

THE WAY

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LEARNING LIFE'S LESSONS



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During a holiday in France in 2016, Paul Younger fell ill and was diagnosed with an aggressive brain tumour. Inevitably, his life has been radically changed by this and by his subsequent treatment. As a man schooled in the Spiritual Exercises, he found himself drawing deeply on the resources of Ignatian spirituality to discover God at work even here.

The Good Thief 18–28

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The Gospel of Luke describes how a thief, crucified beside Christ, offers him a few kind words, and in turn receives a promise that he will enter Paradise alongside Jesus. The unexpected death of a much-loved uncle led Ruth Evans to reflect upon this story, seeing in it a dialogue of great significance for those struggling to make sense of life, or facing their own death or that of a loved one.

Theological Trends

A Different World Is Possible: The Vision of Ignacio Ellacuría 29–42

Ambrose Mong

Ignacio Ellacuría was one of a group of Jesuit victims of government death squads during the El Salvador civil war of the 1980s. As rector of the University of Central America, he analyzed the political situation of his country from the viewpoint of the poor. Ambrose Mong shows how his work has inspired later theologians to argue that presenting visions of alternative ways of living is an essential part of the Christian mission.

From the Ignatian Tradition

Juan Alfonso de Polanco: Memory, Identity and Mission 43–55

José García de Castro

Juan Alfonso de Polanco was, for a crucial decade in the early years of the Society of Jesus, the secretary and confidante of St Ignatius. His writings played an important role in setting the future direction for Jesuit life and ministry. José García de Castro offers the example of his life as an indication of the importance of a lived sense of history within an institution such as the Society.

Mary Ward: To Be or Not to Be ... a Saint 57–69*Christine Burke*

Early in the seventeenth century Mary Ward tried to establish a religious order for women modelled on the Jesuits. She faced implacable opposition and persecution from within the Church. It would take another two centuries before something like her vision was realised. Christine Burke argues that securing her canonization would send an important message to those putting forward new ideas in today's Church.

The Dialectics of Prayer and Sleep 71–80*A. Paul Dominic*

In the Garden of Gethsemane, the night before he died, Jesus invited his closest disciples to 'Stay awake and pray'. Sleep can be regarded as an enemy by those trying to pray. Yet, as Paul Dominic suggests here, the relationship between prayer, sleep and wakefulness is more complicated than this might indicate, and indeed God may sometimes be best encountered within sleep itself.

Exodus: A Journey through Sickness 81–88*Oonagh Walker*

According to the gospel accounts, Jesus spent much of his public ministry confronting sickness and its causes. Present-day society often avoids and isolates illness, regarding it as a defeat for medical science. Here Oonagh Walker reflects on her own experience, and what, by embracing it, she found herself able to learn.

The Science of Affections: The Ignatian Spiritual Exercises through Thomas Aquinas 89–100*Jade Marie Lasiste*

In the Jesuit *Constitutions* St Ignatius advised that all Jesuits training for the priesthood be instructed in the works of St Thomas Aquinas, a theologian whose work had greatly influenced his own studies in Paris. One place where this influence can be traced is in the text of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Jade Marie Lasiste shows how Ignatius' use of the term 'affections' can be illuminated by comparison with Aquinas.

'What Do You Want from Her?' Women in the Gospel of John 101–108*Daniel Kearney*

The Roman Catholic Church is beginning to look at the possibility of new roles for women within its organization. The scripture scholar Raymond Brown suggested in 1975 that the Gospel of John provides a good resource for this investigation in its portrayal of the women who were close to Jesus. Daniel Kearney considers what we might learn from their witness.

Book Reviews

Paul Nicholson on the beatification of John Sullivan

Gemma Simmonds on a selection of translated essays on Ignatian spirituality

Brian O’Leary on the Jesuit *Constitutions* and formation

John LaRocca on a new biography of Edmund Campion

Michael Canaris on Pope Francis and church reform

John Cottingham on psychology and the soul

Tim McEvoy on a spiritual director’s diary

Peter Tyler on philosophy and contemplative prayer

Luke Penkett on two books about encounters with the divine

Joanna Collicutt on Christian belief and spiritual well-being

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. The 2017 Special Issue commemorates the five-hundredth anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, so articles in this area will be particularly welcome.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABBREVIATIONS

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

FOREWORD

‘FOR BETTER FOR WORSE, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health ...’ These familiar words, taken from the marriage vows in the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*, point to the need for commitment in bad times as well as good if we are to learn all that life has to teach us—lessons go on being offered until, as the next phrase puts it, ‘death us do part’. These lessons are not, obviously, restricted to married people. You will find in this issue of *The Way* much evidence of the kind of wisdom that can perhaps only be gained by reflecting on the experiences of sickness and suffering.

In 2015 Paul Younger wrote an article for *The Way* describing the Ignatian roots of the ecological vision underpinning Pope Francis’s encyclical *Laudato si’*. A year later, while on holiday in France, he fell ill, and was diagnosed with a hitherto unsuspected brain tumour. Here he writes a deeply personal article describing how Ignatian spirituality has helped him to face all that has happened since. Oonagh Walker, another regular contributor to our journal, has also found that a recent experience of sickness took her back to the foundations of her own faith.

It was not sickness but violent, government-sponsored oppression that led to the deaths of six Jesuits, along with their housekeeper and her daughter, at El Salvador’s University of Central America in 1989. The rector of that university, Ignacio Ellacuría, who was among those killed, was a liberation theologian dedicated to tracing the work of God among the poorest of his fellow citizens. Ambrose Mong here describes the influence that his ideas continue to have among the many who would argue that it is essential to the Christian message to proclaim the possibility and necessity of alternatives to present social injustices—alternatives towards which we need actively to work. The ‘good thief’, crucified alongside Jesus, was also a victim of state violence. The few recorded words of his dialogue with Jesus speak profoundly to Ruth Evans of what it means to struggle to make sense of life, and death.

Mary Ward was a seventeenth-century Englishwoman who tried to found an apostolic order of women modelled on the Jesuits. Her suffering came at the hands of the Church, which rigorously persecuted her over several decades for her effrontery. Christine Burke believes that, in these changed times, she deserves rather to be recognised as a saint. Daniel

Kearney is hopeful that the contemporary Church will soon be ready to broaden the roles open to women within it, and offers the example of the women in John's Gospel as role models.

Battles for equality and justice seem a long way from the daily toil of a humble secretary. Yet without the work of one of Ignatius' closest collaborators, Juan de Polanco, in writing letters and collating reports, José García de Castro demonstrates that little of the barnstorming missionary endeavour of the first, and later, generations of Jesuits would have been possible. Paul Dominic persuasively argues that God can be at work even in sleep, planting visions that can, if attention is paid, transform the lives of the visionaries themselves and those with whom they work. God influences those who are open to God in many other ways than in dreams, notably through what Ignatius called 'the affections', and the article by Jade Lasiste shows how the work of Thomas Aquinas can help us reach a fuller appreciation of what he meant.

On a pilgrimage through northern England a few years ago, feeling footsore and weary, I passed a billboard emblazoned with a quotation attributed to King Alfred the Great: 'Only the fool seeks a comfortable life'. (I cannot remember what was being advertised, nor have I been able to trace the quotation since!) Even if there is no harm in seeking such a life, few will manage to enjoy it in an uninterrupted fashion over decades. It is good, therefore, to be reminded of the valuable lessons that hardships can bring. Not, admittedly, that this billboard did much to ease my blisters or improve my mood at the time. But God can use seemingly negative experiences to shape us in positive ways, and any spirituality that is worthwhile must be able to recognise this.

Paul Nicholson SJ
Editor

LOST FOR WORDS

An Ignatian Encounter with Divine Love in Aggressive Brain Cancer

Paul L. Younger

TO BEGIN BEFORE THE BEGINNING: the turn of the year 2016 was a season of extraordinarily joyful blessings in our family. Having recently celebrated the graduations of our three sons, and delighting in early successes in their careers, we now gathered to celebrate the first marriage in the next generation of my extended family. My sense of joy was heightened by the sale of a company I had co-founded nearly two decades earlier, simultaneously lifting a great burden from my shoulders and settling all of the family's debts.

Yet despite all of these reasons for cheerfulness, something was puzzling me: a heavy emphasis on suffering and death in my daily *lectio divina*. Continuing a habit I had developed while making the Spiritual Exercises in daily life over eight months (completed in May 2015), my daily *lectio* takes the Roman Catholic missal readings, augmented by whatever commentaries or other books seem most appropriate in the light of my emotional and intellectual response to the scriptures. And just as our family reached peaks of happiness and fulfilment, the entries in my spiritual journal recorded relentless grappling with life's darkest challenges.

By the morning of the wedding, I had begun to tire of this. I closed my journal entry for 30 January 2016 with this question: *What are you preparing me for, Lord?* No answer was immediately forthcoming, but the uninvited meditations on suffering and death persisted unabated. Then suddenly, six months later, I got an unequivocal answer.

Expressive Dysphasia

In late July 2016, my wife Louise and I were savouring yet more joy: summer holidays, visiting various friends in south-western England, Jersey and, finally, Brittany. Our hosts there were fellow parishioners from Glasgow, who had long been inviting us to join them in their restored

farmhouse near Redon. The welcome was as warm as the summer weather, and although I had finally given up alcohol at New Year 2016, I made an exception to sample the local wine, followed by a half-dram of whisky as a nightcap. The following morning we slept late, and woke in good spirits, with no hint of any health problems. Louise and I chatted as usual, then went to join our friends for breakfast outdoors.

It was when I tried to ask where I might find the breakfast cereals that I discovered the sounds coming out of my mouth bore no relation to my intended meaning. Indeed, they did not correspond to *any* language. With rising alarm, I tried again. Still in vain. I stepped to the door and silently beckoned Louise—not an accustomed means of communication between us. With considerable effort I managed slowly to stutter out *What ... I ... am ... thinking ... is ... not ... what ... I ... am ... saying ...* We concurred in mute surmise: I was having a stroke.

With our friends at the wheel, we were soon in Redon Hospital. After a couple of tests, I was despatched on a 50-minute emergency ambulance transfer to a larger hospital in Rennes. The enforced rest gave me the opportunity to assume my habitual prayer: continually breathing the name *Yeshua*.¹ I continued this prayer as I lay prone in the dark tunnels of large scanners, and then in a curtained cubicle while the medics deliberated.



An MRI scan of the brain

¹ *Yeshua* is the Aramaic form of Jesus' name.

This solitude was a welcome respite from speaking, as my articulation remained laboured, with occasional stammering and malapropisms.

After a couple of hours, the neurologist gave her verdict. The content reminded me of an old joke, in poor taste—‘There’s good news, and there’s bad news’. It was not a stroke; it was a brain tumour. I was told that, although the tumour was not *within* an operational area, it was immediately adjoining ‘Wernicke’s Area’—the part of the brain that governs speech. The expressive dysphasia I had experienced that morning was due to pressure from the tumour.

The precise timing of the dysphasia could not be explained definitively, but the medics regarded it as plausible that my sudden consumption of alcohol after seven months of abstinence could have triggered irritation of the tumour, thus betraying its presence. Had my body remained used to alcohol, then the tumour might not have been so ready to reveal itself. Apparently many people die from undetected tumours of this type, their only symptom being the one major fit that kills them. If my interpretation is correct then, given that my teetotalism had resulted from a formal discernment arising from the Spiritual Exercises, that divine activity had now spared myself and my family from such an ‘unprovided death’.

My initial response to learning about the presence of the tumour was simply surprise. As I assimilated the news, I became conscious of an unanticipated sensation: deep calm. A few hours later I was prescribed counter-convulsive drugs, as a precaution against fits, which sometimes accompany expressive dysphasia. I was sent back to the hospital in Redon so that my initial response to these powerful drugs could be monitored overnight. As the summer twilight faded to dark, the feeling of calm persisted, occasionally punctuated by quiet chuckles as I recognised some of the ironies of my situation, and recalled old comic quips about the brain. I continued breathing the name of *Yeshua* throughout my body, until I fell deeply asleep.

In the morning, I was discharged under strict orders to return home immediately and report to hospital. Louise managed to arrange flights for the following day. Her support for me became rather literal on the voyage, as the counter-convulsives took full effect, so that it was a profoundly somnambulant husband she needed to guide home. The NHS staff in Glasgow lost no time inducting me into the system. While they conducted six hours of thorough medical examinations, family began to arrive to support us.

A Rough Retreat

The ensuing turbulent month unfolded as an impromptu ‘retreat’, as many of the lessons I had learnt in theory during the Spiritual Exercises now became incarnate. This ‘retreat’ assembled itself around medical imperatives, which oscillated between brief periods of intense activity (sophisticated brain scans, surgery, crucial clinical appointments) and lengthy intervals of greater passivity (awaiting important phone calls and appointments, coming to terms with sudden changes in lifestyle and coping with anguish). Throughout, I underwent the most profound and sustained series of spiritual experiences I had ever encountered.

Like any ordinary retreat, this period demanded temporary isolation from most of my social circle, not least my parish. But the retreat was decidedly ‘rough’, both in the rude manner in which it suddenly began, and in its invitation to meet the Lord, not in the genteel ‘still, small voice of calm’, through which I had previously encountered him in individually guided silent retreats, but in a maelstrom of ‘earthquake, wind and fire’.² In the place of a single retreat director, the Lord convened a great cohort of relatives, friends and professionals to help me through the process.

We were now aware that the tumour might not prove fully operable, and that surgery might result in permanent damage to my speech or the use of my limbs. However, as the tumour had been discovered at the height of the holiday period, we would have to wait a while to get a definitive opinion from an expert neurosurgeon. As the clock ticked, my initial calm began to crumble, to be replaced by nebulous fear. As the Feast of St Ignatius of Loyola falls on 31 July, it was one of the mass readings for that day that then caught my eye:

There is only Christ: He is everything and He is in everything³

This is indeed foundational in Ignatius’ Spiritual Exercises. When reflecting on it in good times, it seemed self-evidently true. But what about now? When I responded to that text my prayer became: ‘Lord reveal yourself to me in my anguish and fear. Where are you in my tumour?’ As I grappled with this, my principal prayer became Psalm 68 (69), begging

² From John Greenleaf Whittier’s hymn ‘Dear Lord and Father of Mankind’. This hymn is part of his poem ‘The Brewing of Soma’, in which the ‘still, small voice of calm’ alludes to the experience of Elijah on Mount Horeb, as recounted in 1 Kings 19: 11–13. See *The Complete Poetical Works of John Greenleaf Whittier* (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1873), 374.

³ Colossians 3: 11. All scriptural quotations are from *The Jerusalem Bible*, as used in the ICEL missal.

the Lord to ‘rescue me from sinking in the mud [and] save me from the waters of the deep, lest the waves overwhelm me’⁴ As I prayed this psalm daily, I sometimes felt disingenuous when I reached the point where I promised to ‘sing the praise of God’s name’ and ‘glorify God with thanksgiving’. I felt little genuine inclination to praise just then. I also felt a degree of shame: why am I succumbing to fear, given the innumerable luminous blessings the Lord has shone into my life over five decades? Why did I remain so resistant to the Lord’s promptings, whether through happiness or sorrow?⁵ Then I remembered the Lord’s own anguish in Gethsemane and felt less ashamed.⁶ Further consolation came swiftly from the words I read in an autobiography of the Nicaraguan Jesuit Fernando Cardenal: ‘everyone is the owner of their own fear’⁷

**Why am I
succumbing
to fear ... ?**

I considered what ‘owning my fear’ might mean, and for now it meant simply asking the Lord for the grace of courage to confront it. I did not attempt to deny the reality of my fear or put a ‘brave face’ on it, but faced it squarely, acknowledging my need for the Lord to give me the strength to vanquish it. The following morning I received powerful confirmation of this intention, when that day’s gospel recounted Peter appealing to Jesus for help, in the very same terms as Psalm 68 (69), receiving the immediate response: ‘Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid.’ (Luke 22:42–46)

I had a fortnight to pray for courage before I finally spoke to the neurosurgeon best placed to address my tumour. To my relief, he expressed confidence that they could operate. However, to minimise the risk of permanent brain damage, he asked me to consider consenting to a ‘waking craniotomy’, in which the patient is awake and engaged in continuous dialogue with a speech therapist throughout the removal of the tumour. I immediately agreed. The neurosurgeon was a little taken aback, as it normally proves time-consuming to persuade patients to accept this procedure.

⁴ Psalm translations from *The Grail*, as in the ICEL edition of the Roman Catholic Divine Office.

⁵ Compare Matthew 11:16–17.

⁶ Luke 22:42–46.

⁷ Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Cardenal (1924–1978), quoted in Fernando Cardenal, *Faith and Joy: Memoirs of a Revolutionary Priest* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2015), 121. Pedro Chamorro was an outstandingly brave journalist who edited *La Prensa*, the only substantial Nicaraguan newspaper to endure decades of repression and boldly to document the atrocities of the Somoza dictatorship. Pedro endured exile, torture and death threats, yet refused to be silenced. His assassination in January 1978 provoked public rage against the dictatorship, which accelerated the victory of the Sandinista revolution the following year.

My prayer for courage was buttressed by my scientific training, as I was aware that there are no pain-receptor nerves in the brain, so once the scalp is anaesthetized, the excision of the tumour cannot possibly hurt. Nevertheless, even when people appreciate this, they often panic when they wake in the operating theatre. They then have to be put back under, and the increased risk of brain damage forces the neurosurgeon to be over-cautious, risking leaving some of the tumour in place. I felt confident that I would remain calm, and so the operation was scheduled accordingly.

I had a weekend to prepare, and I received a powerful blessing to deepen my courage and calm. Although I had prepared for the sacrament of reconciliation a fortnight earlier, a mix-up over diaries with my confessor had frustrated the plan. The very day before I was to report to the hospital I was unexpectedly visited by a friend of a friend: Fr Fernando, a young Dominican priest working in Nicaragua. We spent forty minutes celebrating the sacrament. This sent me a powerful message: to recognise that living with uncertainty is an important form of spiritual poverty, and that the fear and anguish prompted by uncertainty will be vanquished by the grace of trust. So I must persevere in praying for trust, which is akin to courage and patience. To nurture trust in the Lord, Fr Fernando suggested that I imagine myself as a baby in my mother's arms: vulnerable, but thoroughly loved and never afraid of abandonment. That image remained with me throughout the weeks ahead.

At the same time, I was borne upon a flood of prayer, love and concern. Most moving was the response from the parish in which I first began to grow as a confirmed Christian, where I lived in my junior school



years. That parish community organized a day-long prayer vigil when they heard news of my tumour—and then did it all again five days later when they were told that that would be the day of my operation. Over the period I must have received more mass dedications than the Pope's intentions. Astonishing 'God-incidences' multiplied: I received prayers from all around the world, as word spread from person to person, often among those who knew me but previously did not know each other. A former colleague who had been longing all his life to undertake the Hajj to Mecca heard of my condition, and wrote to tell me he was dedicating his pilgrimage to my healing.

Meanwhile, my spiritual reading yielded a rich harvest of timely advice, as previously unknown books reached my hands. The writings of an eighteenth-century Jesuit spiritual director, Jean-Pierre de Caussade, spoke to me urgently and cogently:

The divine will involves the soul in troubles of every kind, from which conventional human wisdom perceives no escape. It then feels all its weakness and, exposed to its limitations, it is frustrated. It is *precisely then* that the divine will asserts itself in all its power to those who submit to it without any holding back. Divine will then guides the soul through deadly perils ... it raises the soul to the heights of heaven⁸

Here I began to approach the crux of my 'rough retreat': learning humility from the sudden deprivation of my illusory feeling of control over my life, and from the confounding of my arrogance, born of a sense of entitlement to the gratuitous blessings I had always received. In my weakness and finiteness I could clearly see that the only way through mortal peril is trust in the Lord, and I let myself fall backwards into the maternal embrace of God. I had nothing left to do but let go.

With all of this love, prayer and wisdom supporting me I approached the operation with the same feeling of calm I had first experienced shortly after the tumour was discovered. As I woke early on the morning of the operation, these words of St Paul awaited me in that day's readings:

We feel we must be continually thanking God for you ... because your faith is growing so wonderfully and the love that you have for

⁸ Jean-Pierre de Caussade, *Abandonment to Divine Providence: With Letters of Father de Caussade on the Practice of Self-Abandonment*, translated by E. J. Strickland (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2011 [1921]). The original French text was posthumously published in 1861 (de Caussade died in 1751).

one and another never stops increasing; and ... we can take special pride in you for your constancy and faith under all the ... troubles you have to bear the purpose of it is that you may be found worthy of the kingdom of God; it is for the sake of this that you are suffering now the name of Jesus Christ will be glorified in you and you in Him, by the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ⁹

Albeit starting from a low base, I could indeed feel growth in faith and love, as I received the graces of courage, calm and trust for which I prayed.

In the event, the operation was highly successful. At only one point did my speech begin to deteriorate, but that was just after the extraction had already cleared the affected area. After local anaesthesia of the clipped neurons (not for pain—there was none—but just to prevent them causing confusion) my speech recovered fully and the hours of dialogue continued without further incident. I remained in good spirits, and finally rejoiced to hear that all identifiable tumour material had been excised. I remained awake all the way back to the ward, and through a joyful reunion with my family.

Though the neurosurgeon was very pleased with the operation, he cautioned me to expect follow-up radiotherapy and/or chemotherapy, as surgery cannot remove every last cancer cell. The speech therapist told me not to be alarmed if my speech deteriorated before improving again. Indeed, for several days I was unable to read or write. At first, my speech was restricted to words of one or two syllables; it took me months to approach mastery over polysyllabic words. Hilarious malapropisms remained rife for weeks. Yet, curiously, the two languages I learnt as an adult were unaffected. Overall, recovery was swift, and we enjoyed a joyful period, with much laughter, optimism and heartfelt prayers of gratitude.

GBM: God Be Merciful

Ten days after the operation we had to return to the hospital to receive the formal 'diagnosis', from laboratory characterization of the removed tumour cells. The type of cancer they found (glioblastoma multiforme, GBM) is of 'Grade 4'—the most aggressive category—and would therefore be expected to recur. GBM is regarded as incurable and terminal. All of this life-changing news was delivered swiftly and impassively by a young doctor who seemed to have missed class the day when sympathetic communication of bad news was covered.

⁹ 2 Thessalonians 1:3–5, 12.

When I asked the doctor to expand on what my prospects might be, he made the classic mistake of equating my life expectancy with the median of the lumped frequency distribution of recorded mortalities from the time of diagnosis—which for this condition is just fifteen months. As a scientist, I could quickly spot the shortcomings of this crude approach.¹⁰ For instance, as the frequency distribution includes *everyone* who ever died with a GBM tumour, it lumps together those who had inoperable tumours, those whose operations had not been fully successful and those who were too old or ill to receive radiotherapy and chemotherapy. So although the median of the distribution is indeed dauntingly brief, the tail of the graph—though thin—is very long. Already there were plenty of grounds to hope that my longevity would be counted in years rather than months. For Louise, though, with no scientific training, it was simply devastating to receive these cold statistics at face value.

As our sons anxiously awaited the outcome of the meeting, we now had the deeply painful duty of breaking the news to each of them individually. After telling them what the doctor had said, I immediately added that I am not a statistic. Statistics simply describe the past; they do not determine fates. In contrast, I am a human being, loved by God and surrounded on all sides by love and prayer. The outcome is ultimately in God's hands.

Hope, Patience, Perseverance, Trust

I was prescribed a course of treatment, commencing with a six-week period of concurrent radiotherapy and chemotherapy—not seeking a cure, but to enhance longevity and quality of life. As I embarked on this programme, I perceived a dilemma in my prayer: how should I pray as I ought (Romans 8:26)? Having revelled in a blessed marriage and prioritised supporting my loving family, it felt perverse to learn that I might soon have to abandon that vocation. So praying for healing felt right. But given that GBM is 'incurable', is it reasonable to pray for healing? Well, there *are* cases of indefinite remission with GBM tumours after surgery and treatment, usually ascribed to a re-awakening of the compromised immune system that allowed the tumour to grow in the first place. So to pray for healing was not unreasonable. Moreover, in no instance in the Gospels

¹⁰ See Steven Jay Gould, 'The Median Isn't the Message', in *Bully for Brontosaurus: Reflections in Natural History* (New York: Vintage, 2001), 473–478; also available at http://cancerguide.org/median_not_msg.html.

does Jesus refuse healing and simply recommend that sufferers cultivate pious resignation. Jesus expects us to desire healing, and he wants to heal us.

It was about halfway through the six-week period of intense radio- and chemotherapy that I experienced in prayer the resolution of the perceived dilemma. While it is true that I cannot dictate what blessings God chooses to grant me, it is not only legitimate, but indeed incumbent upon me, to ask to remain able to pursue my vocation for my family, community and society. Yet I must accept that I cannot choose my own path.¹¹

Apart from the diagnosis of a GBM tumour in the first place, every other aspect of my treatment has gone very well. Within days of my diagnosis, I was introduced to an inspiring man whose GBM tumour had been more than twice the size of mine at surgery, yet who continues to thrive fourteen years later. He gave me invaluable advice on the active steps I can take to cooperate with medical healing, such as adopting a low-sugar, largely vegetarian diet, and a daily routine combining plenty of exercise, rest and meditative prayer.

Meanwhile, my body proved robust under the highest doses of radiation and chemotherapy, which is known to correlate with improved longevity. It was very tempting to over-extrapolate from this. Did it mean that the Lord had definitely answered my prayer for healing? But maybe God only asks of me the testimony of these days: living in the present moment, counting only on God's love, ministered to me by those around me. God never promised anyone a charmed life, free of hardship. But God has promised that, ultimately, we will not be overcome.¹² In the meantime, I received my current maxim in prayer: 'Rejoice in hope; be patient in suffering; persevere in prayer' (Romans 12:12).

Even though my speech has largely recovered, I remain 'lost for words' in another sense:¹³

The realisation of many great things, of many genuine miracles, depends only upon our trust in God's great generosity. He will not always do a show-stopping miracle, although the show of power will sometimes be there. But He can and *will*, with divine sovereignty, so

¹¹ See John 21:18.

¹² See *The Showings of Julian of Norwich*, translated by Mirabai Starr (Norwich: Canterbury, 2014), 3.68.

¹³ Compare Luke 1:20. A longer account of these experiences ('Unanticipated Growth') is available by emailing paul.l.younger@gmail.com.

dispose the thousand small things of inner-world causality and logic, that in the end His will is accomplished. Anyone possessed of this confidence would be certain of the results: he would leave the means up to the Lord God. And anyone whose own self-reliance is overcome by the Lord in this way is left standing speechless and astonished ...¹⁴

Paul L. Younger held the Rankine Chair of Engineering at the University of Glasgow, where he was also professor of energy engineering. Previously he was pro-vice-chancellor for engagement and founder-director of the Institute for Sustainability at Newcastle University. He has worked extensively with community groups on water supply and pollution remediation projects worldwide, and is currently helping develop large-scale renewable energy systems in Ethiopia.

¹⁴ Words written with manacled hands by the Jesuit Alfred Delp, only weeks before his execution by the Nazis: Alfred Delp, *Advent of the Heart: Seasonal Sermons and Prison Writings, 1941–1944*, edited by Roman Bleinstein and translated by the nuns of Abtei St Walburg (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2006), 147.

THE GOOD THIEF

Ruth Agnes Evans

Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. (Luke 23:32–33)

I OFTEN FEEL GRATEFUL to the people who made their way to Christ late in the day. Whatever the personal price they paid for this tardiness, they remain a source of encouragement, a reminder that Christian optimism is part of a hope that is eternally present: we are precious to God however late our presentation of ourselves, however much time we have lost along the way.

The Jewish philosopher Simone Weil said,

Of all the beings other than Christ of whom the Gospel tells us, the good thief is by far the one I most envy. To have been at the side of Christ and in the same state during the crucifixion seems to me a far more enviable privilege than to be at the right hand of his glory.¹

Simone Weil would have known how singular her choice appears. After all, the thief, a self-confessed failure in life, is not known for any history of virtue or lengthy service. He is known only for a few stumbling words.

This is one of the reasons, of course, why he is attractive. We can recognise something of ourselves in his troubled effort. Yet there is more to it than that. The words of the thief are merciful and kind. As Saunders Lewis points out in his moving poem 'To the Good Thief', the thief arrives at his extraordinary response in the midst of a horrific scene.

This article is dedicated to the memory of Lawrence John Klein, who died on 10 June 2016.

¹ Simone Weil, 'Letter III: About Her Departure', in Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*, translated by Emma Craufurd (New York: G. F. Putnam, 1959), 59.

It was in the rawness of his flesh and his dirt that you saw Him,
Whipped and under thorns,
And in his nailing like a sack of bones outside the town,
On a pole, like a scarecrow

O master of courtesy and manners, who enlightened you,
About your part in this harsh parody?²

The tribute captures the poignant contrast in the thief's sublime words. He demonstrates kindness and courtesy at a time and place where they are scandalously absent. In these most appalling of circumstances, he pays homage to Christ the King.

Most of the voices on Golgotha, including those of the so-called pure, deride Jesus. But the thief does not. The onlookers decorate Jesus with abusive titles: 'Messiah of God' (Luke 23:35) and 'King of the Jews' (Luke 23:38). The witnesses know that these tributes will humiliate the dying man, whose mission is unfulfilled, still more. The thief, who feels he is worth no more than a memory ('remember me when you come into your kingdom' [Luke 23:42]), is the only person to address Jesus by his name. This battered thief, who cannot name any good that he has defended, is the only person to defend the dying Nazarene.



Crucifixion, by *Gaudenzio Ferrari*, 1513 (detail)

² Saunders Lewis, 'To the Good Thief', in *Presenting Saunders Lewis*, edited by Alun R. Jones (Cardiff: U. of Wales P, 1983), 184.

The anxiety of the thief's words to Jesus is also memorable—the fact that reaching out in compassion to Jesus is his final act, an attempt to rescue a remnant of himself in the memory of one he recognises to be innocent and blessed. The thief reached out to Christ from his position on a cross; understandably, he did not want to be forgotten. The desperation and relevance of the conversation grips us, spoken in a place where relief is impossible and hope a distant dream.

There is a personal reason why I have recently been preoccupied by meditating on the thief. We had a bereavement in my family last summer: the unexpected death of a much-loved uncle, Lawrence—whose story was in most respects completely unlike the probable story of the thief. He was a generous person who lived a life replete with charity and good works.

***Death has a
meaning
beyond its
cruelty***

However, the sympathetic aspects of the thief's character, in particular his capacity for compassion and communication, do remind me of my uncle. After Lawrence died, I found myself reflecting on his death in a way that was difficult to bear and, in particular, it was the conversation between Jesus and the thief that helped me. The dialogue reminded me that death has a meaning beyond its cruelty. The conversations I had had with my uncle about Christianity were always from Lawrence's viewpoint, as one who respected, but did not formally practise, the Christian faith. Hence his efforts to understand reminded me a little of the struggle of the thief. I also knew that my uncle liked this gospel story.

We may assume that Christ's response brought the thief into the consolation of faith and hope. When my uncle died unexpectedly, I felt that my understanding of him had been incomplete. I reflected on the fact that, like this conversation from the cross, our human conversations, our imperfect words, are precious and unrepeatable. I had always loved the thief, but now I heard in his words something of my uncle, and I felt the thief's words were not only rescuing him, but rescuing me as I grieved. Surely the words of the thief are moving because we know that his voice is broken and dying, because he is suffering too much to claim with confidence the hope for which he longs, because what he expresses is not a radiant faith but a last-ditch effort to understand.

I have many reasons in my life to be grateful to my uncle, not least his interest in and support for my way of life at a time when religious life was struggling against decline. And this leads me to another point I want to make about the conversation between Jesus and the thief: the gratitude they must have felt for one another as another human being entered

their world. It is not only that Jesus shows mercy to the thief; before this happens the thief shows mercy to Christ. We do not understand how the thief could have acquired so much insight and sensitivity to his companion's sovereignty, but we can guess at the difference he made to Jesus. Now Jesus is able to offer his Kingdom, to speak with the voice of King and Messiah. He has no wish to reinforce the man's anguish; he seeks to bless and reassure.

One of the connections I make between my uncle and the thief is the fact that my uncle had a gift for reaching out to people, including vulnerable people on the margins of society. And this reminds me of the thief's readiness to risk an encounter with someone broken by suffering, who is yet a mystery to him. The thief reminds me of my uncle because of the way he enters sincerely into the human situation of Christ at a time where the majority remain observers in derision or silence. A Jew himself, my uncle was preoccupied by the persecution of minority groups and the moral demands placed on the observer by this persecution.

The Dialogue

And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, 'He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!' The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, 'If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!' There was also an inscription over him, 'This is the King of the Jews'. One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, 'Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!' But the other rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom'. He replied, 'Truly, I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise'. (Luke 23:35-43)

One reason that the conversation is arresting is because a dialogue between three dying men is itself so extraordinary; they are aware of one another and their words are invested with the urgency of death. All of the speakers in this dialogue are in pain, which means that they find it difficult to speak. Their words are few because they have little strength. Jesus, who will die first, is the most physically weak (John 19:33). He lets the derision pass. It is into this context that the good thief will speak, challenging the view of the majority.

The First Thief

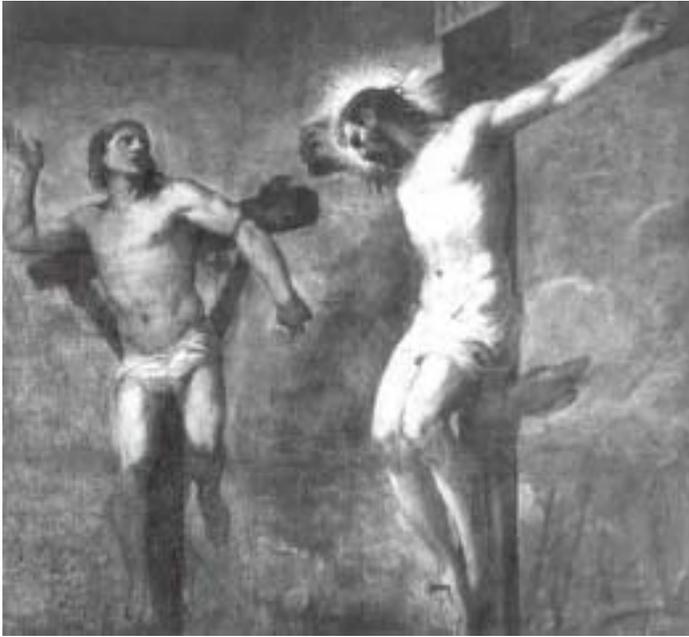
One only has to listen to the aggressive thief to guess what his likely influence on his companion has been. The first thief enters the situation abusively. From the text it would seem that, out of the three of them, it is he who has the most energy, and he vents it on Jesus. It is clear that he verbally abuses Jesus many times. He 'kept deriding him'; he wants to hurt someone who is broken and defenceless. And yet it is hard not to feel some sympathy for this man, who has neither the patience nor the courtesy for respect, who vents his anger on one who appears like his tortured self. He is desperate; he longs for rescue. Understandably, if there is a chance of such a rescue he will demand it, or at least deride the Messiah who apparently cannot provide it for him. His words are violent; they invade and wound. He mocks Jesus for not being the Saviour he is supposed to be. It seems that, for a time, Jesus was mocked by both companions (Mark 15:32). This collusion would lend credence to the good thief's self-description.

How tempting it must have been to adopt the attitude of the first thief: to blame Jesus for everything, to indulge in mockery, to close one's heart, to avoid the encounter, the uselessness of becoming open, of knowing that one is loved. After all, of what use are love and openness in such a place?

The Second Thief

The other thief is also dying on a cross and he hangs in pain between earth and heaven. There is nothing for which he can hope now except the end of pain. The name of the place, 'The Skull', asserts that his death is only the end. All the beauty and energy of existence have come to this. The people who watch him die esteem him no more highly than he does himself. The thief has no past that he can prize, no future in which he can place his faith; he has only his tortured present. How alone the man is, how forsaken. It would seem that no one could be further from God than he is. Everything has become unreachable: the life from which he is suspended, the death he cannot attain.

This thief has a need to speak and not to die unheard. The strength of his action comes from his plight and the fact that his words are spoken in reaction against those who abuse Jesus. He rebukes his companion and reaches out to the man dying on the cross beside him. A dying person is very vulnerable, and there is a natural tendency to be self-centred. Yet the thief knows Christ to be innocent and reaches out to him; it seems that he wishes to console him.



Christ and the Good Thief, by Titian, c.1566

We could say the two thieves represent two tendencies at the hour of death; to become self-absorbed or to seek salvation. Unlike the first thief, this man is concerned for Jesus and able to guess at his suffering. He is troubled by the moral realities of their shared situation. Clearly, the two thieves already know each other. The second thief asserts that the two of them are being punished for their crimes, while Jesus is innocent. The injustice bothers him. Thus he achieves an objective view of Jesus at this moment. Unlike the first thief, there is no self-seeking in his words and no aggression. His concern is first for Jesus. Only when he has addressed Jesus' plight does he ask for something for himself.

Jesus' State of Mind

Jesus is surrounded by mockery. He hangs in anguish, visibly a failure. He hangs anticipating no rescue, not appearing as a redeemer. How cruel and determined the rejection of him is! His abusers see that the man is about to die; to them this is a place of no return. They reject him at this hopeless moment, driving home his failure, using the very titles he believes to be his own.

The Gospel of Luke offers insight into Jesus' state of mind as he dies. We know what his recent experiences have been. Leading up to this cross

there have been a great many losses and betrayals. Not only physically, but also emotionally, he has been overwhelmed. The night before, in Gethsemane, Judas kisses Jesus in betrayal (Luke 22:47–48). The kiss, the mockery of love, wounds Jesus. It is a cruel, exploitative gesture, evoking the history of their trust and affection, a history in which Judas has had privileged access to his master. It is this privilege that he now manipulates, cutting himself off from his own future—a glorious future in which love, friendship and discipleship would have reached fulfilment. Jesus makes a last attempt to recall his friend to himself and to their shared history. ‘Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?’

Later, in the courtyard of the high priest, Jesus witnesses the denial of Peter, one of his closest friends and someone on whom he has depended for support (Luke 9:28, Matthew 14:28–29). Luke records, ‘The Lord turned and looked at Peter’ (Luke 22:61). How alone Jesus must feel as he turns and looks. He is a captive, has no one here who will help him. So much of which he has endeavoured to establish is collapsing before his eyes.

Then he is blindfolded so that his captors can mockingly ask him to prophesy: ‘Who is it that struck you?’ (Luke 22:64) They contrast the stature of his claims with the ignominy and helplessness of his position. There is a consistent desecration of his person. During the passion narratives there is a propensity for Jesus’ gifts to be used against him in mockery.

Before the Sanhedrin at their morning Council, Jesus confronts the obstinate refusal of his opponents. His response to them reveals his weariness. He knows the insurmountable opposition that he faces. He knows he cannot move them by his words (Luke 22:66–71): it would seem as if they speak tauntingly when they say, ‘If you are the Messiah, tell us’. He replies, pointing out how they have trapped him by their obstinacy:

‘If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I question you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.’ All of them asked, ‘Are you, then, the Son of God?’ He said to them, ‘You say that I am’. Then they said, ‘What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips!’ (Luke 22:67–71)

Pilate sends Jesus to Herod, by whom he is treated with contempt. Herod desires to see a miracle from him for entertainment (Luke 23:7–12). Back again with Pilate, Jesus is forced to go through a degrading competition for pardon with the criminal Barabbas. In preference to Jesus, the crowd

chooses Barabbas (Luke 23:18–21). They shout Pilate into having Jesus condemned.

Jesus is not even strong enough to carry his own cross (Luke 23:26). As he struggles on, he speaks to some women from Jerusalem,

Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed'. Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover us'. For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry? (Luke 23:28–31)

He can see the impact of his plight on others, both present and in the future, and this adds to his grief. As a man facing execution, he sees darkness before him.

He is crucified. He has no desire to condemn his executioners or even to blame them for what they are doing to him. His will is for their redemption. 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' (Luke 23:34) Now he hangs upon the cross. What is being done to him is presented to others as a spectacle. According to Luke's record, before the thief speaks Jesus cannot hear any sympathetic voice.

The Name of Jesus

The name of Jesus has great power in this Gospel. It is first used by the angel Gabriel, who prophesies that Mary will give her child this name when he speaks to her about her forthcoming pregnancy (Luke 1:31). The name, then, comes from God. It is said that the child will be great and will be called 'the Son of the Most High' (Luke 1:32). The exchange evokes the future greatness of this child, his future kingship, predicting an infinite future. 'Of his kingdom there will be no end.' (Luke 1:33)

The good thief uses Jesus' name as they are dying. Between the two namings, Jesus' mission has been refused and his earthly life curtailed. Yet the thief also recognises Jesus to be a king. He is the last person to speak Jesus' name in his lifetime in this Gospel. The exchange sets a precedent for using the name of Jesus as an appeal for salvation. Although the crucifixion scene could not be further removed from the heavenly visitation of the annunciation, Jesus promises his companion Paradise, speaking with kingly conviction and authority. Notably, the responses to Jesus that follow this dialogue become more sympathetic. After Jesus has died, the centurion asserts his innocence (Luke 23:47); the crowd return

home beating their breasts (Luke 23:48); Joseph of Arimathea asks Pilate for the body (Luke 23:52).

The use of Jesus' name highlights the extraordinary tenderness of the thief's language. Raymond E. Brown writes,

His manner of address, 'Jesus', is stunning in its intimacy, for nowhere else in any Gospel does anyone directly address Jesus simply by his name without a specifying or reverential qualification ... the personal name conveys the sincerity of the request The familiarity is not irreverent, for the wrongdoer assumes that Jesus has the kingly power to dispense at will royal benefits.³

This familiarity emphasizes the intimacy of their circumstances, the pain they share. They are both waiting to die. A span of suffering stretches before each of them, before the only event that can bring release. Any word, any act of communication extended to the other costs a great effort. No one understands the failed king and the thief as each does the other at this moment. The fact that the thief uses Jesus' name is an act of kindness and stresses that he is addressing Jesus as a human being.



**The Good Thief, by Michelangelo Cerquozzi,
mid-seventeenth century**

Sometimes the use of our name at a dreadful moment recalls us to ourselves, reminds us, indeed, that we have a personal self, reminds us who we are, reminds us that we are known and loved. Jesus is dying surrounded by mockery. He is mocked as the so-called chosen one, as the failed king. No one else is recorded to have used his name.

³ Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave. A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 1005.

Kingship and Paradise

In contrast to the mockers, the thief takes the theme of Jesus' kingship seriously. His act is the more impressive because no one else is doing so. Unexpectedly, the thief takes up this theme of kingship in all sincerity. In so doing he reveals his recognition of the gravity of the issues that the mockery has exploited, the magnitude of the invitation that has been refused. The dying Jesus really is a king.

From his answer on the cross, Jesus wishes to help this man. Indeed, no one is better placed to understand and to help him. How gentle Jesus is. He does not speak of the thief's sins at all; he immediately accepts the companionship that is offered. He does not, as we might have been tempted to do, take up the theme of his own innocence or the injustice of his situation; instead he addresses the need of the man who dies with him. He does so in a way that offers that man a promise. Paradise could not appear more remote from the hell they are enduring, from their trapped minds and bodies. Yet they will enter it that day. In Paradise they will be together. The pact between them, which began as an act of recognition between dying convicts, will be sealed within eternity. Though it must seem as if suffering is all that there can be, there will also be a passing to a better place.

It is only in this Gospel that we are given this conversation. It is detailed and plausible. Jesus, surrounded by mockery, offers the thief hope, a reason for which to die, a destiny that he can reach. Because Jesus asserts that he is also going to Paradise, it becomes easier for the thief to believe that he can go there. After all, he has already expressed his faith that for Jesus there will be a Kingdom.

Only a person who hangs alone upon a cross can understand what Jesus and the thief now mean to one another. Close to death, only the presence of another human being has the power to bring comfort. Imagine the lifting of loneliness. Imagine the gratitude to hear words that are kind. Imagine knowing that someone close at hand cares about you in that place. Imagine the silent union of hearts.

Openness to Hope

I see an enormous significance in this conversation between Jesus and the thief, particularly for those who are struggling to make sense of life, are close to death or are struggling to find courage in the face of bereavement. The dialogue stresses the loving accessibility of Jesus, his will to save. All of us can identify with the thief, with his hope.

The conversation between Jesus and the thief is perhaps the most moving dialogue in this Gospel. Only the thief is recorded as having spoken personally and with mercy to Jesus. He wins Paradise through his implicit faith. There is something especially affecting about the openness of a battered person, of a person like this thief who has every excuse for being hard and closed. This is an openness which is without affectation, which is sincere. It is the openness of one who has nothing in the earthly realm to gain by his openness. The thief's pain will not cease by it; the chances of his life will not be restored. From his misery, he has the conviction to respond; he is alert to what is happening around him. We can take his words as an indication of his awareness of the agony of the mocked king. Compassionately, he calls Jesus by his name. He believes in the Kingdom at which others laugh. He takes hold of the hope that others scorn.

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A DIFFERENT WORLD IS POSSIBLE

The Vision of Ignacio Ellacuría

Ambrose Mong

ON 16 NOVEMBER 1989, Ignacio Ellacuría SJ, five fellow Jesuits, their housekeeper and her daughter were assassinated by right-wing security forces in El Salvador for their opposition to the Salvadorean government. As rector of the University of Central America, Ellacuría had committed himself to fighting for the poor by writing political analyses of the situation in the country, and publishing and broadcasting them through various channels in the media. A liberation theologian, he sought to confront the social reality in Latin America in concrete and material ways. The presence of so much misery and poverty led Ellacuría to affirm that a different world is not only possible but necessary.¹

This article explores the implications of Ellacuría's vision of a new world in his own work and that of other theologians, reflecting on the spirit of utopia, the civilisation of poverty, the centrality of compassion and the mission of the Church. Ellacuría's understanding of Christianity is essentially messianic, with its focus on liberation of the whole person for the transformation of our society into a more humane one through a spiritual revolution.

The phrase 'a different world is possible' does not refer to a blueprint for change; it indicates rather 'a horizon or a time that is largely concerned with hope and with eschatology'.² As it is a question of time, the focus is

¹ See Jon Sobrino, 'On the Way to Healing: Humanizing "a Gravely Ill World"', *America* (29 October 2014), available at <http://www.americamagazine.org/issue/way-healing>.

² Luiz Carlos Susin, 'Introduction: This World Can Be Different', *Concilium*, 'A Different World is Possible' (December 2004), 7–12, here 7. The phrase is a slogan of the World Social Forums and of the anti-globalisation movement; it also forms the title for this important issue of *Concilium*, on which I draw here.

here and now: a different world is possible *here on earth*. Hope implies that we are not satisfied with the existing state of affairs and long for radical, utopian change. While eschatology is related to our Christian faith and deals with the last things such as hell, purgatory and heaven, utopia is related to human action guided by practical reason. In Christianity we need a synthesis of eschatology and utopia.

The Spirit of Utopia

According to another liberation theologian, José Maria Castillo, if we believe that a different world is possible, then we have ‘to regain a utopian consciousness’. This implies that we are not satisfied with our present world and thus plan to be guided by ‘utopian reason’ to construct a better one.³ ‘Utopias have been the driving force of history’ when charismatic individuals or groups refuse to maintain the status quo and seek to construct a more equitable and just society. ‘A society without utopias is a society without hope’.⁴ Utopian dreams, however, are not enough to develop something that is really different from oppressive social structures. As Charles Villa-Vicencio, a former member of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, writes:

For the dreams of the oppressed to become a reality they are to be translated into political programmes and law-making that benefit those who have longed for, and fought for, the new age, while protecting the new society against the abuses which marked past oppression. This ultimately is what a liberatory theology of reconstruction is all about.⁵

The greatest danger, therefore, is to be satisfied and contented with the present global system—to think we are in the best possible world and not to want any other kind of changed world. For example, many people think that capitalism is the only feasible political system, the market economy is the most efficient possible and thus ‘the effectiveness of the market has been elevated to the supreme criterion of values’. Hence, people from the developed world often think that the poverty and destitution of

³ José M. Castillo, ‘Utopia Set Aside’, *Concilium*, ‘A Different World is Possible’ (December 2004), 35–41, here 35.

⁴ Castillo, ‘Utopia Set Aside’, 38.

⁵ Charles Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction: Nation-Building and Human Rights* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), 29, quoted in Rudolf von Sinner, ‘Religion and Power: Toward the Political Sustainability of the World’, *Concilium*, ‘A Different World Is Possible’ (December 2004), 99.



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the developing world are the result of corrupt politicians there—or that bad ethical behaviour is caused by a malfunction of the market economy.⁶

But in a capitalist world, the production of private goods is more important than social development for the common good, because society is organized to satisfy the wants of a few rich individuals who dominate it. Promoting massive consumption and exploitation of natural resources, capitalism benefits the few at the expense of the many. A small number of rich people will always seek to perpetuate and protect their wealth and privilege, and to keep the majority of the population in subjugation and poverty.⁷ This concentration of wealth produced by the global market and neo-liberal capitalism 'is causing more than 70,000 deaths daily from hunger, malnutrition and their resulting pandemics'. Its effects are worse than the brutalities of Nazism and Stalinism.⁸ Further, in spite of its emphasis on freedom, capitalism 'in reality tolerates only the freedom of those who do not question the capitalist system'. As such, like Stalinist Communism and Hitler's Nazism, it only allows limited freedom on its own terms.⁹

According to Ellacuría, 'Only in a spirit of utopia and with hope can one have the faith and courage to attempt, together with all the poor and

⁶ Castillo, 'Utopia Set Aside', 38.

⁷ Castillo, 'Utopia Set Aside', 39.

⁸ Castillo, 'Utopia Set Aside', 36.

⁹ Castillo, 'Utopia Set Aside', 37.

downtrodden of the world, to turn back history, to subvert it and launch it in a different direction'.¹⁰ Jon Sobrino, Ellacuría's friend and colleague, places this passage in the context of the 'tradition ... of following Jesus'. 'Central to this tradition', he writes, 'is *honesty with reality and living in reality*, meaning overcoming deceit and lies ... [and] *the absoluteness of compassion* for the suffering of others ...'.¹¹

The Civilisation of Poverty

New ways of life and forms of culture

Ellacuría wished for an entirely different world, superior to the civilisation of wealth that is at present pushing our planet towards its destruction. In what he called the 'excremental historical analysis' or 'the study of the faeces of our civilisation', he exposed the sickness of society resulting from widespread inequality and injustice.¹² Ellacuría called for a 'civilisation of poverty' which 'rejects the accumulation of capital as the motor of history It makes the satisfying of basic needs the principle of development.'¹³ Poverty no longer meant deprivation of necessities. This new civilisation would guarantee the satisfaction of basic needs, the freedom of individuals and the creativity of the community. The 'civilisation of poverty' allows for the emergence of new ways of life and forms of culture where new relationships between human beings and nature, as well as with the divine, are cultivated.

Ellacuría viewed poverty by contrast with and in opposition to wealth, which drives and defines our present civilisation. In a world of wealth and crass materialism, poverty can act as antidote to a sick civilisation where the gap between the rich and the poor is widening. The present global economy is driven by 'capital-wealth dynamism', marked by sin and leading to death.¹⁴ Poverty offers a different kind of dynamism:

¹⁰ Ignacio Ellacuría, 'El desafío de las mayorías pobres', *Estudios Centroamericanos*, 493–494 (1989), quoted as the epigraph to Jon Sobrino, 'Turning Back History', *Concilium*, 'A Different World is Possible' (December 2004), 125. Complete English translation by Phillip Berryman as 'The Challenge of the Poor Majority', in *Towards a Society That Serves Its People: The Intellectual Contribution of El Salvador's Murdered Jesuits*, edited by John J. Hassett and Hugh Lacey (Washington, DC: Georgetown UP, 1991), 171–176. I have preferred Sobrino's translations here.

¹¹ Sobrino, 'Turning Back History', 127 (italics original).

¹² Ellacuría, 'El desafío de las mayorías pobres', quoted in Jon Sobrino, 'Fifty Years for a Future That Is Christian and Human', *Concilium*, 'Journeys of Liberation' (January 2016), 73.

¹³ Ignacio Ellacuría, 'Utopía y profetismo', *Revista Latinoamericana de Teología*, 17 (1990), quoted in Sobrino, 'Fifty Years for a Future That Is Christian and Human', 74.

¹⁴ Ellacuría, 'Utopía y profetismo', quoted in Sobrino, 'Fifty Years for a Future That Is Christian and Human', 75.

This poverty is a poverty that really gives the spirit space, no longer swamping it with the desperate need to have more than the next person, by the desperate lust for all sorts of superfluous things, when most of the human race lacks the basic necessities. Then it will be possible for the spirit to flourish, and the immense spiritual and human wealth of the poor and peoples of the Third World, which is today choked by desperate poverty and by the imposition of cultural models that may in some ways be more developed but for all that are not more fully human.¹⁵

As the Indian theologian Felix Wilfred testifies:

Affluence creates a weak person and a fragile culture. On the other hand, the confrontation with human suffering and response in terms of compassion has developed in the victims some of the values we require to sustain a different world—solidarity, humanness, the spirit of sharing, the technique of survival, readiness to take risks and steely determination in the midst of adversities.¹⁶

These values are embodied in the lives of poor and marginal, who can offer resistance to the existing global system that promotes an expansionist and assimilationist ideology, denying pluralism and human uniqueness. Although the expansion of the market and capitalism is taking place all over the world, it is not *universal*, for universality is ‘a spiritual quality of transcendence’: ‘universality ... is not to be confounded with ubiquity’.¹⁷

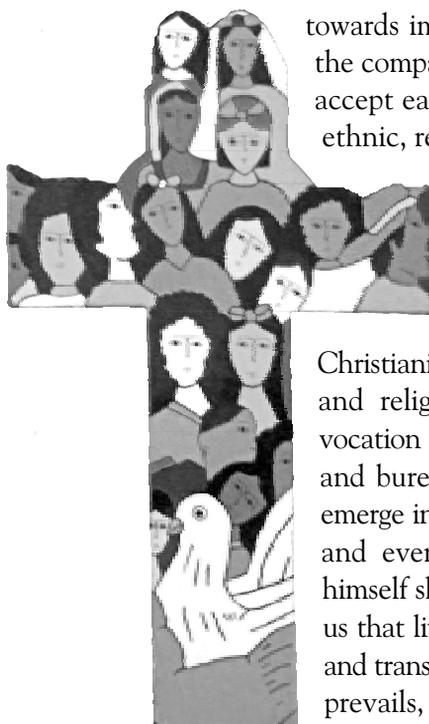
‘True universality is possible only where there is sacrifice and renunciation.’ This requires the ability to move beyond one’s own cultural, ethnic or national identity. The universal is present ‘at the local level in the experience of subordinated peoples, the illiterate villagers and powerless identities’. Subordinated people are more willing to make sacrifices than the wealthy: ‘The poor are attuned to the spirit of genuine universality promising hope for our world, while the worldwide expansion of selfish pursuit is not. The latter is the enemy of universality.’¹⁸ Consequently poor and marginal people can be considered ‘guardians of peace and ... defenders of genuine universalism. At the grassroots level the common struggle for survival brings people together.’ The xenophobia of the West

¹⁵ Ignacio Ellacuría, ‘Misión actual de la Compañía de Jesús’, *Revista Latinoamericana de Teología*, 29 (1993), quoted in Sobrino, ‘Fifty Years for a Future That Is Christian and Human’, 76.

¹⁶ Felix Wilfred, ‘Searching for David’s Sling: Tapping the Local Resources of Hope’, *Concilium*, ‘A Different World is Possible’ (December 2004), 88.

¹⁷ Wilfred, ‘Searching for David’s Sling’, 92.

¹⁸ Wilfred, ‘Searching for David’s Sling’, 92.



towards immigrants and refugees 'stands in stark contrast to the compassion and deep humanity with which simple people accept each other and help each other ... without regard to ethnic, religious or linguistic background'.¹⁹

The Church is deeply involved with both of the two civilisations, that of wealth and that of poverty. The old Christendom of wealth and empire may have disappeared in modern times but, as Johann Baptist Metz has shown, a bourgeois Christianity has taken its place.²⁰ Left to themselves, Churches and religions have a tendency to forget their messianic vocation as a result of institutional concerns, political interests and bureaucracy. Nonetheless, messianic impulses at times emerge in spirituality and mysticism, social reform movements and even in martyrdom, as the life of Ignacio Ellacuría himself shows. The Church in Latin America has revealed to us that living faith and religious practice can be revolutionary and transformative, so that a different world, where compassion prevails, becomes possible.

The Centrality of Compassion

Metz argues that, for Christianity to be authentic, it must emphasize the centrality of compassion at the heart of its teaching. As Jon Sobrino explains:

For Metz compassion is ... a primary reaction to another person's suffering. It possesses a political dimension, in that a merely private attitude ... is not enough. And since it has to be exercised in the midst of oppression and repression, it has to become *justice*.²¹

In the Gospels, Metz observes, Jesus is more attentive to the sufferings of others than to their sins, but is very critical of the sins of hypocrisy committed by the scribes and Pharisees—the religious authorities. Unfortunately, however,

¹⁹ Wilfred, 'Searching for David's Sling', 93.

²⁰ On bourgeois Christianity, see Johann Baptist Metz, *The Emergent Church: The Future of Christianity in a Postbourgeois World*, translated by Peter Mann (London: SCM, 1981).

²¹ Sobrino, 'Fifty Years for a Future That Is Christian and Human', 70.

Christianity very soon began to have serious difficulties with this fundamental sensitivity to other people's sufferings, which is inherent in its message. The worrying question about justice for the innocent who suffer, which is at the heart of the biblical traditions, was transformed, with excessive haste, into the issue of the salvation of sinners.²²

Perhaps this rapid shift from focusing on sufferings to sins gave the Church more power over the souls of its members. But as a result, the messianic-prophetic elements in the gospel have increasingly been ignored, and the messianic-prophetic elements in Christianity have been domesticated by political, economic and technological developments in a globalised world.

Messianic Christianity

The Dominican Claude Geffré has argued that while Christianity stresses the political character of Jewish messianism, it has also over-emphasized the spiritual character of Jesus' messianism and thus seems to neglect the historical nature of salvation. It is a good sign that the Church since the 1960s has begun to rediscover the messianic aspect of Christian faith,

... the power to transform history which implies the announcement of the kingdom of God in word and deed. Exegetes and theologians have shown in particular how the eschatology of the New Testament transforms the promises of the First Testament, which announces the future of a kingdom of justice and peace on earth, without abolishing them. The kingdom proclaimed by Jesus is not of this world, but it can already have its anticipation in the course of history.²³

The messianic elements in the gospel entail standing by the poor and the disenfranchised against the rich and powerful; as Mary proclaims in the Magnificat: 'He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. (Luke 1: 51–53) The Vatican II document *Gaudium et spes* attempts to align the Church with the contemporary world by taking the side of the poor and afflicted:

²² Johann Baptist Metz, 'La compasión. Un programa universal del cristianismo en la época de pluralismo cultural y religioso', *Revista Latinoamericana de Teología*, 55 (2001), 27, quoted in Sobrino, 'Fifty Years for a Future That Is Christian and Human', 70. Translated as 'Towards a Christianity of Political Compassion', in *Love That Produces Hope: The Thought of Ignacio Ellacuría*, edited by María Pilar Aquino, Kevin F. Burke and Robert Anthony Lassalle-Klein (Minnesota: Michael Glazier, 2006), 250.

²³ Claude Geffré, 'The God of Jesus and the Possibilities of History', *Concilium*, 'A Different World is Possible' (December 2004), 73.

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts.²⁴

Unfortunately, what we still have today in many places is a bourgeois Christianity that ignores the plight of the poor.

Bourgeois Christianity

According to the German political scientist Iring Fetscher,

The rise of the ‘bourgeoisie’ is accompanied by: the triumph of the modern sciences and technology, the individualistic calculation of utility as the basic rule of life, the legitimation of individual love as the basis of communal life, the rejection of any non-democratic foundation for state power, a high regard for work, industry and thrift as typical ‘bourgeois’ virtues (to which cleanliness and tidiness are subsequently added).²⁵

Such individualism, he writes, can lead to ‘egoism and cold calculation. “Every man for himself—and God for all”.’²⁶ For the bourgeoisie, diligent work is a means of accumulating wealth, and they are also interested in possessing more and more—what counts is what they have, the level of income that ensures they live well, at least in the material sense. This means that buying power is very important to them, and they thrive in modern industrial society driven by capitalism. Thus, the bourgeois principle is essentially destructive because it turns human beings into competitors and undermines human solidarity. This bourgeois ideology has had a pervasive influence on Christianity in the West and has also spread to other parts of the world.

The bourgeois principle is essentially destructive

Karl Barth holds that the bourgeois person interprets the Gospels to suit his or her comfortable lifestyle and endorses what God has taught ‘as a matter for consideration, which he can accept, but of which he is fundamentally the master, which does not cause him any inconvenience, indeed in the possession of which he is doubly secure, justified and rich’. Regarding the danger of ‘making the Gospel respectable’ and the domestication of Christ’s teaching in the Church, Barth also speaks of

²⁴ *Gaudium et spes*, n. 1.

²⁵ Iring Fetscher, ‘The “Bourgeoisie” (*Bürgertum*, Middle Class): On the Historical and Political Semantics of the Term’, *Concilium*, 125, ‘Christianity and the Bourgeoisie’ (December 1979), 9.

²⁶ Fetscher, ‘The “Bourgeoisie” (*Bürgertum*, Middle Class)’, 10.

how such a person may accept the gospel message ‘peacefully and at once make himself its lord and possessor, thus rendering it innocuous’. Thus he can justify all his actions by ‘being a believer along with all the other things he is, by making even the Gospel into a means of his self-preservation and self-defence!’²⁷ The bourgeois person tailors the Word of God according to his or her will and interests. Barth calls this ‘natural theology’.

Focusing on the United States, the theologian and sociologist Gregory Baum writes about how bourgeois Christianity emphasizes personal salvation:

Middle class individualism has its spiritual counterpart: the emphasis on personal salvation. Here Jesus is seen as the saviour who rescues us one by one from the catastrophe of history This approach can lead to such a concentration of [sic] the individual that life after death becomes the entire religious preoccupation.²⁸

This emphasis leads to a tendency to neglect the social dimension of Christianity. It is predominantly Protestant, although Catholicism has displayed some elements of it with its emphasis on sin and guilt. Middle-class Christianity tends to view sin as a very private notion and thus the injustices that are prevalent in our institutions and society are largely overlooked. The disadvantaged in society are also ignored, because bourgeois Christians are focused only on their own community and concerned only about their own salvation. As Baum continues:

Middle class piety overlooks the enormous social gaps between people and believes that the Christian message has the same meaning for all, beyond the differences of class To respond to world hunger a preacher will ask people to opt for a more modest life and a simpler diet without any awareness that some families in the congregation are unable to feed their children properly.²⁹

Bourgeois Christianity, Baum concludes, ‘easily speaks of unity and reconciliation. It disguises the real conflicts in the community and the inequality of power and pretends that love can unite all people in a common humanity.’³⁰ It naïvely believes that love conquers all, even the

²⁷ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, volume 2, *The Doctrine of God*, translated by T. H. L. Parker and others (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1964 [1934]), n. 26, part 1, 141.

²⁸ Gregory Baum, ‘Middle Class Religion in America’, *Concilium*, 125, ‘Christianity and the Bourgeoisie’ (December 1979), 21.

²⁹ Baum, ‘Middle Class Religion in America’, 21.

³⁰ Baum, ‘Middle Class Religion in America’, 21–22.

gap between rich and poor nations. To counteract this distorting process, a political theology has developed which attempts to expose the largely individualistic and utilitarian ideological nature of bourgeois Christianity.

The Mission of the Church

Ellacuría believed that the Church could proclaim liberation, justice and love without falling into either what he called 'angelism' or 'secularism'. The Church, he said, 'is above the danger of a wholly inner and subjectivist interpretation of salvation, and also above the danger of a wholly secularist and politicizing interpretation'.³¹ Liberation is a historical process in which we encounter the God who saves us. 'People came to feel that development, even integral development, could not serve today as the mediating tool of salvation; that liberation would have to play the role instead.'³² Although 'liberation' does 'move into the whole area of political and societal behavior', Ellacuría held that the term is more than just political because it proclaims 'a salvation that runs through history but also goes above and beyond history'.³³

In the interaction between liberation and salvation, Christian liberation avoids the two extremes of viewing liberation in purely immanent terms and in purely transcendental terms. 'The distinctive character of Christian liberation is to be found in the fact that it entails liberation from something and liberation for something.' In this way, liberation has a positive direction, moving towards something new. Liberation is liberation from sin, which is not merely 'a purely spiritual fault that only indirectly affects the world of human beings'. According to Ellacuría:

There is an historical objectification of sin, and it is absolutely necessary to maintain the distinction between personal sin and objectified sin. In the concrete, anything that positively and unjustly stands in the way of human liberty is sin. It is sin because it prevents a human being from being a human being, depriving him or her of the liberty that properly belongs to a child of God. Sin is the formal exercise of an act of radical injustice.³⁴

³¹ Ignacio Ellacuría, *Freedom Made Flesh: The Mission of Christ and His Church*, translated by John Drury (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1976), 95.

³² Ellacuría, *Freedom Made Flesh*, 96. 'Integral development' is expounded in Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum progressio*, n. 14, which states: 'The development We speak of here cannot be restricted to economic growth alone. To be authentic, it must be well rounded; it must foster the development of each man and of the whole man.'

³³ Ellacuría, *Freedom Made Flesh*, 98.

³⁴ Ellacuría, *Freedom Made Flesh*, 104.

Sin is not just something that is personal, interior and subjective, it affects the whole community. 'Sin is seen as the absolute negation and denial of the absolute in reality.'³⁵ There is such thing as structural sin, a state of sin that perpetuates injustice and oppression.

A Sign of Credibility

The work of Christian liberation, which involves the struggle against injustice and the effort to facilitate love, is a sign of credibility for the Church. Ellacuría wrote: 'The Church dedicates itself to liberation because it is of the very essence of its mission, because it is an inescapable obligation in its service to the world'.³⁶ Liberation is a question of the service that the Church should give:

The only limits on the Church in its service to the world are those limits which are intrinsic to its mission itself. It is senseless to worry about whether the Church is meddling in politics when it is carrying out its liberative mission.

Jesus never shirked the responsibilities of his mission, even when the religious and political authorities condemned him for interfering in the secular world.³⁷

The Church has not always been faithful to the mission of fighting against injustice. In fact, it has contributed much towards injustice and oppression in the world. Ellacuría said:

The Church has contributed to injustice by acts of commission and omission, abetting oppression to a greater or lesser degree. It must face this fact and acknowledge it. It is a fact within the Church itself, where respect for the human person and personal rights [have] often been subordinated to other, inferior values, with the result that the institutional aspect has often stifled the primary and essential aspect of interpersonal communion and community. The Church's words have proclaimed one thing while its deeds have proclaimed something very different. As a result, it has gradually lost credibility in the eyes of many.³⁸

The Church has been serving the established order rather than making an effort to bring about a new order where justice can prevail. Its failings

³⁵ Ellacuría, *Freedom Made Flesh*, 105.

³⁶ Ellacuría, *Freedom Made Flesh*, 110.

³⁷ Ellacuría, *Freedom Made Flesh*, 111.

³⁸ Ellacuría, *Freedom Made Flesh*, 113.

are obvious and have been increasing, Ellacuría lamented. 'The Church has often done more to serve the preservation of the natural order than to abet the social transformation of history.'³⁹ It has reinforced unjust structures instead of trying to alleviate injustice and has adopted, not a civilisation of poverty, but a civilisation of wealth.

Ellacuría also believed that the Church 'has not gone far enough to face up to its sinful character'. All of us who make up the Church must admit this. Sin resides not only in its members but also in the Church as an institution. 'As such [the Church] should serve as a concrete sign of conformation to Christ, but it has frequently conformed itself more to the world of sin.' It has not always been 'a radiant sign of God's justice and Christ *kenosis*'. Thus Ellacuría held that if the Church 'does not effectively undergo ... painful conversion, if it does not endure the humiliation of Good Friday, then it cannot expect the glory of resurrection or its acceptance by the world'.⁴⁰ But if the Church can undergo this conversion, then salvation resides in it.

In addition, the Church must 'take positive action in the fight against injustice'. It must direct its activity towards battling against the sin of injustice and oppression. The Church must also *denounce* injustice as sin 'publicly, incessantly and forthrightly', and at the same time *announce* the necessity of dying to oneself in order to experience the resurrection.

This calls for a radical conversion in history, for *metanoia* in the individual and revolution in existing structures Personal conversion must have impact in the area of structural change if this conversion is to attain its full objectification in history.⁴¹

History as well as the Bible has shown us that 'it is the oppressed that will liberate the oppressor':

The active nay-saying of the oppressed is what will redeem the sin-laden yea-saying of the oppressor. There is real interaction between oppressor and oppressed, but the activity of the former tends to maintain the state of oppression whereas that of the latter tends to eliminate it rather than merely seek revenge.⁴²

³⁹ Ellacuría, *Freedom Made Flesh*, 114.

⁴⁰ Ellacuría, *Freedom Made Flesh*, 114.

⁴¹ Ellacuría, *Freedom Made Flesh*, 115.

⁴² Ellacuría, *Freedom Made Flesh*, 115.



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The Church, thus, must ‘identify itself with the struggle of the oppressed’. Naturally it will end up in conflict with those in power. But this in itself is a real sign that the Church is dedicated to the cause of justice and ‘the clearest proof of its Christian character. In acting thus, the Church will be following the purest strain of salvation history. That is what the prophets did; that is what Jesus himself did.’⁴³ In practical terms, this means embracing a civilisation of poverty, allowing Jesus Christ to reign over human beings so that the world becomes more human. This would bring about a world very different from the existing one.

A True Spiritual Revolution

To have a different world, we need to ensure that our economic and social systems and environment are sustainable. The economic system must be capable of giving every human being a decent standard of living, beyond the minimum that can sustain life. Further, our society must promote social relationships and institutions that help all human beings to flourish. The Korean theologian Jung Mo Sung speaks of the need for ‘a cultural convergence and a spirituality’ that give individuals a sense

⁴³ Ellacuría, *Freedom Made Flesh*, 116.

of belonging in society. There must also exist 'symbols, rites and myths' that unite people.⁴⁴ Unfortunately, the modern capitalist model idolizes the market and promotes it through mass media. Everything is reduced to the desire, and not the need, to consume: the philosophy seems to be 'I consume, therefore I am', or 'I shop, therefore I am'.

It is not enough just to oppose capitalism; we need 'a true spiritual revolution' that helps us to discover and accept the real human condition:

This spirituality both allows us to share and is found through our sharing in the sufferings, fears and insecurities of other individuals and groups (compassion), and also in their hopes, struggles and joys (solidarity). Without this encounter with persons who are suffering, without the encounters found in compassion and in struggles there can be no encounter with oneself or with the Spirit who breathes over us, and without these encounters there can be no reconciliation.⁴⁵

If Christianity and other religious traditions do not take up this task of changing the world through spirituality, others will not be able to do so:

Without spiritual revolution there will be no real economic revolution, since capitalism is, in fact, an economic system based on and motivated by deep spiritual beliefs, and consumerism is a form of religious expression in our daily lives.⁴⁶

A different world is possible through such a genuine spiritual revolution. The Church does not possess an ideal model for constructing a better world or a more equitable society to live in peace and harmony. But it has the hope that the Spirit of God is at work to renew the face of the earth. Each time we put the teaching of the gospel into practice, we make the world a better place to live and we anticipate the coming of God's Kingdom in our midst. In his life and writings, Ignacio Ellacuría has shown that constructing a better world where justice and peace prevail is possible.

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⁴⁴ Jung Mo Sung, 'Economics and Spirituality: Towards a More Just and Sustainable World', *Concilium*, 'A Different World is Possible' (December 2004), 109–110.

⁴⁵ Sung, 'Economics and Spirituality', 113.

⁴⁶ Sung, 'Economics and Spirituality', 113.

From the Ignatian Tradition

JUAN ALFONSO DE POLANCO

Memory, Identity and Mission

José García de Castro

THE YEAR 1517 marked the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. But for Jesuits and for those who follow the spirituality of Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises, there was another significant event in that year. Juan Alfonso de Polanco, Ignatius' secretary and close collaborator, was born, just within sight of the magnificent Gothic cathedral in Burgos. He was the second son of Gregorio de Polanco and Maria de Salinas. The date was 24 December, just under two months after Luther is said to have nailed his 95 theses to the church door at Wittenberg.

Whatever else may be true about the beginnings of the Society of Jesus and about the first Jesuits, their relationship to Christ through the Spiritual Exercises was clearly central. But we know, in fact, very little about how the first companions practised Ignatius' Exercises. In Paris, Ignatius had given the Exercises to six other university students and, as a result, they changed their ways of life, dedicating themselves to Ignatius' dreams about pilgrimage to Palestine. A few months later, Favre had given the Exercises to another three students in Paris, and they too had joined the group. The commitment they all made at Montmartre had been the foundation stone on which everything else was built, and they had in due course arrived in Rome.

Juan Alfonso Polanco had studied in Paris, and knew the first companions there. But it was in Rome, in 1541, that he made the Exercises under Diego Laínez, and they had the same effect. He was 23 years old. Making the Exercises just once was enough to root his Christian life in the fellowship of Ignatius and his companions.

There were some awkward consequences that Polanco might not have foreseen. Only seven months previously, his parents had bought him a very

well-paid post in the Vatican as a *scriptor apostolicus*, a kind of ecclesiastical notary. Ignatius and his companions were a new group, not very well known and suspected of illuminist heresies. Polanco's younger brother Luis undertook to 'rescue' the convert from this new group, and to do the sensible thing by returning him to his family. Thus, while he was on his novitiate experiments in Tuscany, Polanco was literally kidnapped by his brother. Though the young Polanco seems to have been quite capable of breaking down doors and climbing out of windows on a rope, it ultimately took considerable diplomatic manoeuvrings on Ignatius' part to get him safely back to Rome.¹ We do not know how Polanco arrived at his original decision—perhaps it was an election 'without doubting or being able to doubt' (Exx 175). But the content was clear: 'as for my resolve, I hold to it firmly—of living and dying in this Congregation'.²

Charism and Administration

When it became clear that it was Francis Xavier whom Ignatius would have to send to the East, rather than the ill Bobadilla, Ignatius famously said to him 'this is your task' (*esta es vuestra empresa*).³ We can imagine Ignatius seven years later saying something similar to Polanco. But the task was not some large-scale enterprise fraught with risk such as going off to the Indies. Rather, Ignatius had called on Polanco in order to name him secretary of the Society.

It was March 1547. Polanco was almost thirty, and his training was over.⁴ Little more than six years had passed since the Society's foundation, and Polanco would be the sixth to hold the post of secretary. For different reasons, none of his predecessors had lasted long in the job.⁵ As time was passing, the organization was becoming more complex. The numbers of Jesuits, of institutions, of contacts and friendships, of requests, were increasing. And everything was landing back on the simple offices in Rome. Just praying for each other, and writing letters in a sporadic fashion, was no longer going to suffice.

¹ See Bartolomeo Ferrão to Miguel de Torres, March 1547, MHSJ EI 1, 467–470 (letter 154).

² Polanco to Gregorio Polanco, 16 April 1547, MHSJ *Polanci Complementa* 1, 37–38. Further information on Polanco's early Jesuit life can be found in my *Polanco (1517–1576): el humanismo de los jesuitas* (Bilbao: Mensajero, 2012), 84–108.

³ MHSJ FN 2, 381. Xavier's untranslatable reply was, '*pues, sus, héme aquí*'—roughly, 'OK, here I am'. The available English version is based on a later Latin text: Pedro de Ribadeneira, *The Life of Ignatius of Loyola*, translated by Claude Pavor (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2014), 113.

⁴ On this, see Angelo Martinez, 'Gli studi teologici di Giovanni de Polanco alle origine della legislazione scolastica della Compagnia di Gesù', *Archivum Historicum Societatis Jesu*, 21 (1952), 225–260.

⁵ Favre, Xavier, Pietro Codazzo, Jerónimo Domenech, Bartolomeo Ferrão.

Despite their not yet having any constitutions, the charism seemed clear enough to most, though not all, Jesuits. They knew who they were and the purposes for which they had been founded in the Church. They also knew what did not fit with those purposes. What was now beginning to be urgent was a kind of structuring of the charism so that life could happen in an orderly way, and business could be conducted effectively. The Society's organization and systems were not adequate for what was now happening. It was growing faster than Rome could manage things. If something was not done, the Society would suffer serious harm. It needed to get out of this impasse without delay. Perhaps following advice from Laínez, Ignatius found in Polanco the ideal person now needed for the post of secretary.⁶

Polanco spent the remaining thirty years of his life in caring for the Society of Jesus with great dedication, at the highest levels of its government. His was office work; his tools were paper and pen. He accepted his work as secretary as his way of being sent on apostolic mission. He did it with a fidelity, energy and reliability that were quite remarkable.

Some of his companions were sent to the turmoils of Reformation Germany; others to the unknown Americas or the exotic Indies; still others went to the heart of Africa. Many founded and consolidated colleges; others preached in ports, city squares, cathedrals or marketplaces. Others again made a royal court their home, giving



The Emperor Akbar with Jesuits, by
Narsingh Mughal, c. 1600

⁶ Carlos Coupeau, 'Juan de Polanco's Role as Secretary of Ignatius of Loyola: "His Memory and Hands"', in *Ite inflamate omnia. Selected Historical Papers from Conferences Held at Loyola and Rome in 2006*, edited by Thomas M. McCoog (Rome: Jesuit Historical Institute, 2010), 109–127.

counsel that influenced the growth of modern Europe. But Polanco and his team stayed in Rome.⁷ They took it for granted that the greatest good they could offer the Society, for God's greater glory, was to handle information: they made summaries and reports for those who had to take decisions; they sifted information, they distributed it and they made suggestions about how to address each situation as it arose.

Within a few weeks of arriving at the Curia, Polanco organized the secretary's office and introduced a sorely needed continuity and consistency to the fragile administrative structures that has been operative in the first years.⁸ Reading just a little of Polanco's abundant correspondence is enough to make one wonder at the attention he gave to each particular situation. We have quite a number of his circular letters,⁹ but the vast majority are letters to individuals. Each case demanded his attention, his reflection, his prayer; each received a quite particular response.

Polanco lived with an eye constantly on the here and now, offering responses that were thoughtful, timely, constructive and helpful. When there were elements in the charism that needed establishing, developing, consolidating, encouraging or indeed, quite often, correcting, a word from Polanco would leave Rome as part of a package of letters and eventually arrive at its individual destination. What Polanco wrote, in a real sense, created history.

Polanco's work was often directed not at the publicly visible things that the members of the Society's body were doing, but at the foundational structures that made it possible for these things truly to be done in the name of the Lord. Polanco was a man of discernment, the basis of all Ignatian decision-making. Of the Jesuits involved in the development of the early Society, it was probably he who took the greatest number of significant decisions.

Through letters and instructions, the Roman Curia of the Society of Jesus made itself felt all over the world. St Teresa used to encourage her sisters by saying that the Lord walks among the pots and pans, and that

⁷ Despite what is sometimes said, Polanco did make two major journeys during his time in Rome. He went with Diego Laínez to the Colloquy of Poissy and the Council of Trent (1 July 1561–12 February 1564). Later he accompanied Francisco de Borja to Lisbon (30 June 1571–28 September 1572).

⁸ Mario Scaduto, 'Uno scritto ignaziano inédito. Il "Del Officio del Secretario" del 1547', *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*, 29 (1960), 305–328.

⁹ For example: Ignatius to the Jesuits of Gandía, 29 July 1547, 182 (letter 182; MHSJ EI 1, 551–562; *Ignatius of Loyola: Letters and Instructions*, translated by Martin E. Palmer, John W. Padberg and John L. McCarthy [St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2006], 195–202); Ignatius to various Provincials (letter 7002; MHSJ EI 12, 282–284).

therefore they needed to seek Him precisely there.¹⁰ For Polanco life took place amid pens and papers, seals and stamps, instructions and briefing papers, second and third copies of letters written out and kept in the office, postage, timetables, itineraries and the like. It was amid all this that he found God, that he found the love that descends, indwells and is at work. Here it was that in Polanco's prosy life an imaginative 'composition of place' happened: it was amid a monotonous office routine that Polanco repeated each day, quietly and faithfully, *whoever wishes to live with me has to work with me, eat like me, drink like me* (Exx 93).

Love Consists in Communication

'Love consists in mutual communication.' (Exx 231) Often, this discreet note is passed over; people's attention is more drawn to its longer counterpart: 'Love ought to manifest itself more by deeds than by words' (Exx 230). But deeds born out of a relationship of love are often regular, repeated actions—actions that thus become a kind of language and communication. Communication is itself one of the deeds in which love consists.

Polanco created and developed the Society of Jesus' efficient system of communication.¹¹ Once he arrived in the office, the number of letters leaving from Rome increased month after month, year after year. He was absolutely convinced of the importance of communication for the 'conservation and increase of the body' (*Constitutions*, X.1 [812]), and regularly instilled this conviction in others.¹²

When communication stops, the heart grows cold and love dies; if Jesuits do not communicate with each other, their institute and way of proceeding collapses. The two extensive letters Polanco wrote to the whole Society giving directives on regular letter-writing are less well known than they should be. The first gives no fewer than twenty 'advantages of ... writing ... about both the state of business and persons and news

¹⁰ See St Teresa of Ávila, *The Book of Her Foundations*, 5.8, in *The Collected Works of St Teresa of Ávila*, translated by Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodríguez (Washington, DC: ICS, 1976–1985), volume 3, 120.

¹¹ See José García de Castro, 'Cartas', in *Diccionario de espiritualidad ignaciana* (Bilbao: Mensajero, 2007), volume 1, 294–306. For the time between Ignatius' arrival in Rome and 1546, there are 151 letters in the first volume of the MHSJ edition of Ignatius' letters. With Polanco's arrival, a relentless increase began: 87 letters in 1547, 302 in 1548, 464 in 1549, 512 in 1550, 802 in 1551, 838 in 1552, 893 in 1553, 1035 in 1554, 1010 in 1555, and in the first seven months of 1556 up to Ignatius' death on 31 July, 677.

¹² See María de la Soledad Justo, 'Que no es todo para todos. El deber de escribir en la Compañía de Jesús', *Actas y Comunicaciones del Instituto de Historia Antigua y Medieval*, 9 (2013), 1–10.

of edification'. Modern technology has given us means of better and more intensive communication. But Polanco's two letters are still astonishingly relevant for what they say about what makes us communicate, and why we communicate:

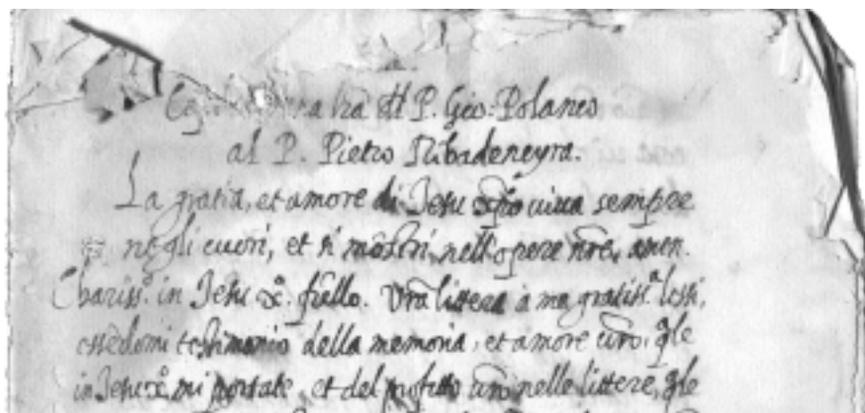
A person writing about his own labours and what God is working in souls should, while telling all the facts ... express himself in such a manner that the reader will see that he is seeking to further not his own but God's glory and the edification of his neighbour ... attributing to God what is God's, that is, all that is good, and to himself what is his own, namely, all that is evil, etc. If there is something so extraordinarily laudable that he does not wish to report it in his own words, it would be good if he had a friend who could write about it; if not, it should come on a separate sheet, or else in the main letter in such a way that even somewhat suspicious persons would have no room for suspecting him of vanity.¹³

Polanco was shrewd and discriminating in how he managed the different levels of communication. He could work with theology and spirituality; he knew about human and community relationships; he was astute and precise when it came to getting things done. And the reason why we have thousands of documents from him is theological and spiritual. God had founded a religious order characterized by the dispersion of its members on mission, and without permanent provision for meeting together. It was thus only written communication that could serve to hold this body together in the Lord. Letters were the principal manifestation of 'the love of God' operating as 'the chief bond for the union of the members between themselves and their head' (*Constitutions* VIII. 1.8 [671]). For those on mission, it was correspondence that would stir up their memories, keep alive their mutual affection and deepen their friendships. Letters were the means by which Jesuits constructed their quite particular union of minds and hearts.

It was ultimately Polanco who was responsible for making sure that this communication happened. He knew how the mailing systems worked; he had his contacts in the post offices and the ports. Communication was undoubtedly one of the keys to the rapid expansion of the Society of Jesus throughout the world.¹⁴ Polanco's commitment to keeping Jesuits

¹³ Polanco to the entire Society, 27 July 1547 (letters 179, 180), MHSJ EI 1, 536–549; *Letters and Instructions*, 183–194, here 193.

¹⁴ See Mario Scaduto, 'La corrispondenza dei primi gesuiti e le poste italiane', *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*, 19 (1950), 237–253.



Manuscript letter from Juan de Polanco to Pedro de Ribadeneira

united was constant, and extended to all the Society's missions in countries as scattered as Peru, Brazil, the Near East and Japan. When he left Rome, the office came with him. For example, while he was at the Council of Trent with Diego Laínez between August 1562 and December 1563, 300 letters were still sent with his signature.¹⁵

Consolidating the Charism

How were the first Jesuits to get themselves organized in the different communities and institutions that were coming into being? How could they know whether what they were doing was, or was not, or was more or less, Jesuit? They lived for eighteen years without the *Constitutions*, without a basic set of rules for their internal organizational life.¹⁶ The brief document called the *Formula of the Institute* set out in just three pages the new Society's spiritual profile. But, of its nature, it could not go into detail or long explanations about how things should be and be done. That had to wait till the first General Congregation in 1558, which adopted a Spanish text of the *Constitutions* (known as the Autograph) and a first Latin translation done by Polanco. Even then the fifth General Congregation in 1594 revisited both texts, comparing them anew and introducing small modifications.

¹⁵ See various volumes of MHSJ: 7 in *Monumenta Salmeronis* 1, 667–685; 81 in *Monumenta Natalis* 2, 105–145; 112 in *Monumenta Lainii* 6, 332–731; 108 in *Monumenta Lainii* 7, 1–559.

¹⁶ See Antonio M. de Aldama, 'La composición de las Constituciones de la Compañía de Jesús', *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*, 42 (1973), 201–245; Juan Carlos Coupeau, *From Inspiration to Invention: Rhetoric in the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2010).

How far can we think of Polanco as the co-author of the *Constitutions*? He was certainly involved in their preparation and composition, in developing their structure, their rhetoric and their content. He produces lists, drafts and footnotes (what we call Declarations). He was talking to Ignatius all the time. The question will always be with us. It remains largely unanswerable.¹⁷

Before the *Constitutions* appeared, the early Jesuits were improvising their ways of proceeding, under the Spirit's guidance. Ignatius was a good strategist. For one thing, he put in key positions of government Jesuits who had understood well both the fundamental charism, with its driving principles, and the Jesuit 'way of moving forward', how those principles should be applied to times and places. For another, he had both Nadal travelling round Europe, and Polanco stationary in Rome, offering inspiration, encouragement and also correction. Both were trying in every way possible to pass on the Society's basic identity (*forma Societatis*) wherever it was settling and establishing itself.¹⁸

But Polanco sometimes had to deal directly with delicate problems himself. What did it mean to preserve and consolidate the charism when the awkward questions were coming not from headstrong Jesuit students but from the Pope himself? In 1558 Paul IV insisted that the Society's Superior General should hold office only for a fixed term rather than for life as the *Formula of the Institute* had laid down. In June 1561, Polanco went to the Vatican to talk with Pius IV, and succeeded in getting him to revoke his predecessor's edict and to restore the principle, proper to the Society, of a lifetime generalate.

A more delicate problem arose in April 1573, regarding Polanco's own person.¹⁹ The third General Congregation had assembled in Rome following the death of Francis Borja in order to elect the fourth Superior General. Polanco was the Vicar General, and seemed quite likely to be

¹⁷ On the question of distinguishing the hands of Polanco and Ignatius, see Manuel Ruiz Jurado, 'Escritura de Polanco o de San Ignacio?', *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*, 77 (2008), 321–345.

¹⁸ Examples of Polanco's work, besides the two instructions on letter-writing mentioned above, are: Polanco to the Jesuits in Padua, 7 August 1547, on poverty (letter 186; MHSJ EI 1, 536–542; *Letters and Instructions*, 203–207); Polanco to superiors in the entire Society on letter-writing, 7 February 1550 (letter 1048; MHSJ EI 2, 675–677); Polanco to various colleges of the Society, 11 April 1551 (letter 1703; MHSJ EI 3, 389–392). For his part, Nadal fulfilled a similar function through the talks that he gave in various places, such as Coimbra, Alcalá and Cologne. For a useful selection in Spanish, see *Las pláticas del P. Jerónimo Nadal: la globalización ignaciana*, edited by Miquel Lop (Bilbao: Mensajero, 2011).

¹⁹ See the authoritative account of this episode in John W. Padberg, 'The Third General Congregation', in *The Mercurian Project: Forming Jesuit Culture (1573–1580)*, edited by Thomas M. McCoog (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2004), 49–75, especially 50–56.

elected. But some influential members of the Congregation were opposed. A group of Portuguese and Italian Jesuits wanted the next General not to be a Spaniard and to oppose firmly the admission of ‘new Christians’—those descended from Jewish converts—into the Society. Polanco failed on both counts: he was Spanish, and he was in favour, following Ignatius’ own criteria, of admitting *conversos* to the Society if they fulfilled the conditions laid down in the Examen. Indeed, he was himself of New Christian stock. As the Congregation was on the point of starting its business, there was a knock at the door. It was Cardinal Galli, the Secretary of State.²⁰ He was coming on the Pope’s behalf to tell the Congregation that the Holy Father’s express wish was that the new General *not* be a Spaniard. This was an indirect way of referring to Polanco. Eyes among the delegates turned to one of the Portuguese delegates, Fr Leão Enriques. On his knees and in tears he asked pardon of his companions for the intrigue he had been conducting since his departure from Portugal. A group of five Jesuits went to Frascati to remind the Pope that the members of the Congregation were meant to vote in freedom of conscience, without being constrained by any influence from outside. The Pope responded to this representation from the Congregation and asked his messenger to visit it again, this time toning down what he had previously said. But he continued to make it clear what he wanted.

Oddly enough, only four months previously, in a letter to Fr José de Acosta in Peru, Polanco had been commenting on the need for honesty regarding bishops and prelates: ‘with all due respect for them and decorum, we should not hide the truth when it would be appropriate to tell it plainly’.²¹

Preserving Memories

One of the tasks that Polanco took on conscientiously and faithfully, right from the time of his arrival in Rome, was that of *expressing the Jesuit charism in writing*. This was vital if the charism was to survive over time. The 1540 *Formula of the Institute* could not settle everything. There was still much in the charism that needed to be lived and expressed. The fact that there was a new version in 1550, and then the slow compilation of the *Constitutions*, only served to prove the point.

²⁰ Often referred to in contemporary documents as ‘the Cardinal from Como’.

²¹ Polanco to Acosta, 12 December 1572, MHSJ *Monumenta Peruana* 1, 503.

It is thanks to Polanco's initiative that we have the first biography of Ignatius, written by Diego Laínez in 1547 in Bologna. It takes the form of a letter to the secretary of the Society, and predates considerably what we now call the *Autobiography*.²² With this document of Laínez's on his desk, and with some other information that he gained from letters and conversations with Jesuits in Rome—including Ignatius himself—Polanco made two compilations (*sumarios*), one in Spanish (1548) and the other in Italian (1549).²³ These are the first histories of the nascent Society of Jesus. They serve as essential first-hand sources for what happened and how it happened.

Moreover, it is often forgotten that Polanco made a major contribution to the so-called *Autobiography* of Ignatius. If you read them carefully, the two 'prologues' of Jerónimo Nadal and Luís Gonçalves da Câmara give evidence of Polanco's influence. When Nadal pressed Ignatius to recount his life, Ignatius said, 'say three masses about this matter: you, Polanco and Ponce, and tell me what you think about the matter after your prayer'. When the Masses had been celebrated, Nadal went back to Ignatius and spoke to him in the first person plural: 'we said the masses, gave him the same reply, and he made a promise'.²⁴ Nadal was speaking in the names of three people: Polanco, Corgodan and himself. It was Gonçalves da Câmara who took down the dictation, and both he and Nadal contributed prefaces that are reproduced in modern editions; hence it is their names which have been associated with the text.²⁵ But we can read in da Câmara's prologue, 'while *Master Polanco* and I were at table with him [4 August 1553], our Father said that there was one thing that Master Nadal *and others* of the Society had *often* asked him to do, but that he had never made up his mind about it'.²⁶ Da Câmara only arrived in Rome on 23 May 1553. These 'other' Jesuits to whom Ignatius refers, and who had been 'often' asking him to recount his life story, must surely have included Polanco.

²² Polanco to Laínez, 21 May 1547 (letter 174; MHSJ EI 1, 520; *Letters and Instructions*, 176): 'I look forward eagerly to the summary you promise when there is a lull in your occupations ... and I will receive it as a great kindness'. The text of the *Autobiography* is in MHSJ FN 1, 7–145.

²³ MHSJ FN 1, 151–256, 261–298.

²⁴ 'Prologue of Fr Jerome Nadal', in Peter du Brul, *Ignatius: Sharing the Pilgrim Story* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2003), xiii–xiv. Ponce Cogordan (1500–1582) had been in an administrative role in the Roman house since 1549.

²⁵ Compare John W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard UP, 1993), 8: 'Polanco and Nadal importuned the narration from him as a kind of 'testament' that would show his followers how and to what God had called him'.

²⁶ 'Prologue of Fr Luís Gonçalves da Câmara', in du Brul, *Ignatius: Sharing the Pilgrim Story*, xv.

Polanco wrote a life of Ignatius of Loyola, probably around 1574, after he had stopped being secretary of the Society (1573) and before he was sent as Visitor to Naples and Sicily (1575).²⁷ He had sufficient information to be able to write competently and authoritatively. Ribadeneira had published his own biography in 1572; Polanco could draw on Laínez's 1547 letter, his own resúms (1548, 1549), and the so-called *Autobiography* (1553–1555). But Polanco's chief resource was his experience of nine years and four months of close proximity to Ignatius himself. Among the other early companions, no one else had lived so closely with the founder. But why did he write it? Did he think the *Autobiography* was inadequate? Did he find Ribadeneira's life too hagiographic?

The knowledge we have today of the early Society of Jesus would be impossible were it not for Polanco's contribution. Thanks to his monumental work, the *Chronicon Societatis Iesu*, we Jesuits and those who follow Ignatian spirituality can look back and find solid roots linking the charism and the institution to its time.²⁸ What the Jesuits did in their ministries and how they did it gradually generated a collective sense of identity that would later be expressed properly in the *Constitutions*. The Society of Jesus that we know now is largely a continuation, in 'creative fidelity', of what it became back in this period. The tradition, which remains open to adaptation, inculturation and different styles of implementation, nevertheless shapes us. It gives us the *forma Societatis*. And this encourages us to turn back to the original sources of the charism—sources which both clarify the present and project us forward into the future.

There are perhaps some readers who remain sceptical on this point. But they are probably well aware of the book, *The First Jesuits*, by the great US historian John O'Malley SJ, which has now, since its first publication in 1993, been translated into a wide range of languages. The book is informed by an enormous knowledge of sixteenth-century Europe and rigorous work on the sources. But it is worth noticing from where the information in this book principally comes. A computer search reveals that, out of the many volumes of the *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu*, O'Malley depends chiefly on those by Polanco. There are 522 references to the *Chronicon*, 71 to Polanco's other writings and 190 to Ignatius'

²⁷ MHSJ FN 2, 506–597. It is worth noting that an earlier edition was the first text to be published in the first volume of what became a series of more than 160 volumes (MHSJ *Polanci Chronicon* 1, 9–74).

²⁸ In English, see *Year by Year with the Early Jesuits (1537–1556): Selections from the Chronicon of Juan de Polanco, S.J.*, translated by John Patrick Donnelly (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2004).

letters, which were often thought through and formulated by Polanco as secretary. The second most important source is the writings of Jerónimo Nadal (368 citations), while the total from the other volumes of the *Monumenta* combined is 225.

A Witness to the Charism

Surprisingly, we have no picture or engraving recording for us what Polanco looked like. But we do have a more important pen-portrait, a necrology written by Fr Giovanni Jacobo Basso²⁹ in Florence in 1607, at the request of Fr Octavio Lorenzini. Fr Basso was writing 31 years after Polanco's mission in Naples.³⁰ His love and admiration for his superior shine through. He brings out Polanco's eloquence and skills in conversation, the ease of character which made him loved, and indeed liked, by so many. He was a man of deep spirituality, as evidenced in his way of saying Mass, in his personal prayer, and in his regular fasting and abstinence. Basso recalls his style of government: gentle and sensitive with all. He ends: 'So great was the uprightness and kindness of the good Fr Polanco that I would wish us all to imitate him, at least in some respect'.

Writing was an integral part of Polanco's mission and his life. Because of historical factors, both in the Church as a whole and among the Jesuits in particular—of which today we need to become more aware—he was forgotten. It is a strange paradox.

When Polanco wrote his first compilation of the Society's history, he wrote of why the task was important:

... in order to provide consolation and good example for those who follow ... it seemed to me something that would glorify the divine Majesty if we did not let ourselves forget what His almighty hand has done and is doing in this Society, and, through it, in many other souls. It seems only fair that we display virtue to those who did not know it directly, and that we not allow its memory to die with those who are still living.³¹

One cannot imagine a better way of making the point. For all of us in the Ignatian tradition, remembering this Jesuit from Burgos is one of

²⁹ Secretary and *socius* (assistant) to Polanco towards the end of his time as Visitor of Sicily and Naples (1575–1576); he had previously acted in a similar role for Ribadeneira.

³⁰ Italian original in *MHSJ Polanci Complementa* 2, 570–574; Spanish translation in García de Castro, *Polanco*, 369–372.

³¹ *MHSJ FN* 1, 152.

the ways in which we can recall the many benefits we have received (Exx 233). Such an exercise strengthens our own sense of spiritual identity and our mission. Returning to the sources is not just a historical exercise about the past. We should read our spiritual history with spiritual eyes—which is not to say that we cease to be intellectually serious. We look back at the past so that it can clarify our present, and indeed continue to guide our mission forward into the future.³²

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translated by Philip Endean SJ

³² On this, see my 'Alcanzados por los fuentes', *Manresa*, 81 (2009), 311–328. The recent 36th Jesuit General Congregation adopted such a strategy in evoking the first companions' experience in Venice as a way of thinking about the Society's present situation and of opening up paths into the future (decree 1, nn. 4–7, available at https://jesuits.eu/images/docs/GC_36_Documents.pdf, 15).

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MARY WARD

To Be or Not to Be ... a Saint

Christine Burke

IN 2016 POPE FRANCIS reviewed the procedures surrounding the process leading to canonization. But the gender imbalance among the canonized, the preponderance of Europeans, clerics and consecrated religious, the scarcity of married couples and people who work in the messy everyday world, in addition to the exorbitant cost of the process, still raise serious questions. In advocating, as I do, the canonization of Mary Ward (1585–1645), I hesitate to put forward the cause of yet another religious. Clearly religious congregations have a deep reverence for their individual founders, but saints are for the whole Church. All Christians are baptized to be a sacrament of God's love in the world. Does the life of this particular person offer exceptional hope, insight and challenge to the whole people of God today?

Throughout her life Mary Ward was drawn into an ever-deepening friendship with God and, as Jesus had warned, living out the implications of such a friendship led her to the cross. Central to the oppression she endured was her belief that women as well as men were called to bring God's love to an estranged people. She died a laywoman because the church authorities had disbanded the religious institute she founded. Yet women kept joining this unofficial group. All apostolic women's religious congregations recognised by the Church today can look to Mary Ward as a pioneer. Her tenacity, integrity and trust can speak to people from many walks of life.

Changing mindsets has never been easy. Mary Ward challenged the Church to change, to recognise the potential of women to be an apostolic force. She did not allow the resistance she met to damage her relationship with God or her commitment to following God's call. Her story shows that God can bring about what is needed if we continue to work for what we know to be right, even in the face of opposition. The challenge is to do this with love and respect, committed to new possibilities yet remaining within the community of faith.

Background and Life¹

Mary Ward was born into a Roman Catholic Yorkshire family during the reign of Elizabeth I. After Henry VIII's break with the religious control of Rome, Catholics were persecuted as traitors who gave allegiance to a foreign power. An underground network of Catholic families supported each other across the country, raising the next generation with a staunch commitment to the old faith. While education for girls was not a priority of the time, Mary and some friends who later joined her must have been permitted to share classes with their male siblings and cousins, because they were competent in Latin and foreign languages and well grounded in the faith. The tutors in these family homes were often Jesuits in disguise, who risked torture and death to help strengthen the faith of Catholics. Parents who maintained such households were also imprisoned and fined heavily.

At the age of fifteen Mary felt drawn to a prohibited way of life: that of a cloistered nun. All the convents in England had been ransacked and destroyed by royal decree. For five years family, friends and spiritual directors opposed her choice and refused permission. In 1605, when she was 21, she finally left England to join a monastic community of Poor Clares in the Spanish Netherlands.

Through a variety of experiences Mary found herself called in prayer from this enclosed life to 'some other thing', something 'more to the glory of God'.² This movement from a holiness based on seclusion from the world to one engaged in 'all good works that are in this world to be done', was directly opposite to the prevailing mood in the Church.³ In a world where women were seen as needing a husband or a convent wall to manage them, prejudice mounted as Mary's conviction clarified that God wanted her to do something different.

A small group of friends joined her in 1609 to combine a life of prayer and community with educational and pastoral outreach. Their way

¹ To find out more, see Christine Burke, *The Gift of Mary Ward* (Melbourne: John Garratt, 2013), for a short overview of her life and significance for today; Gregory Kirkus, *Mary Ward* (Strasbourg: Signe, 2008); *Till God Will: Mary Ward through Her Writings*, edited by Gillian Orchard (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985), contains some primary texts.

² Mary Ward, 'The Italian Autobiography', in *Mary Ward (1585–1645): A Briefe Relation ... with Autobiographical Fragments and a Selection of Letters*, edited by Christina Kenworthy-Browne, Catholic Record Society 81 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2008), 139.

³ Quoted in Mary Catherine Elizabeth Chambers, *The Life of Mary Ward*, 2 volumes (London: Burns and Oates, 1882–1885), volume 1, 474.

of life was influenced by that of the Society of Jesus, which had been permitted to put aside some of the normal requirements of religious life, such as saying the Divine Office in common, and living and working within the walls of a monastery. Their purpose was to strengthen the faith of people through spiritual guidance and teaching at various levels, going wherever the need was greatest. In 1611 Mary had a religious experience which convinced her that God wanted her group to ‘take the Same’ way of life, spirituality and constitutions as the Jesuits, even though the church authorities were convinced that such a project was beyond the capacity of mere women.⁴

Enormous pressure was placed on Mary and her small band to find another rule, another way of life. Even her Jesuit friend and spiritual director Roger Lee could not support her plan. The prevailing wisdom was that women were too fickle for such an apostolate and unable to have any experience of God. Aquinas had taught that women were naturally inferior to men, and it was widely believed that only men could have a direct relationship with God. Women needed to have their relationship with God mediated through men. Disbelief, ridicule and anger greeted



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Mary Ward's vision of religious life, from the Painted Life of Mary Ward

⁴ Mary Ward to John Gerard, 1619, in *Mary Ward (1585–1645)*, 142.

the mere idea that women could take this rule of life. The most potent argument against imitating the Jesuit way of life was that women had no access to learning through universities and seminaries, so they could not be trusted to teach a correct version of the faith.

***The centrality
of friendship
in our
relationship
with God***

But in 1615, while Mary was on retreat, she had an insight that confirmed her in her belief that this rule of life was what God wanted. She saw that God invites human beings to a life of friendship with God. If women accepted this invitation, God's grace would support them as they worked with people who were seeking to know God more. This experience was crucial to her understanding of the centrality of friendship in our relationship with God, the core qualities needed to live out this vocation and her conviction about the equality of women with men. She understood that, while the Jesuits had higher learning, they might be tempted to trust their personal gifts and their learning, rather than recognise the grace of God as critical in their ministry. Women had to rely utterly on that grace.

Mary's later life was built on her conviction that women could help in bringing the love of God into creative tension with the realities of people's lives. Her trust in the unchanging 'Friend of all friends' gave heart to her own friends.⁵ She refused to give up when faced with closed minds that would not even consider the possibility of active ministry for women. Mary exhorted young women joining her enterprise to believe that women were in no way inferior. She claimed for women a voice and mobility, in a world where women were denied both these basic rights.⁶

In 1621, with a few companions, Mary walked from St Omer to Rome, crossing the Alps in winter, to persuade the Pope that her plan was workable. She presented letters of recommendation from rulers and ambassadors. Over the next ten years, she and her companions set up schools all over Europe. Powerful families rejoiced in the opportunity of education for their girls. But the church authorities were unbending. Any activity by nuns had to be within convent walls. No exceptions would be made. Experience was up against law formulated in another context.

From the outset the four cardinals charged with deciding on Mary's appeal for recognition were determined to refuse permission. She realised this and confronted the frustrations of trying again and again to show by the fruits of her work that it was of God. Mary believed that this small

⁵ *Till God Will*, 9.

⁶ For this pithy summing up of her struggle as 'voice and mobility', I am indebted to Gemma Simmonds.

committee was making pronouncements without the approval of the Pope because each time she saw him he was gracious and somewhat supportive. However Pope Urban VIII's diplomatic exterior covered his total agreement with his officials.

In 1631 Mary was imprisoned in Munich by order of the Inquisition. The sisters were turned out of their convents in the middle of the Thirty Years' War. The 'pretended congregation of Jesuitesses' was disbanded and suppressed by the ferocious condemnation of Urban VIII; the members' vows were declared null and void; Christian faithful were commanded to repute their entire project as 'suppressed, extinct, rooted out, destroyed and abolished'.⁷

After her release from prison Mary was summoned before the Inquisition in Rome and, though cleared of heresy, was nonetheless subjected to constant surveillance by Inquisition spies. Out of over two hundred companions, perhaps about twenty remained in contact with her after the suppression. A few companions made their way to Mary in Rome, living as a company of friends, supplied with food from the papal household because they were penniless. A few stayed in Munich, living as laywomen but continuing to teach, and a few eked out their existence in Liège. Some would have joined other convents or returned home, but many just disappeared in the midst of war.

During these last fifteen years of her life Mary was plagued by illness. For five years she was not permitted to leave Rome and, when she finally gained approval to return to England, she had to beg for money along the way. In London she and her remaining companions began a small school, but then the Civil War started and they moved to York with the fleeing Royalist contingent. It was here that Mary died in 1645. Her companions found a minister 'honest enough to be bribed' so they could bury her in hallowed ground, since it was forbidden to bury Catholics on church premises. On her tombstone her companions wrote 'To love the poor, to persevere in the Same, to live, dye and rise with them, was all the ayme of Mary Ward ...' To women skilled in the art of reading its coded message, this speaks of her love for her companions and for the Catholics in England, her commitment to 'taking the Same' way of life as Jesuits, and her unwavering hope that recognition would come one day.

⁷ 'Pastoralis Romani Pontificis: Urban VIII's Bull of 1631', in M. Immolata Wetter, *Mary Ward under the Shadow of the Inquisition* (Oxford: Way Books, 2006), appendix, 213–214.

Mary Ward for Today

Mary Ward has much to offer the wider Church today: her emphasis on friendship with God as the way of life to which we are all called; her strong conviction that ‘verity’, or truth, is fundamental to our relationship with God and each other; her belief in the equality of women with men; her ability to maintain her integrity when obedience to God and to the Church were in direct conflict, without separating herself from the Church; and finally her powerful gift of forgiveness for those who worked her downfall.

Friendship with God

Mary found great hope in meditating on a relationship with God like that of ‘those in Paradise, before the first fall’. She felt that God was drawing her into this level of friendship, and spelt out her experience in a 1615 letter to her spiritual director. Those in such a relationship, she said, possess ‘a singular freedom from all that could make one adhere to earthly things’. They are free to bring every aspect of their lives before God, free from placing undue importance on passing things, free to do all good works. Justice and sincerity are key to this freedom: ‘That word justice, and those in former times that were called just persons, works of justice, done in innocence and that we be such, as we appear, and appear such as we are’.⁸ Mary identified the marks of friendship with God as essential for her company. In later retreats she asked for this friendship for all people, because it is so easy: if we just want it, God will do the rest. In an era which placed great stress on sin, she rejoiced in the freedom of this friendship: ‘O my lord how liberall ar you and how rich ar thay to whom you will voutsafe to be a frind’.⁹

Verity

The sincerity that Mary had appreciated in her prayer experience of 1615 developed in her musings on verity, and was acted out in her stance before a church leadership that questioned her integrity and sought to impose a way of life she believed was not in keeping with God’s will. She connected the truth that we try to live out with the understanding

⁸ Mary Ward to Roger Lee, 1 November 1615, in *Till God Will*, 40.

⁹ *Mary Ward und ihre Gründung. Die Quellentexte bis 45*, edited by Ursula Dirmeier (Münster: Aschendorff, 2007), volume 1, 347. All the primary source material by and about Mary Ward is found in the four volumes of this work; the English and orthography are unmodernised.

in John's Gospel that God is Truth. One incident captures the importance of this truthfulness in her life. Imprisoned by the Church and thought to be dying, she was told she could receive Holy Communion if she signed a letter in which she recanted any heresy she might have taught. Mary had a deep devotion to the Eucharist. She knew she had not committed heresy, whatever the authorities claimed. She refused to sign and wrote her own declaration of loyalty to the Pope. For the Church today to affirm by canonization the life of someone who maintained her integrity in this way would be a great example to encourage us all to be true to our principles.

Women in the Church

The Catholic Church would be a great deal poorer without the contributions of religious sisters over the past four centuries. Schools of every sort, hospitals, refuges, childcare centres, orphanages, social justice and spirituality centres, and various innovations to meet new needs—the list of those contributions is endless. But in Mary Ward's time such work was forbidden to religious women, because women were seen as less than men. A number of founders of women's congregations struggled against this prohibition, some trying to do what they could from a monastery base, others deciding they would do the work that was needed and not ask to be religious sisters. Mary Ward believed that the work should be done and that the women who did it should be seen as religious sisters. The call to this work was from God, and if such outreach was possible for men,



permission for it should also be given to women. She suffered greatly for her courage and persistence.

Centuries before modern feminism, Mary Ward responded to a comment from a Jesuit: ‘fervour will decay, and when all is done they are but wemen’:

I would know what you all thinke he meant by this spech of his: But wemen It is not veritas hominum verity of men nor veritie of weomen but veritas Domini and this veritie wemen may have as well as men, if we fayle it is for want of this verity and not because we are weomen Ther is no such difference between men and weomen that weomen may not doe great matters, as we have seen by example of many Saints who have done great things: and I hope in god it will be seene that weomen in tyme to come will doe much.¹⁰

She told a story about a time she heard a priest claim that women can have no experience of God. She said there was no point in arguing with such prejudice: what the good father lacked was—experience! Lived pastoral experience was the root of her theological position, with strong similarities to anyone today who draws on experience as part of their theological critique of church practice or unquestioned assumptions. Her words here are drawn from three talks that Mary gave to her small community in St Omer in 1617, stressing the importance of verity, and of women’s equality in the eyes of God. How radical her message was is underlined by Pope Urban’s subsequent condemnation of her Institute and her work:

... free from the laws of enclosure they wander about at will, and under the guise of promoting the salvation of souls, have been accustomed to attempt and to employ themselves in many other works which are most unsuited to their weak sex and character, to female modesty and particularly to maidenly reserve—works which men of eminence in the science of sacred letters, of experience of affairs and innocence of life undertake with much difficulty and only with great caution.¹¹

For the next two hundred and seventy years, women continued to join Mary Ward’s Institute, although it had no recognised name and was under repeated papal prohibitions against naming or claiming Mary Ward

¹⁰ *Mary Ward und ihre Gründung*, volume 1, 357–358. These talks were not written down by Mary Ward; the texts are based on transcripts made by her listeners. The Jesuit to whom she was responding (‘Mr Sackfeeld’) is identified by Dirmeier as Thomas Sackville.

¹¹ ‘*Pastoralis Romani Pontificis*’, in Wetter, *Mary Ward under the Shadow of the Inquisition*, 213–214.

as its founder. Generations of her company formed other young women, giving them confidence that they too could make a difference in this Church and world. Like many religious in other congregations, they have been unrecognised pioneers, taken for granted as they shaped the unobtrusive work that has transformed ministry in the Church. Today they work in education, theology, social justice, spiritual direction and pastoral care, still seeking to be grounded in true wisdom and to lead people to friendship with God. In most civil societies, the equality of women and men is now recognised, in word if not always in deed. It would be significant if church leadership could admit it that had made mistakes in its assessment of the abilities of women and in its treatment of them.

Unobtrusive work that has transformed ministry in the Church

Integrity and Loyalty

The last fifty years have tested many Catholics' ability to balance loyalty to the Church with their own integrity. As the hopes of Vatican II seemed to stall, a number of good people have felt disillusioned by the reluctance of church leaders to embrace change. Many have left. Those who stayed have been tested by Vatican bureaucracy and, more recently, by the Church's long-term failure to deal with a succession of abuse scandals. Remaining Catholic, not cynically but with hope in God, is not an easy option.

Mary Ward remained loyal to the Church through what she called her 'long loneliness', with its continuing sense of aridity; and she did this able to trust in the hope that 'success will follow'.¹² She urged her companions to obey the papal decree, and continued a respectful dialogue with the Pope. She died commending, to her friends around her death bed, 'the practis of gods Voc[ation] in us, that it be constantly, efficaciously, and affectionately in all'.¹³ She did not doubt that her call and that of her companions came from God and that God would bring it to fruition in God's good time. She is an example of 'prophetic obedience': the exercise of 'personal conscience, based on discernment of the apostolic faith of the Church and attentiveness and responsiveness to the signs of the times'.¹⁴ Her confidence sowed the seeds of hope for future generations.

¹² Mary Ward to Winifred Wigmore, 27 October 1624, in *Till God Will*, 73.

¹³ Mary Poyntz to Barbara Babthorpe, 3 February 1645, in *Mary Ward (1585–1645)*, 160.

¹⁴ See Bradford E. Hinze, *Prophetic Obedience: Ecclesiology for a Dialogical Church* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2016), xxi. Sandra Schneiders has said: 'I am always utterly amazed at the story of prophetic obedience

Women today are challenged to retain that hope within the institutional Church. An increasing number struggle with the absence of women from its decision-making process. They struggle to be recognised for their gifts rather than stereotyped by their gender. Many will tell of their pain as they seek to forgive and remain in dialogue with the Church, to contribute their ideas, work and worship in a Church that is so blatantly patriarchal. If anyone had a reason to shake the dust off her feet it was Mary Ward. We can draw strength from her tenacity and trust. Such loyalty, even in times when the disfigurement of the Church is in full view, is trusting God to bring life out of this experience that feels like death. As a woman in the Church and of the Church, Mary continues to challenge us to stay, to work for change, to show what can be done.

Forgiving Our Enemies

We live in an increasingly polarized Church and society. It is easy to dismiss, deride and refuse to forgive. Mary Ward also lived in a time of such polarization. Her experience of church oppression was personal: she met and knew the cardinals, the Pope, and the priests who spread lies about her. A friend once told her she thought it 'more advantagious to her, to be her Ennemy then her friend' because when she received an injury she took care 'first to frame in her selfe an entire pardon, grounded and hartly, not formall and verball, then to pray for them and seeke out occasions to render them service'.¹⁵ She spent nights praying for the health even of those who had opposed her in every way. Right up to the end of her life she refused to demean them but engaged with them graciously. The loving outreach of God was her touchstone. She dared to leave the outcome to God while doing everything in her power to bring about change. She embodied being a 'friend of God and prophet' (Wisdom 7:27). Her challenge to us in our families, communities, societies and Church echoes down the centuries.

What about Miracles?

Do any miracles support the claim that this woman is a model for the Church today? Pope Francis has pointed out that miracles are not limited

that Mary Ward embodies. I think in the whole history of Religious Life there is not a more striking example of the obedience to which we are called. Her canonization will be the finest tribute to prophetic obedience imaginable.'

¹⁵ 'The English Vita', in *Mary Ward (1585-1645)*, 83.

to extraordinary healings. In Ward's case it is miraculous enough that we know about her work at all and possess primary sources about her life, and that her congregations are now found all over the world, despite centuries of being blacklisted by the Church.

All reference to Mary Ward was forbidden and books about her were burned by order of the Inquisition. The communities were without a founder and without a name. As they spread to dioceses across Europe and beyond, new foundations were taken over by local bishops, resulting in a number of 'mini-congregations' who knew they were connected to Mary Ward but could not claim any link to her publicly. In the following centuries various bishops, confessors and frightened superiors in York and Germany gave orders to destroy documents relating to Mary Ward. New foundations in Ireland perhaps did not even know her name. So much was lost.

Early requests for recognition were turned down. In 1703 Pope Clement XI approved a small excerpt from the Ignatian rule as a basis for pious living, but would not approve a religious congregation. In 1749 the role of a chief superior of the group was recognised by Benedict XIV in the apostolic constitution *Quamvis iusto*.¹⁶ However, this same document forbade the sisters to make any reference to Mary Ward, since the Institute she had founded had been abolished forever. In 1877 Pius IX finally gave papal approbation and confirmation to the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, but refused to exonerate and recognise Mary Ward as founder. A 1900 meeting attempting worldwide reunion was closed down by a



Manuscript of Mary Ward's Briefe Relation

¹⁶ Benedict XIV, *Quamvis iusto*, 30 April 1749, in Mary Wright, *Mary Ward's Institute: The Struggle for Identity* (Sydney: Crossing, 1997), 196–213. This document gave all future active women religious the right to form congregations.

Vatican order after political intervention, probably from Austria and maybe from some powerful archbishops.

In 1909 Mary Ward's reputation was finally restored by Pope Pius X, who officially removed the prohibition on naming her as a founder.¹⁷ Throughout the twentieth century the many small groups that had been separated under various bishops began to reunite. This has now led to the existence of two branches of Mary Ward's Institute, the Congregatio Jesu (CJ) and the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (IBVM-Loreto), who increasingly work together where possible. At the World Congress of Lay Apostolates in 1951, Pope Pius XII told his audience that the two great role models for apostolic work in the history of the Church were St Vincent de Paul and Mary Ward. He called Mary, 'that incomparable woman given by Catholic England in her darkest hour'.¹⁸ In 2009 Pope Benedict XVI declared her 'Venerable', meaning that nothing in her life would prevent her being declared a saint.

Mary Ward the Saint

Could the example of Mary Ward's life help the people of God to negotiate the questions and challenges of our time? Her sanctity was grounded in everyday living, and in recognising and valuing her own experience. The yearning for spirituality in our time is closely linked to the yearning for personal experience of God. Greater recognition of this woman's life would call us all to take the time to ponder our experience and to become open to Holy Mystery who speaks to us through that experience. Mary's conviction of the worth of women is a powerful testimony for the people of God living in a Church that still rejects women's leadership in most significant areas of church life. Her story has a compelling force, whether she is canonized or not. However canonization would constitute an important witness for today. Mary Ward was treated as a subversive, when in fact she was a woman of her time—a reformer. 'She did not just want to conserve a faith under threat, she saw its shortcomings and wanted change.'¹⁹ For Mary Ward calls us to be people of our time, bringing

¹⁷ For those who are interested in the survival of such a group across centuries of condemnation, see Wright, *Mary Ward's Institute*, which draws on canonical records and archives to present an overview of this struggle, and also Gregory Kirkus, *The Companions of Mary Ward* (Strasburg: Signe, 2009).

¹⁸ Pius XII, address to the first World Congress of Lay Apostolates, 14 October 1951, available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/fr/speeches/1951/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19511014_apostolato-laici.html (French only).

¹⁹ Comment from my sister Elisabeth Burke in response to this paper!

our insights, our experiences of God and life to the table where decisions are made—and asking the Church leadership to listen with open hearts to new possibilities.

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THE DIALECTICS OF PRAYER AND SLEEP

A. Paul Dominic

The prayer I have in mind is no matter of routine, it is deliberate and earnest. It is not tied down to a fixed timetable; rather it is a state which endures *by night and day*. (St John Chrysostom)¹

The Lord fills my heart completely;
What else can in me stay?
Walking, sleeping, working, weeping—
I think of him and pray. (Surdas)²

WHEN DOES PRAYER HAPPEN best for a person wanting to pray? In what particular state of mind? As in all activity, the activity of prayer calls for awareness, alertness and attention. This obviously requires a certain conscious engagement from the person. The more prepared we are in consciousness of mind and heart the better we can pray to God who, humanly speaking, neither sleeps nor slumbers (Psalm 121:4). Prayer thus lends itself to those who are awake and fresh. From this standpoint there can be no common cause between prayer and sleep.

The Ascetical versus the Mystical

In fact, sleep would be generally considered an obstacle to prayer; and so the common persuasion would be that to pray one would have to keep awake from the beginning till the end, overcoming sleep if necessary. The watchword in this respect, to which all give credence, may well be Christ's injunction: 'Stay awake and pray' (Matthew 26:41). Though it was given to his disciples as a warning in the context of impending suffering, fear and temptation, it could serve as a general principle for prayer. Anyway, inactivity or lethargy does not lead us to prayer; but wakefulness is an

¹ As quoted in homily 6, 'On Prayer', in *The Divine Office*, volume 2 (London: Collins, 1974), 21.

² In R. H. Lesser, *Saints and Sages of India* (New Delhi: Intercultural, 1992), 47.



Fresco, Palazzo de Ragione, Padua, fifteenth century

inciting element of prayer, enabling some to struggle against sloth and inspiring others to keep vigil. So an eager wakefulness that keeps us fresh is the best preparation for prayer, as saints of various hues have insisted.³ There is no denying the truth of this ascetical aspect of prayer.

However, more than ascetical, prayer is mystical; that is to say, there is an element in prayer which is

totally from God and of God.⁴ And so, corresponding to the warning, ‘Stay awake and pray’, could there not be an invitation, ‘Sleep and pray’, flowing from a biblical passage such as ‘I slept, but my heart was awake’ (Song of Solomon 5:2)? As Karl Rahner comments on this passage: ‘Ah, yes, the heart! That truly never sleeps. And out of the heart, says Jesus, everything comes. Even and especially when one is asleep.’⁵

In this light prayer and sleep are not simply exclusive, even if not always inclusive. Being not exclusive, they may be thought of as related in terms of a certain dialectic between them. The dialectical experience of sleep and prayer, which appears as a twin expression of our mode of being, not only in ourselves but also in relation to God,⁶ is destined to move toward a synthesis. It is, indeed, part of the universal spiritual search of religious traditions, more than we imagine. What follows is an attempt at presenting this evocative, if unsuspected, truth gleaming in *Gitanjali*, the

³ For the proverbial Ignatian directives in this regard see Exx 46–48, 73–75, 33, 42, and throughout.

⁴ This is something that St Teresa treasured and taught. See St Teresa of Ávila, *The Collected Works of St Teresa of Ávila*, translated by Kieran Kavanagh and Otilio Rodriguez (Bangalore: AVP, 1982), 290.

⁵ Karl Rahner, ‘A Spiritual Dialogue at Evening: On Sleep, Prayer and Other Subjects’, in *Theological Investigations*, volume 3, *Theology of the Spiritual Life*, translated by Karl-H. and Boniface Kruger (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1967), 236.

⁶ Following partly Henry Corbin: ‘Prayer is not a request for something: it is the expression of a mode of being, a means of existing and of causing to exist, that is, a means of causing the God who reveals Himself to appear, of “seeing” Him The role of prayer is shared between God and man, because Creation like theophany is shared between Him who shows Himself and him to whom it is shown; prayer itself is a moment in, a recurrence par excellence of, Creation.’ (*Alone with the Alone: Creative Imagination in the Sūfism of Ibn ‘Arabī* [Princeton: Princeton UP, 1969], 248–249.)

celebrated collection of Indian religious lyrics with an enduring, universal attraction that won for Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) his Nobel prize for literature.

Wakefulness in Prayer

To begin with, there can be no highest prayer without the rudiments of the lowest prayer. Learning to pray begins with using our hands, eyes and lips, and of course minds—just the opposite of what is meant by mystical prayer (as the Greek root of the word mystical, $\mu\omega$, has the meaning ‘to close’!). As we begin to pray we need to exercise ourselves physically and mentally. We need to be awake for prayer, as for any other human activity including preparing to sleep—granting, of course, different levels of wakefulness for different activities. The greater the difficulty of praying, the greater the need or urgency to be awake and aware. This principle is most obvious from what Jesus explicitly asked his disciples to do when he began his own struggle with prayer at Gethsemane. Paul evokes the same principle using a line of an early Christian hymn: ‘Sleeper, awake! ... and you will touch Christ’ (Ephesians 5:14).⁷

One may hear the echo of this basic approach to prayer in Tagore. He knows the weakness of the flesh and in the face of this very weakness he believes the spirit can be willing! And so, even as he laments, ‘Languor is upon your heart and the slumber is still on your eyes’, he encourages the believer, at once questioning and revealing:

Has not the word come to you that the flower is reigning
in splendour among thorns? ...
At the end of the stony path, in the country of virgin
solitude, my friend is sitting all alone. (LV)⁸

He ends with the commanding invitation: ‘Deceive him not. Wake, oh awaken! Let not the time pass in vain!’ The path of prayer begins from a moment of wakefulness, continues with the awareness of the goal and knows how to deal with the obstacles on the way; and thus it keeps itself alive to the joy of the heart, counting the cost of the struggle as the ‘sweet music of pain’.

⁷ The last part of the verse is a variant reading.

⁸ Unless otherwise indicated, Roman numerals in the main text refer to the number of the song in *Gitanjali* (Madras: Macmillan India, 1973).

Keeping Vigil

The wakefulness of prayer is appropriate after restful sleep; but sometimes prayer may demand foregoing sleep, even at night. Whereas the former experience of wakefulness relates (as in the above poem) to the journey we make in order to reach the divine destination of the heart, the latter experience of foregoing sleep serves as a night vigil for God to come to the devout. A psalm in the Book of Isaiah (26:9) may reflect this spirit: 'My soul yearns for you in the night, my spirit within me earnestly seeks you'. Tagore, enthused by the belief that God, his friend, sometimes makes the journey of love towards him at night, makes sure to keep vigil; and, 'ever and again', opens the door and looks out on the darkness for the one he loves to come. All the while he keeps praying:

My eyes have lost their sleep in watching; yet if I do not
meet thee still it is sweet to watch.
My heart sits ... waiting for thy love; if she is deprived still
it is sweet to hope.⁹

Even if he is alone in his watching, without any companions, he is determined to keep just listening for the footsteps of God on the journey; and if his unabated longing for God seems to be in vain he finds 'still it is sweet to feel the pain of longing'.

Blessed Slumber despite Vigil

From the foregoing one may formulate a thesis about prayer: prayer happens when one is awake. The antithesis follows: when one is asleep prayer simply does not happen.

However, sometimes in the very activity of our long search for God in wakeful prayer we may find ourselves tired enough to lay ourselves down, stretch our limbs and rest. Our companions may not tire and press on with their seemingly unending journey of prayer perseveringly, perhaps even looking askance at our dull spirit. Their reproach may prick our pride to rise and keep pace with them without, however, enabling us actually to do so. In this very situation of shame, when we may appear to have forgotten the purpose for which we set out together, we may look upon ourselves as failures, unlike our companions who are determined to keep marching towards their destination. But, surprisingly, we find Tagore making a different response, at once encouraging and daring. For, as he dares to say:

⁹ Rabindranath Tagore, *Lover's Gift and Crossing* (Madras: Macmillan India, 1973), XI, 54–55.

I gave myself up for lost in the depth of a glad
humiliation—in the shadow of a dim delight.
... and I surrendered my mind without struggle to the
maze of shadows and songs. (XLVIII)

‘At last’—this is his punch line—‘when I woke up from my slumber and opened my eyes, I saw thee standing by me, flooding my sleep with thy smile’. The ‘glad humiliation’ and ‘dim delight’ of falling asleep—were they not, or could they not be, the intimations of what was to come in and through a sleep which God would flood with smiling?

God’s Visitation in Sleep

God, who comes to us thus even when we fall asleep as we pray, does not follow our clear ascetical rules for praying. Nor is God bound by our sense of propriety in our dealings with God. After all, God is the master of our prayer! With all our trust in God, I wonder if a prayer such as this: ‘I will both lie down and sleep in peace; for you alone, O Lord, make me lie down in safety’ (Psalm 4:8) would come happily to the lips of many. It is no wonder that it took an inspired author to pray in this way, against the current of our expectations.

**God is the
master of our
prayer!**

But Tagore speaks of good people who have had this experience of God. In song LI, a whole village retires at nightfall with the satisfaction of having done their day’s work, part of which was to make sure, of course, that their last expected guest had come and been properly welcomed. When some say that the king—the kingly God—is yet to come, the others only laugh. Soon there seems to be a knock at the door. When some say that the knocking is the king’s messenger, the others once again laugh, saying the sounds are just the wind. Later, when they are disturbed in the dead of night by a great sound, people think it is thunder. Some say it is the wheels of the king’s chariot, but no one heeds them except to murmur drowsily, ‘it must be the rumbling of clouds’. Before long, though, while it is still dark and the people are still asleep, there comes the sound of the drum and there is no mistaking the clear voice crying, ‘Wake up! Delay not!’ Some are quick to shout, ‘Lo, there is the king’s flag!’ This time no one doubts, sleep deserting the sleepers in their shame. All know that there is no time to lose. They begin asking one another: ‘Where is the throne to seat him? Oh, shame! Oh utter shame! Where is the hall, the decorations?’ In the midst of all this anxious chatter they hear someone say,

‘Vain this cry! Greet him with empty hands, lead him into thy rooms all bare!’
 Open the doors, let the conch-shells be sounded! *In the depth of the night has come the king of our dark, dreary house.*
 The thunder roars in the sky. The darkness shudders with lightning. Bring out the tattered piece of mat and spread it in the courtyard. With the storm has come of a sudden our king of the fearful night. (LI, emphasis added)

This Indian version of the experience of God breaking through the night of sleep—is it not evocative of the revelation of God to individuals such as Abraham and Jacob (Genesis 15:12–18; 28:11–17), or to the Hebrews passing through the wilderness (Exodus 13:21–22; Wisdom 10:17; 18:14–15), or to the shepherds at the night when their Saviour was born (Luke 2:8–14)? May we not then be bold enough to hope for God’s coming while we are asleep, especially if we have kept eagerly awake and prayed long enough, only to sleep away in our very longing for God, or even in spite of it? In this vein Tagore wrote:

The night is nearly spent waiting for him in vain. I fear lest in the morning he suddenly come to my door when I have fallen asleep wearied out. Oh friends, leave the way open to him—forbid him not.
 If the sound of his steps does not wake me, do not try to rouse me, I pray. I wish not to be called from my sleep by the clamorous choir of birds, by the riot of wind at the festival of morning light. Let me sleep undisturbed even if my lord comes of a sudden to my door. (XLVII)

Can sleep, then, become a sort of spiritual exercise, unusual though it may be, to dispose us to God’s gracious coming? After all, is not our love and longing thus ‘stilled into worship’?¹⁰ Can sleep of a certain kind serve as a gateway for God to enter into the altar of our quiet self and being? Can we not, then, exult with Tagore in his ecstasy?

Ah, my sleep, precious sleep, which only waits for his touch to vanish. Ah, my closed eyes that would open their lids only to the light of his smile when he stands before me like a dream emerging from darkness of sleep. (XLVII)

¹⁰ Tagore, *Lover’s Gift and Crossing*, XIV, 56.

Longing for a Divine Tryst in Sleep

What is most important in all prayer is the desire for prayer. And so Tagore could ask: 'Light, oh where is the light? Kindle it with the burning fire of desire!' (XXVII) In the absence of even a flicker of that desire, he could indeed wish for death: 'Ah, death were better by far for thee!' The human desire for God and prayer is the reverse side of God's desire for every human and all humanity. Like all passionate desires, the mutual desire of God and humans shows itself intensely at certain times and in certain places. But, obviously, they are not at the same level—human desire is always falling short of its own lofty ideals and aspirations, and so is inclined to be frustrated and self-accusatory even while knowing and acknowledging the faithfulness of God's desire. Tagore was enviably privileged to unveil the precious secret of God's unwavering desire as he contrasted the partners in the meeting between human and divine:



Brooding, by Rabindranath Tagore

Misery knocks at thy door, and her message is that thy lord is wakeful, and he calls thee to the love-tryst through the darkness of the night. (XXVII)

If this tryst of prayer has to begin, understandably enough, in a wakeful preparatory moment, it is pursued through the privileged night moments of sleep, filled with sweet desires and holy dreams of love and union. It is not without reason that a psalmist could voice his longing for God thus: 'God gives to his loved one in sleep' (Psalm 127:2).¹¹ What, one

¹¹ This is the literal translation. See *The New Jerusalem Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 947, n. 127b.

could ask, is given? But who could say whatever is given? Tagore's answer has a ring of truth: 'I know not what this is that stirs in me—I know not its meaning' (XXVII). But what he does know is the ardour of hope that the lamp of love will be kindled, thanks to the love-tryst of the night!

Making the Most of God's Night Visitation

It may take time to shed our inhibitions and open our hearts to the unsuspected grace of God's night-time tryst. But the more we become familiar with and open to the surprising advances of God in the intimacy of night, the more receptive we become to such quiet visitations, and the more we learn to be cooperative with God's desire for us to bring to perfection the desire for God that God has instilled in us in the first place! More simply, knowing God's intimate dealings with us in our sleep we need to grow in a corresponding, if bold, response. Tagore shows the way as he prays when he is still awake:

If the day is done, if birds sing no more, if the wind has
flagged tired, then draw the veil of darkness thick upon me,
even as thou has wrapt the earth with the coverlet of sleep
and tenderly closed the petals of the drooping lotus at dusk.
From the traveller ... whose strength is exhausted, remove
shame and poverty, and renew his life like a flower under
the cover of thy kindly light. (XXIV)

If Tagore has known to keep vigil for his God, he has also known in that very vigil how God keeps vigil for him. And so, there are times when he foregoes his vigil and prepares himself to pray in sleep as he composes himself with the song:

In the night of weariness let me give myself to sleep
without struggle, resting my trust upon thee.
Let me not force my flagging spirit into a poor preparation
for thy worship. (XXV)

He joyously responds to a divine rhythm that follows the circadian rhythm, affirming: 'It is thou who drawest the veil of night upon the tired eyes of the day to renew its sight in a fresher gladness of awakening'.

Longing Fulfilled, but Not Fully

For all the assurance of finding God in sleep and praying in sleep, there is also a latent, lingering longing because of missing God in sleep! So Tagore complains:

He came and sat by my side but I woke not. What a cursed sleep it was, O miserable me!
 He came when the night was still; he had his harp in his hands, and my dreams became resonant with its melodies. Alas, why are my nights all thus lost? Ah, why do I ever miss his sight whose breath touches my sleep? (XXVI)

This is not unlike the unfulfilled longing of Moses who, for all his familiarity with God, was never to see God's face, for the simple reason that the very majesty of God would strike him dead. Tagore cannot help but express a similar sadness as he prays, all awake: 'On many an idle day have I grieved over lost time'. Still he knows better than to falter with that grief and presses on with his prayer in surprising calm:

But it is never lost, my lord. Thou hast taken every moment of my life in thine own hands.
 Hidden in the heart of things thou art nourishing seeds into sprouts, buds into blossoms, and ripening flowers into fruitfulness.
 I was tired and sleeping on my idle bed and imagined all work had ceased. In the morning I woke up and found my garden full with wonders of flowers. (LXXXI)

Could God be with us less and be less intimate with us when we lie down to sleep in sweet abandonment to the omnipresent God who slumbers not (Psalm 121:4)? If anyone doubts, it is only necessary to look at 'The sleep that flits on baby's eyes' or 'The smile that flickers on baby's lips' and ask from where else and how else could it come (LXI).

Synthesis of Praying and Sleeping

And so, finally, we reach a synthesis of the double experience of praying and sleeping. Tagore acknowledged it to God thus:

I did not know that I had thy touch before it was dawn.
The news has slowly reached me through my sleep, and I open my eyes with its surprise of tears.
 The sky seems full of whispers for me and my limbs are bathed with songs.
 My heart bends in worship like a dew-laden flower, and I feel the flood of my life rushing to the endless.¹²

¹² Tagore, *Lover's Gift and Crossing*, XXXVIII, 68 (emphasis added).

One explanation of the synthesis of prayer in sleep, or vice versa, may be found in a snatch of a conversation between the physicist David Bohm and the philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti.

Bohm: To reach the unconscious you've to have an action which doesn't directly appeal to the conscious.

Krishnamurti: Yes. That is affection, that is love. When you talk to my waking conscious, it is hard, clever, subtle, brittle. And you penetrate that, penetrate it with your look, with your affection, with all the feeling you have. That operates, not anything else'.¹³

But who can most penetrate into our unconscious with love as God does, and that in our sleep?¹⁴ Does this not bring us back to Rahner? And so we come full circle to enjoy the biblical charm of prayer.

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¹³ Jiddu Krishnamurti, *The Awakening of Intelligence* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1986), 538.

¹⁴ An earlier broaching of the subject was my 'Praying through Sleep', *Review for Religious* (July–August 2000).

EXODUS

A Journey through Sickness

Oonagh Walker

IN THE GOSPELS we hear of Jesus, especially in the early, exciting days of his ministry, ‘curing every disease and every sickness’ (Matthew 9:35) among the people, in most cases simply with a word or a touch. Occasionally, however, he pauses before healing and puts a strange question to those who have approached him. ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ (Matthew 20:32) he asks two blind men. Or, to a man who has been an invalid for 38 years, he says, ‘Do you want to be made well?’ (John 5:6) On one occasion, even more surprisingly, before dealing with the man’s physical condition, he tells a paralytic that his sins are forgiven (Matthew 9:2).

In these encounters, it seems as if Jesus is asking those he heals for some self-scrutiny before he can release them from their sickness. With the blind men, is he challenging them to face up to what their *true* desire is and to put it into words? With the invalid at the Sheep Gate, is he urging him to consider whether he is really prepared for what may be a difficult journey out of his infirmity after all these years? And is he, in the case of the paralytic, perhaps offering release from a sense of inner guilt related to the man’s paralysis?

With his deep insight into the human heart and mind, Jesus will have known that, in every case, the healing he was giving would be the beginning of a journey away from the suffering self, its neediness and its dependence on others, to a new perception of the person’s identity and place in the world. The Gospels only give a few glimpses of what happened afterwards to the many individuals Jesus healed—a grateful leper, a jubilant Bartimaeus glorifying God, a woman freed from diabolical possession who became his most faithful disciple—but for all of them there must have been a difficult trek back to normality, with the memory of their amazing release perhaps fading with time.

Sickness is an evil but, like other evils, it can also have a strangely beguiling aspect. When I was young, I spent some time in a tuberculosis

sanatorium, and we patients were strictly forbidden to discuss our illness with each other. The doctors knew all too well how patients can fall in love with their sickness—how they can begin to find their identity as invalids, even beginning to envy those who have more impressive symptoms than themselves and to begrudge the extra attention this brings them. Even when they are well on the road to recovery, they may find themselves, like the Israelites, looking back to the ‘Egypt’ of their illness and hankering for its small comforts and securities.

Nowadays we tend to keep sickness at a distance: we medicalise it and push it off to hospital, or we romanticise it and make tender enquiries about the sick and about those who care for them—and we promise to pray for them, rather as we do for the Holy Souls. But those who suffer from prolonged illness, and those who have the exhausting task of caring for them, know how fraught with its own particular temptations and spiritual frailty chronic sickness can be. Even a saint, Thérèse of Lisieux, could regret the fretfulness and impatience she sometimes felt: ‘How little it takes to lose control of oneself! I would not have believed this before.’ And, as she journeyed towards death, she found no consolation in prayer: ‘One would have to travel through this black tunnel to understand its darkness’.¹



Thérèse of Lisieux in August 1897

¹ St Thérèse of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St Thérèse of Lisieux*, translated by John Clarke (Washington, DC: ICS, 1996), 265, 212.

Leaving aside the experience of chronic illness, even a sudden accident or a sickness that comes out of the blue can turn your world upside down, but can also bring spiritual graces that enable you to see yourself and your role in the world in a new light. The writings of Julian of Norwich and St Ignatius give accounts of remarkable revelations and a world-shaking conversion brought about by unexpected sickness. However, on a much more modest scale, any period of illness can be a time of reorientation and enlightenment for anyone and it can lead to a surprising spiritual journey.

I look back on the three weeks I spent in hospital last year as the most significant period in my own spiritual life. I had a very resistant form of pneumonia; my temperature was dangerously high and I knew I might be dying. Yet my mind was crystal clear. I had never before experienced such a heightened sense of awareness. I was conscious not just of my own condition but also of the other patients around me—all of them apparently very ill—and I studied the different ways in which they were coping (or not).

On my first evening, it seemed imperative to me that I must learn from what was an unusual experience for me in recent years. In a light-hearted moment, I imagined myself painting the words ‘Know Thyself!’ in big letters round the walls of the ward, rather like those at Belshazzar’s Feast. At this early stage, I felt that sickness was an adventure—something I could cope with and even turn to my advantage—psychologically, I confess, rather than spiritually. But such self-importance did not survive the barrage of anguish and helplessness that was to follow. In the course of three weeks I made a long journey through what I called the Valleys of Death, of Purgation and finally, of Consolation—a pilgrim’s progress. It was a very strange and intense journey, and I was at no stage conscious of plotting or constructing the thoughts or images: they just came, through no effort on my part, and they surprised me.

As I have mentioned, the three weeks were divided roughly into three dominant states of mind: first, of distress, guilt and a feeling of captivity; then, of a gradual purgation of my self-absorption and a rueful acceptance of personal frailty; finally, to feelings of freedom, of gratitude and of being loved beyond my deserving.

At the stage I have called the Valley of Death, it was as if I were travelling through a harsh wilderness. My mind was filled with biblical images and phrases: the psalmist’s ‘desolate pit’, the ‘miry bog’ in which there is no foothold, the snares and entrapments. In this sick state of mind, I found myself dwelling on past mistakes, full of self-blame. I tried

to pray, but the familiar words seemed mechanical and meaningless. Yet, it was one of those biblical phrases that brought me to an understanding of some purpose to all this distress. It was the image in Isaiah where God speaks of testing Israel in ‘the furnace of affliction’ (Isaiah 48:10; KJV) which suggested that suffering could be like a refining fire and could lead to a purging of the sick ego. This conviction came to me one night when I was feeling completely trapped in a misery that increased the more I thought about it.

By dwelling on my suffering, I was making it much worse

On that particular night, I was feeling beside myself with distress and I prayed for a trick. A strange word to use but that is what I cried out for: ‘Please, give me a trick!’ I realised that, by dwelling on my suffering, I was making it much worse. It was as if I were caught in a net and, in my struggle for release, I was in fact entangling myself even more—like a frog I once found in the garden, caught in a mesh I had put over the strawberries. In trying to free itself, it had become ever more entrapped, so that it looked like a crocheted purse. It took me half an hour to cut it free with a pair of nail scissors but, once released, the creature leapt gladly into the pond and swam away.

That is the difference between animal and human suffering: animals undoubtedly suffer but humans do not just suffer—they *think* about their suffering. This consciousness doubles the suffering and then, because they struggle against this thinking, it triples, quadruples and so on ... I felt trussed just like the frog and I knew I was powerless to do anything to free myself, so I prayed for some strategy—a ‘trick’! And immediately, in my head I heard a clear male voice say, *Not your story!* It was not judgmental or rebuking, just cool common sense—as if it were perfectly obvious what I had to do. I have heard this calm, male voice at other times in my life, always quite unexpectedly and always in the same matter-of-fact style. And the spiritual advice it gives is uncompromising but sensible.

Now I realised that the only way to get free from the trap was to drag myself away from my own distress, which was completely dominating my consciousness, and turn to the suffering of others. It was incredibly difficult to do. I turned first to Jesus in Gethsemane, but that was too overwhelming. How could I even begin to compare anything I was suffering with that? Instead, I thought of the dying Keats fighting for breath in a small room in Rome, denied the love and the poetry that should have been his. Then I thought of Thérèse in her cloister enduring

the hideous medical treatments of the time and feeling abandoned by God. And so, each night of that week, I travelled through time visiting scenes of suffering. The most distressing came last, when I visualised my own first baby boy, many years ago, isolated and neglected in a busy hospital, awaiting long-delayed treatment; and then the second, stillborn, son, who had struggled for eight months for a life he was never to have.

These memories filled me at first with grief and revulsion at my own self-pity at that time. Yet, it was the thought of their suffering—not my own but so close to home—that finally released me from my self-absorption and brought me to a deeper understanding of the vast range of human suffering. I had first to accept my weakness and my limitations—but without the fruitless self-blame that had been paralyzing me—and then, trustingly, ask for the grace to overcome them. And then I would be able to make my exodus into new territory.

This began with a vivid visualisation: it was as if I had been transported into space and I was looking down on all the grief and horror that we are daily hearing and reading about in the news. I began to feel a deep compassion—not mere pity and certainly not despair—or rather sorrow, but mixed with a sense of some greater purpose behind it all. I have wondered since whether this cosmic view of human suffering was perhaps prompted by St Ignatius' Contemplation for the Second Week where he sees how the Divine Persons 'gazed on the whole surface or circuit of the world, full of people' (Exx 102). And Julian of Norwich's parable of the Lord and his Servant perhaps also contributed to the image: how the Lord looks down on his helpless servant 'gently and kindly, with great sorrow and pity'.² Teilhard too sees 'Providence across the age as brooding over the world in ceaseless effort to spare that world its bitter wounds and to bind up its hurts'.³ It seems presumptuous to suggest that I was, as it were, peeping over the shoulder of the compassionate Lord, but it seemed at the time that I was being granted a larger vision and it brought with it a sense of consolation.

After this, although I was still quite sick and feverish, I felt a deep peace. I was convinced that friends were praying for me and that their

² Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, translated by Elizabeth Spearing (London: Penguin, 1998), long text n. 51, 116.

³ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu*, translated by Bernard Wall and others (New York: Harper Collins, 1957), 84.

prayer was carrying me, rather as the four friends carried the paralyzed man. And prayer seemed like a physical force which surged out well beyond me and my situation to the ‘unsleeping’ Church of the old hymn, where ‘the voice of prayer is never silent’.⁴ This experience was followed by a series of very clear pictures which came quite spontaneously. It was rather like watching a film, but also being part of it. In the first picture, I saw myself standing in the centre of a bare stage in an empty theatre. I was trying to pray and I knew that Our Lord and Our Lady were standing in the wings on either side, very attentive, but with no intention of joining me. In exasperation, I called out, ‘Well, at least send one of your friends!’, and immediately, as in a film, the scene ‘cut’ to a rocky river bank in Spain, where I found myself sitting next to a bedraggled Teresa of Ávila who, having climbed out of the water, was laughingly telling what it is like to be the Lord’s friend. There was a sense of here-and-nowness about the encounter: I did not see her as some historic figure from sixteenth-century Spain, nor as a glorious saint enthroned in heaven, but as a companion to whom I could talk freely.

The days that followed were like a guided retreat in which I was joined by the friends I believed had been praying for me. The saints, Teresa, Thérèse and Catherine Labouré, were our spiritual directors and they led us to new ways of praying the rosary—Teresa vividly pictorial, Thérèse gently meditative, while Catherine Labouré, always reticent in life, somehow silently conveyed the thoughts of Mary during each mystery. (This was the nearest I came to Our Lady at this time. She was mainly a kindly absence.) The intimacy and quietness in these sessions was nevertheless far from inward-looking but always brought a feeling of expansion away from the purely personal.

There were other small consolations throughout that week: one evening I felt Jesus as a brotherly presence and, clearly feeling very childish that night, I asked him to tell me a story as my brother used to do when we were little. God meets us where we are—so he did! I was especially grateful at this time to recollect an image which had come to me years ago when one day I had suddenly seen myself as a single stitch in a vast cosmic tapestry—infinitesimally small and rather drab in colour, but nevertheless necessary to the whole design. I had almost forgotten this

⁴ See John Ellerton’s hymn ‘The Day Thou Gavest, Lord Is Ended’ in George William Rutler, *The Stories of Hymns: The History behind 100 of Christianity’s Greatest Hymns* (Irontdale: EWTN, 2016), 297–299.

image but now it was restored to me with even deeper meaning. I now saw the tapestry not just as the entirety of human life but as the great web of being, the whole of Creation filled with the omnipresence of God. Seeing myself as of such microscopic littleness might have been demeaning, but instead was hugely affirmative, since I knew myself as a beloved part of something infinitely greater than myself.

Like many things of a spiritual nature, the memory of such experiences tends to diminish in the light of common day. For some time afterwards, I felt an urge to write it all down so as to retain the effects of the painful examination of conscience during the first and second weeks, and also to preserve the sense of enlightenment and blessing I eventually knew. But I shied away from the attempt, partly because it seemed too personal to put into writing but also for fear of it all being a delusion or nothing more than the effects of a high temperature. Although my experiences were not of the same order as St Teresa's, I can sympathize with her constant anxieties that her visions, voices and revelations were delusions of the devil. Yet her litmus test (given to her by her Jesuit spiritual guides) for the genuineness of such 'favours' or 'consolations' was the sense of peace and deeper understanding that accompanied them. When I suppress my qualms and scruples, I can still recall the consoling tranquillity of heart and mind and a deeper and wider sense of the praying Church and of the whole created world that I eventually experienced.

I would not readily volunteer to repeat this journey out of sickness but I nevertheless feel a deep gratitude for the experience and for what I have been allowed to retain. At rare moments, I can again sense Mary as



the unseen observer and Jesus as the fraternal companion; but much more frequently I am able to renew the friendship with the saints of my childhood—when they seemed as familiar to me as my family and the neighbours. The ‘communion of saints’ is no longer just a doctrinal abstraction but a warm and living fellowship. But the most practical and unfailing benefit I have received is that when I find myself full of self-regard or caught up in some egotistic scenario—and that happens all too often!—I can hear again that calm, non-judgmental voice saying, half-humorously, *Not your story!*, and I welcome it.

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THE SCIENCE OF AFFECTIONS

The Ignatian Spiritual Exercises through Thomas Aquinas

Jade Marie Lasiste

THE DECLARED PURPOSE of St Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises is: 'To master oneself and order one's life, without being swayed by an affection which might be disordered' (Exx 21).¹ The identification of affection as crucial to the ordering of a person's life highlights its importance in the Ignatian tradition of discernment. But what are disordered affections, and what does it mean to order them?

Modern dictionary definitions treat *affection* as a synonym for *feeling*, *emotion* or *attachment*. But in the time of Ignatius, emotions did not exist as a psychological category; even today, there is no consensus on the theory of emotions.² To reduce affections to emotions in a contemporary reading of the *Spiritual Exercises* is thus a gross simplification. Fully to appreciate the sophistication underlying the practicality of the Exercises, it is necessary to consider the medieval discourse on the theology and psychology of appetites, passions, affections and virtues.

At the time of its writing, St Thomas Aquinas' *Treatise on the Passions* in the *Prima secundae* of the *Summa theologiae* 'probably constituted the longest sustained discussion of the passions ever written', synthesizing and eclipsing the ideas of major thinkers preceding him.³ As Ignatius studied theology at the University of Paris under the guidance of the Dominicans at Saint-Jacques,⁴ it is likely that it was there where he encountered the *Summa*. While there is no evidence as to which pages Ignatius actually

¹ Translated by Timothy P. Muldoon, in 'Ordered Affection: Sexuality and Ignatian Spirituality', *The Way*, 49/1 (January 2010), 7–22, here 10.

² See John Dryden, 'Passions, Affections, and Emotions: Methodological Difficulties in Reconstructing Aquinas's Philosophical Psychology', *Literature Compass*, 13 (2016), 343–350.

³ Nicholas E. Lombardo, *The Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion* (Washington, DC: Catholic U. of America P, 2011), 1 (subsequent references in the text).

⁴ *Autobiography*, n.93.

read, it was during his stay that the Dominicans started to restructure their curriculum to focus on Aquinas, and Ignatius is believed to have had a Thomist-orientated education.⁵ Aquinas' lasting influence on Ignatius is evident: he would later advise that all scholastics in the Society of Jesus be instructed in the works of Aquinas (*Constitutions*, IV.4.1 [464]).

Accordingly, I propose to compare Aquinas' conceptual framework for the affections in the *Summa theologiae* with Ignatius' own account in the *Spiritual Exercises*. I hope to demonstrate the coherence of this antecedent text with the methods that Ignatius employs, in and beyond the *Spiritual Exercises*, to order the affections towards finding and ultimately resting in God.

The Affections and Passions According to Aquinas

In his book *The Logic of Desire*, Nicholas Lombardo revisits the *Treatise of the Passions* and offers an exposition and analysis of Aquinas' thought on the passions and affections. While Aquinas provides no explicit definition of affection, Lombardo writes: 'For Aquinas, the category of affection denotes a class of psychological phenomena that includes both movements of the sense appetite and movements of the intellectual appetite, that is, the will' (75). Passions are a subset of affections and are movements of the 'sense appetite' only (20, 76): 'A passion is a physiological and psychological response to the apprehension of a sensible good or a sensible evil, that is, an object that is known through the senses, and judged to be either good or evil' (20).⁶

Defining 'appetite', Lombardo translates Aquinas: 'Appetite is ... an inclination toward something ... that is both similar and suited to that which desires it' (26).⁷ There are three kinds of appetite: the natural appetite, the sense appetite and the intellectual or rational appetite (will). The *natural appetite* is an inclination towards something 'only by natural disposition' (31).⁸ In the case of the *sense appetite*, the object or 'good' is apprehended by the body; for the *intellectual appetite*, it is something mentally comprehensible (31).

⁵ See George E. Ganss, *Ignatius of Loyola: The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works* (New York: Paulist, 1991), 37.

⁶ Aquinas also recognises affections of the intellectual appetite alone, referring to them as simple or intellectual affections.

⁷ *Summa theologiae*, 1.2, q.8, a.1.

⁸ *Summa theologiae*, 1, q. 1, a. 59.

Human beings are particularly special because they possess all three appetites. But the appetites are not mutually exclusive, and their objects are not necessarily the same:

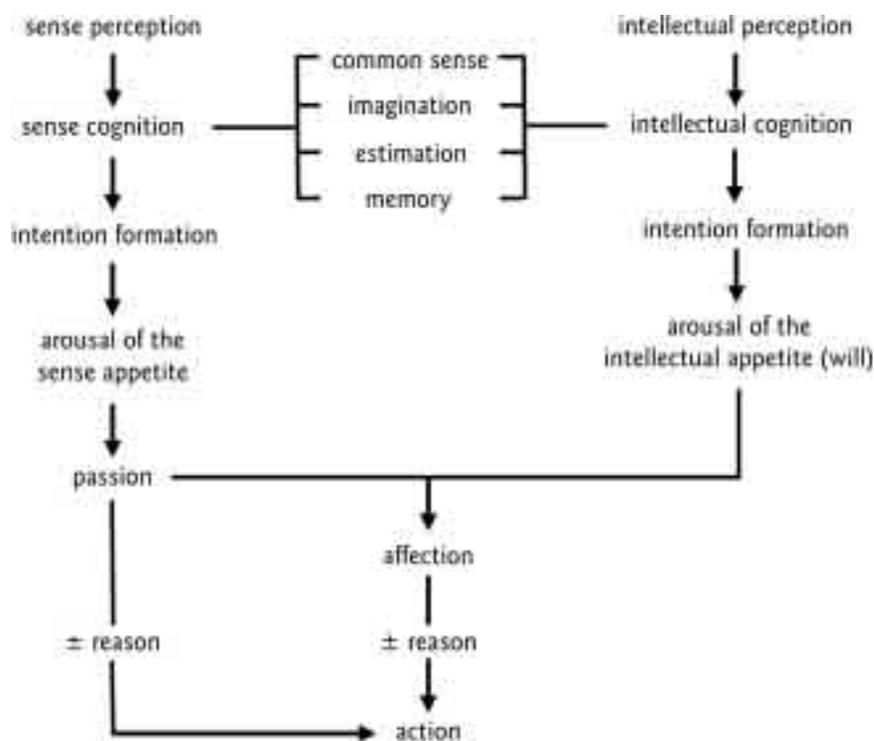
When they are operative, they influence and sometimes compete with each other, as when they incline us toward mutually incompatible goods. It is this conflux of different appetites that makes us complicated. (33)

The inclinations of the sense appetite, however, are subject to the superior intellectual appetite when it comes to choices or actions. And the intellectual appetite is itself subject to reason; hence, the sense appetite is commanded by reason through the influence of the intellectual appetite (94–98). Even so, the appetites respond to reason freely and the passions retain some degree of autonomy: ‘The sense appetite is oriented toward reason’s guidance, but it responds to reason on its own terms’ (95).

A pathway may be traced from perception to action in accordance with this analysis (22–25). Perceptions can be gathered by thinking about an abstraction with the intellect, or by using the corporeal senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. Their object is appraised by the faculties of common sense, imagination, estimation and memory to form an ‘intention’—a ‘perception colored by cognitive evaluation’ (24). This intention arouses the appetites and, in response, an affection is generated, either of attraction or repulsion towards the object: a good attracts; while evil repulses. The process terminates in action, or the lack thereof, with or without the permission or the influence of reason. All these events are stored as memories, available for retrieval upon a repeat encounter and contributing to apprehension as necessary.



St Thomas Aquinas, by *Fra Bartolomeo*, c.1513



The pathway from perception to action in Aquinas

The sense appetite is further analysed into the *concupiscible* and *irascible* powers (54–74). The concupiscible power evaluates objects based on their desirability and hence focuses on the presence or absence of objects. Aquinas identifies *love* and *hatred* as concupiscible passions. Love leads respectively to the *desire* for an object that is absent and *pleasure* in an object that is present. In the same way, hatred leads to *aversion* from an absent object and *sorrow* for a present one. When the concupiscible power is threatened, the irascible power is aroused: the irascible passions ‘are second-order desires and aversions that defend the inclinations of the concupiscible passions’ (51). These apprehend objects according to their usefulness and the difficulty of obtaining them, thereby inspiring movement towards or away from those objects. Hope and despair, fear and daring, and anger constitute the irascible passions. Love and hope are the first of the movements drawn from the concupiscible and irascible powers, respectively, from which all the other passions and affections are derived. The intellectual appetite does not have irascible and concupiscible powers.

Through reason, it is in itself both irascible, in that it repels evil, and concupiscible in that it desires good.⁹

Aquinas differs from his predecessors, both pagans and Christians, in his optimism regarding the passions and affections. 'Pleasure perfects actions', according to Aquinas; thus he deems sexual intercourse to have been not only possible but more pleasurable in the Garden of Eden, where man and nature are unblemished (36, 42). This contrasts with the negative view of sexual desires and pleasures held by his Franciscan contemporary St Bonaventure and the earlier theologians St Augustine, St Justin and St Clement of Alexandria.¹⁰

In medieval medicine, for which the writings of the Greek philosopher and physician Galen hold the ultimate authority, the soul's passions needed to be diagnosed and cured with reason to render human beings free from them.¹¹ Galen characterizes grief as 'an evil of the soul, just as pain is an evil of the body'.¹² But Aquinas argues that passions and affections are not 'diseases and disturbances of the soul' (40).¹³ Aquinas' confidence that these are fundamentally good is based on a simple but powerful doctrine: God created them. As such, they are naturally orientated towards what completes and perfects humanity: that human beings may flourish through the development of virtues and realise their purpose (*telos*).¹⁴ The supreme objective of human beings is to be with their Creator; in God, humanity is perfect and complete (17, 37–42). Because God bestowed the appetites on humanity, and with them the capacity to feel, Aquinas is certain that it is through these that God communicates and directs people to God (43). Therefore, even in a world of temporal goods, when confronted with the infinite and absolute goodness of God, human beings will inevitably choose God and will no longer be attracted to lesser goods (29–30).

Original sin does not change the positive nature of passions and affections; the fall of humanity does not automatically condemn it to evil. What the fall effectively does is to isolate human beings from the sanctifying grace through which God dwells in them. Consequently, they

⁹ *Summa theologiae*, 1, q. 82, a. 5.

¹⁰ Muldoon, 'Ordered Affection', 9.

¹¹ Galen, *On the Passions and Errors of the Soul*, translated by Paul Harkins (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1963), 44.

¹² Galen, *Passions and Errors*, 54.

¹³ *Summa theologiae*, 1. 2, q. 24, a. 2.

¹⁴ Aquinas deviates from Bonaventure on this matter: whereas Bonaventure declares that the virtues reside only in the intellect and the will, Aquinas states that the virtues are in the sense appetite.

lose their inner harmony and are left to deal with nature by themselves. Their intentions are left in disarray; their appetites are more susceptible to conflicts; and their reason is impaired. Like a wounded soldier, a person is weakened and, when confronted with evil manifest through sensible matter, less able to resist temptations (118–124). To be healed, sanctifying grace must be restored, infused into the soul through the sacraments of baptism and penance. Sanctifying grace transforms the appetites, affections and reason towards rehabilitation (125–128). It also grants the gifts of the Holy Spirit which, in cooperation with human agency, foster a *habitus* or disposition towards holiness (102) and promote the instillation and growth of the virtues (132).

The Affections According to Ignatius

In the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius distinguishes how ‘we use acts of the intellect in reasoning and of the will in eliciting acts of the affections’ (Exx 3). He also writes of ‘that love which moves me and brings me to choose’ something (Exx 184; see Exx 338). These words echo Aquinas’ language of the affections, acts of the will, and the movements that inspire choice.

It is worth noting that Ignatius, like Aquinas, considers the moral status of the affections to be contingent on the intentional objects estimated as either good or evil and, in terms of the irascible powers, with respect to the movements inspired. This can be seen throughout the *Spiritual Exercises*, which aim to engage the affections in the exercitant’s discernment of God’s will. Two subtle differences must be emphasized, however. First, given an array of legitimate options that one can desire, the actual intentional objects matter less than the affirmation that it is God’s will that these objects be desired (Exx 16).

Second, Ignatius deems motive to contribute significantly to the merit of an affection, which may be seen especially from his letters. He once reprimanded a Jesuit priest for giving rosaries to a group of women who were ‘attached to him’ because the charity was ‘imperfect’ when mixed with ‘human affection’.¹⁵ In another letter, instead of applauding a Jesuit brother for his desire to study, Ignatius reminds him to exercise ‘charity

¹⁵ Ignatius of Loyola to Lorenzo Bresciani, 16 May 1556, in *Ignatius of Loyola: Letters and Instructions*, edited and translated by Martin E. Palmer, John W. Padberg and John L. McCarthy (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 664.

and humility', for not all members of the Society can be learned or be priests.¹⁶ The importance of motives underlying affections is not so clear in Aquinas (109–110).

But what does Ignatius say that ordered affections should be like? With relation to God, affections must be *reverent* (Exx 3). With relation to election, or decision-making, they 'should descend from above, from the love of God; in such a way that ... the love ... for the matter being chosen is solely for the sake of our Creator and Lord' (Exx 184). Affections must be from God, in God and for God.

This is consistent with Ignatius' statement of humanity's *telos* in the Principle and Foundation (Exx 23): 'Human beings are created to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord, and by means of doing this to save their souls'. Ignatius expounds how everything else in creation was made to help humanity achieve this purpose; consequently, human beings must be prudent in either utilising or abstaining from these resources. They must not desire anything specific—'health rather than sickness, wealth rather than poverty, honor rather than dishonor' (Exx 23)—but only that which elevates them towards this end. Even the motivation for what they desire, Ignatius highlights, must be 'only the service, honor and glory of the Divine Majesty' (Exx 16). Therefore, it is imperative that affections must be entirely dedicated to God—ordered from their roots in desire to the acts they inspire—if humanity is to attain the fruition of its *telos*.

***Affections
must be
entirely
dedicated to
God***

Timing is also essential in the ordering of the affections: the pilgrim must act now. The meditation on the Three Kinds of Men states that to find peace and salvation one must be rid of any attachment to a thing that has been wrongly acquired long before the hour of death (Exx 153). In addition, if the sequence of meditations and contemplations in the Spiritual Exercises is to be taken seriously, affections must be ordered before deciding on the matter at stake (Exx 170–174), or at least before making an election.

From Ignatius' writings, it can be concluded that affections are ordered if, and only if, they are for the glory of God, and they are for the individual's salvation and his or her union with God. Any affection that does not fit these criteria is disordered and so must be rectified.

¹⁶ Ignatius of Loyola to Giovanni Battista, 23 May 1556, in *Ignatius of Loyola: Letters and Instructions*, 670.

Ordering the Affections

In the presence of any disordered affection, what does Ignatius suggest? His answer is unequivocal: if someone ‘feels an affection or inclination to something in a disordered way’ (Exx 16), that person should do everything possible to feel and act to the contrary, and earnestly ask God to arrange his or her inclinations so as not to desire anything unless God wishes it.

This twofold approach to ordering affections is fascinating, as it touches on the versatility of what it means to *order*. To establish order is to put everything in its proper sequence and, as a corollary, to *prioritise*. Ignatius’ approach is to put God first and hold everything else, including his own desires and affections, as subservient to God. Through this surrender, he reorientates his life towards his natural *telos* and, paradoxically, becomes free to flourish. In addition, to order is also to *command*, in this case to exert authority over untoward impulses. By action to the contrary (*agere contra*), Ignatius voluntarily imposes his will on the sense appetite. *Agere contra*, as a recourse to train the affections and to control the ego, is highlighted at least twice more in the *Spiritual Exercises*: when exercitants are tempted to shorten the time dedicated to prayer (Exx 13) and when they find themselves averse to desiring poverty (Exx 157).¹⁷

Aside from strengthening the will in this way, Ignatius has a further strategy to achieve the same end: instructing the flesh through external penance, such as ‘abstain[ing] from what is ordinarily suitable’ in food, sleep and comfort (Exx 83–85), ‘to keep our bodily nature obedient to reason’ (Exx 87). By *agere contra* and external penance, the lower appetite is actively subjugated by the higher, in accordance with Aquinas’ framework.

The influence of this framework can also be seen in the structure of the *Spiritual Exercises*. The First Week begins with exercitants reflecting on the history of sin (Exx 45–54) and on their personal sinfulness (Exx 55–61), the fitting conclusion of their reflection being a wish to repent and overwhelming gratitude to the Lord for the opportunity to do so. These preoccupations inspire the affections of sorrow and hope. Sorrow, a concupiscible passion, is provoked by the evil of our unworthiness. As this sorrow moves us to repent not only in words but in deeds (Exx 230–231), it is shown to be derived from genuine love of God (Exx 316). Hope

¹⁷ See Ruth Holgate, ‘Growing into God’, *The Way*, 42/3 (July 2003), 7–18, here 17.

arises, in the midst of wretchedness, from remembering the intercession of the angels and the saints, and the life and strength afforded to humanity by nature (Exx 60). It also recognises the possibility of reconciliation with God and the good inherent in that reunion (Exx 61). In Aquinas' terms, hope is an irascible passion, resulting from the cognition that changing our ways is an arduous task, but is nevertheless possible to achieve with God's grace. Thus the First Week elicits love and hope—the first movements of the concupiscible and irascible powers, respectively, from which all the other affections spring.

The hope of overcoming sinfulness comes from God's forgiveness in the sacrament of confession (reconciliation), which Ignatius recommends should best be undertaken after the First Week and at all events weekly (Exx 44, 18). According to Aquinas, God's sanctifying grace is infused directly into the soul through this sacrament. The acquisition of grace confers the ability, in the midst of temptations, better to order the affections under the rightful rule of reason. Sanctifying grace also instils the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity (125–126). In a letter of 1548, Ignatius echoes these sentiments, writing about how God's grace will help us choose the path 'made clearest to us, as the happiest and most blessed in this life, and wholly directed and ordered to the other everlasting life—whereby we are encompassed and made one with these most holy gifts'. Without these gifts, however, 'our thoughts, words and actions' are 'tainted, cold, and, troubled'.¹⁸

Ignatius takes great care to manage the external senses in setting the stage for the Exercises, as can be seen in his Additions (Exx 73–82, 229), where he gives his recommendations on prayer space, posture and even lighting.



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¹⁸ Ignatius of Loyola to Francisco de Borja, 20 September 1548, in *Ignatius of Loyola: Letters and Instructions*, 255.

Of Aquinas' four methods of cognition (common sense, imagination, estimation and memory), the Exercises make the most use of imagination. The power of the imagination is not to be underestimated; Aquinas states that 'it is impossible for our intellect to understand anything actually, except by turning to the phantasms' (90).¹⁹ Ignatius heightens the imagination by instructing exercitants to use all five bodily senses of sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch in their contemplations (Exx 65–70, 121–125). Through this creativity, both the sense and intellectual appetites are aroused and give rise to affections. The interior knowledge gained through this, with the grace directly requested in colloquy, is to be used so that exercitants can hate the disorder of their actions and so correct themselves (Exx 63).

In the Second to Fourth Weeks, exercitants effectively participate in the life of Christ. The virtues of humility (Exx 116) and obedience (Exx 134), for example, are contemplated not merely by watching the scenes unfold but by sharing the experiences of Christ. This is made clear in a prelude that provides instruction on what the exercitant must ask of God:

What I ask for should be in accordance with the subject matter. For example, in a contemplation on the Resurrection, I will ask for joy with Christ in joy; in a contemplation on the Passion, I will ask for pain, tears, and suffering with Christ suffering. (Exx 48)

Aquinas regards the affections as not only beneficial but necessary for the development of virtues. In light of the beatific knowledge intrinsic to Christ's divinity and because he is without sin, Aquinas considers that his affections are perfectly ordered: "Christ has absolutely no disordered desires", not because he was less human but because he was more human' (212).²⁰ Thus, by partaking in the affections manifest in the life of Christ, through the use of senses and the imagination, the Exercises order affections by following the example of the epitome of humanity and virtue: the Son of God himself.

Habituation and confirmation of the decision to order the affections and to follow God are accomplished in the Exercises through repetition of either the Compositions of Place or their respective themes. The call to

¹⁹ *Summa theologiae*, 1, q.84, a.7.

²⁰ *Summa theologiae*, 3, q.7, a.2.

dwell on moments of former consolation and desolation (Exx 62) or once again to contemplate God's love at the conclusion of the Exercises (Exx 230) applies the cognitive faculty of memory to observe what happens to the intentional objects conceived. The expectation is that, regardless of the possibly altered perspectives or the fresh insights gleaned, the ordered affections remain, are tuned more finely, or perhaps are even reinforced. With repetition, the role of cognition also diminishes, so that there is a transition 'more from head to heart' as ordered affections become more instinctive.²¹ The benefits of repetition confirm Aquinas' thesis that the joy following from the use of reason and the exercise of will strengthens its future use: 'Virtue generates joy because the will attains goods that it desires through virtue, and when the will attains some desired good, the volitional affection of joy necessarily results (hence the proverb: virtue is its own reward)' (107).

Indirect strategies to support the ordering of affections can be found elsewhere in Ignatius' writings. In one of his letters, Ignatius offers his advice to the Jesuit fathers and brothers after learning of their 'holy follies' and 'indiscreet fervor'.²² While commending them for their enthusiasm, Ignatius also warns of its dangers and urges them to focus their energy on study and acquiring knowledge. In the scheme of Aquinas, affections, when guided by reason, develop into what is good and naturally fitting (*connaturalitas*) for humanity.²³ Learning is practical as it empowers the intellect and helps support reason over the appetites—particularly the sense appetite, which the young Jesuits had been inciting through self-mortification.

The methods that Ignatius proposes to order the affections can be summarised into two categories: human agency, through *agere contra*, penance and prayer; and God's love, through sanctifying grace, the theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In Aquinas' terms, God's tremendous grace overflows into the reason and the will, enabling mastery of the appetites (136). When a human being cooperates with God to train the senses and educate the intellect, their synergistic efforts drive

²¹ David L. Fleming, *Draw Me into Your Friendship: The Spiritual Exercises. A Literal Translation and a Contemporary Reading* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 99.

²² Ignatius of Loyola to the fathers and scholastics at Coimbra, 7 May 1547, in *Ignatius of Loyola: Letters and Instructions*, 172.

²³ Thomas Ryan, 'Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas', *Theological Studies*, 66 (2005), 49–68, here 55.

him or her towards the realisation and growth of the virtues. Thus, perfectly to order the affections means not only to prioritise and command, but also to *harmonize*. The integration of human faculties, united with God's will, is what leads to inner peace (250–251)—an indicator of consolation, according to Ignatius' rule on the discernment of spirits (Exx 316).

Reading Ignatius through the lens of Aquinas' theory of affections illuminates the link between scholastic and mystical piety. The *Treatise on the Passions* provides the anatomy and physiology of the affections, for which the *Spiritual Exercises* offers a prescription of healing. Bridging theory and practice, and utilising the affections as signposts, the Exercises guide exercitants through an ordered life on a journey to the grandest of destinations, their *telos*: an eternal home with God.

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‘WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM HER?’

Women in the Gospel of John

Daniel Kearney

IN AUGUST 2016, after ‘intense prayer and mature reflection’, Pope Francis set up the ‘Study Commission on the Women’s Diaconate’ to study the question of women and the diaconate ‘in the earliest times of the Church’.¹ Many church historians claim there is good evidence that women served as deacons in the early Church. In the Letter to the Romans (16:1), St Paul mentions Phoebe as being a deacon. John Wijngaards, writing in *The Tablet* (8 May 1999), states:

History has left us ample records of the activity of genuine women deacons who flourished mainly in Greece, Asia Minor, Dalmatia, Syria and Palestine, certainly from the third to at least the eighth century until here too, as in the West, menstruation and other taboos eroded it. St Chrysostom at Constantinople had 40 women deacons. We also have many epigraphic inscriptions, such as that of Theodora in Gaul (sixth century) and Sophia in Jerusalem (fourth century) *Here lies the servant and Virgin of Christ, the deacon, the second Phoebe.*²

According to Raymond Brown we should be reflecting upon the Gospel of John ‘when we are discussing new roles for women in the Church today’.³ He acknowledges that there is not much information about church offices in the Fourth Gospel but I think, nonetheless, that there is evidence to illustrate the importance and significance of women, at least in the Johannine community (that is, the early church community in which the Gospel was produced), in the spreading of the gospel message.⁴

¹ See ‘Pope Institutes Commission to Study the Diaconate of Women’, available at http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2016/08/02/pope_institutes_commission_to_study_the_diaconate_of_women/1248731.

² John Wijngaards, ‘When Women Were Deacons’, *The Tablet* (8 May 1999), 622.

³ Raymond Brown, ‘Roles of Women in the Fourth Gospel’, *Theological Studies*, 36/4 (1975), 689.

⁴ Brown, ‘Roles of Women in the Fourth Gospel’, 690.

The Mother of Jesus

‘The joyful face of woman’s salvation.’⁵

Only seven women appear in the Gospel of John: the mother of Jesus; a Samaritan woman; a woman caught in the act of adultery; the sisters of Lazarus, Martha and Mary; Mary of Magdala; and Mary, the wife of Clopas. Each of these women (except for Mary, the wife of Clopas) plays a crucial role in the gospel narrative and in the life of the early Johannine community. But, surprisingly, there is only one example in the whole narrative of Jesus addressing a woman by her name.

This takes place during Jesus’ first appearance after the resurrection, when a rather emotionally distraught Mary of Magdala is frantically searching for his body, which she fears has been removed, most probably stolen, from the tomb. Initially, she mistakes the Risen Lord for a gardener and pleads with him: ‘Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away’ (John 20: 15). Then Jesus says ‘Mary!’ and she knows him (20: 16). ‘He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.’ (John 10: 3)

Until this moment Jesus has only ever used the word ‘woman’ to address his female followers. At the wedding feast at Cana (2: 1–12) when his mother says to him ‘They have no wine’, his reply is ‘Woman, what concern is that to you and to me?’, which seems a rather startling way for a son to respond to his mother. John Marsh sees this as Jesus ‘claiming that the time has come when his actions derive no longer from Mary’s parental guidance and authority but are from his own relationship with his heavenly Father’.⁶ The absence of Mary’s name here and throughout the gospel narrative is a characteristic of John. Some commentators have suggested we must infer that the evangelist is using her presence figuratively to represent, in a highly symbolic situation, the Judaism that ‘bore’ Jesus according to the flesh.⁷

But it is clear from her directive to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you’ (2: 6), that she is fully aware of who her son is and, significantly, of his divine destiny. And, more importantly, it is his mother’s faith in him, at this early stage in his ministry, that facilitates the first *sign* at Cana. Without her presence and faith there is no sign because, until

⁵ Tina Beattie, *Eve’s Pilgrimage: A Woman’s Quest for the City of God* (London: Burns and Oates, 2002), 71.

⁶ John Marsh, *The Gospel of St John* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 144.

⁷ Marsh, *Gospel of St John*, 144.

that moment, his glory had not been seen and the disciples did not believe in him as the Messiah. Mary initiates the sign and, in doing so, she gives further impetus to her son’s public ministry. This necessitates her presence at the wedding feast, whether figuratively or actually.

Jesus uses the same form of address on the cross to entrust his mother to the care of the beloved disciple, ‘Woman, here is your son’ (19:26). Jesus’ use of the word ‘woman’ is suggestive for some commentators of Genesis 3:15 and 20, and



**The Crucifixion with the Virgin and St John,
*French school, fifteenth century***

appears to present the mother of Jesus as the ‘new Eve’ and the spiritual Mother of all the faithful. Tina Beattie writes:

Eve and Mary together represent the redemption of women, for it is only by knowing what it means to be fallen that we can understand what it means to be redeemed. It is as if, in order to represent Mary, the early Church had to construct her opposite out of the shadowy and relatively insignificant figure of the biblical Eve. In some patristic writings, Eve is the face of woman’s sorrow while Mary is the joyful face of woman’s salvation. Mary is the eschatological woman of the new creation, whereas Eve is Everywoman, representing both the promise of fulfilment and the reality of suffering.⁸

The Samaritan Woman

‘With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.’ (Isaiah 12:3)

The Samaritan woman is drawing water from Jacob’s well at the sixth hour—about noon, the hottest part of the day. Water was usually drawn

⁸ Beattie, *Eve’s Pilgrimage*, 71.

from the well in the morning or late evening when it was cooler. Is this a sign that she has been ostracized and excluded from the community by the other women of the town—on account, perhaps, of her immorality, since she has had five husbands and is now living with a man who is not her husband?

According to Kenneth Grayston, the encounter with the Samaritan woman (John 4) 'is, at the simplest, a story about moving from ignorance to disturbing self-knowledge'.⁹ But, more significantly, it is about redemption: in presenting Jesus reaching out to the Samaritan woman the evangelist is clearly showing that Jesus' mission is for all people—including sinners and Samaritans alike. Whatever her status and standing within the community, Jesus sees in this woman someone who is alive to the voice of the 'true bridegroom'. When he asks her to call her husband she replies, 'I have no husband' (4:18). Her openness to Jesus' questioning contrasts with his previous and frustrating encounter with Nicodemus—a stock representative, perhaps, of the Jews as a whole.

Her frank and honest admission of having 'no husband' is significant on a theological level and is, perhaps, at the heart of this encounter at Jacob's well. As previous chapters in this Gospel have illustrated the inadequacies of the Jewish purification rites (Cana), temple worship (cleansing of the Temple) and the priestly caste (Nicodemus), so now attention is turned to the shortcomings of the Samaritan religion. The Samaritan woman's marital history and current status are used to stand for the inadequacies of that religion. The Samaritans' supposed worship of five gods—symbolized by the woman's five husbands—is not true belief.¹⁰

Jesus tells her that the hour has now come when 'the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him' (4:23). Suddenly, the woman says 'I know that Messiah is coming When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.' (4:25) Ironically, Jesus has already told her everything, but now he reveals himself to her as the Messiah. The earthly water is forsaken as she

⁹ Kenneth Grayston, *The Gospel of John* (London: Epworth, 1990), 40.

¹⁰ 2 Kings 17:24 following suggests that the Samaritans had seven gods; the figure of five comes from Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities*, 11.288). See Daniel Rathnakara Sadananda, *The Johannine Exegesis of God: An Exploration into the Johannine Understanding of God* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 240 n.30.

realises what is now being offered to her from the ‘wells of salvation’ and, joyfully, she returns to tell—or perhaps evangelize—the people of the town. The Samaritan woman has been chosen, appointed, by Jesus to reveal his glory to her people and, on the strength of her preaching, many believe in him. She is a missionary, and her ‘preaching’ converts others whom she then leads out to encounter the very source of the good news (4:29–30).

When the disciples return they are ‘astonished that he was speaking to a woman’ (4:27) They have missed the point and Jesus admonishes them, ‘I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour. Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour.’ (4:38) The Samaritan woman at the well had certainly worked for her harvest!

The Adulterous Woman

‘Righteousness and mercy will kiss each other.’ (Psalm 85:10)

This incident was not originally part of the Gospel of John and may not have been added until as late as the third century. It is, however, generally agreed among scholars to be a reliable and authentic story of the oral tradition. Its inclusion in the Gospel was an opportunity for the Early Church to give an example of dominical leniency as well as to emphasize, above all, that Jesus did not come to judge (*to condemn*) but to offer forgiveness to sinners. As we read later in John 8: 15, ‘You judge by human standards; I judge no one’.

Just as the plight of the sick man at the pool of Bethzatha (5:1–18), waiting for the arbitrary movement of the pool for a cure, highlighted a lack of compassion and mercy for sinners at the heart of Pharisaic religion, so too does the insistence of the blood-lusting mob on punishing the adulterous woman for her sin. This, perhaps, captures the very essence of this enigmatic and touching encounter with the adulterous woman. Jesus is replacing the harsh use (or abuse) of Mosaic law with a compassionate, just and merciful alternative. The adulterous woman is now the ‘poster girl’ for this new and radical dispensation. The fallen are redeemed. Righteousness and mercy have kissed. Condemnation is replaced by empowerment and hope: ‘Go your way, and from now on do not sin again’ (8:11). It is a message for all, not just for the adulterous woman.

***Condemnation
is replaced by
empowerment
and hope***

Martha and Mary

‘Worship in spirit and truth.’ (John 4:24)



The Raising of Lazarus, by Sebastiano del Piombo, 1517–1519

According to Grayston, ‘It is not a matter of chance that Jesus works out the theological and spiritual consequences of death and resurrection with two women. His male disciples are too cautious, too easily reassured, and too heroic’ to be attentive or receptive to the signs he has already worked.¹¹ When Jesus finally arrives at Bethany, Lazarus has been in the tomb for four days, but Martha’s faith and belief in Jesus are still undeterred as she confesses, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died’ (11:21). Grayston suggests that this is both a statement of faith and also a reproach.¹² But others

tend to view it as a straightforward statement of her faith and belief in Jesus; in spite of the tragic death of her brother, Martha continues to believe: ‘even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him’ (11:22). According to John Marsh,

This statement shows Martha has already perceived that Jesus has a special relationship to the Father, and that no bounds can properly be set upon what that relationship may effect in the world over which God is Lord. Martha has seen a ray of impossible hope!¹³

The ensuing theological conversation—reminiscent of that which had taken place earlier in the narrative with the Samaritan woman at the well—about resurrection and Martha’s practical, Judaistic understanding of it (‘I

¹¹ Grayston, *Gospel of John*, 90.

¹² Grayston, *Gospel of John*, 90.

¹³ Marsh, *Gospel of St John*, 427.

know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day' [John 11:24]) allows Jesus to supersede her futuristic eschatology with his own and unique teaching of realised eschatology. Here the focus is no longer on the *last day* but on belief, *now* in this present moment, in Jesus who is both 'resurrection and life'. When Martha finally—if not completely—grasps this new and present reality she immediately responds again, characteristically, with faith: 'I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world' (11:27). Then, like the Samaritan woman, she immediately shares the good news, going back to call her sister Mary and tell her, 'The Teacher is here' (11:28).

It is, perhaps, significant that both sisters *approach* Jesus, or come into his presence. Mary repeats her sister's statement of faith, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died' (11:32). She prostrates herself at the feet of Jesus—the feet she will later anoint and wipe with her hair in a poignant prelude to Jesus' own death. Both sisters perceive that Jesus is the new and true focus of worship now. He is God among them. And we are reminded again of his conversation with the Samaritan woman when Jesus declares, 'Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem' (4:21).

Both Martha and Mary, in their raw and frank fidelity, stand in stark and dramatic contrast to Jesus' blundering and rumbustious male companions and followers—a contrast surely intended by the evangelist. The sisters' faith and belief in Jesus, tested by the death of their beloved brother, Lazarus, are nevertheless serenely constant and fearless in a quiet and understated way, even before they have witnessed Lazarus' remarkable and unlikely resurrection! Their faith is, more significantly, not founded on signs and wonders but on a true and intuitive realisation of the spiritual reality that 'The Teacher' is, as Martha acknowledges, 'the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world'.

Mary of Magdala

'I have called you by name, you are mine.' (Isaiah 43:1)

Mary of Magdala is the first person to witness the empty tomb and to encounter the resurrected Jesus.

Thus she combines in her own experience (the first to do so) the twin facets of what the Church has taken to be the basic experience of the resurrection. The tradition contained both an assertion of an empty

tomb and a recollection of a number of appearances of the risen Lord to his disciples. There seems to be something remarkably discerning in that a woman was made the first recipient of both these elements of the Church's faith.¹⁴

Just as the first woman, Eve, brought sin and, ultimately, death into the world, now another woman, Mary of Magdala, brings the good news of life and salvation back into a redeemed world. She has been chosen, called intimately and tenderly by her name to be the first witness of God's great salvific act for his people. But Mary also represents each one of us on our own personal and individual faith journey. We too, just like Mary of Magdala, have been called by our names into a unique and life-giving relationship with the Risen Lord.

According to Raymond Brown, women and men were equal in the Johannine community—perhaps symbolized in John's Gospel by the presence of a man and a woman at the foot of the cross. It appears to have been a community where there was no specific difference or division between male and female followers. But, as Brown concludes,

Even John has left us with one curious note of incompleteness: the disciples, surprised at Jesus' openness with a woman, still did not dare to ask him, 'What do you want of a woman?' (4:27). That may well be a question whose time has come in the Church of Jesus Christ.¹⁵

It is a question which still resonates today, over forty years later, in the continuing debate about the ministerial roles of women in the Church.

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¹⁴ Marsh, *Gospel of St John*, 632.

¹⁵ Brown, 'Roles of Women in the Fourth Gospel', 696.

RECENT BOOKS

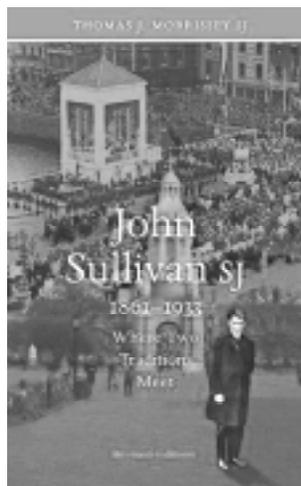
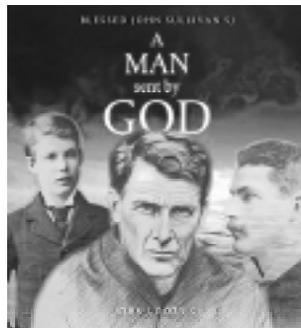
John Looby, *A Man Sent by God: Blessed John Sullivan SJ* (Dublin: Messenger, 2017). 978 1 9102 4856 0, pp. 84, €14.95.

Thomas J. Morrissey, *John Sullivan SJ, 1861–1933: Where Two Traditions Meet*, rev. edn (Dublin: Columba, 2013). 978 1 8560 7747 7, pp. 128, £9.99.

The ‘land of saints and scholars’ has now celebrated the first beatification to take place on its shores. On Saturday 13 May 2017 Fr John Sullivan, a Jesuit of the Irish Province, was declared ‘Blessed’ in a well-attended ceremony held at the church of St Francis Xavier in Dublin. A man who wrote ‘Try to live a comfortless life. Every victory over self is a victory for God’ (Morrissey, p. 105) has yet, both before and since his death in 1933, managed to bring comfort to countless numbers in their sufferings and inspired a continuing devotion that has led him ever closer towards being recognised as a saint.

John was born into one of the most influential families in the Ireland of the second half of the nineteenth century. Sir Edward Sullivan, his father, was in turn Solicitor-General, Master of the Rolls and Lord Chancellor of Ireland. He was also a member of the Protestant Church of Ireland, and John was brought up in the same tradition. John’s mother was Catholic, however, and he owed much of his faith to her, in later life frequently comparing her to Monica, the mother of St Augustine, who prayed unceasingly for her son’s conversion.

It was while studying law at Trinity College in Dublin that John seems to have taken his first steps towards the Roman Catholic Church. However it was more than a decade later, and only after a prolonged stay in the Orthodox monasteries of Mount Athos, that he was finally received into full communion with Rome at the Jesuit Farm Street church in London. Just four years after that he joined the Society of Jesus, and following what was, by the standards of the time, a short formation programme, was ordained in



1907. He was to spend most of the rest of his life teaching at the Jesuit boarding school of Clongowes Wood College in County Kildare.

By most accounts John was not an especially effective teacher. The witness of his life, though, seems to have made a powerful impact upon many of those whom he encountered. It may be this that led his superiors to appoint him, for one term of office, as rector of a house of young Jesuits on the outskirts of Dublin. After five years, though, he returned to Clongowes, the school, and its 'People's Church', where he worked serving the local farmers and other country people.

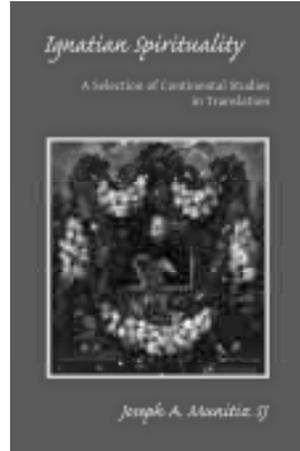
As the quotation in the first paragraph—taken from one of his few remaining writings—suggests, as a priest John Sullivan lived an austere life. The man who had been noted as 'the best-dressed man in Dublin' when he was at Trinity now dressed in a patched Jesuit gown and broken-down boots, travelling round the neighbourhood on an ancient bicycle. He travelled especially to bring the sacraments to the sick, and to pray with them. He soon gained a reputation as one through whom healings took place, and this reputation continues to the present day. Originally buried in Clongowes, as devotion to him continued to grow, his body was brought in 1960 to a shrine in the Dublin church where his beatification took place.

John Looby's *A Man Sent by God* was put together this year in time for the beatification ceremony. Among other things it emphasizes the ecumenical aspect of this man who spent nearly half his life as a member of the Church of Ireland. Thomas Morrissey's book sets the events of Sullivan's life in the context of the social and political events in the Ireland of his time, a country seeking and finally gaining its independence from Britain. It draws on a detailed earlier biography, written only eight years after Sullivan's death by another Jesuit, Fergal McGrath, who had known Sullivan well. Prepared originally to mark the sixtieth anniversary of its subject's death, Morrissey's book bears witness to the devotion people continued to have for Sullivan at that date.

John Sullivan can seem to offer in many ways an old-fashioned view of what it is to be a man of God: ascetic, self-sacrificing, humbly carrying out everyday tasks with seemingly little thought for himself or his reputation. Indeed both biographers relate him to the medieval Irish monastic tradition. Yet in an era where comfort and ease are so highly prized, there is something bracing in being presented with a witness that is so uncompromisingly counter-cultural. The capacity of this witness to touch the lives of many people over the last century cannot be denied, and now that the Church has formally recognised his holiness it is likely only to increase. These two books together will give a reader some sense of what it is that drew, and continues to draw, people to this humble schoolteacher.

***Ignatian Spirituality: A Selection of Continental Studies in Translation*, translated by Joseph A. Munitiz (Oxford: Way Books, 2016). 978 0 9047 1745 7, pp.266, £15.00.**

It has been one of the more useful aspects of *The Way* to offer access to thinking about Ignatius and the Spiritual Exercises that comes from a cultural, theological and ecclesial matrix different from the predominant anglophone one. This broadens and enriches the conversations between theologians, practitioners and teachers within the tradition while also reflecting on the experience of pilgrims who come to the Exercises and the Ignatian spiritual tradition from distinctive contexts. Joseph Munitiz has done all scholars and practitioners of the Ignatian way a singular favour in collecting and translating some of the best contemporary resources written in French, Spanish and Flemish. We hear from teachers of spirituality and theology from across continental Europe, taking in the disciplines of pneumatology, dogmatics, ecclesiology, history and psychology. Some of the articles are principally theoretical, others rooted in practice over long years, while a few explore more technical points within the text itself, offering both parallels and welcome contrasts with Anglophone studies.



Munitiz' own introduction translates part of the Catalan Jesuit Javier Melloni's edition of a *précis* (by an anonymous monk) of the *Compendio breve de ejercicios espirituales* written by the abbot of Montserrat, García de Cisneros. The study of this work explores how Ignatius himself may have learnt to pray from his Benedictine confessor. It allows us to discover the possible origin of some of the fundamental traits of Ignatian prayer, such as the use of colloquy and composition of place, but also the distinction between imaginative and intellectual meditation and the importance of preparatory reading. It is not only a historically interesting piece but also one which encourages us to appreciate the brevity and directness of the Ignatian text within the context of the monastic tradition of his time.

Munitiz pays particular attention to the distinctive contributions of three female writers whose emphasis on tenderness echoes a constant theme in the writing of Pope Francis. Nerea Alzola reflects on the experience of women accompanying those making the Exercises, admitting the inevitable temptation of such a study to fall into essentialist traps, but also acknowledging the debt to feminist philosophers and theologians whose writing has shaped the perspective of many women directors. Renouncing any sense of possession of

the Ignatian tradition, she claims that women's marginal position enhances their sense of a spiritual life in which all are learners, in contrast to the monotone of patriarchal positions which undervalue lived experience and narrative thinking. Consideration of the different ways in which women and men speak, pose questions and reflect on experience leads to reflections on the particular way in which women respond as pilgrims and guides to the text of the *Spiritual Exercises*.

In similar vein Mariola López Villanueva explores the biblical texts that show Jesus' encounters with women, texts from which the affective, the relational and the bodily emerge as integrated and integrating dimensions. These stories appeal to the four imperatives of adult life—to identity, intimacy, generative power and integrity—and the author sees these calls as successively at work within the process of the Exercises, illustrated through stories of biblical women. She considers the ways in which Jesus himself may have gained by these encounters and sees the progressive dynamic of the Exercises given flesh within them.

Finally Sylvie Robert writes of the spiritual birth that can take place through the process and election within the Exercises, a birth which makes the guide into a midwife, so to speak, who is also in labour. These chapters take us beyond stereotypes into original and challenging considerations of gender within the text and the praxis of the Exercises.

Many guides and exercitants shy away from considering the theological content of the Exercises, seeing such consideration as a dry and sterile attempt to turn this most practical of texts into intellectual abstraction. While Ignatius warns that it is not so much knowledge as inner feeling and relish that satisfy the soul, nevertheless a look at the theological underpinnings of the text helps to open it out more richly for guide as well as for pilgrim. Santiago Arzubialde, a teacher of spirituality of many years' standing, combines historical, theological and psychological elements in his search for a pneumatology of the Exercises. He considers Ignatius' search for balance between a coarsened and an over-sensitive conscience, and traces the development of this thinking from Ignatius' early conversion to the theology of the Spirit manifest in the Rules for Discernment and his insistence in the *Constitutions* on a Spirit-filled *discreta caritas*.

Pierre Gervais, editor of the *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, seeks to uncover the mystery of Christ and the dynamic of redemption implied by the dogmatic assumptions within the text. He sounds a welcome warning against discernment done without reference to the life of Christ and the distinguishing marks of his Kingdom as found in the Two Standards, and reminds us that discernment is not a technique but a constant call to seek God by making ourselves ready to engage in a permanent dialogue about our daily following of Christ.

Many of today's pilgrims and guides may find themselves at odds with the institutional Church, and it is not uncommon to encounter people for whom Ignatian spirituality is the one aspect of corporate Christian life to which they still cling. Antonio Guillén's contribution towards an Ignatian ecclesiology takes issue with a decontextualised reading of the Rules for Thinking within the Church that interprets them as an assault on personal freedom rather than concrete options in a life in the Spirit.

The theological contributions explore discernment as a dynamic force leading to change, made possible only in the aftermath of a felt perception of reality and characterized by joy. This does not exclude consideration of sin and penance, and requires us to remember that the concept of sin was very different in Ignatius' time. Munitiz' collection is an eminently useful and enlightening invitation to go deeper into Ignatius' text and into the life story which gave it birth. Each chapter repays careful pondering and acts as a superb practical as well as a theoretical guide.

Gemma Simmonds CJ

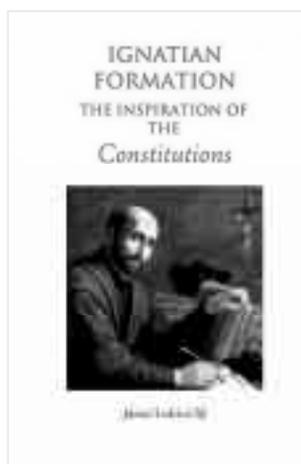
János Lukács, *Ignatian Formation: The Inspiration of the Constitutions* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2016). 978 0 8524 4893 9, pp.232, £14.99.

Compared with the voluminous writings on the *Spiritual Exercises* over the past fifty years, English-language books on the Jesuit *Constitutions* are rare indeed. So the appearance of a new work by the Hungarian Jesuit János Lukács is to be welcomed. A former Provincial in his country, he had served before that, and is again currently serving, as novice master. The specific lens through which he has chosen to examine the *Constitutions* is, not surprisingly, that of formation.

For many people the term *Constitutions* immediately suggests a juridical document, a collection of laws or a canonical framework. The Jesuit *Constitutions*, however, are much more.

This 'more' was well expressed by the former superior general, Pedro Arrupe:

Our spirit grasps the *Constitutions* as a book of norms, but at the same time as a book of life, not only because it is for life, but because in it there is latent a charisma, a living gift of the Spirit who gives life, and who is the principle of unity and of action.¹



¹ Pedro Arrupe, *A Planet to Heal* (Rome: International Centre for Jesuit Education, 1977), 273.

In today's terminology Arrupe was highlighting the spirituality that pervades and is articulated by the *Constitutions*. This spirituality is simultaneously personal and corporate. It is the spirituality of the 'body' of the Society of Jesus as well as that of its individual members. And above all it is apostolic.

Most recent commentators on the *Constitutions* have mined this precious vein. The metaphor is apt because this spirituality does not reveal itself without a struggle and calls for a range of approaches—from close textual analysis to paying attention to the way in which the *Constitutions* are lived by Jesuits today. Lukács is part of this modern trend. He has the requisite academic background for the task he has set himself, allied with the perspective that his roles as Provincial and novice master have given him on current developments in the Society.

Part one of the book is devoted to what Lukács calls preliminary studies. These allow him to explore his presuppositions as he approaches the topic of formation. Beginning with comparisons between the *Spiritual Exercises* and the *Constitutions*, he then presents his understanding of Ignatian anthropology. Then, following reflections on some terms used by Ignatius ('to help', 'capital sins' and 'virtues'), he comes to the hermeneutical principles with which he approaches the text. Because these are so significant for what follows it is worth naming all six here: 'Pathway and Progress'; 'Mystagogy'; 'Incorporation'; 'Human Maturity'; 'The Parts and the Whole'; and 'Fundamental Ignatian Works as One Oeuvre'. Now he is ready to move to part two, which is entitled 'The *Constitutions* as a Handbook of Formation. Here he develops at some length his commentary on parts III to VI of the *Constitutions*, covering a Jesuit's novitiate, years in studies, tertianship and final vows. In conclusion, the book contains a section on the future, its challenges and its opportunities.

This overview alone should convey something of the seriousness and comprehensive nature of Lukács' study. It is not an introduction to the *Constitutions*, but will be of interest to those already familiar with Ignatian spirituality in general and the *Constitutions* in particular. Above all it will challenge, as well as stimulate, those tasked with formation at any of its different stages. Of course, as is to be expected in writing that is as multi-layered as this, there are controversial aspects. In particular, some may want to question Lukács' understanding of the overall dynamic of the *Constitutions*. But such a debate, if it occurs, can only help to throw further light on this difficult area of formation in the Society of Jesus.

Brian O'Leary SJ

Joseph A. Munitiz, Ignatian Spirituality, and János Lukács, Ignatian Formation, are available from The Way Ignatian Book Service through the editorial office and online at www.theway.org.uk/bookservice.html.

Gerard Kilroy, *Edmund Campion: A Scholarly Life* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015). 978 1 4094 0151 3, pp. xix + 397, £80.00.

This is, perhaps, the best biography of Edmund Campion that I have read, although it is not perfect, and I do have some problems with it. The author's purpose in writing this book is to produce a biography of a man who became, in the course of his life, a saint. But he does not want to write a life that is dripping with piety and pious legends.

Kilroy begins his discussion of Campion by placing him in the City of London, where he grew up and his schooling began. The author tells us that Campion's father died when he was a boy. He was chosen to address the new Queen, Mary, as she entered London for the first time on 3 August 1553. Kilroy then follows Campion to



Oxford, where he was a very talented student. He opened three days of disputations before the Queen Elizabeth and the Earl of Leicester on 3 September 1566, contriving to address the relationship between the crown and the university. He had a reputation as 'the best orator in the university' (p. 41).

The author lists the many fellows and undergraduates who left England during Campion's time at Oxford either to go to the seminary at Douai or to enter the Jesuits. This creates a context for Campion's questions about the Church of England, which began to bother him while at Oxford and led him to go to Ireland. From Ireland, where apparently he decided to join the Counter-Reformation Church, he made his way first to Douai and then on foot to Rome, where he was accepted into the Jesuit novitiate. From Rome he eventually travelled to Prague, where he became a teacher and then a preacher at the emperor's court and the Jesuit church.

In the midst of his apostolic activities in Bohemia, Campion received a call from the Jesuit General, Everard Mercurian, to come to Rome before being sent as a missionary to England. Previously Mercurian had refused William Allen's appeal for Jesuits to go on such missions. In the General's mind the resources of the Society were already spread too thinly. He realised that Jesuits captured in England would be martyred, and he needed living priests to work in the already existing apostolate of the Society and in the rapidly multiplying Jesuit schools. This time the request came during the marriage negotiations between Elizabeth and the Duke of Anjou and Alençon. Allen expected the queen to grant some form of toleration to Catholics after the wedding, so Mercurian approved.

Would that the conditions had been so favourable! Campion's mission was to have been non-political. Gregory XIII had suspended the deposition of the

queen contained in the Bull *Regnans in excelsis* until such time as it could be enforced, but Fr Nicholas Sander, with Allen's approval, was involved in an invasion of Ireland. How could priests charged with the peaceful conversion of England use armies in Ireland and claim to be peaceful in England? This was the situation in which Campion found himself. It was further complicated because some on the Privy Council favoured toleration of Catholics for the sake of the Anjou marriage but others refused even to think of a limited toleration. The Jesuit mission to England could not have started in less auspicious circumstances. Kilroy's analysis of the situation is one of his particular contributions to the history of that mission.

Previous authors have mentioned Campion and others on his way to Rome celebrating his future status as a martyr. But Kilroy shows how slowly Campion travelled, and that it took him hours of prayer to accept his assignment in England, and to accept the fact that he might be martyred. Once in England he and Robert Persons thought it good to write *apologiae* for their presence there. Persons sealed his, but Campion did not. The person to whom he entrusted it read it and was so moved that he had it printed. When the Council read what has been called *Campion's Brag*, they discovered that an English Jesuit with a European reputation had challenged them to a debate.

Campion would repeatedly challenge representatives of the Church of England to such debate, which reveals how his academic background shaped his world-view and his approach to conversion, which was based not on military conquest but on finding the truth. He was obsessed with making sure that he always had his books with him and, if he were forced to leave them somewhere, he would travel to get them back. Campion had a fruitful ministry. People went long distances to hear him preach and to be absolved of their sins. But the government finally captured him in a Catholic house where he was hiding after ministering to Catholics in the area. And, as he claimed in the preface to his *Decem rationes*, 'the high priests were preparing instruments of torture rather than scholastic debates' (p. 187).

In chapter 8 the author discusses the use of torture in England and, in particular, the use of the rack on Campion. 'Campion has the distinction of having his name on four warrants for torture, more than any other person in English legal history.' (p. 243) His analysis of the use of torture—the way, for example, that those who operated the rack had to be protected because English law did not recognise torture—breaks new ground. Campion was given the opportunity to debate with theologians from the Church of England while being held in the Tower, and after he had been racked. He apparently not only defended Catholicism and his presence in England well against at least three different sets of opponents but also, in the course of this defence, let his hearers know that he had been racked.

Kilroy repeats the story that the queen was present in the Tower after Campion was racked and that ‘on the night before the trial, Campion was led out under a blanket for a secret interview with the Queen herself’ (p.268). He cites sources for this story but one wonders how reliable they are. How much of it is simply hagiographical comment? Some claim that the queen tried to offer Campion a bishopric. But what sense did it make to offer an office in the Church to a man who had been racked and could not even use his arms?

When dealing with the trial and its aftermath, Kilroy allows his admiration for Campion to shape his reading of documents that do fall into the hagiographical category. ‘When the verdict was given ... there must have been gasps of surprise’ (p.327); ‘On the night of Campion’s execution there must have been many streets in London (and across the country) where weeping was the only sound’ (p.346). How many people outside Middlesex even knew about Campion’s death on the day of his execution? The author continually cites eyewitness accounts without addressing how unreliable they can be. However, he is right in noting that the Protestant John Foxe, author of *Actes and Monuments* (popularly known as *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*) asked the Council to be merciful to Campion. John Stow, Abraham Fleming, William Camden and Sir John Harington were also upset and disturbed by Campion’s execution.

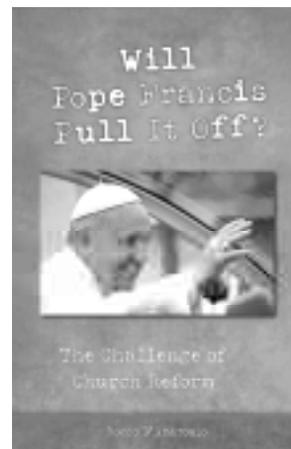
This is a very good biography of Campion except in those sections where the author pushes the evidence too far.

John LaRocca SJ

Rocco D’Ambrosio, *Will Pope Francis Pull It Off? The Challenge of Church Reform*, translated by Barry Hudock (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2017).

978 0 8146 4501 7, pp.104, £11.99.

Early in 2017, a widely publicised pasquinade lampooned Pope Francis’s priorities in large handbills posted around Rome, listing supposed ‘victims’ of his efforts at reform, and asking whether they too were worthy of his hallmark summons to mercy. While the creative work of a few provocateurs perhaps garnered more international attention than was warranted, the incident served to confirm the yawning chasm that has come to exist between certain forces within the Church that Pope Francis inherited as pontiff and his dream of a revitalised, synodal ‘poor church for the poor’. It is precisely within



and out of this breach that Rocco D'Ambrosio's thin volume hopes to speak.

Instead of the ubiquitous caricatures put forward in the many potboiler and pseudo-psychological biographies that have proliferated in recent years trying to survey (or invent) Francis's agenda and secret desires, D'Ambrosio sets out to employ 'institutional analysis' to interrogate the successes and challenges of the Bergoglio pontificate, all with documented supporting evidence. D'Ambrosio's scope is tightly focused on what he sees as the unbending will of Francis in the face of strong resistance to the Pope's 'radical, intensive, and broad' (p.13) goals of reform. The author's subjective hopes for the success of this project are in no way disguised or *sotto voce*; the title (in both English and the original Italian) reverberates with D'Ambrosio's aspirations for the propitious future of the Church to come, if only Francis perseveres in his crusade to right the wrongs infecting the governing structures of the Roman Catholic Church since the time of the Borgias, if not since Constantine.

The eight succinct chapters explore ecclesiological themes of authority, power, and the hermeneutics of teaching and reception, but as read through the helpful institutional, communicative and social-structural analyses of a social scientist. The unique and expansive expertise of the author, who is obviously as fluent in magisterial and conciliar texts as he is in the writings of Mary Douglas and Carl Jung, provides an intriguing entrée into study of the Pope's hope for a coming ecclesial *metanoia*, as well as the complexities of achieving it at an enduring and systemic level. D'Ambrosio's thesis is that such transformation can and has been disputed, stunted, delayed or thwarted at many turns by forces stolidly hesitant to implement, or vehemently encamped against, any such changes.

The book is timely and well crafted, drawing heavily on the primary sources of the Pope's writings and public statements. It consciously seeks to include and address the perspectives of many: 'simple faithful, priests and bishops, nonbelievers, theologians, sociologists, psychologists, and more' (p.x). The author is adept at distilling a complicated issue into a marketable and approachable volume. There are strengths to the book's size and readability.

Yet, as a reader, I must confess that, when I had finished, I was left wanting not a better analysis, but more of it. I would encourage potential audiences to enjoy and utilise the significant contribution D'Ambrosio makes to the field. Students of various disciplines and at different academic levels will glean much from it, especially postgraduates and dedicated Church-watchers. But in the same breath, I would prepare readers to be ready to complement it with other sources and commentaries, particularly those focused on the unique sociological world of the Roman Curia. Even if an excellent introduction to the topic, so few pages simply whet the appetite for learning more. The book

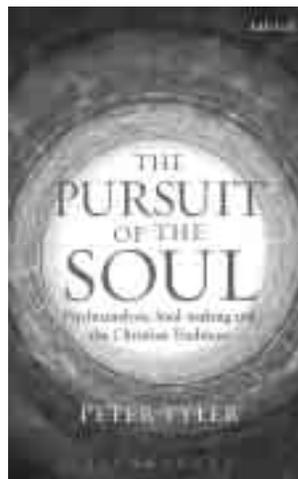
will certainly find a place on my shelf and in my classroom, but more as an introduction than as the fully mapped topography of the ongoing explorations into the life and work of this unique Jesuit pontiff.

I sympathize entirely with the author's claim that in seeking to understand elements of ecclesial life adequately, 'there is no place for simplistic or superficial thinking' (p.26). D'Ambrosio diligently avoids such generalisations or travesties. The book is simple, without being simplistic. His obviously intentional commitment to the more readable side of the popular-scholarly balance does, however, serve to challenge his audience. The reader must be ready to respond to D'Ambrosio's insights by digging a little deeper on his or her own. This compact primer seemingly urges those who engage with it to use it as one among many resources in unpacking a topic of great import and complexity. For this reason, I would both recommend it wholeheartedly and anticipate reading more substantial pieces by this gifted and clear writer in the future.

Michael Canaris

Peter Tyler, *The Pursuit of the Soul: Psychoanalysis, Soul-Making and the Christian Tradition* (London: Continuum, 2016). 978 0 5671 4077 7, pp.208, £18.99.

The term 'soul' is regarded with deep suspicion in much of the modern academic world. Psychology departments, although the very name of their discipline derives from the Greek word for 'soul', confine themselves to empirical investigations of the workings of the mind and regard talk of the soul as a hangover from a pre-scientific era. And philosophy departments, at least in the anglophone world, tend to regard souls as 'spooky' entities that have no place in the naturalistic world-view that most of them affirm ('naturalism' being understood as the ruling doctrine according to which there is no ultimate reality apart from that describable in the language of science).



Yet against all the odds, as Peter Tyler observes at the start of this book, the term 'soul' persists in contemporary discourse (p.5). The philosopher Edith Stein, writing in the middle of the twentieth century, was an early voice protesting against the modern programme of doing 'psychology without soul'

(p. 171); and Tyler notes with approval that among contemporary practitioners of psychoanalysis, counselling and pastoral care there is something of a rediscovery of soul language. For the idea of the soul represents, in Stein's phrase, a *lifeway* at the heart of the human self—something in our deepest identity which is the source of our moral and spiritual growth and development. And *that* is a notion that it is hard to jettison completely if we want to understand what it is to be truly human.

In his survey of the concept of the soul in Western thought, Tyler guides us from the ancient world down to the modern and postmodern eras, taking in a variety of philosophers, psychologists and theologians along the way. The author, a professor of pastoral theology and spirituality at St Mary's University, Twickenham, is also a registered psychotherapist, and the climax of the book is a discussion of two psychoanalytic thinkers, Otto Rank and James Hillman. Both were regarded in their day as maverick figures in the profession: Rank a renegade Freudian, Hillman an unorthodox follower of Carl Jung. Yet Rank had the courage to resist Freudian attempts to present psychoanalysis as a scientific procedure, emphasizing instead the importance of the *mythic* dimension, which he took to be vital for our understanding of the 'soul-life' of the patient (p. 111). In similar vein, Hillman insisted that psychoanalysis was a process of 'soul-making', which requires us to delve into the realm of 'the symbolic, imaginative and mythic', where the Age of Reason reaches its 'last borders' (p. 123).

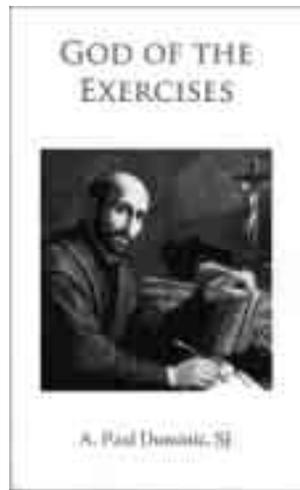
But how does the Christian tradition fit into all this? Many psychoanalytic thinkers, from Freud onwards, have been hostile to religion. Rank was 'no great friend of religion' (p. 117), while Hillman, despite his frequent references to ancient Greek *daimones* and deities, lacked what Tyler calls the 'necessary window on the transcendent', and in effect ended up reducing the divine to something entirely within the human psyche (p. 129). Tyler's own position, by contrast, is that the soul is best understood using the framework of a 'religious psychology' informed by a Christian perspective. He argues that the pivotal figure in this context is St Augustine, who in his conception of the soul inherited much from the philosophies of Plato and Plotinus, and yet forged a new understanding in which our human nature reflects the nature of the Triune God of Christianity. The theology here is complex, but Tyler negotiates it deftly, making use of ideas from much later thinkers including Wittgenstein and Thomas Merton. By drawing on all these sources, Tyler aims to show how we can arrive at a 'soul-psychology', which 'avoids ... the Charybdis of overly mechanized scientific solutions, and ... the Scylla of a spiritualized "anti-matter" that [divorces] soul-language from the wholeness of personhood expressed in terms of body, heart, mind and spirit' (p. 176).

In a work with as large a sweep as this, there are inevitably gaps. In the swift jump from the ancient world to the twentieth century, for example, we are given no intermediate chapters on Descartes or on Kant, and this means that some readers may find it difficult to unravel the nuances of such terms as ‘Cartesian’ (which makes frequent appearances in the book), or the Kantian notion of ‘apperception’ (which also figures frequently). Nevertheless, given the constraints of space he is working under, Tyler manages to pack into the volume a great deal of absorbing material and to introduce it, for the most part, in an engaging and accessible way. The book as a whole offers rich food for reflection on one of the most enigmatic and fascinating concepts in Western culture.

John Cottingham

A. Paul Dominic, *God of the Exercises: A Director’s Diary-Directory during the Spiritual Exercises of Thirty Days* (Bengaluru: Asian Trading Corporation, 2016; Leominster: Gracewing, 2017). 978 8 1708 6758 6, pp.244, £12.99.

To be honest I approached Paul Dominic’s *Diary-Directory* with scant enthusiasm, faced with its rather dry title, but I can happily say that the book itself gently won me over by its deep and sincere prayerfulness. For this is a book centred on prayer—the collected diary entries of the author thrice daily (‘at dawn’, ‘during the day’ and ‘at night’) as he directed the full Spiritual Exercises. True, he has a tendency towards the pious and the prolix in places, which can be off-putting, but that never obscures the heart of the book which is, ultimately, the transforming encounter with the true ‘God of the Exercises’.



The reader is invited into a deeply personal conversation from the outset, given permission to listen in on the heartfelt colloquies between Paul Dominic, his God and his retreatants. One has the feeling of standing on holy ground. This sense of sharing in a conversation—in the largest sense, *the* ongoing conversation between the Creator and creation, mediated here by the Exercises—permeates the book. The tone is one of wonder and surprise. What comes across on almost every page is that the author is clearly in love with the process of the Exercises, their spirituality, the gift of communication they represent; and he is in awe of the God who chooses to converse with us and in us.

This broader mystery of spiritual conversation—how God acts in and through human beings—is explored and marvelled at as Paul Dominic, the director, experiences the ups and downs of a typical thirty-day retreat. In language of which surely St Ignatius would have approved, he declares at one stage: ‘So I shall learn what I should have long ago done ... reverence in the presence and action in me and around me of Your Divine Majesty!’ (p.9). The reader is privileged to witness a gradual self-discovery over the course of the retreat and to be offered another reminder of the transformational power of the Exercises for the director as much as the exercitant.

Indeed, for anyone new to accompanying others through the Exercises, Paul Dominic provides a reassuring and human guide. Authentically vulnerable moments peek through: experiences of powerlessness or frustration as a spiritual director and in his own journey to God—‘If only my heart could beat in unison with such flashes of my mind’ (p.60), he laments at one low point or, contemplating his meagre credentials as a spiritual guide, ‘Lord Spirit, the best discernment I have made, alas, is that I have not been able to make any real discernment!’ (p.94) The reader might be able to empathize, too, with some of the practical realities of retreat-giving—including taking a retreatant to hospital at one o’clock in the morning. For Paul Dominic, God is to be found as much in the ‘upsets’ as in the plain sailing.

This book—while always personal—is a helpful resource for anyone involved or interested in spiritual direction within the Ignatian tradition. The experiences and reflections of the author bring us back repeatedly to the ‘fundamentals’ of the craft—above all letting the Creator deal with the creature and the centrality of discernment. From the surprisingly liberating discovery that ‘We are not in control; neither I nor the exercitants’ (p.159), he moves to being able to pray at the end of the retreat: ‘Risen Lord, let us hitch a ride with You as You joyously appear and disappear and move among us and stir us from wherever we are’ (p.199).

From a scholarly point of view the footnotes drip with erudition and repay the attention of anyone wishing to explore the spirituality of the Exercises or Ignatian spirituality more generally. Dominic draws upon an extraordinary breadth of sources, from the classic Western spiritual tradition to the Hindu wisdom of his native India, referencing everyone from John Henry Newman to Etty Hillesum in between. Above all, Paul Dominic is sensitive throughout to the true Source that is Christ: the ‘God of the Exercises’ to whom he returns again and again.

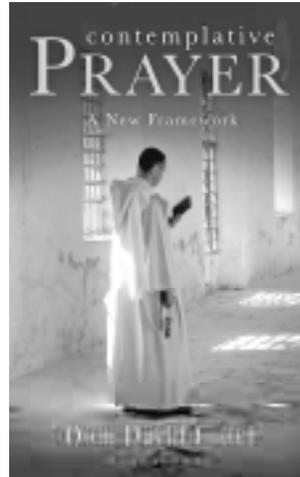
Like Nancy Sheridan, author of the afterword, I too was inspired by reading this diary-directory to recognise anew the gift of God in the ministry of spiritual direction and struck by how that gift manifests itself in and through the Exercises. I found this in some ways profoundly ordinary journey of personal conversion through conversation both touching and challenging. For

God of the Exercises can also be read as an account of soul-searching desire—the desire, lived day in, day out over a span of thirty days, of a spiritual director to imitate Ignatius and bring others to Jesus using the gifts at their disposal—above all the Exercises. This is a desire which, needless to say, is infectious.

Tim McEvoy

David Foster, *Contemplative Prayer: A New Framework* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015). 978 1 4081 8710 4, pp. 176, £12.99.

Dom David Foster begins his book with a somewhat alarming experience for a Benedictine monk—a sense of having ‘lost God’ in his student days and how he subsequently had to build up a new relationship with God coming from this place of comparative darkness. From this starting point he constructs an analysis of prayer from what he terms the ‘philosophical point of view’. To this end he draws on the work of many nineteenth- and twentieth-century, mainly European, philosophers, including Ludwig Wittgenstein, Martin Heidegger, Friedrich Nietzsche and William James. If these names put you off then this is not a book for you: Foster loves his philosophy, and his philosophers, and brings his wide acquaintance with them to bear on his experiences of prayer. If, on the other hand, these philosophical discussions appeal, then you will find the book of great interest.



Particularly well done are the sections on the apophatic, or Dionysian, perspectives on prayer and how they relate to the ‘postmodern’, or what Foster sometimes terms ‘nihilist’, culture within which we currently reside (in the West at least). His supposition throughout, supported in his argument by writers such as Wittgenstein and Heidegger, is that ‘contemplative prayer springs from the roots of our human being’, which for him—using Heidegger’s phraseology—is a case of being related to the ‘underlying structure of our experience of being’ (p. 195).

The problem, I always feel, when constructing a philosophical analysis from various thinkers who often contradict each other is what do we do with the discrepancies and rough edges between the various viewpoints—either we must face them head-on, avoid them or smooth them over. Foster goes for the last position, and so we find Wittgenstein’s linguistic analyses, Heidegger’s

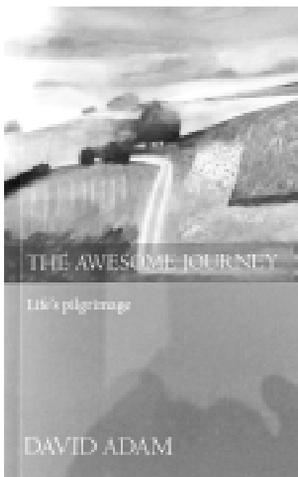
philosophy of being (or should that be 'Being?') and the Nietzschean 'transvaluation of values' all brought together in a great synthesis around the Christian experience of 'contemplative prayer'.

As I have said, for those of a philosophical bent this may well prove attractive. For those without that particular affliction I hope the book will still appeal, as it does at least induce a dialogue between our strange postmodern times and the older narratives of Christian contemplative prayer, in 'a different kind of search for God' that 'has taken people to the frontiers of experience, where we need to recognize the limitations of reason and conceptual thinking' (p.196). If, as Wittgenstein suggested, our philosophical speculation acts as a finger pointing to that 'whereof we cannot speak' then it has probably done as much as it can in the present times. Dom David concludes by hoping that contemplative prayer will ultimately lead us beyond philosophy to the place where we 'have life and have it in abundance'.

Peter Tyler

David Adam, *The Awesome Journey: Life's Pilgrimage* (London: SPCK, 2015). 978 0 2810 7294 1, pp. 144, £8.99.

Michael Ford, *Becoming the Presence of God: Contemplative Ministry for Today* (Blackrock: Columba, 2016). 978 1 7821 8234 4, pp. 192, £11.99.



David Adam is certainly one of the best-loved figures in Celtic spirituality. His first book, *The Edge of Glory*, came out in Great Britain in 1985 and he has since published many books of prayers, meditations, reflections and saints' lives in the Celtic vein. His latest publication, *The Awesome Journey*, is a series of reflections on biblical encounters with the divine.

'God', Adam reminds us, 'is with all of us but many are unaware of his presence' (p.7). *The Awesome Journey* helps us on our way. Beginning with a chapter that asks, 'Where are you?', we journey with Abram/Abraham into the unknown, meet fellow travellers whom God has put in our paths, come across liminal places, have our hearts set on fire, discover God's strength in our times of weakness, moments when we are 'brought up with a start' (p.83), before coming home and rejoicing. We meet Jacob, Moses, Elijah, the Prodigal Son and Paul, and along the way we are nurtured

by a host of writers ranging from Augustine of Hippo to Teilhard de Chardin, St Columba to Sir Francis Drake, Bede to Gerard Manley Hopkins, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry to Francis Thompson. And at the end of each chapter there are exercises to enable us to put into practice what we have read.

This is a gem of a book, and at the end of it Adam writes, 'We are one in God and ... God is in each of us. This does not mark the end of the awesome journey, but a new beginning. Learning to walk with God and reveal that he is in us is the way of contemplation and the way of action.'

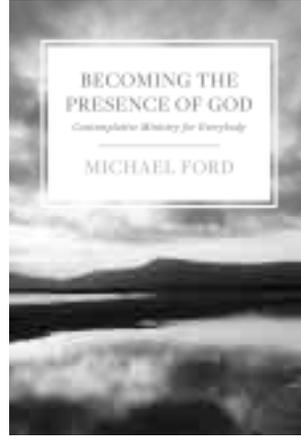
(p. 126) This brings us to our next book, *Becoming the Presence of God*.

Michael Ford is perhaps best known nowadays as one of the world's finest commentators on the life and writings of Henri Nouwen. It should come as no surprise, then, that his latest, wide-ranging book focuses not only on caring for others but on actually becoming, as the title of his book states, the *presence of God* for them.

This is a two-way relationship. The more we are called to become the presence of God, the deeper we go into the presence of God and the more deeply we allow God to come into us, our lives, and the ones whom we—with God—support. But this can only happen, Ford argues, if our ministries grow out of, and are nourished by, contemplation. Far from being a way of life for the few, contemplation is gift that is offered to every human being, and, as Ford writes in his very first sentence, 'this is a book to encourage you to claim your vocation to be a contemplative in the world' (p. 1).

Ford has been—and continues to be—richly blessed in his life. Through working at the BBC, beginning with Eamonn Andrews on the set of *This Is Your Life*, he has met a myriad of people from all backgrounds and this, in part, has enabled him, in an unobtrusive way, to ask the questions that matter, and to ask those questions in such a way that people open up their hearts to him.

In *Becoming the Presence* we are introduced to this wealth of people, beginning with a Trappist monk who became a postman, and a hermit who had been a novice under Thomas Merton, both of whom encouraged Ford 'to try to live more contemplatively' (p. 31). This is a helpful and fruitful start. 'To become the presence of God in the world', Ford writes, 'we have to home ourselves in that interior cloister' (p. 40). From there readers are encouraged to immerse themselves in the mystery of Christ, gaining access 'to a deeper life at the root of existence' (p. 47). On our journey we read about Pope Francis, speaking of the vocation to be a protector in the world; Dame Maria Boulding,



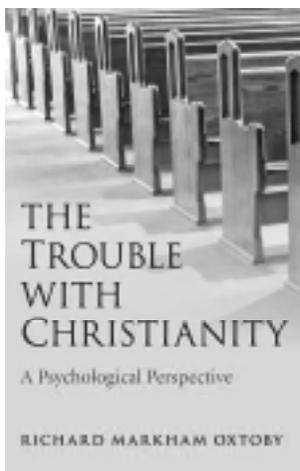
who writes about the duty to integrate spirituality with the intellectual life; and Henri Nouwen, who made a case for ‘a new form of Christian leadership, whose hallmarks would be contemplation and vulnerability’ (p. 73).

We now come to the heart of the book. After quoting what I have said myself regarding the lessons about ministry and ministering that we can all, but especially those in the Church, learn from L’Arche, Ford addresses clericalism. He describes how Wayne Teasdale, an urban monk living in Chicago, William McNamara, the first ecclesial hermit in the United States, Maggie Ross, whose *Pillars of Flame* is a damning indictment of clerical power, and the Irish philosopher and poet John O’Donohue all quite rightly criticize the Church for being too clerical—inadvertently, or even directly, wounding far too many people—and maintain that each one of us is called to be a priest.

After a much-needed chapter on ‘The Blessing of Light’, reflecting on how to be a persevering light in the darkness, we arrive at the final chapters: ‘Bearers’, in which Ford commends Brother Roger’s *Rule of Taizé* and the work of reconciliation; ‘Befrienders’, in which he shows us how we can become the presence of God for others, especially at a time of death; and ‘Bridges’, in which we are shown how we ourselves are to become bridges. These are uncomfortable tasks at times and certainly in need, themselves, of support—which God continually gives, sometimes in the most unexpected ways and sometimes in the most unexpected places.

Luke Penkett

Richard Markham Oxtoby, *The Trouble with Christianity: A Psychological Perspective* (Alresford: Christian Alternative, 2016). 978 1 7853 5289 8, pp. 120, £9.99.



This is a very short book (79 pages plus an appendix). It is essentially an essay that promotes a form of liberal Christianity whose validity is ultimately judged in terms of its ability to improve the psychological and spiritual well-being of all people (hence the reference to psychology in the title). It comes up with an espoused way of being in the world that has very little room for formal religious observance and dogma but instead lives out an ethic of compassion, forgiveness, non-judgmentalism, positivity and wonder at nature. The author claims that this way of being conforms to the teaching and behaviour of Jesus

and can therefore legitimately be called Christianity. Indeed, he goes further, and asserts that much of what has historically been characteristic of Christianity through the ages goes directly against the teaching of Jesus and has caused untold psychological, social, and spiritual damage.

Oxtoby locates the problem in authoritarian forms of religion that hijack certain theological ideas in the service of a repressive power agenda—his main example here is the idea of original sin. These ideas are themselves shored up by some more fundamental concepts, the key ones being that God is creator and sustainer of the universe, and that God not only stands outside the created order but has authority over it. Once God is understood to be essentially other and essentially better than humanity we are on the road to all sorts of psychopathology. We are driven by fear of God's wrath; by low self-worth owing to our lowly status; and by a kind of learned impotence owing to a sense of our utter dependence on God's regal and capricious will.

As a psychologist who has worked with people who have been harmed by authoritarian religion I have a good deal of sympathy with many aspects of Oxtoby's account of the nature of a healthy spiritual life. The problem with the book, however, is that his views are simply asserted with only pseudo-arguments unsupported by evidence and with a selective reading of the gospel material. There is much compassion in this book, and its call for a kinder form of Christianity appeals to the heart; but in striving to get rid of all that it sees as destructive in the history of the Christian faith it has managed to throw out the baby with the bathwater.

Joanna Collicutt

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