John of the Cross*, translated by Kieran Kavanagh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington, DC: ICS, 1979), 295–389.



Bernard Lonergan

Eastern traditions of meditation. Like the latter, Lonergan grounded his considerations in the empirical data of consciousness—which are available to all who attend to their own experience of themselves. Lonergan, however, placed these considerations within a systematic context, appreciating the various levels of intentionality in an authentically functioning subject.

Foundational to both Lonergan's work and the Eastern traditions is attentiveness to experience. The essential unity of a person is manifest in a primordially immediate experience of consciousness as presence to Self. It is the core experience of one's Self: 'The *oneself* is the irreducibly individual element whence spring the choices of the decisive person and the drifting or forgetting of the indecisive person. What springs from that source is free; for it one is responsible.'¹⁰ We experience this Self tacitly—in a way which, while remaining in the background, always accompanies our explicit experiencing, knowing and acting; it is that which is most private and intimate within us, the 'unrevealed, hidden core' of our being.¹¹

¹⁰ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, 'Subject and Horizon', in *Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism*, edited by Philip J. McShane, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, volume 18 (Toronto: U. of Toronto P, 2001), 240 (emphasis original).

¹¹ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, 'Existenz and Aggiornamento', in *Collection: Papers by Bernard Lonergan*, edited by Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: U. of Toronto P, 1988), volume 4, 229, 222.

To speak of such things is an 'existential speaking' that is difficult to categorise, engaging as it does the whole human person and involving thereby dimensions that are 'psychological, sociological, historical, philosophic, theological, religious, ascetic ... even mystical'.¹² Our core is present within ourselves before we know ourselves as intentional and acting subjects. Yet, just as we can be in love before we come to the wonderful realisation of the fact, so this luminous presence can reside within us without our reflecting upon it.

Lonerger teaches us that we *all* have a 'luminous being' within; it is the core of our very Self. It is, however, often difficult to access it. Augustine lamented that God was 'within' while he was 'without'.¹³ The present-day contemplative and teacher Martin Laird observes that, while this quiet, luminous centre is the 'most fundamental fact of our spiritual lives, it takes a lifetime to realize it'.¹⁴ Because we tend to identify ourselves with our thoughts and feelings rather than with the stillness at the core, we usually need help to access this centre.

Ramana Maharshi

For thousands of years Hindu practitioners of meditation have been attending to their experience of interiority. One such is the South Indian Hindu sage Sri Ramana Maharshi. There are remarkable parallels between his assured answer to the question, 'Who am I?', and Bernard Lonergan's articulation of what it is to be one's Self. Lonergan and Ramana are both asking an existential question about the nature of the Self. The latter put the explicit question, 'Who am I?'; the former framed the question as 'What is it to be oneself?'.¹⁵ Common to both Lonergan and Ramana is an interest in the human subject. Also common to both is the capacity to attend to their experience and reflect intelligently upon it. Each has an authentic subjectivity which is able to communicate insights from interior realms of which most of us are unaware.

Born into an orthodox Hindu family as Venkataraman Iyer, the boy later became known as Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi.¹⁶ He was popular,

¹² Lonergan, 'Existenz and Aggiornamento', 222.

¹³ Augustine, *Confessions*, translated by Henry Chadwick (Oxford: OUP, 2009), 2.

¹⁴ Martin Laird, *A Sunlit Absence: Silence, Awareness, and Contemplation* (New York: OUP, 2011), 2.

¹⁵ See Bernard J. F. Lonergan, 'On Being Oneself', in *Phenomenology and Logic*, 234–246, especially 240; Ramana Maharshi, *The Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi*, edited by Arthur Osborne (York Beach: Samuel Weiser, 1972). For a historical overview of the question, 'Who am I?', perennially raised by humanity, see Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, volume 1, 481–491.

¹⁶ 'Bhagavan', meaning 'God', was the name with which he was typically addressed; 'Ramana' is a shortened version of his name Venkataraman; 'Maharshi' is a shortened form of Maha-Rishi, which

good at sports and, although intelligent, interested neither in study nor in spiritual matters. His father died when he was twelve and the children were sent to live with their paternal uncle.¹⁷ It is possible that this emotional suffering prepared him for the experience that occurred at the age of sixteen when, for no reason apparent to Venkataraman, he suddenly feared that he was going to die. With no prior training, the boy spontaneously responded to this fear with an exercise in interiority. He describes the experience:

The shock of the fear of death drove my mind inwards and I said to myself mentally, without actually framing the words: 'Now death has come; what does it mean? What is it that is dying? This body dies But with the death of this body am I dead? Is the body I? It is silent and inert but I feel the full force of my personality and even the voice of the "I" within me, apart from it. So I am Spirit transcending the body. The body dies but the Spirit transcending it cannot be touched by death. That means I am the deathless Spirit' From that moment onwards the 'I', or Self, focused attention on itself by a powerful fascination Whether the body was engaged in talking, reading or anything else, I was still centred on 'I'.

Venkataraman's experience of the 'I' was like a persistent bass note, a *continuo* underlying and blending with all his normal, everyday activities. He describes it as a 'fundamental sruti note', referring to the monotone that persists through a piece of Indian music 'like the thread on which beads are strung', and he identifies the Self with this core experience.¹⁸

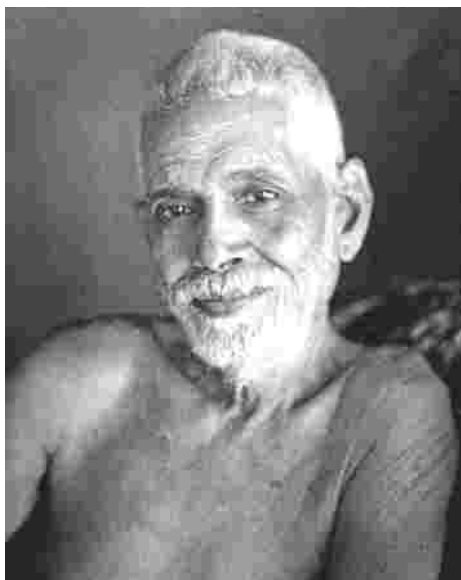
Ramana's fascination with the Self he had discovered transformed him, changing his priorities so that his behaviour began to be, to Indian eyes, recognisably that of a 'sadhu' or holy man. Ramana came to be seen by the Western Christian world as a figure like St Francis of Assisi, the depths of whose love endeared him to humans and animals alike. He spoke little, teaching mostly by his silence. His profound depths of interiority influenced all who came into contact with him, drawing them into their own centre, into silence, into the Self. There they would find that questions would fall away as a deep peace settled upon their spirits. When Ramana did teach, his method was founded on asking the question, 'Who am I?' This method became known as 'Self-enquiry'.

means 'great sage'. See Arthur Osborne, 'Preface', in *Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi*, 10. The title 'Sri' is one of respect.

¹⁷ Arthur Osborne, *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-Knowledge* (New Delhi: B. I., 1990 [1954]), 14–15.

¹⁸ Osborne, 'Preface', 8.

Those who came to Ramana Maharshi recognised his wisdom, a wisdom derived not from formal education but from attending to and reflecting upon his own experience. It was a wisdom that led him to value all creeds as 'sincere expressions of a great experience'.¹⁹ For Ramana there were two ways to liberation from the confines of egocentricity, a liberation that issued in the freedom of the larger Self. He instructed, 'There are two ways: ask yourself "Who am I?" or submit'.²⁰ Both Self-enquiry and devotion to God were satisfactory routes. For Ramana accessing



Sri Ramana Maharshi in 1948

the Self, accessing the depths of one's consciousness, led to the same dynamics of ego-abandonment as devout surrender to a beloved Divinity.

The question arises as to what that 'Self' is for Ramana Maharshi. He asks, 'Is not the sense of "I" natural to all beings, expressed in all their feelings as "I came", "I went", "I did", or "I was?"' Initial reflection on the source of this 'I' by those unfamiliar with Self-enquiry might identify it with the body. But Ramana instructs,

On questioning what this is, we find that the body is identified with 'I', because movements and similar functions pertain to the body. Can the body then be this 'I-consciousness'? ... No, it cannot be. This sense of 'I', which arises in the body for the time being, is otherwise called the ego, ignorance, illusion, impurity, or individual self.²¹

We must also surrender all identification with thoughts and emotions to access the Self. Yet Ramana urges his listeners to go even further. He leads them in simple language to identify for themselves what Bernard Lonergan calls the experience of presence to Self:

¹⁹ Paul Brunton, *A Search in Secret India* (York Beach: Samuel Weiser, 1985), 291.

²⁰ Maharshi, *Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi*, 17.

²¹ Ramana Maharshi, 'Enquiry into the Self', in Maharshi, *Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi*, 18.

Lay aside this insentient body as though it were truly a corpse. Do not even murmur 'I', but enquire keenly within what it is that now shines within the heart as 'I'. Underlying the ceaseless flow of varied thoughts, there arises the continuous, unbroken awareness, silent and spontaneous as 'I-I' in the heart. If one catches hold of it and remains still, it will completely annihilate the sense of 'I' in the body, and will itself disappear as a fire of burning camphor.²²

In a section explicitly devoted to the question 'Who am I?' Ramana rejects the notion that the 'gross body' or the various capacities of our being comprise the Self.²³ Our thoughts and our emotions do not constitute the Self. We are to refrain from identifying with them. We are to refrain from pursuing them and instead merely bear witness to them:

Whatever thoughts arise as obstacles to one's *sadhana* (spiritual discipline), the mind should not be allowed to go in their direction, but should be made to rest in one's Self ... one should remain as witness to whatever happens, adopting the attitude, 'Let whatever strange things happen, happen; let us see!'.²⁴

Ramana gives the same advice as Teresa of Ávila concerning the management of thoughts during meditation; she similarly recommended patience and endurance when confronted by unwanted distractions: 'it isn't good for us to be disturbed by our thoughts, nor should we be concerned ... let us be patient and endure them for the love of God'.²⁵

If we refrain from identifying with the processes of consciousness, then all that remains is pure Consciousness itself: 'the ego or 'I', which is the centre of the multitude of thoughts, finally vanishes and pure Consciousness or Self, which subsists during all the states of the mind, alone remains resplendent'.²⁶ When through perseverance we arrive at a

²² Maharshi, 'Enquiry into the Self', 19. See Jim Marion, *Putting on the Mind of Christ: The Inner Work of Christian Spirituality* (Charlottesville: Hampton Roads, 2011), 203; Ken Wilber, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution* (Boston: Shambhala, 1995), 302. Ramana contrasts the self-conscious ego or 'I' with 'I-I', used to describe a nondual consciousness wherein the experience of pure subjectivity lacks the reflexive moment of being present to oneself as an object.

²³ Maharshi, *Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi*, 39–47.

²⁴ This passage was omitted from earlier editions of the *Collected Works*. See Ramana Maharshi, 'Self-inquiry', translated by T. M. P. Mahadevan, in Ramana Maharshi, *The Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi*, edited by Arthur Osborne, 9th edn (San Rafael: Sophia Perennials, 2006), 11.

²⁵ Teresa of Ávila, 'The Interior Castle', 4. 1. 11, in *The Collected Works of St Teresa of Ávila*, translated by Kieran Kavanagh and Otilio Rodríguez (Washington, DC: ICS, 1976–1985), volume 2, 321.

²⁶ Ramana uses words such as 'resplendent' and 'luminous' over a hundred times.

state wherein ‘there is not the slightest trace of the “I”-thought’, then we have found ‘the true Being of oneself’. To experience this ‘I-consciousness’ is to experience the core of the Self.

For Ramana, a Hindu, there too we access God: to know oneself is to know God.²⁷ A Christian cannot, however, say the same thing: that to plumb the depths of one’s own consciousness, of pure awareness, is also to experience Jesus Christ. The light inherent in the Self is profoundly different from the radiant light of Jesus Christ, as it was manifested at the transfiguration.

The Light of Consciousness and the Light of Christ

Certainly the pursuit of the luminous core of the Self brings death to our attachments to the things that preoccupy the ego, and thereby enables us to transcend it. If we then exercise a focused intentionality towards, or abandonment of ourselves to, the depths thus revealed, we will find ourselves immersed in the profoundly peaceful and joyous experience of the Self. Martin Laird comments on the luminosity of such prayerful silence: ‘The interior silence that all contemplative practices cultivate finally blossoms as luminous flowing awareness’.²⁸

We may well ask how much this experience differs for Christians and for Hindus, since their two traditions do appear to have much in common from a purely phenomenological point of view. A constant theme in both Christian and Hindu mysticism is that the depths of Self-awareness generate an apophatic experience of simplicity and light. Words such as ‘radiance’, ‘luminosity’, ‘flame’ and many others associated with light abound in writings that reflect on the nature of the Self and of awareness or consciousness. For Christians this discovery of the light of the Self is not surprising: we are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26–27), and ‘God is light and in him there is no darkness at all’ (1 John 1:5). But the question therefore arises for them as to whether the light at the core of the Self differs from the light of God, revealed in Jesus Christ.

The disciples experienced the radiance of Christ at the transfiguration. Christ’s clothes became ‘dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them (Mark 9:3) and his ‘face shone like the sun’ (Matthew 17:2). For Gregory Palamas (1296–1357), a significant theologian and saint

²⁷ Maharshi, *Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi*, 42, 36.

²⁸ Laird, *Sunlit Absence*, 14.



The Transfiguration, by Titian, c.1560

within the Eastern Orthodox tradition, this radiance was a revelation of Christ's divinity, totally other than that which he possessed in his humanity. On Mount Tabor Christ manifested 'the splendour of the divine nature hidden under His flesh'. For those whose 'eyes of their hearts' had been purified—such as the disciples, the Virgin Mary, Simeon and Anna—'the power of God shone out visibly as if through thin glass' in the flesh of Jesus Christ.²⁹ Palamas argued that a life of prayer and asceticism offers the possibility of a similar vision to Christians who pursue the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ.

If this is so, then the light available to those who plumb the depths of the Self must be of a different order from that which is revealed by the divinity of Jesus Christ. 'How', as Palamas asks, 'could ordinary light be the glory and the kingdom of the Father and the Spirit?'³⁰ Hans Urs

²⁹ Gregory Palamas, *Saint Gregory Palamas: The Homilies*, edited and translated by Christopher Veniamin (Waymart: Mount Thabor, 2009), 34. 13.

³⁰ Palamas, *Homilies*, 34. 14, 34. 15.

von Balthasar would support this position. He insists that 'the measure which Christ represents and embodies is *qualitatively different* from every other measure'. The 'phenomenon' of Christ 'is unique of its kind' and hence 'its interior constitution cannot be known by being compared to other phenomena'.³¹ Moreover the experience of the light of Christ carries within it its own intrinsic evidence. For there is an 'objective and radiant rightness' about the God-given form, which demonstrates 'how emphatically that light derives from the object and indwells it' and hence distinguishes it from all other objects.³² While acknowledging that the 'interior realities' of all religions are present within Christ, Balthasar nevertheless insists that the form of Christ is distinguished from all other 'religious forms'.³³

Both Hans Urs von Balthasar and Bernard Lonergan call for a further step beyond discovering the luminosity of the depths of the Self. They call for a conversion. Conversion opens up a transcendent dimension which reveals the light of Christ in its glorious uniqueness. The radiant light of Tabor is available for those prepared to abandon themselves in prayerful surrender to Christ, with its accompanying ascetic demands for purification and transformation. Yet for both Balthasar and Lonergan the grounding of an authentic Self provides a sure starting point for this journey.

Thinkers from both Christianity and Hinduism call us to attend to our experience of the Self, an experience known apart from our bodily awareness and apart from our thoughts and emotions. It is the awareness of pure consciousness, our simple presence to the Self. When in the depths of silence we learn to focus on this simple awareness, we discover ourselves. We find an embodied, existential answer in the core of our being to the question 'Who am I?'. For the Hindu Ramana Maharshi to ask the question 'Who am I?' in the depths of simple presence to Self is synonymous with finding the revelation of God within. Either way leads to freedom from the bondage and confines of egocentricity. For the Christian Bernard Lonergan to attend to the data of consciousness yields the discovery of the luminosity of the Self. Lonergan, however, calls us to go further into the realm of transcendence through conversion

³¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, volume 1, *Seeing the Form* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1982), 481 (emphasis added).

³² Balthasar, *Glory of the Lord*, volume 1, 481.

³³ Balthasar, *Glory of the Lord*, volume 1, 481–482, 502, 507.

and so to discover Jesus Christ. There we find a radiant luminosity that transcends that of the Self, a luminosity witnessed by saints such as Gregory Palamas and scholars such as Hans Urs von Balthasar.

Meredith Secomb has worked as a clinical psychologist in the public sector and in a private practice that specialised in the interface of psychology and spirituality. She has a doctorate from the Australian Catholic University and has published in the fields of spirituality, psychology and theology, also presenting conference papers on Lonergan and psychological topics in Australia and overseas. After completing her doctorate Meredith travelled into various parts of rural Australia as a missionary on a bicycle. She now lives a simple life as a contemplative in suburbia and shares in the life of her local Orthodox Christian parish.

ST TERESA OF JESUS, MENTAL PRAYER AND THE HUMANITY OF JESUS

Joanna Farrugia

ONE OF THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL ASPECTS of the spirituality of St Teresa of Jesus (St Teresa of Ávila) was her attitude towards mental prayer. St Teresa advocated mental prayer at a time when a group of women dedicating themselves to prayer was regarded with distrust and suspicion, and when people were advised to follow the safe paths of the ascetical life and vocal prayer, shunning the extraordinary ways of mysticism. For her, mental prayer was not only a silent prayer of the heart, but also a response to God's call and invitation, and the way to a personal and intimate relationship with God.

Things were obviously not easy for St Teresa. The value and role of mental prayer were a matter of controversy. Furthermore, women mystics were even more likely than their male counterparts to be suspected of false mystical illuminations or demonic possession. This was partly because scholastic theologians were influenced by Aristotle's assertion that women were guided by their passions rather than by stable judgment. As a woman, St Teresa did indeed feel incapable of much. She wrote in *The Way of Perfection*: 'I realized I was a woman and wretched and incapable of doing any of the useful things I desired to do in the service of the Lord'.¹ The result of these reflections, however, was not a surrender to apathy but the resolve to do the little that she felt was in her power.

It was in this sceptical environment that St Teresa founded the first monastery of Discalced Carmelites within the Carmelite reform, with a much stricter rule than the Carmelite monasteries of the time. The nuns were to dedicate themselves to a life of prayer, of intimate friendship with God, of faith and love, and they were to observe enclosure. St Teresa

¹ Teresa of Ávila, *The Way of Perfection*, 1.2, in *The Collected Works of St Teresa of Ávila*, volume 2, translated by Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington DC: ICS, 1980).

believed that their prayer would be well received by God although they were women, and she showed an ardent faith that this was the case:

Since you, my Creator, are not ungrateful, I think you will not fail to do what they beg of you. Nor did you Lord, when you walked in the world, despise women; rather you always, with great compassion, helped them. [And you found as much love and more faith in them than you did in men since the world's judges are sons of Adam and all of them men, there is no virtue in women that they do not hold suspect. Yes, indeed, the day will come, my King, when all will be known for what they are. I do not speak for myself, because the world already knows my wickedness ... but because I see that these are times in which it would be wrong to undervalue virtuous and strong souls, even though they are women].²

St Teresa firmly believed that mental prayer is not a kind of spiritual optional extra, but an affirmation of awareness of the extraordinary reality that God is accessible to human beings in a personal, one-to-one relationship. Together with centring one's attention on the human qualities and attributes of Jesus, she earnestly insisted on the nearness of God to each person, emphasizing the importance of being fully present to God in prayer—just as God is fully present to us. She said in *The Way of Perfection*:

What I am trying to point out is that we should see and be present to the One with whom we speak without turning our back on Him, for I don't think speaking with God while thinking of a thousand other vanities would amount to anything else but turning our backs on Him. All the harm comes from not truly understanding that He is near, but in imagining Him as far away.³

You should not be thinking of other things while speaking with God, for doing so amounts to not knowing what mental prayer is.⁴

For St Teresa it was unthinkable that anyone could possibly want to think of something else while in the presence of God, rather than treasuring the moment of intimacy with God. She was firmly convinced of God's presence during mental prayer, faithfully exhorting her sisters, 'I'm not asking you to do anything more than look at Him'.⁵

² Teresa of Ávila, *Way of Perfection*, 3. 7. The bracketed paragraph was deleted from the first redaction (Escorial Autograph) by García de Toledo, St Teresa's confessor, who thought it was too daring for the attitude toward women that was characteristic of the times. Teresa complied and omitted the passage in the second redaction (Valladolid Autograph).

³ Teresa of Ávila, *Way of Perfection*, 29. 5.

⁴ Teresa of Ávila, *Way of Perfection*, 22. 8.

⁵ Teresa of Ávila, *Way of Perfection*, 26. 3.

She argued that even vocal prayer can and must be accompanied by mental prayer. Mental prayer may be silent prayer, or interior prayer—or prayer unbound by any formulas. St Teresa suggested three essential steps for fruitful mental prayer: first, we must be searching for God; second we must be willing to be alone with God; and third, we must look upon God as present within us. In *The Way of Perfection* we read:

However softly we speak, He is near enough to hear us. Neither is there any need for wings to go to find Him. All one need do is go into solitude and look at Him within oneself and not turn away from so good a Guest but with great humility speak to Him as to a Father.⁶

Martha and Mary

Unlike some proponents of the spirituality of her time, St Teresa never saw mental prayer as a means simply to personal fulfilment, and she resolutely put aside any methods of provoking mystical states or supernatural experiences for their own sake. Furthermore, she never neglected temporal



Martha and Mary, by Bernardino Luini, c. 1520

⁶ Teresa of Ávila, *Way of Perfection*, 28. 2.

duties for the spiritual, as this would only result in what she saw as a form of spiritual confinement.

Although a contemplative, St Teresa believed in a balance between the contemplative and the active life. She encouraged her sisters to desire and be occupied in prayer, not for the sake of their own enjoyment but to replenish their enthusiasm and vigour to serve God. The work of both Martha and Mary was necessary:

Believe me, Martha and Mary must join together in order to show hospitality to the Lord and have Him always present and not host Him badly by failing to give Him something to eat. How would Mary, always seated at His feet, provide Him with food if her sister did not help her? His food is that in every way possible we draw souls that they may be saved and praise Him always.⁷

For St Teresa, however, Mary had already done the work of Martha:

He said that Mary had chosen the better part. The answer is that she had already performed the task of Martha, pleasing the Lord by washing His feet and drying them with her hair I tell you, Sisters, the better part came after many trials and much mortification the many trials that afterward she suffered at the death of the Lord and in the years that she subsequently lived in His absence must have been a terrible torment. You see she wasn't always in the delight of contemplation at the feet of the Lord.⁸

Mental Prayer and the Love of God

Not surprisingly, St Teresa rigorously recommended dedicating a larger place in prayer to the work of the heart relative to that of the understanding and the intellect; she believed it to be much more important simply to rejoice in the Lord's presence than to tire ourselves out by occupying our minds with deductive reasoning. In the autobiography, *The Book of Her Life*, she says:

But returning to those who practice discursive reflection, I say they should not pass the whole time thinking ... they should put themselves in the presence of Christ and without tiring the intellect, speak with and delight in Him and not wear themselves out in composing syllogisms.⁹

⁷ Teresa of Ávila, *The Interior Castle*, 7.4.12, in *Collected Works*, volume 2, alluding to Luke 10:38–42.

⁸ Teresa of Ávila, *Interior Castle*, 7.4.13.

⁹ Teresa of Ávila, *The Book of Her Life*, 13.11, in *The Collected Works of St Teresa of Ávila*, volume 1, translated by Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodríguez, 2nd rev. edn (Washington DC: ICS, 1987).

St Teresa insisted with her sisters that the essential element in mental prayer 'not to think much but to love much'.¹⁰ In the *Life* she gives another definition of mental prayer, which has become a classic: 'For mental prayer in my opinion is nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends [*tratar de amistad*]: it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us'.¹¹ The Spanish suggests a communion or exchange suffused with intimacy and love.

It was in order that this communion might be more perfect that God took on our human nature to participate fully in our human life. St Teresa's first thought was not that we *must* pray; what was so remarkable for her is that we *can* pray because God, through Jesus, has made it possible for us to enter into intimacy with God. She advised her sisters in *The Way of Perfection*:

Represent the Lord Himself as close to you and behold how lovingly and humbly He is teaching you. Believe me, you should remain with so good a friend as long as you can. If you grow accustomed to having Him present at your side, and He sees that you do so with love and that you go about striving to please Him, you will not be able, as they say, to get away from Him; He will never fail you; He will help you in all your trials; you will find Him everywhere. Do you think it's some small matter to have a Friend like this at your side?¹²

Mental prayer as understood and advocated by St Teresa makes no sense to the loveless soul. It is possible, perhaps, to recite other prayers with little or no conscious love of God, but it is not possible to do this with Teresian mental prayer. For her, mental prayer was an expression of love, a sincere love which involves giving rather than seeking for oneself, a love that strives to please rather than be pleased. At certain moments St Teresa even doubted that human beings could truly love God:

Perhaps we don't know what love is. I wouldn't be very surprised, because it doesn't consist in great delight but in desiring with strong determination to please God in everything, in striving, insofar as possible, not to offend Him¹³

¹⁰ Teresa of Ávila, *Interior Castle*, 4. 1. 7; and see Teresa of Ávila, *The Book of Her Foundations*, 5. 2, in *The Collected Works of St Teresa of Ávila*, volume 3, translated by Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington DC: ICS, 1985): 'The soul's progress does not lie in thinking much but in loving much'.

¹¹ Teresa of Ávila, *Book of Her Life*, 8. 5.

¹² Teresa of Ávila, *Way of Perfection*, 26. 1.

¹³ Teresa of Ávila, *Interior Castle*, 4. 1. 7.

***The desire to
be alone with
God and talk
with God***

This kind of love moves us to spend time alone with God, not for what we get out of it, but for what we can put into it. For St Teresa it was the desire to be alone with God and talk with God that characterized true prayer. It is not important whether we are delighted by consolation or tortured by dryness and desolation during prayer. What is important is this desire, which really shows our love for God. St Teresa taught her sisters that love for God cannot but develop into the habit of prayer. Furthermore, it makes us choose God rather than ourselves outside prayer as well, a choice that will be evident in our acts of fraternal charity, generosity and humility. This attachment to God and detachment from ourselves, is the measure of the perfection of our prayer.

The Humanity of Jesus

Because of her vision of spiritual intimacy with God, St Teresa's devotion to the humanity of Jesus resulted from attachment to him as a person with whom she could communicate on an equal and intimate level. This was considered by her to be an immense privilege; at the same time it was extremely helpful to her to recall that Jesus himself also experienced human emotions. St Teresa had instruction in the Jesuit methods of prayer and meditation, which made use of symbols and images and developed them by means of visualisation. It is without doubt that these teachings played a part in developing her ideas here.

St Teresa was once again swimming against the current here, as not all mystical writers of the time agreed with her on this teaching. The belief of the time was that to remain in consideration of Christ's humanity could be an obstacle to the soul's progress in contemplation. For this reason, contemplation of the humanity of Jesus was relegated by scholastic theologians to the level of 'discursive meditation'. This was roughly equivalent to the early stage of prayer that St Teresa calls 'meditation'.

Yet, once again, St Teresa took a stand of her own on this issue. She asserted that the path which keeps the image of Jesus' human form always before us is the safest and the most appropriate for human beings. Her opponents cited John 16:7 in support of their theory that the human image of Christ had been superseded: 'if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you'. But St Teresa did not accept the validity of this example and vigorously refuted the argument. She did not condemn every move to moderate the use of

the imagination, but she simply could not accept that the soul should banish the remembrance of Jesus Christ purposely and forcibly.

She believed that meditation on the person of Jesus could continue also at the higher stage of mystical prayer given by the grace of God. In this way, the mysteries represented by the Person of Jesus could be apprehended not only discursively but ‘in a more perfect manner’.¹⁴ With reference to certain books on prayer she argued:

They give strong advice to rid oneself of all corporeal images and to approach contemplation of the divinity. They say that in the case of those who are advancing, these corporeal images, even when referring to the Humanity of Christ, are an obstacle or impediment to the most perfect contemplation. In support of this theory they quote what the Lord said to the apostles about the coming of the Holy Spirit—I mean at the time of His ascension. They think that since this work is entirely spiritual, any corporeal thing can hinder or impede it, that one should try to think of God in a general way, that He is everywhere and that we are immersed in Him. This is good, it seems to me sometimes; but to withdraw completely from Christ or that this Divine Body be counted in a balance with our own miseries or with all creation, I cannot endure.¹⁵

And in *The Interior Castle*, again, she wrote:

I believe I’ve explained that it is fitting for souls, however spiritual, to take care not to flee from corporal things to the extent of thinking that even the most Sacred Humanity causes harm. Some quote what the Lord said to His disciples that it was fitting that He go. I can’t bear this.¹⁶

St Teresa gave two reasons why she considered that neglecting Christ’s humanity was wrong. First, she believed that it showed a lack of humility on our part to wish to rise above meditation on the humanity of Christ before God granted us that gift. This lack, she admitted, as very small and hidden, and that was the reason why it went unnoticed. Wanting to raise the soul up to the level of contemplation before the Lord raises it, or not being content to meditate on something as valuable as the humanity of Christ, was in her opinion, ‘wanting to be Mary before having worked with Martha’.¹⁷ She said in the *Life*:

¹⁴ Teresa of Ávila, *Interior Castle*, 6.7.11.

¹⁵ Teresa of Ávila, *Book of Her Life*, 22.1.

¹⁶ Teresa of Ávila, *Interior Castle*, 6.7.14.

¹⁷ Teresa of Ávila, *Book of Her Life*, 22.9.

This practice of turning aside from corporeal things must be good, certainly, since such spiritual persons advise it. But in my opinion, the soul should be very advanced because until then it is clear that the Creator must be sought through creatures What I wanted to explain was that the most Sacred Humanity of Christ must not be counted in a balance with other corporeal things.¹⁸

The second reason she gave was that we are not angels and we have bodies ourselves. In the *Life* she writes, 'It is an important thing that while we are living and are human we have human support', and again, 'Christ is a very good friend because we behold Him as Man and see Him with weaknesses and trials and He is company for us'.¹⁹

We can read about this teaching twice in St Teresa's writings, both in her autobiography and *The Interior Castle*. It is worth noting that the teaching of *The Interior Castle* remained faithful to that given in the *Life*, although fifteen years passed between the writing of one and the other.

Praying with Christ

For St Teresa, meditation on the humanity of Christ meant coming to know ourselves through Christ. Christ as companion both affirms and challenges our emotions. In him we find our humanity fully present so that we do not have to remove our human particularity in order to pray. If we begin our prayer by recognising our emotional state and accepting the contingent facts of our changeable mental and affective life, and then locate this awareness in relation to Jesus' human experiences, our unstable and changeable condition is not suppressed but reordered. St Teresa encourages us to see ourselves in relation to the story of Jesus. In this way we can accept our emotions in a mature way, and not deny them. By relating our human emotions to the humanity of Jesus, we associate them with the fundamental action of a loving gift. We have to open up our affective life to the possibility that through it, as through Christ, God can communicate love.

In the manner of the love of God for human beings, St Teresa stressed that friendship is not a relationship in which one partner makes unilateral claims on the other from a position of superiority. On the contrary, it means wanting the fulfilment of another human being's potential, because

¹⁸ Teresa of Ávila, *Book of her Life*, 22.8.

¹⁹ Teresa of Ávila, *Book of her Life*, 22.9; 22.10.

friendship is more than just a generalised benevolence. Her concern was always that we should develop the habit of conscious companionship with Christ. It is erroneous to think that we have to leave ourselves and journey somewhere distant in order to find God. God is already accessible to us and it is up to us to continue to speak to God. However, just as much as St Teresa believed that it is possible for everyone to experience the love of God, likewise she held that God does not impinge on our will and our freedom, and we are free to accept or refuse God's offer of friendship. She wrote in *The Way of Perfection*: '... since He doesn't force our will, He takes what we give Him; but He doesn't give Himself completely until we give ourselves completely'.²⁰

Joanna Farrugia is a theology graduate whose main focus of study is Christian spirituality. She is married and mother to four grown-up children. She is at present working as a librarian in a theology library. She dedicates her spare time to playing the organ.

²⁰ Teresa of Ávila, *Way of Perfection*, 28. 12.

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ECOLOGY AND IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY

José A. García

THE PROJECT OF CARING for the earth is so crucial to the future of humankind that all traditions—humanistic, scientific or spiritual—ought to make a contribution. From this conviction, there arises the question of whether Ignatian spirituality has some distinctive inspiration to bring to the service of the environmental movement. I believe it has: the aim of this note is to explain this belief.

Perhaps the deepest root of this claim is found at the beginning and end of the *Spiritual Exercises*: in the Principle and Foundation, and in the Contemplation to Attain Love (*Contemplatio*). The ‘things’ referred to here are more than merely *things*: they are created realities, gifts of God in which God’s self dwells and awaits us.

The process of the Exercises is marked by a double affirmation. The Principle and Foundation asserts that not only human persons but ‘the other things on the face of the earth’ (Exx 23) are all created by God: that is, that they derive from God’s creative love. The *Contemplatio* asserts that the whole of reality is a place of encounter with the God who is manifest there: giving things to us and giving himself in them; dwelling in these things; working in them for us; and descending from above in them.

After his spiritual experiences at Manresa, the world appeared to Ignatius as a great theophany—a revelation of the divine. God shows himself in the world and wishes to be met there, to be adored, loved and served there. This insight constitutes Ignatius’ new mysticism, which transformed Ignatius the hermit into Ignatius the Jesuit. From then on,

his passionate search did not centre on fasting, penances, even on prayer as such, but on loving and serving God, and loving and serving God's world. Later, when writing the *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus, Ignatius would ask of the Society's members something that is valid for each one, because it defines the most essential horizon of his spirituality: 'to seek God our Lord in all things ... loving him in all creatures and all creatures in him, in conformity with his holy and divine will' (*Constitutions* III. 1. 26 [288]).

Is this not an inspiring principle—a triple relationship with God, with other persons and with the earth on which humankind passes its life? Once we locate ourselves in this world-view, can we separate God from what God loves so much, the world? Can we respond to God's love without this response being expressed in the care of the habitat of all living beings? We cannot. When we interact with 'things' horizontally—as Ignatius will come to say—it is precisely to find in them their source and their giver, so to be 'horizontal mystics', contemplatives in action. When we relate with God 'vertically', it is to discover and love the world in him: to be persons active even amidst their contemplation.

Something else is to be noted in this Ignatian vision—a vision of the world as a reality imbued with God, and a vision of God as one who makes us a gift of the world and a gift of himself in the heart of the world.



Men and women, the natural world, the cosmos, historical events and so on are not for us merely an 'occasion' from which we detach ourselves in rising to God. We do not meet God in bypassing them but *in them*. How then, if nature is God's gift to us, and is the place in which God gives himself to us, could we fail to interest ourselves in the world?

Many traditions, each one with its own accent, converge in the environmental movement. Our own tradition is this: 'things' are creatures, are God's gift rather than simply our property. They are not merely free to be used as we wish. As we approach them, the first thing we need to do is to take a backward step, because the ground on which we stand is holy ground (Acts 7:33). Only then, when we have seen things as our created sisters, can we take a step forward. This is what Ignatius means by the phrase 'to the extent that' in the Principle and Foundation, and by the expression we find in the *Contemplatio*, 'to love and serve the Divine Majesty in all things' (Exx 233). Haven't we all some sense that *without* making this first step backwards, this moment of adoration and thanksgiving, our relationship with things easily becomes distorted into self-seeking?

Ignatian spirituality, at its very heart, embodies this world-view according to which God and the world are neither *identical* (as in some ancient or modern variant of pantheism), nor unrelated to each other, as in a false dualism. Ignatius is far from either of these poles of thought. He appears to be close to the position of St Paul when he proclaims in the Areopagus that everything is in God, that it is he who gives everything—including life and breath—to everyone (Acts 17:25). In technical terms, this Pauline vision, which is also the Ignatian vision, is usually called panentheism, which means that 'everything exists and lives in God'.

What consequences derive from this spiritual vision for our care of the environment? There appear to be four:

1. For those who wish to live the following of Christ guided by Ignatian spirituality, the care of the earth is not an optional commitment, but concerns us all. All of us need to consider how we can make our contribution, whether or not we campaign within some formal ecological movement.
2. Whether or not we do belong to some such movement (but especially if we do) our involvement in caring for the earth is not something *added* to our spirituality. The challenge is that this involvement be *itself* spiritual: that is, 'ecology in the power of the Holy Spirit', motivated by him who made his home on the

earth, encouraged and inspired by him and by his project for a new heaven and a new earth. Scientific and technical analyses are indispensable, but we need this spirituality which sustains our motivation in the long term and which allows us to identify such initiatives as part of our spiritual tradition.

3. Ignatius is realistic about our possessive instinct. As an instinct it is not bad in itself: what is bad is one's tendency to turn it into an obsession. Jesus often warned of this primordial tendency: following him, Ignatius also treated it in his Meditation on the Two Standards. Usually, he tells us, the most radical temptation of the human being is 'to covet riches' (Exx 142), whether they be material or spiritual. In other words, we experience the desire to achieve our own salvation by accumulation, by the 'disordered' (that is, unreflective and disproportionate) use of things. But a price has to be paid for this obsession and it is invariably paid by the natural world and by our brothers and sisters, especially the poor and most defenceless.
4. There remains a theme that is very difficult to discuss, but is also unavoidable. Can concern for the environment in our Christian-Ignatian accent be an explicit dimension of the ecological debate, alongside other humanistic and scientific traditions? Ought we to *make* it explicit? I would say that it must: but the question of 'When?' and 'How?' is complex, and goes beyond the scope of this reflection. Specific methodologies would need a further consideration.

José A. García SJ is a Jesuit and spiritual director living in Valladolid.

translated by Frank Turner SJ

CONFESSORS AND PARENTS

George B. Wilson

IT IS COMMON KNOWLEDGE, even among secular folk, that a priest is prohibited under pain of excommunication from ever revealing what he hears in confession. So it might be a bit titillating to hear that I am about to do just that. Not the secrets of any particular penitent, of course (that is what is forbidden), but a common theme that surfaces frequently these days in the confessional.

For centuries before the reforms initiated by Vatican II, people confessed their sins behind a screen intended to shield their identity from their confessor. While that mode continues to be perfectly acceptable, the conciliar reforms invited Catholics who so desired to enter into a significantly different experience by confessing face-to-face. The resulting transparency lends itself to a more relaxed atmosphere. The exchange tends to be more fluid, more conversational. As a result, even the content of confessions has evolved. Penitents are more apt to move beyond a formulaic recitation of their offences. They bring up issues that, while not in the realm of sin, are troubling to them. Often their distress is clearly painful.

At the top of the list of concerns is: 'my kids have left the Church'. The expression is usually technically incorrect. Often what the person is really saying is that his or her children have stopped practising their faith. Or, perhaps more accurately, they have stopped going to Mass. They still belong to the Church. But whatever the expression, the trauma it names is clearly of profound importance to the parent. Its power is revealed by the fact that so many break down in tears when they tell their story.

How Are We to Minister to These Hurting Parents?

It should be obvious that the primary service a confessor—or a friend—can provide to these parents is empathetic listening. This mother or father

needs to experience the confidant's genuine care for him or her. Beyond the simple (but essential) affective presence to a fellow human in pain, however, what reflections might help these parents to reframe their feelings of responsibility? I offer a few thoughts that penitents seem to find helpful, whether in the confessional or in a conversation between friends.

You Are Not a 'Failure'

In the verbal recounting of the story, penitents frequently reveal more than the bare facts. I hear an undertone of remorse. The unexpressed focus is on what the parent failed to do. The mother or father assumes responsibility for the actions of offspring who are themselves adults. Their 'children' are often old enough to have children of their own.

The most important reality to hold in mind is that a son or daughter is above all a *person*. The child is not simply a passive replica of a parent's fondest hopes. Personhood brings with it freedom, but also responsibility for one's choices. One of the most difficult life tasks for parents is to learn how not to *over-identify* with the children they have brought into the world. The goal of parenting for a Catholic is not to produce one more practising Catholic but to facilitate the growth of a human *adult*: someone who takes ownership of his or her freedom and responsibility for the consequences of his or her choices. Responsibility for the content of those choices falls on the offspring, not the parent. The parent may need help to arrive at this stance: *I did my best. I don't agree with his lifestyle. It pains me to see how he is choosing to live. But that's not my responsibility, it's his. And I'm still there for him.*

You Have Passed on Your Values to Your Children

Parents who take on too much responsibility for their children's choices can be helped by appreciating the distinction between fundamental values and the way those values are expressed in behaviour. Failure to appreciate this difference brings with it a certain irony. Parents feel responsible when their adult child fails to behave in the desired manner, but fail to appreciate the fact that their child has, quite unconsciously, been profoundly shaped by their values. Your daughter may not have the same way of expressing those values; she may not 'practise' her faith; she may not attend Mass. But the values beneath the practice are imprinted in her.

When I put it this way a parent on retreat will frequently respond: *It's true. My daughter's really a great person. She's a lot more caring for others than I was at her age. She looks out for her neighbours and is more open to people of different races or economic backgrounds. And I can see her kids picking up those values from her.* 'Picking up'—exactly: kids learn much more than



they are 'taught'. One thing that we have begun to appreciate more in recent years is that we humans, like all animals, are fundamentally mimics. The cliché of an earlier era noted that 'actions speak louder than words'. We are coming to realise that the old saw was not merely useful advice; it expressed an essential fact about human development.

Philosophers may define us as *rational* animals but, before rationality emerges, we have already been already profoundly shaped at a pre-rational level by what we have observed and *imitated*. (I discovered late in life that some of my own gestures are just like those my father had: he never taught me; I merely 'picked it up'.) And the transformative power of mimesis continues throughout our lives. Our bodies are creating our values long before our minds can express what is going on, much less turn them into finely honed beliefs. Your kids have picked up your values.

Their World Is Different from How Yours Was at Their Age

A disappointed father will frequently say, *Why does he have to be different? I was an adolescent once just like him*. No, you were not. The comparison does not work; it is based on an unwarranted assumption.

There is a wonderful piece of wisdom in *West Side Story*. The old fellow who runs the shop where the gang hangs out normally tolerates their brash behaviour. But at one point it gets too rough even for him. His anger erupts. He says, 'Why, when I was your age'—but before he can finish his sentence one of them responds, 'When you was my age *You never was my age*'¹ How true, but how little appreciated.

¹ Arthur Laurents and Stephen Sondheim, *West Side Story* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1972 [1959]) I. vi.

Parents fall into the trap of thinking sixteen is always sixteen. The fact is that dad was never sixteen in the world where his son lives at sixteen. Mum never faced the same pressures her daughter faces. Dad did not have the same range of options available at such an early age, the same anxiety about ‘fitting in’. Answers based on the sameness of a mere chronological moment do not work. They are answers to questions that only appear to be the same. Being sixteen in 1940 bears no resemblance to being sixteen in 2018. What your adult son or daughter needs is emotional support, and that is perfectly compatible with a clear statement that you do not *agree* with all their choices.

Trust in the Lord—and Yourself

The Lord has not given up on your son or daughter, or on you. And is that not what really matters? As a mother you cannot make your adult son practise a faith he is only beginning to figure out for himself. Your own teenage faith came to you in a different era, all wrapped up in a whole culture, like the centre of a chocolate cream. His search for what is meaningful in life is more like chewing on a tough piece of beef jerky. He will have a whole lifetime to work on the question. And digestion will come only at the end.

What kids need in their early adult years is not exhortation, and certainly not admonitions. All we can give them to help them work things out is our *example*: they need to see that practising our faith makes us (slightly older) adults genuinely joyful and compassionate human beings. That is something worth imitating.

George B. Wilson SJ is a retired church consultant and occasional confessor in Cincinnati. Email: gbwilson@zoomtown.com.

THE RICHES OF OUR HUMAN POVERTY

Insights into the Mystery of the Trinity from Ruth Burrows

Michelle Jones

‘HUMAN POVERTY is a deep mystery that plunges us into Trinitarian depths.’¹ This insight is derived from the Carmelite spiritual tradition in general, and from one Carmelite nun in particular—Ruth Burrows. Burrows’s understanding of the mystery of the Trinity originates in her lived experience—in particular her vivid experience of ‘human poverty’, by which she does not mean material poverty, but rather the fundamental contingency and vulnerability of the human condition. For her it is our own essential nothingness that is a gateway into the life of the Trinity. Her understanding has much to teach us in everyday life as well as theologically.

Ruth Burrows has been a Discalced Carmelite nun for over 75 years and belongs to the community at Quidenham in England. In 1975, Burrows published her autobiography and first book, *Before the Living God*, which she wrote at the prompting of her friend and mentor Wendy Beckett—who is widely known for the television programmes she made about art for the BBC. This work was followed by twelve further books and numerous articles on the Christian life in general and Carmelite spirituality in particular. Her most recent book, *Love Unknown*, was commissioned by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams. Several of Burrows’s books are widely regarded as spiritual classics; they have been reprinted many times and translated into other languages.

The Blossoming Desert

Perhaps unexpectedly for a nun and spiritual writer, by temperament Burrows knows only the raw fragility of the human condition. She has

¹ Ruth Burrows, *Love Unknown* (London: Continuum, 2011), 11.

been vividly aware since her earliest childhood of the terrifying reality of humanity's inescapable contingency and the fundamental chasm between God and humankind. She finds within herself only emptiness—her nature does not offer her any comforting, secure emotional supports upon which to establish a relationship with God. Burrows gives us a window upon her own inner life in her autobiography:

Often I have complained in my heart that God seemed absent from my life. It seemed to me that I had to live life all alone, eating it in its raw bitterness. He was not there to give me understanding and comfort. Even now I can sympathize with myself over this. A hidden God he has been to me, but God indeed.²

And in *Love Unknown*, she recounts how she appraised herself during her early years as an enclosed, contemplative nun: 'In short, I felt I was a sham, pretending to be something I was not. I lacked a natural religious sense and feared I was an agnostic if not an atheist at heart.'³

Because of her singularly stark inner life, Burrows has long lived with the truth that intimacy with God requires immersion in Jesus' communion with the Father. She details:

My purpose in being autobiographical is simply to tell you how I came to have an indestructible conviction that the weaker, the more wretched and poor we are, the more we realize that we have no goodness of our own, and cleave to Jesus with might and main, taking him absolutely at his word that he has come to save sinners, that he has come as our servant, our healer, the more is he able to do everything for us.⁴

Burrows has embraced the truth that her own nothingness is a pure capacity for the Holy Spirit to articulate Jesus' 'Yes' to the Father in her. So, in one of those paradoxes of which God seems so fond, the desert of Burrows's interior life has blossomed into a vivid illustration of the fundamental gospel message that we cannot save ourselves; but as dependent, loved children, we are scooped up into the divine life.

A Lived Theology

The fingerprints of Burrows' personal story can be seen everywhere in her formal theological statements; hers is a *lived* theology.

² Ruth Burrows, *Before the Living God* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975), 31.

³ Burrows, *Love Unknown*, 4.

⁴ Burrows, *Love Unknown*, 4.

The Trinitarian life of God [is] a life of total self-bestowal that it is our blessed destiny to share. The Father Is, exists in begetting the Son, in pouring himself out to him, and the Son Is by returning all to the Father. In a way incapable of image or expression, the Spirit Is this mutual self-dispossession with which the Father endows his Son and the Son his Father.⁵

For Burrows, the crucified Jesus is the icon of this communion of ecstatic, uncontainable, outpoured love. 'If we want to know God', she asserts,

... we must look at Jesus crucified. Holding up the cross, bidding us gaze into that bleeding, humiliated face, the Holy Spirit's focus is not first and foremost on suffering, or even on sin and its consequences, but on a love that is absolute, 'out of this world', 'other', 'what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived'. We must gaze and gaze with fullest attention and then affirm: this is God; this is what God is really like. Through this vision we have the certainty of what is beyond our comprehension, that God is love and nothing but love, and that he is love to and for us What we see in Jesus is a Self-gift on God's part that is the fullest content of love.⁶

What Burrows is really interested in and focuses upon is the fact that human beings are created to participate in the life of the Trinity. She is adamant that the dogma of the Trinity should not remain an abstraction—'mere information ... kind of God to give us, but quite irrelevant in our earthly existence'—but that we should recognise and live by the truth that 'Trinitarian life is also our life'.⁷

Burrows perceives that, just as the crucified Jesus is the icon of the Trinitarian life of ecstatic love, he is also humanity's gateway into participating in this life of love. She explains,

In principle, we are taken with our risen Lord into the very heart of the Trinity. It is given to us to know God even as God knows himself As Jesus shared our flesh and blood in the time of his kenosis, now that he is glorified we share his divine life, a life that belongs to no creature by nature, but is proper to God alone. This life comes to us through Christ In a way we cannot fully grasp we are 'in' Christ, incorporated in him.⁸

⁵ Ruth Burrows, 'Quis ut Deus? Who Is as God? Meditations on the Kenosis of the Son of God' (unpublished manuscript, June 2013), 51.

⁶ Ruth Burrows, 'If You Knew the Gift of God ...', in *Essence of Prayer* (London: Burns and Oates, 2006), 46.

⁷ Burrows, *Love Unknown*, 29; Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 228, cited in Ruth Burrows, 'Prayer in the Trinity', in *Essence of Prayer*, 65.

⁸ Burrows, *Love Unknown*, 135–136.

So, Burrows's understanding of our sharing in the Trinitarian life, our deification, is thoroughly christocentric. We are held in the complete self-emptying 'Yes' that Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, gives to the Father.

The burning core of Burrows' insight about humanity participating in the life of the Trinity is that being united to Jesus, being taken in him into the Trinitarian communion of love, means embracing the inescapable limitations and vulnerability of our human existence: our 'human poverty'. Our poverty and dependence, when accepted and incorporated into Jesus' self-surrendering 'Yes' to the outpoured love of the Father, are nothing other than capacity for the divine life.

The Merciful Trinity

Burrows uses what I think is a very striking image to communicate the richness of our neediness as the entry point into the Trinitarian life. It is a ceramic by Caritas Müller entitled *The Merciful Trinity*. She offers this commentary on the image:

Can we believe that God comes so close, is so bound up with us as this image reveals? See how, of the four connecting circles, the centre one is the focus of the other three. Within that circle lies helpless 'man'. The divine Trinity comes down to his aid, the Father gently lifting him up and tenderly pressing his holy face against the leprous cheek; the Son kneels to kiss his dirty, crippled feet delighting in being his servant; as a dove in flames, the Spirit, mutual love of Father and Son, swoops down to complete 'man's' enfolding into the unspeakable glory of the triune life.⁹

So what, according to Burrows, does it mean *in practice* to be taken into the Trinitarian life, in Jesus, by accepting the essential poverty of our human existence? What are the real implications of her Trinitarian insights for our daily living? It is a matter of choosing to stand unflinchingly and trustingly exposed to God's outpoured love amidst every experience of our basic powerlessness. As Burrows puts it, 'God can ... increase your trust so that you yourself choose to become at the root of your being a little child'.¹⁰ *Trust* is the key word here, and Burrows perceives this trust to be the work of the Holy Spirit: we are enabled by the Holy Spirit to incarnate

⁹ Burrows, 'Quis ut Deus?', 1.

¹⁰ Mark Allen and Ruth Burrows, *Letters on Prayer: An Exchange on Prayer and Faith* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1999), 50.



© Sr. M. Caritas Müller OP

The Merciful Trinity, by Caritas Müller

Jesus' self-emptying surrender to the Father's love by refusing to run away from our inescapable vulnerability. What Burrows is saying here is perhaps best summarised in a simple prayer composed by her dear friend Wendy Beckett: 'Whatever the past, or my fears of the future, here and now, O Holy Spirit, utter within me the total Yes of Jesus to the Father'.¹¹

When Burrows explores the lived reality of her insight that human poverty plunges us into Trinitarian depths, she focuses on three main areas: the experience of prayer, the experience of ourselves, and the experience of daily life.

Prayer

Burrows points out that in prayer—and she is thinking of times of solitary, personal prayer: 'What is likely to happen is that, at least from time to time, we simply cannot think useful thoughts, nothing helps us and we are in a state of rootless helplessness which is hard to bear because drab and unsatisfying'.¹² Burrows regards such encounters with our limited humanity

¹¹ Wendy Mary Beckett, 'Simple Prayer', *Clergy Review* (February 1978), cited in Ruth Burrows, *Ascent to Love: The Spiritual Teaching of St John of the Cross* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1987), 68.

¹² Ruth Burrows, *Interior Castle Explored: St Teresa's Teaching on the Life of Deep Union with God* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1981), 69.

**To remain
surrendered
in trust to
that love**

in prayer as opportunities to choose to be held by the Spirit in Jesus' surrender to the Father's love. To this end, she commends a stance of 'non-passive passivity'.¹³ She insists that we must do whatever it takes to convince ourselves of God's outpoured love and to remain surrendered in trust to that love—no matter how empty our prayer may feel. This is not a matter of grim determination, but rather a practical affirmation of the glorious riches of the impoverishment we may feel in prayer. Our prayer may *seem* lamentably shabby, insufficient or downright boring to us, but all the while we are being drawn into the Trinitarian communion as the Holy Spirit unites our resolute small 'yes' to Jesus' great 'Yes'.

Self-Knowledge

Burrows' second locus of the human poverty that can plunge us into Trinitarian depths is our bitter experience of ourselves as sinful, weak, limited creatures. With her characteristic living wisdom she writes,

Is there one of us who has not, at some time or other, been forced to look in the glass of self-knowledge at an unflattering image? We cannot live with other people and not get our corners knocked off. The trouble is that we do not use this grace—for grace it is—as we ought.¹⁴

Burrows is adamant that we must not evade our painful experiences of ourselves as imperfect and broken but, instead, with Spirit-infused trust, resolutely accept the reality of our limited humanity. Her point here is that God has made *Jesus* our 'righteousness and sanctification and redemption' (1 Corinthians 1:30) and this truth is realised within us when we allow the Spirit to hold us in the reality of our own unpleasant insufficiency. In her book *Living Love*, Burrows offers a distillation of this insight that our daily experience of imperfection can take us into the life of the Trinity:

There is One who always did his Father's will; who offers the Father perfect love and worship. And this One is the Father's gift to us. From the shelter of the Son's heart we go on trying, with him, to do always what pleases the Father; but at the same time never wanting to feel we are becoming holy and good, without spot or wrinkle. Never are we more truly in Christ Jesus than when, deeply conscious of our sinfulness, we peacefully rest in the heart of our Redeemer.¹⁵

¹³ Allen and Burrows, *Letters on Prayer*, 66.

¹⁴ Burrows, *Love Unknown*, 11.

¹⁵ Ruth Burrows, *Living Love: Meditations on the New Testament* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985), 22–23.

Burrows acknowledges that, just as in his day Jesus was more likely to be rejected by the self-consciously pious, the danger of resisting this work of the Spirit is ‘far greater among what we might call professionals—priests, religious, and lay people who are bent on “living a spiritual life”’.¹⁶ The dreadful irony is that those who claim to be closest to God can actually be holding themselves aloof from Trinitarian communion because they are determined to cultivate their own safety, goodness and spiritual success. They doggedly refuse to accept those chinks in their armour that are, in fact, the entry points to Trinitarian glory.

Daily Life

Burrows’ third and final ‘place’ of human poverty is our experience of daily life. What she means here is our powerlessness before the people and circumstances that constitute our world. Despite our innate drive to the contrary, we cannot ultimately control the way in which life unfolds or justifiably infringe the otherness of others.

For Burrows, to live the Trinitarian life is to abandon our futile attempts at manipulating life for our own ends and instead maintain a generous self-surrender before the otherness around us. She claims, ‘In spite of all appearances, in the very midst of our abounding weakness, we are *enabled* to live God-life, to be for others, ecstatic, willingly laying down our life’.¹⁷ In the face of our powerlessness before the unfolding of life, the Spirit empowers us to make a leap of trust and enter into Jesus’ perfect self-emptying receptivity to the Father’s love. Burrows is typically unrelenting in her vision of what is involved in sharing in the radical self-expropriation of Jesus:

Union with Jesus consists not in sitting in glory but in sharing his cup of shame, opprobrium, dishonour and powerlessness How can we share this cup in our daily life? By renouncing all power and every desire for it, every manoeuvre to obtain what we want, to prevail over others; by taking an attitude of unimportance and subjection to the community; by rejecting the right to insist on our rights; by sacrificing the image we have of ourselves and which we sensitively want upheld in our own eyes and those of others; renouncing all desire for status, of being important to others. The cup Jesus wants to share with us is that of selfless love, which is its own reward—he offers no other.¹⁸

¹⁶ Ruth Burrows, *To Believe in Jesus* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1978), 94.

¹⁷ Burrows, ‘*Quis ut Deus?*’ 7 (emphasis original).

¹⁸ Burrows, *Living Love*, 38.

Trusting in God

In the preface to her autobiography, Ruth Burrows tells us her purpose in writing:

What I want to show people is that what really matters is utter trust in God; that this trust cannot be there until we have lost all self-trust and are rooted in poverty; that we must be willing to go to God with empty hands, and that the whole meaning of our existence and the one consuming desire of the heart of God is that we should let ourselves be loved.¹⁹

She could be describing here the essence of what she conveys in her writings on the mystery of the Trinity. For Burrows, we have been created to share in the life of the Trinity, and Jesus is our way into this communion of love. The Spirit can utter Jesus' definitive self-emptying 'Yes' to the Father's love *within us* in so far as we lay aside our attempts to be spiritually impressive and to purchase divine favour through our own merits. So our manifold experiences of fragility and inadequacy—so naturally abhorrent, but so rich in divine potential—must be resolutely embraced and surrendered to God in empty-handed trust. As we try to let God love us within the raw reality of who we are, we may not feel that we are sharing, through the Spirit, in Jesus' intimate communion with the Father; we may not feel that our poverty is plunging us into the Trinitarian depths. But Ruth Burrows assures us that this is the glorious truth—if only we have the eyes to see.

Michelle Jones is a consecrated woman and lives a contemplative life of prayer in rural Western Australia, in affiliation with the Carmelite monastery of Quidenham in the UK. She has a doctorate and licentiate in spiritual theology from the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas in Rome, and a mastership from the University of Notre Dame, Australia. Michelle works online as a lecturer in theology for BBI (the Australian Institute of Theological Education) and the Carmelite Institute of Britain and Ireland.

¹⁹ Burrows, *Before the Living God*, 2.

PIERRE FAVRE

‘Everywhere There Is Good to Be Done’

Edel McClean

WALKING AROUND the magnificent Jesuit churches in Rome, one sees the great Ignatian figures everywhere. We have Ignatius himself, *Spiritual Exercises* clasped to his chest, eyes cast heavenwards; Francis Xavier, his cross held aloft; Robert Bellarmine, Francis Borgia, a veritable ‘Who’s Who’ of the history of the Society of Jesus—with one, remarkable absence. The ‘first companions’ were three men—Ignatius, Xavier and Pierre Favre. Favre was, for many years, second in command to Ignatius, the first of the group to be ordained, a man eagerly sought out in sixteenth-century Europe. For many years in Paris this band of three shared a room, a common purse and common purpose, yet while Ignatius and Xavier were sainted, Favre remained humbly ‘blessed’.¹

Even finding an image of Favre is difficult, and those that do exist most often present him as dark-haired, small and severe, when in fact he was fair-haired, tall and kind. Even in his native Savoy, the chapel built on the Favre farm, while clean and much visited, has seen better days. The local church shop in Le Grand Bornand has run out of the only prayer card bearing his image. In Annecy, asking after Favre’s hidden-away statue in the grounds of L’Evêché, you are more likely to be pointed towards the Cathedral of St Francis de Sales.

Favre was born in the parish of St Jean de Sixt in Savoy in 1506. His family were not headline peasants but they were working farmers, with hands in the soil of the foothills of the Alps. Pierre, the eldest of three boys, was a bright spark. Destined for the life of a farmer, he so

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¹ Favre was canonized a few months after this article was written, in November 2013.

pined for knowledge that his parents relented and sent him to school, first in nearby Thones, then further afield to La Roche. He lived with one foot in the world of learning, with close family ties to the local Carthusian monastery and its select library, and access to the hugely respected teacher Peter Velliard.

His studies, however, did not excuse him his summer duties and, until he left for Paris aged nineteen, he spent his summers alone in the high grasslands of the Alps with the family herds. He learnt to watch, to endure and persevere, to stay safe, to give the mountains their due. The life of a literal good shepherd would have been second nature, since every animal in his flock would have been crucial to his family's livelihood. In later years he no doubt understood, better than his noble friends, the farming parables of Jesus, because he lived them from his birth. His natural ability with the people he met reflects an early life in which he, unlike many of his companions, had had a close connection to the earth and to its people. To put on airs and graces would have been, to use an Irish idiom, to 'jump out of the bowl he was baked in'.

The Wandering Apostle

In 1525, Favre left Savoy for university in Paris, and the Collège Sainte-Barbe. To all intents and purposes he excelled—he was a gifted scholar—but he was interiorly anguished. A devout young man, he struggled with his sense of his own sinfulness, with indecision and with a constant fear of offending God. It was from this darker interiority that Ignatius came to rescue him. Although fifteen years his junior, Favre was many years ahead of Ignatius in study and, always a generous soul, dedicated himself to helping the Spaniard. In turn, Ignatius turned his hand to helping young Favre to deal with his anxieties (although waiting four years before allowing him to make the Exercises). Years later, Favre recalled: '... he gave me an understanding of my conscience and of the temptations and scruples I had had for so long without either understanding them or seeing the way by which I would be able to get peace'.²

Ignatius saved Favre's skin, though it could also be said that Favre saved Ignatius—the latter is unlikely to have survived some of the rigours of college life without Favre's solid, steady, reasoned learning.

² Pierre Favre, *Memoriale*, n.9, translated by Edmond C. Murphy, in *The Spiritual Writings of Pierre Favre* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 65.

Paris was formative for Favre. He met Ignatius, Xavier and the others who were to join their band of brothers. He made the Exercises, extended the friendship formed in his boyhood with the Carthusians, learnt the tools of discernment, was ordained a priest, was educated in humanistic theology and resolved to enter into a new way of life with the embryonic Society of Jesus. In Paris, too, he began to grasp what was to be the crux of his life's work, as he had his first connection with what he was to call 'the heretics of this age'.

The teachings of Luther and his contemporaries would have been discussed in the lecture halls and rooms of the universities where Favre engaged in eclectic theological studies, but this was also a crisis spilling out into the streets of Paris. As a university student, Favre would have been obliged to attend the executions of heretics, some as young as fourteen. Such brutality would have burned the soul of the gentle shepherd and years later, fully grasping the breadth of the Reformers' challenge, he urged friendship, not judgment:



Statue of Pierre Favre at Annecy

Anyone helping the heretics of this age must be careful to have great charity for them and to love them in truth, banishing from his soul all considerations which would tend to chill his esteem for them. We need to win their goodwill, so that they will love us and accord us a good place in their hearts. This can be done by speaking familiarly with them about matters we both share in common and avoiding any debate in which one side tries to put down the other. We must establish communion in what unites us before doing so in what might evince differences of opinion.³

³ Pierre Favre to Diego Laínez, 7 March 1546, in *Spiritual Writings of Pierre Favre*, 379.

After eleven years, in 1536, Favre left Paris, making a slow journey to Rome via Venice. In the following three years in the towns of northern Italy, he and various members of a growing band of men engaged in a variety of ministries including, for Favre, lecturing in theology and scripture. In 1539, Pope Paul III asked for Favre to be sent to Parma, and so began what was to become his wandering apostolic life, being sent hither and thither across Europe, wherever there was felt to be great apostolic need. His travels took him to Spain, Portugal, Germany, Belgium, France, Switzerland and into the crucible of Reformation Europe. It is estimated that he travelled 7,000 miles 'as the crow flies'. Since he was travelling on foot, and since physical and political boundaries made travel difficult, the true figure is likely to be closer to 14,000. He did not return to Rome and his beloved Ignatius until 1546, and died only two weeks later.

Favre's main gift to us is his *Memoriale*, a journal he kept for the last four years of his life. Unlike Ignatius, he did not have an audience in mind and, if he had not died so quickly, he would no doubt have destroyed it. As it is, perhaps out of a desire to protect his reputation, the text was not published until three centuries after his death. The text consists of musings between himself and God, and you cannot read the *Memoriale* without feeling that you are getting almost too close, too intimate an insight into his sometimes tortuous reasoning.

He writes sometimes to himself—berating, challenging, commanding; and sometimes to God—begging, thanking, repenting. Sometimes he records his activities, but this is more with the intention of discerning them than recording them for curious future generations. The *Memoriale* and his few surviving letters deserve to be better known for there are treasures to be found. Two themes that emerge most strongly are Favre's approach to ministry and his engagement with discernment.

Approach to Ministry

Favre's apostolic style was based around friendships, engaging in spiritual conversation, hearing confessions and giving the Exercises. He became that good shepherd, willing to go out, to travel the highways and byways in search of the 'lost sheep'. He walked miles between cities, and within cities, seeking out conversation, trusting always that God was at work. He explained how, on journeys, he sought to be alert to opportunities around him:

While staying in inns, I have always felt inspired to do good by instructing and encouraging people ... it is very good to leave in the inns and houses where we happen to stay some trace of good and holy behaviour, for everywhere there is good to be done, everywhere there is something to be planted or harvested.⁴

Those he could not reach on foot he sought to reach by prayer. He was, as Michel de Certeau puts it, 'a minister of invisible kindness that had descended from the heights', and the breadth and reach of his prayer was extraordinary.⁵ Travelling through Germany and seeing at first hand the effects of the Reformation, his prayer remained astoundingly generous:

I felt great fervour as eight persons became present to me along with the desire to remember them vividly in order to pray for them without taking notice of their faults. They were the sovereign pontiff, the emperor, the king of France, the king of England, Luther, the Grand Turk, Bucer and Philip Melanchthon.⁶

In prayer he turned to angels, saints well-known and otherwise, those deceased whom he had loved, Mary and, above all, Jesus. He prayed for himself, for his many spiritual friends, for those he encountered, for the great decision-makers of Europe and for those who caused his own soul so much unquiet. A modern reader might detect a certain simplicity in Favre—he had an almost embarrassing devotion to some questionable relics, for example—but he was a man of his time, and a man who had grown up in deeply pious Savoy. He defended the prayer of simple folk at least in part because, even with all his learning, it remained his own prayer.

He longed for stability, to be able to stay in one place and nurture those friendships that he valued so much, but there was always another call to somewhere where the need was greater and so he would find himself back on the road. At one point he writes, somewhat sadly: 'Our Lord only knows the reasons why I do not deserve to stay in one place for any length of time but am always being taken away at the moment when the harvest begins to peak'.⁷

The perpetual call to move onwards embraced the poverty, humiliation and humility of the Two Standards of the Exercises (Exx 146). Favre did

⁴ Favre, *Memoriale*, n. 433.

⁵ Michel de Certeau, 'Pierre Favre and the Experience of Salvation', *The Way*, 45/4 (October 2006), 21–40, here 33.

⁶ Favre, *Memoriale* n. 25.

⁷ Pierre Favre to Ignatius, 7 November 1542, in *Spiritual Writings of Pierre Favre*, 339.

not seek his own benefit or expect to be greeted as a celebrity, nor is there any complaint about the strains and dangers of being on the road. His manner was warm and open-hearted; he himself describes ‘my old style of embracing much and pressing little’.⁸ This approach endeared him to church and state leaders, and to the general populace as well as those who laboured alongside him.

Core to Favre’s way of operating in the world was his belief that people are changed more by those who love them in God’s grace than by those who seek to argue, outwit or overcome them. His great gift was in his ability to come alongside people so that they loved him and knew themselves to be loved by him. From this place, and only from there, he exhorted them, pushed them to push themselves; he encouraged them to catch a glimpse of what God could make of them, if they just allowed him a chance.

Engagement with Discernment

Perhaps what emerges most from the pages of the *Memoriale* is the character of the man himself. While in Paris, Ignatius gave Favre the tools to live with his temperamental nature, but not to defeat it. His sensitivity, openness and huge humility were to become his greatest strengths. His tremendous strengths, however, were also his tremendous weaknesses. He recognised the bad spirit and laboured endlessly to resist, but could not change his susceptibility to its insistent demands.

One of the great sadnesses was that he was so perpetually dissatisfied with himself, unable to see or rejoice in the work that God was doing through him. What others could see, he himself could not. Using the language beloved of an ‘X Factor’ generation, it might have been said to Favre: *you don’t know just how good you are*. It is hard not to be shocked at the way Favre sometimes addressed himself in his writings. He derided himself for his sadness, his lack of tears, his coldness in prayer, his distractions and temptations, for not speaking or writing in the right spirit, ‘committing so many senseless deeds and so many acts of ingratitude and of ill will’.⁹ Whatever face this kind, holy man presented to the world, internally he was constantly at work, labouring hard against the temptation to despair of himself.

⁸ Pierre Favre to Diego Laínez, 30 August 1542, in *Spiritual Writings of Pierre Favre*, 338.

⁹ Favre, *Memoriale*, n.120.

It is here that the skills of discernment taught to him by Ignatius were so essential. He learnt to recognise that his loss of hope for himself was not of God, and in the *Memoriale* he frequently engages in self-encouragement:

I became conscious in many ways of that misery of mine which comes from my imperfections and my deficiencies above all in the conduct of my affairs In these moods of depression, this single consideration brought me some spiritual comfort: I saw that God was favourable to me. If I retain the certainty and the awareness of God's presence in me, he will make of me what I can and should be.¹⁰

Ultimately, each of his turns into despair and depression caused him to pray fervently to God. He could not cope without God, and he faced all his suffering, his struggles and daily dangers because of his absolute love of God and his ever-growing conviction that God was coming to him and calling him onwards. It is this, perhaps, that made him so gifted in discernment—he had to engage with it himself, minute by minute—and because of this he became the one who, according to Ignatius, gave the Exercises better than anyone.

In all the other desires that emerge through the *Memoriale*—and there are desires expressed in virtually every paragraph—one stands head and shoulders above all others:

I asked that he might teach us how to praise and honour him, to think about and know him; how to remember him, long for him, love, desire and serve him; how to seek to see and hear him, to perceive his fragrance, to delight in him and touch him.¹¹

A deepening of prayer and of unity with God is evident as the *Memoriale* progresses. Favre's prayer becomes simpler, more direct, less focused on his apostolic activities and more focused on trust in God. God does not respond to Favre's frequent requests for his instability to be removed. That instability, however, serves both to feed Favre's love and compassion for those he meets, and to increase his understanding of his utter dependence on God as his only possible source of stability.

¹⁰ Favre, *Memoriale*, n. 238.

¹¹ Favre, *Memoriale*, n. 51.

‘He ... Stole into Their Souls’

Perhaps the greatest attraction of Favre is the humanity that, thankfully, hagiography has not been able to stamp out. Favre was not confident. His faith in God was unshakeable but his faith in himself was non-existent. Whereas contemporary medicine would have probably medicated him (he may well have suffered from clinical depression), his only recourse was to God. It is here that he is at his most comforting. He was a good man, who did great work. He was much loved, yet he never ceased battling with the voices that told him otherwise. For those who engage in a similar battle, Favre is a trusted friend who can give solid advice precisely because he has been there before us:

Simplicity and goodness should eventually get the upper hand over our natural way of thinking. That is to say, though on a natural level we might think it right to be angry or depressed over something, nevertheless goodness and simplicity ought to put up with it. Sometimes we are interiorly anguished; and though this spirit may speak what is true, reproving us for our many failures, nevertheless if it robs us of our tranquillity it is not the good spirit. The spirit of God is peaceful and gentle, even in reproof.¹²

They say that saints are sinners who never stop trying, a truth that could certainly be applied to Favre. He knew the bitter taste of disappointment in himself. He understood what it was like to fight the same battle repeatedly, only to find himself back where he had begun. But to an even greater depth he knew the Christ who ‘consoles, helps, delivers, heals, liberates, saves, enriches and strengthens’.¹³ It was this Christ whom he served, and to whom he bore witness and his writings continue to bear witness. *Things can be very bleak*, his writings tell us, *and you may be battling with thoughts you would be reluctant to give voice to, you may not like yourself very much, but Christ is there to console and liberate and strengthen.*

Why did Favre not join Ignatius and Xavier in the band of the saints more quickly? We can only speculate. He came from farming stock in Savoy, not a powerful nation state, whereas his two companions were noblemen. Ignatius and Xavier were both preachers by nature, but Favre

¹² Pierre Favre, ‘Instructions for Those Going on Pilgrimage’, in *Spiritual Writings of Pierre Favre*, 342.

¹³ Favre, *Memoriale*, n.151.

won souls in conversation and was never confident in his preaching. The deeply humble Favre might not mind so much that his face is not in evidence in Rome's churches; he was not a man to seek out the limelight, and was forever pointing away from himself towards Jesus. It was not Favre who missed out from not being given his rightful place, it was us. We can only gain from the inspiration of a man whom one of his contemporaries described thus:

There was an especially rare and delightful sweetness and charm in his relations with other men which I must confess to this very day I have not found in any other. In some way or other, he so won the friendship of other men and gradually stole into their souls, that by his whole manner, and the gentleness of his words, he irresistibly drew them to a love of God.¹⁴

Edel McClean is a spiritual director, facilitator and trainer. She currently works as a learning and development officer with the Methodist Church in the North West of England. She was previously a team member at Loyola Hall spirituality centre for almost seven years.

¹⁴ Simão Rodrigues, 'Commentarium de Origine et Progressu Societatis Jesu', 25 July 1577, MHSJ *Epistolae Paschasii Broeti, Claudii Jaji, Joannis Codurii et Simonis Rodericii*, 453, translated by William Bangert, in *To the Other Towns: A Life of Blessed Peter Favre, First Companion of St Ignatius* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2002 [1959]), 36.



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TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE II

Ignatian Spirituality and Spiritual Conversation

Rolphy Pinto

IN HIS HOMILY on the feast of the Epiphany in 2017, Pope Francis compared believers to the Magi, who ‘could see what the heavens were showing them’ because ‘they were guided by an inner restlessness’ and ‘open to something new’. ‘The Magi thus personify all those who believe, those who long for God, who yearn for their home, their heavenly homeland.’¹ The longing for God constitutes believers, making them open to both the transcendence and the immanence of God.

Karl Rahner named this fundamental openness to God the ‘supernatural existential’. *Supernatural* here refers to the free and unconditional initiative of God in entering into a relationship of love with human beings. It also refers to God’s self-communication, a gift that descends from above (see Exx 237). *Existential* refers to the potentiality, given in advance, that is constitutive of a person and which enables that person to perceive the divine initiative, to receive it and to respond to it.

The supernatural existential is the consequence of God’s universal salvific will.² Wanting all human beings to be saved, God creates them with this ability to enter into relationship with God. Though they all have the inbuilt capacity to receive and respond to God’s self-communication, however, not all actually do so. In Bernard Lonergan’s terms, people seeking to live authentic lives undergo *intellectual* (being true) and *moral* (being good) conversions. But of these, not all achieve *religious* conversion—falling in love with the ultimate transcendent reality of God—or consciously

¹ Pope Francis, homily, 6 January 2017, available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2017/documents/papa-francesco_20170106_omelia-epifania.html.

² See Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, translated by William V. Dych (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1978), 127–129; and 1 Timothy 2:4.

recognise God as the ultimate source of their desire to be authentic. Those who do find in God the transcendent source of all love and of their own desire to love encounter God as someone with whom they can commune.³

The human person is a potential interlocutor of a self-communicating God, but individuals do not experience God's self-communication in a uniform way. They experience it as both transcendence and immanence. As Walter Kasper affirms, 'In his mercy, God is revealed paradoxically as both the Wholly Other and the One Who Is So Close to Us. His transcendence is not infinite distance and his nearness is not close chumminess.'⁴ The transcendence and immanence of God form an integral part of human experience of the divine.

Experience of the transcendence and immanence of God leads us to the question of language to speak about God. Human language can never adequately express the inexhaustible, transcendent mystery of God; and yet, since God chooses to reveal Godself to human beings (most eloquently in the mystery of the incarnation), something *can* be said about God in words.⁵ Theology and its language, no matter how wise, struggle to give expression to both the incomprehensibility of the hidden God (Isaiah 45:15) and the accessibility of the God manifest in creation and incarnation.

A negative or apophatic theology (from the Greek *apophasis*, 'unsaying') responds to the impossibility of saying or affirming anything about God. This has biblical roots, especially in Moses' experience of God in 'thick darkness' (Exodus 20:21) and in a 'cloud' (Exodus 24:15). *The Cloud of Unknowing* and *The Dark Night of the Soul* reflect this phenomenon in the experience of the mystics. Darkness and cloud appear as the primary metaphors to speak about the divine nature. The authors who write about mystical experience do not perceive these as negative realities, but as a backdrop for the epiphany of God, in such a way that the darkness itself appears as luminous.⁶ The incomprehensibility of God is closely

³ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 2nd edn (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1973), 170, 240–243; Tad Dunne, *Lonergan and Spirituality: Towards a Spiritual Integration* (Chicago: Loyola UP, 1985), 111–116.

⁴ Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, translated by William Madges (Mahwah: Paulist, 2014), 52.

⁵ See Murray A. Rae, 'Anthropomorphism', in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, edited by Kevin Jon Vanhoozer (London: SPCK, 2009), 49.

⁶ Edward Howells, 'Apophatic Spirituality', in *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, edited by Philip Sheldrake (London: SCM Press, 2005), 118.



God and Creation, fresco, Trinity-Ipatiev monastery, late sixteenth century

linked to the mysterious, inaccessible and ultimately ineffable dimension of God's name. The unpronounceable name of God revealed to Moses—YHWH (Exodus 3:14), the so-called tetragrammaton—expresses God's absolute transcendence. God's name is so sacred for devout Jews that they do not even dare to pronounce it aloud.⁷

Positive, or kataphatic, theology, which seems to contrast sharply with apophatic theology, is a result of God entering into relationship with God's creation even though there exists a radical difference between them.⁸ The creation is not identical with its Creator-God, but it exists within its Creator. This is the bridge that links the transcendence and the immanence of God. A kataphatic mystic who affirms the presence of God in all things and all things in God understands that God's manifestation cannot be reduced to a single instance or mediation.⁹ This is a realisation that God is transcendent precisely because God is immanent.

Consequently, though apophatic language is associated with the transcendence of God and kataphatic with the immanence of God, there are instances when God's immanence, experienced in the innermost

⁷ See Kasper, *Mercy*, 47.

⁸ See Janet K. Ruffing, 'Kataphatic Spirituality', in *New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, 393.

⁹ Ruffing, 'Kataphatic Spirituality', 393.

depths of our being, becomes inexpressible. In these cases, the one who goes through an intense experience of God (*theopathy*) has recourse to apophatic language to speak of it. For example, this is how John of the Cross expresses the flooding of the presence of God into the centre of his soul:

When light shines on a clean and pure crystal, we find that the more intense the degree of light, the more light the crystal has concentrated within it and the brighter it becomes; it can become so brilliant due to the abundance of light it receives that it seems to be all light. And then the crystal is indistinguishable from the light, since it is illumined according to its full capacity, which is to appear to be light¹⁰

Ignatian Spirituality as a Spirituality of Tensions

I would now like to explore the relationship between transcendence and immanence more concretely in the spirituality and the mystical experiences of Ignatius of Loyola. Eugene H. Peterson has given a description of spirituality (being well aware that trying to define it is futile) that is pertinent here, because it is framed precisely in terms of transcendence and immanence:

The current usefulness of the term is not in its precision but rather in the way it names something indefinable yet quite recognizable—Transcendence vaguely intermingled with Intimacy. Transcendence: a sense that there is more, a sense that life extends far beyond me And Intimacy: a sense that deep within me there is a core being ‘Spirituality’, though hardly precise, provides a catchall term that recognizes an organic linkage between this Beyond (transcendence) and Within (intimacy) that is part of everyone’s experience.¹¹

Ignatius’ experience of the transcendence of God emerges clearly in his Spiritual Diary. The context of the first fragment of the Diary that has survived (2 February–12 March 1544) is Ignatius’ discernment with regard to the type of poverty that the Society of Jesus should adopt. On the sixth day of his discernment, he finds himself, ‘ever more convinced and moved to poverty’.¹² The consolation he feels leads to a resolution for strict poverty. However, he will not take a final decision until 12 March.

¹⁰ *Living Flame of Love*, 1.13, in *The Collected Works of St John of the Cross*, edited by Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1973), 298.

¹¹ Eugene H. Peterson, ‘Spirituality’, in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, 767.

¹² Diary, 7 February 1544.

In the intervening period Ignatius seeks confirmation from God. God gives him more consolation by visiting him, letting him see one or two persons of the Trinity together. But Ignatius is not satisfied. He desires to contemplate all three persons of the Trinity, revealing what one might consider a certain spiritual gluttony.¹³ But Ignatius does not receive the vision he wishes to see. Rather, he arrives ultimately at the silence of God.

I found myself completely bereft of all help, unable to find delight in the mediators, or in the Divine Persons; I felt as remote and separated from them as if I had never felt their influence in the past, or was ever to feel any of it in the future.¹⁴

Finally, it dawns on him that he must let God be God; that God cannot be reduced to his own preferences but that he must rather bend to God's. With this insight, peace returns to his heart and he concludes his election in favour of a strict poverty for the Society.

During his discernment process, Ignatius' experience of God is mainly apophatic. The predominant method of prayer in his Spiritual Exercises, however, is kataphatic, using meditation on images to contemplate the life of Christ.¹⁵ Nevertheless, there also seems to be space for 'imageless prayer', or the contemplative prayer of silence in the strict sense, within the Exercises.¹⁶ From the Second Week onwards, Ignatius introduces a fifth prayer period into the daily rhythm, known as the 'application of the five senses' (Exx 121–126). In this prayer period, no new material is introduced. It is not even a repetition of the earlier exercises. The five senses to be applied are those of 'imagination', that is, the spiritual senses broadly understood. The exercise is more passive than active. After a tiring day of prayer exercitants are expected to listen, feel and receive rather than to play an active role. They allow the mystery to speak to them; they cease to define or 'compose seeing the place' (Exx 47) and remain silent. Here Ignatius, wisely, makes space for the transcendent divinity—the divinity that breaks forth transcending images and imagination.

¹³ It could be said that Ignatius here, like Mary Magdalene, is clinging on to what he knows. He wants more of the visions with which he is familiar.

¹⁴ Diary, 12 March 1544.

¹⁵ According to Harvey Egan, the dynamism of the Exercises 'renders Christian mysteries increasingly more *transparent*'. This aspect, notwithstanding the 'unknowing' of God, makes Ignatius' mysticism radically kataphatic. See Harvey D. Egan, *Christian Mysticism: The Future of a Tradition* (New York: Pueblo, 1984), 53.

¹⁶ See Nicolas Steeves, 'L'immaginazione è preghiera', *Ignaziana*, 21 (2016), at <http://www.ignaziana.org/en/indice.html>, 61–63, accessed 20 May 2018.

Thus, there is an inherent tension between immanence and transcendence in Ignatian prayer and spirituality. This tension can be observed more easily in the final contemplation of the Spiritual Exercises, the Contemplation to Attain Love (Exx 230–237). Here Ignatius invites exercitants, on the one hand, to contemplate,

... how God dwells in creatures; in the elements, giving them existence; in the plants, giving them life; in the animals, giving them sensation; in human beings, giving them intelligence; and finally, how in this way he dwells also in myself, giving me existence, life, sensation, and intelligence; and even further, making me his temple, since I am created as a likeness and image of the Divine Majesty. (Exx 235)

On the other hand they are also to contemplate ‘how all good things and gifts descend from above; for example, my limited power from the Supreme and Infinite Power above’. God is both indwelling immanence and distant transcendence. William A. Barry and Robert G. Doherty are right to describe Ignatian spirituality as ‘a set of life-giving and creative tensions’.¹⁷

The best known of these tensions was first defined by Jerónimo Nadal when he called Ignatius a ‘contemplative in action’.¹⁸ The ‘contemplative’ points to God above, though not exclusively. And ‘in action’ does not necessarily refer to activity. It also signifies cultivating or attaining a new vision of reality, a consciousness that dwells in God and enables a person to find God in all things and all things in God. Thus, the phrase ‘contemplative in action’ is fitting to express the inherent dialectic of the divine experienced as both transcendence and immanence. This can also be understood as a form of *practical theology*.

Towards a Practical Theology

Theologia practica is the complementary partner of *theologia speculativa*. The differentiation between them goes back historically to the Middle Ages, when practical theology largely related to ordained ministry. But recently it has embraced much more. ‘Practical theology is the theological study of the praxis of lived religion.’¹⁹ It refers not merely to the dimension of *action* but also to how religion is lived, and it covers a field of practices

¹⁷ William A. Barry and Robert G. Doherty, *Contemplatives in Action: The Jesuit Way* (Mahwah: Paulist, 2002), 4.

¹⁸ Joseph de Guibert, *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice: A Historical Study* (Chicago: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1964), 45; MHSJ MN 5, 162.

¹⁹ R. Ruud Gonzevoort and Johan H. Roeland, ‘Lived Religion: The Praxis of Practical Theology’, *International Journal of Practical Theology*, 18/1 (2014), 97, and see 95–96.

which often take place outside the domain of formal or institutionalised religion.²⁰ Here I shall focus on only one dimension of practical theology, namely *spiritual conversation*.

Experiencing God

Human beings, as we have said, are created with an inborn capacity (*existential*) to receive the self-communication of God, though not all human beings are open to that self-communication. However, those who do respond—believers, in a very wide sense—experience the mystery of God in the dynamic tension between transcendence and immanence. This tension emerges because humans need, on the one hand, someone intimate to whom they can relate and, on the other, someone ‘beyond’ whom they can adore. Such a tension appears in the *Confessions* of St Augustine when he says, ‘Thou wast more inward to me than the most inward part of me; and higher than my highest reach’.²¹

Another good example of this tension is the experience of the fugitive prophet Elijah in the cave of Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19:11–18). God is not to be found in the triad of wind, earthquake and fire—the usual signs of the theophany of a transcendent God to the exodus people. Rather, Elijah recognises God in the ‘sound of sheer silence’, which suggests softness and intimacy. Elijah transcends the very signs of transcendence themselves and, in a mystical fashion, becomes aware of God’s immanence in the paradoxical ‘sound’ of silence, which can be perceived only by the inner spiritual senses.²²



Elijah at Mount Horeb, by William Brassey Hole, c.1912–1916

²⁰ Gonzevoort and Roeland, ‘Lived Religion’, 94.

²¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 3.6.11. English translation by Albert Cook Outler (New York: Dover, 1955).

²² The theophany to Elijah is parallel to one given to Moses at Sinai (Exodus 33:21–23). See Walter Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings* (Macon: Smyth and Helwys, 2000), 235–236.

A difficulty that arises with regard to experiences of God is that, more often than not, the person going through the experience does not recognise it as such immediately. In as much as human beings are inherently open to the divine mystery they experience God, but in an unthematized way in the moment of experience. The experience of God becomes thematized, or is named as such, only after intentional spiritual reflection.²³ To cite a couple of biblical examples, Moses begs YHWH, 'Show me your glory'. In reply he is told, 'You shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen' (Exodus 33:18, 23). This is to say that Moses will recognise the presence of God after the glory of God has passed by and not in the very moment of God's passing. Moses will have to look back in order to recognise the passage of God through his life. The experience of Jacob is another instance. At Bethel, after his dream vision of the ladder, 'Jacob woke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!"' (Genesis 28:16)

How, then, can one become aware or conscious of having had an experience of God? In his book *How Can I Find God?* James Martin asked the then Superior General of the Jesuits, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, to respond to the title question. Fr Kolvenbach replied with a story about an abbot who found God in the way Moses did, by 'looking back': 'One day a monk asked the abbot if he ever encountered God. Had he ever had a vision or seen God face-to-face? After a long silence the abbot answered frankly: no, he hadn't.' But, the abbot reflected, this was not surprising since even Moses saw God only from behind. At that point, 'looking back over the length and breadth of his life the abbot could see for himself the passage of God'.²⁴ This is where spiritual conversation comes in. What makes it fruitful is that the person being accompanied is sharing his or her examination of consciousness or examen, which, according to Martin, 'builds on the insight that it's easier to see God in retrospect rather than in the moment'.²⁵

²³ See Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 52: 'the explicit, conceptual and thematic knowledge, which we usually think of when we speak of the knowledge of God ... is a reflection upon man's transcendental orientation towards mystery, and some degree of reflection is always necessary'; see also Rossano Zas Friz De Col, 'Teología de la vida cristiana ignaciana ensayo de interpretación histórico-teológica', *Ignaziana*, 9/7 (2010), at <https://www.ignaziana.org/en/..%5C9-2010.pdf>, accessed 12 June 2018, 40.

²⁴ James Martin, *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything: A Spirituality for Real Life* (New York: HarperOne, 2010), 98; and see *How Can I Find God? The Famous and the Not-so-Famous Consider the Quintessential Question*, edited by James Martin (Liguori: Triumph, 1997), 181.

²⁵ Martin, *Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything*, 97.

The Examen

The five-step General Examen of the Spiritual Exercises (Exx 43), begins by giving ‘thanks to God our Lord for the benefits I have received’. This step is extremely important because it opens the person to the self-communicating God who is both transcendent and immanent. In recent years, many psychologists have come to realise the importance of gratitude for personal integrity, overall maturity, interpersonal relationships and happiness.²⁶ A grateful heart that is open to others is also more open to recognising the divine stirrings of the absolute ‘Other’ in one’s life.

In the third step Ignatius asks the person making the examen to cast a bird’s-eye view over the day, ‘an account of my soul from the hour of rising to the present examen’. This exercise is done after placing oneself in the presence of God, which makes one more capable of recognising that presence retrospectively. The whole point of the examen is not so much to find God as to be found by God.²⁷

A person usually enters into spiritual conversation after the examen whether formally, or informally when an unprogrammed or casual conversation turns into a spiritual one. The very fact that a conversation should become spiritual presupposes some degree of retrospection by the participants beforehand. The activity of retrospection or examen continues during the course of the conversation and can touch great depths.

Spiritual Conversation and Spiritual Direction

What is spiritual conversation? According to Luz Marina Díaz it is not a debate, an intellectual or academic discussion about religious themes, or a sort of preaching of the gospel. She describes it in this way: ‘What we share in spiritual conversation are personal experiences. Spiritual conversation is the practice of finding God in those experiences while paying attention to our emotions, desires and dreams.’²⁸ Spiritual conversation can take place when two friends talk about the things of God, or in small groups that gather to share their faith or for *lectio divina*. Above all, spiritual direction or spiritual accompaniment is a privileged space for spiritual conversation. Here the partners in conversation may be called the director and the directee.

²⁶ See Luis López-Yarto, ‘La gratitud, mucho más que una emoción pasajera’, *Manresa*, 85 (2013), 8.

²⁷ *How Can I Find God?*, 110.

²⁸ Luz Marina Díaz, ‘Spiritual Conversation as the Practice of Revelation’, *The Way*, 55/2 (April 2016), 43



Zechariah and the Angel, by William Blake, 1799–1800

In the Old Testament, the sense of God's transcendence increases in the prophetic books. Intermediaries between God and humans appear in the form of visions and angels. A guild of priests maintains the state of holiness in the Temple and made it hospitable for God's glory.²⁹ Priests have the exclusive privilege to enter into the holy of holies. When, in the Gospel of Luke, Zechariah delays in the sanctuary, the people gathered outside guess that he has seen a vision (Luke 1:21–23). Priests not only receive visions; they also interpret them. People are made aware of the presence of the transcendent God through the mediation of the priest.

The spiritual director, in a broad sense, plays a mediatory role in spiritual conversation. In order to play this role well, he or she needs to have skills and training, and especially the capacity for deep and humble listening—not only to what is said in words, but to the directee's body language. Spiritual conversation unfolds in storytelling, which is integral to it. The stories narrated need not be of an overtly religious nature; the skilled director pays attention to them and helps the directee to discover the hidden presence of God.³⁰ This is where the directee 'looks back' at the past and discovers the passage of God through his or her life.

²⁹ Paul D. Hanson, 'Zechariah, The Book of', in *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, edited by Roger S. Boraas and Paul J. Achtemeier (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), 1240; Ernest C. Lucas, 'Daniel, Book of', in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, 158.

³⁰ Díaz, 'Spiritual Conversation as the Practice of Revelation', 43–47.

In order to play this intermediary role, directors need more than just the training they have received and the skills they have acquired. A good spiritual director is principally a mystagogue, that is, one who has had the experience of the mystery of God. The task of mystagogy is to introduce believers into the mystery of Christ. The methods and techniques employed in spiritual direction or mystagogy are important, but the participants' experience of God (and not merely their knowledge of the truths of faith) is more important. Only someone who has experienced, interpreted and integrated the divine mystery in his or her own life will be able to help directees open themselves up to that mystery. There is an increasing awareness that the heart of Christianity lies in the personal knowledge of Christ through individual experience.³¹ While such experience is not lacking, there remains a need for correct interpretation of what is experienced.³² When spiritual conversation becomes mystagogy, directees begin to enter into the mystery of God, revealed as both transcendent and immanent.

Spiritual Conversation and Ignatian Spirituality

In Ignatian spirituality, spiritual conversation is a technical term naming an apostolic tool for helping others (*ayudar a las almas*).³³ For Ignatius, such conversation implied a depth of engagement, of familiarity and of intimacy. Helping individuals spiritually in this way, through a one-to-one, face-to-face conversation, was a historical novelty.

As a method it is universal and, at the same time, extremely adaptable to the needs of different people. Within the Ignatian charism, spiritual conversation is the door opening into, and potentially even the culmination of, apostolic action. The context in which this apostolate unfolded for Ignatius was most commonly confession or the ministry of the Spiritual Exercises. For him the goal of spiritual conversation was to help people to find God and so transform their lives.³⁴ Spiritual conversation was thus theology in practice.

³¹ In Karl Rahner's famous affirmation, 'the devout Christian of the future will either be a "mystic", one who has "experienced" something, or he will cease to be anything at all': 'Christian Living Formerly and Today', in *Theological Investigations*, volume 7, *Further Theology of the Spiritual Life 1*, translated by David Bourke (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1971), 15.

³² See Anton Witwer, 'La mistagogia—problema odierno o sfida continua per il teologo spirituale?', *Mysterion*, 8/2 (2015), 189, at http://www.mysterion.it/Mysterion_2-2015.pdf, accessed 12 June 2018.

³³ *Autobiography*, n. 54.

³⁴ See Germán Arana, 'La conversación espiritual. Instrumento apostólico privilegiado de la Compañía', *Revista de Espiritualidad Ignaciana*, 36/1 (2005), 1–9.

Ignatius was able to help others find God because he himself found God—or, rather, God found him—through his own personal experience. He used with others the method that he recognised God had employed with him. The process by which he turned to God began in Loyola and matured in the testing months at Manresa. From his personal experience came the book of the *Spiritual Exercises*.

The person emerging from the experience of making the Spiritual Exercises is potentially a mystagogue, because the Exercises lead him or her to experience personally the mysteries of the life of Christ. Ignatius insisted that it is not enough to have theological knowledge; one needs an experiential knowledge of God, ‘for what fills and satisfies the soul consists, not in knowing much, but in our understanding the realities profoundly and in savouring them interiorly’ (Exx 2). The exercitant not only has an experience of God but also learns to interpret it adequately through spiritual conversation, which is an integral part of the *Exercises*, with a director who should already be a mystagogue.

How does an Ignatian mystagogue accompany others in spiritual conversation, within and outside the context of the Exercises? It is presupposed that the director has internalised the Ignatian charism. (The Ignatian way is not the only one. Every charism in the Church helps others in its own unique way.) The director listens to the story and the experiences of the directee and interprets them, paying special attention to the inner movements of the spirits (*mociones*) that are at work in him or her and observing in what direction they lead, whether to spiritual consolation or to spiritual desolation. It is through these movements that God speaks in the human soul.³⁵ The director helps the directee to name appropriately and to handle these different movements.³⁶

In the experiential world of the directee there is a constant interplay of consolation and desolation, of presence and absence, of the immanence and transcendence of God. For Ignatius, these fluctuating states are not exceptional, but mark the normal course of spiritual growth. In and through reflection on personal experiences, the directee sheds his or her own preconceived ideas about God and learns to respect God’s mystery, as Ignatius did in his Spiritual Diary. Ultimately the person introduced into divine mystery will seek not the consolations of God but the God of consolations. How God chooses to reveal Godself, as someone nearby or

³⁵ Díaz, ‘Spiritual Conversation as the Practice of Revelation’, 44.

³⁶ José García de Castro, ‘Alcanzados por las fuentes: ¿por Qué? ¿cómo?’, *Manresa*, 81 (2009), 321–323.

as someone far beyond one's reach, is God's prerogative and is totally out of human control. Truth lies between the two poles, in letting God be God.

The internal structure of the Exercises, and the particular exercises designed by Ignatius, are of a dynamic nature. If, for example, in the Third Week God seems absent and hidden, in the Fourth Week God is manifest (Exx 223).³⁷ The mystagogy of the Exercises is experienced in the shifting back and forth between the immanence and transcendence of God.

Spiritual conversation is a privileged moment of becoming aware of the self-communication of God. Becoming conscious of the presence of God in our lives is transforming. We enter into an intimate relationship with God, and that changes the way we relate to others and to the world around us.³⁸ Practical theology or theology in practice, especially in spiritual conversation, is a means to consolidate our personal relationship with God, so that we become Christ-centred and, consequently, servants of Christ's mission in the Church and the world.

Rolphy Pinto SJ is a Jesuit priest of the Gujarat Province of the Society of Jesus. He holds a doctorate in spiritual theology, which he has been teaching at the Pontifical Gregorian University since 2014.

³⁷ S. Bongiovanni and Gaetano Piccolo, 'Dalla mia volontà alla tua grazia. L'esercizio del regno', in *Ignazio di Loyola. Esercizi Spirituali* (Milan: Garzanti, 2016), 102.

³⁸ See Díaz, 'Spiritual Conversation as the Practice of Revelation', 52–53.

GODLY PLAY

An Ignatian Way of Proceeding with Children?

Brenda Leigh Timmer

‘I WONDER WHERE YOU ARE in the story, or which part of the story is about you?’, asks an adult in a gentle and reflective tone. In front of her is a bag of sand with some wooden people carefully placed within it, the tracks that their feet made as they were moved through the ‘desert’ still clearly visible. Seated in a circle around the materials, one by one children reflect on the story of Abram and Sarai (or Abraham and Sarah) which they have just heard. They wonder about leaving the river and heading into the desert; they wonder what happened to Abraham and Sarah when they died; they wonder about their own place in the Great Family, which is as many as the grains of sand in the desert and as many as the stars in the sky. As the wondering slows down, the storyteller packs away her materials and invites each child to find some ‘work’ to do. Some choose to draw a picture, others may take out the Play-Doh, one or two go back to the bag and figures and lay out the story again, yet another finds a comfortable bean bag and sits still and quiet, lost in thought.

This reflective group of children with their adult storyteller is a Godly Play circle. It expresses a playful and intentional, deeply respectful approach to the spiritual nurture of children. I will argue that it also offers a characteristically Ignatian way of proceeding with children.

Parents, medical practitioners, early-childhood workers and economists all point to the importance of the first seven years of a child’s life for his or her overall health and development. Similarly, in her research on the spirituality of children, Rebecca Nye has argued for the vital importance of early childhood for the development of spirituality. Nye argues that children have an innate relational consciousness, which ‘is especially about being attracted towards “being in relation”, responding to a call to relate to more than “just me”—i.e. to others, to God, to creation or

to a deeper inner sense of Self'.¹ This innate sense of openness to the divine, however, seems to diminish as children age. Research by Kalevi Tamminen in Finland found that while 80 per cent of seven-year-olds reported periods of awareness of God's presence, this had decreased to 60 per cent among eleven-year-olds, and only 30 per cent of adults mentioned such awareness.²

Poets beautifully express this truth. Edwina Gateley, in her book *Growing into God*, describes how as a child she stumbled upon God, and the ensuing 'relationship with the Divine was gloriously intimate, playful, and very, very special'.³ In her poem 'Full Circle' Gateley mourns, 'The whispers of my girlhood turned into chants and litanies; the giggles and delight—left in disgrace on the great stone steps of your dwelling place'.⁴

At a broad level most Christian denominations have recognised the importance of formation for children. Catechism classes, Sunday School, holiday bible clubs and school-based groups are just some of the ways the Church has sought to instil the basic grounding of faith in children. There is a problem, however. The greater part of work with children seeks to teach them something—bible stories, the doctrines of the Church, how to behave and so on. The result is all too often a church adult who knows a lot about Christian things but longs for experience of encounter with the divine.

Children and adults who are not connected to the Church in any way likewise seem to seek language to express their spiritual experiences. In her research Rebecca Nye found that the children in her sample group, who had, by and large, very little exposure to formal religion, would quite readily utilise religious language in conversation. However, they would often draw back quite quickly, moving away from overtly religious communication. She hypothesized that this might be for a variety of reasons: they were uncomfortable with the language; they were embarrassed at venturing into the socially unacceptable space of spiritual conversation; or the content of the spiritual experience they sought to describe was itself uncomfortable.⁵ Children become adults, and for those who are unchurched their unfamiliarity with the language of faith and spirituality may leave them frustrated in their attempts to explore their inner world.

¹ Rebecca Nye, *Children's Spirituality: What It Is and Why It Matters* (London: Church House, 2009), 6.

² Quoted in Nye, *Children's Spirituality*, 9.

³ Edwina Gateley, *Growing into God* (Franklin: Sheed and Ward, 2000), xi.

⁴ Gateley, *Growing into God*, 72–73.

⁵ David Hay and Rebecca Nye, *The Spirit of the Child*, rev. edn (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2006), 101–103.

Much of the work I do as a minister at a local congregational and ecumenical level is formation work. I offer the broad possibilities of the Ignatian way of being to men and women who are looking for something more than they already have spiritually. They long for intimacy with God but find the images of God that have shaped them from childhood are often unhealthy and even destructive. One of the deep sadnesses of listening to people who come for spiritual direction or accompaniment is just how many of them have these deeply unhealthy images of God. Shaped by childhood, popular culture and church experience, many adults come to retreats or ongoing direction with images of divine punishment and feelings of fearfulness or indifference.

For many, the God they actually experience is deeply removed from the God about whom they have been taught or whom they think they know in an unreflective way. They want to know how they can understand and process their interior lives in ways that integrate their inner world and the world outside. They want to learn how to pray. They want to know how they can live according to God's will for their lives. Often they are people of faith who have made a long journey with God and Church, and yet they know that there must be more than what they are living.

As these people of formal faith—or no formal faith—are introduced to the Ignatian way of proceeding, there are often moments of recognition: moments in which they realise that they have known this all along, and yet have never known it. There is also a great deal of unlearning that takes place as people journey into an Ignatian way of being in the world. They are challenged at deep levels as they engage with the images of God that have been with them, often for as long as they can remember. They have to be given permission to trust their interior experience, to recognise their desires and to be able to articulate their interior experience. They are often unable to express their own connection with scripture or to wonder what a text might mean for them at this moment. Intent on understanding, or doing, or performing, they are unable to play with God. Much of the introductory work with adults who come to Ignatian spirituality offerings deals with these basic formational matters.

As a director, I have pondered whether there is any way to engage in formative work with children that offers them the beauty and the gift of the Ignatian way of being in the world. Do children first have to be damaged by the many extremely unhelpful approaches to 'Christian education' and then come to us as adults seeking something more? Is it

possible for children to be offered a way of being in the world that invites them to intimacy with God, engagement with scripture, interior awareness and articulation of their experience? I suggest that Godly Play may just be one answer, as well as being an Ignatian way of proceeding with children.

Some Godly Play Fundamentals

Developed by Jerome Berryman, an Episcopalian priest from the United States, Godly Play is an intentional and rich approach to the spiritual nurture of children. Berryman initially began his ministry in Christian education but, even in his seminary days, he was dissatisfied with the approach to the formation of children that was normative at the time. He spent decades developing, researching and learning, and, most importantly, being with children. What he created is a comprehensive approach to nurturing the spirituality of children which is now offered in at least 43 countries from Australia to Uruguay—countries as diverse as the United States and India, South Africa and Latvia, the United Kingdom and Tanzania.⁶

A comprehensive approach to nurturing the spirituality of children

Godly Play begins with a foundational theology of the spirituality of childhood. The basic assumption is that children know God; they know what it is to play hide-and-seek with the elusive presence of God within themselves and the world; they have experienced the dance of the divine that the poet Hafiz described in the fourteenth century.⁷ But although children know God, Berryman argues, what they lack is the language to express and interpret that knowing. Godly Play shapes and forms a practice with children which offers them the religious language of the Christian community. The language of Godly Play itself is story and play, which Berryman argues are the native languages of children.

Before exploring language and play, however, it is important to note that the practice of Godly Play needs an environment that is carefully constructed and managed so as to optimise the sacred, creative space available to the children. Ideally it takes place in a room where children are surrounded by the story materials (figures, boxes, images and symbols).

⁶ 'International Associations', *Godly Play Foundation*, available at: <https://www.godlyplayfoundation.org/the-godly-play-foundation/international-associations/>, accessed 26 January 2018.

⁷ See 'The God Who Only Knows Four Words', in *The Gift: Poems by Hafiz, the Great Sufi Master*, translated by Daniel Ladinsky (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1999), 270. Quoted by Peter Privett in his presentation at the 2017 Godly Play UK Conference in Sheffield.

In the Godly Play room children are able to work—play—with any of these materials. The room should be uncluttered and attractive, and the materials of the highest quality a community can manage. While it is true that God can be found anywhere, it is also true that a beautiful space crafted with prayer and attention fosters an openness to the presence of God.

The images of the Christ Child and the Risen Christ sit on the focal shelf of every Godly Play room, inviting wonder about the mysteries of the incarnation and the resurrection. The children are introduced, in numerous stories, to the Spirit who flies on the wind like a dove, is invisible and yet there like the scent of oil, who appears in ‘tongues of fire’. The Godly Play room is a place of exploration and wonder, and so children bring into it images of God gathered in other places—in the gentle welcome and careful listening of Godly Play we trust that God will consistently invite the child to know God more freely.

Within the framework of Godly Play children are given space to become fluent in four genres of religious language. The *sacred stories* tell the story of the people of God through the ages—beginning with creation and moving through the Old Testament, then Pentecost and the life of Paul, and ending with the ‘story which hasn’t been written yet’, a book in which children can record their own stories as part of the people of God. The second genre is *parable*, which is told in a way that invites wonder, exploration, creativity and ‘thinking outside the box’. Children are encouraged to build metaphors, to recognise that parables have multiple levels of meaning and to expect the unexpected. Third come *liturgical*



action stories. These are the stories of the Church and range from baptism and world communion to the circle of the church year, advent and the mystery of Christmas. Included in the liturgical action stories are the stories of Jesus as they are drawn from different Gospels and often synchronized by the tradition of the Church. Here the children are invited to become part of the story of faith as it has been lived by the Church over the past two millennia and as it is lived now. The fourth genre offered to the children is *silence*. The Godly Play approach takes very seriously the need that all people, including children, have for contemplative silence and reflective space. By contrast with many children's ministry programmes which seek to entertain and 'keep the interest' of children, Godly Play adopts a slow and reflective pace; space is given for personal silence and the silence of the child is respected and maintained.

Godly Play and Ignatian Spirituality

It is my contention that Godly Play shapes a number of foundational attitudes or practices which are essential for living the Ignatian charism. Children formed in Godly Play may more easily slip into a more formal Ignatian way of proceeding as they grow, in comparison with those who have been formed by traditional teaching-based approaches to children's work.

At its simplest, the gift of Godly Play invites children to grow in relationship with God rather than teaching children about God. Christian education in the modern period has focused energy and attention on teaching children (and adults) about the Bible, about the characteristics of God, about what a 'good Christian life' is. Learning models are honed and sharpened to teach children their faith. But those who follow Jesus in the Ignatian way need to be formed in a manner of being in life and faith that is less concerned with knowing *about* God and much more concerned with knowing God in the fullness of being human. Godly Play takes this distinction seriously. Children will still learn a lot about the Bible; they will learn about the geography of the Middle East; they will engage with the tradition of the Church; they will wrestle with parables and think about what they mean. But all of this learning is organic, part of the greater process at the heart of which is a pre-existent and dynamic relationship with God.

Entry into the Godly Play room is marked by crossing a threshold; children are invited to 'get ready' to hear the story and engage in the work of play. Before the storyteller fetches the materials and begins to tell

the story, the children are once again invited to get ready. This process may also be understood as an Act of the Presence of God. The children are encouraged to become still and conscious of themselves and God, and to wait attentively.

How to be still, how to listen in contemplative silence are not universal skills, however. Berryman argues that children need to be helped to get ready, to move into what he calls the ‘middle realm’:

The middle realm is the original position, the place we start from, but it also comes and goes in intensity as we mature. It is the space in the midst of the four cardinal points on our relational compass—the relationship with the self, with others, with nature, and with God. It is where we go to regain our balance.⁸

As the children are helped to get ready they experience the deep attentiveness that is part of focusing on the story, and they are invited to check continually if they are ready. Of course groups are often noisy, and children are fidgety and restless: they are not always ready. What they are learning, however, is that getting ready is important, that coming close to God and trusting God to come close to us require that we slow down, become still and listen deeply. These practices of silence and contemplation are also integral to the Ignatian charism of ‘contemplatives in action’.

The children are gathered in a circle and a story is presented. The storyteller uses simple visual materials, and the focus of every person in the circle is on the materials, the words and the movements of the storyteller. Godly Play is intentional in shaping a sound and healthy image of God. The words used to speak about God in the carefully scripted stories are inviting and theologically specific—phrases such as ‘God gave us the gift’, ‘coming close to the mystery’ of Christmas or Easter, ‘God came so close to Abram, and Abram felt so close to God’ and ‘All of God is everywhere’.⁹ This language invites children into the mystery of God, who is consistently loving and engaging with God’s creation. In telling the story of Jesus phrases such as ‘his work was to come close to people’ and ‘he knew he had to become a parable’ invite participants into the mystery and wonder of the Jesus who is now present as the risen Christ.

The process of storytelling invites careful listening and imaginative engagement. Materials are kept simple so that children can use their

⁸ Jerome Berryman, *The Spiritual Guidance of Children: Montessori, Godly Play, and the Future* (New York: Morehouse, 2013), 89–93, here 92.

⁹ Jerome Berryman, *The Complete Guide to Godly Play* (London: Church House, 2010), volume 2, 88.

imaginations to become part of the story. Words are repeated to help with attentive listening in a process akin to *lectio divina*. The method of telling the stories is not designed to convey information, but rather to invite prayerful engagement. The pace is slow and the tone is gentle.

Once the story has been told, the storyteller sits back, keeps a brief silence and then begins to *wonder* with the children. The storyteller's role is not to check that the facts of the story have been learnt, but rather to accompany the children as they engage prayerfully with the text. Week after week children are invited to engage with their own inner experience, their own ideas and their own perspective, and are encouraged to find words to share their inner reality. Questions such as *I wonder what part of the story you liked best? I wonder what is most important? I wonder whether you have ever been lost?* are gently asked and reflected upon.

The storyteller receives the children's responses, exercises active listening skills and maintains the circle in such a way that children are given time and space to wonder deeply. This work and this wondering, allow children to grow in respect for their own inner experience and truth. It allows them to learn the language needed to give expression to that inner reality. The respect of the storyteller and the circle invites the children to risk sharing their inner selves a little more. They take part in an experience of spiritual accompaniment that is formational for the work of reflective faith. For the storyteller, sharing in the wondering of the children is a very practical experience of 'finding God in all things'. Children naturally connect the stories of life with the stories presented in Godly Play. Their sense of life is often far more holistic than that of adults. For example, mentioning the lost sheep in the parable of the Good Shepherd easily initiates conversation about the children's own experiences of getting lost.

Following the wondering period, children are invited to choose how they will respond to the story and continue their wondering. Space is given for them to respond in whatever way feels right to them. Some children may 'return to the text' and take out the story materials and work with them on their own. They may fetch other story materials and lay these alongside the story they heard that morning, linking, integrating and perhaps contrasting the stories. Some children may choose to use art materials to shape, create and express the truth that is their own. Some children may sit in silence. Some may play with more traditional toys. In all these responses, the children continue in prayer. They continue to engage with God and to express their own inner truth in ways that



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make sense for them. This process of prayer forms an integral part of the Ignatian way. A text invites us to find ourselves and to notice God within it. We are invited to use art, play and our senses to continue the conversation with God initiated through the text. Children engaged in Godly Play are praying in a very Ignatian way.

As an intentional approach to the spiritual nurture of children, as opposed to Christian education, Godly Play focuses on the process rather than the end result. Rebecca Nye argued that children's spirituality, if it is to survive, needs approaches such as this.¹⁰ In a world of continuous academic assessment and constant pressure to achieve, the Godly Play room provides a gentle space where simply being is enough. The art that children work on in the response time is theirs alone. When they choose to share it with the storyteller or other adults, the adults have learnt not to ask what it is, but rather to notice colour, movement and form.

The spirituality nurtured by Godly Play is for life. As within Ignatian spiritual direction, Godly Play recognises that anyone we accompany has a pre-existing relationship with God, and will continue in relationship with God long after we have are no longer part of that person's story. We do not seek to 'create' spiritual highs, or achieve religious goals. As the Creator deals with the creature, adults in the Godly Play room gently support the child.

Finally, Berryman makes a very clear point about what makes children's ministry Godly Play. He argues that a children's team may

¹⁰ Nye, *Children's Spirituality*, 46–48.

have a beautiful Godly Play room, stocked with wonderful resources. They may tell the stories word-perfect from the scripts. The children may create beautiful art from well-stocked shelves of response material. The feasts may be well prepared and tasty. It is not Godly Play, however, unless all involved expect God to come and play. What makes it Godly Play is the delight-filled, surprising and life-giving playful engagement of God. All those involved are expectantly alert to the movements of the Good Spirit within themselves and among the community. In the Godly Play room children notice the moments of grace and movements of insight, and are alert to the God who plays with them.

Where Godly Play Is Not So Ignatian

There are some ways in which Godly Play does not reflect the Ignatian charism so easily, and where practitioners would need consciously to adopt an Ignatian approach. First, very few of the core stories used in Godly Play are focused on Jesus. For those formed in Ignatian christology this can be problematic—as it is for those of an evangelical spirituality. The story of the ‘Faces of Easter’ introduces the pivotal moments in Jesus’ life—birth, visit to the Temple, baptism, temptation in the wilderness, ministry, the Last Supper, crucifixion and resurrection. The parable stories invite children to engage playfully with the teaching of Jesus. There is a set of stories written for the Easter period called ‘Knowing Jesus in a New Way’, which is focused on how we might know the risen Jesus now. It is my sense, however, that children come to know Jesus as they are invited into finding themselves as part of the people of God, but their own friendship with Jesus is not focal. Shared reports, however, seem to indicate that, by the mysterious process of faith and life, children do connect with Jesus. I am told that there are additional stories on the miracles of Jesus which are being prepared.

The second area of which practitioners need to be aware is the need for an outward focus. Within the Godly Play room children are invited to serve each other at the feast. They may be invited to bring prayers of intercession as part of the preparation for the feast. However, the Ignatian emphasis on the mission of God and our participation in that mission may not be obvious—or even covered. Of course, Godly Play is not the totality of the children’s spiritual formation. They continue to worship with the adults in the church community; they continue to share in fellowship and congregational activities and ministries. It is in these

places of additional formation that they may more actively be shaped by a sense of the God who is always transforming and redeeming. As a Godly Play practitioner, however, I would encourage others to make the sense of purpose and vocation part of the very early formation offered to children.

Godly Play as Spiritual Accompaniment

Annemarie Paulin-Campbell, of the Jesuit Institute of South Africa, has argued that those who accompany others in the Ignatian way are characterized by the following qualities:¹¹

- being a person of prayer;
- awareness that my experience may be very different from another's experience;
- respectful curiosity, interest, 'wondering';
- genuine openness and willingness to enter into another's frame of reference;
- awareness of my own image of God;
- flexibility—being able to adapt to the person and context;
- compassion and empathy.

I can think of no better description of the multitude of men and women who, week by week, throughout the world, gather together circles of children, help them to get ready, present a story, invite reflection and responsive wondering, hold space while children reflect and respond to God in silence, and then facilitate communal feasting. Whether they know it or not, Godly Play storytellers are giving spiritual accompaniment and, I would argue, they do it in a fundamentally Ignatian way.

Brenda Leigh Timmer is a Methodist minister in Durban, South Africa. She is a spiritual director, advocate for Ignatian spirituality and trainer of prayer guides working with the Jesuit Institute of South Africa. She is also a Godly Play trainer working with Godly Play South Africa.

¹¹ Annemarie Paulin-Campbell, 'Spiritual Accompaniment in the South African Context', unpublished lecture notes presented at the Jesuit Institute of South Africa training in spiritual direction, 2018, 1.

HELL AND THE IMAGE OF GOD IN THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Eric Jensen

OTHERS HAVE DEALT in detail with the difficulties involved in giving the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola, and also with his images of God.¹ Here, however, I should like to consider in particular how those images relate to the theme of hell. Hell is a major part of the First Week. The word occurs four times in the first exercise alone (Exx 50.3, 50.5, 51.2, 52.1), and once in the second exercise (Exx 60.4). But it is on the fifth and final exercise of the Week (Exx 65) that I wish to focus: the meditation (or, in the Vulgate, the contemplation) on hell.

The words *infierno* in the Spanish Autograph and *inferno* in the Latin Vulgate both refer to an underworld, a region beneath the surface of the Earth, the length, breadth and depth of which we are invited to imagine in the first prelude (Exx 65.3).² Ignatius' assumption, it follows, is that hell is an actual place, a part of God's creation full of fire, smoke, sulphur, dregs and putrid things (Exx 66, 68, 70) designed for the punishment of those who are damned—that is, those who have rejected God's love and that of Christ our Lord (Exx 65.5, 67).

The long-held belief that God punishes is founded on texts from both the Old Testament and the New. 'I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and fourth generation of those who reject me ...' (Exodus 20:5); 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and

¹ See Brian Grogan, 'Giving the Exercise on Hell: Theological and Pastoral Considerations', *The Way Supplement*, 48 (Autumn 1983), 66–84; and Philip Sheldrake, 'The Principle and Foundation and Images of God', *The Way Supplement*, 48 (Autumn 1983), 90–96.

² 'All the ancient peoples of the Mediterranean region seem to have imagined the dead sharing a huge, dark cavern under the world—a kind of common grave, controlled by its own gods or demons and without air, light, or water': 'Hell', in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, edited by G. W. Bowersock, Peter Brown and Oleg Grabar (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard UP, 1999), 486.

his angels' (Matthew 25:41).³ The first exercise also assumes that someone may be in hell even 'because of one mortal sin' (though to the Vulgate Ignatius adds the word *forte*—'perhaps') and speaks of 'innumerable other persons who went there for fewer sins than I have committed' (Exx 52.1).⁴ The Colloquy with Christ our Lord also suggests that there are many souls in hell, 'Some ... because they did not believe in Christ's coming; and others who, although they believed, did not act according to his commandments' (Exx 71.1).

Behind all these assumptions about hell are images of the God who created this place of pain and punishment, and who actually confines souls there for all eternity. Besides assumptions, there are also contradictions and questions: how could a loving God even *create* such a place, much less banish anyone there? How can the image of such a punishing God be reconciled with passages, in both the Old Testament and the New, which describe God as all-loving? 'I have loved you with an everlasting love' (Jeremiah 31:3); 'God is love' (1 John 4:8). All of which is to say that, for our own times, it is the theology of the exercise on hell, and not just the language, that needs revising.



Inferno, anonymous, c.1520

³ The parable of the Last Judgment (Matthew 25:31–46) is not focused on the reality of hell, but is concerned with the question, 'How will those be judged who have never known Jesus?'. The contemporary opinion was that they were lost, but this parable shows that they can and do meet Christ in the poor, and so all can be saved. See Joachim Jeremias, *Rediscovering the Parables* (London, SCM, 1966), 161–163.

⁴ See Hugo Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968), 90 n. 54, cited in Grogan, 'Giving the Exercise on Hell', 73.

As Bernard Lonergan observes, however,

... because a theology is the product not simply of a religion but of a religion within a given cultural context, theological revisions may have their origin, not primarily in theological, but rather in cultural developments. So that at the present time theological development is fundamentally a long delayed response to the development of modern science, modern scholarship, modern philosophy.⁵

Since Ignatius' day, we must acknowledge, there has been both cultural and theological development: cultural development in our world-view, and theological development in our understanding of the meaning of hell. For instance, though we now know that there are magma and molten lava at Earth's centre, we no longer conceive of this as a place of punishment for souls, and hell is now understood as a 'state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed', rather than a penalty designed by the Creator.⁶

Hell and the Image of God in the Parable of the Prodigal

Images are powerful ways of communicating meaning, and some images from sacred scripture can continue to have a fearful hold on our imaginations, despite our growth from childhood to adult maturity. It is especially with the *image* of God that we must be concerned in our giving of the exercises of the First Week.

For a renewed image of God I turn primarily to the parable of 'The Father and the Two Lost Sons' (Luke 15: 11–32), as Kenneth E. Bailey has more accurately renamed the parable of the Prodigal. Bailey writes, 'Nearly everyone who wrestles seriously with this pericope ends up with a sense of awe at its inexhaustible content'.⁷ He quotes C. W. F. Smith:

While Jesus was not a philosopher or theologian (in the accepted sense), his parables alone provide material that neither the philosopher nor the theologian can exhaust. This is the mark of Jesus' supreme genius. We have a curious tendency, even when dealing with Jesus' humanity, to overlook his sheer intellectual stature.⁸

⁵ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: Herder, 1972), 353.

⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Ottawa: CCCB, 1994), n. 1033.

⁷ Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 158 (subsequent references in the text). Some 65 pages of *Poet and Peasant* are devoted to the exegesis of Luke 15, and I draw freely on their analysis here.

⁸ Charles W. F. Smith, *The Jesus of the Parables* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1948), 19, cited in Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 158.

As the title Bailey gives it makes clear, the centre of the parable is neither the younger son, upon whom most writers' and artists' interest has been focused over the years, nor his older brother, but the father, who is not God, but 'in his love is an image of God'.⁹

I use this parable in my giving of the exercise on hell, inviting the exercitant to focus first on the younger son, and then on his elder brother, in order to clarify the meaning of hell as a self-alienation from God. The image of the younger son in a pagan land, feeding pigs while dying of hunger (Luke 15:15–17), conforms well to the imagery of the first prelude used earlier in the First Week, of the soul imprisoned in my corruptible body, and body and soul together exiled 'among brute animals' (Exx 47.5–6).¹⁰

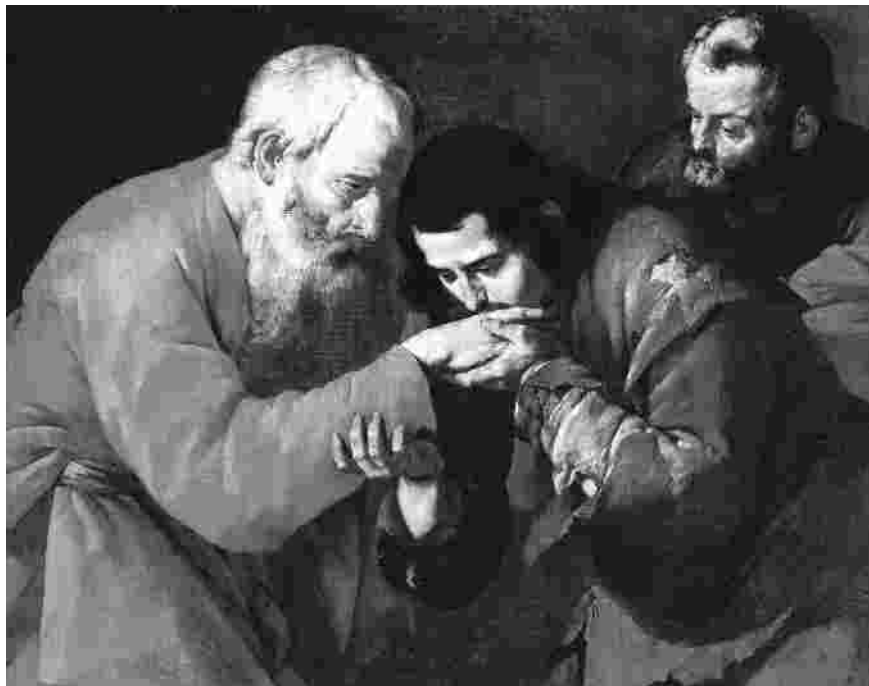
In the culture of the Middle East, as Bailey observes, the younger son's request for his share of the father's wealth while he is still alive would be 'an extraordinary insult to the father ... this cultural aspect of the parable sets the stage in a crucial way for all that follows' (162). His request is actually twofold: for the division of the inheritance and also for the right of disposition during the father's lifetime. 'The implication of "Father, I cannot wait for you to die" underlines both requests. It is even stronger in the second.' (164) This constitutes 'a profound break of relationship between the father and his son. The boy is indeed lost.' (165) He 'is breaking relationships not only with his father and brother but in a very radical way with the community at large'. He 'gradually descends into his own hell' (168).

Then I invite the exercitant to consider the other son. People sometimes feel that the elder brother deserves our sympathy, overlooking the fact that he is not innocent: he has been complicit in dishonouring his father, because he too has accepted a share of the inheritance, as is clear in the text: 'So he divided his property between them' (15:12). This fact is confirmed later by the father's words '... all that is mine is yours' (15:31), which seem also to imply that it is the elder son who must have purchased his brother's deed to the inheritance, thus providing him with cash.¹¹ Knowing that his brother's request is shameful, he nonetheless acquiesces in silence (168).

⁹ Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (London, SCM, 1963), 128, cited in Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 169.

¹⁰ For a scholarly analysis of this imagery see Walter J. Ong, 'St Ignatius' Prison-Cage and the Existentialist Situation', *The Barbarian Within, and Other Fugitive Essays and Studies* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 242–259.

¹¹ Bailey imagines the prodigal going 'from one prospective buyer to another At every turn he is greeted with amazement, horror, and rejection' (169). This leaves only his older brother to purchase it.



The Return of the Prodigal Son, *Neapolitan school*, c. 1630s

He may not have left the father's household, but he too is alienated from sonship, and he is now in the position of a servant or slave, as confirmed later by the words, 'For all these years I have been working like a slave for you' (15:29). He nevertheless complains that he is not treated as a son. The exercitant may find contemplation of this separation and estrangement of the son from the father supported by the example in Ignatius' Second Addition of a knight before his king and all the court, 'shamed and humiliated because he has grievously offended him from whom he has received numerous gifts and favours' (Exx 74.2).

The elder son appears first outside the father's house, but instead of entering immediately, eager to join in the celebration that he hears within, he is suspicious and calls a young boy (*henatônpaidôn*), who tells him that his brother has come back safe and sound and that his father has killed the fatted calf (15:25–27). The older son then refuses to go in, and so his father humbles himself, coming out to plead with him (15:28–30):

The older son chooses to humiliate his father publicly by quarreling while the guests are still present There is now a break in relationship between the older son and his father that is nearly as radical as the

break between the father and the younger son at the beginning of the parable. (195)

In praying this part of the parable, retreatants have sometimes come to recognise a break in their own relationships with God or with others, or even an alienation within themselves: the rejection of a former self—rebellious, immature (like the younger son)—whom they (like the older son) now regard with hatred. Ignatius Loyola had a similar experience in the early stages of his conversion; in the *Autobiography* he speaks of ‘the hatred he had conceived against himself’.¹²

If, however, we take the father as an image of God and his household as an image of heaven, we begin to see in a new way what being in hell might look like. Thus, we may ask: is it possible that the older son will choose to remain outside the father’s house forever? The answer is, yes, this is a real possibility! The elder son is being faced with the reality of an eternal hell. Although the eternity of hell is not mentioned in Ignatius’ points for reflection (Exx 66–79), eternity is part of the understanding of hell as a *definitive* state, in the words of the *Catechism*. We must emphasize, however, that it is not the father who banishes his son from the household; rather, the father is the one who (for all eternity?) pleads with him to come in.

Isolated and alone in the dark, weeping and gnashing his teeth outside the father’s house, refusing to join in the joyous celebration for the return of his brother, the elder son provides a very persuasive picture of what hell must be like, as we pray for ‘an interior sense of the pain suffered by the damned’ (Exx 65.4), which is the first part of the grace sought in the fifth exercise’s second prelude. The aim of all this imaginative prayer is found in the colloquy at the end of the exercise: to give thanks that I have been saved from such a fate by Christ’s great pity and mercy (Exx 71.3–4).

Purgatory and the Two Lost Sons

Should the elder son, in the very depths of his consciousness, actually desire to come into the father’s house, what issues must he work through, and how should he work through them, in order to do so? How will he overcome his inability to comprehend his father’s actions, to understand his father’s love? How will he come to realise that the father’s love cannot

¹² *Autobiography*, n.12.

be earned, even by hard work and obedience? How can he let go of his hatred and rejection of his brother? All of this will demand much struggle and effort, and much grace.

Bailey asks the question directly: 'The younger son was dead and is alive. The older son is likewise dead. Can he come to life?' (203) The parable ends without answering this question, but the parallel structure implies that the elder son can eventually do what the younger son did: come to his senses and seek his father's forgiveness. The elder son is now, as his brother was, in a hell of his own making, but it is more difficult for him to free himself because he is so convinced of his own righteousness. Nevertheless, the elder son's position is *not* fixed and definitive; in this reading of the parable, by extension, new choices are still possible for us after death and in the next life, and transformation is also possible.

If, as T. S. Eliot has remarked, '... here as hereafter, the alternative to hell is purgatory',¹³ then the anguish and suffering that the elder son must undergo in order to be reconciled with his father should be understood as purification or purgation, and not as punishment. One scholar, who describes himself as 'a Protestant who believes in purgatory', has argued for a return to the original understanding of purgatory as a process of purification.¹⁴ At the time of the Reformation, Catholics (including John Fisher and Thomas More) seem to have understood it as punishment, and both 'depict purgatory essentially as a temporary hell'.¹⁵ While most Protestants have rejected the doctrine of purgatory as having no support in scripture, there are hints of it in both Testaments.¹⁶

As the parable stands, hell remains a real possibility, but in it there is also the demand for an alternative to hell. Here in the parable of the Father and the Two Lost Sons, I would suggest, we have a biblical foundation for the doctrine of purgatory, set in the context of a loving, pleading Father. (This, it should be noted, is held in opposition to the universalist understanding of salvation, 'that since God is pure and omnipotent love, he must save all people', and so 'hell ceases to exist as a real possibility'.)¹⁷

¹³ T. S. Eliot, 'The Idea of a Christian Society' (1939), in *Selected Prose* (London, Penguin, 1953), 210.

¹⁴ Gerry L. Walls, *Purgatory: The Logic of Total Transformation* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), xiv. The Catholic understanding of purgatory today is that 'All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are assured of their eternal salvation, but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven': *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1030.

¹⁵ Walls, *Purgatory*, 164.

¹⁶ See Walls, *Purgatory*, 11–13 for 'biblical hints of purgatory'. Nowhere, however, does he refer to Luke 15.

¹⁷ Grogan, 'Giving the Exercise on Hell', 77. For more on the universalist position, see *A Catholic Reading Guide to Universalism*, edited by Robert Wild (Eugene: Resource, 2015); Hans Urs von Balthasar,

A New Image of God

Just as the graces of the First Week are dynamic rather than static, so also the exercitant's image of God is not usually static, but changes and develops over the course of the First Week. It includes the God who first began to create, reflected on in the Principle and Foundation (Exx 23.2), as well as the Creator present on the cross, with whom we converse as a friend in the colloquy of the first exercise (Exx 53, 54).¹⁸ Similarly, the fourth point of the second exercise (Exx 59.1–2) asks us 'to consider who God is ... God's wisdom ... God's omnipotence ... God's justice ... God's goodness ...'—and, in the second colloquy, God's mercy (Exx 61).

This dynamic image is developed *concretely* in the parable of the Father and the Two Lost Sons. By implication we are invited to identify this father with Jesus' Father in the Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:2–4). Kenneth Bailey tells us that, in the parable of the prodigal,

Jesus is best understood to be defining the word *father* for the use he intends to make of it. In that story Jesus breaks all bounds of human patriarchy and presents an image of a father that goes beyond anything his culture expected from any human father He was not describing fathers as he knew them but rather creating a new image that he intended to use as a model for God ... Jesus called God 'Father' and defined this term in the parable of the prodigal son.¹⁹

Again, quoting Henri Nouwen, Bailey affirms:

This is not the picture of a remarkable father. This is the portrait of God, whose goodness, love, forgiveness, care, and compassion have no limits at all. Jesus presents God's generosity by using all the imagery that his culture provides, while constantly transforming it.²⁰

For, as he explains elsewhere,

It is and, I am convinced, was impossible for any son to request his portion of the family wealth while the father still lived. Every

epilogue, 'Apokatastasis: Universal Reconciliation', in *Dare We Hope 'That All Men Be Saved'?* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2014), 179–204.

¹⁸ The NRSV and other translations of Genesis 1:1 have a footnote giving 'When God began to create' as another translation of the Hebrew for 'In the beginning when God created'

¹⁹ Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2008), 99.

²⁰ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 131, cited in Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*, 100.

Middle-Eastern peasant understands this instinctively the universality of this ingrained concept leads us to assume that the attitude is of great antiquity.²¹

The son's impossible request alone is enough to make the parable shocking. More shocking still is the fact that the father, instead of beating his son, as everyone would expect, actually grants his request.

What sort of father, then, does the parable present to us? When the boy eventually returns in disgrace, the father *races* to embrace him.²²

No villager over the age of 30 ever runs When he does this, his undergarments show. All of this is frightfully shameful for him He knows what his son will face in the village. He takes upon himself the shame and humiliation due the prodigal.²³

His father's embrace is meant to 'restore the boy to his home *and to his community*. Now no one can reject or despise him anywhere all across the village.'²⁴ When the father orders his servants to clothe him in the best robe (15:22), 'the servants know that they must treat him with respect as a master'.²⁵ As we have seen, the father will go on to allow his elder son further to humiliate him in public. This is the son who was 'expected to stand and serve all through the meal as a "head waiter"'.²⁶

In the three parables of Luke 15, Jesus is responding to the charge that he not only welcomes sinners, but even eats with them (15:2) and is thus defiled. When he comes to the story of the two lost sons, Jesus' audience might well have responded to the parable, *This man you speak of is a fool! He doesn't know how to be a father! He allows his children to do whatever they want, and when his younger son shames him and his entire village, the father rewards him on his return home. If, in welcoming sinners and eating with them, you claim to do what your father does, then, Jesus, you too are a fool!*

His original audience, then, would not have seen Jesus as a teller of beautiful tales. For Christians today, however, the parable presents us with a father who, though he leaves his children free to do what they

²¹ Kenneth E. Bailey, *The Cross and the Prodigal: Luke 15 through the Eyes of Middle Eastern Peasants* (St Louis: Concordia, 1973), 31.

²² 'The word "run" in Greek (*dramôn*) is the technical word used for the footraces in the stadium': Bailey, *Cross and the Prodigal*, 54.

²³ Bailey, *Cross and the Prodigal*, 54–55.

²⁴ Bailey, *Cross and the Prodigal*, 55 (italics original).

²⁵ Bailey, *Cross and the Prodigal*, 59.

²⁶ Bailey, *Cross and the Prodigal*, 68.

will, never stops caring for them. He allows each of them to make his own mistakes, trusting that each will eventually find his way home to him. He watches for the younger one's return, and he pleads with the older one to be reconciled and come in.

As a loving and trusting father, he is indeed an image of a loving God, but this father is still more: he is also humble. This humility goes beyond what we usually associate with God, though, when we reflect on Jesus' words, 'Whoever has seen me has seen the Father' (John 14:9), we realise that Jesus in *his* humility, and most of all in his humiliation on the cross (see the colloquy after the first exercise, Exx 53.1), is a revelation of the Father humble and humiliated. If we ask who suffers most in this parable, the answer is clear: the father himself becomes the suffering servant of his sons. This is the hidden christological message of the parable: 'He had to pay the price of self-emptying love in order to reconcile the prodigal to himself. Now he must pay the same price to try to win the older son.'²⁷ Bailey asks, 'Is not the end of the story the cross? Perhaps Christ left the parable incomplete because these events had not yet taken place.'²⁸

The Grace of Fear

Key to every exercise is the grace to be sought, which is named in the second prelude. The grace to be sought in the exercise on hell is 'an interior sense of the pain suffered by the damned, so that if through my faults I should forget the love of the Eternal Lord, at least the fear of those pains will serve to keep me from falling into sin' (Exx 65.4–5). Fear, then, is what is asked in the fifth exercise, but what kind of fear?

The 'fear of those pains' sought in meditating on the real possibility of hell would seem to be a servile fear but, as others have pointed out, 'Here fear does not *precede* the discovery of mercy and the response of love; it *follows* them'²⁹ Scripture tells us, 'There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, for fear has to do with punishment' (1 John 4:18). Thus, the fifth exercise is concerned not with servile fear, which love casts out, but with filial fear.³⁰ As Ignatius tells us, in his rules 'To Have the Genuine Attitude Which We Ought to Maintain in the Church Militant', servile fear may help to get a person out of grave or mortal

²⁷ Bailey, *Cross and the Prodigal*, 71.

²⁸ Bailey, *Cross and the Prodigal*, 73.

²⁹ Michael Ivens, 'The First Week: Some Notes on the Text', *The Way Supplement*, 48 (Autumn 1983), 13.

³⁰ Ivens, 'First Week', 13.



God the Father Blessing, by Raphael, sixteenth century

sin (Exx 370.2), and ‘once such a one has risen, one easily attains to filial fear, which is wholly acceptable and pleasing to God our Lord, since it is inseparably united with love of him’ (Exx 370.3). The fear sought in the exercise on hell, therefore, is not the servile fear of a punishing God, which may have gripped my childhood imagination, but the filial fear a child has of wounding a loving father.

How, then, is this grace to be received? It may come simply as stunned amazement at the freedom with which God has endowed me, which I will be asked to surrender to God’s safekeeping at the end of the Exercises in the *Suscipe* (Exx 234.4 of the Vulgate).³¹ The grace may also come as an extension of the sorrow and tears asked for in the second exercise (Exx 55.4) with the meditation on my sins; or it may come on feeling again the personal disorder which is the focus of the triple colloquy (Exx 63.3) of the third exercise; but it may come also in the terrifying and shocking recognition that I have the ability to say *No!*

³¹ ‘Take under your protection’ seems a more accurate translation of the Latin word *suscipe* than the ambiguous ‘take’.

to God, to exclude myself from God's life and love, so that hell becomes a very real possibility for *me*, however I may imagine it.

Bailey develops many other insights. In giving the contemplation of this parable during the fifth exercise of the First Week, it is preferable to mention only a few salient facts about the cultural context, and to allow the images to come alive in the exercitant's imaginative prayer. God deals uniquely with each and every person, and the graces of the Exercises can come in all sorts of ways during the making of them, or even after concluding them. Amazing things can and do happen. Whatever happens, after contemplating Bailey's interpretation of the parable of the Father and the Two Lost Sons, I will have moved through the essential structure of the fifth exercise, seeing in imagination the real possibility of hell, without having to picture an actual place (the first prelude), and I will have experienced an interior sense of the filial fear which this real and painful possibility evokes in me (the second prelude), without having to use the points (Exx 66–70), which amount to an application of the senses on hell as a place of punishment.³² In the colloquy with Christ our Lord (Exx 71.1), I will move straight to the great pity and mercy he has always had for me (Exx 71.4), and I will have come away, not with a servile fear of a cruel and merciless god, but with a new image of God, a God of infinite patience, humility and love, that will sustain the prayer of the remaining weeks.

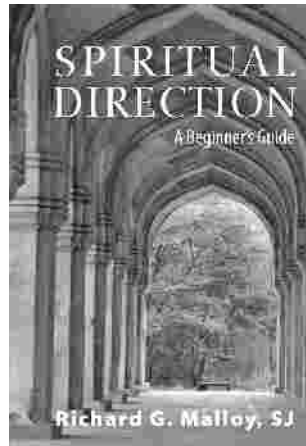
Eric Jensen SJ was born in Montreal in 1936 and entered the Society of Jesus in 1958. He has served as a high school teacher and pastor in Winnipeg, and lives and works in Guelph, Ontario. Now, in his third career, he gives the Spiritual Exercises and writes in his spare time. His most recent book is *Ignatius Loyola and You: Learning to Become a Reflective Christian* (2018).

³² Grogan suggests that one could apply the senses 'to the *absence* of God. This has to be done through pictures of what is in fact emptiness, nothingness, evil as defined by the scholastic—*carentia boni debiti*, the absence of a good which should be there': 'Giving the Exercise on Hell', 79.

RECENT BOOKS

Richard G. Malloy, *Spiritual Direction: A Beginner's Guide* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2017). 978 1 6269 8253 6, pp.224, £16.99.

Spiritual Direction: A Beginner's Guide is a very readable exploration of various dimensions and facets of Ignatian spiritual direction. Its author is a storyteller, weaving narratives from his own and others' lives, both personal and professional, from popular culture, and from social and political history into his exposition. Malloy covers, albeit in a somewhat wandering manner, the expected topics. He explores themes such as what the spiritual life is; what prayer is; discernment; and the personal transformation and freedom that can and often do result from both ongoing spiritual direction and residential retreats. He describes spiritual direction as being a work of grace in which we collaborate, an art of recognising and responding to the 'process of divinisation going on in our minds, hearts and souls' (p.35). It starts from where the individual person is now and his or her direct experience.



He describes spiritual direction as being a work of grace in which we collaborate, an art of recognising and responding to the 'process of divinisation going on in our minds, hearts and souls' (p.35). It starts from where the individual person is now and his or her direct experience.

What is particular and unique about Malloy's book among the many that exist on Ignatian spiritual direction is its emphasis on social justice as central to the process. Throughout the book you get the sense that, for Malloy, the spiritual life is fundamentally orientated towards global transformation, towards action and service, and towards heralding in the Kingdom of God here and now. He places spiritual direction unapologetically in the context of a world of many injustices, defining *justice* as 'the righting of relationships', with God, self and others (p.66). Quoting Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato si'*, Malloy writes, "To hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" should be an aim and norm of our practice of spiritual direction. Living out our spirituality must take into account those most in need.' (p.77)

In Ignatian language, the spiritual life is about becoming 'contemplatives in action'. Malloy acknowledges that contemplation and action are intimately linked. Spiritual direction is about helping people to become free enough to choose 'wisely and well' (p.20); in order to do this we need to know ourselves better, recognise those areas where we are particularly unfree, and ask for

the grace to be freed. In short, we need to be deepening our intimacy with God—being contemplatives.

A brilliant reversal of a familiar phrase points to just how counter-cultural this call to be contemplatives in action is today in the West: 'Don't just do something, stand there!' For Malloy this phrase describes the use of the Examen—a key Ignatian prayer for discernment, and for discovering and responding more deeply to the action of God in our lives. His repeated refrain is that we need to learn how to respond discerningly rather than merely react, and for this a contemplative practice is needed.

Malloy acknowledges that we live in an increasingly complex, pluralistic world. In this context, spiritual direction is about 'the development of habitual ability to freely choose the good, the right, the true' (p.32). Importantly we need to be able to do this amid the messiness of a life which is much more about keeping a balance within complexity than binary, black-and-white thinking. Stories from his own life, including his experience of the call to become a Jesuit, highlight that Malloy is not afraid of that messiness. Indeed he seems convinced both that God is at work precisely in the messiness of human life, and that we are able to discover God's particular invitation to each of us directly by engaging with what is really going on inside and outside ourselves. For Malloy, 'The opposite of faith is not doubt. The opposite of faith is certainty.' (p.118)

He tells a movingly honest story of falling in love with a woman while he was in the Jesuit novitiate (his first two years of formation) and the challenge of grappling with his feelings (p.41). Speaking of his own director at the time, Malloy says: 'The Jesuit superior and Henry never told me what to do. They constantly and gently insisted that I closely examine my feelings and thoughts. What did I want? What did I really want? I learnt that God's will is present in our desires.' (p.41) This reaction exemplifies the deep Ignatian conviction that the spiritual director should let God deal directly with the individual, and that the deepest desires of that individual are clues to God's desires.

Several chapters explore, in particular, working with the millennial generation, which is known for being less connected to institutional religion than its predecessors and much more familiar with a pluralistic world where the certainties of old do not pass muster. Malloy suggests that spiritual direction is a crucial tool in enabling everyone to respond to the 'call ... to the great adventure of faith and living the implications of faith in all the gospel's splendour and challenge' (p.118)—including those who do not fit neatly into a denomination or religious tradition. Maybe spiritual direction is particularly suited to millennials precisely because it listens to the experience

of individuals and encourages them to engage, from that experience, with the God who is working to ‘challenge, re-create and transform’ our world and inviting us to collaborate in that radical venture.

Malloy concludes that spiritual direction:

... is always making us a little bigger, more open, more willing and able to encompass those we meet with love, compassion and the mercy of God. The point of our being women and men of prayer is that we become not just people who pray, but those who live our lives attuned to and clicked into what God is doing in our lives and world. (p.194)

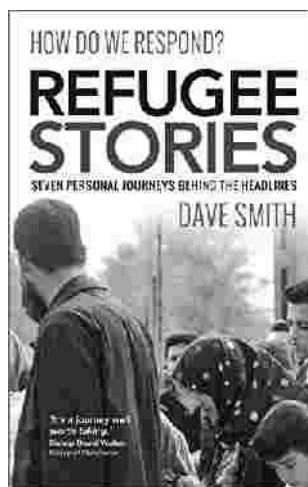
Iona Reid-DalGLISH

Dave Smith, *Refugee Stories: Seven Personal Journeys behind the Headlines* (Watford: Instant Apostle, 2016). 978 1 9097 2848 6, pp.225, £9.99.

Refugee Stories is an unsettling exploration of the violence perpetrated against refugees and asylum seekers. It is also about the people who work to protect them. The author, Dave Smith, is the founder of the Manchester-based Boaz Trust, which provides housing for refused asylum seekers and refugees. The most disturbing aspect of the book, however, is his continuing struggle with the Home Office in the United Kingdom.

Refugee Stories chronicles not only the violence done to refugees in the countries from which they have fled, but also the hidden violence that the UK asylum system can inflict. The threefold typology of violence—direct, cultural and structural—developed by the Norwegian founder of the discipline of peace studies, Johan Galtung, is a helpful lens through which to examine the book. In this typology, *direct* violence is obvious and visible: ethnic cleansing, torture, beatings, rapes, killings. The other two kinds of violence—*cultural* (religious intolerance, ethnic stereotyping) and *structural* (systemic injustice within institutions and organizations)—may be less visible. But *Refugee Stories* makes it clear that the UK’s asylum system is guilty of structural violence.

All three types of violence feature in the narratives Smith has assembled. The seven refugees whose stories he tells have all personally experienced or witnessed some form of direct violence in their home countries and have fled in fear. In the first story Hanes, a refugee from southern Ethiopia, recalls:



One night they came and took my father away. They had their heads covered, so we couldn't recognize them. The next day we found out that he had been murdered. They had taken his body to the hospital and left it there. If people die in a police station it's obvious who did it, but if they die in hospital, they can pretend that someone else did it, or that they don't know how it happened. (p. 26)

Later Hanes himself was arrested and tortured by police because of his political activism. Like his father, he was dropped off at the hospital, left for dead. But he survived. After 25 days of treatment he was released, and fled Ethiopia. This first story sets the raw tone of the book.

Many of the people interviewed in *Refugee Stories* have also experienced what Galtung calls cultural violence. For example, merely being a member of a particular ethnic minority or religious sect can mean that you are oppressed, hated and disenfranchised. In the fifth story Sheikh, a member of the Ahmadi Islamic sect in Pakistan, states,

When I was a child in school, people tried to discredit us. They said that Ahmadis were bad people. They really hated us. In Pakistan, the Ahmadis are a minority, but it's difficult to say how many Ahmadis there are, because everyone is afraid and wants to be safe, so some people don't declare it. (p. 131)

Openly to signal your religious or ethnic identity may put your life at risk.

However, the structural violence portrayed in the book is especially troubling. There are subtly brutal ways in which refugees and asylum seekers can be prevented from consulting lawyers, denied opportunities to work and barred from accessing welfare services. As it is described in this book, the asylum system in the UK is not only rigid and inflexible, but at times capricious and incompetent. An asylum seeker can be ensnared in an administrative limbo for years.

Ayesha, a medical practitioner in Sudan before she escaped persecution and sought refuge in the UK, describes the effects of the asylum system on those trapped in it:

When your life is on hold you go through so much stress and depression People are playing with your life and they destroy you from the inside The thing that I have suffered most from, and still do, is that I lost my confidence I am trying, but I can't concentrate, I can't remember (p.59)

Others tell a similar story. 'When I look back I can see the level of cruelty that is created in the asylum system.' (p.89) 'The Home Office has done all the same things against me which we faced in our country', says Sheikh. 'Firstly, they try to prove that the asylum seeker is a liar and not credible. Then they start to take away his respect, to make him humiliated and pitiable.' (p. 145) Refugees and asylum seekers who have been traumatized by direct violence choose to flee their countries in the hope of finding safety. But the structural

violence of an erratic asylum system often exacerbates their trauma rather than providing a space where they can heal.

Another name for this sort of structural violence is 'social sin'. Social sin extends beyond the personal and may permeate the systems ostensibly set up by governments to bring good order. In the introduction to *Refugee Stories* Smith states that there is one question he would like the reader to take away at the end of his book: 'How can a civilized country like the UK have refused asylum to those refugees, leaving them in destitution and despair?' (p.21) Smith hopes that we, the readers, will be part of the solution. When faced with a system that is cruelly inefficient and impersonal, how should we respond? It is hard to address social sin on our own. The best responses to it are community based. We need to join with others and become a 'social grace'.

As I read *Refugee Stories*, I began to conceive of the Boaz Trust as an embodiment of a social grace. The way the refugees describe the welcome, encouragement, protection and practical support they receive from the people at Boaz reinforces this image. Boaz opposes the structural violence embedded in the asylum system by walking with refugees and providing them with well-organized, just and loving support.

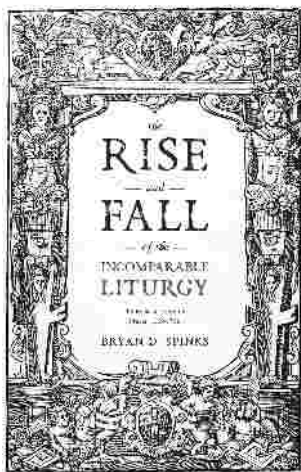
Smith challenges the reader to be part of the solution. He calls us to sociopolitical conversion (although he does not use that terminology). He hopes that reading the stories in his book will not only move our hearts, but also prompt us to act. Smith invites us to get involved practically, and he outlines ten ways in which to do so: (1) get informed, (2) pray, (3) welcome, (4) be a friend, (5) use your skills, (6) offer your spare room, (7) help people transition to refugee status, (8) visit people in detention, (9) campaign, and (10) give.

Of these ten responses, it seems to me that the starting point is friendship. One young woman asylum seeker, who was taken in by a couple, discloses, 'Even more important than having a roof over my head was having a friend' (p.240). Smith observes that refugees and asylum seekers, '... just want to be *normal*, with a home, a job, a family, doing the ordinary things that we take for granted' (pp.15–16). While this book unsettles, it does so in a way that invites the reader to become friends with refugees and asylum seekers, and help them feel normal and ordinary again.

But friendship is not enough. We need to campaign. Smith's vision is the reform of the UK asylum system. 'Let's persevere, pray and work until the UK asylum system is transformed, just and compassionate, and the destitution, detention and degradation of refugees in our country and beyond is abolished.' (p.243)

Michael Smith SJ

Bryan D. Spinks, *The Rise and Fall of the Incomparable Liturgy: The Book of Common Prayer, 1559–1906* (London: SPCK, 2017). 978 0 2810 7605 5, pp.176, £19.99.



Bryan Spinks concludes his masterly study of the history of the *Book of Common Prayer* with the mordant observation that ‘perhaps, like the poor, it will always be with us’ (p.159). The *Book of Common Prayer* is indeed still with us, but only just. Like the Asian crested ibis or the fritillary, it is a rare species. The main reason that it is not critically endangered is that it survives in cathedrals and college chapels where choral evensong is sung. Outside such sanctuaries it is rarely found.

We gather that the Prayer Book Society gives out free copies to first-year students at Anglican theological colleges. To most recipients these days it will be as odd and useless a gift as the *Book of Mormon*. Yet this prayer book, now ‘one with Nineveh and Tyre’, was for four centuries the only liturgical provision authorised for use in English churches. Together with the King James Bible, its influence on the English language and on English literature has been immeasurable.

Bryan Spinks describes the evolution and reception of the *Book of Common Prayer* from the Elizabethan settlement of 1559 to the Royal Commission report of 1906, the date that can be seen as marking the beginning of the Prayer Book’s demise. Spinks is a highly distinguished liturgical scholar, who has already published widely on specific aspects of the history of the Prayer Book. Here he provides a single overarching narrative, an overview of the whole story.

Spinks does not begin, as we might expect, with the Prayer Books of 1549 and 1552. The shelf-life of those books, he points out, was no more than three-and-a-half years. Spinks starts with what he describes as Elizabeth’s ‘ambiguous settlement’ (p.7), ambiguous because it was not altogether clear what the queen’s ideal for her Church was. That settlement enacted the Prayer Book of 1559, a text which, of course, the puritans found far from ambiguous. For John Field and Thomas Wilcox, for example, it was ‘an unperfected booke, culled and picked out of the popishe dunghill, the Masse booke full of all abominations’ (p.23).

We move with Spinks to the Jacobean prayer book of 1604. The Hampton Court Conference, most famous for its commissioning of the King James Bible, ordered certain changes to the text of the Prayer Book. Spinks discusses these changes judiciously. Whether we think they amount to much will be coloured,

these centuries later, by our own views on what matters and what does not. The additional prayer for deliverance from the plague will probably strike us as a good idea. The so-called 'godly', their nostrils ever alert to the whiff of popery, were always pressing for more reform. By contrast, more conservative churchmen, such as the members of the 'Durham House group', sought not to reform but to enrich worship, to make worship more worthy of the one worshipped and to beautify the buildings in which that worship was offered.

The struggle over how the *Book of Common Prayer* services should be celebrated intensified during the reign of Charles I. This was the age of William Laud. For Spinks, Laud's overriding concern was for the beauty of holiness in worship. There was little tinkering with the text of the *Book of Common Prayer* but much moving of furniture, most contentiously in the railing of the Communion table. (It is no part of Spinks's remit to consider whether concern for the beauty of holiness is consistent with branding the faces and cropping the ears of those with whom one differs theologically.)

Under the Commonwealth, Spinks tells us, the use of the *Book of Common Prayer* was punishable by a fine of £5; then £10 for a repeat offence; finally imprisonment for a third offence. And so to the Restoration and to the Savoy Conference of 1661. Spinks devotes much of a chapter both to the conference, at which Richard Baxter's *Reformed Liturgy* was rejected, and to the 1662 Prayer Book. Spinks points out that the latter, albeit making more revisions than did the version of 1604, remained 'in the main the substance of the Cranmerian text as adopted in 1559' (p.80).

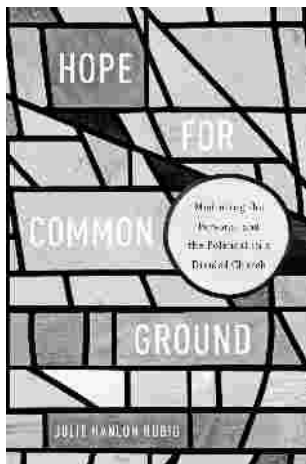
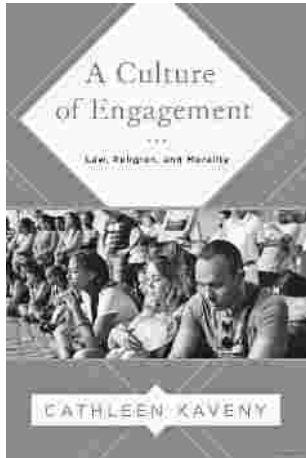
'The long eighteenth century' saw a few proposals to revise the Prayer Book. Spinks reminds us that this was the Age of Reason. In tune with the times, the polymath William Whiston and the brilliant Samuel Clarke, both associates of Isaac Newton, offered versions of the liturgy stripped of its Trinitarian references. Such endeavours came to nothing. By now the Prayer Book was so familiar, so deeply embedded in English life, that there could be no further tampering with it.

Not, that is, until the next century. Spinks entitles the chapter in which he discusses Tractarianism 'The Nineteenth Century: Undermining the Sure Foundation'. 'The Victorian era', he writes 'saw new and irreversible assaults on the liturgical adequacy of the Book of Common Prayer as well as on the manner in which the services were performed' (p.127). The 1906 Report of the Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline was the belated recognition that the *Book of Common Prayer* had had its day—though it was 74 years before a new prayer book appeared. In 1980 the *Alternative Service Book* was published—a work for which Bryan Spinks, as he concludes this superb study, barely masks his contempt.

John Pridmore

Cathleen Kaveny, *A Culture of Engagement: Law, Religion, and Morality* (Washington DC: Georgetown UP, 2016). 978 1 6261 6302 7, pp. 320, £25.20.

Julie Hanlon Rubio, *Hope for Common Ground: Mediating the Personal and the Political in a Divided Church* (Washington DC: Georgetown UP, 2016). 978 1 6261 6306 5, pp. xxi + 242, £23.00.



These two publications seem to oppose the call, increasingly voiced by writers such as Rod Dreher, urging Christians to remove themselves from the currents of modernity and turn towards contemporary monasticism.¹ Both Cathleen Kaveny, professor of theology and law at Boston College and Julie Hanlon Rubio, professor of Christian ethics at St Louis University, insist on the need to remain in the public square and take personal responsibility for social problems. They make a strong case for mediation and engagement in a socially, politically and ecclesially polarised world. Although they are writing from the perspective of the United States, there are many points that non-US readers will find relevant, especially if they come from a place where the culture of Roman Catholic identity takes precedence over the culture of engagement. Both books were written and published before the election of Donald Trump as the 45th president of the United States. They both appear in the Moral Traditions series.

Kaveny's method of engagement is 'crisscross'. The term is borrowed from the sociologist John Murray Cuddihy and refers to a web of conflicting and converging loyalties within US culture. Kaveny is interested in bringing the threads of different traditions together in order to illuminate nuance, depth and colour as well as the problematic areas of each tradition. This kind of interaction and interrelation is what she understands by 'culture of engagement'.

Like Dreher, who takes the phrase 'Benedict option' from *After Virtue*, Kaveny draws on Alastair MacIntyre. MacIntyre provides her with an

¹ See Rod Dreher, *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Sentinel, 2017).

understanding of how different moral and cultural traditions encounter, challenge, contribute to and correct one another. She challenges those who use MacIntyre to overemphasize the importance of maintaining a distinct religious identity over and against the surrounding culture.

Another influence on Kaveny is Pope Francis. She evokes Francis's gesture of washing the feet of men and women in prison on Maundy Thursday and comments on how he departs from accepted liturgical standards in order to encounter Jesus in the marginalised other. She is inspired by Francis's preference for a Church which is 'bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been put on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security'.² Her crisscross method of engagement is explored and tested in 56 short chapters, most of which began as columns and blog posts in *Commonweal* magazine. They deal with a wide range of issues including marriage, the death penalty, torture, conscientious objection, suicide, contraception, Catholic colleges and pop culture as well as the beginning and the end of life.

There is a slightly odd chapter (my favourite) called 'Watch Your Mouth: Sage Advice from St James' which seems to advocate silence and makes one wonder whether it is possible to build the culture of engagement on silence. Kaveny compares our drive to communicate to the sex drive (according to James, both are equally dangerous). Her meditation on the Epistle of James will probably disconcert all those who use the tongue or the keyboard, whether they work in the media or are just messaging on their mobile phones.

Kaveny finds in James the following observations: people who spend too much time talking about faith, holiness and good works rarely put their money where their mouth is; talkers tend to judge themselves by their words and other people by their deeds; loving one's neighbour is not compatible with disparaging that person behind his or her back (p. 128). She takes these points further via Aquinas, who not only devotes five separate questions of his *Summa theologiae* to 'injuries inflicted by words' (reviling, backbiting, talebearing, derision and cursing) but speaks of them as mortal sins.

It turns out that the point of this chapter is not to promote silence as such, however, but to express concern about the impact of destructive talk on communal well-being. While it is sometime tricky to decide when to be silent and when to speak up (silence can be used to conceal injustice), Kaveny is right to challenge the suggestion that the monastic vow of perpetual chastity is the hardest one to keep. In her view, 'most people would find it a piece of cake next to the vow of perpetual silence' (p. 129).

² *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 49, quoted by Kaveny, p. 10.

Kaveny implies that Catholics would have been better off if they had spent less time talking against such matters as gay marriage, especially after it had passed into the law of the land, and more time engaging with others who care about relationship education, fidelity and responsible parenthood (goods of marriage). She points out that opposite-sex and same-sex couples face many of the same challenges in maintaining a lifelong commitment. In the later period of life, when children have been raised, the harshest tests of marriage might not involve sexual temptations but temptations to abandon, isolate or demean a partner, especially when his or her mental or physical health is weak.

Rubio's approach to the issue of marriage is exactly the same. She is keen to move away from pelvic ethics to a broader consideration of pressing issues. While she does not consider these issues from the perspective of jurisprudence (in the way Kaveny does), she does offer a more detailed theological reading on the number of topics common to the two publications.

Rubio is concerned that Catholics in the US not only disagree deeply on abortion, same-sex marriage and taxes, but also disagree on what the major social problems are and how to approach them. She does not think that the principles of Catholic Social Teaching can resolve the disagreements as both liberals and conservatives honour and appeal to them. Incidentally, she finds the labels 'conservative' and 'liberal' themselves problematic and believes that representatives of both have much more in common than they think. Still, these labels remain helpful as a shorthand and she uses them freely throughout her book. For Rubio, the division is a serious issue because it weakens the Body of Christ: 'when so many feel that they cannot understand or be understood by Catholics on "the other side", the church is not simply diverse, it is fractured' (p.xv). Furthermore, in her view, the inability of Catholics to unite on a common cause weakens their influence in the public sphere.

So, with this pessimistic assessment of the situation, where is the hope invoked in the title of her publication? She finds it in the *potential* of politics (most people believe that political systems can change things for the better), *concerns* about avoiding what the tradition calls 'cooperation with evil' (most people do not want to cooperate with evil, and there is a difference between willingness to cooperate and toleration of evil in order to achieve a higher good), and a *desire* to identify community-based solutions to problems that result in beneficial outcomes.

Rubio stresses the importance of focusing on the local sphere. This is almost completely consistent with the culture of engagement promoted by Kaveny. 'Local' here means the 'space between' the personal (the individual) and the political (the governmental). This approach is close to the understanding

of subsidiarity in Catholic Social Teaching. For her, focusing on the local does not mean returning to nostalgic ideas about simpler ways of life or the 'Benedict option'. It does not mean neglecting the role of personal efforts or opting out of political campaigns. It means placing emphasis on communal efforts, including local church initiatives. She believes that if Catholics begin to get along better in the local sphere, they might be able to inspire a similar commitment in others.

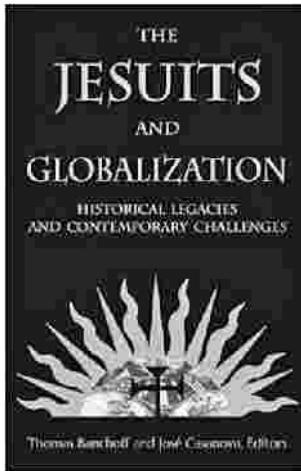
On the issue of marriage, Rubio (like Kaveny) starts with a broad question: 'What does it mean to be promarriage?' (p.85). Note that this is not the same as asking: 'what does it mean to defend marriage?', or 'can same-sex marriage be morally justified'? These last two questions will (understandably) be answered differently by conservatives and liberals. So, where is the common ground? For Rubio, the common ground between left and right can be found in a shared belief in the enduring relevance of marriage, in an acknowledgement of the need to prepare men and women for the challenges of married life and parenting, in a recognition of the duty to help more families find financial security, and in an obligation to help couples avoid divorce if possible and find support if they do part. Rubio's advice is that 'if those with differing identities can set aside the more contentious marriage debates for a season, they can spend time considering how to better respond to the most serious threats to marriage' (p.87).

Rubio is clear that in order to make progress it is necessary to leave some irresolvable disagreements aside and focus on what is shared. She praises married theologians who in recent years have been important witnesses to the value of marriage in their lives and in the language they use ('spouses being best friends', 'lovers who delight in each other's touch', 'partners who share a willingness to stretch and be changed for each other'; p.89). She warns against glamorising marriage and creating expectations of spouses that are too high. But, in Rubio's view, contemporary Christian theology—with such concepts as covenant, intimacy and egalitarianism combined with mutual self-giving and solidarity—has resources for dealing with the challenges. Catholics on both the right and the left use the same resources and concepts even if normally they find themselves disagreeing on concrete issues. For both, to be 'promarriage' is to take marriage seriously and provide support for its flourishing.

These two publications seem to suggest that hope is a fruit of engagement. Perhaps the quality of our hoping depends on the intensity of our engagement with the world as it is, especially with those who hold opposite views to our own. Is this too challenging or even naïve, given the current climate of polarization? Perhaps it is, but what is the alternative?

Anna Abram

***The Jesuits and Globalization: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Challenges*, edited by Thomas Banchoff and José Casanova (Washington DC: Georgetown UP, 2016). 978 1 6261 6286 0, pp.304, £25.50.**



This collection of thirteen essays (with an introduction) originated in a three-year project involving workshops in Washington, DC, Oxford and Florence, concluding with the bicentennial commemoration of the 1814 reestablishment of the Society of Jesus after its papal suppression in 1773. The book is divided into two parts. The first, 'Historical Perspectives', surveys Jesuit global enterprises during three overarching periods: early modern (c. 1540–1773), modern (1814–c. 1945) and contemporary (c. 1945–1965). The second part, 'Contemporary Challenges', offers case studies investigating examples of Jesuit endeavours from Vatican II to the present.

The preface lays out a working definition of *accommodation* as the Jesuits' 'characteristic way of proceeding': it 'combines strong convictions with an openness to intercultural encounter' (p. vii). Two core questions are addressed across the centuries: what does the experience of globalisation tell us about the Jesuits? And what does the experience of the Jesuits tell us about globalisation?

Three initial chapters on early modern Jesuits in Asia set out both the promises and pitfalls of the accommodation strategy, which evolved out of Renaissance humanism. Antoni Üçerler details the Japanese and Chinese contexts of Alessandro Valignano and Matteo Ricci, who developed a strong pragmatic accommodation based on virtuous civic practices, optimistic about the ability to distinguish between true faith and idolatrous beliefs. By contrast, Francis Clooney's study of debates over the transmigration of souls, especially in Hinduism, tempers such optimism in Jesuit encounters with genuine difference. Limits are even more pronounced in Daniel Madigan's chapter on early modern Jesuit engagements with Islam. Islam, viewed as a heretical form of the Christian tradition—and hence closer to it than Buddhism or Hinduism—seemed less capable than those religions of accommodation. Paradoxically, the radical otherness of China and India, more distant from the European self, offered greater openings for dialogue.

Turning to the New World, Aliocha Maldavsky investigates Jesuits in colonial Ibero-America. Here the freedom to accommodate was limited less by strongly held philosophical and religious beliefs than by the Jesuits' deep links to Portuguese and Spanish political power structures. John O'Malley's

chapter on Jesuit education and globalisation returns to the Renaissance humanist sources of accommodation and points ahead to the eventual tragic consequences of that fundamental world-view. Already in the Society's *Constitutions* (IV.8.3 [402]), Ignatius had specified that Jesuits were to learn the languages and study the cultures of those to whom they were sent. A key turning point in the Society's history and self-understanding was marked in 1548 by the founding of the first Jesuit school, in Messina, which reorientated the order's ministries towards education. In practical terms, this resulted in a global network of Jesuit colleges and knowledge exchange.

However, accommodation's extremely optimistic vision of human cultures across the globe generated a backlash. Detractors spun the strategy as a cultural relativism that undercut Christianity's (and, implicitly, Europe's) universalism. Simone Pavone's chapter on the national and global dimensions of anti-Jesuitism analyzes the causes that eventually led to the Society's global suppression. Two major factors were cultural accommodation in Asia (the Chinese Rites Controversy) and the political power structures in Ibero-America.

The re-establishment of the Society in 1814, made possible by the defeat of Napoleon and the restoration of national monarchies, coincided with a second phase of globalisation: the passage from early modern to modern Europe. Various industrial revolutions enabled previously unimaginable technological advances in transport, communication and weaponry. These in turn provided the preconditions for nineteenth-century European imperialism, a context in which the restored Jesuits occupied a paradoxical position.

John McGreevy's chapter notes that, on the one hand, as cosmopolitan ultramontanists opposed in principle to nationalist liberalism, Jesuits were expelled multiple times from numerous modernising nation states. On the other hand, those same nation states utilised Jesuit missionaries as colonising forces abroad. For the most part, these Jesuits did not continue the early modern accommodation strategy of their pre-suppression forefathers. However, Jesuits in the United States were a partial exception. 'The first and most basic impetus behind Jesuit globalization', writes McGreevy, 'was one of the great migrations of modern history, the decision of sixty million Europeans to leave the continent over the course of the nineteenth century' (p.133). As O'Malley notes, the imperative of educating these immigrants and preparing them to succeed in their adopted country demanded Jesuit accommodation in adapting the *Ratio studiorum* to the United States' foreign conditions.

The spectres of Karl Marx, communism and the 'social question' haunted the twentieth century. In 1891, after decades of sociopolitical revolutions following industrial revolutions, Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum novarum* signalled a turning point in Catholic thought. Forty years later, Pius XI's

Quadragesimo anno (1931) brought this shift to a larger global stage: institutions were 'to make all human society conform to the needs of the common good; that is, to the norm of social justice' (n.110). Thomas Banchoff's chapter details the Society's response, constructing 'a network of social institutes around the world to promote workers' education' and linking some of these to existing Jesuit institutions of higher education (p.248).

A critical yet easily overlooked Cold War turning point was 1949. Within a short span of only five weeks, the Soviets exploded their first nuclear device and Mao Zedong established the People's Republic of China. That same year, following quickly on the heels of the United Nations General Assembly's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Jesuit Superior General Jean-Baptiste Janssens issued his 'Instruction on the Social Apostolate'. Jesuit institutions of higher education were directed to found 'chairs or faculties dealing with social questions' (p.248). A dozen years later, following the death of the wartime pope Pius XII, John XXIII convened Vatican II.

In part two, 'Contemporary Challenges', five chapters examine case studies of Jesuits and globalisation in the era beginning with the council. David Hollenbach's chapter on contemporary adaptations of Ignatius' 'more universal good' emphasizes the shift in Jesuit transnational analyses to global economic interactions. For example, the Cameroonian Jesuit Engelbert Mveng has explored the consequences of the African slave trade and European colonisation in terms of 'anthropological poverty' (p.177).

Maria Clara Lucchetti Bingemer's chapter on Latin America traces the development of the 'preferential option for the poor' from the 1970s dialogue with Marxism forward. The intellectual leadership and legacy of the philosopher-theologian Ignacio Ellacuría at the Salvadoran University of Central America stands as a salient example. The 1989 assassinations of Salvadoran Jesuits were a particularly horrifying reaction to such developments.

The case of India, the largest province in Asia, is explored in the chapter by John Joseph Puthenkalam and Drew Rau. Already in 1973—the year before the opening of the Thirty-Second Jesuit General Congregation with its famous declaration in decree 4 that 'the service of faith' requires the 'promotion of justice'—the Jesuits in Social Action (JESA) initiative had been founded to oversee all social justice activity in the nineteen provinces of the South Asian Assistancy.

Two chapters move beyond specific regions. Peter Balleis focuses on migration and refugees in an era of unprecedented human mobility enforced by international and civil conflict. Since its foundation in 1980, the Jesuit Refugee Service has been collaborating with other agencies to help people displaced in this way. Thomas Banchoff's chapter, already mentioned, complements Hollenbach's by examining the orientation of Jesuit higher

education towards the *global* common good. While endorsed in mission statements, the orientation ‘has not gone uncontested’ (p.252), and the opportunities it offers for world-wide collaboration among Jesuit institutions have been difficult to realise.

Jesuits in educational institutions today are not unlike their early modern predecessors entangled in Portuguese and Spanish colonial political structures—or, in another example, late-nineteenth-century restored Jesuit missionaries to the Native Americans constrained by US government assimilation policies. According to Banchoff, Jesuit educational institutions today,

... depend to one degree or another on the patronage of the powerful—that is, governments, which provide political approval and legal frameworks, and those who cover operating costs and contribute other material resources through tuition and philanthropy (p.252).

His attention to these contemporary circumstances provides a useful corrective to what might be perceived as an unevenness in this collection. Understandably, Jesuit shortcomings or failures—the pitfalls rather than the promises—are more readily seen (or at least acknowledged) in historical hindsight than in present-day accounts. However, one wonders what other contemporary blind spots limiting Jesuit accommodation will be sharply evident to those who follow us decades from now.

José Casanova’s concluding chapter returns to the collection’s original two questions, which sought ‘to examine the Jesuits through the prism of globalization and globalization through the prism of the Jesuits’ (p.2). Jesuit history affirms globalisation’s ‘unexpected turns, zigzags, and contingent dynamics’—on recent display, for example, in the historic British referendum on leaving the European Union, which took place in the year this volume was published. Viewing history through the Jesuit prism ‘confounds and complicates simple, unambiguous narratives and one-dimensional, unilinear theories of globalization’ (p.21).

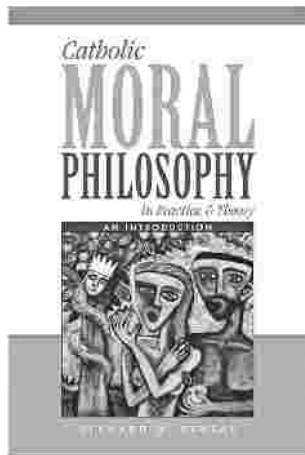
This superb collection of essays is strongly recommended to anyone interested in the history and distinctive identity of the Society of Jesus evolving out of Renaissance humanism. It also provides a timely caution for anyone interested in globalisation, especially in light of what Pankaj Mishra has recently called the ‘Globalization of Rage’.³ Nationalist populism evokes the initial quandary of negotiating self-identity stated in this collection’s introduction. Accommodation entails a delicate and fragile negotiation, combining ‘strong convictions with an openness to intercultural encounter’ (p.vii). How far can self-identity be stretched before we feel (rightly or

³ See *Foreign Affairs* (17 October 2016), available at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2016-10-17/globalization-rage>.

wrongly) that we have lost ourselves? This formulation of the key issue at the core of Jesuits' 'characteristic way of proceeding' over the centuries once lay at the heart of the Chinese Rites Controversy. That negotiation has now become a balancing act for all who inhabit our increasingly multipolar and interconnected planet.

Stephen Schloesser SJ

Bernard G. Prusak, *Catholic Moral Philosophy in Practice and Theory: An Introduction* (Mahwah: Paulist, 2016). 978 0 8091 4978 0, pp. 384, £19.99.



This book is called *Catholic Moral Philosophy*, and Bernard Prusak, who teaches philosophy at King's College, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, has written it chiefly for (Roman) Catholics. He draws on Christian tradition, citing its popes, such as Leo XIII, and its great theologians and philosophers, such as Thomas Aquinas. But his way of proceeding is philosophical, and his arguments engage with contemporary moral philosophers irrespective of whether they are Catholics, Christians or even believers.

To use a phrase of Pope Francis, Prusak's purpose is to 'initiate processes rather than occupy spaces'—in other words to make people think and encourage debate. Thus he does not begin by developing a general account of morality and then going on to apply this account to various controversial topics. Rather, he starts with a few difficult issues such as abortion, war, the treatment of animals, trafficking in human organs and the role of conscience. On that basis he then develops ideas about general issues regarding morality.

One example could be taken from the abortion debate. The question is often, and rightly, asked: is a human foetus already a human being, a person? Prusak's strategy is rather to start from a practice—for example when people can abort a twin simply because they want one child—and to focus on what this reveals about the questionable attitudes to human life in the society concerned. By contrast, and more permissively, he also mentions the social difficulties that lead many women to seek an abortion: poverty, broken families, drug dependence, abusive relationships, inadequate human formation or relationship breakdown. For Prusak these issues need to be taken seriously. Just saying that abortion is forbidden will not have much effect.

He also discusses a famous case that arose in 2009, when Sr Margaret McBride—director of a Catholic hospital in Phoenix, Arizona—allowed the abortion of an 11-week-old foetus to proceed. Had the abortion not been carried out, both the mother and the child would have died, and the mother already had four children to care for. In such cases people often invoke the principle of ‘double effect’ to justify a claim that some abortions are morally permissible, even if others are not. But for Prusak this has its limitations. For him the important point is that ethics does not proceed simply by applying rules. Rather, one has to take into account all the relevant circumstances of a situation when making the moral judgment. ‘The virtuous person, who is “up to good”, has insight into the purposes and limitations of the rules of morality. We might even say that he or she is the rule and as such discloses to us how to be and act.’ (p. 72)

War is another theme with which Prusak deals. The tradition distinguished between principles governing the resort to war (*ius ad bellum*) and principles governing the conduct of war (*ius in bello*). On this basis we could exonerate individual soldiers from the charge they were acting immorally while saying that the war itself was unjust. Here Prusak follows a revisionist line developed by other thinkers such as the eminent Oxford professor Jeff McMahan—one that lays greater responsibility on the conscience of the individual soldier.

A further point on which Prusak engages with contemporary secular discussions is the question of how humans should treat animals. The main question here is the basis of the claim that humans have a particular moral status over and above that of other animals. Does this depend on specific capacities, for example the capacity for thought or self-consciousness? If you say ‘yes’ to this question, then you have a problem with human beings who do not have, or who have ceased to have, these capacities. Why should we treat these humans differently from at least some animals? Doesn’t this amount to crude speciesism? Shouldn’t we be treating animals better than we do?

Prusak believes that our treatment of animals is often disgraceful and needs to change. But he argues against the view that the moral status of human beings depends on specific psychological capacities. For him ‘human being’ is not just a descriptive term but a moral one. Human beings have dignity as human beings, even when they are in no position to exercise their psychological capacities.

He invokes the idea of dignity again when arguing that human beings should not sell parts of their bodies. Given, for instance, the great shortage of human kidneys, why should it not be legal for humans to sell their kidneys? Why is it worse to sell kidneys in order to finance someone’s education than to sell a motorbike or a house? One answer Prusak puts forward is that our bodies belong to us in a different way from everything else we possess. In one

sense, it is not that we *have* bodies; we *are* our bodies. It follows that what is true for us as persons applies also to our bodies. They are not just things that have their price, as Kant put it. They have dignity.

Prusak is able to use these discussions in what we often call 'applied ethics' very effectively as a way of leading the reader into more difficult questions of fundamental ethics, and to make us think. And each chapter ends with questions for wider reflection that can serve

... to enable and encourage readers to enter into the twists and turns of the tradition of Catholic moral philosophy; to find it exciting; to become more reflective; and to agree and disagree even vehemently, but with greater appreciation of the tradition's depths and complexities (p. 5).

Bruno Niederbacher SJ

Juan Cristóbal Pasini, Nicolás de Bobadilla. *Recuperación de un personaje de la primera Compañía de Jesús* (Madrid: Mensajero, 2016). 978 8 4271 3932 9, pp. 239, €17.90.



Juan Cristóbal Pasini has become the first Jesuit to write a monograph-length biography of Nicolás de Bobadilla (1509–1590) since Giuseppe Boero published his *Vita del servo di Dio P. Nicolò Bobadiglia* in Florence in 1879. This does not mean that this early and controversial figure among St Ignatius Loyola's first companions has remained unknown. A fellow *palenciano*, Modesto Salcedo, recognising Bobadilla's significance for his native region, also produced a biography of him in Spanish, in 1982.

Both authors, as well as other more recent scholars, suggest that Bobadilla was a person of significance in the history of the Church, and merits greater attention and respect than he has received from Jesuit sources. In particular, the early histories of the Society of Jesus helped to marginalise this key first companion of Ignatius. Bobadilla has been cursed by the dominance of interpretations based on the testimony of contemporaries who wrote very negatively about him (mainly Jerónimo Nadal and Juan de Polanco). They judged him as at best vain and superficial, and at worst disloyal and rebellious.

Pasini's thesis suggests that Bobadilla brought to his companions 'a person who reflected, questioned, and intuited beyond what was evident to the

others' (p.29). While Pasini realises that Bobadilla was an antagonist in several conflicts in the early stages of the Society of Jesus, he also recognises him as someone who was a model of availability and apostolic zeal. Ironically, these are exactly the qualities that are denied by the early chroniclers.

While Pasini proposes a recovery of Bobadilla based on a more objective study, he nevertheless remains tied to the same documents found in the *Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu* (the Jesuits' publication of their early documents) that form the basis for almost every other study. In the preface, Manuel Revuelta González proposes seven points (pp.17–18), based on these same sources, concerning Bobadilla's contribution to actually living the *Formula Instituti* (the foundational document of the Society of Jesus). Bobadilla remained faithful to the earliest charism of the Society in accepting papal missions almost throughout his life. The Society of Jesus, especially after it turned to education as a key instrument for its mission, ultimately turned away from this charism as its most prominent.

Unfortunately Pasini misses some opportunities to probe more deeply into the narratives. He notes, for example, Alfonso Salmerón's strong letter to Ignatius from Trent in 1546 (transcribed in the appendix, pp.232–233). The letter is quite harsh and brings forth accusations against Bobadilla that Pasini correctly notes have no substantiation elsewhere. But he leaves a key question unanswered: what would motivate Salmerón to write such accusations at this important moment in the history of the Church? Despite the harsh criticisms in this letter, Ignatius appears to have retained his confidence in Bobadilla's qualities and ministry.

Pasini correctly identifies the crisis in government following the death of Ignatius as the key moment for understanding all of the subsequent interpretations of Bobadilla's personality. There was a clear difference of perception of how the Society of Jesus should move forward and who had the moral authority to lead it. But the brevity of this book prevents a deep exploration of the controversy, and so the opportunity is missed to see in it the deterioration of the personal relationships between Bobadilla and Polanco, Nadal and the Vicar General, Diego Laínez. Nadal's relationship with Bobadilla never recovered, and so he reads back into his early history of the companions a negative will on Bobadilla's part which then enters into Jesuit historiography to our day. This may be the most important obstacle to recovering the real contribution of Bobadilla, not only to the early history of the Society of Jesus, but also to the reform of the Church.

Several small errors crept into Pasini's narrative of Bobadilla's life which call for closer attention to the sometimes confusing correspondence that failed to catch up with Bobadilla's almost constant movement. The controversy

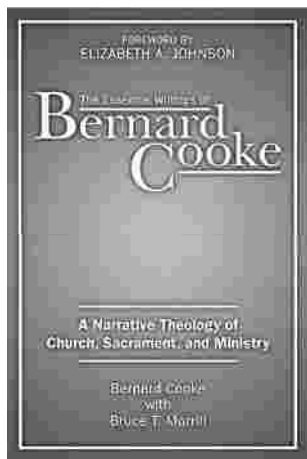
with the Augustinian ‘crypto-Lutheran’ Agostino Mainardi, for example, takes place in Rome, not Ferrara, and the central figure in the conflict is Ignatius, not Bobadilla (pp.65–66).

But Pasini’s great contribution in this biography is a solid Spanish translation of Bobadilla’s autobiography from a rather complicated Latin (pp.193–212). Pasini’s attempt to show the challenges of Bobadilla’s poor orthography by including images of the manuscripts fails because of their small size, which renders them completely illegible (they share half a page with their transcriptions). The plan might have worked better if they were reproduced on a full page.

Pasini provides those interested in the beginnings of the Society of Jesus with some new insights into the personality of one of Ignatius’ early companions. He indicates that the story is much bigger than the one we have received from the official sources. But much more remains to be done to explore more deeply, not simply the perceptions of Bobadilla’s personality by his Jesuit companions, but also the strong and lasting relationships he formed with many key players in the history of the Catholic reform in Europe during the long sixteenth century.

Mark A. Lewis SJ

***The Essential Writings of Bernard Cooke: A Narrative Theology of Church, Sacrament, and Ministry*, edited by Bruce T. Morrill (Mahwah: Paulist, 2016). 978 0 8091 4975 9, pp.288, £16.99.**



This is a book that can be read through a variety of lenses: as a memoir of a significant post-Vatican II US theologian; as a narrative of the recent history of the Roman Catholic Church; and as a discussion of still-contentious issues, especially in the theology of ministry. That the book is successful on all of these levels is testimony to its unique nature.

As editor, Bruce Morrill has woven Bernard Cooke’s theological writings together with his reflections on his life as a Jesuit, an academic theologian and a married man engaged actively in many of the challenges that faced, and continue to face, the Catholic Church after Vatican II. In addition, Morrill has added his own commentary on the insights of his former professor to produce a book that is always engaging, accessible and able to contribute to ever-present debates in the theology of ministry.

In his life and work Bernard Cooke (1922–2013) illustrates much of the Catholic Church's trajectory from the 1950s onwards. After completing a doctorate in Paris just prior to the pontificate of John XXIII, Cooke paved the way for Jesuit universities in the United States to develop a theological curriculum tailored to lay involvement in the life of the Church. In many aspects of his teaching and research, Cooke anticipated the Second Vatican Council's recognition that the mission of the Church depends on the gifts of all its baptized members.

In his personal life, Cooke, who resigned from the Jesuits and from priestly ministry to marry, also embodied some of the drama of Catholic life after Vatican II. Negotiating the complexities that resulted from his change in ecclesial status, Cooke continued to participate in ecumenical activities, was an advocate for the expansion of the ministry of women in the Church, and, most significantly, remained prominent in the theological education and formation of a generation of lay leaders in the Church. Beyond his work as teacher and activist, Cooke published widely—Morrill includes a helpful bibliographical guide. Cooke's major theological publications, especially the magisterial *Ministry to Word and Sacrament* (1976) and *Sacraments and Sacramentality* (1983) continue to be important resources for the study of ministry and sacramental theology.

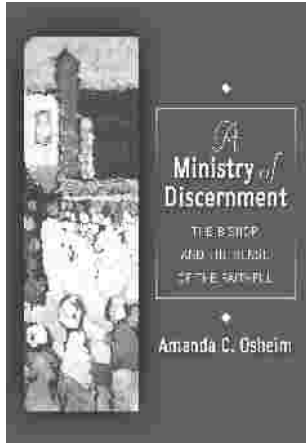
Reflecting the impact of his own life story, Cooke focused on 'change' as part of the Church's own story. Morrill details Cooke's efforts to articulate a theology of the Church that, in stressing something other than the centrality of authority, would enable it to perceive change in relation to the movement of grace, rather than as primarily a threat to order and control. Cooke's emphasis on grace as the source of the Church's capacity to change, an emphasis that connected him to the theology of Karl Rahner, led him to highlight the historical development of the Church's texts, traditions, structures and ministries. In light of that development, Cooke stressed the need for the Church to remain open to possible future movement of the Holy Spirit, a movement that the Church as a whole would need to discern.

For anyone interested in gaining insight into the life of the post-Vatican II Church, this book is a valuable resource. It is perhaps especially valuable because of its autobiographical and biographical approach, which takes the life of a single theologian as a window on to the grand dramas of the past few decades. More than a historical artefact, however, the book offers wisdom that can serve the Church as it continues to address the questions and challenges that were important in the life and theology of Bernard Cooke.

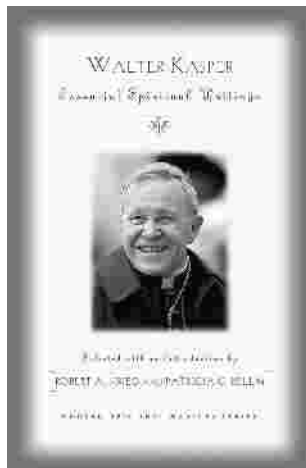
Richard Lennan

Amanda C. Osheim, *A Ministry of Discernment: The Bishop and the Sense of the Faithful* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2016). 978 0 8146 8319 4, pp.248, £15.99.

Cardinal Walter Kasper: *Essential Spiritual Writings*, edited and translated by Patricia C. Bellm and Robert A. Krieg (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2016). 978 1 6269 8191 1, pp.192, £15.99.



Discernment is fundamental to authentic living. It requires the skills to listen, reflect and act accordingly. It involves a process of letting go and realising something new. In recent years there has been a vast amount of literature dedicated to the theme of Christian discernment. Here we have two such books: the first, Amanda C. Osheim's *A Ministry of Discernment*, is a scholarly analysis of the dynamic relationship between the *sensus fidelium* (the sense of the faithful) and the structures of leadership within a diocese; the second is a fascinating collection of writings from one of the leading voices of church renewal and reform in the post-Vatican II era, Walter Kasper.



Osheim explores how the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises develop persons of discernment through a spirituality that consciously engages with the 'authentic, limited, communal and transformative reception of God's self-gift' (p.xvii). This involves, for example, discovering how salvation is made present in a person's personal and communal history: 'by coming to understand not only the need to receive salvation but also the call to share salvation with others, the exercitant grows in holiness and enters more deeply into true communion with God'. (p.125)

Developing the theme of discernment, Osheim examines how organizational structures can embody spirituality. She does this by exploring the structures of the Society of Jesus and its lived reality, which is rooted in the Spiritual Exercises. Her intention here is not to suggest imposing the Society's spirituality and structures on the wider Church community; rather, it is to 'envision potential ecclesial structures to support the bishop's ministry of discernment' (p.130).

The author is in no doubt that a bishop's ministry is one that is always in need of engagement with the faithful. In her conclusion, Osheim draws

on remarks by Pope Francis on the fiftieth anniversary of the synod of bishops in which he describes the Church as a 'synodal Church', and as one that listens, and realises that listening is more than simply hearing: 'It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn' (p.204). *A Ministry of Discernment* is a very well structured book which will be a valuable resource to those involved in diocesan (and parish) renewal and reform.

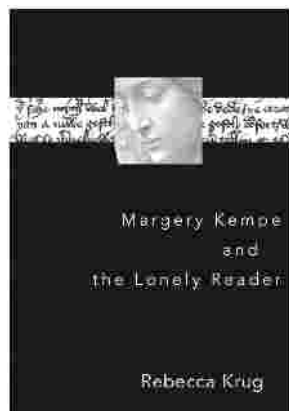
Walter Kasper's *Essential Spiritual Writings* are drawn from his theological works written between 1972 and 2012. The book is divided into seven chapters covering themes including personal existence, ecumenism, prayer, Jewish–Christian relations and Christian hope. Each chapter contains about eight texts from Kasper's work which are arranged in chronological order. The introduction to the book is an excellent outline of his life journey thus far, from seminarian and student to priest, professor and, most recently, papal adviser. Having worked alongside notable figures such as Metz, Rahner and Ratzinger, Kasper was a theology professor for over 25 years. He is renowned for his works in systematic theology which include *Jesus the Christ* (1974) and *The God of Jesus Christ* (1982). This book is a welcomed addition to the Modern Spiritual Masters series.

Michael Sherman

Rebecca Krug, *Margery Kempe and the Lonely Reader* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2017). 978 1 5017 0533 5, pp.256, £50.00.

Rebecca Krug is an associate professor of English at the University of Minnesota, where she specialises in late medieval English literature, culture and religion, the history of literacy and women's studies. She had already begun to make her mark with *Reading Families: Women's Literate Practice in Late Medieval England* (2002); essays on Margery Kempe in the *Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Literature* (2009) and the *Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Culture* (2011) followed, along with individual chapters, including studies of Langland and the Gawain poet, in a variety of other collections. Her latest book, *Margery Kempe and the Lonely Reader* manifests her continuing interest in English literature of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

In it Krug argues that in Kempe's engagement with written culture—and, in particular, that composed and read by women—she discovered a desire to engage with fellow believers, her family and friends, and bring an element of



spiritual comfort both to them and to herself. She addressed herself to readers who lived lives of 'intense devout engagement' (p.viii) and were largely dissatisfied with their own reading of extant texts. Krug throws new light on both Kempe's own work and the milieu of late medieval women's writing and reading, and shows why this supposedly uneducated sixty-year-old woman finally decided, through her somewhat underwhelming amanuenses, to write and therefore bring 'solas' to her 'synfulwrecchys'. Above all, Margery's work of self-discovery enabled herself and her readers to experience, feel and savour their emotions.

Krug focuses on five key concepts of late medieval devotional writing—comfort, despair, shame, fear and loneliness—and devotes a chapter to each. She shows a deep understanding of the *Book of Margery Kempe*, especially of its literary style, and her passion and compassion for Margery shines through. Moreover, Krug has a wide knowledge of Margery's initial readership who made her writing possible; a rare and rewarding marriage of twenty-first-century scholarship and medieval text.

After a brilliant contextualising introduction, the first chapter accordingly focuses on consolation in late medieval devotional writing, which sought to teach readers how they should feel about their wretchedness, especially in contrast to God's infinite goodness. The second chapter concentrates on dealing with despair, and the third looks at how Kempe treats shame and her various verbal remedies to prevent it from becoming self-destructive. In this and the preceding chapter, Krug argues that Kempe came to terms with these aspects of life by writing about them. Indeed, it was in her writing, especially about despair, that Margery Kempe both rediscovered herself and re-examined traditional classical and medieval understandings and appreciations of the value of negative emotional feelings.

Chapter 4 looks deeply at fear, describing the importance of faith when faced with what we now call the fight or flight response. The penultimate chapter engages with Kempe's search for spiritual joy and companionship in relation to certain books of consolation that offered contradictory advice on living 'alone with God'. In an afterword the reader is left with the question: 'Is it possible for one to fend off loneliness by treating a physical book, as a writer or as a reader, as a vehicle for companionship?' (p.23).

Since the *Book of Margery Kempe* was rediscovered in 1934, it has become a major—if at times challenging and puzzling—text for students of medieval Christianity and literature, especially in the fields of mysticism and spirituality, and of women's studies. Rebecca Krug's empathic and learned study offers much to those of us engaged in studying or teaching the history of religious thought, or of women's writing, as well as those who simply wish to address their own feelings with a spiritual sister.

Luke Penkett

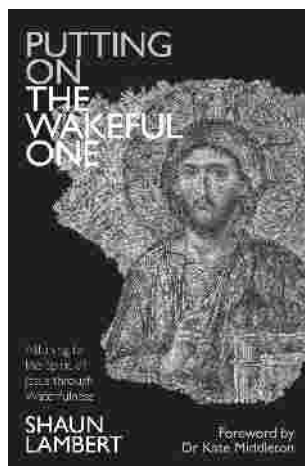
Shaun Lambert, *Putting on the Wakeful One: Attuning to the Spirit of Jesus through Watchfulness* (Watford: Instant Apostle, 2016). 978 1 9097 2846 2, pp.189, £8.99.

There is a detectable thirst today for a spirituality that makes sense; and here is a book that will offer something to satisfy it. I started reading it on Pentecost Sunday 2017, with the news of terrorist killings on London Bridge ringing in my ears, and it undoubtedly speaks into our darkened world. The words (often used in this book) ‘watchfulness’ and ‘mindfulness’ have a contemporary ring; but they are an invitation to follow the ancient precept: ‘fix your eyes on God’.

Lambert has an African background, which gives added richness to the book; and he is a Baptist minister encountering the traditional wisdom of monastic spirituality. He offers both new and old ways of reading Mark’s Gospel with intention, attention and awareness, and by these means many a familiar text will be given a fresh feel. Occasionally the author leaves us behind; early on, for example, he speaks frequently of Mark as an ‘embedded gospel’, and tells us that it is a conclusion of recent scholarship, but does not actually tell us what that means (though chapter 4, on ‘Jesus and the Senses’ does help to some extent).

There are some good ideas here, though possibly more thought on how to present them would have helped: chapter 10, for example, on ‘becoming watchful through contemplation’ has a good deal of repetition, and could have done with editing. In different chapters, Mark’s Jesus is presented as ‘seer’, ‘sage’, and ‘story-teller’; and the author is strong on the importance of poetry, ‘the lyrical’: we are to read Jesus’ parables ‘mindfully’, not aggressively, aware of our ‘distorted narratives’.

Many people will find this book extremely helpful in developing a sensible incarnational spirituality and making it prophetic. The book ends with some resources and a study-guide, and some useful exercises for reading it, individually or in a group, over some weeks. This volume undoubtedly meets a need.



Nicholas King SJ

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Gerard Manley Hopkins, Jesuit poet

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