THE WAY

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THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE

The Resurrection, ***by Pericle Fazzini, Paul VI Hall, Vatican***

Book Reviews

Gemma Simmonds on a personal reflection on religious life

Clare Watkins on Vatican II and Pope Francis

Bonnie Thurston on a radical theological and political meditation around the monastic day

Joseph A. Munitiz on a newly translated biography of Ignatius and a history of the Jesuits and the Popes

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FOR AUTHORS

The Way warmly invites readers to submit articles with a view to publication. They should normally be about 4,000 words long, and be in keeping with the journal's aims. The Editor is always ready to discuss possible ideas. A Special Issue is planned to commemorate the five hundredth anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, so articles in this area will be particularly welcome.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

ABBREVIATIONS

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

FOREWORD

ALTHOUGH, ACCORDING TO Sir Francis Bacon, 'jesting Pilate' would not 'stay for an answer' after he had questioned Jesus about the nature of truth, in fact Jesus had already offered his response. Earlier, in the eighth chapter of John's Gospel, Jesus had told his disciples that, if they held to his teaching they would know the truth, a truth that would set them free. Much growth in the Christian life is rooted in discovering and acknowledging truths—truths about ourselves, about the rest of creation and about God—and allowing our lives to be shaped in relation to what we discover. This issue of *The Way* bears witness to such a process of discovery and response, in different eras and widely dispersed locations, and to the freedom that it brings.

For decades the truth of child abuse within the Church was unacknowledged and hidden. More recently different processes have been set up to begin to right its wrongs. Philip Shano's article describes one such process, as it operated in Canada. The fact that the experience of women in the Church has often been undervalued is frequently thought to explain some aspects of abuse. Oscar Momanyi looks at how a closer reading of perhaps neglected aspects of the Christian scriptures (as well as those shared with Judaism and Islam) may help us to a clearer appreciation of the true nature of God's dealings with humanity, drawing on both male and female experience.

Growth in prayer should be marked by a deeper immersion in truth, and three articles here consider ways in which this growth may be promoted. Although Evagrius the Solitary is hardly a household name today, he was one of the first to try to outline common patterns of development in Christian prayer, as Carol McDonough shows. Philip McParland hopes to dispel the idea that contemplative prayer is only for experts, or for those who can commit their whole lives to it in monastery or convent. In simple steps he presents a path of contemplation for all. Riyako Hikota makes the perhaps surprising assertion, to be found in the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar, that humour is inseparable from growth in Christian prayer and discipleship.

As I become more able to acknowledge the truths of the world around me and of my own nature, and thus become freed of prejudices, I can more easily make choices that will lead me towards God, rejecting whatever

might impede that movement. Brian O'Leary looks to a lesser-known passage in the writings of St Ignatius of Loyola to find criteria for making such choices. And Bob Doud describes the experience of a particular choice of this kind—to sell the family home and move into a retirement community—and expounds something of the freedom and spiritual growth that is to be found in it.

Ultimately, it is the Spirit of God whom Christians believe will lead them into a freedom-bestowing truth. For many Roman Catholics this was exactly the experience of the Second Vatican Council. Pope John XXIII had hoped for this in convoking the Council and, as Jane Khin Zaw shows, the philosopher and mystic Simone Weil had desired and anticipated just such a renewal two decades earlier.

It is often difficult to know the truth of a given situation, and at times even more difficult to hold to that truth strongly enough to allow it to determine how a life is to be lived. Taken together, the articles in this issue of *The Way* point to methods of discovering truth and also offer witness to different ways in which it can be lived out. To adapt the title of Brian O'Leary's article, which opens the collection, that which is more truthful is itself the more divine.

Paul Nicholson SJ
Editor

'THE MORE UNIVERSAL … THE MORE DIVINE'

Ruminating on an Enigmatic Dictum

Brian O'Leary

DECISION-MAKING LIES AT THE HEART of Ignatian spirituality. In making the Spiritual Exercises a person is led through a process of discernment that culminates in an election (choice, decision).[1] The *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* are built around part VII, where Ignatius offers detailed criteria for making the most fruitful decision regarding the sending (missioning) of a Jesuit into the vineyard of the Lord. Not all these criteria are of equal weight or always applicable. One on its own is never sufficient. What usually happens is that a combination of criteria has to be brought to bear on any particular sending. However, there is one over-arching criterion or norm (*regla*) that Ignatius expects the 'one who sends' to observe. It is non-negotiable.

> To proceed more successfully in this sending of [Jesuits] to one place or another, one should keep the greater service of God and the more universal good before his eyes as the norm to hold oneself on the right course (*Constitutions*, VII. 2. D [622] a).

It is worth highlighting that Ignatius refers to a norm (singular), even though there might seem to be two norms involved: the greater service of God and the more universal good. This is no grammatical error or editorial slip-up but a clear declaration that, in Ignatius' mind, we are dealing with one reality which he expresses through the use of synonyms. The greater service of God *is* the more universal good; the more universal good *is* the greater service of God.

The weight of this assertion may not be immediately obvious unless a person is familiar with its many presuppositions. In the case of Ignatius these are based on his theocentric world-view and his conviction that

[1] See Exx 169–189 on making an election.

God is, in very essence, *Deus semper maior* (the Ever-Greater God).[2] This is the God who, while remaining Wholly Other, reveals Godself throughout the history of the People of Israel and, quintessentially, in the incarnation of God's Son, Jesus.[3] This is the God with whom a retreatant fosters a deep relationship during the Spiritual Exercises through a prayerful immersion in the scriptures.

A little further on, introducing the fourth of the more specific criteria for choice, Ignatius makes the magisterial statement: 'The more universal the good is, the more is it divine' (*Constitutions*, VII. 2. D [622] d).[4] Is this claim a reiteration of the earlier formulation, but with a rhetorical flourish? Does 'more divine' simply mean that the more universal good leads to 'the greater service of God'? If so Ignatius, in this reworking of his earlier statement, is saying nothing new. Most commentators seem to take this for granted and offer little or no further reflection on its meaning. But it is at least worth questioning this assumption.

We might enquire, for example, whether Ignatius is adding a new dimension to the earlier formulation. Might he be conveying an insight which, while doubtless similar, is yet subtly different? And, most intriguingly of all, might he be implying something more 'mystical'? At the very least he has moved from referring to the greater service of God (a relatively comprehensible idea) to claiming that the more universal good is, in some sense, divine (which is a more baffling concept, maybe even an enigma). And why does he put forward this theological viewpoint as introduction to the fourth criterion and not before in the list of criteria as a whole? There is more than enough material on which we can ruminate!

The More Universal the Good Is ...

The conclusion that Ignatius draws from this principle that 'The more universal the good is, the more is it divine' reads:

> Hence preference ought to be given to persons and places which, once benefited themselves, are a cause of extending the good to many others who are under their influence or take guidance from them.

[2] See Brian O'Leary, 'Foundational Values in the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius', *Milltown Studies*, 33 (Spring 1994), 5–21. Especially relevant is the section entitled 'A Theocentric Worldview Open to Humanism', 9–13. Also 'Fostering a Contemplative Stance: An Ignatian Exploration', *The Way*, 55/2 (April 2016), 17–26.

[3] In technical terms the God of Ignatius is simultaneously transcendent and immanent.

[4] It is difficult not to suspect that Ignatius is quoting a well-established dictum rather than composing it himself. But, since he has made it his own, this does not affect our understanding of the text.

This is further clarified by what follows.

> The spiritual aid which is given to important and public persons ought to be regarded as more important, since it is a more universal good. This is true whether these persons are laymen such as princes, lords, magistrates, or administrators of justice, or whether they are clerics such as prelates. This holds true also of spiritual aid given to persons who are distinguished for learning and authority, for the same reason of the good being more universal. (*Constitutions*, VII. 2. D [622] d)

Ignatius is here invoking the criterion that, in today's terminology, can be called the *multiplier effect*. This is both a logical and a pragmatic principle, although its espousal has often left the Jesuits open to the charge of elitism.[5] But within Ignatius' late medieval world-view and value system, both of which were expressed and even validated by the hierarchical structuring of society, this criterion made perfect sense.[6] A concrete example will illustrate this.

When Diego Miró, and subsequently Luís Gonçalves da Câmara, were asked to be confessors at the court of King John III of Portugal in 1553, they declined. Their motives were partly a concern that their own spiritual well-being would be endangered by a life at court, and partly a desire to maintain the Society's commitment to refuse all civil and ecclesiastical honours. Having been informed of these developments, Ignatius wrote to Miró saying: 'Certainly,

John III of Portugal, by Cristóvão Lopes, c.1545

[5] Elitism was one of the accusations levelled against the Jesuits at the time of the Suppression. It still arises in discussions about fee-paying schools, whether run by Jesuits or others.

[6] A brief but helpful discussion of the charge of elitism is found in Barton T. Geger, 'What *Magis* Really Means and Why It Matters', *Jesuit Higher Education*, 1/2 (2012), 16–31, at 27.

I myself, when I consider your motives, grounded on humility and safety, which are better found in lowliness than in prominence, can only approve, and be edified by your intention. However ….' He then proceeded to explain why he disagreed with their decision and ordered them to accept the role they had been offered. Among the reasons supporting his standpoint he noted:

> Then, if we look to the universal good and God's greater service, these will, so far as I can perceive in the Lord, ensue more strongly from this. For the good of the head is shared by all the body's members, and the good of the sovereign by all his subjects, so that spiritual benefit given to the sovereign should be rated above that which might be given to others.[7]

The core principle invoked here, that 'the good of the head is shared by all the body's members', reappears in the context of the Society itself and its Superior General. In describing the leadership qualities needed by this person Ignatius insists,

> … that he should be closely united with God our Lord and have familiarity with him in prayer and in all his operations, so that from him, the fountain of all good, he may so much the better obtain for the whole body of the Society a large share of his gifts and graces, as well as great power and effectiveness for all the means to be employed for the help of souls (*Constitutions*, IX.2.1 [723]).[8]

The Ignatian Understanding of de arriba

An oft-used expression of Ignatius is *de arriba* (from above). This is a polyvalent turn of phrase, being simultaneously imaginative and theological. It is a central component in his understanding of reality and is rooted in his theocentric *Weltanschauung*. It declares that all blessings and graces descend on the created world from God. The clearest expression of this scenario is in the fourth point of the Contemplation to Attain Love: 'how all good things and gifts descend from above … just as the rays come down from the sun, or the rains from their source' (Exx 237).

[7] Ignatius of Loyola, *Letters and Instructions*, edited by Martin E. Palmer, John W. Padberg and John L. McCarthy (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2006), 410.

[8] These ideas are more fully discussed in Brian O'Leary, *Sent into the Lord's Vineyard: Exploration in the Jesuit Constitutions* (Oxford: Way Books, 2012), 136–143.

More specially, Ignatius favoured this phrase, *de arriba*, when he wanted to stress that something is *pure gift*, entirely beyond the capacity of the human person to bring about, contribute to, or in any way prepare for. Even when the phrase is not explicitly used it is possible to intuit its meaning embedded in many texts. This is prototypically true of his teaching on 'consolation without a preceding cause' which 'only God our Lord can give the soul'. Although not directly relevant to the topic of this article it is worth quoting here.

> For it is the prerogative of the Creator alone to enter the soul, depart from it, and cause a motion in it which draws the whole person into love of His Divine Majesty. By 'without [a preceding] cause' I mean without any previous perception or understanding of some object by means of which the consolation just mentioned might have been stimulated, through the intermediate activity of the person's acts of understanding and willing. (Exx 330)

But consolation 'with cause' can also be considered as *de arriba* in a broader sense of the term.

From the Personal to the Corporate

Already we will have noticed how Ignatius' thinking on this issue (essentially one of how God relates with us) embraces communities as well as individuals. In his teaching on the maintenance of union in the Society of Jesus he expounds how God's love 'will descend from the Divine Goodness and spread to all other persons, and particularly to the body of the Society' (*Constitutions*, VIII. 1. 8 [671]). He implies a direct gift-bearing and life-giving contact between God and the 'body'. The principle of *de arriba* continues to operate in this corporate setting just as it had done for the individual in the *Spiritual Exercises*. But there is a significant difference, and this is where the person of the leader is crucial.

Grace, ultimately from God, is now mediated by the head to the members of the body. This can be seen to apply, not only to the Society of Jesus, but to all religious or ecclesiastical bodies, and to political bodies as well. Ignatius, in this teaching, is not denying the immediate giving of grace by God to individuals, but is indicating a further dimension to the economy of grace. God does not operate *either* immediately or mediately, but *both* immediately and mediately. This understanding of God's working in the world allows Ignatius to hold that grace can be mediated by the monarch to his or her subjects, by the Pope to all Christians, and by the Superior General to all Jesuits.

This, in turn, is the basis for Ignatius' teaching that the good of the monarch, or of the Superior General, or of anyone holding authority, will bring about the more universal good among God's people. Ignatius' political philosophy and his theology of Church influence each other and are in fundamental harmony. This is why the charge of elitism levelled against his insistence on the priority of ministry to those in positions of authority (which, as we will see, he extends to those wielding influence for other reasons) is anachronistic. Within his *Weltanschauung* it was no more than a reasonable and wise criterion which was meant to benefit the masses *(aiudar a las almas)*. Ignatius always had the whole world in view.

Ignatius always had the whole world in view

It is, of course, possible to disagree with Ignatius' underlying assumptions about the nature and dynamics of society (Church or state), as many philosophers and theologians today certainly would. Indeed, few Jesuits, if any, would regard being confessor to a monarch (or even a president) as the most effective way of evangelizing in the postmodern world. And even apart from this extreme example, most recognise a need for a re-evaluation of the criterion that 'the spiritual aid which is given to important and public persons ought to be regarded as more important, since it is a more universal good'. The criterion certainly needs to be modified, but does it have to be totally abandoned? As I have written elsewhere:

> [Yet] in spite of the difference between this mindset [of Ignatius] and that of a democratic and more egalitarian society, the principle of the greater multiplying effect is still valid. There are always people who, either because of their own worth, or the position and authority they hold, have a much wider influence than others do. There are those on the national or world stage whose opinions are respected, whose lifestyle is imitated, who become role models (especially for the young). If such people are evangelized and openly live by the gospel message, many others will be reached and drawn to Christ.[9]

But it is not only important and influential *persons* that Ignatius seeks to target, but important and influential *places* as well. A Jesuit presence in them can also produce a greater good.

> For that same reason, too, preference ought to be shown to the aid which is given to large nations such as the Indies, or to important

[9] O'Leary, *Sent into the Lord's Vineyard*, 101.

> cities, or to universities, which are generally attended by numerous persons who, if aided themselves, can become labourers for the help of others (*Constitutions*, VII. 2. D [622] e).

The criterion of the more universal good explains why Ignatius, and Jesuits after him, have always been drawn to areas with large populations and to centres of learning. Here will be found 'numerous persons' (not necessarily all!) who, having themselves benefited by the ministries of the Society, will then pass on to others the fruits of their 'being aided'. Some of these will be highly educated and hence more able to articulate their faith. 'Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you.' (1 Peter 3:15) The good news of Jesus Christ, the joy of the gospel, will thus be spread more and more widely. All this demonstrates how the principle of the multiplier effect applies, not only to evangelizing persons, but to evangelizing places as well.[10]

... the More Is It Divine

We have seen that most commentators believe this phrase means that the more universal good leads to, or is the equivalent of, 'the greater service of God'. Parmananda Divarkar offers such an interpretation in his Indian version of the *Constitutions*.[11] His translation (or rather paraphrase?) reads: 'The more widespread the good we do, the better it fits into God's plan'. This is unimpeachable as a theological statement but does it correspond to the original? Does it not weaken what Ignatius wrote in an effort to modernise and simplify the language? Reductionist is a word that comes to mind. Ignatius is surely voicing a more comprehensive claim for what is universal than limiting it to 'the good *we* do'? And is he not making a more profound statement than that the greater (or 'more widespread') good *we* do simply fits better into God's plan?

Ignatius is not limiting, or indeed personalising, 'the good' in this way. He is enunciating a general, even a metaphysical, truth. His application of

[10] The oft-quoted anonymous Latin couplet admirably catches the spirit of this criterion as well as identifying the distinctive spiritualities to be found in religious life:

Bernardus colles, valles Benedictus amabat,	Bernard loved the hills, Benedict the valleys.
oppida Franciscus, magnas Ignatius urbes.	Francis the towns, Ignatius great cities.

[11] *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus, Annotated and Complemented by General Congregation 34* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1996), 160.

that truth to the Society's choice of ministries becomes the criterion of the multiplier effect. But this remains a practical, partial, even though fully justifiable, application. The original, deeper meaning of *quanto universalius … tanto divinius* remains unexplained.

The God of Ignatius

It may help if we broaden our approach and examine, however briefly, Ignatius' idea of God and of the good. The Gospels, with which he was so familiar, provide an obvious starting point. What was Ignatius especially drawn to in their pages? In the Second Week of the Exercises he suggests that the retreatant take for prayer the text of the Sermon on the Mount (Exx 278). The Third Point he offers as an aid in this exercise makes reference to the following gospel passage:

> You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy'. But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. (Matthew 5:43–45)

We learn who God is from how God acts. If God is not discriminatory in bestowing the gift of rain, neither is God discriminatory in any other exercise of love. On the contrary, God's love is all-inclusive, universal in its outreach and unconditional. This love exemplifies the truth expressed

The Sermon on the Mount, *by Cosimo Roselli, c.1500, Sistine Chapel*

in the well-known axiom of scholastic philosophy: *bonum est diffusivum sui*. Goodness (or 'the good'), of its very nature, spreads itself out, shares what it is. It cannot do otherwise. If goodness were to hoard its own treasure, or wrap itself up in a narcissistic pose, it would not be goodness. It would be self-contradictory, counterfeit, a satanic deception. It would be displaying what is 'characteristic of the evil angel, who takes on the appearance of an angel of light' (Exx 332).

God, according to Christian theology, is the Supreme Good. So God always acts as goodness must (*diffusivum sui*). Ignatius understood this, not only from his reading of the Gospel, but from his mystical experiences. He conveyed his conviction explicitly in the Contemplation to Attain Love:

> I will ponder with deep affection how much God our Lord has done for me, and how much he has given me of what he possesses, and consequently how he, the same Lord, desires to give me even his very self, in accordance with his divine design (Exx 234).

There is a totality of giving on God's side which invites a reciprocal totality of giving on the side of the retreatant ('Take, Lord, and receive …'). This giving of oneself is intentionally and ultimately to God, but it will be mediated through the giving of oneself in love and service to other persons. We are called to honour the incarnational principle. Such is, in summary, the central point of Jesus' teaching on the Final Judgment in Matthew 25:21–46.

Returning to the Sermon on the Mount, a few verses after the quotation drawn on above, Jesus says, 'Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Matthew 5:48). How is our heavenly Father perfect? In the universalism of His goodness and love! We then are to be like our Father in the universalism of *our* love for all people and for the whole of creation. There is to be nothing constricting in our vision or discriminatory in our choices. On the contrary, we are called to expand constantly the scope of our love and the 'diffusion' of our goodness. In this way we will become more like our Heavenly Father in *His* perfection.

The Contemplation on the Incarnation (Exx 101–109) is a further example of how Ignatius appropriated this teaching of Jesus and showed us his image of God. The scriptural teaching is now expressed in a vivid, imaginative manner that yet conveys deep theological insights. Ignatius proposes to the retreatant:

> I will see and consider the three Divine Persons, seated, so to speak, on the royal canopied throne of Their Divine Majesty. They are gazing on the whole face and circuit of the earth; and they see all the peoples in such great blindness, and how they are dying and going down to hell …. Likewise I will hear what the Divine Persons are saying, that is, 'Let us work the redemption of the human race'. (Exx 106–107)

We note especially phrases such as 'the *whole* face and circuit of the earth', and '*all* the peoples', as well as 'the redemption of *the human race*' (not certain individuals or even some chosen groups). The stress is on the universality of the divine project which is itself a revelation of who God (the Divine Persons) is in Godself.

The fourth point in the Contemplation to Attain Love was already mentioned when examining the Ignatian term *de arriba.* The first three points portray God as the Giver of gifts (Exx 234), as dwelling in me and in all creatures (Exx 235), and as active and labouring in me and in all creatures (Exx 236). The fourth point introduces something quite new and even mystical.

> I will consider how all good things and gifts descend from above; for example, my limited power from the Supreme and Infinite Power above; and so of justice, goodness, piety, mercy, and so forth—just as the rays come down from the sun, or the rains from their source (Exx 237).

This affirms that our limited goodness is flowing into us from God (*de arriba*). But it is affirming much more. In this perspective our limited goodness participates in the infinite goodness of God. We are good through our participation in God.[12] Hence our goodness can, at least analogously, be called divine. And since God's goodness is universalist of its essence, our human goodness is divine through its participation in the universalist goodness of God. Hence, to choose always the greater good is to deepen this participation or, in other words, to grow more and more into the image and likeness of our Creator God (see Genesis 1:26).[13]

[12] 'Thus he has given us … his precious and very great promises so that … (you) may become participants of the divine nature' (2 Peter 1:4). See too the words spoken by the priest at every celebration of the Eucharist: 'By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity'.

[13] Further exploration might link these reflections with the eastern doctrine of divinisation.

The US Jesuit theologian Michael J. Buckley addressed these themes in an article, often considered a classic, on the Contemplation to Attain Love. In this extract he focuses on the transition between the first three Points of this exercise and the fourth.

> Everything speaks of God as it resembles him, and calls back to God as the image calls back to its reality. This is to catch some glimpse of Who is giving, Who is present, Who is working and labouring for men. The transition of this point is from the acts of God to the reality of God in himself, a shift made possible because things are not only gifts and holy and sacred history—they are participations in his nature. It reveals how interior God is, and how everything exterior flows from within him. All that is done, everything that is made, is not called from the outside by some sort of pressure; it is the spontaneous result of his own inner richness and goodness. His doing is of his being.[14]

Coda

'The more universal the good is, the more is it divine.' The ruminations in these pages may not have provided a definitive explanation of this enigmatic dictum, but they have highlighted some issues that it raises and offered suggestions for a way forward. I have presumed that the dictum was most likely quoted rather than composed by Ignatius. But quoted from what source? Where did Ignatius find it (or where did Polanco find it)? Scholars have failed to identify any writing from the Christian tradition in which it appears.

The nearest they have come is a passage in a lesser-known work of Thomas Aquinas. This, at least, expressed views similar to those we find in the Ignatian text. Aquinas stated: 'Furthermore, the human mind knows universal good through understanding, and desires it through will: but *universal good is not found except in God*'.[15] Ignatius may well have read this work of Aquinas (it was better known in his day) while a student at the University of Paris. The passage quoted would have brought him to a clearer understanding, or affirmed his own intuition, of the relationship

[14] Michael J. Buckley, 'The Contemplation to Attain Love', *The Way Supplement*, 24 (Spring 1975), 92–104, here 103.

[15] St Thomas Aquinas, *De regimine principum*, translated by Gerald B. Phelan (Toronto: Institute of Mediaeval Studies, and London and New York: Sheed and Ward, 1938), 71 (my emphasis). This text deals with the education of a prince destined to rule.

between the universal good and the 'divine'. It was only a small step further to realising how this relationship could convert into a criterion for the choice of ministries or, in today's language, into apostolic discernment.

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THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF CANADA AND THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

Philip Shano

ADOLFO NICOLÁS, THEN SUPERIOR GENERAL of the Society of Jesus, wrote a letter to Jesuits worldwide on 8 September 2014. It was a follow-up to letters he had requested earlier from Jesuits and their partners around the globe. He asked them to offer reflections on major conflicts in our cultures. He spoke of strife, divisions and the most evident sufferings of our world. Given how international the Society of Jesus is, what Fr Nicolás received was a comprehensive view of the crying need for reconciliation throughout the world. His letter referred to the thirty-fifth Jesuit General Congregation, with its proposal of 'reconciliation and bridge building as contemporary ways of deepening our mission'.[1] Decree three of the General Congregation speaks of the need to 'establish right relations with God, with one another, and with creation' and to 'build a new world of right relationships, a new Jubilee reaching across all divisions so that God might restore his justice for all'.[2] Fr Nicolás also pointed out that the Formula of the Institute of 1550 presented reconciliation as a ministry proper to the Society.

Many Canadians assume that their peaceful and wealthy nation is free from conflicts that demand reconciliation. However, Canada has recently concluded a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) aimed at uncovering the facts about a dark part of its history—a system of residential schools for indigenous children. The Jesuits have been part

[1] Adolfo Nicolás, 'Reply to *Ex Officio* Letters 2014' (commonly known as the 'Letter on Reconciliation'), 8 September 2014, *Acta Romana Societatis Iesu*, 25 (2014), 1032–1038.
[2] Society of Jesus, General Congregation 35, decree 3, nn. 56, 60, in *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, 746, 747.

of the process because of their involvement in that school system. They are challenged to be part of a more hopeful and just future for indigenous peoples in Canada.

Residential Schools and the TRC

Many Canadians were shocked in late May 2015 to hear their Supreme Court Chief Justice, Beverley McLachlin, and other leaders use the phrase *cultural genocide* to describe the experience of generations of indigenous youth in residential schools established by the federal government and operated by major Christian denominations.[3]

The residential school system existed from the late nineteenth century until the late twentieth. The number of schools reached 80 in 1931 but decreased after that, increasing again in the 1950s. The last federally operated school closed in 1996. In total, about 30 per cent of indigenous children, roughly 150,000, passed through the residential school system, and over 3,200 of them died while attending the schools. Many were buried in unmarked graves, without the notification or consent of their parents.[4] The historical consensus is that the schools did significant harm to indigenous children who attended them, by removing them from their families, depriving them of their ancestral languages and exposing many of them to physical and sexual abuse. The aim of the government was the assimilation of indigenous children.

The Roman Catholic Church operated over 60 per cent of the schools on behalf of the government. Several religious orders were involved, including the Jesuits of English Canada. They operated just one, the Garnier Residential School in Spanish, Ontario, whose roots go back to a log-built school in Wikwemikong on Manitoulin Island. In those days, the Jesuit school educated young people in their native tongue and was a day school. This existed from 1850 to 1911. But then it burned down, and a new school was established in the town of Spanish in 1913.

[3] Beverley McLachlin, 'Reconciling Unity and Diversity in the Modern Era: Tolerance and Intolerance', 7, available at http://www.pluralism.ca/images/PDF_docs/APL2015/APL2015_BeverleyMcLachlin_Lecture.pdf, accessed 27 February 2017. It should be noted that, although Ms McLachlin was the most prominent Canadian to use the expression 'cultural genocide', historians and members of the First Nations have used it for many years to describe how Canada has treated its indigenous peoples.

[4] See *Truth and Reconciliation Committee of Canada Final Report* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens UP, 2015), volume 4, *Missing Children and Unmarked Burials*, available at http://www.myrobust.com/websites/trcinstitution/File/Reports/Volume_4_Missing_Children_English_Web.pdf, accessed 27 February 2017. Tuberculosis was the predominant reported cause of death, but in 49 per cent of cases no cause of death at all was recorded.

Dormitory at the Garnier Residential School in Spanish, Ontario

This became the first residential high school for aboriginal boys in 1946. It closed in 1958 and was demolished in 2004.[5] The historian David Shanahan has researched the history of the school. He says that the federal government consistently underfunded education for aboriginals and that the Jesuits of the time were overextended. He sums up the situation:

> All the signs pointed to a massive failure of the people at Spanish to produce a high school of sound academic learning. Priests and Brothers were becoming disillusioned and exhausted by the continual drain on their spiritual, emotional, and physical resources. Questions began to be asked. What were the Jesuits doing at Spanish in the first place? Was it simply an orphanage/reform school run on behalf of the Indian Department?[6]

Many leaders and writers have described the existence of the residential schools as one of the most shameful aspects of Canadian history. Perry Bellegarde, the national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, refers to it

[5] A good summary of the Spanish residential school is offered in Michael Stogre, 'The Jesuits' Ministry to the Native People in Canada', in *Builders of a Nation: Jesuits in English Canada, 1842–2013*, edited by Jacques Monet (Toronto: Novalis, 2015). Pages 58–65 deal specifically with the educational dimension of the ministry to indigenous peoples. A first-hand account is Basil Johnston's *Indian School Days* (Norman: U. of Oklahoma P, 1988).

[6] David Shanahan, *The Jesuit Residential School at Spanish: 'More Than Mere Talent'* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Jesuit Studies, 2004), 199.

as 'the darkest chapter of our shared history'.[7] Chief Justice McLachlin spoke of 'the most glaring blemish on the Canadian historical record'.[8] The then prime minister, Stephen Harper, offered a public apology on behalf of the government of Canada on 11 June 2008, just a week after the establishment of the TRC.[9] The Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair, Manitoba's first aboriginal chief justice, oversaw the commission. Two other commissioners assisted him: Dr Marie Wilson and Chief Wilton Littlechild. The commission gathered statements from residential school survivors through public and private statement-gatherings across the country. These gatherings allowed over 6,750 survivors to share their stories and put them on record. Through its travels, hearings and interviews, the TRC uncovered stories of physical, psychological and sexual abuse as well as neglect.

The first truth commission, the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons, was held in Argentina in 1983 to investigate the kidnapping and murder of thousands of people under the country's military dictatorship. The one that is etched in the minds of most people is the commission in South Africa that dealt with the shameful reality of apartheid. Such commissions move from the haunting stories of injustice and criminality to a more hopeful future. Writing before the establishment of the Canadian TRC, Daryold Corbiere Winkler, an indigenous Canadian, wrote of the need for such a process in relation to the First Nations:

> Hailed as a modern miracle, the South African experience testifies to the possibility of new ways of bringing justice and of restoring dignity to persons and communities …. our First Nations peoples are searching for the restoration of their political, cultural and spiritual identities and the healing of their communities.[10]

He offers wisdom from Archbishop Desmond Tutu: 'If we are going to move on and build a new kind of world community there must be a way in which we can deal with a sordid past'.[11]

[7] Perry Bellegarde, 'Truth and Reconciliation: This Is Just the Beginning', *The Globe and Mail* [Toronto] (1 June 2015), A12, available at http://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/truth-and-reconciliation-this-is-just-the-beginning/article24705066/, accessed 1 March 2017.
[8] McLachlin, 'Reconciling Unity and Diversity', 7.
[9] The TRC is found at http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=15.
[10] Daryold Corbiere Winkler, 'Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Lessons from Canada's First Nations', in *The Challenge of Forgiveness*, edited by Augustine Meier and Peter VanKatwyk (Montreal: Novalis, 2001), 28–29.
[11] Archbishop Desmond Tutu, quoted in Winkler, 'Forgiveness and Reconciliation', 29.

The Recommendations of the TRC

Canada's TRC wrapped up with several days of formal and informal gatherings, addresses, statements from the parties, ceremonies, rituals and prayer services in Ottawa from 31 May to 3 June 2015. Central to this process was the release of the commission's interim report and a series of calls to action. Like others before them, the commission described the residential school system as a form of cultural genocide and argued that the schools' purpose was 'to kill the Indian in the child'.[12] In other words, indigenous children were to be assimilated into the white population, thereby destroying their original culture. The TRC final report states:

> To the Commission, 'reconciliation' is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country. For that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour.[13]

An early image of the girls' school at Spanish

[12] This phrase is often used to summarise the policy of the Canadian government even prior to confederation. It was probably first used by a US army officer, Richard Henry Pratt, in the nineteenth century. See Julia V. Emberley, *The Testimonial Uncanny: Indigenous Storytelling, Knowledge, and Reparative Practices* (New York: SUNY, 2014), 50.

[13] *Truth and Reconciliation Committee of Canada Final Report*, volume 6, *Reconciliation*, 3, available at http://www.myrobust.com/websites/trcinstitution/File/Reports/Volume_6_Reconciliation_English_Web.pdf, accessed 2 March 2017.

The TRC called on Canada to move from apology to action, and issued a long list of recommendations to help with that movement. Among the 'guiding principles' is that steps be taken to improve the economic and educational situation of indigenous Canadians.[14] Can we build a Canada where indigenous citizens are just as likely as other Canadians to enjoy economic success? The key to that is improving educational opportunities.

To provide redress for the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of reconciliation, the TRC offered 94 recommendations, both specific and broad. The calls to action are divided between two volumes of the report: *Legacy* and *Reconciliation*. The 42 recommendations in *Legacy* cover child welfare, education, language and culture, health, and justice. The remaining 52 recommendations deal with reconciliation. They start by calling upon various levels of government 'to fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation'.[15] The recommendations that follow seek reconciliation between levels of government and the indigenous peoples of Canada.

Of particular relevance to the Jesuits and the Christian Churches are recommendations 58–62. These cover church apologies, and call upon the Churches,

> … to develop ongoing education strategies to ensure that their respective congregations learn about their church's role in colonization, the history and legacy of residential schools, and why apologies to former residential school students, their families, and communities were necessary.[16]

The commission also asks the Churches to ensure that their formation programmes leading to ministry include elements that help with reconciliation. They speak of,

> … the need to respect Indigenous spirituality in its own right, the history and legacy of residential schools and the roles of the church parties in that system, the history and legacy of religious conflict in Aboriginal families and communities, and the responsibility that churches have to mitigate such conflicts and prevent spiritual violence.[17]

[14] *Reconciliation*, 16.
[15] *Reconciliation*, 28 (n. 43).
[16] *Reconciliation*, 102 (n. 59).
[17] *Reconciliation*, 110 (n. 60).

An important part of this process is that it should take place in collaboration with indigenous spiritual leaders.

The recommendations that have received most attention are those involving education. The commission speaks of two general areas of education. In the *Legacy* section, educational reform seeks to close the tremendous social gap between aboriginals and non-aboriginals in Canada. 'We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians'.[18] When the commission deals with education in the *Reconciliation* recommendations, it is concerned with ensuring that curricula are amended to include teaching about residential schools, Treaties, and aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada.[19]

The Society of Jesus and the TRC

Even before the establishment of the TRC the Jesuits of English Canada were cooperating fully with indigenous peoples, the government, the legal system, and other church organizations in working towards reconciliation. Father Rye, the assistant to the Canadian Jesuit Provincial, appeared before the Quebec National Event of the TRC in Montreal on 25 April 2013 and issued a 'Statement of Reconciliation'. He said:

> I stand here on behalf of the Jesuits to say that we are truly, deep within our hearts, sorry for what we did to injure individuals, families and communities by participating in the Canadian Residential School system.

He referred to more than four hundred years of involvement between the Jesuits and the First Nations of Canada and called the residential schools 'a terrible cloud on our legacy of friendship'. He continued:

> It has been a struggle for the Jesuits to recognize that we became an active part of a system aimed at the assimilation of your traditional culture. It was not until it was much too late that we realized the harm that we had done.[20]

[18] *Truth and Reconciliation Committee of Canada Final Report*, volume 5, *Legacy*, 74 (n. 7).
[19] *Reconciliation*, 121 (n. 62). The Treaties are constitutional agreements made from the eighteenth century to the present between the British crown and, later, the government of Canada and indigenous peoples regarding land and resources.
[20] Peter Bisson and Winston Rye, 'Statement of Reconciliation', available at at: http://image.jesuits.org/CANADA/media/statement-of-reconciliation.pdf, accessed 27 February 2017.

Fr Rye said that the Jesuits are proud to call many former students from the school in Spanish friends and are humbly grateful for the fact that so many have not turned away from them. He acknowledged the many achievements of the students: 'We recognize that what they achieved as professionals, athletes and community leaders was not because of our efforts at the school—but through their own strength of character and love of knowledge'.[21] Fr Rye acknowledged the harsh conditions, poor food, brutal punishment and horrible incidents of sexual molestation.

He offered words which speak to the fundamental cruelty of the system of schools: 'Children who were much too young were taken from the love of their families and placed under the guidance of men and women who had little training and less compassion'. He vowed that this will never be 'the way things are' again. On behalf of the Jesuits in English Canada, he assured the TRC and survivors that the Jesuits have learned from what happened. Speaking of reconciliation, he said that the Jesuits 'are humbled by your love and forgiveness. We have never had to beg for reconciliation; you have offered it to us freely for so many years by your example.'[22]

The 'Statement of Reconciliation' also acknowledged the,

> … terrible inequality that continues to exist between the educational opportunities for white students and students from First Nations in Canada. Young people are still being transported to white communities, to obtain an education in an environment that is foreign to them. That is exactly what happened in the past and we seem to be reliving it again.[23]

Fr Rye promised that the Jesuits will do all they can to help eradicate this continuing inequality and injustice.

The Jesuits' Way Forward for Reconciliation

Just as Jesuits were part of the problem in their involvement with the residential schools, they now want to be part of the solution. They have already committed themselves to a new way of relating to the aboriginal people with whom they work across the country. The calls to action of the TRC provide a focus for these efforts which, for the Jesuits of English Canada, mainly concern their continuing ministry in education, and the

[21] Bisson and Rye, 'Statement of Reconciliation'.
[22] Bisson and Rye, 'Statement of Reconciliation'.
[23] Bisson and Rye, 'Statement of Reconciliation'.

formation of young Jesuits who are heading toward that ministry as priests and brothers.

One of the TRC recommendations deals with the need to update educational curricula so that Canadians are taught the truth about their history and recognise the contributions of indigenous people today. The Jesuit provincial leadership has asked any educational institution connected to the Society in English Canada to update its curricula to meet the recommendations in the calls to action. In some cases, this had already started before the TRC requested it.

Several years ago, the Jesuits were involved with others in establishing the Mother Teresa middle school in Regina, Saskatchewan. The school educates the poorest children in that city and '90% of MTMS students are of Aboriginal ancestry'.[24] Before the TRC, the University of Sudbury in Ontario and Campion College (at the University of Regina) were already very involved both in the education of indigenous people and in ensuring that non-aboriginals were being taught the truth about Canadian history. The University of Sudbury has a vibrant department of indigenous studies and Campion College is associated with the First Nations University of Canada at its Regina campus. Both Jesuit institutions are involved in creative and dynamic projects with their indigenous colleagues.

Regis College, the Jesuit school of theology at the University of Toronto, has developed a new course in uniquely Canadian social justice issues, with a specific emphasis on aboriginal questions.[25] It will be a required course for Jesuits in formation. The province of the English

First Nations University, Regina

[24] 'Mother Teresa Middle School: Highlights September 2016', available at http://mtmschoolregina.com/pub/documents/Highlights%20September%202016-FINAL-1.pdf, accessed 2 March 2017.
[25] See 'Injustices in Canada Today', at https://regiscollege.ca/courses/rgt2891hf/, accessed 2 March 2017.

Canadian Jesuits has also initiated an immersion programme for Jesuits in formation, starting from the summer of 2016. It is based at Campion College in Regina, in collaboration with the First Nations University. Participants have academic and pastoral experience with urban and rural indigenous people who are helped by the Jesuits in Regina. A significant aspect of the programme is that the Jesuits are formed and led by indigenous leaders.[26] Jesuit contacts in Saskatchewan are able to put the men in formation in touch with many aspects of aboriginal life in the West of Canada.

In his 'Letter on Reconciliation', Fr Nicolás names four elements in the reconciliation process: forgiveness, healing, empowerment and mission. He describes the unique power of each:

> **Forgiveness**, so as not to remain helplessly fixed on past offenses.
>
> **Healing**, so as to restore to the offended or the exploited their dignity and their humanity, a process that requires much time and patience.
>
> **Empowerment**, so that every person can help establish filial bonds that recreate God's family around a common table.
>
> **Mission**, because a person restored in dignity places himself or herself at the service of humankind in a multitude of ways.[27]

The Canadian TRC has provided the Society of Jesus in English Canada with a powerful and, ultimately, hopeful reminder of the importance of being attentive to the ongoing need for reconciliation. The educational and pastoral presence of the Canadian Jesuits for indigenous peoples should include each of Fr Nicolás's elements, with a special emphasis on empowerment.

Closing the Gap

Aboriginal and non-aboriginal leaders and writers use different language, but they all see the TRC as a *kairos* moment in the relationship between aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadians. The national First Nations chief, Perry Bellegarde, writes:

> I believe reconciliation is about closing the gap—the gap in understanding between First Nations and Canadians and the gap in the

[26] See Joanne Kozlowski, 'Jesuit Immersion Experience', at http://campioncollege.ca/alumni/alumni-online-magazine/jesuit, accessed 2 March 2017.
[27] Nicolás, 'Reply to *Ex Officio* Letters 2014'.

> quality of life between us …. What will Canada look like if we act on this agenda [the TRC recommendations]? We will see justice, respect and healing for residential school survivors; First Nations thriving and enjoying the richness of their traditional territories; elders whispering their languages in the ears of their grandchildren; and the widespread recognition that First Nations rights are human rights, the rights that Canadians champion around the world. That is reconciliation.[28]

The 'gap' is explained in more detail in a document presented to the main Canadian political parties by the Assembly of First Nations ahead of the 2015 federal election:

> *The Gap* is the vast difference in the quality of life experienced by First Nations people and non-Indigenous Canadians. *The Gap* is a fundamental human rights issue, inclusive of First Nations' collective rights to land and self-determination. *The Gap* should not exist in a country as rich as Canada. *The Gap* is holding all of us back from building healthy and thriving First Nations and a stronger Canada. Now is the time for reconciliation. We can only achieve reconciliation with *closing the gap*.[29]

John Ralston Saul, a major non-aboriginal Canadian thinker and writer, says that the treatment of Canada's aboriginal population 'is the great issue of our time, the great unresolved Canadian question upon which history will judge us all'.[30] The conclusion of the TRC and its 94 recommendations provide a clear and precise mandate. The historian Ken Coates wrote in response to Chief Justice McLachlin's reference to cultural genocide, that her use of the phrase had changed the national vocabulary, and was now part of the national agenda. He likened it to the prime minister's apology for the residential schools in 2008:

> A new Canada can be seen on the horizon …. Canada needs a new relationship with aboriginal people. A shared understanding of what happened in the past—and a recognition of the lingering, multigenerational effects of colonialism, paternalism and racism—is only a starting point for real reconciliation and partnership.[31]

[28] Bellegarde, 'Truth and Reconciliation'.
[29] 'Closing the Gap', available at: http://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/closing-the-gap.pdf, accessed 2 March 2017.
[30] John Ralston Saul, *The Comeback: How Aboriginals are Reclaiming Power and Influence* (Toronto: Viking, 2014), 2.
[31] Ken Coates, 'McLachlin Said What Many Have Long Known', *The Globe and Mail* [Toronto] (29 May 2015), available at http://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/mclachlin-said-what-many-have-long-known/article24704812/, accessed 15 March 2017.

Archbishop Desmond and Mpho Tutu

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who chaired the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and his daughter Mpho have written an important book about the forgiveness process. They are convinced that with each act of forgiveness, whether small or great, we move toward wholeness. They say that forgiveness is how we bring peace to ourselves and to the world. Forgiveness is the greatest gift we can give to ourselves when we have been wronged. Of the South African TRC, Archbishop Tutu writes, 'The process we embarked on … was, as all real growth proves to be, astoundingly painful and profoundly beautiful'.[32] Canada now has a better picture of the pain, and the closing ceremonies of the TRC in Ottawa give some indication that we have glimmers of beauty. Closing the gap will make that beauty shine more brightly.

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[32] Desmond Tutu and Mpho Tutu, *The Book of Forgiving: The Fourfold Path for Healing Ourselves and Our World* (New York: HarperCollins, 2014), 2.

Spirituality and Living

THE WAY OF LIFE IN A RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

Robert E. Doud

WHAT IS *SPIRITUAL* about moving into a retirement community? If spirituality is about the love of God and the love of neighbour, what difference does it make in someone's spiritual life to downsize living quarters, dispense with many old possessions and adapt to new surroundings? When my wife, Jackie, and I decided to sell our home of thirty years in Glendale, California and move thirty miles east to La Verne, neither our galaxy nor our solar system was very much affected. The move, however, made a positive spiritual difference in our lives.

There is something biblical about making a big move. Figures such as Sarah and Abraham, Rebecca and Isaac, Rachel and Jacob, Naomi and Ruth made many decisions to fold up their tents and wander nomadically from one oasis to the next. No doubt there were farewells to friends and neighbours that the matriarchs and patriarchs had to say. They had provided hospitality to others and probably received it from other tribal leaders and wandering bands. As we migrate through life, the goodness and the providence of God are experienced in old relationships as they are more wistfully appreciated, and new friendships as they spring up to surprise us.

Divestment and Discernment

We started with the books. As two academic people, we had accumulated a large number of books and files, most of which would have to be gone through and eliminated. We relived a good deal of our past as we filled boxes with books that had had some importance for us at different stages in our long careers. Most of the filed material was quickly discarded. Indeed, some files had been neglected over many years and were full of

duplicate and triplicate material. The St Vincent de Paul Society sent a truck that came to the door several times to cart away dozens of boxes of books and articles of a religious and philosophical nature.

Who suffers grief or separation anxiety over the loss of old books? I did. In fact, one year on from the big move, I have repurchased some of the titles that I had discarded. But for the most part, I am sure, I shall never remember the vast majority of the books I have given away. And, the clothing! We must have reduced our wardrobes down to about one third of what they were. A happy thought: all of the clothes that were so well known to our Glendale friends looked quite new to the eyes of new friends in La Verne.

Guidance is necessary in making a move of this kind. There are people who know how to do it. We enlisted the help of a company called Gentle Transitions, which helped us eliminate things, drew a floor map of our new residence and advised us on exactly which pieces of furniture to take, and which to discard. When we first became serious about making our move, Hillcrest invited us to a series of workshops on the art of doing it well. One event, I remember, was a sort of auction, in which various items were held up and bids were made from the audience, not with a view to purchasing the items, but rather voting *yea* or *nay* on whether these things should be saved or shed immediately. Dusty straw hats, roller skates, cracked vases, soccer trophies and faded plaid sports jackets were voted down. Decades-old children's toys, we were told, are usually passed on to charity shops and thence, probably, to the dump. In the process we

learnt to laugh at our common foibles and predicaments, at the many shared symptoms of ageing, and at ourselves. We were not alone in facing what we had decided to face.

Only a few months before our move, Jackie's sister Nancy had passed away. Part of the reason, or one of the reasons, we felt ready to make our move was that now we were free to move further away from Nancy's house. She was eleven years older than Jackie, and we did not want to move away from her because she lived alone in a very large house with stairs and steps inside, she had trouble with walking and balance and was suffering from increasing dementia. When Nancy passed away, her children were left with the immense task of sorting and disposing of her impressive library, elegant and well-stocked wardrobe, thousands of photographs, furniture and many valuable objects.

Sorting out your own stuff before you die is a great gift to your children, heirs and executors! In general, nothing you have is of half the value to your surviving loved ones as it is to yourself. Unloading a lifetime of accumulation is spiritually purging for yourself, generous to them and useful to whoever will acquire the things and use them after you. 'Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked shall I return' (Job 1:21). It is also possible to arrange your own funeral, design the liturgy of farewell and write a last will and testament that is generous and thoughtful to others, including your favourite charities. All of this is a generous, responsible and spiritually enriching thing to do.

To what extent or in what ways was our deciding to move a process of spiritual discernment? Discernment of spirits requires faith, prayer, hope, a sense of humour, and a keen awareness that God is taking care of us, even when God seems almost arbitrarily to be demanding cruel things of us. It requires a careful sifting of experience in the hope of finding God, finding God's will, finding God's care plan for ourselves and for the ones we love. What happens to each of us affects everyone else.

Of course, in our prayers, we first placed before God our inclinations to leave our former home, and then we noticed the growing strength of our wish to join a retirement community. We visited several such communities, to gather data and to draw pictures of them in our minds in order to compare them to the one we eventually chose, Brethren Hillcrest Homes. Hillcrest was always foremost in our minds because we had known about it for many years through friends and former colleagues who had moved there.

Spiritual considerations are of primary importance when making such a decision as whether or not to move into a particular retirement community. Is God calling you to be part of this community? Will your spiritual needs be nurtured there? Will you grow spiritually? Will you be able to serve as friend and minister to others in your new environment? Do you have a history with other people in this community? Such a history serves as a foundation on which to build an enriching experience of life. Is God calling you to find God and God's grace in this place as you go through the ageing process, sharing time, space and grace with others?

Spiritual discernment looks for hints of divine guidance. Hillcrest was part of our past. We had worked at the University of La Verne, had lived in the city, and maintained contact with La Verne through one good friend in particular. Now, in the present, a home at Hillcrest that we liked had come on to the market. We were both retired and neither of us wanted to continue with the care and maintenance of an older house that required continual fixing up. I had recently undergone a hip replacement and, although I was now completely healed, I knew that our house, built on a slope, would be problematic if either of us developed mobility problems. The only downside of the decision was the distance, some thirty miles east of Los Angeles and Pasadena, where we had lived and worked, and where many family members and friends resided. Even so, with cars and freeways what they are in California, the distance was manageable.

So, with the help of the hints we could discern, coming from the past, the present situation and the probable future, we bit the bullet and made the decision: move to La Verne. Parallel to our own decision was the situation of a close friend, Jill. A near-lifelong friend of Jackie, and long-term friend of mine, Jill had been diagnosed with Shy-Drager Syndrome. This progressive and irreversible disease involves multiple system atrophy, the gradual wasting away of all the body's nerves, much like ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease. Jill needs friends who are close by. At the time of writing, she lives in the skilled nursing part of Hillcrest, and we see her every day. Jill's life is a gift to all her friends, as she brings out of us the best in us, of who we are, and the best of what we have to give.

Dignity and Independence

There is dignity in making one's own decisions. There is indignity in having one's life, especially in its personal and private aspects, decided by others. At Hillcrest great efforts are made to help people keep as much dignity and individual self-determination as possible for as long as

possible. But, paradoxically, we need others to support us as we try to keep our independence. Doing your own sorting out and cleaning up is an act of independence. It is great to know that you are directing your own decision-making and not waiting for others to take care of things. It is great to be among people—indeed, to live in a community—that supports us in the task of keeping our independence and preserving our dignity.

The enemies of joy and happiness that are found in some retirement communities are depression or discouragement, isolation and feelings of helplessness, uselessness or irrelevance. We are fortunate that, with the many opportunities for involvement and for maintaining our interests at the Hillcrest community, these dangers are staved off effectively. Entertainments abound. There are musical and theatre events here on a regular basis. There are films to watch. We have an art gallery, poetry readings and musical events that are put on by the residents. There are adequate staff to assist residents who have problems with mobility. There are committees to join and opinions to hear about improving our community. Residents may have a small dog or cat for companionship.

There is a movement in some urban areas that is called Ageing in Place.[1] It is a fine movement with fine intentions to create a network of care and assistance among the elderly. Even so, there must be times when someone in a situation of need 'falls through the cracks'. Living alone, an elderly person may not be able to be in charge of his or her own care, especially in an emergency situation. Friends and neighbours may not be able to give the care and attention needed by a participant in the programme.

At Hillcrest, residents are asked to *call in* every morning, phoning a certain number between 5.00 and 10.00 a.m. If they miss the call, they receive a reminder. In each room of every home there is a pull-cord to summon assistance in an emergency. The facility has a duty of care to its residents, with stipulations established by state law. Nearly every day, paramedics can be seen arriving. So, we are constantly reminded of the transience and fragility of life. Death is never routine, but it is regular and frequent at a continuing care facility for the elderly. There is a special table in our campus lounge area where neatly framed photographs of the recently deceased are placed. Each month, there are three to four such pictures displayed. The pictures remind us to say a prayer for the person who has died.

[1] See http://www.ageinplace.org/.

Old Age, Forgiveness and a Sense of Humour

Living in a place like this is to become a minister of sorts or, at least, it develops habits and attitudes of being helpful to others. We are constantly aware that the medical conditions of people whom we meet almost every day are ones that we ourselves might be facing tomorrow. The devotion of the spouses of disabled people is remarkable, even heroic. In order to live in a place such as Hillcrest, one must have a heart that readily goes out to other people. Those who are seriously troubled by the presence of the disabled, or by frequent sightings of wheelchairs and walking frames, should not move here. We must remember to be cheerful. This is not artificial; cheerfulness is therapeutic for people who are living with pain and limitations of mind or body.

I hope Elijah (Elias) (I Kings 18–19) had a sense of humour. I picture him prostrate under his biblical broom tree, having fled from the threats of Jezebel into the wilderness, ready to give up completely. He said: 'Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors' (1 Kings 19:4). The biblical writer *did* have a sense of humour. He knew that Elijah would be told by God, after having been provided with some water and a hearth-cake, to walk for forty days to the mountain of the Lord at Horeb. Still today, the Lord may extend our lives, often beyond the limits of what we think we can bear. Jill likes doughnuts. If bringing her a glazed sugar doughnut can help her get through one day, it also helps me understand the story of Elijah, even if I cannot understand the plan of God that keeps Jill alive. She cries a lot. To keep his faith in God, Elijah must have had a sense of humour. An exhausted and totally discouraged prophet and mystic making a forty-day journey on foot in the blistering desert heat? With a single hearth-cake for sustenance? Seriously?

In his old age, Moses stood atop Mount Nebo and watched Joshua lead his people into the Promised Land. No doubt, it was good to watch this great event take place. But, again, why could Moses himself not have been given the joy of walking through the parted waters of the Jordan River? He had long before offended God in a way that disqualified him from fully enjoying that moment. Did Moses have the thought that God really keeps score, that God's mercy is 'measured out with coffee spoons', as the poet might say? No: Moses let go of all resentment, or—I like to think—he was so happy for his people that he forgot his own reason for complaining.

Old people are challenged to let go of regrets and resentments. I can really say that people at Hillcrest live happily, or at least acceptingly, in the present. We can say prayers that heal past injuries. We can learn to give the past to God, with its unsightly scars and still-open wounds. Maybe prayers, which have validity in eternity, can effect change in things that happened then. We can pray back into the past for someone who offended us long ago. We can hope that God not only forgives, but uses our past sins and slights to others to bring good effects later on. As we forgive others and pray for them, we can learn to forgive ourselves as well.

Ecumenism and Cooperation

Ecumenism is a word that can be defined in many ways. Generally, it should suggest attitudes and actions that show respect and mutual support between different religions and their denominations. The spirit of ecumenism is a vital part of Christian spirituality. At Hillcrest there are retired ministers from several Christian denominations, and there is respect and friendliness between these denominations. The spirituality of Hillcrest is incarnate in the many stories of friendship and mutual support among its residents. There is an intense community life here; we are interconnected. Although we do not have formal group discernment, our committees, our administrators, our casual get-togethers are not without the movement of the Holy Spirit, and not without clues dropped from heaven.

Is it luck or is it grace-filled providence that brings people together into groups that serve the needs of one another and expand into the wider community with greater service? Many members of the Hillcrest community belong to the Church of the Brethren. Indeed, Hillcrest was founded some seventy years ago as a place of refuge in retirement for

Brethren ministers and missionaries. The campus still has its Brethren chaplain, a subtle Brethren spirit and ethos, and a lovely interfaith chapel.

The Church of the Brethren is one of the Peace Churches, along with the Quakers and the Mennonites. There is a lack of competitiveness and a strong spirit of cooperation among the Brethren. They educate men and women in ministry, but have a strong tradition that respects the priesthood of all believers. They sponsor and operate several universities across the United States, and their ethos is rural and countrified. The nearby University of La Verne, also Brethren in origin and inspiration, presently serves a population of largely Hispanic students. Its chaplaincy is also interreligious in focus, although its chaplains are ministers of the Church of the Brethren.

People at Hillcrest are reserved about their religious beliefs, but there is a pervasive atmosphere of favour towards church membership and participation. Roman Catholics have mass in the chapel once a month, but also attend the weekly Brethren vespers, and participate in a local parish community that is a vibrant model of twenty-first-century Catholicism. Anyone who has a religious message to share can volunteer to speak at vespers.

The Brethren are rooted in a Pennsylvania Dutch heritage that is known for its frugality, ingenuity, skill in crafts and simplicity of life. Our community runs a charity shop, which is located on the edge of the campus. Anyone who wants to contribute can bring donations, which are sorted and priced by a cadre of dedicated volunteers who take pride in the recycling of reusable items of all descriptions. The charity shop is also a place where members of the community can mix with neighbours from outside Hillcrest. There are community members who can fix anything from broken chairs and tables to mobile phones and other electronic devices.

Jackie and I have become members of the Hillcrest marketing committee. As residents advance to greater levels of care, the homes or units they no longer need must be resold and refilled in order to keep revenue coming in. The marketing committee befriend people visiting the campus, answer questions and encourage guests to contact people in our sales and marketing office. Membership of such a committee helps residents to get to know one another, and to extend welcome to prospective new community members. Jackie is also a member of the ethics committee, which offers advice to the administration on matters of ethical concern.

In the early years of our lives, perhaps after leaving college, we are concerned with marriage, raising children, maintaining a home, earning as much as we can and acquiring the things we need. Being busy all the time and fulfilling many obligations, we are perhaps not as reflective, contemplative, philosophical and prayerful as we might be. It seems that for most people any quiet moments or times of leisure have to be squeezed in among the hectic activities of surviving and flourishing in the workaday world.

It takes time, in retirement, for leisure to happen. We still need to appear busy, important and occupied with significant matters. We still need to stay engaged and to feel relevant, but perhaps we can learn to do so in a lower key and with less intensity. This latter condition is the advantage of living in a retirement community, creating our own best balance between private concerns and involvement with others in common projects. We find here both the luxury of pursuing personal interests and the wise poverty of shedding not just unnecessary possessions, but many pressing cares as well.

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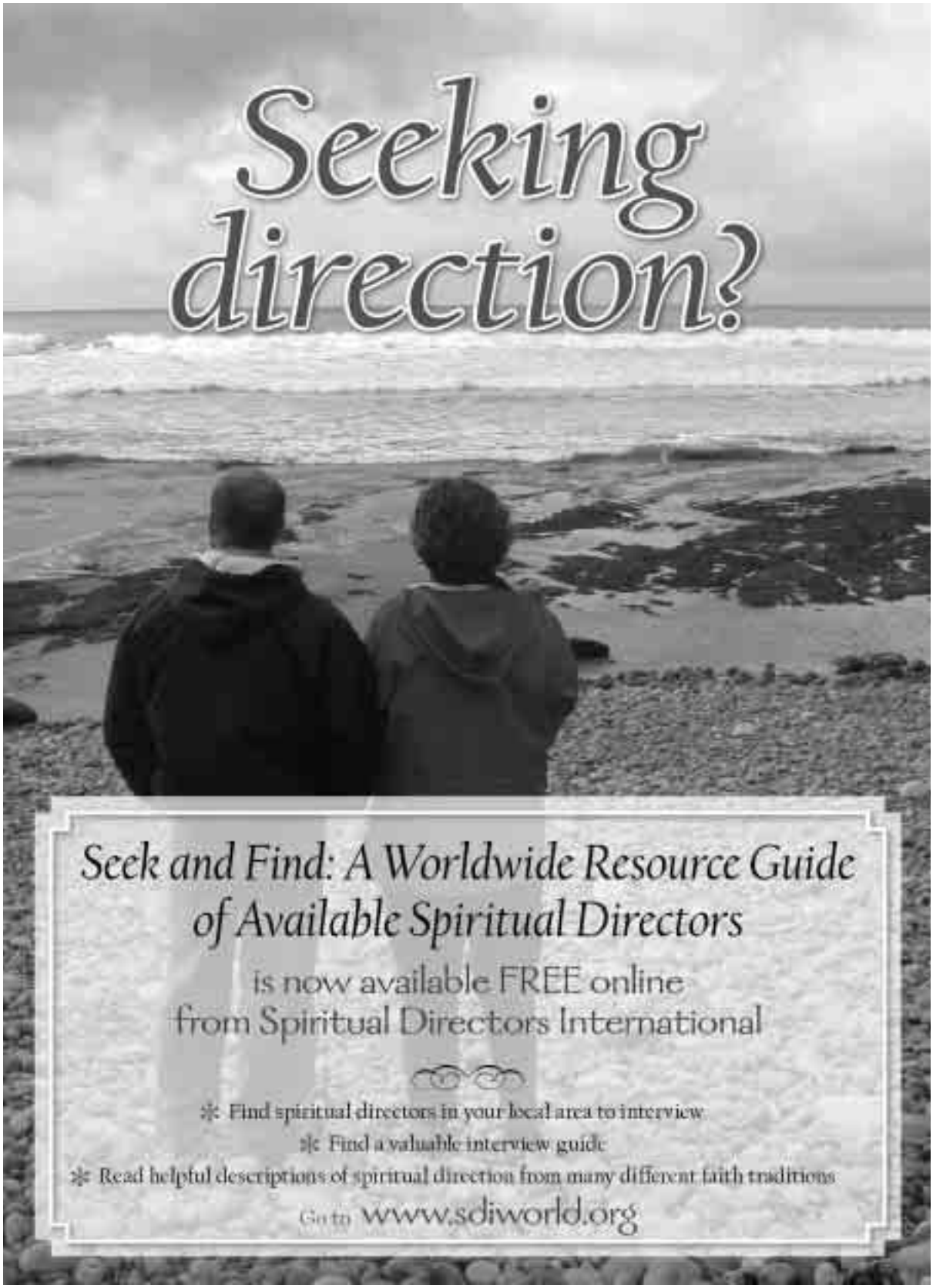
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A CONTEMPLATIVE PATH FOR ALL

Philip McParland

THERE ARE MANY pathways to God. Among them is the contemplative path, which has attracted men and women from the earliest Christian times. In the popular mind it tends to be associated with cloistered monks and nuns, and hermits. This suggests that one needs to be living in a particular kind of environment to be a contemplative. In reality nothing could be further from the truth. The contemplative path is a spiritual path that can be lived by anyone in any situation or context. I would like to offer a brief description of the contemplative path showing how it can be accessible and available to all. This description I simply call the four 'R's.

Receive

The first 'R' is *Receive*. Our fundamental stance before God is one of receptivity. All that is essential in our spiritual lives comes from God. Let us begin with God's presence. We do not create God's presence in our lives. God's presence in our lives is given. In God we live and move and have our being. As Gerard Manley Hopkins so aptly put it, 'The world is charged with the grandeur of God'. Without God's presence we would cease to exist. God's presence is a loving presence, a creative presence, a sustaining presence. At every moment of every day God is loving us, creating us, sustaining us.

Similarly, we do not create a relationship with God. The relationship God has with us, with each of us, is given. It is a natural consequence of God's presence in our lives. God's presence creates relationship because God is relationship. To be God is to be in relationship. This is what we mean when we say that God is Trinity. Whether we are aware of it or not God is in relationship with us. Spirituality is our discovery of this relationship. It is our acceptance that we have received the gift of being in relationship with the divine presence.

And then there is unconditional love. We do not make God love us. God's love for us is free, unmerited, gratuitous. It is pure gift. The Christian life is not about winning God's approval and God's favour. It

The Annunciation, ***by Andrea del Sarto, 1528***

is not about making ourselves acceptable to God. Our efforts, our good deeds do not make God love us. God's love for us is given. It is a fact. This is why the contemplative path is about accepting the unconditional love of God. Henri Nouwen said: 'Our life is a short opportunity to say "yes" to God's love. Our death a full coming home to that love.'[1] Saying 'yes' to unconditional love is the contemplative way.

The essential movement or flow of our spiritual lives is from God to us, not from us to God. The spiritual life is not an ascending movement, but a descending one. This is why a contemplative prays with open and empty hands. It is why Mary is a great model of the contemplative way. Mary at the annunciation was truly receptive. She welcomed the angel, allowed the Holy Spirit to take possession of her and received the gift of Jesus.

The foundation of the contemplative path is an acceptance that all is grace, all is gift, all is given. This acceptance creates a disposition towards receptivity which is reflected in the way we live our lives.

Recognise

The second 'R' of the contemplative path is *Recognise.* Those who wish to live the contemplative way seek to develop their capacity to recognise the presence of God in all that is real.

The Ignatian tradition invites us to find God in all things. This invitation is based on the belief that God's presence is revealed in and

[1] Henri Nouwen, *Here and Now* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 171.

through the totality of our human lives. We cannot limit God's presence to the 'religious bits': to what happens in church, to times of prayer, to the celebration of the sacraments. God's presence is manifested in our encounters with other people, in our relationships, in the inner stirring of our hearts, in art and music and nature, in our times of leisure, in our pain and struggles, in the events of our daily lives. All these things and more are sources of God's revelations. They are the window that looks inward to God. The human life of every person is the holy ground, the sacred place where God is met and known.

For most people, recognising the ways in which God is present in their lives does not come naturally. Tuning into God's presence is in fact an art, a discipline that needs to be cultivated. Among the things that can help us to grow in contemplative awareness let me mention three.

1. *Take time to stand and stare*. Most people today are too busy to *stand.* Perhaps this is because they get their value from their work. A lot of the time we are in overdrive, under pressure to *do*, to achieve, to produce. It seems that we are not allowed to *be* any more. We have, perhaps, lost the art of play. Play is not only for children. It is for adults too. Play is a non-productive activity. It allows us to be and to rejoice in the act of being. By taking time to stand we are free to *stare.* Staring is a particular way of seeing, of looking at reality. To stare is not to analyze or define reality. It is to enter into communion with reality. In the words of William McNamara it is to take 'a long loving look at the real'.[2] To be willing to do this opens us to the reality of God and allows us to glimpse the God of reality.
2. *Pay greater attention to what is happening around you and within you*. There is an old Portuguese proverb that says, 'When God wants to hide something he places it right in front of our eyes'. Often God is staring us in the face and we do not see him! Elizabeth Browning puts this well when she says,

> Earth's crammed with heaven,
> And every common bush afire with God:
> But only he who sees, takes off his shoes
> The rest sit round, and pluck blackberries.[3]

[2] William McNamara, *Wild and Robust: The Adventure of Christian Humanism* (Cambridge, Ma: Cowley, 2006), 120.
[3] Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh*, in *Aurora Leigh and Other Poems* (London: Penguin, 1995), 232.

Perhaps we do not recognise God because we do not expect to find God in the ordinary things of life. But the truth is, 'Earth's crammed with heaven / And every common bush afire with God'. Believing God is in the ordinary is one thing, being attentive to the ordinary is another. Unless we are really paying attention to what is happening in our lives we are unlikely to notice the divine presence. The practice of mindfulness, widespread today, is one way of paying attention to what is happening in our lives. This can help us to develop our capacity to recognise the presence of God in all that is real.

3. *Practise the examen or review of awareness*. The examen is a form of prayer that comes from the Ignatian tradition. It involves spending about ten minutes before bedtime looking back over the day in the light of the question: where was God in my life today? Gently surveying the day with this question in mind helps us to notice the way God is working in our lives and to realise how we can in fact find God in all things. It also increases our sensitivity to the movements, often subtle, of the Holy Spirit.

Rely

Mention of the Holy Spirit brings me to the third 'R': *Rely*. The contemplative path is a path of reliance. Contemplatives know their dependence on God. They accept their own weaknesses and powerlessness to save themselves. With St Paul they glorify 'him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine' (Ephesians 3:21). Contemplatives rely on a power that is not their own: the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the gift given to us from above to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Let me suggest what this means in practice.

The Holy Spirit is our helper. We cannot live the Christian life through our own power and strength alone. Jesus knew that what he was asking us to do was humanly impossible. He knew we would need divine help. This is why he and his Father gave us the gift of their Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our energizer, the one who empowers us to live like Jesus in our daily lives. The Holy Spirit is also the one who helps us to pray.

The Holy Spirit enlightens us. Many of the traditional prayers we say to the Holy Spirit focus on inspiration, understanding and enlightenment. This is because we associate the Holy Spirit with the gifts of wisdom and discernment. We naturally turn to the Holy Spirit when we need to be

inspired and when we have important decisions to make. When it comes to guidance and to the ability to see the hand of God at work in our lives we are dependent on the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit transforms us. We are invited to become like Jesus. Our destiny is to share in the very life of God. The problem is that we all have hurts, biases and selfish tendencies within us that need to be healed and purified. This healing and purification is the work of the Holy Spirit. One of the symbols we use to describe the action of the Holy Spirit is fire. Fire both refines and burns. The flame of the Holy Spirit within us is a refining fire. It burns away the evil in our hearts so that we can become like Jesus.

The Holy Spirit unites us, and is often referred to as the bond of love. This is a beautiful description: in the same way that a child is the bond of love between a husband and wife so the Holy Spirit is the bond of love between the Father and the Son in the life of God. The Holy Spirit is also the bond of love between Jesus and us, and indeed between the members of the Christian community. The Holy Spirit is the one who links us up, who makes us into a family, who is the source of unity between us. This is why we say that the Church was born as a community on the first Pentecost. There is a divine energy flowing between us, holding us together, allowing us to affect one another even when we are physically separated. This divine energy is the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the bond of love

This is the reality of the Holy Spirit in our lives. This is what the Holy Spirit wants to do for us and can do for us. The fact is that the more we draw on the power of the Holy Spirit and allow this Spirit to take possession of us the more effective and fruitful our Christian lives and activity will be. This is why the great contemplative saints were energetic and dynamic people. They depended upon a power that was not their own. The contemplative path is a path of reliance.

Respond

The fourth and final 'R' of the contemplative path is *Respond*. The contemplative way may be a God-centred path but it is not all passivity. It involves action—practical action. Anchored in God it finds expression in the service of others.

If service is the call of the Christian, it is certainly the call of the contemplative path. To ignore the needs of others is not the contemplative

way. We see this reflected down through the centuries in the lives of those who chose the contemplative path. In the Middle Ages, Meister Eckhart insisted that the goal of the spiritual life is love:

> If a man were in an ecstasy, as Saint Paul was, and knew that some sick man needed him to give him a bit of soup, I should think it far better if you would abandon your ecstasy out of love and show greater love in caring for the other in his need.[4]

For the sixteenth-century Spanish Carmelite reformer Teresa of Ávila, prayer and service were like twin sisters; you cannot have one without the other. And, closer to our own time, we have the experience of Thomas Merton. In his book *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* he describes a mystical insight he had into the oneness of humanity. Looking at a bustling crowd in the centre of Louisville's shopping district, he realises that the mystery of God is surrounding us at all times.

> I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers …. There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun.[5]

For Merton love meant seeing people, of all faiths and none, as children of the one God and our brothers and sisters. It is significant that he died while attending a conference on interfaith dialogue.

Contemplatives respond to life out of their experience of God's presence, love and power. This experience leads them to become involved in the lives of others in a compassionate way. Without this compassionate involvement any kind of contemplative way of life is diminished, perhaps even inauthentic. We see the contemplative path expressed wonderfully in the life of Jesus. He was a man of prayer and of action. He spent time alone in silence, but he also responded in so many loving ways to needs of the people he encountered. For Jesus the contemplative path was a God-centred path that led to practical service. 'Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful' (Luke 6:36). Allow yourself to experience the

[4] Meister Eckhart, 'Counsels on Discernment', in *The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises and Defense*, translated by Edmund Colledge and Bernard McGinn (Mahwah: Paulist, 1981), 258.
[5] Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (New York: Image, 1989), 156–157.

compassion of the Father and then share the compassion you have received with others. This is what he did and it is why he is the model of the contemplative path.

The contemplative path, then, has four elements. It is open to God's transforming love. It seeks to find God in all things. It depends on the help of God's Spirit to live and pray and act. And it finds expression in compassionate involvement in the lives of others. These four elements can be summed up in the four 'R's: Receive, Recognise, Rely, Respond. They are surely a contemplative path that is accessible to all.

Philip McParland provides a ministry called Soul Space, details of which can be found on his website, www.philipmcparland.com. He recently published a book called *There is Another Way* (Soul Space, 2015) which addresses the experience of dissatisfaction caused by our contemporary culture and the need for an alternative way of life that satisfies the deeper desires in the human heart.

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EVAGRIUS THE SOLITARY AMONG THE ABBAS OF KELLIA

A Fourth-Century Life of Prayer and Hospitality in the Trinity

Carol McDonough

> Abba Antony once went to visit Abba Amoun on Mount Nitria. When they met, Abba Amoun said, 'By your prayers, the number of the brethren increases, and some of them want to build more cells where they may live in peace. How far away from here do you think we should build the cells?' Abba Antony said, 'Let us eat at the ninth hour and then let us go out for a walk in the desert and explore the country'. So they went out into the desert and they walked until sunset and then Abba Antony said, 'Let us pray and plant the cross here, so that those who wish to do so may build here. Then when those who remain there [Nitria] want to visit those who have come here [Kellia], they can take a little food at the ninth hour and then come. If they do this, they will be able to keep in touch with each other without distraction of mind.' The distance is twelve miles.[1]

EVAGRIUS PONTICUS, copyist and scribe, known as Evagrius the Solitary, lived from AD 344/5 until his early death in 399 in the eremitic community at Kellia in the Western Desert of Egypt. The abbas—fathers—of Kellia, Nitria and Sketis were among the first eremitic mystical practical theologians. Their personal and communal reflections arose out of a life of 'prayer without ceasing' (1 Thessalonians 5:17), lived mostly in silence, with weekly gatherings in community. Their schemata—outlines of the practice of the spiritual life—were brought together and extended by

With thanks to Ineke Langhams Cornet, Meredith Secomb and Mark Slattery.

[1] *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection*, translated by Benedicta Ward (London: A. B. Mowbray, 1975), Amoun, n. 34.

Evagrius, and some of these survive to the present, known as the Evagrian corpus.[2]

The historical theologian William Harmless writes:

> These early monks … forged techniques of prayer and asceticism, of discipleship and spiritual direction, that have remained central to Christianity ever since. Intellectuals helped record and systematize this early mystical spirituality. The most important—but still little known or appreciated—is Evagrius Ponticus.[3]

Evagrius was at the centre of a 'remarkable circle of intellectual monks', who discerned that for most hermits in their individual journeys there were recognisable stages of prayer, each one leading to the next.[4] These stages began with inner practice or ascesis (in Greek, *praktike*), fostering the virtues and love of God. That love (*agape*) grew into mystical contemplation and knowledge of God (Greek *gnostike*; Latin *theoria*). The struggles involved in growth towards contemplation were sufficiently common for descriptions and remedies to be articulated and handed on. The monks' weekly reflections were generative. This eremitic spirituality passed on by memory and the oral tradition was enhanced—and saved—by the transition to writing in the Evagrian corpus.[5]

One reason for the relative neglect of Evagrius' contribution is his association with the complex doctrinal and theological disputes of the First Origenist Controversy, which in fact broke out after his death, but with which his name was associated. Their consequences continue to influence the contemporary reception of that distillation of experience and theologizing of shared learning from the practice of the desert abbas which have come to us under the name 'Evagrius'.

But now, through new archaeological and primary-text research, scholars are piecing together revised understandings of the times and circumstances in which eremitic abbas lived and wrote. They are extending and modifying the interpretations found in earlier hagiographies and commentaries on the collected sayings of the abbas and ammas. Together,

[2] For contemporary accounts of Evagrius and the Evagrian corpus, see William Harmless, 'Evagrius Ponticus: Ascetical Theory', in *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), 311–343; and Augustine M. Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus: Beyond Heresy* (Cambridge: CUP, 2013).

[3] William Harmless, 'Mystic as Desert Calligrapher: Evagrius Ponticus', in *Mystics* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), preface, xii.

[4] Harmless, 'Evagrius Ponticus: Ascetical Theory', 316.

[5] Harmless, 'Evagrius Ponticus: Ascetical Theory', 322.

these offer fragments of a bigger picture of all early desert eremitic colonies and coenobitic monasticism, in Egypt and beyond.[6]

The Abbas of Nitria and Kellia

The story is told that in 328, the chaste Amoun, 'reported to have been of noble and wealthy descent',[7] chose to live separately from his wife. Visited by him twice a year, she formed a women's religious community at their home, while Amoun became a solitary, building two round cells at Nitria in the Western Desert.[8] Other men seeking Christ, many leaving behind social responsibilities, came to live and pray near Amoun. A new eremitic colony was born. They lived according to the form of life pioneered by St Antony the Great (*c.*250/1–356), 'the ultimate authority and the father of the monks'.[9] Each man built his own cell, working in silence with his hands. For communal participation in the Sunday liturgies, they built a church; a guest lodge for seekers was also erected. The eremitic colony of Nitria grew to hundreds, then thousands. Around 338, Amoun and Antony founded a new colony at Kellia for those seeking greater silence.

St Amoun, fresco, Monastery of St Neophytes, Cyprus, 1197

The cells at Kellia, however, were rarely completely solitary, and the monks were seldom fully reclusive. More often cells housed two to six: an abba with his disciples. (This way of life persists in the Oriental and Eastern communions to the present in Egypt, the Middle East

6 Seminal sources and studies consulted about the colonies of the desert include: *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life*, translated by Sebastian Brock (Kalamazoo: Cistercian, 1987); Lucien Regnault, *The Day-to-Day Life of the Desert Fathers in Fourth-Century Egypt* (Petersham: St Bede's, 1999); Maggie Ross, *The Fountain and the Furnace: The Way of Tears and Fire* (New York: Paulist, 1987); Alexander Ryrie, *The Desert Movement: Fresh Perspectives on the Spirituality of the Desert* (Norwich: Canterbury, 2011).

7 Samuel Rubenson, *The Letters of St Antony: Origenist Theology, Monastic Tradition and the Making of a Saint* (Lund: Lund UP, 1990), 118.

8 Palladius, *The Lausiac History*, translated by Robert T. Meyer (Westminster: Newman, 1965), 8.5.

9 Rubenson, *Letters of St Antony*, 43.

Archaeological remains of cells at Kellia

and Mount Athos in Greece. It is also occasionally found in the west.)[10] Every Saturday after None (the sixth hour), the Kellia eremitic monks walked in from their cells for liturgy and met nearer to the central church to take part in fellowship circles.[11] Some communed about their way of life all night, sharing and gaining insights. On Sunday they joined together in the Eucharist and *agape* meal at the settlement church, returning to the solitude of their cells for the week, 'a mighty silence and a great quiet among them'.[12]

Each abba perceived, practised and reflected on his own life of prayer within its one purpose in God. He also gave *praktike* to his disciples: guidance in ascetic practice, adapted by the abba to the circumstances of the inner life of each monk, involving a rhythm of prayer, prayerful work and maybe spiritual reading. As Benedicta Ward explains:

> … the monks found that they needed the assistance of others, not only in the practical matters of life in the desert, though that was of

[10] One contemporary Catholic association of diocesan right modelled on this pattern of spirituality is the Hermits of Bethlehem, New Jersey, USA, founded in 1974. See http://www.bethlehemhermits.org/, accessed 20 February 2017.

[11] For commentary on fellowship circles, see Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus*, 75–79.

[12] Rufinus, *Historia monachorum*, 22, quoted in Peter F. Anson, *The Call of the Desert: The Solitary Life in the Christian Church* (London: SPCK, 1964), 21.

> great importance to them, but in the inner ways of the heart. It would be an anachronism to talk about 'spiritual direction' among the desert fathers; they were very clear that the process of turning towards God was a matter of the spirit and the body together, and that this was given in direction only by Christ. Any help they asked or received from one another was with this in mind ….[13]

The 'basic unit' of the community was this relationship of the abba and his disciple, the disciple choosing the abba and each abba deciding as to whether to accept a disciple.[14]

The Life of Evagrius

Evagrius Ponticus was born at Ibora in Roman Pontus (İverönü in modern Turkey), at a time when the Roman Empire was already officially Christian, though the memory of persecutions and martyrdoms must have been strong.[15] He was the son of a country bishop and landholder. The siblings who would become St Basil the Great, St Gregory of Nyssa and St Macrina the Younger were close family friends.[16]

Evagrius' life formation was deeply permeated by Christianity—familial, parish and, increasingly, monastic. He was tutored by Christians, notably St Gregory of Nazianzus, whom he described as 'Gregory the Just, the one who planted me'.[17] Evagrius was taught biblical exegesis and theology, including that of St Clement and his student Origen. Both Clement and Origen had reshaped Platonic philosophy into a tool for formulating and debating Christian biblical commentary. All Evagrius' mentors were either taught directly by Origen or steeped in his writings. Following Origen, Gregory of Nazianzus formed the young Evagrius for an ascetic life in which prayer, liturgical and personal, based on biblical immersion, was as essential as breathing.[18]

[13] Benedicta Ward, 'Traditions of Spiritual Guidance: Spiritual Direction in the Desert Fathers', *The Way*, 24/1 (January 1984), 61.
[14] Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus,* 80. By contrast the contemporaneous monasteries of Pachomius, on which Western monasteries are largely modelled (John Cassian was a prime disseminator), are structured around a superior and community of monks. See, for example, James E. Goehring, 'Pachomius and the White Monastery', in *Christianity and Monasticism in Upper Egypt*, volume 1, *Akhmim and Sohag*, edited by Gawdat Gabra and Hany N. Takla (Cairo: American U. in Cairo P, 2010), 47; William Harmless, 'John Cassian', in *Desert Christians*, 373. Cassian was a disciple of both Evagrius and Pachomius.
[15] Constantine the Great had adopted Christianity in 312. See Eusebius, *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*, translated by G. A. Williamson (London; Penguin, 1985), 380–414.
[16] Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus*, 9–27.
[17] Evagrius, *Praktikos*, quoted in Harmless, 'Evagrius Ponticus: Ascetical Theory', 314 n. 7.
[18] Eusebius, *History of the Church*, 242.

Evagrius lived in Roman-occupied cultures, the first two of which were Hellenic Christian (Cappadocia, then Constantinople). Tonsured as a reader by the monastic Bishop Basil (St Basil the Great), he was ordained deacon by Gregory of Nazianzus, who was by then archbishop of Constantinople. Evagrius joined the archbishop's negotiating staff and became 'skilled in argument against all heresies', advocating their successful Nicaean credal theology at the First Council of Constantinople in 381.[19]

After an infatuation with a noblewoman in Constantinople, Evagrius fled to Palestine, to the Jerusalem monastic community of Amma Melania (St Melania the Elder) and Abba Rufinus. By this time he was about forty, and he became chronically ill. Amma Melania, who had experienced losses and was 'informed by tremendous theological literacy', recognised that 'this disease of yours has something divine about it'.[20] To recover his physical and spiritual health, she prescribed that he should go to Nitria, where she herself had lived and received formation from Abba Macarius of Alexandria. Sending Evagrius to him, Amma Melania acted decisively for Evagrius' good, reshaping his life.

Evagrius brought the person he had become, his memories, his faith, his knowledge and skilfulness, to his final home, the Western Desert of Egypt, around 384. He lived in the semi-eremitic and eremitic colonies of Nitria and subsequently Kellia, and visited Sketis. Of this last Rufinus wrote:

> Sketis is in a vast wilderness, a day and a night's journey from the monasteries of Nitria, and the way to it is not found or shown by any track or landmarks on the ground, but one journeys by the signs and courses of the stars. Water is hard to find, and when it is found it has a bad smell, bituminous, yet inoffensive to the taste. Here men are made perfect in holiness, but none but those of austere resolution and supreme constancy can endure such a terrible spot, yet their chief concern is the love which they show one another and towards such as by chance reach that spot.[21]

Rarely, Evagrius also trekked the eighteen days—on foot and by boat, following the stars—to Alexandria where he continued to advocate the authority of the credal theology and determinations of the Ecumenical

[19] Palladius, *Lausiac History*, 38.2, quoted in Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus*, 83; Anson, *Call of the Desert*, 22.
[20] Palladius, *Lausiac History*, quoted in Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus*, 21.
[21] Rufinus, *Historia monachorum*, 29, quoted in William Harmless, 'The *Apophthegmata Patrum*: Text and Context', in *Desert Christians*, 174; Anson, *Call of the Desert*, 23.

Council of Nicaea.[22] 'Withdrawing from civic space does not mean withdrawing from the public arena.'[23]

The abbas handed on St Antony's teachings to Evagrius during the two years he spent living in Nitria, earning his keep as a copyist. Through the abba–disciple relationship, Evagrius became immersed in a culture of eucharistic and solitary spiritual practice.[24] Yearning to be incorporated into the very life of the Holy Trinity, he discovered that this gift led to a desire to focus on God for God, to live wholly in God.[25] The process was not simple or easy or quick. For the life of silence in solitude first preoccupies the mind with the self, not with God. The fruits of contemplation required perseverance and practice, and are a gift of God.

A desire to focus on God for God

To learn this prayer-as-life-in-God, this prayer without ceasing, Evagrius apprenticed himself to Macarius of Alexandria at Kellia, and to Macarius the Egyptian, founder of the community at Sketis.[26] For the last fourteen years of his life, 385–399, continuing to buy his bread and oil through his work as a copyist, Evagrius lived humbly in the weekday silence at Kellia, amongst experienced abbas who encouraged him in his eremitic formation. Over years, Evagrius' motivation, reflection and practice started to bring him the personal depth and orientation towards God that he desired, not without struggle. He discovered that his scholarship and ecclesial knowledge were as nothing. He asked another great abba, Arsenius, a disciple of Antony,

> 'How is it that we, with all our education and our wide knowledge get no-where, while these Egyptian peasants acquire so many virtues?' Abba Arsenius said to him, 'We indeed get nothing from our secular education, but these Egyptian peasants acquire the virtues by hard work'.[27]

In time, through obedience to experienced guidance, and hard inner and outer work, Evagrius became an abba himself. Men, and women,

[22] See Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus*, 82.
[23] Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus*, 83.
[24] Unless otherwise stated the paragraphs in this section draw primarily on Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus*, 22–27 (in turn drawing on Palladius, *Lausiac History*, 7.10), corroborated by Harmless, 'Evagrius Ponticus: Ascetical Theory', 313–315.
[25] Harmless, 'Mystic as Desert Calligrapher', 150.
[26] Harmless, '*Apophthegmata Patrum*: Text and Context', in *Desert Christians*, 175 n. 33.
[27] *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Arsenius, n. 5, also quoted in Harmless, 'Evagrius Ponticus: Ascetical Theory', 311–312.

Evagrius Ponticus, by Johannes Sadeler, c.1586

sought to become his disciples and learn from him about prayer-as-life.[28] Now known as a wise man, Evagrius died after being carried to Eucharist, ill, on the feast of Epiphany, 6 January 399.[29]

After Evagrius Died

Immediately after Evagrius' death rapid and major disruption occurred in the ordered, peaceful existence of the desert.[30] This disruption came from both inside and outside the Church, in the form of ecclesial-political-theological controversies around aspects of Evagrian and Origenist thought, and of the sacking of Sketis.

In late 399, Pope Theophilus of Alexandria launched an attack on Origen,[31] which weakened the eremitic communities' leadership because,

[28] Anson, *Call of the Desert*, 22. Anson paraphrases the observation of Palladius about women visiting Evagrius' Abba, Macarius the Egyptian. Amma Melania's visit to Nitria suggest women also visited there and Kellia.

[29] Palladius, *Lausiac History*, 38.1, quoted in Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus*, 9 n. 2.

[30] See Otto F. Meinardus, *Two Thousand Years of Coptic Christianity* (Cairo: American U. of Cairo P, 1999), 28–42.

[31] The see of Alexandria was founded in AD 68 on the death of the apostle Mark. See Meinardus, *Two Thousand Years of Coptic Christianity*, 28–29.

according to William Harmless, 'The real theological target … was not so much Origen *per se*, but rather desert Origenism, the bold speculative Origenism of Evagrius and his friends'.[32] Scholars continue to untangle the very complex contexts that surround the anathematization of Evagrius and Origen. According to Elizabeth Clark, 'many non-theological issues loomed large in the debate', including 'questions of episcopal jurisdiction' and also authorship and translation disputes.[33] But the strategies of Theophilus, who had formerly read Origen every day, have been interpreted as the quickest way of destroying the international influence of the intellectual desert hermits.

In 407 the first Mazices (Berber) invasion sacked Sketis.[34] As Abba Arsenius mourned, 'The world has lost Rome [sacked by the Visigoths in 410] and the monks have lost Scetis'.[35] A new semi-eremitic monasticism was born from the necessity of closer settlement and high defensive walls. But Evagrius, and the abbas, had provided literary handbooks of prayer-as-life that were equally effective for living as a solitary, or in very small groups, or closer together in a walled community. The abba–disciple system of organization remained—and does to this day.[36]

The Evagrian Corpus

The traditionally known, newly found and reattributed works of the Evagrian corpus were written in Greek and Latin, but are often known through translations into other languages of the patristic period.[37]

[32] William Harmless, 'Evagrius Ponticus: Mystical Theology', in *Desert Christians*, 363. And see Harmless, 'Evagrius Ponticus: Ascetical Theory', 316. One interpretation is that by discrediting the reputation and power of the intellectual hermits, Theophilus was trying to gain allies, such as St Jerome, in the wider Christian world.

[33] Elizabeth A. Clark, 'New Perspectives on the Origenist Controversy: Human Embodiment and Ascetic Strategies', in *Forms of Devotion: Conversion, Worship, Spirituality, and Asceticism*, edited by Everett Ferguson (London: Taylor and Francis, 1999), 253, 255–256.

[34] William Harmless, 'Remembering Poemen Remembering: The Desert Fathers and the Spirituality of Memory', *Church History*, 69/3 (2000), 483–518, at 483.

[35] *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Arsenius, n. 21, also quoted in Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 206.

[36] See Carol McDonough, 'Christian Hermits and Solitaries: Tracing the Antonian Hermit Traditions', *The Way*, 54/1 (January 2015), 84–85.

[37] For the Evagrian corpus, sources include the summation at Joel Kalvesmaki, *Guide to Evagrius Ponticus*, at www.evagriusponticus.net, accessed 20 June 2016 (this is a constantly updated manuscript tradition collation); annotated bibliography of the Evagrian manuscript tradition, Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 335–337; Jeremy Driscoll, *Steps to Spiritual Perfection: Studies on Spiritual Progress in Evagrius Ponticus* (New York and Mahwah: Newman, 2005), 11–37; Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus*, xxi–xl, 29–45; Andrew Cain, *The Greek* Historia monachorum in Aegypto*: Monastic Hagiography in the Late Fourth Century* (Oxford: OUP, 2016); Robert E. Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus* (Oxford: OUP, 2006), xxiii; William Harmless and Raymond R. Fitzgerald, 'The Sapphire Light of the Mind: The Skemmata of Evagrius Ponticus', *Theological Studies*, 62/3 (September 2001), 498–530, at 348.

> With the condemnations of Origenism, those works of Evagrius considered most 'tainted' dropped out of the Greek transmission history and were preserved primarily in the Syriac and Armenian versions. The Byzantine monasteries continued to copy and read the ascetic works of Evagrius, sometimes passing them on under his own name and sometimes under the name of Nilus of Ancyra.[38]

Manuscripts were separated from one another, and random distribution by copyists and monkish travellers led to major misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Between the fourth and seventh centuries, and up until the present, manuscripts have continued to be scattered.

Interpretations of Evagrius and the Evagrian corpus have remained prey to the negative received perceptions resulting from the anathemas pronounced against him in the sixth century. Nevertheless, the insights of the Western desert abbas enshrined in the Evagrian corpus have had a wide and enduring reception history. Jean Gribomont lists transmission trails which lead to the present 'through Cassian for the Latin world; through Palladius for John Climacus; through Maximus the Confessor for the Byzantines; and through Philoxenus and others for Isaac of Nineveh and numerous Syrians'.[39]

Of Evagrius' style William Harmless writes:

> Evagrius cultivated an artful brevity. All his best-known and most influential writings are collections of terse, proverb-like sentences, clustered in brief, seemingly disconnected paragraphs called *kephalaia* ('chapters') …. Evagrius' writings are an elegant polyphony, a fuguelike weave of motifs, built from self-contained morsels.[40]

The Evagrian corpus presents difficulties in its patristic, cultural and linguistic contexts and textual obscurities. However, fresh evidence has accumulated and transformed scholarship about Evagrius and the 'real spiritual mutation' that occurred in the context of eremitic practice.[41]

Evagrius' central 'trilogy'—*Praktikos*, *Gnostikos* and *Kephalaia gnostika*—was meant as a kind of handbook detailing the successive stages of the

[38] Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus*, vii.

[39] Jean Gribomont, 'Monasticism and Asceticism: Eastern Christianity', in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, edited by Bernard McGinn, John Meyendorff and Jean Leclercq (London: SCM, 1986), 105.

[40] Harmless, 'Evagrius Ponticus: Ascetical Theory', 317.

[41] Louis Bouyer, *The Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers*, 381, quoted in Harmless, 'Evagrius Ponticus: Ascetical Theory', 312.

hermit-monk's growth and common issues encountered in the process. Grounded in daily scripture and liturgy, the high purpose, principles and practice of the life of prayer were formed into a widely accepted and disseminated tradition. Through yearning years of God-focused, prayerful living into endless mystical love, the 'Evagrian' stages of prayer were taught as an encouragement and guide for all those persevering with the compassion and help of the essential abba–disciple praxis. According to Harmless,

> Evagrius was an astute psychologist of the spirit, and his analyses of what ails the soul form but one thread within a subtle and intricate theology of the spiritual life. Evagrius helped pioneer Christian mysticism, advocating unceasing prayer, and was among the first to plot milestones in the soul's journey to God.[42]

For beginners, in the *Praktikos*, Evagrius 'took care to disclose only the very first elements of his doctrine', but he writes in a more complex way for experienced seekers.[43] He acknowledges his indebtedness to his own teachers: Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil, his desert abbas and Amma Melania. He speaks of learning 'the upright ways of the monks who have gone before us' from the ten 'sayings of the holy monks' (*apophthegms)* with which the *Praktikos* concludes. These are the very first sayings written down from the eremetic oral tradition.[44]

The *catenae*, the connected series of short texts of *De oratione* (On Prayer), were probably written for the monks of the monastery of Rufinus on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. They express gratitude for Evagrius' months of renewal in Jerusalem around 383, but were written many years later.

> I have often been restored to health by your letters, as I used to be by the counsel of our great guide and teacher [Macarius of Alexandria] …. I am delighted to find you so eager for texts on prayer—eager not simply for those written on paper with ink, but also for those fixed in the intellect through love and generosity.[45]

[42] Harmless, 'Mystic as Desert Calligrapher', 136.
[43] Gribomont, 'Monasticism and Asceticism', 105.
[44] Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus*, 92–93; Harmless, '*Apothegmata Patrum*: Text and Context', 244–245.
[45] Evagrius, 'On Prayer', prologue, in *The Philokalia: The Complete Text*, edited by G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard and Kallistos Ware (London: Faber, 1983), volume 1, 55.

The intention of Evagrius is to illuminate the growing yearning for God of the ascetic hermit-monk who was becoming experienced in *praktike*. The *catenae* culminate with this aspiration: 'If when praying, no other joy can attract you, then truly you have found prayer'.[46]

Evagrius teaches that we come to prayer as the passions, the 'eight thoughts' (*logismoi*)—precursors of the seven deadly sins—are cleansed and fall away.

> When your intellect in its great longing for God gradually withdraws from the flesh and turns away from all thoughts that have their source in your sense-perception, memory or soul-body temperament, and when it becomes full of reverence and joy, then you may conclude that you are close to the frontiers of prayer.[47]

The abbas insisted that thoughts are inevitable; that is how the human mind works. The monk—literally 'one alone' (Greek *monachos*)—gets to choose, moment by moment, whether his thought leads away from or towards growth into God. Leading towards God produces *apatheia*—calm, tranquillity; the spirit begins to see its own God-given light, and this leads to *agape*, Love.

> We recognise the indications of *apatheia* by our thoughts during the day, but we recognise it by our dreams during the night. We call *apatheia* the health of the soul. The food of the soul can be said to be contemplative knowledge since it alone is able to unite us with the holy powers.[48]

The eremitic monk and the holy woman practised unceasing prayer, liturgy and regular communion between abba and disciple. Slowly each was freed of *logismoi*. By cultivating the virtues, each was enabled to give over a purified mind to the Trinity and to grow endlessly into the knowledge and love of God, love of neighbour and love of the creation and its care.[49]

[46] Evagrius, 'On Prayer', n. 153, in *Philokalia*, volume 1, 71.
[47] Evagrius, 'On Prayer', n. 62, in *Philokalia*, volume 6, 62–63. And see Harmless, 'Evagrius Ponticus: Ascetical Theory', 346–347.
[48] Evagrius, *Praktikos*, translated by J. E. Bamberger (Kalamazoo: Cistercian, 1916), n. 56; Harmless, 'Evagrius Ponticus', 348.
[49] Gabriel Bunge, 'The "Spiritual Prayer": On the Trinitarian Mysticism of Evagrius of Pontus', *Monastic Studies*, 17 (1987), 191–208; Harmless, ' Evagrius Ponticus: Ascetical Theory', 324.

Illumination from a manuscript of John Cassian,* De institutis coenobiorum*, fifteenth century

The abbas learnt and passed on, in desert silence, solitude, stillness and communion, humankind's often unarticulated but true desire: life in God for all. Through their hard work, their listening interiorly, communing and reflecting with each other, they uncovered a way to bring to fruition the counsel of St Antony: 'He who knows himself, knows all men …. But he who can love himself, loves all men.'[50]

In the intimate, supported environment of the abba/amma–disciple relationship all that deadens a self-love held in God was uncovered through *praktike*. The abbas cared for one another in body, mind, heart and soul—in welcome. Gradually, through the virtues of prudence, understanding, wisdom, patience, courage, continence, charity and temperance, they grew into loving themselves as they loved their neighbour. These virtues are the virtues of inner and outer hospitality: 'If any one by chance should

[50] *The Letters of St Antony the Great*, translated by Derwas Chitty (Oxford: Fairacres, 1975), letter 6.

wish to dwell with them, as soon as they hear of this, each man offers his own cell'.[51] They open up the capacity to welcome the One who comes as the Creator in the creation, helping Love to grow within the creature, enabling each of us to welcome ourselves, to welcome the stranger within and without, with open arms, open mind and open heart, 'that they all may be one' (John 17:21).

Carol McDonough has previously published in *The Way* on the Antonian hermit traditions. These are one impetus for an ecumenical national discernment retreat about the emergence and forms of the Antonian vocation in Australia. A student at the Jesuit College of Spirituality, University of Divinity, Australia, she is also completing her book on the history and contemporary traditions of practice of Christian hermits, eastern and western.

[51] Rufinus, *Historia monachorum*, 22, quoted in Anson, *Call of the Desert*, 21.

A CHARISM INSEPARABLE FROM CATHOLIC FAITH

Hans Urs Von Balthasar on Humour

Riyako Cecilia Hikota

THERE IS A WELL-KNOWN PROVERB attributed to St Francis de Sales: 'A sad saint is a bad saint'. Joy is one of the fundamental aspects of Christian faith. But what about a sense of humour, or laughter as its most obvious expression? Are these not as important as joy in Christian life? It is not easy to answer this question. There has long been a notion that Jesus himself never laughed. The Gospels do not say that he laughed or even smiled—while we do read that he wept (John 11:35). At least partly because of this, most religious paintings tend to portray him as a sombre Saviour. The question of whether Jesus ever laughed was taken quite seriously at times (even with deadly consequences in the famous novel by Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*).[1] All of this shows that there has existed a deeply rooted notion that faith and humour are incompatible.[2] However, is this really the case?

Going back to Jesus himself in the Gospels, some of the parables he tells and some of the responses he gives to the Pharisees do suggest a sense of humour.[3] Further, it cannot be christologically correct to say that Jesus never laughed, as he was fully human (that is, if we consider humour and laughter as an essential feature of being human). Also, if we take a look at the history of the saints, we can find many saints with a sense of humour, if sometimes a grim one.[4] We have St Lawrence, the

[1] Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, translated by William Weaver (London: Vintage, 2004).
[2] See Ingvild Saelid Gilhus, *Laughing Gods, Weeping Virgins: Laughter in the History of Religion* (London: Routledge, 1997), 64–74.
[3] See Leonard Greenspoon, 'Humor in the New Testament', at http://global.oup.com/obso/focus/focus_on_ humor_new_testament/, accessed 1 March 2017.
[4] See Jacques Roi, *L'Humour des saints* (Paris: Cerf, 1980); James Martin, *Between Heaven and Mirth* (New York: Harper One, 2011); Michael A. Screech, *Laughter at the Foot of the Cross* (Chicago: U. of Chicago P, 2015 [1997]).

third-century martyr, for example, who is supposed to have said, as he was being burned on a gridiron, 'turn me over. I'm already cooked on this side'.[5] Pope Francis once said that he offers St Thomas More's prayer for good humour every day.[6] Recently, at least on a pastoral level, the importance of humour for spiritual life seems to have been acknowledged, at least by some.[7] In 'serious' discussions of Christian theology, however, it does not yet receive the amount of attention it deserves, considering its potential power to fight against evil, arrogance and despair.[8]

One influential theologian who has actually mentioned the importance of humour in his writings is Hans Urs von Balthasar. He did not write extensively on this topic, but still his comments are worth examining. By placing them in the wider context of his theology and his 'tragic' view of Christianity I hope to explore the neglected question of what humour is in a theological sense and why it can be significant in Christian faith (or, more specifically, in Roman Catholic faith).[9]

Hans Urs von Balthasar on Humour

Balthasar writes that humour is 'a mysterious but unmistakable charism inseparable from Catholic faith'.[10] This statement appears in his book *Der Antirömische Affekt* (literally, 'the anti-Roman feeling', published in English as *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church*), in which he discusses the place of the papacy within the Church. At the beginning of this book, Balthasar declares that he wrote it to show that,

[5] Ambrose, *De officiis*, 1.41.207.

[6] This prayer was not, in fact, written by St Thomas More, but by Thomas Henry Basil Webb, a soldier killed at the battle of Cambrai in 1917. The prayer concludes: 'Give me a sense of humour, Lord, / Give me the power to see a joke, / To get some happiness from life / And pass it on to other folk'. See '"Give Me a Good Digestion, Lord"—More's Apocryphal Prayer', *Moreana*, 9/36 (December 1972), 93–96, available, with other articles on the subject and More's genuine prayer (in fact he prays 'to estew light folyshe myrth and gladnesse'), at http://www.moreana.org/uk/revue_moreana.asp?rub=14&idsrub=185. See also Pope Francis, Christmas greetings to the Roman Curia, 22 December 2014, n. 12, available at https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/december/documents/papa-francesco_20141222_curia-romana.html#_ftnref14.

[7] See, for example, Martin, *Between Heaven and Mirth*.

[8] See Peter L. Berger, *Redeeming Laughter: The Comic Dimension of Human Experience* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997); Karl-Josef Kuschel, *Laughter: A Theological Reflection* (New York: Continuum, 1994); Ignacio L. Götz, *Faith, Humor, and Paradox* (Westport: Praeger, 2002); Hugh S. Pyper, 'Humour', in *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, edited by Adrian Hastings, Alistair Mason and Hugh Pyper (Oxford: OUP, 2000), 314–315.

[9] No research in depth has yet been done on this topic. See the summary by Fergus Kerr, 'Comments: Humour in the Catholic Church', *New Blackfriars*, 89/1023 (2008), 497–498.

[10] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church*, translated by Andrée Emery (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2007), 330 (subsequent references in the text).

> … there is a deep-seated anti-Roman attitude [a hostility towards the papacy] within the Catholic Church … and that this attitude has not only sociological and historical grounds but also a theological basis and that it has to be overcome again and again by the community of the Church (1).

Throughout the book Balthasar talks about the 'multi-dimensional reality' of the Church (20), 'the force-fields that bear upon the Church' (15–16) and 'the network of tensions in the Church' (18). In his view, the Roman Catholic Church has been a tension of forces from the very beginning, making a '*contest* within the Church herself' inevitable, which could be 'mostly against the Petrine principle, but it could just as well be against pneumaticism or theological rationalism or the claimed dominance of exegesis' (341). (He even notes that the word '*contest*', which has *con* [Latin, 'together'] in it, itself implies that it is a 'community-creating act' [342].)

In short, according to Balthasar, the tensions within the Church are not necessarily signs of spiritual shortcomings or flaws, but rather constitutive of a Church which, since its very foundation, has been characterized by an interplay of forces. In his ecclesiology, it is the different subjective principles represented by the Virgin Mary, Peter, John and the other figures surrounding Jesus that form the unity of the Church in their mutuality, interaction and tension. (In this structure, even though the papacy is no doubt a crucial element in the Church, it is not placed 'above' the Church, nor is the mystery of the Church ever reduced to the papacy.)

It is in this large ecclesial context that Balthasar spares several pages to comment on the significance of humour for Roman Catholic faith in his discussion of what he calls the 'Catholic "And"' (that is, the 'and' that links '"faith and works", "nature and grace", "reason and revelation"') (329).[11] Humour is above all regarded as a *balanced* attitude or view set among different tensions and forces. He starts by criticizing 'the dogmatism of those who cannot let go of their own selves', for such an attitude is 'the opposite of the courage of those who opt for the catholicity of truth, focusing their existence on the concrete Christ' (328). He then goes on to note that every heresy is nothing other than 'a part claiming to be the whole' (328), in other words, a phenomenon lacking in a sense of balance. In this

Humour is above all … a balanced attitude

[11] Balthasar is quoting Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, volume 1, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*.

context, he critiques 'the *soli* of the Reformation—*sola fide, sola scriptura, sola gratia, soli Deo gloria*' by contrast with the 'Catholic "And"', saying that such formulations ironically fail to acknowledge God's sovereignty, despite their very sincere wish to defend it: 'they are forbidding God to be anything other than himself (man, for instance, if he should so wish), to be anywhere else but in heaven …' (329).

From time to time, Catholics also fall into their weaknesses, but, Balthasar writes,

> The Catholic … has enough saints in his Church to inspire him with a genuine sense of God's divinity.
>
> But the saints are never the kind of killjoy spinster aunts who go in for faultfinding and lack all sense of humor …. For humor is a mysterious but unmistakable charism inseparable from Catholic faith. (329–330)

He associates a sense of humour with the balance that makes 'the Catholic … pliable, flexible, yielding, because [his] firmness is not based on himself and his own opinion but on God' (330). Humour is an important quality which distinguishes genuine faith from the fanaticism of 'faultfinders, malicious satirists, grumblers, carping critics, full of bitter scorn, know-it-alls who think they have the monopoly of infallible judgment …' (330).

When it comes to the specific examples that Balthasar cites of humorous saints, it is tempting to think that their sense of humour is an important reason for his admiration for certain authors who are also sources of inspiration for his theology. Balthasar mentions St Ignatius of Loyola (affirming his Jesuit roots),[12] St Teresa of Ávila[13] and St Thérèse of Lisieux[14]

[12] Apparently St Ignatius had a dry wit. According to an early biography, when they were imprisoned by the Inquisition, Ignatius and his companions were told 'that they would not have brought so much trouble upon themselves if their Discourses had less of Novelty in them. "I did not think", Ignatius repli'd with a grave and modest Aire, "that it had been a novelty amongst Christians, to speak of Jesus Christ".' (Dominique Bouhours, *The Life of St. Ignatius, Founder of the Society of Jesus* [London: Henry Hills, 1686], 84) See also Roi, *L'Humour des saints*, 53–68.

[13] St Teresa's humour is well known. 'Once, when she was travelling to one of her convents, St Teresa of Ávila was knocked off her donkey and fell into the mud, injuring her leg. "Lord", she said, "you couldn't have picked a worse time for this to happen. Why would you let this happen?" And the response in prayer that she heard was, "That is how I treat my friends". Teresa answered, "And that is why you have so few of them!"' (Quoted in Martin, *Between Heaven and Mirth*, 68–85.)

[14] St Thérèse's spirituality can be characterized by spiritual 'childhood' (as her name, St Thérèse of the Child Jesus, suggests). Her writings are full of a childlike sense of play. For example, she writes, 'O little Childe Jesus! My own treasure, I abandon myself to your divine whims, I wish for no other joy but that of making you smile.' (Quoted by Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit: Thérèse of*

(showing his love of Carmelite spirituality) as examples of saints whose spiritualities show flashes of humour. Among Christian writers in whose work he finds humour, Balthasar mentions the French authors he adores, Paul Claudel and Georges Bernanos (as the first Catholics in France to be completely free of Jansenist gloom), as well as Charles Péguy. Unsurprisingly, he takes the liberty of 'appropriating for the Catholics that humour of C. S. Lewis' (333) and refers to G. K. Chesterton as the author whose writings show that 'only the Catholic form guarantees the miraculous quality of being, the freedom, the sense of being a child, of adventure, the resilient, energizing paradox of existence' (331).

We should also mention Mozart in this context. After declaring that the saints never lack a sense of humour, Balthasar briefly mentions in a parenthesis that 'Karl Barth who so loved and understood Mozart' (329–330) should not be regarded as humourless either, implying that the appreciation of Mozart's music indicates a sense of humour—despite the fact that Barth could not abide the Catholic 'And'.[15] Considering the theological importance of Mozart for Balthasar, as well as for Barth,[16] this remark is worth noting. For Balthasar, music is a meeting place of opposites (whether they are the human and the divine, what can and cannot be spoken, or time and eternity) as well as, in Mozart particularly, an art-form which can contain the whole within a fragment.[17] Theologically speaking, Balthasar sees something similar in sense of humour and in the ability to appreciate symphonic music, the classic example of which, for him, is Mozart. In Balthasar's words:

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, by Doris Stock, 1789

Lisieux and Elizabeth of the Trinity, translated by Donald Nichols, Anne English Nash and Dennis D. Martin [San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992], 291.)

[15] The reformed theologian Karl Barth himself was deeply aware of the significance of a sense of humour in Christian faith, which would be a topic worth exploring in itself. See for example, Daniel L. Migliore, 'Karl Barth: Theologian with a Sense of Humor', *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin,* 7/3 (1986), 276–279. It has often been noted from the evidence of his personal letters that Mozart himself had a strong, if sometimes silly and rude, sense of humour. See Robert Spaethling, *Mozart's Letters, Mozart's Life: Selected Letters* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000).

[16] See Philip McCosker, '"Blessed Tension": Barth and Von Balthasar on the Music of Mozart', *The Way*, 44/4 (October 2005), 81–95.

[17] See McCosker, 'Blessed Tension', 91–92.

> Christian truth is symphonic. Symphony by no means implies a sickly sweet harmony lacking all tension. Great music is always dramatic: there is a continual process of intensification, followed by a release of tension at a higher level …. Mozart imparts something winged, buoyant, internally vibrant to his simplest melody … so that the power that enables us to recognise him after only a few bars seems to flow from an inexhaustible reservoir of blessed tension ….[18]

To appreciate, and compose, symphonic music requires an ability to hear the melody as a whole while enjoying its inherent tension. Like sense of humour, it requires balance.

Balthasar and the 'Tragic' Christian Existence

All of this might simply be brushed aside as a series of random, idiosyncratic comments inserted between 'serious' discussions about the structure of the Church, but the names to which Balthasar refers show a distinctive preference for certain authors which is also clear from his other writings. Further, the context where his comments are placed and his understanding of humour as indicative of balance among tensions or forces suggest that these comments can be integrated into his wider theology. This notion of balance is an important characteristic of Balthasar's way of thinking, which can be seen almost everywhere in his writings.

There is, however, a paradox here. For despite his appreciation of the humour of the saints, it is not comedy but tragedy that deeply influences Balthasar's theology, and it is in this context that his comments on humour are worth examining. Balthasar is regarded as a pioneer in the area of theological engagement with tragedy.[19] While there is a long-standing view that Christianity is fundamentally anti-tragic,[20] for Balthasar Christianity actually sustains tragedy. He explores the tragic dimension of Christian existence in various places. For example, he writes:

[18] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Truth is Symphonic: Aspects of Christian Pluralism*, translated by Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1987), 15.

[19] One of the major theologians who have followed him regarding this matter is certainly Donald MacKinnon. Balthasar's approach to tragedy has been critically examined by scholars such as Ben Quash and Kevin Taylor. See Ben Quash, 'Christianity as Hyper-Tragic', in *Facing Tragedies*, volume 2, edited by Christopher Hamilton and others (Vienna: LIT, 2009), 77–88; Kevin Taylor, 'Hans Urs von Balthasar and Christ the Tragic Hero', in *Christian Theology and Tragedy: Theologians, Tragic Literature and Tragic Theory*, edited by Kevin Taylor and Giles Waller (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 133–148: Kevin Taylor, *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Question of Tragedy in the Novels of Thomas Hardy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

[20] George Steiner, for example, declares that tragedy is dead after Christianity, because hope is always present. In his words, 'Christianity is an anti-tragic vision of the world …. It leads the soul toward justice and resurrection …. Being a threshold to the eternal, the death of a Christian hero can be an occasion for sorrow but not for tragedy.' (*The Death of Tragedy* [New York: Hill and Wang, 1968], 331–332.)

> The Cross has removed the wall of division, as the Letter to the Ephesians says, in the tortured flesh of Christ. And yet this wall seems to be set up higher and more unsurmountably than ever. The Cross is judgement and therefore division: one thief is on the left, and another is on the right. But it is wholly dialectical: Jesus openly makes a promise to the thief on his right and says nothing to the thief on his left. But in order that the thief on the right may win the promise, Jesus unites himself in secret with the thief on the left in the solidarity of being rejected. *The Christian is exposed to this situation of being torn; and what other name than tragic could one find for this*, if one looks back to the Greek stage?[21]

Balthasar sees something fundamentally tragic in the 'in-between' state of the Christian. The Christian (and therefore the Church made of Christians as well) is characterized by paradoxical twofoldness in many ways. The Christian is a 'justified sinner', forgiven but not exempt from judgment, redeemed by Christ but still exposed to sin as long as he or she lives in this world. The Christian is a paradoxical being, constantly torn between the eternal truth of Christ and the laws of the world. For Balthasar, the Church is tragic 'in its innermost being', to the extent that it believes itself 'to be redeemed once and for all', when, in truth, the Church is different from its sinless archetype, the Virgin Mary (*Ecclesia Immaculata*).[22] As a matter of fact, Christians can be even more vulnerably exposed to sin than non-believers, exactly because only they can be tempted to believe that they are redeemed once and for all and to forget their paradoxical status as *simul iustus et peccator* or 'justified sinners'.

Forgiven but not exempt from judgment

At the same time we should never forget that the Christian can be called 'tragic' only in the sense of 'tragedy under grace',[23] for, despite the tragic dimension of the Christian existence, Christians always have the privilege of relating their own tragedy to the paschal mystery, thus receiving hope and consolation even in the midst of their suffering. In order to describe the Christian existence, indeed, Balthasar uses the image of the Christian stretched out on the cross, which is 'formed by the crisscrossing beams of the old aeon and the new'.[24] He writes:

[21] Hans Urs von Balthasar, 'Tragedy and Christian Faith', in *Explorations in Theology*, volume 3, *Creator Spirit*, translated by Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993), 406. Italics added.
[22] Balthasar, 'Tragedy and Christian Faith', 409.
[23] This phrase is used by Reinhold Schneider, a German Catholic novelist admired by Balthasar. See Balthasar, *Tragedy under Grace: Reinhold Schneider on the Experience of the West*, translated by Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1997).
[24] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, translated by Aidan Nichols (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1990), 264.

> The Church, and Christians, can occupy no determinate place within the *Mysterium Paschale*. Their place is neither in front of the Cross nor behind it, but on both its sides: without ever settling for the one vantage point or the other they look from now one, now the other, as ceaselessly directed. And yet *this see-saw* by no means lacks a support, because the Unique One is the identity of Cross and Resurrection, and Christian and ecclesial existence is disappropriated into him.[25]

This state described as a 'see-saw' is exactly what we have been calling the 'tragic' state of the Christian existence. The Christian's life is like a 'see-saw', alternating between the cross and the resurrection, death and life, the old aeon and the new, this world and the truth of Christ, but it is always supported by Christ Himself who went through both.

Balance in Christian Life

The metaphor of the 'see-saw' brings us back to humour as a balance among tensions (whether they are within the Church or between the Church and the secular world). On the one hand, Balthasar describes Christian existence, torn as it is between opposing forces, as 'tragic'. On the other hand, he says that a good Christian (or, more specifically, a good Catholic) should have a good sense of humour. The key to connecting these two points lies in his emphasis on the 'in-betweenness' of Christian existence, which is constantly located in tension.

Calvary, *by David Teniers the Elder, mid seventeenth century*

By placing Balthasar's comments on the humour of the saints in the context of his 'tragic' view of Christianity, I have tried to present a

[25] Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale,* 266. Italics added.

balanced discussion of the significance of humour itself, which has to be distinguished from mere frivolity or flippancy. As C. S. Lewis reminds us, the devil is pleased to see flippancy, because 'the habit of flippancy builds up around a man the finest armour-plating against the Enemy'—that is, the Enemy of the devil, or God.[26]

Balthasar's 'tragic' view of the Christian implies that suffering plays an important role in Christian life, so it helps us to see the significance of humour in the face of suffering. After all, it is exactly in the midst of suffering that the humour of saints stands out remarkably as 'a mysterious but unmistakable charism' (330). The saints we have mentioned above are also those who have suffered greatly.[27] In the suffering of the saints we often see joy based on trust in God in its purest form. Certainly humour is not the same as joy, but it would be safe to say that joy can be expressed in the form of humour.[28] We have to keep in mind that such coexistence of suffering and joy (not at all in a masochistic sense) is made possible because of the Christian's in-between state in relation to God and this world.

In the end, only with a full awareness of the paradoxical twofoldness inherent in the Christian existence can we really appreciate the value of humour to a Christian who confesses, as St Paul did, 'it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me' (Galatians 2:20) or is 'always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies …. So death is at work in us, but life in you.' (2 Corinthians 4: 10–12) Speaking of the existential status of saints, Balthasar writes:

> They do not turn their backs on the whole world in order to enjoy the rest of heaven in advance. Rather, they live a life of intense longing and move the world by the strength of that heaven that has first been granted to them and then closed to them. They hang crucified between this world and the beyond.[29]

In the last analysis, theologically speaking, having a good sense of humour means having a balanced view of life while loving both God and oneself,

[26] C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001 [1942]), 56.
[27] It is not a coincidence that many of the saints and authors whom Balthasar mentions as examples of Christians with a sense of humour also happen to be those to whom he refers in the context of his theology of Christ's descent into hell.
[28] As Jacques Roi says, 'one can be joyous without having any sense of humour, but humour implies that the soul is in joy'. (See Roi, *L'Humour des saints*, 15.)
[29] Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit*, 212.

and God and creation. In daily life, this attitude takes the forms of humility, healthy optimism, and respect and compassion towards others, all of which are made possible by focusing our existence on God instead of ourselves.

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THE CHILDREN OF SARAH, HAGAR AND MARY

A Feminist Perspective on Judaism, Islam and Christianity

Oscar Momanyi

In the name of God, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy.[1]

THE THREE MAIN ABRAHAMIC RELIGIONS—Judaism, Islam and Christianity—have been linked, historically and theologically, to the patriarch Abraham, to whom God promised 'I will make of you a great nation' (Genesis 12: 2).[2] This relationship has been taken for granted as an interpretative lens for understanding the three religions. But such a viewpoint has relegated the three matriarchs of the faiths—Sarah, Hagar and Mary—to the periphery of discourses about them. Reflecting on Judaism, Islam and Christianity from the perspective of women can elicit fresh insights within the self-understanding of the three faiths and help foster a dialogue between them that can result in reconciliation and peace.

I shall begin this reflection by rereading the stories of Sarah, Hagar and Mary, exploring the lessons that we can learn from the struggles of these three mothers. I shall then turn to my own encounter with people who practise the three religions in Israel-Palestine, and especially to the women I met there. I think these contemporary women, like our ancient mothers, Sarah, Hagar and Mary, can teach us how to overcome hostility, violence and suspicion in the name of religion.

Rereading the Stories of the Mothers

Challenging the patriarchal foundations of Judaism, Islam and Christianity by shifting the focus precisely from patriarchs to matriarchs, studying

[1] All the *sura* (chapters) in the Qur'ān begin with this line.

[2] See Aaron W. Hughes, *Abrahamic Religions: On the Uses and Abuses of History* (New York: Oxford UP, 2012), 1–33. In this introductory chapter, Hughes deconstructs the idea of 'Abrahamic religions' and argues that too much attention has been given to the similarities between these religions. He proposes that studying them by focusing on their differences instead can enrich our understanding of them.

religion from the perspective of women, can enrich our understanding of these religions. It can suggest alternative interpretations on the basis of an 'ethics of care', manifested in motherly care and often associated with feminist ethical theory, rather than the 'ethics of justice' sometimes associated with patriarchy.[3]

The three mothers can teach us that religious differences should not necessarily be experienced as negative. Differences can be integrated into people's experience in creative ways that can lead to life in abundance. This does not preclude tension and conflicts, rather it entails imaginative possibilities for transforming them into positive energies. The lives of the three mothers are full of conflict, but a rereading of the biblical narratives reveals that positive guidance can be fashioned from their stories for the religious quest in the twenty-first century, so that religious pluralism does not threaten peace and stability.

Religious differences should not necessarily be experienced as negative

How are the three mothers connected to the three major religions? Jacob (Israel), the younger son of Isaac, himself the son of Sarah (formerly Sarai) and Abraham (Abram), is considered as a patriarch of Israel. Jacob had twelve sons, who represent the twelve tribes of Israel. Thus, through this special connection to Jacob, Jews consider themselves as directly connected to Abraham and Sarah. Ishmael, the son of Hagar and Abraham, is considered as a prophet and patriarch of Islam.[4] Mary, the wife of Joseph in the New Testament, is the mother of Jesus, who, in Matthew's genealogy, can also be traced back to Abraham. All Christians believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and Muslims also consider him to be a prophet. Thus, the mothers link these three religions in a special way.

The story of Sarah and Hagar, and their children, Isaac and Ishmael, narrated in Genesis is a story of struggle. It is convenient for us to avoid facing the struggle that these mothers go through in Genesis—to read past it. However, I think that the struggles of these mothers can help us reflect on the struggle that the three major religions face in the twenty-first century, and can be a way to begin healing religious division. In order to understand the story and the struggle of these two women, the

[3] See Nel Noddings, *Caring, a Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley: U. of California P, 1984), 1: 'One might say that ethics has been discussed largely in the language of the father: in principles and propositions, in terms such as justification, fairness, justice. The mother's voice has been silent.'

[4] Qur'ān 2: 127–138.

reader needs to resist the narrator in the Genesis account. Resisting the narrator means reading the narrative in a manner that documents a different perspective from the narrator's.[5] Avoiding the narrator's focus on major male characters to read Genesis 16 from the perspectives of Sarah and Hagar can be enlightening.

What do we learn from the struggle of Sarah and Hagar? It revolves around two issues: the fertility of the two women and the oppression out of which the narrative itself emerges.[6] In regard to fertility, the narrator in Genesis 16 informs the reader that Sarai had not given birth to a child and that she said to Abram: 'You see that the Lord has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my slave-girl; it may be that I shall obtain children by her' (Genesis 16:2). Therefore, Abram had intercourse with the Egyptian slave, Hagar, and she conceived. However, afterwards Sarai felt insulted and belittled, and she began to be hostile to Hagar, treating her so badly that Hagar had to run away into the desert. But when Hagar was in the wilderness, an angel of the Lord appeared to her near a spring and told her to return, announcing: 'I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude' (Genesis 16:10).

At a personal level, the basic conflict between Sarah and Hagar arises from human feelings linked to fertility.[7] Sarai's bold move of asking Abraham to take Hagar as a wife in order to get a child who would continue the lineage (Genesis 16:3) can be seen as repulsive, even abhorrent, by twenty-first-century readers who generally tend to favour monogamy over polygamy. But Sarai's boldness needs to be read within the patriarchal context of ancient Canaan. For a woman to take the initiative in this way was unprecedented. Sarai was challenging the passivity that was expected of women in the patriarchal societies of Genesis. She becomes an agent of her own desire for a child, and this agency is also intended to advance the promise of descendants that God had made to Abram. The promise that the angel gives to Hagar in the desert points to the fact that Hagar, too, is an agent, through whom God's will to bless the people will be fulfilled. The two women are both active

[5] I borrow the concept of 'resisting the narrator' from Gina-Hens Piazza, 'Violence in Joshua and Judges: How to Address Violence and Its Victims', *The Bible Today*, 39 (July 2001).

[6] See Letty M. Russell. 'Children of Struggle', in *Hagar, Sarah, and Their Children: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives*, edited by Phyllis Trible and Letty M. Russell (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 186.

[7] See *The Anchor Bible: Genesis*, edited by E. A. Speiser (London: Doubleday, 1964), 119.

rather than passive, and without them God's plan for Abraham and these women would not have materialised.

The women in Genesis 16 are the principal actors; the man, Abram, passively accepts what he is told.[8] And the promise of blessing made to Abram in Genesis 15 is also made to Hagar in the next chapter; God not only makes a covenant with the patriarch but also with a mother in distress. This parity can offer hope to contemporary women who face oppression. The story of Hagar can help them interpret a situation of oppression imaginatively in such a way that it is not final, but offers hope for a new blessing from God and a homecoming where there will be no oppression.[9] In contemporary theology God's promise made to Abram seems to have eclipsed the promise to the lowly slave woman. But what can be made of this promise to Hagar? Is it possible to argue that the promise encompasses Muslims, who trace their line to Abraham through Hagar?

In the New Testament Gospels, we can see Mary, too, having her struggles in the patriarchal context of the first century. But she nevertheless accepts the enormous responsibility of being the mother of Jesus. How can the struggles of two mothers in the Torah, Sarah and Hagar, along with that of Mary, be interpreted in life-giving ways for a twenty-first-century reader of the scriptures? How can the mothers rather than the fathers be a model of peace instead of enmity and violence between the three Abrahamic religions?

The Daily Lives of the Children of Sarah, Hagar and Mary

In her book *Understanding Other Religious Worlds*, Judith Berling outlines five threads in the process of learning about other religions. The first of these involves 'entering other worlds through engaging and crossing boundaries of significant difference'.[10] Encountering difference can startle us, but it is from that unsettled state that understanding another religious world begins. This does not need to lead to conversion, but can result in broadened sensibilities and a refined view of our own religious identity.[11]

[8] See Gordon John Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 16–50* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 5.
[9] See Walter Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 115.
[10] Judith A. Berling, *Understanding Other Religious Worlds: A Guide for Interreligious Education* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004), 64.
[11] Berling, *Understanding Other Religious Worlds*, 13.

Participants in the author's immersion programme praying at the Western Wall, Jerusalem

In appreciating the goodness of another religion, we are able to appreciate the goodness of the Christian faith that we ourselves profess.

In January 2016, I participated, together with thirteen other Christian men and women, in two weeks' immersion in Israel-Palestine, where we encountered in a radical way the differences between the three Abrahamic religions and lived through the tension that those differences elicited.[12] We observed how people practising these religions side by side interact and engage with one another and, in that process, we hoped to learn more about ourselves and the way we live, and should live, as Christians. We deliberately focused our observation on women, with the aim of gaining insights into how the women's ethic of hospitality and generosity can emerge in a situation of tension that sometimes leads to violence. We attempted to resist the masculine narrative about the three religions that emphasizes justice and retribution over forgiveness and understanding. The experience opened our eyes to the reality that members of these three religions are all children of God.

The Holy Land, paradoxically, is where the children of Sarah, Hagar and Mary struggle most to live in harmony with each other. Much blood

[12] This was a semester-long graduate course with an immersion component, entitled 'Children of Sarah, Hagar and Mary' taught at the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University in Berkeley, California, as part of the Master of Divinity programme. It was directed by a professor of Old Testament studies, Gina-Hens Piazza.

has been shed in the process. A poor understanding of the religions' differences has been one of the causes of the escalating violence between them. The three mothers remind us that we can be different and yet still understand each other. They themselves are different in many ways. Differences can serve as points of departure for reflection that can enhance dialogue and mutual trust between the three major religions. The encounter with difference can also help us to appreciate how the struggle of the three faiths can be a struggle for life and reconciliation rather than one that leads to division and antagonism. Celebrating differences while engaging in dialogue is important in living with religious tension and diversity, so that our differences may become a blessing rather than a curse.

Children of Mary at the Via Dolorosa

Our encounter began at the Ecce Homo convent and pilgrim house, Via Dolorosa 41 in Jerusalem. We met children of Mary—fellow Christians: the Sisters of Zion. These are Christian women who live in the Muslim quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem. The Sisters of Zion strive to give prophetic witness in the middle of the religious hostility of the Holy Land. Their charism reflects a particular awareness of God's love for the Jewish people.[13]

The Ecce Homo Convent, and the Ghawanima Minaret of the al-Aqsa Mosque

[13] 'Charism', at http://www.notredamedesion.org/en/page.php?id=2&T=1, accessed 17 February 2017.

Their lives offer an alternative story: a counter-narrative that peace and reconciliation are possible. They do not need to speak; they proclaim this story by their lives. They preach by their lives. Their hospitality to the many pilgrims flowing into Jerusalem is a prophetic witness: the sisters welcome everyone, no matter what their faith. In a place full of enmity and suspicion, here we meet women of faith who welcome people and share their lives with them in joy. Hospitality does not know difference of religion; it is God's welcoming embrace in the midst of difference.[14]

Many mosques can be seen in the Muslim quarter. Just across from the Sisters of Zion convent there is a large mosque from which the muezzin's call to prayer can be heard five times a day. The sisters do not seem disturbed by it; they have embraced the call to prayer as a constant reminder that, as Christians, they too are called to a life of prayer and reflection. Growing up in Kenya, I felt that the muezzin's call was a rude interruption to the tranquillity of our neighbourhood. But standing in Jerusalem, the holiest site in Christendom, my perspective on Islam began to change. I started to appreciate that other people have their own way of seeking God; they have the desire, just as I do, to seek the face of God. That awareness made me feel solidarity with people of other religions.

Praying with the Psalms and the Torah

Our group arrived in Jerusalem at the beginning of Shabbat (Friday at sunset), the Jewish holy day of rest and prayer. After settling in, we headed to the Jewish quarter, where we encountered thousands of Jewish people praying at the Western Wall. They believe that God's presence rests in the wall, part of which is understood to be a remnant of the Second Temple, destroyed in AD 70. Initially I was scared of the numerous soldiers wielding M-16s whom we met on the streets on our way and as we went through the checkpoints. The number of people praying at the wall at Shabbat was also overwhelming. Eventually we reached the prayer area and prayed together with the many Jews there. My fear dissipated as I found myself side by side with the children of Sarah, most of them wearing their Shabbat dresses and deeply immersed in prayer. The men prayed separately from the women according to Jewish custom.

[14] See Letty M. Russell, *Just Hospitality: God's Welcome in a World of Difference*, edited by J. Shannon Clarkson and Kate M. Ott (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009).

All the men, including visitors, were offered a *kippah*, that little Jewish sacred skullcap, to wear before entering the prayer area. As a Christian, I found it humbling to wear a sacred Jewish object. I felt that this outward gesture was a sign of solidarity with these people who were extending a welcoming embrace to me even though they did not know who I was. Most important was to realise that the *kippah* is a symbol of Someone above who looks after us below. The *kippah* reminded me of my humanity and helped me appreciate how I depend on the One who is above.

One member of our group brought his Liturgy of the Hours (a collection of prayers, mainly from the book of Psalms, used in the Roman Catholic Church) to the prayer area. He described feeling at peace praying the Psalms alongside thousands of other people praying their Torah. I carried prayers written on small pieces of paper and inserted them in the cracks on the Western Wall—an ancient tradition. These were prayers I had brought for various people who had asked me to pray for them in the Holy Land. I felt deeply connected to all those whose prayers I could see stuck in the cracks all over the wall. There was a deep sense of communion between the people there, no matter what their prayers were. We are all created in the image of God, and I did not feel judged because of my colour or religion but accepted as a child of God.

Shabbat Shalom: Shabbat of a Lifetime

The next moving experience was our Shabbat meal with a Jewish family. I had read about this Jewish holy practice but had never taken part in it before. It was a life-changing experience to join in that sacred meal in a Jewish household: ours was Shabbat of a lifetime. Our host, let us call him Yacob, was a young man.[15] Yacob and his wife, Rahab, are blessed with five children: three girls and two boys. We quickly felt at home in their house; Rahab and her children offered us a warm, welcoming embrace. They met us with a *Shabbat shalom*, a special Jewish greeting wishing us a peaceful Shabbat. Rahab had already lit candles. She told me that the lighting of candles by the women of the house is a custom during Shabbat that is supposed to create a sense of peace in the home (*shalom bayit*). As she spoke I reflected on the role of women as conduits of peace.

[15] Names have been changed to preserve the privacy of the persons concerned.

We began the Shabbat rituals with songs and prayers. Before we washed our hands, silence was observed and all the children of the house were blessed by their parents. This was a powerful symbol of how we are always blessed as unique and different children of God: our differences do not stop God from blessing us. Therefore we need to celebrate difference, even religious differences, in ways that manifest God's love for us.

Afterwards, the meal was punctuated by prayers, moments of silence, sharing of experiences and laughter. There was joy in the encounter by which Christians learnt from Jews and vice versa. I felt connected with everyone at that table. Eating together has a way of bringing people together in a profound way. It is not surprising that both Christianity and Judaism have table fellowship at the centre of their liturgies. Participating in that Shabbat meal helped to reinforce in me the idea that mealtimes are an opportunity to encounter God. Although I was in a Jewish home, I also felt deeply connected to my Christian roots. The experience reminded me of the Last Supper.

During and after our Shabbat meal, Rahab shared passionately with us the struggles that her family faces in living in the tension-filled city of Jerusalem. She noted that most of their neighbours are Muslims, and they generally have a good relationship. It is only when radical groups incite violence that there is suspicion and sometimes hatred. 'Deep down', she said, 'we know that our Muslim neighbours are good people, and we want to live in harmony with them'. Listening to Rahab speak about her experience moved me and made me feel that reconciliation is possible, especially if we let love and care, embodied in women such as Rahab, lead the process.

Rahab seemed to care deeply not only for her family but also for her Muslim neighbours, and she yearned for peace and tranquillity. She embodied an ethic of care, hospitality and welcome. She treated us as part of her family. Her home was small, yet she managed to find space for fourteen of us and to feed us on Shabbat. She taught me that there is always space for everyone I meet in my heart, whatever his or her religious affiliation. I just have to open myself to encounter people who are different.

Memories of the Second Intifada: Two Women Decide to Say No to Violence

We were fortunate to meet two particularly remarkable women. One is a Jew (let us call her Rebecca), and the other is a Muslim (let us call her Fatma). Both of them have suffered in the violence and atrocities that

Jerusalem has experienced over the years. However, they have decided that violence and hatred cannot be stumbling blocks on their road to peace and reconciliation. They feel that if women from the two religions can begin to come together to pray, talk about their experiences and eat, that could be the first step back from violence and hatred between the Muslims and the Jews of Jerusalem. This is a risky venture because leaders from both sides of the religious divide (mostly men) discourage such meetings. In patriarchal societies such as those of Jerusalem it is a very bold step for women to reject the status quo and initiate change from the grassroots.

During the Second Intifada, or the Al-Aqsa Intifada, which began in 2000, there were many suicide bombings in Jerusalem. The Intifada was basically a Palestinian uprising against the Israelis, but it quickly took on religious dimensions (Muslims versus Jews). For Rebecca, the Second Intifada was personal. Her son was severely injured by a suicide bomb in central Jerusalem. He was rushed to the Hadassah (Esther) Ein Kerem Hospital, where his mother found him. He had serious wounds and it was not clear if he would survive.

The Hadassah Ein Kerem Hospital was originally built and is still supported by a Jewish foundation, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, but serves everyone, no matter what their religious affiliation. It is another example of women taking the initiative to bring peace, harmony and healing in a broken society. When Rebecca arrived at the hospital, shocked and angry, she asked to meet the doctor who was caring for her son, and was surprised to find out that he was a Muslim. Rebecca felt conflicted: 'one Muslim wanted to kill my son, and another Muslim wants to save his life'. But at that moment her anger was transformed; she started thinking of ways to channel her anger creatively so as to change the world for the better. Her experience altered Rebecca's perception of Muslims.

After the recovery of her son, Rebecca decided to set up an interfaith group bringing Muslim and Jewish women together in order to foster reconciliation and peace. Christian women are welcomed too. Rebecca was lucky to find Fatma, a Muslim who was ready to enter into dialogue with Jewish women. Over the years the two have maintained the interfaith group of women, which makes a discreet impact on the Muslim and Jewish communities in Jerusalem and other parts of the Holy Land. These children of Sarah, Hagar and Mary are turning their struggles into an opportunity for positive change in their communities. They are

convinced that women have a better chance than men of helping reduce the tension and violence in the Holy Land. Rebecca and Fatma are 'midwives for peace, justice, and reconciliation'.[16] They are agents of change motivated by the desire to do good in this broken world.

Finding God at the Temple Mount

One morning after breakfast, we headed towards the Temple Mount (הַבַּיִת הַר, Har HaBáyitin Hebrew and الحرم الشريف, al-Ḥaram al-Šarīf in Arabic), the holiest site in Judaism and the third holiest in Islam. There we met Professor Mustafa Abu Sway, a Muslim scholar who would help us to understand the struggles that have taken place on the Temple Mount over the years.[17] He seemed to me a joyful man who recognised the presence of Allah in his life. I did not feel a sense of bitterness in him, although he had clearly experienced difficult times living in the Holy City. He was a gracious, caring guide, who exemplified hospitality between one religious tradition and another.

Inside the al-Aqsa Mosque, Temple Mount

The Temple Mount has been at the centre of tensions between Muslims and Jews in Israel. The Jews believe that the Second Temple once stood there, hence the holy of holies—the place where God's presence is manifested more than anywhere else—is located somewhere on the Temple Mount. The Muslims also have important sites: the

[16] L. Juliana M. Claassens, *Mourner, Mother, Midwife: Reimagining God's Delivering Presence in the Old Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 79.

[17] See http://www.alquds.edu/en/staff-profiles/faculty-of-arts-staff/116-department-of-philosophy/465-mustafa-abu-sway.html, accessed 15 October 2016.

Dome of the Rock, the Dome of the Chains and the al-Aqsa mosque. Soldiers could be seen everywhere and tension was in the air. However, I felt a deep sense of peace, reverence and holiness as we approached the Temple Mount. I clearly felt God's presence; despite the human tensions I felt that God was close to me.

Professor Abu Sway first took us to the al-Aqsa mosque and told us about its history, architecture and art. Although I grew up in Kenya, a country where about a third of the population are Muslims,[18] I had never entered a mosque before. This was partly because I thought that I would not be welcome, and also because my image of Muslims had been clouded by negative stereotypes. The gracious welcome that we received at the mosque overwhelmed me. After many years of living alongside Muslims but having little contact with them, I could not believe that I was entering such a holy Islamic site. We took off our shoes and entered the mosque reverently. This reminded me of Moses' experience at the burning bush: 'Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground' (Exodus 3:5). Professor Abu Sway then took us inside the Dome of the Rock and showed us around the Temple Mount area, explaining the history of the conflicts there. Soldiers kept following us and eavesdropping on what he was saying. One person in our group was touched by an act of kindness at the Dome of the Rock. As we were standing there, a Muslim woman approached her, looked her in the eye and lovingly gave her a gift. That was for me a sign that we were all welcome, although we clearly came from a different religious tradition.

Finding God at Aida Refugee Camp

The Wi'am Centre, or Agape Centre, is a Palestinian conflict resolution and transformation centre in Bethlehem.[19] It is located close to the Aida Refugee Camp, where many Palestinians from Jerusalem and Hebron have been living since about 1950. Zoughbi Zoughbi, a witty Palestinian Christian, is the founder and director. The centre is also close to the Separation

[18] See http://www.muslimpopulation.com/africa/, accessed 15 October 2016.

[19] Wi'am was honoured with the 2010 Peacebuilding Award by World Vision International for 'successfully integrating traditional Palestinian mediation customs with innovative academic models of conflict analysis to address the very difficult circumstances of Palestinians living in the West Bank'. See http://kroc.nd.edu/profiles-peacebuilding/zoughbi-ma-89, accessed 15 October 2016; see also http://www.alaslah.org/, accessed 20 February 2017.

Barrier, the eight-metre-high wall that separates the Palestinian areas from Israel. Zoughbi explained to us the struggles that the Palestinians face and Wi'am's efforts to help resolve conflicts within the community. Some tension was once again evident; the soldiers on the watchtowers were observing, and we were told that they were ready to retaliate at the slightest provocation.

The people at the centre try to use several ways to help solve conflicts. One of them stood out; it is called *Sulha*. *Sulha* is derived from the word '*Sulh*', which means 'to make peace' or 'reconciliation' in Arabic.[20] *Sulha* is a traditional Palestinian mediation process in which mediators go to a scene of conflict and listen to people from both sides. The main mission of the mediators is to bring the aggrieved parties together and work towards restoring relationships. Drinking coffee crowns the mediation process. The aggrieved persons drink together and then they shake hands as a sign that the relationship is amended.

Life in the refugee camps and in other Palestinians areas is rough and tough. We could see that clearly at Aida Refugee Camp, just across from the Wi'am centre: conflict within communities emerges all the time. By the use of *Sulha*, which emphasizes relationships, love and care, the mediators of Wi'am help many Palestinians cope with their difficulties and find meaning in their lives. Christians and Jews can also learn much from the *Sulha* process. The Wi'am centre is involved in many other peace initiatives, among them the empowerment of youth and women, non-violent resistance and ministry to Palestinian prisoners. The centre is helping to keep hope alive in a situation that can lead people into disillusionment. Zoughbi gives a powerful witness as a Christian who feels at home and finds joy working with his Muslim brothers and sisters. His theology is grounded on the fact that we are all children of God.

Initially, we were welcomed to the centre with endless cups of coffee and tea, then we had a huge banquet lunch. There were many Muslim women who worked behind the scenes, silently preparing the banquet for us. They cared for us even though they did not know who we were and where we came from. We felt at home in the centre, even though we were overlooking the Separation Barrier with armed soldiers looking down on us. The hospitality we experienced at Wi'am challenged us to think about the walls that we ourselves can create, and that may block us

[20] See http://www.alaslah.org/sulha/, accessed 15 October 2016.

from experiencing the hospitality and the humanity of others. One slogan written on the Separation Barrier helped me to think about the barriers in my own life. The graffiti urged me to 'make hummus not walls'.

Hummus not Walls

The struggles that people of different religious affiliations face, in Israel-Palestine and throughout the world, are real. Exploring the religions from the perspective of women can help us to understand these struggles and thus help transform anger into a positive force. One day, as we were going to visit Rachel's tomb—a site holy to all three Abrahamic religions—we saw a young Israeli woman soldier firing tear gas at Palestinian protesters who were throwing stones over the Separation Barrier. The next day a Bedouin trader on Via Dolorosa welcomed two of us into his shop with a cup of coffee and two cups of tea. He then spent more than an hour speaking to us and showing us his shop as if we were members of his family. These two experiences reminded me that on both sides of the religious divide—and among both men and women—hospitality and enmity coexist. That is the ambiguity of life; but, as people of faith, we can still recognise God's presence in that ambiguity. Facing the tensions and struggles that arise from religious differences can be a way to overcome fear and division and can help the children of Sarah, Hagar and Mary to work together as members of one body with many parts (1 Corinthians 12:12). The ethics of care embodied in men

and women can be a starting point for the healing of divisions, hatred and violence in the name of religion.

As we walked through the Old City of Jerusalem, children taught us a lot. It was difficult for us to tell the difference between Jewish and Muslim children. On many occasions, after an attempted conversation, we said *shukran* ('thank you' in Arabic) to Jewish children and *toda* ('thank you' in Hebrew) to Muslim children. Often, the children responded joyfully even so; they seemed to have embraced their differences and were not startled by the mistake. I prayed that God might grant us that childlike embrace of one another's differences.

Walking on the Via Dolorosa and praying the stations of the cross with Mary and Jesus, we came across Jewish, Muslim and Christian traders. God was there with us amidst the hustle and bustle of life. There was also tension: the soldiers with their M-16s were watching closely as ever; but God was watching even more closely, granting us peace. God continues to bless the children of Sarah, Hagar and Mary as he blessed Hagar in the desert. God continues to offer salvation to his people in all historical circumstances, even amidst deep religious conflict.

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THE SPIRIT BLOWS WHERE IT CHOOSES

Simone Weil, the Church and Vatican II

Jane Khin Zaw

WHEN POPE JOHN XXIII threw open a window to let in the fresh air, he was pointing out the Church's crying need for renewal, for a new lease of life.[1] And he was evoking in this way a powerful symbol. Air is the very breath of life. But it is significant that as a symbol of the Spirit it is always in motion, whether as a mighty wind or a gentle breeze. Karl Barth used the same imagery for the breath of the Spirit in his last lectures in the United States, in the year that the Council began. He seems to put into words Pope John's own thoughts that year when he warned us against 'unspiritual theology':

> The Spirit departs when theology enters a room whose stagnant air automatically prevents it from being and doing what it can, may and must be and do ….
>
> He, the Holy One, the Lord, the Giver of Life, waits and waits to be received anew by theology as by the community.[2]

In his speech convoking the Council, John XXIII called on all Christians to join him in his prayer to the Holy Spirit: 'Renew your wonders in our time, as though in a new Pentecost'.[3] For, as Barth affirms, 'Only where the Spirit is sighed, cried and prayed for does he become present and newly active'.[4]

This insight was shared by Simone Weil, a young Frenchwoman of Jewish descent who, twenty years before the Council, was deeply conscious

[1] See *Wit and Wisdom of Good Pope John*, edited by Henri Fesquet (London: Harvill, 1964), 126.
[2] Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), 56–57.
[3] John XXIII, *Humanae salutis* (1961). English translation at https://jakomonchak.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/humanae-salutis.pdf, accessed 24 March 2017.
[4] Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, 58.

of how much the Church and the Church's theology needed renewing for the sake of the world. The Spirit can only touch hearts that are open and thirsting to receive it. In her meditations on the 'Our Father', her profoundly Christian instinct reaches out for the Kingdom of God, which to her means,

> … the complete filling of the entire soul of intelligent creatures with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit bloweth where He listeth? We can only invite him … purely and simply, so that our thought of him is an invitation, a longing cry. It is as when one is in extreme thirst … the image of water is like a cry from our whole being.[5]

In the light of the renewal of ecclesiology achieved by Vatican II, and indeed of all the Council's renewals, one might almost say that it was Simone Weil's vocation to bear a kind of prophetic witness to the need for such renewal.

Never having been baptized, Weil was not formally a member of the Church. But her extreme sensitivity to the Church's deficiencies, which kept her from asking for baptism, seems to indicate that at heart she was a true child of the Church. Hers was not the destructive criticism of the hostile outsider (nor of the heretic some have judged her to be). She did not believe that we should dispense with the Church and go directly to God, for the incarnation and all that it implies were essential to her view of Christianity. Many discerning members of the Church—including both popes of the Council, John and Paul—have greatly valued her thoughts as an inspiring and positive contribution to Christian spirituality.

On the eve of Vatican II, Pope John was praying for a new Pentecost, and he must surely have recognised in Simone Weil's critique of the Church a similar cry of thirst for the renewing Spirit. This was the whole point and purpose of the Council: the renewal of the Church for the sake of the world. But which Church? And what world? Perhaps the most significant renewal achieved by Vatican II was that of the Church's own self-understanding. It was not so much that a clearer outline emerged. Rather the idea of the Church gained new dimensions and depths as its reality was acknowledged to transcend our grasp of it: the defined limits within which it had previously been presented seemed to dissolve and melt at the edges. At the same

The renewal of the Church for the sake of the world

[5] Simone Weil, 'Concerning the Our Father', in *Waiting on God*, translated by Emma Craufurd (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010 [1951]), 85.

time the world to which it is sent began to reveal strange properties of light and grace, so that the sending could almost be seen as a two-way process. Could it be that the Spirit was in the world as well, and not the exclusive property of the Church? As *Gaudium et spes* reiterates:

> Christ is now at work in the hearts of men through the energy of His Holy Spirit, arousing not only a desire for the age to come, but by that very fact animating, purifying and strengthening those noble longings too by which the human family makes its life more human ….[6]

This truth of the Spirit's presence and action in humanity everywhere was one of which Simone Weil was passionately convinced. 'God's wisdom', she writes, 'must be regarded as the unique source of all light upon earth'.[7] She even goes so far as to say that 'Every time a man has, with a pure heart, called upon Osiris, Dionysius, Krishna, Buddha, the Tao, etc., the Son of God has answered him by sending the Holy Spirit'.[8] It is the same truth that lies behind the Council's openness to the world, and its readiness to learn from the signs of the times, as well as its new attitude of reverence and respect towards other Churches and other religions. By its teaching that 'all men are called to this union with Christ' and 'all men are called to salvation by the grace of God', the Council says, in effect, that, by the very fact of being born a member of the human race, everyone is at least potentially part of the Christian community and, in terms of grace, belongs to it by his or her acceptance of the call.[9] From as far back as she could remember, Simone Weil was conscious of this in her own experience of grace.

One of the most consoling developments in the teaching of the Council is the understanding of the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation. The Church had for too long been thought of primarily in its visible and human aspect; theology had described it in juridical terms as an institution, a perfect society. But it is not only, or even primarily, a reality of this world but, much more, a mystery of divine grace present in history: 'one complex reality which coalesces from a divine and a human element'.[10]

6 *Gaudium et spes*, n. 3.
7 Simone Weil, *Letter to a Priest*, translated by A. F. Wills (London: Routledge, 2002 [1953]), 9.
8 Weil, *Letter to a Priest*, 15.
9 *Lumen gentium*, n. 3.
10 *Lumen gentium*, n. 8.

Council Fathers walking in St Peter's Square

Rather than presenting the Church as something static, a hierarchically organized society in contradistinction to the world, the Council preferred to speak of it as a living, growing reality of grace, 'a community of faith, hope and love', 'a communion of life, charity and truth', with limitless horizons and open to the world: 'a lasting and sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race'.[11] Its membership is far from being an exclusive elite: 'there belong to or are related to it in various ways, the Catholic faithful, all who believe in Christ, and indeed the whole of mankind, for all men are called by the grace of God to salvation'.[12]

It has been said that at Vatican II, for the first time in its history, the Church had to take account of all the implications of its catholicity. This widening of horizons would have rejoiced the heart of Simone Weil. For, paradoxically, it was Simone's belief in the very catholicity of Christianity that kept her outside the visible Catholic Church: her burning conviction that all the riches of truth and love to be found in other religions and in the whole course of human history were fruits of the one Spirit of Christ and should therefore find a place within the universal fold of the Church.

The post-Tridentine ecclesiology current in Weil's day seemed intent upon excluding all who did not conform to the institutional Church in its external confession. She felt that such rigid exclusivity contradicted the very heart of the Christian gospel of God's universal love, and her whole being protested against it. The concrete form her protest took was to

[11] *Lumen gentium*, nn. 8–9.
[12] *Lumen gentium*, n. 13.

remain a Christian outside the Church. 'The possibility of there being such a vocation', she wrote, 'would imply that the Church is not Catholic in fact as it is in name, and that it must one day become so, if it is destined to fulfil its mission'.[13]

Of course Weil knew quite well that the normal Christian vocation finds completion in baptism and sacramental incorporation in the visible Church as the manifest sign of faith. But it seemed to her that God did not require this of her yet. She did not think her inhibition could be simply a protest from her own spirit, for what held her back was 'no less strongly to be felt in the moments of attention, love and prayer than at other times'.[14] If she was refusing something God wanted of her, she would surely have had some consciousness of this. Instead,

> Up to now, although I have often asked myself the question during prayer, during Mass, or in the light of the radiancy that remains in the soul after Mass, I have never, once had, even for a moment, the feeling that God wants me to be in the Church. I have never even once had a feeling of uncertainty.[15]

In her early years Simone was ready to live as a Christian, but she was not so sure that she could accept Christian beliefs. She wrote to her friend the Dominican Fr Perrin:

> Of course I knew quite well that my conception of life was Christian. That is why it never occurred to me that I could enter the Christian community. I had the idea that I was born inside. But to add dogma to this conception of life, without being forced to do so by indisputable evidence, would have seemed to me like a lack of honesty.[16]

Though she would not hold religious beliefs, she could not avoid religious behaviour. And in giving her convinced allegiance to Christian virtues, she was already admitting the existence of a transcendent domain beyond this world. Later on, when she grasped Christianity more explicitly, she said that there was no question of opting for this world only. Because of God's offer of grace, all humankind was inescapably in a supernatural

[13] Weil, *Letter to a Priest*, 3.
[14] Simone Weil, 'Letter I: Hesitations concerning Baptism', in *Waiting on God*, 3.
[15] Simone Weil, 'Letter IV: Her Spiritual Autobiography', in *Waiting on God*, 17.
[16] Weil, 'Letter IV: Her Spiritual Autobiography', 13.

situation: 'The Christ is that key which locks together the Creator and creation …. there is no possibility of a profane or natural life being innocent for man here below. There is only faith, implicit or explicit, or else betrayal.'[17]

It was Fr Perrin, as she says, who helped her 'to see intellectual honesty in a new light'. She wrote to him: 'your words made me think that perhaps, without my knowing it, there were in me obstacles to the faith, impure obstacles, such as prejudices, habits'.[18] Although faith is primarily our response to the hidden God—'present in secret',[19] as Weil puts it—revealed in the depths of our hearts and drawing us to Godself, it also has an objective content which is given in the historical revelation of Christianity. In Jesus' life and death and resurrection, and in the words of the gospel, God reveals him as our Saviour. Writing to another priest, Père Couturier, from New York, Simone could say:

> When I read the catechism of the Council of Trent, it seems as though I had nothing in common with the religion there set forth. When I read the New Testament, the mystics, the liturgy, when I watch the celebration of the mass, I feel with a sort of conviction that this faith is mine or, to be more precise, would be mine without the distance placed between it and me by my imperfection. This results in a painful spiritual state.[20]

The catechism of the Council of Trent, setting forth doctrinal truth as a collection of propositions to which the believer must give intellectual assent, gave a distorted impression of the nature of faith, which continued to affect the thinking of the Catholic faithful for centuries. Vatican II, however, in its constitution on Divine Revelation, restores the fuller understanding of faith—as seen by Paul and John—in which it is the response of the whole person to God, who 'out of the abundance of his love speaks to men as friends and lives among them, so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself'.[21] It is not mere truths, however transcendent, that God reveals; God reveals and communicates Godself through the mystery of grace. Faith, therefore, is,

[17] Simone Weil, *Intimations of Christianity among the Ancient Greeks* (London: Routledge, 2003 [1957]), 196.
[18] Weil, 'Letter IV: Her Spiritual Autobiography', 17.
[19] Simone Weil, 'Forms of the Implicit Love of God', in *Waiting on God*, 70.
[20] Weil, *Letter to a Priest*, 1.
[21] *Dei verbum*, n. 2.

> … an obedience by which men and women entrust their whole self freely to God …. If this faith is to be shown, the grace of God and the interior help of the Holy Spirit must precede and assist, moving the heart and turning it to God.[22]

Twenty years earlier, Simone Weil was writing very much the same kind of thing:

> There is no salvation without a 'new birth', without an inward illumination, without the presence of Christ and of the Holy Spirit in the soul …. true faith constitutes a very different form of adhesion from that which consists in believing such-and-such an opinion. The whole notion of faith then needs to be thought out anew.[23]

Again twenty years before the Council, Weil pointed out the need for a readiness to see even in the atheist someone of good will. Rather than condemning atheists, she tries to understand their mentality:

> As the Hindus say, God is at the same time personal and impersonal …. As in the West the word God, taken in its usual meaning, signifies a Person, men whose attention, faith and love are almost exclusively concentrated on the impersonal aspect of God can actually believe themselves and declare themselves to be atheists, even though supernatural love inhabits their souls.[24]

The Council document *Gaudium et spes* not only tries to distinguish between various forms of atheism but also to understand what has caused them. Further, it identifies among the causes of atheism the unchristian way of life and behaviour of some of those who are professed believers in God and Christ:

> To the extent that they neglect their own training in the faith, or teach erroneous doctrine, or are deficient in their religious, moral or social life, they must be said to conceal rather than reveal the authentic face of God and religion.[25]

This, of course, is typical of the whole pastoral mood of the Council, open and alert to the signs of the Spirit in every human outlook on life,

[22] *Dei verbum*, n. 5.
[23] Weil, *Letter to a Priest*, 28.
[24] Weil, *Letter to a Priest*, 20.
[25] *Gaudium et spes*, n. 19.

religious or non-religious: 'Whatever good or truth is found amongst them is looked upon by the Church as a preparation for the Gospel. She knows that it is given by Him who enlightens all men so that they may finally have life.'[26] Or, as Simone puts it, 'If He rewards those who seek after Him, He also gives light to those who approach Him, especially if they earnestly desire the light'.[27]

Simone Weil certainly had the right to the name of Christian. But it seemed to her that Christianity had come to her not from the Church alone but from her whole experience of life and the whole range of her extensive reading and study of the riches of the human spirit:

> You can take my word for it too that Greece, Egypt, ancient India, and ancient China, the beauty of the world, the pure and authentic reflections of this beauty in art and science, what I have seen of the inner recesses of human hearts where religious belief is unknown, all these things have done as much as the visibly Christian ones to deliver me into Christ's hands as his captive. I think I might even say more. The love of those things that are outside visible Christianity keeps me outside the Church.[28]

What frightened Weil was the Church 'as a social structure …. the Church patriotism which exists in Catholic circles'.[29] She could not love the Church that had approved of the Crusades and the Inquisition; the Church that excluded so many good, valuable and beautiful things simply because they blossomed in religious traditions other than Christianity, and thus belied its own claim to catholicity; the totalitarianism implicit in the use of the words *anathema sit*: 'It is that also which prevents me from crossing the threshold of the Church. I remain beside all those things that cannot enter the Church, the universal repository, on account of those two little words.' She concluded:

> Christianity should contain all vocations without exception since it is catholic. In consequence the Church should also. But in my eyes Christianity is catholic by right but not in fact. So many things are outside it, so many things that I love and do not want to give up, so many things that God loves, otherwise they would not be in existence.[30]

[26] *Lumen gentium*, n. 6.
[27] Weil, *Letter to a Priest*, 13.
[28] Simone Weil, 'Letter VI: Last Thoughts', in *Waiting on God*, 26.
[29] Simone Weil, 'Letter II: Same Subject', in *Waiting on God*, 5.
[30] Weil, 'Letter IV: Her Spiritual Autobiography', 17.

The Church that Simone Weil claimed not to love was the all-too-human institution, with its faults and imperfections. This is undeniably the true Church, for the Church is always a particular group of people in a particular time and place: a this-worldly institution. As it moves through history its sinfulness can be more or less glaring, and its holiness more or less evident; its preaching may be more or less true to the gospel, its words more or less true to the Word it serves. And yet she must have glimpsed the whole reality, with its divine and human elements inextricably bound together, to suffer as she did from the sight of its imperfections. One might even say that it was her love of the true Church that caused her such distress at not being able to bring herself to enter it. And she suffered even more that so many others were excluded from entering it:

Divine and human elements inextricably bound together

> I cannot help still wondering whether in these days when so large a proportion of humanity is sunk in materialism, God does not want there to be some men and women who have given themselves to him and to Christ and yet remain outside the Church. In any case … nothing gives me more pain than the idea of separating myself from the immense and unfortunate multitude of un-believers.[31]

While others were suffering, anywhere in the world, Simone could not but participate in their suffering. And when that suffering consisted in a separation from the community of God's grace, it was even more impossible for her to allow herself to escape it.

If Simone could not love the Church as a social structure, it was because of the constant danger of sectarianism which goes with social structures, and of the kind of 'Church patriotism' that was like attachment to a terrestrial country. She wrote:

> The children of God should not have any other country here below but the universe itself, with the totality of all the reasoning creatures it ever has contained, contains, or ever will contain. That is the native city to which we owe our love.[32]

What Simone was discerning was the sign of the times presented by the increasingly felt need for universal brotherhood, fellowship and unity between nations and peoples. Human solidarity in the one family of humankind precedes any national or religious grouping. But it was

[31] Weil, 'Letter I: Hesitations concerning Baptism', 3.
[32] Weil, 'Letter VI: Last Thoughts', 27.

principally the universality of God's saving love in the grace given to all that implied for her our obligation to catholicity:

> The combination of … the longing in the depth of the heart for absolute good, and the power, though only latent, of directing attention and love to a reality beyond the world and of receiving good from it—constitutes a link which attaches every man without exception to that other reality. Whoever recognizes that reality recognizes also that link. Because of it, he holds every human being without any exception as something sacred to which he is bound to show respect …. Whatever formulation of belief or disbelief a man may choose to make, if his heart inclines him to feel this respect, then he in fact also recognizes a reality other than this world's reality.[33]

It was at Vatican II that the Church eventually recognised the fundamental human right to religious freedom in a clear and unambiguous statement:

> This Vatican Synod declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that in matters religious no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs.[34]

This principle is based on the dignity of the human person, which John Courtney Murray calls 'the basic ontological foundation, not only of the right to religious freedom, but of all man's fundamental rights'.[35] In the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, the Council affirmed, 'all the faithful, clerical and lay possess a lawful freedom of inquiry and of thought, and the freedom to express their minds humbly and courageously about the matters in which they enjoy competence'. Above all,

> Theologians are invited to seek continually for more suitable ways of communicating doctrine to the men of their times. For the deposit of faith or revealed truths are one thing; the manner in which they are formulated without violence to their meaning and significance is another.[36]

[33] Simone Weil, 'Draft for a Statement of Human Obligations', in *Selected Essays, 1934–1943: Historical, Political, and Moral Writings*, edited and translated by Richard Rees (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2015), 219–220.
[34] *Dignitatis humanae*, n. 2.
[35] John Courtney Murray, 'The Declaration on Religious Freedom', in *Vatican II: An Interfaith Appraisal* (Notre Dame: U. of Notre Dame P, 1966), 572.
[36] *Gaudium et spes*, n. 62.

Vatican II in session

It was precisely this that Pope John proposed as the guiding principle of the Council in his opening speech on the first day.

Of course Weil was ready to acknowledge signs of hope in the Church of her own time which, she affirmed, 'today defends the cause of the indefeasible rights of the individual against collective oppression, of liberty of thought against tyranny'. But it needed to demonstrate change explicitly:

> In order that the present attitude of the Church should be effective and that she should really penetrate like a wedge into social existence, she would have to say openly that she had changed or wished to change. Otherwise who could take her seriously when they remembered the Inquisition?[37]

Similarly, Weil knew that the Church did not take the dictum 'outside the Church there is no salvation' in its narrowest sense, but it seemed to her that the ecclesiology of her time, in all its rigidity, just did not fit the Christian gospel of good news for everyone. Although her own understanding of the nature of the Church was far from perfect, she could feel that theology was giving an inadequate and misleading presentation of its true nature. Writing to Père Couturier (later to be a pioneer of ecumenism) she spells this out:

[37] Weil, 'Letter IV: Her Spiritual Autobiography', 20.

> In particular, the belief that a man can be saved outside the visible Church requires that all the elements of faith should be pondered afresh, under pain of complete incoherence. For the entire edifice is built around the contrary affirmation, which scarcely anybody today would venture to support. No one has yet wanted to recognise the need for such a revision …. Unless the Church recognises this need soon, it is to be feared that it will not be able to accomplish its mission.[38]

But the Holy Spirit is the true and only source of perpetual renewal, and the Spirit blows when, and where, it will. Long before Vatican II it had been stirring up springs of renewal within the Church as well as outside it. The revival in patristic studies, with its return to early Christian sources, was leading theology towards a fuller understanding of the Church, seen in Pauline terms as the Body of Christ living by the Spirit, and not merely as a juridically organized society. This growing development in ecclesiology was sanctioned in 1943—the year Simone died—by Pius XII in *Mystici corporis*, though its further flowering in the Council's document *Lumen gentium* would go well beyond the restricted terms of this encyclical.

Simone herself had been aware of the current of ideas about the Mystical Body of Christ as an image of the Church, but she thought she saw in them not much more than another form of insular society:

> Our true dignity is not to be parts of a body, even though it be a mystical one, even though it be that of Christ. It consists in this, that in the state of perfection, which is the vocation of each one of us, we no longer live in ourselves, but Christ lives in us; so that through our perfection Christ in his integrity and in his indivisible unity, becomes in a sense each one of us ….[39]

The Church is not a club or a sect, but a sign of the unity of the whole human race. In so far as it was regarded as a society separated from the rest of the world, it ceased to be this sign. So Simone wanted to dissociate herself from that kind of Church. The emphasis she preferred is in fact the one more true to St Paul, and the one chosen by the Council Fathers twenty years later. It is through the union of each one of us with Christ that we are formed into his likeness:

> By communicating His Spirit to His brothers, called together from all peoples, Christ made them mystically into his own body. In that

[38] Weil, *Letter to a Priest*, 21.
[39] Weil, 'Letter IV: Her Spiritual Autobiography', 20.

> body, the life of Christ is poured into the believers who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ who suffered and was glorified.[40]

If popes, bishops and theologians before, during and after Simone Weil's lifetime were aware of the need for renewal, it was precisely out of what was her own concern: that the Church should accomplish its mission. Catholicism was being misunderstood by many people of good will because of deviations in teaching and practice within the Church right up to Vatican II, and no doubt after it too. As Bishop Huyghe said at the Council: 'One even meets men who know and love Christ but do not recognise the Church. Moreover it even happens that the Church, far from bringing men closer to Christ, drives them away.'[41]

For this reason, especially in the post-war years, French and German theologians, in particular, were rethinking traditional theology so as to make it more intelligible to the men and woven of their day—theologians such as Karl Rahner, Yves Congar, Marie-Dominique Chenu and Henri de Lubac. Their work was to have considerable influence in the shaping of the council documents, though initially it brought them trouble with the Holy Office.[42] As de Lubac says in *Catholicism*, the theologians were simply pushed to this rethinking by the renewal of Christian living in all the great movements springing up from among the people, proofs of the Church's perennial vitality: 'the theologians themselves, the interpreters of the living tradition, are urged forward by a revival which is reflected primarily in events because it springs from the very depths of the Catholic conscience'.[43]

For renewal was already making itself more and more manifest, in the liturgical movement, in lay apostolates such as the Young Catholic Workers, in Catholic Action, in the awakening of social concern, in ecumenism. In France, Cardinal Suhard, who was archbishop of Paris from 1940 to 1949, by his openness to the Spirit at work in his clergy made possible a great missionary renewal carried out through the Mission de France and the Mission de Paris. He wrote in terms astonishingly similar to those of Simone:

[40] *Lumen gentium*, n. 7.
[41] Robert Kaiser, *Inside the Council: The Story of Vatican II* (London: Burns and Oates, 1963), 211–212.
[42] Cardinal Souhard is reported to have said to Père Chenu in 1942, when his work had been put on the Index, 'Dear Father, don't worry. In twenty years everyone will be talking like you.' (Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Un École de theologie: le Saulchoir* [Paris: Cerf, 1985], 8.)
[43] Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, translated by Landelot P. Sheppard (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988), 321. (The French original was first published in 1938.)

> The Church is not a party, nor a clan, nor a faction. She is simply the true, the only family of mankind. She would be stifled in anything that confined her to a territory, a country, an epoch or a culture. She is at ease only in the bounds of the wide world …. You will only transform souls and society by social justice and charity. Then, and only then, will you show the true face of the Church.[44]

It is significant that the Council's Decree on Missions affirms that it is 'acting out of the innermost requirements of her own catholicity' that the Church proclaims the gospel.[45] And, for the Council, catholicity implies that legitimate diversity should be seen as an enrichment of the Church's unity, which is not to be obtained by imposing uniformity, whether on the numerous local churches that make up the universal Church or on the individual members of the Church. Real unity grows from within, from the one life of Christ lived in loving service of our neighbour. This kind of Church is less the organized social structure Simone so much feared, with a hierarchy of authority—pope, bishops and clergy—issuing directives to a passive laity, than a living communion, in which each individual is a realisation of the whole mystery of the Church as a sign of salvation for the world.

The Church as a sign of salvation for the world

Simone Weil's contention that Christianity should be truly catholic and contain 'absolutely everything in itself …. Except, of course, falsehood', does in fact lead to the same conclusion as the Council reached, that 'The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature'.[46] God's plan for humankind is precisely that the whole human race should form one people of God. At the end of the world, 'from the four winds the Church will be gathered like a harvest into the kingdom of God'. In this text, the 'Church' surely means not only (or, for that matter, all of) the visible Church, but the Church in terms of grace, including all those 'things … outside it' that are of value, that 'God loves'. This is why the Council is at pains to point out that 'whatever truth and grace are to be found among the nations, as a sort of secret presence of God' should be restored to Christ. 'And so, whatever good is found to be sown in the hearts and minds of men, or in the rites and cultures peculiar to various peoples … is not lost.'[47]

[44] Emmanuel-Célestin Suhard, *The Responsible Church: Selected Texts of Cardinal Suhard* (Notre Dame: Fides, 1967), 153.
[45] *Ad gentes*, n. 1
[46] Weil, 'Letter IV: Her Spiritual Autobiography', 18; *Ad gentes*, n. 2.
[47] *Ad gentes*, n. 9.

For Simone, 'If … salvation is possible outside the Church, individual or collective revelations are also possible outside Christianity'.[48] Her conviction that all religions may be found to contain intimations of Christianity in their teaching and tradition is echoed in several Council documents. The Declaration on Non-Christian Religions encourages us to reverence and foster the spiritual and moral goods in other religions which 'often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men'.[49] The missionary enterprise accordingly becomes not so much a matter of bringing Christ to where he is not as of discovering Christ's grace in other religions and cultures,

> … gladly and reverently lay[ing] bare the seeds of the Word which lie hidden …. that they themselves may learn by sincere and patient dialogue what treasures a generous God has distributed among the nations of the earth.[50]

The Council does not pursue the implications of texts such as this as far as Simone herself develops the truths in them. She is willing to ask whether the sacraments of non-Christian religions could not be real sacraments, and their revealed scriptures real revelations. By a real sacrament she means 'possessing the same virtue as baptism or the eucharist and deriving that virtue from the same relation with Christ's Passion'.[51]

In the years since the Council, theologians have discussed similar questions left open by its documents, for instance the possibility of the history of religion being understood as a single history of revelation. Karl Rahner notably argues from the texts of Vatican II to 'the necessary and universal character of revelation in every age'.[52] He further concludes:

> The heathen in his polytheism, the atheist in good faith, the theist outside the revelation of the Old and New Testaments, all possess not only a relationship of faith to God's self-revelation but also a genuine relationship to Jesus Christ and his saving action.[53]

When Weil goes so far as to argue that 'It is therefore useless to send out missions to prevail upon the peoples of Asia, Africa or Oceania to

[48] Weil, *Letter to a Priest*, 21.
[49] *Nostra aetate*, n. 2.
[50] *Ad gentes*, n. 11.
[51] Weil, *Letter to a Priest*, 16.
[52] Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, volume 16, *Experience of the Spirit: Source of Theology*, translated by David Morland (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1979), 198.
[53] Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, volume 16, 220.

enter the Church' it is, of course, the abuses connected with the Church's missionary action that she is really rejecting: 'Missionary zeal has not Christianised Africa, Asia and Oceania, but has brought these territories under the cold, cruel and destructive domination of the white race, which has trodden down everything'.[54] She allows that it is the way in which mission has been conducted that is bad: 'The missionaries—even the martyrs among them—are too closely accompanied by guns and battleships for them to be true witnesses of the Lamb'.[55] And she is ready to acknowledge that there have been exceptions, such as the Jesuits in China, who were 'carrying out the words of Christ'.[56]

It is quite true that evangelization has occurred alongside colonialism, which was not condemned by the Church until fairly recent times. But as nations in the developing world began achieving independence, their Churches were able to become more indigenous and less encumbered with European characteristics and practices. Contemporaneously with Simone Weil, Henri de Lubac was as passionately convinced that true evangelization should not simply seek to substitute Western institutions and thought patterns for the cultures and traditions of those being evangelized:

> And if it is once understood that the work of conversion consists, fundamentally, not in adapting supernatural truth, in bringing it down to human level, but, on the contrary, in adapting man to it, raising him up to the truth that rules and judges him, we must especially beware, as of blasphemy, of confusing ourselves, its servants, with it—ourselves, our tastes, our habits, our prejudices, our passions, our narrow-mindedness and our weaknesses with the divine religion with which we are so little imbued. We must give souls to God, not conquer them for ourselves.[57]

As for the growth of the visible Church by means of mission, Simone would have been less doubtful of its possibility if she had witnessed the astonishingly rapid expansion of Christianity in the developing world up to our own day. The universality of the Church is more evident today than it ever was, and it is one of the characteristics that make mission an element that is of its essence: 'By reason of it, the Catholic Church strives

[54] Weil, *Letter to a Priest*, 8–9.
[55] Weil, *Letter to a Priest*, 10.
[56] Weil, *Letter to a Priest*, 18.
[57] Lubac, *Catholicism*, 301.

energetically and constantly to bring all humanity with all its riches back to Christ its Head in the unity of His spirit'.[58] While the Spirit was preparing the way for an ecclesiology of communion in the documents of Vatican II, it was also—and is still—blowing most powerfully in the lives of the whole people of God so as to bring forth new ways of being Church and give flesh to this emphasis on communion. Today, as throughout the history of humanity, the Spirit clearly finds more room to manoeuvre and breathe in the hearts and lives of the poor and dispossessed.

And so it is particularly in the growing Churches of the developing world that numberless small, local groups are springing up in which people share their resources, their faith and their problems, interpreting their lives by means of the gospel in the light of the Spirit given to each individual in a unique way. These 'basic communities', spontaneously germinating among the laity, were recognised by the Extraordinary Synod in 1985 as offering 'great hope for the life of the Church', as 'a true expression of communion and an instrument for fashioning a more profound communion'.[59] The principle at the root of such communities

Veneration of the cross and procession attended by members of five basic ecclesial communities in the Philippines

[58] *Lumen gentium*, n. 13.
[59] *The Extraordinary Synod—1985: Message to the People of God* (Boston: St Paul, 1985), 60.

is that each person shares in the life of Christ in a unique way and is called to make this life more and more fruitful in any and every human situation. The Council devotes an entire chapter of *Lumen gentium* to the universal call to holiness: a holiness that grows in the measure of one's response to grace and that of itself bears Christian witness 'by showing everyone through their earthly activities the love with which God has loved the world'.[60] Basic communities are the development in praxis of these fundamental truths of the Council's ecclesiology.

In the years since the Council, it has been more and more widely recognised that true religion, as Simone Weil saw, has to do with nothing other than justice and love:

> The Gospel makes no distinction between the love of our neighbour and justice …. Only the absolute identification of justice and love makes the coexistence possible of compassion and gratitude on the one hand, and on the other, of respect for the dignity of affliction in the afflicted.[61]

'The love of Christ impels us', said the Council fathers. 'Hence, let our concern swiftly focus first of all on those who are especially lowly, poor and weak … those who still lack the opportune help to achieve a way of life worthy of human beings.'[62]

It is out of the demands of justice and love that the Church's preferential option for the poor emerged, an option required by its union with Christ, who identified himself with the poor and powerless, and was crucified for his witness to love and truth. In the 1970s it was the bishops of Latin America who first made this option their own, in solidarity with the vast majority of their people, struggling against the unjust structures of society which kept them in misery and destitution, deprived of human rights and dignity. The bishops could not fail to recognise that this was not a wrong that could be left to politicians to redress: the Church has to take responsibility too. As they said in Puebla in 1979: '"A muted cry wells up from millions of human beings, pleading with their pastors for a liberation that is nowhere to be found in their case" ….

[60] *Lumen gentium*, 41.
[61] Weil, 'Forms of the Implicit Love of God', 49.
[62] 'Message to Humanity', 20 October 1962, in *The Documents of Vatican II*, edited by Walter M. Abbott (Piscataway: American, 1966), 5.

Today it is loud and clear, increasing in volume and intensity, and at times full of menace.'[63]

Solidarity with the poor involves joining in their struggle for liberation and working for social justice, but it also implies the relinquishment of all power structures and authoritarian domination in order to be a Church whose presence in the world felt as that of the Christ who said: 'I am among you as one who serves' (Luke 22:27). As Karl Rahner explains, it is only in modern times that,

> … society's situation is no longer merely a *given* for human beings and their life …. No, today this societal situation and its transformations have themselves become an object of human activity and human reflection ….
>
> What we mean, then, when we place the word 'justice' along with faith at the head of our agenda, is that we have a task in society to cooperate responsibly in shaping that society's structures ….
>
> We must confess … that we are the beneficiaries of unjust structures that signal a task, a challenge, and an obligation for the Christian who would make a commitment to justice.[64]

In a capitalist society which enjoys and grows in wealth at the cost of the poor, both at home and in underdeveloped nations whose resources and labour are exploited unjustly for our benefit, we are inescapably responsible for definite social sins. Simone Weil was very conscious of the existence of such social sins: 'Among our institutions and customs there are things so atrocious that nobody can legitimately feel himself innocent of … diffused complicity. It is certain that each of us is involved at least in the guilt of criminal indifference.'[65]

It has sometimes been said that the Church should not take part in work for social or political justice, since these are secular concerns, but should confine itself to specifically 'religious' activity. Simone demonstrates that, on the contrary, the Church's response in this area is crucial: it is at the heart of Christianity. But in order to be a truly religious response it

[63] *Puebla and Beyond: Documentation and Commentary*, edited by John Eagleson and Philip J. Scharper, translated by John Drury (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1979), 134. The quotation is included from the bishops' conference at Medellín, 1968.
[64] Karl Rahner, *The Practice of Faith: A Handbook of Contemporary Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 273, 274, 276.
[65] Simone Weil, 'Additional Thoughts on the Love of God and Affliction', in *Gateway to God*, 87.

must arise in some sense from a genuinely personal identification with the poor and afflicted:

> Affliction is essentially a destruction of personality, a lapse into anonymity …. The man who sees someone in affliction and projects into him his own being brings to birth in him through love, at least for a moment, an existence apart from his affliction ….
>
> Charity like this is a sacrament, a supernatural process by which a man in whom Christ dwells really puts Christ into the soul of the afflicted. If it is bread that is given, this bread is equivalent to the host.[66]

It was surely Simone's own preferential option for the poor and afflicted—an option made from her earliest days, which influenced all her choices and decisions in life—that led her unerringly to the very centre of Christianity. It was also what lay at the root of her paradoxical vocation as a Christian outside the Church: 'merging into the crowd and disappearing among them'.[67] She was not disowning Christ, since she was carrying out his precepts and spreading his Spirit abroad. Rather, she gave prophetic witness that true fraternity extends to every other human being and must never be confined within the limits of the Church

John XXIII

This was the spirit of the Council as Pope John conceived it, and to some extent it has influenced all the Council documents as well as the changes in the life of the Church since Vatican II. The latter may seem desperately slow and halting at times, but the Spirit is clearly and powerfully at work in restoring

[66] Weil, 'Additional Thoughts on the Love of God and Affliction', 94, 95.
[67] Weil, 'Letter I: Hesitations concerning Baptism', 3.

the fundamental dimension of communion, especially in the basic Christian communities, which continue to flourish and multiply among the people of God. It was Bishop Butler who said that Vatican II was the promise of inspiration for the whole people of God: 'The layman must claim his share, the lion's share in it. It is he who explores those frontiers between professed belief and professed unbelief that are ever summoning the Church to new adventures and new techniques of apostolate.'[68] Simone Weil conceived her own vocation in a way that was a paradigm of such lay involvement. Her idea of Christianity took it beyond the sphere of the personal and into the social dimension in a way that is remarkably consonant with the gospel understanding of today's Church of the poor and for the poor.

In his whole teaching and life, in the theology of his parables, in his seeking out of the sick and the afflicted, his association with sinners and the lowly and powerless, Christ incarnates God's predilection for the poor. This preferential love represents so vital and urgent a need of God's heart that God does not merely stoop down from above, as it were, to bestow blessings. Christ emptied himself and identified himself personally and wholly with those who were farthest from God, whether in terms of poverty, weakness or sinfulness, to the point of submitting to the injustice of evil and accepting a criminal's death (Philippians 2:6–8).

And this is why the word of God to humankind is above all good news for the poor. If the Church is to be a credible witness to the Word of God, it must preach the gospel as Christ did, not merely bestowing charity on the poor and afflicted, or sympathy on those struggling against unjust and oppressive social or political structures, but living with them in their poverty, sharing their joys and sorrows, joining actively in their struggles for liberation. But it must always do so as Christ did, not using force, but by a courageous witness to truth and justice, and to the transforming power of love and compassion.

The whole of Simone Weil's life and writing, and the paradox of her prophetic stand 'at the intersection of Christianity and everything that is not Christianity', was witness to the truth of God's love: a love which goes out of itself, out of the living communion in the Trinity to those outside, at the greatest extreme of affliction and powerlessness, to share

[68] Christopher Butler, 'The Constitution on Divine Revelation', in *Vatican II: An Interfaith Appraisal*, 53.

its own being with them.[69] Her personal witness is only one of countless ways in which the Spirit is continually urging on the renewal of the Church, a Church never perfectly conformed to Christ, whose body it is. The work of Vatican II is another. And this renewal is daily being accomplished in the myriad anonymous members of Christ outside the visible Church.

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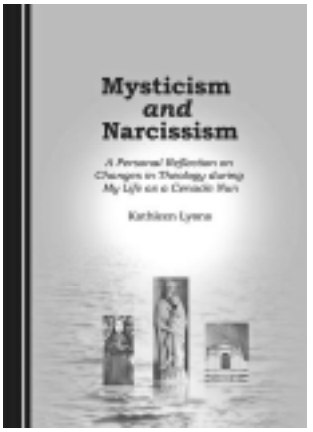
[69] Weil, 'Letter IV: Her Spiritual Autobiography', 18.

RECENT BOOKS

Kathleen Lyons, *Mysticism and Narcissism: A Personal Reflection on Changes in Theology During My Life as a Cenacle Nun* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2015). 978 1 4438 8043 5, pp. 220, £47.99.



Reading recently the memoirs of a woman who, as a young girl, sat on the roof of her house watching the Battle of Britain raging overhead, I was struck by the importance of catching such memories while they are still clear and fresh in the minds of a generation that is beginning to disappear. If this is a matter of urgency for wartime reminiscences, which have an industry all to themselves, it seems even more urgent with regard to memories of a preconciliar Church and religious life that are now fading fast, and are already falling victim to the distortions of revision by those who never experienced the reality of those days for themselves.

For this reason, among others, Kathleen Lyons's personal reflection on changes in theology during her life as a Cenacle nun is a precious and provocative chronicle. Described as a 'constructive narrative theology' (p. xviii), it is not a museum piece summoning up the shadow of a lost past full of quaint customs and antiquated regulations but a sharply contextualised recollection of a life lived with commitment and passion from the outset and carried through seismic changes with an impressive and courageous fidelity.

The book is constructed in an original fashion, with the story of each decade from 1945 to 2012 told straightforwardly with a counterpoint of commentary about the changes within Lyons's particular religious congregation and the wider Church. We are given a fascinating insight into the cultural and theological changes within an order that, in the 1940s, attempted to combine a foundational Ignatian spirituality with the self-identification and customs of a predominantly French model of 'mixed' monastic and apostolic life.

At a time when the history of women's religious life is provoking increasing academic interest, the account of incremental changes from one general chapter to the next is a precious archive as we see the impact of Vatican II and the major gear-shift in interpreting Ignatian spirituality unfolding in the lives of the sisters. Few groups within the Church took the recommendations of the

council so much to heart as women religious. Lyons provides a theologically and ecclesiologically adept account of how a group of religious sisters moved from a semi-monastic life, marked by the mental outlook of the long nineteenth century, into the exhilarating, if sometimes bewildering, foment of thought and action provoked by a leap from medievalism to postmodernism in one lifetime.

Studying biblical theology and training as a teacher, Lyons experiences disappointment with a religious education not in keeping with the principles of adult learning in which she is being trained, and comes to question at the deepest level the narcissism she detects in a Church constructed and identified according to the stories told by its male members to their own advantage. Her long years as a spiritual director, teacher of spirituality and practitioner within the Ignatian tradition give her the opportunity to reflect on the interface between desire, imagination and committed action embedded within the Spiritual Exercises. Her extended experience as a psychotherapist and teacher of psychosynthesis also leads her to explore the psychological as well as the ideological and theological determinants behind what she sees as the tension between the mysticism to which the women of her congregation are called and the narcissism of a Church indelibly marked by patriarchy.

In this exploration she takes as dialogue partners some of the thinkers who were prominent within each specific decade with which she is dealing. Her analysis of the reasons why such dramatic changes in theology and psychology occurred in the time span of her life is sometimes dense and provocative but always lively and open to new ideas. There is a vivacity of spirit and mind which permeates her life and her memories, and which gave her the strength to overcome many disappointments and challenges.

Against a backdrop of the departure from religious life of many to whom she had been novice director, Lyons speaks frankly about the joyous enthusiasm of the Council period, and the bleak stifling of initiatives towards a discipleship of equals and feminist empowerment. She attempts, through memory and analysis, to hold together in creative tension some of the polarities separated by traditional theology: body and spirit, emotion and rationality, individual and community. The fact that such polarisation is once again prevalent within parts of the Church and religious life makes it all the more urgent that we should have a mature and reflective account of changes lived by a woman of singular perceptiveness and shrewd overall judgment.

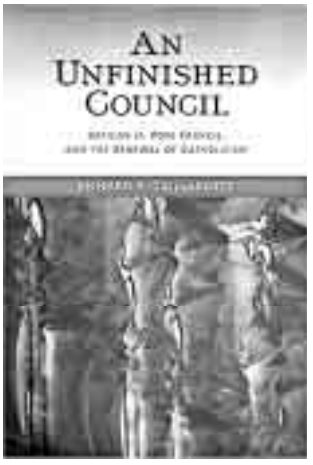
At one point Lyons quotes Foucault's question, 'In what does [philosophy] consist, if not in the endeavour to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of legitimating what is already known?' (p. xxi) Reflecting on the Christian narrative of salvation and women's place—or absence—within it through the Ignatian lens of 'finding God in all things', she

considers the mystery of God as always mediated through specifically historical experience. Because of this, what she presents as the changing history of female subjectivity creates a new situation for speaking about the divine mystery.

There are detailed considerations of the unfolding of feminist theology to which Lyons was introduced in the decades following the Council, but also questions about the way women religious were encouraged in their attempts to follow the Council's behest to return to their spiritual and theological roots. The upheaval caused by this culminated in the conflict between the Vatican and the women religious of the United States, but we see the emergence of these tensions through the eyes of a religious called to be a formator, both of religious and laity, through psychological disciplines and the Ignatian spiritual tradition. Written originally as a doctoral thesis undertaken, astonishingly, in the author's ninth decade, *Mysticism and Narcissism* provides some sharp insights into years which were the context of unparalleled paradigm shifts in the Church and in religious life.

Gemma Simmonds CJ

Richard R. Gaillardetz, *An Unfinished Council: Vatican II, Pope Francis, and the Renewal of Catholicism* (Collegeville: Michael Glazier, 2015). 978 0 8146 8309 5, pp. 192, $19.99.



A few years back we saw a rush of publications dedicated to the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), celebrating and critiquing that ecclesial event on its fiftieth anniversary. One of the particularly helpful volumes of this time came from Richard Gaillardetz, an established and well-known US Catholic theologian.[1] In that earlier volume, co-authored with Catherine Clifford, Gaillardetz opened up the texts and message of Vatican II for a new audience, using close textual analysis to communicate the key themes of the council, motivated by a concern that—fifty years on—the council documents still remain widely unknown, misunderstood and barely received into church life.

Knowing these concerns of Gaillardetz and his easy, accessible style, I was delighted to see this more recent volume, *An Unfinished Council*, which

[1] Richard Gaillardetz and Catherine Clifford, *Keys to the Council: Unlocking the Teaching of Vatican II* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2012).

takes up his recurring concern with Vatican II's teaching and relates it in thematically fresh ways to the characteristics of Pope Francis' pontificate and teaching. The central concern, consistent with Gaillardetz's other work on the council, is: '… that, five decades removed from Vatican II, there is work still to be done to produce more synthetic interpretations of council teaching that yield a coherent vision of the church and a commensurate program for church reform' (p. 91). What is especially stimulating in this volume is the energy and embodied coherence given to this concern by the present Pope—in his teaching and person. It is as if, the argument suggests, this pontificate opens up new opportunities for a deeper reception of Vatican II—a reception that can transform church life and practices.

In order to demonstrate this claim the book follows a clear path, leading the reader through some fairly basic and well-rehearsed materials around the Second Vatican Council itself (chapters one to three), before offering seven key interpretative themes (chapter four). These themes—or 'pillars' as Gaillardetz calls them—will not be surprising to students of Vatican II: the Trinitarian theology of Divine Revelation; the emphasis on dialogue and engagement; baptism as a foundational theme; a renewed theology of the Spirit; collegiality; the missionary nature of the Church; and the Church as Pilgrim. All are well recognised in the literature, if not in the church community more widely. Gaillardetz's particular gift in this book, however, lies in the ways he seeks to 'connect the dots' of these themes, through proposing two integrative ideas, which he hopes will enable 'more coherent ecclesial accounts capable of generating an effective pastoral program' (p. 71).

These two ideas form the basis for the next two chapters, on *humility* as an ecclesial value and virtue, and *non-competitiveness* as characteristic of ecclesial relations as described by Vatican II. To my mind it is these two chapters which form the creative heart of the book, naming as they do something of the authentic character of the council, rooted in a close and careful reading of the texts themselves. In particular, chapter four's account of the virtue of humility, and its implications for a magnanimous and other-centred Church, demonstrates the power of a language of virtue for describing and renewing ecclesial life and structures, resonating not only with the work of Gerard Mannion, to which Gaillardetz refers (p. 73), but also with the more recent work of John Fitzmaurice.[2]

The idea of humility and other-centredness, and its attendant virtues of listening, dialogue and engagement, all connect readily and dynamically with Pope Francis's missionary call to the Church, as described in chapter six.

[2] See Gerard Mannion, *Ecciesiology and Postmodernity: Questions for the Church in Our Time* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2007); and John Fitzmaurice, *Virtue Ecclesiology: An Exploration in the Good Church* (London: Ashgate, 2016).

Drawing especially on that joyful exhortation, *Evangelii gaudium*, Gaillardetz convincingly demonstrates a contemporary ecclesial call to be a missionary, listening Church, in which principles of subsidiarity shape relationships and doctrine is recognised as at the service of pastoral realities. The significance of these themes is even more clear now that *Amoris laetitia* has also appeared, with its emphasis on accompanying people attentively, making local, contextual decisions and the centrality of incarnational realities in all their complexity. In leading the reader through the theology of Vatican II to this thematic assessment of Francis's pontificate, Gaillardetz has done a significant service to the ways in which we are able to reflect on what it might be to be Church for today.

If there is one aspect of this refreshing book that sits less well with me, it is the tendency to over-stress (to my mind) the nature of ecclesial problems and their necessary reform as relating to power and governance structures. This focus on organizational and institutional matters—more or less implicit throughout—begins to be more apparent in chapter five, with the discussion of non-competitiveness as an ecclesial quality, and then moves to a more dominant position in the final chapter.

In part I think these concerns—discussed in terms of 'Catholic identity', and polarisation of positions in the Church, for example—are more lively in the US Church, which shapes Gaillardetz's sense of 'being Catholic', than to British sensibilities. In particular, the Western European experience of secularisation, and late (or post-) modernity has elicited rather different responses from people of faith, at their best more characterized by cultural engagement and multi-perspectival conversation (rather than two-way 'dialogue') than by the concern for 'Catholic identity'.[3] There is a risk, in the end, that the institutional concerns de-energize the empowering concepts and language described by Gaillardetz at the heart of this book.

However, in saying this the challenge remains: how is the call of Pope Francis to enter more deeply into the Church of Vatican II so as to be given embodied and pastorally effective form? My own hunch here depends less on organizational reform (important as it is) and more on that renewal of which Romano Guardini spoke, when he stated that 'the renewal of the church will take place from the hearts of men and women'. This is, of course, less easy to measure, plan or take control of; but, for all that, I believe Gaillardetz's accessible, scholarly and creative work here has a real part to play in that conversion of hearts which is fundamental, in all ages, to the right living of Christ's Church.

Clare Watkins

[3] An excellent account of this is given by Lieven Boeve in his *God Interrupts History: Theology in a Time of Upheaval* (London: Continuum, 2007).

Teresa Forcades, *Faith and Freedom* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016). 978 1 5095 0976 8, pp. 112, £9.99.

According to the *BBC News Magazine*, Teresa Forcades is 'one of Europe's most influential left-wing public intellectuals'.[4] Criticized by the Vatican for her activism as an anti-capitalist, feminist and proponent of an independent Catalonia, Forcades provides a challenging and gentle overview of her 'thoughts on the issues most fundamental to me' (pp. 2–3) in this book. She was born in Barcelona in 1966, and studied medicine at the University of Barcelona. She did her medical residency in the United States, and earned a mastership in divinity at Harvard Divinity School in 1997, the year she entered the Benedictine monastery of Montserrat. Sr Teresa completed her PhD in public health at the University of Barcelona in 2004. Well known on electronic media, she writes and speaks on social justice, political engagement, feminism (she refers to God with feminine pronouns) and other theological topics. Her activism is rooted in monastic life, which provides the structure for this first book she has written in English.

The introduction explains that the book 'is divided into six chapters named after the five canonical hours that give the monastic day its peculiar rhythm … plus the hour of *recreation*, the daily gathering of the community' (p. 3). Chapters open with descriptions of the changing light falling on the chapel crucifix from the window above the altar, bringing Christ and the character of the office into each subject under consideration. This creative organization places everything presented in the context of prayer and under the eye of Christ on the cross, in light or in shadow, as Lord of the hours.

Chapter one, 'Matins', discusses love and freedom in God's relationship to creation. Human free will is placed in the light of *God's* free will (a subject infrequently treated since the Greek Fathers, whom Forcades often quotes). Chapter two, 'Lauds', addresses social justice, focusing on economic systems and particularly the shortcomings of capitalism. It ends by discussing Catalonian independence. Chapter three, 'Sext', the midday prayer of the monastic day, reminds us that 'the body needs to be taken into account' (p. 49)

[4] Matt Wells, 'Sister Teresa Forcades: Europe's Most Radical Nun', *BBC News Magazine* (14 September 2013), available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-24079227; and see Giles Tremlett, 'Keeping up with Teresa Forcades, a Nun on a Mission', *The Guardian* (17 May 2013), available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/17/teresa-forcades-nun-on-mission.

and critiques the pharmaceutical industry, its inordinate influence on public health policy and the concept of 'medicalisation'.

In monastic life, *recreation* is the daily gathering of the community before vespers to interact and share common life. Forcades believes it 'the most important time of the day because it is the most unregulated' (p. 67) and uses it to discuss feminism and medical concerns, especially women's health. 'Vespers' (said at sunset), chapter five, is the setting for a discussion of faith and reason which revisits that of freedom in the first chapter. It also highlights the (neglected) importance of the thirteenth-century German monastic and theologian Gertrude of Helfta, for whom God's vulnerability is a central tenet and from whose circle the tradition of the 'sacred heart' of Jesus originated.

St Benedict's Rule took seriously the biblical injunction that the sun should not go down on anger, so chapter six, 'Compline', the final office of vespers, is devoted to forgiveness. It includes an extensive discussion of Jacques Lacan's critique of the Christian notion of 'person', and a fascinating analysis of Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son. Its practical teaching is that 'Taking responsibility for one's life is the most concise definition of personal freedom' (p. 109) and that because forgiveness is the breaking of a causal chain, 'Forgiveness of self and others is what allows us to be free in our concrete life' (p. 119).

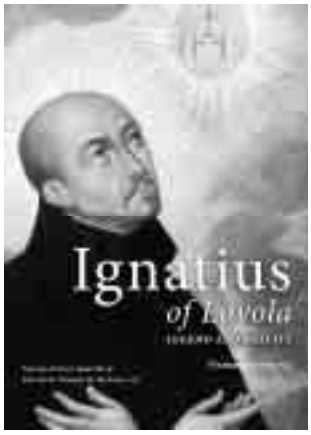
The book may be slim, but its implications are enormous. The work of a widely read and incisive mind, it requires the reader to shift gears quickly and challenges one whose mind is not as agile as the writer's. The annotated table of contents helps the reader map the movement within chapters. It is not only the structure of the monastic day that unifies the book: theological concepts build upon each other as the 'day' progresses. For example, discussion of *panentheism* (pp. 14–22) is picked up again in description of God as community (pp. 80–81) and of *perichoresis* (p. 102). Chapter five's discussion of faith follows from that of feminism in chapter four and is recapitulated in speaking of personhood in chapter six. Forcades admits that this material is from her dissertation on person and freedom. Like many works of that origin which either provide too much detail or assume too much knowledge on the reader's part, it is less successful. Nor do the bits of writing published elsewhere and included here engage as fully as does the rest of the text.

It was difficult objectively to review a book with a creative structure I admire and opinions which I largely share. (Forcades' ideas would make the current political leadership of my country, the United States, apoplectic.) The book is clearly organized, beautifully written and full of challenging ideas. In spite of what Sr Teresa disparagingly says of herself during her medical residency, I would rejoice to have her as physician of body and soul. Our church institutions, economic systems and medical and theological establishments could do with a stiff dose of her physic.

Bonnie Thurston

Pierre Emonet, *Ignatius of Loyola: Legend and Reality*, translated by Jerry Ryan, edited by Thomas M. McCoog (Philadelphia: St Joseph's UP, 2016), 978 1 9454 0200 5, pp.151, $40.00.

John W. O'Malley, *The Jesuits and the Popes: A Historical Sketch of Their Relationship* (Philadelphia: St Joseph's UP, 2016). 978 0 9161 0191 6, pp.149, $55.00.



Here are two handsome productions from St Joseph's, Philadelphia: the first is a translation from the French of a 'life' of Ignatius by the Swiss Jesuit Pierre Emonet. This has the additional benefit of fifteen freshly coloured engravings (by Rubens among others) originally made for the 1609 biography. By their contrast, these aptly bring home the purpose of this concise, extremely well-documented life—a moving away from pious hagiography to historically sound biography.

Pierre Emonet presents with objectivity both the good and the bad aspects of a human being clearly chosen by God. The mystic gifts granted to Ignatius, and the faults of his character, are both insufficiently known and deserve to be brought to light. The first led Ignatius himself to preserve the notes of his *Spiritual Diary*, as he must have felt that he had no right to destroy such signs of the goodness of God; the second, however, help to explain some of the vicissitudes that were to plague the order he founded.

The nineteen short chapters avoid verbosity and the translation has profited from the editor's work adapting them to an English-speaking readership. Here one finds clarity, depth and honesty. Naturally questions remain: the urge Ignatius constantly felt to put pen to paper is intriguing, yet is not examined here; and the role that humour played in his character could have been highlighted more. A bibliography is missing, which is regrettable. In general, however, one can only welcome with gratitude this excellent addition to the biographies of Ignatius.

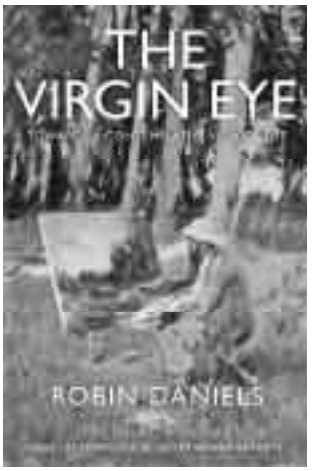
The second publication from St Joseph's comes from the veteran Jesuit historian John O'Malley, well known for his numerous publications relating to the Society of Jesus. It is dedicated, very appropriately, to another veteran

whose publications have enriched Jesuit historiography: Fr John Padberg. The theme chosen is that of the relationship between the Jesuits and the papacy. This vast subject would require many volumes to do it justice, and Fr O'Malley repeats that the only aim he has set himself here is to provide an impressionistic sketch. Even with this qualification, the story he tells is striking for its drama and incident. It clarifies as never before how the so-called 'Fourth Vow' of the Jesuits (special obedience to the Pope regarding missions) does not exclude their strong independence, which they have defended over the centuries. The 'blind obedience' preached by Ignatius does not imply an inhuman loss of sight and speech. However, it can involve great suffering, as occurred with the early missioners caught up in the Chinese 'rites' controversy. Perhaps, of necessity, many delicate questions have to be side-stepped here: can the suppression be understood 'only as the result of newly formulated pretensions of the *ancien regime*' (p.117), or were the Jesuits themselves partly responsible—not to mention the antagonism of other religious orders? The Vatican condemnation of Galileo and its effect on Jesuit education also remains something of a skeleton in the cupboard. However, these are small quibbles. While in the previous publication some errata needed correction, this volume is remarkably free of them.

To conclude, we can be very grateful for two excellent little volumes that are a credit to both the publisher and the authors.

Joseph A. Munitiz SJ

Robin Daniels, *The Virgin Eye: Towards a Contemplative View of Life* (Watford: Instant Apostle, 2016). 978 1 9097 2852 3, pp.320, £9.99.



When the Jungian analyst Robin Daniels died in 2012, he left among his papers a lengthy series of reflections on the contemplative life. (This text must be the '300,000-word book' to which Daniels referred in an interview in *The Blackpool Gazette* in July 2009.) At the author's passing this gigantic study, over two decades in the making, was still a work in progress. Ruthlessly pruned and meticulously edited by his wife, Katherine Daniels, this long labour of love now appears as *The Virgin Eye*.

It is, inescapably, a sad business to be reviewing a book whose author did not live to see it

published, but that melancholy task is lightened in appraising a work as valuable as this. Many will surely be blessed by Daniels's last words to us.

Daniels was a remarkable man—not that he would have allowed that any individual was unremarkable. He wrote an authorised history of Blackpool Football Club. He was, for a time, music critic of the *Croydon Times*. He published a biography of his friend Neville Cardus and books of conversations with Yehudi Menuhin and Archbishop Donald Coggan. He turned his mind to many matters but, at the same time—there is no contradiction—he fully exemplified Kierkegaard's saying, 'purity of heart is to will one thing'.

The Virgin Eye falls into five parts. The first section offers a bleak analysis of the contemporary challenges that, in the West, threaten our flourishing. Ours is an age of accelerating change. However fast we run we cannot keep up. Stress has become a pandemic. Time has become our enemy. Most grievous of society's ills is the erosion of childhood. In our darkness, Daniels insists, we need a new vision. Here is the theme of part two of the book, at once the thrust of its title and its central thesis. For the saving of our souls in a world awry we must discover a fresh way of seeing things. That 'virgin eye' is the vision shared by the poet, the artist and the child. As Sister Wendy Beckett observes in her foreword, Robin Daniels's understanding of the spiritual life resonates with Simone Weil's concept of *attente de Dieu.* What is required of us is that we finally pay attention. The manner of attention we must cultivate—to God, to ourselves and to others—is the subject of parts three, four and five of *The Virgin Eye.*

There are countless guidebooks offering advice to us as we stumble home to God. So we must ask what is distinctive about this manual among all those many others. At least three features could be said to set it apart. First, Daniels draws from many wells. He sends us not only to the classic and familiar spiritual texts, but to writings less frequently quarried for spiritual direction. Daniels clearly loved the romantic poets and he cites them repeatedly. But he casts his net much more widely. Wise counsel is found in myriad sources, including in the utterances of some who—it might be felt—do not always edify, such as D. H. Lawrence and the televangelist Bob Schuller. Secondly, Daniels speaks simply. He prefers short sentences. In these four hundred or more pages there are probably several thousand 'bullet points', nuggets of practical wisdom to help us bring order and purpose to our lives. Here is Daniels on the use of the telephone: 'The phone rings. Pause and let it ring a few times. Exhale old air, then breathe in—gently, slowly, fully. Now reach for the phone, calm in mind and mood and voice ....' (p. 268) Such advice is sane and sensible, and the masters of the spiritual life, who somehow negotiated the perils of this naughty world without the aid of phones, whether smart or not, would surely have agreed. Thirdly, Daniels urges that we turn our thoughts,

the thoughts his reflections prompt, into prayer. Each section of his book concludes with prayers that we are invited to make our own. These prayers are gems.

With its multiplicity of maxims, poured out on page after page, this book must be read slowly. It took twenty years to write. A year would not be wasted in reading it.

John Pridmore

Peter M. Daly and G. Richard Dimler, *The Jesuit Emblem in the European Context* (Philadelphia: St Joseph's UP, 2016). 978 0 9161 0188 6, pp. 468, $70.00.

The Europe of the late Renaissance and Baroque periods was obsessed with 'speaking pictures': with symbolism, visualised metaphors and word-and-image enigmas. Emblem books account for a remarkable proportion of publications in almost every country of Europe in the period. Emblems are everywhere in the applied arts of the early modern world: textiles, wall paintings, theatrical designs and the temporary structures erected for festivals. To be conversant with the language and culture of emblems was a surprisingly important part of an elite or diplomatic education in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

This volume is a worthy addition to the useful, authoritative and wide-ranging series 'Early Modern Catholicism and the Visual Arts' from St Joseph's Press. It should be emphasized that this dense and rich text is less a book to read through than a marvellously compendious work of reference. It is also a splendid and useful introduction to emblematics in general, and what the whole symbolic language of word and image became in the hands of the most skilled company of pedagogues and rhetoricians in the early modern world, the Society of Jesus. The Jesuits were famous for their use of the emblem in education, in feast-day decorations, in works of edification and meditation, as well as in permanent and temporary decorative schemes for churches, colleges and cities.

This books offers a survey of the subject in seven swift-moving and informative chapters: 'The European Emblem'; 'The *Ratio studiorum*' and emblems in education; 'The Jesuit Theory of Symbology', with much information on Jesuit contributions to the development of the genre; 'The

Major Jesuit Emblematic Books'; a study of Jesuit use of emblems in 'The Material Culture'; 'Purposes Served by Jesuits Using Emblematic Forms'; and the conclusion, a concise summary of Jesuit emblematics. There follows an extremely useful appendix, listing European Jesuit assistencies and provinces, with a selective bibliography of the major emblematic works produced by each. This is an indispensable epitome of the mighty studies undertaken recently by the authors of this volume in their comprehensive, multi-volume bibliography of Jesuit emblem books—it enables the reader to see in a small compass something of the universal currency of the emblematic language as well as the wide distribution of centres of its cultural production.

There is one rather arbitrary omission from the appendices: the English Province is simply left out. No reason for this omission is advanced, and in a work of reference such as this one, completeness would have been highly desirable. This omission deprives us of any reminder of the beauty and sophistication of the emblem books produced in exile by Henry Hawkins, whose *Parthenia sacra* (Rouen, 1633) is still a readable literary text of high quality, as well as an important source for the applied arts. This omission runs into an area of inconsistency concerning the English College in Valladolid, which is mentioned as part of the Province of Spain but given summary treatment omitting its published festival books. There is only one other minor reservation: illustrations are not numerous, and vary in quality and attractiveness—while some of the triumphs of Jesuit book-making are present, such as the ever-amazing *Imago primi saeculi*, there seem to be rather a lot of plain typographic title pages with brief captions which explain very little.

Among the most important and prolific authors who are singled out for especial mention here are Jeremias Drexel (1581–1638) who has a strong claim, with his texts emphasizing personal piety and the *ars moriendi*, to be the most published author of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—and one whose texts had a remarkably prolonged afterlife. His *Heliotropium*, first published in 1627, went into 12 Latin editions and a remarkable 49 vernacular editions. This in itself suggests something of the priority that early modern Europe gave to emblematic writing, as well as the way in which a Jesuit text could cross national boundaries.

Herman Hugo, of the Flemish-Belgian Province (1588–1629), was the author of the *Pia desideria*, the symbolic narrative of the love between *anima* and Christ, first published in Antwerp in 1624, one of the most influential emblem books ever written, which ran to 51 Latin editions alone. In the Protestant adaptation by Francis Quarles, first published in 1634, it had a vast reach in the English-speaking countries. Its popularity in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England, which almost rivalled that of Bunyan's *Pilgim's*

Progress, has been largely forgotten, but copies were once 'to be found in almost every cottage'.

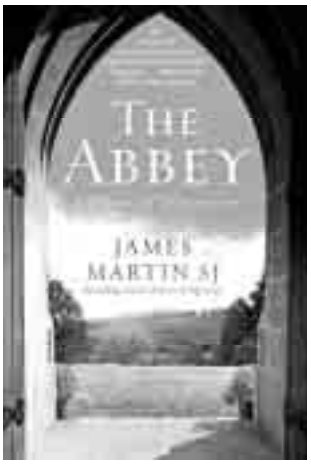
The great French Jesuit educator and emblematist Claude-François Menestrier (1631–1705) was an extraordinary, protean figure, who did everything that a Jesuit closely involved with the public life of a city and nation could do: firework displays, evening classes, funeral apparatus, books of theory, equestrian spectacles, symbolic schemes of decoration for buildings, even a magisterial history of the King of France expressed in emblems and medals—not to mention the ballets and the playing cards, all using the symbols and emblems, and all advancing in one way or another the mission of the Society, especially as an inspiring, civilising and quickening force in the life of the seventeenth-century city of Lyons.

Overall, this is a wonderfully compendious work of reference and summary, written in a concise, even elliptical style and moving rapidly from topic to topic, thus covering a prodigious amount of ground. This is the only book on Jesuit emblematics that a general scholar of early modern culture would need to have on the shelf. It is also a book which offers much to the interested lay reader.

Peter Davidson

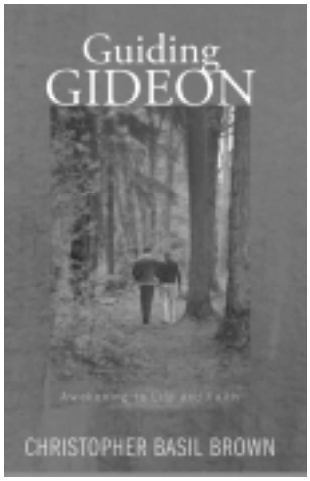
James Martin, *The Abbey* (New York: HarperOne, 2015). 978 0 0624 0186 1, pp. 224, £14.99.

Christopher Basil Brown, *Guiding Gideon: Awakening to Life and Faith* (Eugene: Cascade, 2015). 978 1 6256 4982 9, pp. 166, £16.00.



Two recently published novels, one by the noted Jesuit writer James Martin and the other by the less well-known Australian evangelical Christopher Basil Brown, both have at their hearts the ancient Christian practice of spiritual direction. This common theme plays itself out obviously enough on several levels. Neither novel has a clear-cut hero, as such, but both instead centre on the relationship dynamics or, to put it better, the spiritual dynamics between a spiritual director and his directee.

In Martin's novel, the director is an abbot steeped in the Roman Catholic liturgical rhythms



of monastic community life, a priest who engages almost coincidentally with two ordinary people who are themselves not explicitly setting their struggles in a spiritual context. Brown's director is an evangelical Baptist spiritual guide who intentionally engages in 'companioning' a young man explicitly seeking to explore and deepen his spiritual life. For both authors the mutual relationship between director and director is key to how the novels unfold.

This makes for unconventional plot-lines, especially in Brown's book, as not only do we find ourselves privy to some profound changes in the interior lives of ordinary people as they open themselves up to experiencing spiritual direction, but we also learn a great deal about the self-examining perspectives of the directors as they each—the abbot and the companioning guide—reflect on their exchanges with their directees. This double interest in both sides of the fence suggests a double readership too—although I would venture that those practising or considering practising as spiritual directors might be keener readers than those at the receiving end. For those keener readers I think it is not a matter of choosing one of these novels over the other; rather, to read them both side by side is an intriguing and worthwhile exercise in comparing different takes on the practice of spiritual direction.

For even if the two novels have this crucial common feature of a fictionalised spiritual direction relationship, there are more elements and characteristics that set the two apart—not least that Martin's book is a smooth and consistently effortless read, and Brown's book is not. The latter is a bit of a slog at times, with some unrealistically complex dialogues and interior reflections using a jargon that may not appeal to the non-evangelical. 'From the warmth burning within me, I knew that Gideon was experiencing the real and manifest presence of Jesus' (p. 45), says Brown's fictional spiritual director, in the first person. Martin's writing is more reticent: 'The abbot listened intently. Then he stared into the swirls of milk in his cup and paused for a long time.' (p. 112) Both directors are responding to the movement of the spirit afoot in their directees, but these descriptions leave different impressions on the reader's imagination. This may on the surface seem to be merely a matter of difference in writing style, perhaps even in craftsmanship. But there is more to this stylistic difference than meets the eye, for the reader can just as easily take Martin to task for an easy charm and simplicity that can be

construed by the suspicious as romanticising; and the same reader can as easily absorb Brown's complexity as depth to be seriously pondered.

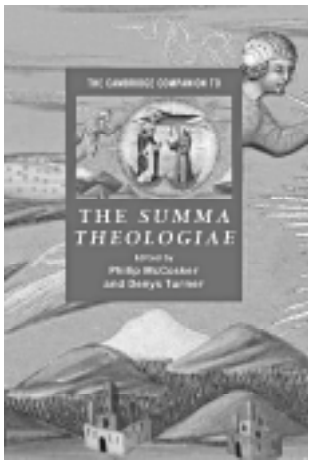
Yet however the interaction between director and directee is described, one thing that does come across with great clarity in both novels is the important role that the director's personal prayer plays in the relationship dynamics between the two. This is not intercessory prayer on behalf of the directee, but examen-like prayer on behalf of the director himself. And, refreshingly, neither director is presented as a 'professional expert' in spiritual matters, an expert simply following a tried and true methodology of spiritual direction (although Brown addresses this very question of expertise through his familiarity with psychotherapy). Rather, both pray about their own subjective responses to their directees.

This is reassuring to know because it is an element of spiritual direction praxis that transcends denominations and genres. For the monastic Catholic and the evangelical Baptist alike, the dynamics of the director–directee relationship are a two-way street. Martin's director, the abbot, is rooted, as the novel reiterates throughout, in an ancient tradition that makes glorious use of cultural artefacts in liturgy, architecture, in art and music, to stimulate the interior spiritual life. None of these external aids to spirituality matters much in Brown's novel, where the evangelical director works directly (and almost psychologically) with the felt intensity of the interior life. Yet, for both, sensitivity to those interior stirrings of the spirit in director and directee alike is key to how their relationships eventually bear fruit—a good case for recognising that *in my Father's house are many dwellings*.

To return to the question of who might be interested in reading these fictionalised accounts of spiritual direction, there is little doubt that anyone, even with no familiarity with spiritual direction, could enjoy Martin's wonderfully readable descriptions of ordinary people's everyday struggles and how these struggles relate to a spiritual life. But some, I suspect, would find it a challenge to stick with the highly stylised version of spiritual exchanges that make up Brown's tale unless they were engaged in this activity themselves. For all that, novels in which spiritual directors figure as main characters are thin on the ground, and should be welcomed, especially by anyone engaged more than peripherally in spiritual direction. Both authors are themselves practising spiritual directors and both, in their own knowledgeable way, offer intriguing deeper glimpses into the interior mechanics of the practice of spiritual direction. And that is always satisfying for the spiritually curious to read about.

Karen Eliasen

***The Cambridge Companion to the* Summa Theologiae, edited by Philip McCosker and Denys Turner (Cambridge: CUP, 2016). 978 0 5217 0544 8, pp. 376, £19.99.**



This recent addition to the much appreciated Cambridge Companion series begins with some useful suggestions from Professor Bauerschmidt of the University of Loyola in Maryland to help readers who have never previously encountered the style or format of Aquinas' writings to grasp the overall form of the work and the technical terms designating various parts of its structure.

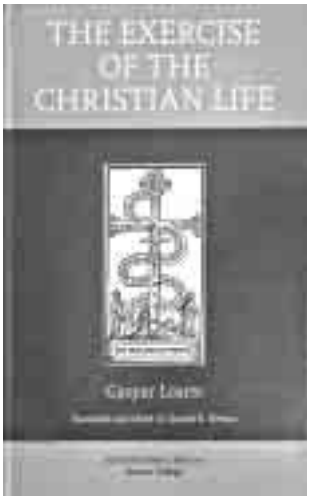
This is followed by a rich account from Timothy Radcliffe of the spirituality that governs its entire approach. The young Dominicans for whom the *Summa* was written needed to understand that one's attitude to lecturing in theology will depend on the spirituality which inspires that activity. Radcliffe argues that Aquinas regarded the practice of theologizing not merely as an exercise in rigorous logical argumentation, but primarily as an attempt to discover and communicate the reality of God. It is aimed at helping both the young Dominicans and the people to whom they preached to discover God. The *Summa* is intended as a guide to spiritual development and as an aid to integrating spiritual understanding into one's moral life. With a similar aim and, unsurprisingly to anyone who knew him, in a very different style, there is an interesting essay by the late Herbert McCabe aimed at roughly the same general audience, but written in his own slightly tongue-in-cheek manner.

The main body of the book consists of a further eighteen substantial papers by what one might describe as a very well-chosen 'Who's Who' of the scholars in the field on both sides of the Atlantic. A review at the highly technical level which, by and large, would be needed to do them all justice is perhaps not best placed in *The Way*. Brian Davies, however, gives a neat, balanced and comparatively accessible account of how Aquinas thinks we can hope to talk sensibly about God, as well as identifying some of the pitfalls likely to trap the unwary; and Karen Kilby offers a helpful view of how Aquinas understood the relationship between philosophy and theology. The remaining papers are, I think, more technical than would be appealing to readers whose main interest is not precisely in how best to manage a philosophical approach to theology. The collection is exactly what it sets out to be: a varied and helpful

introduction to a major milestone in Western theology, with a good deal to say to scholars whose previous training would naturally incline them to approach Aquinas's *Summa theologiae* from one of these specialities or from the other. The result is balanced, constructive and a very good example of the approach and scholarship which its contributors seek to recommend.

Gerard J. Hughes SJ

Gaspar Loarte, *The Exercise of the Christian Life*, translated and edited by Charles R. Keenan (Boston: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2016). 978 0 9972 8234 4, pp. 147, $35.00.



This book might tempt those who had read about Gaspar Loarte (*c.*1498–1578) in, say, John O'Malley's *The First Jesuits*. Charles Keenan, the translator, provides a lucid introduction to the Spaniard's work, filling out O'Malley's *aperçus*. Main areas of interest include Loarte's 'New Christian' background and links to St Juan de Ávila. Following the conversion programme of the 1490s, Jewish ancestry rendered someone suspect to the early modern Spanish authorities but, although St Ignatius gave him a testing time when Loarte joined the Society of Jesus as an older man in 1554, the founder was prepared to take him on, and use his administrative and pastoral talents in the Society's base in Genoa.

Loarte is now best known for this treatise, composed in Italian as the *Esercitio della vita christiana,* and primarily directed, as the author himself declares, at readers who are 'more simple and unlearned'. His audience was not religious 'professionals', and he makes allowances for a readership of lay people with varying degrees of formal instruction and varying amounts of time available.

In keeping with this, advice is given covering appropriate Christian comportment, training in a rule of life, ways of praying and of meditating on the life of Christ, going to confession and attending Mass—communicating frequently, in accordance with what already was the Society's emphasis. Much space is devoted to classifying and combating temptation, tackling the Deadly Sins one by one, as also to facing death. The work concludes with expositions of the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Our Father and the Hail Mary, plus two extended prayers for use around Holy Communion. There are lots of biblical quotations, with some references to the Fathers.

Work on the *Esercitio* probably began in 1556. It appeared in print in Genoa in 1557, after some delays, although no copies of this first edition are extant; the work's second Genoese edition, of 1559, is lost as well. Dr Keenan has worked from a revised Italian text as published from 1559 onwards. The treatise enjoyed considerable popularity, not only in its own day, but subsequently, soon being translated into the author's native Spanish (he had had to make some effort to get his Italian up to an acceptable standard), and into French, German and English. Loarte hoped his readers would find sensitive and intelligent spiritual directors, but realised that the written word alone might sometimes have to serve, where resources were limited. The English case may be a particular instance of this. Although Robert Persons's 1610 *Christian Directory* did not closely follow Loarte's treatise, our Jesuit was acquainted with it.

So, we may ask, to whom is this work likely to appeal now? For the general reader Fr O'Malley has probably already said as much as is necessary. The devotional world of this treatise is very far from that of today, and I cannot see it feeding many hungry people now, whereas, say, Thomas à Kempis can still do so …. The book is of mainly scholarly interest, likely to attract students of the earlier days of the Society in Rome; those following its widening outreach; those wishing to compare the *Esercitio*'s meditative practices with those of Ignatius' own *Exercises;* and those exploring the influence on Loarte and his fellows of such writers as St Juan de Ávila, fray Luis de Granada and Thomas à Kempis.

Eric Southworth