THE WAY

a review of Christian spirituality published by the British Jesuits

July 2019 *Volume 58, Number 3*

WORKING ALONGSIDE GOD

Illumination from a French manuscript of Augustine,
City of God, *c.1475*

Book Reviews

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Michael Kirwan on Pope Francis and the Church in Ireland
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FOR AUTHORS

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the editors of *Manresa* for allowing us to publish a translation of Carlos Domínguez's article. We would also like to thank the Media Center for Art History, Columbia University, for permission to reprint the image on p. 23. Thanks to Peter Brook SJ for additional illustrations. The scripture quotations herein are generally from the New Revised Standard Version Bible © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, and are used by permission. All rights reserved.

ABBREVIATIONS

Autobiography	'Reminiscences (Autobiography)', in *Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, translated by Philip Endean and Joseph A. Munitiz (London: Penguin, 1996)
Constitutions	in *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996)
Diary	'The Spiritual Diary', in *Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, translated by Philip Endean and Joseph A. Munitiz (London: Penguin, 1996)
Dir	*On Giving the Spiritual Exercises: The Early Manuscript Directories and the Official Directory of 1599*, translated and edited by Martin E. Palmer (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996)
Exx	*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, translated by George E. Ganss (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992)
GC	General Congregation, in *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 31st – 35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009) and *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (Boston: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2017)
MHSJ	Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu, 157 volumes (Madrid and Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1894–)

Papal documents may be found at www.vatican.va

FOREWORD

THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION has often shown an ambivalent attitude towards human work. For centuries the necessity of working was viewed primarily as a punishment, one result of the fall from grace experienced by our first parents. 'Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life', Adam is told by God (Genesis 3:17). It is only after death that we will truly be able to 'rest in peace'. More recently, however, it is the positive aspects of work that have been highlighted. Even before the Fall, it is suggested, humans were invited to tend the garden in which they live, and care for the animals with which they share it and that they have named. And, more generally, some kinds of work, at least, may now be seen as partaking in God's own creative enterprise.

A number of the articles in this issue of *The Way* explore this more positive view of work. Gem Yecla considers the giving of spiritual direction as one way in which men and women can participate in the work that God is carrying out in leading and shaping people's lives. Jane Khin Zaw looks at how work and leisure can be balanced in a productive religious life, even when the work is physically hard and in itself somewhat unrewarding. Achieving such a balance, even outside the relatively structured life of a monastery or convent, was one of the aims of Ignatius of Loyola in drawing up *Constitutions* for his new Jesuit order, and Francis Pudhicherry's article shows how he enshrined discernment as a key element in this process. Teresa White starts from a leisure-time visit to Amiens Cathedral to reflect on how its medieval carvings 'blend ordinary human living', including images of everyday work, 'with faith in God'.

Even allowing for a more positive understanding of work, it is difficult to deny that there are at least some forms in which it may be unfulfilling and unwelcome. In his contribution, Phil Callaghan discusses those aspects of employment (or indeed the lack of it), as it is experienced today, that might still make it seem like a punishment. That this should be the case is perhaps unsurprising, as the piece from Carlos Domínguez reminds us, since Christian faith offers no guaranteed escape from suffering. Nevertheless, the Christian story is clearly one in which hope in time triumphs over that suffering, and Robert Doud's writing here

explores the rich variety contained within the idea of hope, which sustains our work in the world and can help us 'to live our moments as best we can'.

Kathleen Taylor quotes a line from one of the Hindu sacred texts, the Vedas: 'This is the God whose work is all the worlds'. The passage goes on immediately, though, to see the same God as indwelling in the human heart. Taylor explores how this expression of the immanence of God in human lives may be read from a Christian perspective. For Christians, discovering and working alongside such a God is usually thought to demand at least periodic withdrawal from everyday concerns and tasks, periods of silence in which to concentrate on what is truly most important. Karen Howard describes some routes into this kind of spiritual practice. Finally Marion Morgan writes about the task of bringing people into the Church through the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults, which includes teaching them about such approaches to spirituality, but also meeting them where they are in their own everyday working lives.

Work has made up a major part of the lives of most people through most of history, and despite the (so far unrealised) promise of increased leisure to be brought about by automation, it still continues to do so. Any adequate presentation of Christian faith and practice will therefore need to be able to offer a positive understanding of its place in the relationship between human beings and God, and of the proper balance between work and leisure. Taken together, the articles in this issue of *The Way* offer a variety of perspectives on such an understanding.

Paul Nicholson SJ
Editor

CO-CREATION SPIRITUALITY

Participating in God's Ongoing Work of Creation through Spiritual Direction and the Spiritual Exercises

Gem Yecla

I WAS STUDYING when I received a viber message from my sister-in-law in Canada: my brother (the youngest of five siblings) was confined to hospital for a series of tests, owing to a suspected heart condition that could lead to heart failure if left untreated. On receiving the news, I was filled with feelings of anxiety and the fear of losing my brother. I could not continue with what I was reading. I just dropped the book that I was holding and went to the chapel; fixing my gaze on the Blessed Sacrament, in tears I implored God to help my brother and to save him. As I was sitting there and crying, I had this thought of God, who seemed to tell me, *Do your work, so I can do mine*.

I was surprised to receive this admonition and command from God. Was I just imagining it? Was God angry with me? Why did God not come to me in the usual gentle and loving way to which I was accustomed? As I was pondering God's response to me in my prayer, I realised that it constituted perhaps the very essence of *co-creation spirituality*—the spiritual awareness that we are co-creators with God. God had entrusted me with a task that I needed to do as a student of spiritual direction, which is why I was so far from my family in the first place. This was my work; and, perhaps, God's work at this critical moment for my brother's health was to attend to him. Even if it was difficult to comprehend this at that time, I had really to entrust my brother, in prayer, to God's hands and to all the medical staff in charge of him, and do my own work, despite the turmoil within me.

This article is based on an essay written as part of the requirements for my master's degree in spiritual direction at the Jesuit College of Spirituality in Melbourne, Australia. I would like to thank my supervisor, Gerald O'Collins, for all his help.

Co-Creation

It is my conviction that the human beings have a special role in God's ongoing work of creation as 'created co-creators'.[1] Through spiritual direction and the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius, we can discern how God wants each one of us to take part in God's labour in the world (Exx 236), if we only remain faithful and attentive to God's ways and promptings in our lives. St Ignatius gave us tools to help us stay connected with God, open and ready to receive the grace of guidance and enlightenment in our desire and practice of knowing and doing God's will. Hence, I also believe that spiritual direction and the Spiritual Exercises, particularly the Examen and the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits, may become powerful ways of changing the oppressive and unjust structures in society, the presence of which is against God's desire and design.

Furthermore, if a human person comes to understand co-creation spirituality, then this changes the mindset and world-view of that person, making him or her aware of being entrusted with power, responsibility and privilege by God. Human beings have already reached a very high degree, if not the apex, of intellectual development in the various fields of knowledge. They have, therefore, become very powerful in altering creation, bringing about, in the process, not only progress but also destruction, where there is no spiritual awareness to contain and inform this power. Hence, I believe that we need to see ourselves as co-creators with God so as to avoid becoming destroyers of the creation that God has so generously given us. Failure to do so will lead to our own destruction as a species.

God creating the stars, from a late fourteenth-century French manuscript

[1] See Philip Hefner, 'The Evolution of the Created Co-Creator', in *Cosmos as Creation: Theology and Science in Consonance*, edited by Ted Peters (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 211–234, here 211.

Creation and the Created Co-Creator

In his article 'Cosmology, Creation, and Contingency', Robert John Russell notes, 'In the early church the creation tradition was articulated in two distinct models: *creatio ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing) and *creatio continua* (continuing creation)'. He further elaborates, 'the *ex nihilo* argument first of all affirms that God alone is the source of all that is, and God's creative activity is free and unconditioned'. On the other hand, 'The notion of *creation continua* stands for God's continuing involvement with the world. Not only does God relate to creation as a whole but also to every moment, and God's fundamental relation is as creator.'[2] This is a significant point for me here because it ties up with St Ignatius' image of a 'labouring God' in the third point of his Contemplation to Attain Love, the last key meditation in the *Spiritual Exercises* (Exx 236). As Judith Roemer and George Schemel note, 'A favorite name and image of God for Ignatius was *Deus Operatius*, God the worker. God is at work in the world, and the point of one's offering is that one labors with Him.'[3]

In developing the concept of the 'created co-creator', Philip Hefner also uses the models of *creatio ex nihilo* and *creatio continua*. According to Hefner, the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, 'affirms that God is the source of all that is'. However, 'The doctrine has less to do with origins than it does with dependence. Rather, as a methodological strategy, it insists that everything that is depends for its being on God the creator.' He continues, 'Creation also refers to God's ongoing sustaining of the world. Every moment of the world's existence depends on the ongoing grace of God.' And, since creation is thus dependent upon God, he argues that creation itself, including humans as created beings, is like God: 'there is a correlation between the nature of the world and the nature of the God who created the world'. Accordingly, Hefner asserts, 'God creates and so do we'. He concludes:

> I recommend that we think of the human being as the *created co-creator*. This term does a number of things. Because we are *created*, we are reminded that we are dependent creatures. We depend for our very existence on our cosmic and biological prehistory; we depend on

[2] Robert John Russell, 'Cosmology, Creation, and Contingency', in *Cosmos as Creation*, 177–210, here 180. Russell also notes, 'an increasing number of theologians working to appropriate a scientific perspective seem to agree on the emerging vitality and importance of *creatio continua*' (181).

[3] Judith Roemer and George Schemel, *Beyond Individuation to Discipleship: A Directory for Those Who Give the Spiritual Exercises* (Scranton: Institute for Contemporary Spirituality, 2000), 287.

> the creative grace of God. Yet, we are also *creators*, using our cultural freedom and power to alter the course of historical events and perhaps even evolutionary events. We participate with God in the ongoing creative process. In addition, the term 'created co-creator' connotes the fact that we have a destiny. We have a future toward which we are being drawn by God's will.[4]

We can look to Jesus Christ himself who, through the incarnation, entered our human condition and became fully human like us, as our example. He fully participated in and carried out God's work in the world through his human ministry. Hefner underlines that, 'In his life, death, and teachings, Jesus offers us the possibilities for raising human living to a higher plane, one which will reveal new ways of adapting to the reality system of nature and of God'.[5] Drawing on the insights of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, John Haught corroborates Hefner's point: 'each of us is part of an immense cosmic drama of transformation, a fact that may give new significance to our lives and works no matter how ineffectual these may sometimes seem'.[6]

Spiritual Direction as Co-Creation

Almost any kind of work or occupation is a potential expression of our call and role as created co-creators. As Hefner affirms, 'We have been created *as* co-creators …. We could not even choose to be created as non-creators. God chose. That we exist as created co-creators is God's decision, not ours.'[7] The most natural way of living out this role is through the work in which we engage. Our work is our way of co-creating with the God who created us as co-creators. This point is also stressed by Jordan Ballor:

> That human beings were created to be creators, to work, is undeniable. The anthropological concept of *homo faber*, man the tool-maker, attests to this basic aspect of what it means to be human. From a Christian perspective, we confess that human beings make things in a way that imitates their Maker. While God creates 'out of nothing' (*ex nihilo*) and then orders and arranges it, we create in a creaturely way, dependent on God's primary acts of creation. All this is true about the human person, and it is good that it is so.[8]

[4] Hefner, 'Evolution of the Created Co-Creator', 226–228.
[5] Hefner, 'Evolution of the Created Co-Creator', 230.
[6] John Haught, 'Teilhard de Chardin: Theology for an Unfinished Universe', in *From Teilhard to Omega: Co-Creating an Unfinished Universe,* edited by Ilia Delio (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2014), 7–23, here 21.
[7] Hefner, 'Evolution of Co-Created Creator', 227.
[8] Jordan Ballor, *Get Your Hands Dirty: Essays on Christian Social Thought (and Action)* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2013), 48.

I chose to highlight the work of spiritual direction as a way of co-creating with God here because of the unique nature of this work and ministry, which focus on our relationship with God itself.

William Barry writes, 'Throughout the history of the church people have sought the help of other members of the church to nurture their interior life. Such help has taken many forms.'[9] One of these is spiritual direction, which is defined by Barry, writing with William Connolly, as,

> … help given by one believer to another that enables the latter to pay attention to God's personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship. The focus … is on experience, not ideas, and specifically on the religious dimension of experience, i.e. that dimension of any experience that evokes the presence of the mysterious Other whom we call God. Moreover, this experience is viewed, not as an isolated event, but as an expression of the ongoing personal relationship God has established with each one of us.[10]

It follows from this definition that the person playing the role of the spiritual director journeys closely with another human being, the directee; and, through an encounter that is open and loving, a sacred space is created for the directee to be able to listen to God and explore God's will in his or her day-to-day life experience. If the human person, then, is participating in God's ongoing work of creation, he or she has to have a sense and knowledge—no matter how vague, since we cannot fully comprehend God, who is infinite—of how this participation will take place in the concrete, since our relationship with God covers all the dimensions of our lives. Hence, spiritual direction offers us the opportunity to explore the realm of God's action in our lives and how God wants us to take part in the world.

St Ignatius and the Spiritual Exercises

The Christian tradition is rich in various spiritualities and various traditions of spiritual direction, each with its own ways of praying and approaching God. I shall focus on St Ignatius of Loyola here because of his unique contribution to the Church with the formulation and formalisation of what he called the Spiritual Exercises. I believe that

[9] William Barry, *Spiritual Direction and the Encounter with God: A Theological Inquiry* (Mahwah: Paulist, 2004), 1.
[10] William Barry and William Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* (New York: HarperCollins, 1982), 8–9.

these can be particularly effective for helping us to stay faithful to our role as God's created co-creators in our specific work and life contexts.

St Ignatius, in the words of Monty Williams, 'was a venal, ambitious member of the Spanish minor nobility in the sixteenth century, who, by reflecting on his life, discovered a path to God'. This process, Williams continues, 'transformed him, and he transformed the known world. He found the Jesuits, whose charism is to offer, to whoever desires it, a way of discerning that leads to a lived intimacy with God in the world.'[11] This 'way of discerning' is at the heart of St Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises.

The Spiritual Exercises are, as Lavinia Byrne writes, both a process and a text; she summarises the content of both:

> The events of the life of Jesus form the backbone of the Spiritual Exercises. The person who is making the Exercises is invited to share the same process as Ignatius has undergone and be exposed to the gospel story in the way that he himself had found so beneficial. And so the Exercises follow a four-week pattern. During the First Week the one who is making them is invited to reflect upon the love and goodness of God our creator. During the Second Week the events of the incarnation, birth and public ministry of Jesus form the matter for prayer and reflection. The Third Week is spent considering the passion and death of Jesus, while the Fourth opens with the resurrection narratives and moves onwards to consideration of God the giver of all things who is constantly giving gifts from above and inviting us to seek and find the divine presence in all things.[12]

The Exercises must be taken as one integral whole. However an extended discussion of their intricacies and richness is beyond the scope of this essay. So I shall focus on just two elements: the Examen and the Rules for Discernment, which I hold to be directly related to co-creation spirituality.

The Examen

In the overall structure of the *Spiritual Exercises*, the Examen is located after the Principle and Foundation (Exx 23), which is the gateway into the Exercises, and before the meditation on sin (Exx 45 and following). David Fleming notes:

[11] Monty Williams, *The Gift of Spiritual Intimacy: Following the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius* (Toronto: Novalis, 2009), 23.
[12] Lavinia Byrne, 'The Spiritual Exercises: A Process and a Text', in *The Way of Ignatius of Loyola*, edited by Philip Sheldrake (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1991), 17–27, here 18–19.

> Ignatius would have the director first prepare the retreatant to become reflective about God's presence or absence in the events of one's daily life. And so he presents first a way of making an examination of conscience, not just in terms of preparing ourselves for the sacrament of reconciliation, but a daily practice which today we have identified as a consciousness examen or an awareness examen. Since a reflective awareness is necessary for anyone making the Exercises, an understanding of this exercise has its primary importance right from the beginning of the retreat. The examen also remains the central exercise in an Ignatian spirituality of finding God in all things.[13]

The Examen occupies a prominent place in the Spiritual Exercises; Ignatius himself is known to have remained faithful to the practice and considered it indispensable.[14] As Donald St Louis writes, 'Ignatius saw the Examen fundamentally as a prayer of discernment, a vitally illuminating and dynamic experience of prayerful reflection that both celebrates and enhances one's awareness and response to the Lord who is ever-present in our human experience'.[15] Therefore, it is my conviction that this five-point prayer, starting with gratitude, followed by petition, review, forgiveness and culminating in renewal, is also vital to co-creation spirituality.[16]

Rules for the Discernment of Spirits

If we are to co-create with God, then it is imperative that we know what God wants and how God operates in our individual lives and in the world. It is in this light that the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits are another essential part of co-creation spirituality as I understand it. Michael Ivens notes, 'As well as contributing to the process of the Exercises themselves, the rules have considerable value in meeting the particular needs of today's world and Church'.[17] And Donald St Louis affirms,

> Ignatius's Rules for the Discernment of Spirits help to provide some specific criteria and hermeneutical principles for identifying and interpreting the action of God and the enemy …, to detect the subtle interplay of grace and selfishness that weave into the fabric of one's response to the grace-gift of God.[18]

[13] David Fleming, *Draw Me into Your Friendship* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 29.
[14] See Michael Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998), 33.
[15] Donald St Louis, 'The Ignatian Examen', in *Way of Ignatius Loyola*, 155.
[16] I find Timothy Gallagher's book, *The Examen Prayer: Ignatian Wisdom for Our Lives Today* (New York: Crossroad, 2006), very helpful and accessible in its pastoral approach in teaching this prayer.
[17] Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, 205.
[18] St Louis, 'Ignatian Examen', 158.

In this way, through the grace of God and with the guidance of a spiritual director, we are able to identify how we are moving towards or away from God, cooperating with or resisting God's actions in our lives.

St Ignatius divided the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits into two sets: the first fourteen rules (Exx 313–327) are meant for those who are in the First Week of the Exercises, while the second set of eight (Exx 328–336) are for those in the Second Week. As Roemer and Schemel explain, 'The First Week is concerned with the basics of spirituality', while 'the Second Week person is much more concerned about the quality of decisions he or she will make for the Kingdom ….'[19] Through spiritual direction, the person making the Exercises will be helped to determine which set of rules is applicable to him or her.

It is important to bear in mind that this process of discernment remains full of nuances and subtleties, and has its own particular complexities. However, David Fleming is right to assert, 'One of Ignatius's greatest gifts is his Rules for Discernment …. He showed how God speaks a language to us through our feelings.' Feelings are very real to us; thus, God becomes very real and close to us as well. It follows then that, 'Prayer, and growing familiarity with God, and an intimate knowledge of Jesus and his actions are all elements of a discerning heart'.[20]

Elizabeth Liebert and the Social Discernment Cycle

At the Center for Spirituality and Justice in the Bronx in the 1980s Elinor Shea and others pioneered an approach to the interconnectedness of spirituality and justice, and the role of spiritual direction in bringing them together, based on the 'pastoral circle' of Joe Holland and Peter Henriot.[21] The pastoral circle has four 'moments': *insertion*, that is, 'inserting our approach close to the experiences of ordinary people'; *social analysis* of these experiences; *theological reflection* 'in the light of living faith, scripture, church social teaching, and the resources of tradition'; and *pastoral planning*, deciding how to respond to the results of the analysis and reflection.[22]

Elizabeth Liebert added features to this model, adapting it to create what is now known as the Social Discernment Cycle, and has made it

[19] Roemer and Schemel, *Beyond Individuation*, 181, 227.
[20] David Fleming, *'What Is Ignatian Spirituality?'* (Chicago: Loyola, 2008), 89.
[21] See Elinor Shea, 'Spiritual Direction and Social Consciousness', in *Way of Ignatius Loyola*, 203–215, here 203.
[22] Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983), 8–9.

central in her own work in group discernment. Citing the significant contributions of the theologians Walter Wink and Eleazar Fernandez in the analysis of the systemic evil that is present in the world, Liebert asserts that, 'it is systems that preserve both justice and injustice'.[23]

> The Social Discernment Cycle is designed to address large and small systems, to help us take concrete steps in the face of systemic complexity, be it in one's family, workplace, neighborhood, school, or church, in local or national politics, or in response to the global ecological crisis. The only way we can affect the future is to do the right thing in the present. Social Discernment helps us discern what the 'right thing' might be, and, together, take the first step. It helps us make 'little moves against destructiveness' as well as 'little moves for constructiveness'.[24]

She further elaborates:

> Oppression is maintained not simply by a series of individual unjust actions. Indeed, the insidiousness of oppression of all kinds is that it transcends individual actors. Personal actions to repair damaged relationship, while laudatory, do not get at the root of systemic oppression. Rooting out systemic oppression, as well as making lasting system change that enhances positive elements, requires action upon

[23] Liebert, *Soul of Discernment*, 30; see also 36–40. And see Walter Wink, *The Powers That Be: Theology for a New Millennium* (New York: Doubleday, 1998) on the 'Domination System' present in the world, (37–62). Eleazar Fernandez, *Reimagining the Human: Theological Anthropology in Response to Systemic Evil* (St Louis: Chalice, 2004) draws on Fernandez's own context as a Filipino theologian based in the United States, and identifies classism, sexism, racism and 'naturism' (environmental destruction) as among the major forms of systemic evil that pervade our reality (34–35).

[24] Liebert, *Soul of Discernment*, 3.

> the whole system. Once we move from personal to systemic analysis, we realize why so many of our well-intentioned actions either make no difference in the system or invite perverse reactions from the system, making a bad situation worse.[25]

Hence, it is imperative that we broaden our process of discernment beyond the personal level and include the unjust and oppressive structures and systems that continue to exist in our own societies and homelands, and in the world at large. As created co-creators, we deal and live with these systems: systems that are composed of human beings, but have acquired both power and personality of their own.

Co-Creation and Change

While I was writing this, I was also doing my Examen twice daily, asking God if my inspiration was coming from God, if I was on the right track. With all sincerity, I did not write and study simply in order to gain my qualification; I wanted to bring something back to my country to help my people. I have an ardent desire for change. I cannot be deaf and blind any more to the suffering of the poor because of the unjust social, economic and political structures that continue to exist in the Philippines, my home, and in the world beyond. The only tools I have at my disposal are spiritual direction and the Spiritual Exercises. I want to find a way to use them as well as I can. This is why I want to articulate the meaning of co-creation spirituality. I find Liebert's words encouraging when she says:

> If an action is well timed and placed at a leverage point in the interlocking forces that compose the system, sometimes a single actor or a single decision can move an entire system. One person can change the direction of a work situation. One person can propose a new ministry that catches a congregation's imagination. One person has sometimes headed off a war. One person can change a system, which in turn changes other systems, forming a network of cascading changes unimaginable from the point of the first contemplative action.[26]

I propose to define co-creation spirituality as a way of being and proceeding in the world, individually and collectively, highlighting the role and the call of the human person as a created co-creator with God. Underlying this is the privilege and responsibility of active participation in God's ongoing work of creation in every dimension of our life and existence.

[25] Liebert, *Soul of Discernment*, 9.
[26] Liebert, *Soul of Discernment*, 123.

I believe that the knowledge of co-creation spirituality brings into the human consciousness an awareness of our true nature as God's created co-creators. As such, it gives human beings a sense of dignity and honour that what they are doing in their profession, work or ministry is not merely a mundane task but actually a meaningful participation in God's creation. I hold that it is important to have this awareness lest we get caught up in the daily routine and grind of doing something over and over again without having a sense of where it is leading.

Since spiritual direction and the Spiritual Exercises tap into the innermost dynamics of the human person involved in them with the desire to know God's will and follow it in freedom, these practices become concrete ways of participating in God's ongoing work of creation. However, every job, profession or useful activity has the potential to participate in the good that God is doing in the world if we are attuned to God and desire to align our thoughts, intentions and actions with God. As William Yeomans aptly states, 'Wholeheartedness in the service of God demands a constant effort of discernment, a growing sensitivity to the will of God. Without this, generosity can lead only to "the expense of spirit in a waste of shame".'[27]

But spiritual direction and the Spiritual Exercises, in particular the Examen and the Rules for Discernment of Spirits, have especial promise as effective methods for transforming the oppressive and unjust structures in the world. These processes enable the person to see him- or herself in graced openness and honesty, and inform that person if he or she is digressing from the path that leads to God. Walter Wink states: 'God at one and the same time *upholds* a given political or economic system, since some such system is required to support human life; *condemns* that system insofar as it is destructive of fully human life; and *presses for its transformation* into a more humane order'.[28] Since all systems and structures are made up of human beings who are endowed with the promise and possibility of being transformed, therefore, oppressive and unjust systems and structures can be transformed as well.

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[27] William Yeomans, 'Two Standards', *The Way Supplement*, 1 (1965), 20.
[28] Wink, *Powers That Be*, 32.

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A SINGLE WORD

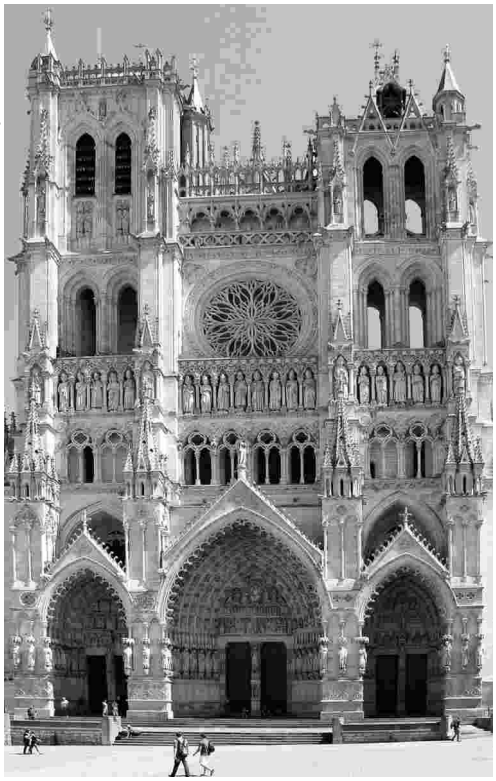
Teresa White

THE MEMBERS OF my religious congregation, the Faithful Companions of Jesus, have always had a special interest in the town of Amiens in northern France. It was in Amiens in 1820 that our founder, Marie Madeleine d'Houët—after much prayer, and having risen above not a few difficulties with the Jesuits of Saint Acheul College (on the outskirts of the city) who were guiding her—reached the point of starting the work that she felt called by God to do: she opened the doors of her first little school on the corner of Rue des Augustins and Rue Dupuis. The house where she and her early companions lived, and where they taught the poor children who were their first pupils, is in the shadow of Amiens Cathedral.

Last summer, I spent a week in that house with another sister, and we had the opportunity to absorb something of what Gerard Manley Hopkins calls the 'air things wear' in that special place.[1] Each day, on our way to morning Mass in the cathedral, we walked along the cobbled streets that Marie Madeleine had walked two hundred years earlier with the same destination in mind. As we entered that truly amazing edifice, I came under its spell. One rainy day—and there was only one—I was moved to look up a few of the historical details. Such was the prosperity of this town of woad-dyers and cloth-merchants that the building of Amiens Cathedral, begun in 1220, was completed within a mere seventy years (the far more famous Notre Dame de Paris took two hundred), in 1288.

Summer is the time when millions of tourists, in Europe and elsewhere, choose to walk on the holy ground of historic churches and cathedrals. In France, where usually there is no entrance fee, they can do it for free—the inevitable queues are not for tickets but for security checks. The sanctity of a holy place 'shall not depart from it', says T. S. Eliot, in spite of the influx of 'sightseers with guide-books looking over it'.[2] I was

[1] Gerard Manley Hopkins, 'In the Valley of the Elwy', in *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, edited by W. H. Gardner (Oxford: OUP, 1979), 68.
[2] T. S. Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*, in *The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909–1950* (London: Faber, 1969), 221.



The façade of Amiens Cathedral

reminded of this during those daily visits to the cathedral in Amiens, when tourists with guidebooks were certainly not lacking, even though many of those who visit it today probably do not share the faith of those who built it. During those days, I became aware that there is a tranquil stability about this cathedral, so that, although massive—it is the largest Gothic cathedral in France—the structure feels light and balanced. For me, Notre Dame d'Amiens shares that sense of blessing that Eliot experienced in Canterbury; it is one of those timeless 'holy places' in which the proximity of God is perceptible.

Is it possible to label a whole era using a single word? In France, I have heard it done, tongue in cheek, in a succession of rhyming words: the essence of the High Middle Ages, for example, is encapsulated by *faith, la foi*. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries came the Renaissance—a time of reawakening, enthusiasm, exploration, discovery which is impossible to sum up in a single word, even for the French! There was no problem with the seventeenth-century word, though: it had to be *le roi*, for in France at that time the Sun King, Louis XIV, was seen and expected to be seen as the centre of the public life of the nation, his importance duly and grandly expressed in the arts, in architecture and literature. In the eighteenth century, the Age of Enlightenment, the word *law*, *la loi*, expressed something of the certainties generated by the use of reason and scientific method advocated by the philosophers of the period. For the nineteenth century, with the flowering of Romanticism and its emphasis on emotion and individualism, what more appropriate sobriquet could there be than *le moi*: *me* or *myself*? *La foi, le roi, la loi, le moi*—I have not yet heard an attempt to capture the

spirit of the twentieth century in a word, but bearing in mind the growth of consumerism in the context of democratic freedom (and keeping to the rhyme scheme), *le choix* is a possible contender!

In so many ways the concept of *la foi* does, concisely and admirably, summarise what we have come to understand as the cultural atmosphere of the High Middle Ages. Generally considered to have begun about the year 1000 and continuing until the end of the thirteenth century, this is the period when the great Gothic cathedrals were being constructed all over Europe, with Christian faith as the mainspring of the whole endeavour. It would seem that a deep religious sensibility pervaded the lives of people in medieval Europe and, since the cathedral was so much a local expression of that sensibility, perhaps it was felt, if only inchoately, that nothing human was irrelevant within its walls.

And so all human life is to be found there: the good and the bad, the great and the small, the beautiful and the ugly. Marilynne Robinson holds that 'theology supports an ultimate coherency that can embrace equally the true, the tentative and the flawed, as reality itself embraces them'.[3] Amiens Cathedral is a splendid example of that ultimate coherence. Its theology is carved in stone or, in the case of the exquisite blond oak choir stalls, in wood, and it encompasses some surprising examples of reality, true and flawed.

The Choir Stalls

Although the exterior of the cathedral was completed before the end of the thirteenth century, the interior decoration continued for a very long time after that. The 110 remaining choir stalls (the guidebooks say that originally there were 120), for example, were constructed in the early sixteenth century, and they exemplify the skill and artistry of the woodcarvers of the late medieval period; it seems that local craftsmen from the Picardy region were engaged to work on them.

By good luck, we happened to visit the cathedral on the one day in the month when it was possible to enter the choir stalls and see the misericords at close quarters—for the rest of the time the wrought iron gates are locked, and, though one can look through the bars, many of the carvings are too small to be seen clearly from that distance. When I went inside, I found myself drawn to these misericords. A device inherited from the monastic tradition, the misericord was a ledge projecting from

[3] Marilynne Robinson, *What Are We Doing Here?* (London: Virago, 2018), 102.

the underside of each hinged seat in the choir stalls. When the seat was folded back, the ledge gave support to the monk or cleric leaning against it, reducing the discomfort of standing for long periods in one position. So cathedral misericords were devised out of compassion (*misericordia*) for the canons, who, like monks in their monasteries, spent a good part of each day standing in the choir stalls, chanting psalms and hymns, and reciting prayers prescribed for the canonical hours of matins, lauds, prime, terce, sext, none, vespers and compline—no wonder they needed a compassionate ledge to lean against!

Misericords are small and discreet, and I discovered that, since at first it was thought irreverent to 'sit' on holy images, in decorating them the carvers did not portray biblical characters and scenes. Instead, they were given the freedom to carve non-religious subjects—after all, no one was going to look at them with very much care or attention. As a result, in the older Gothic cathedrals of Europe, the bas-relief carvings on misericords cover the whole spectrum of the human, animal, mythical and astronomical worlds, as well as offering fascinating glimpses into everyday life in medieval times.

It was only in the sixteenth century that biblical scenes began to be included as part of the accepted decoration of misericords, and the Amiens stalls, begun in 1508 and completed about ten years later, benefited from this innovation. And so, beneath all those compassionate ledges, we find miniature sculptures depicting the principal Old Testament stories: Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, the Tower of Babel, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, David and Job. However, in many of the other carvings in the choir stalls there is a wonderful variety of subjects, sometimes reverently sacred and sometimes irreverently profane.

Non-Biblical Themes

The theology of Amiens Cathedral wordlessly depicts the truth that grace comes when we acknowledge who and what we are, and when we ask God to intervene in our lives. It seems that 'finding God in all things' was intrinsic to life in medieval times and so, within the sacred space of the choir stalls, we find an assortment of figures that happily blend ordinary human living with faith in God.

On the 'pendentives', the ornate sculptures hanging from the wooden vaults of the choir enclosure and on the armrests of the seats, we see local people, and are given ample evidence of their everyday concerns: their maladies (blindness, madness, truncated or malformed limbs), their trades, their customs, their sometimes questionable morals. Among them

are brigands, murderers, hair-pullers, several fools (some are jesters, some grotesquely 'insane'), compulsive drinkers, gluttons, beggars, prostitutes—there is much to stir recognition of the grandeur and misery of the human condition.

The more sedate characters include a tailor cutting cloth and a worried-looking apothecary busily stirring some mixture in a large bowl. Then there is a somewhat distracted nun, as well as a schoolmaster sternly admonishing a young scholar. The cathedral clergy are represented by two lugubrious cantors intoning a psalm at divine office and a canon, lips parted, solemnly making the scripture reading. A laundress, one hand in a bowl of imaginary water, and an embroiderer with her reels of thread have their place too, as well as an old serving-woman, bowed down under the weight of a huge cauldron.

Two faces look at us with a gentleness that reaches across the centuries: a kindly-looking vintager with a curly beard and a backpack full of grapes on his shoulders, and a serene-faced scribe, stylus in hand, writing in his notebook. A clog-maker makes an appearance, and a minter striking coins, both engrossed in their work. Three young boys, bodies intertwined, are seen vigorously wrestling, and an exhausted pilgrim carries a staff and rosary beads. There is also an attractive dairymaid sitting on a stool—no space for the cow, but her bucket is at the ready—and a young woman with a hand-mirror, clearly rehearsing the art of *coquetterie*.

Not surprisingly, there are several carpenters—the models were readily available—one, a master carver (who has signed his name several times in the choir stalls: Ian Trupin) is shown deftly shaping a wooden figurine, while another has obviously allowed his concentration to wander …. An intriguing carving shows two grim faces side by side, peering out of a hood which covers both heads. But the *pièce de résistance* is surely an angry woman, distaff in hand, giving her husband a good beating!

© Stephen Murray

These representations of everyday life were not simply ornaments, but were carved specifically to be placed in the house of God. Do they reflect a desire to recognise God's presence at the heart of things? Do they aim to show that the divine, the mystery that animates all things, embraces not only the beautiful but also the twisted, the painful, even the cruel? Perhaps they express a yearning for a better world, and a resolution to love rather than condemn the troublemaker, the wrongdoer, and to seek to understand rather than rush to judgment. Are they evidence of a desire to protect the vulnerable, the innocent, the hurt and the weak?

We cannot know for sure the answer to these questions, but it may well be affirmative. In spite of all the terrible things we have to face in the years that are allotted to us, the voice of faith tells us, in the words of Julian of Norwich, that 'all shall be well'. In addition, the forgiving, far-seeing perspective of humour seems to have been second nature to those medieval artists, who sensed the 'ultimate coherency' in the common and the simple, the droll and the quirky. Humour fosters an inner harmony, a harmony that becomes palpable when one contemplates the statuary and carvings in Amiens Cathedral, inside and outside the building.

The Life of Mary

Mary is the patron saint of the cathedral, and in the choir stalls a series of reliefs depicts her life. These are particularly interesting because most the details are taken not from the New Testament, in which Mary appears relatively rarely, but from the Apocrypha.[4] So, in a kind of enlarged comic-strip format, we see Anne and Joachim meeting at the Golden Gate of Jerusalem, and an angel announcing to Anne the news that she will soon give birth to a daughter. The birth of Mary follows, with a neatly swaddled baby being given to Anne by the midwife. We also see the child Mary at Anne's knee, learning to read, and her presentation in the Temple by her parents. Mary's education is not neglected; and there she is, studying with three girls of her own age. In another carving, an older Mary is shown at her loom, weaving industriously. An interesting panel shows the choice of Joseph, from among several other suitors, as a spouse for Mary, and their betrothal ceremony.

[4] It was only in 1546, at the Council of Trent, that the Church reconfirmed the scriptural canon of St Augustine and excluded the Apocrypha from the Christian Bible.

Interspersed at this point are familiar representations of scenes based on the Gospels—the annunciation, the visitation, the nativity, Cana and so on—but a further panel, also inspired by the Apocrypha, depicts Joseph apologising to Mary for his lack of trust in her, while an angel unites the couple in 'mystical marriage'. Yet another apocryphal text is the source of a scene which Ignatius, in the *Spiritual Exercises*, takes for granted (Exx 299): the risen Jesus appearing to his mother. The final scene shows Mary after her Assumption, being crowned by Jesus in heaven.

As Christians, we believe that we write the story of our lives with God's eyes upon us. The carvings in Amiens Cathedral are charged with that faith, and because of it, they are overflowing with significance for those of us who share it. They encompass a deep sensitivity to the symbolic and the spiritual, together with a wholesome attachment to the world—God's world and our common home. This is surely the special gift of art: to show us what we already know but often forget: that eternity exists in the ordinary, concrete experiences of everyday life. As Gerard Manley Hopkins expressed it: 'This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, patch, matchwood, immortal diamond,/Is immortal diamond'.[5] That single word, *faith*, which in my view captures so much of the spirit of the Middle Ages, reveals the sparkle of the diamond, assures us that God is with us in our everyday lives and always will be.

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[5] Hopkins 'That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection', in *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 106.

CULTIVATING SILENCE IN LIFELONG FAITH FORMATION

Karen Howard

> I encountered God for the first time in a large flowering currant bush. It was springtime and I was eight. I wasn't expecting to see Him in my garden. I recognised him though in the exquisite beauty of the abundant pink/red tubular flowers and the fresh green of the new leaves of the bush. I saw the fullness of new life burgeoning forth from stems that had been stark and dreary just a few weeks before. God spoke to my heart, in the cool April breeze, of his love for me. It opened my eight-year-old eyes to see the world as a gift from God to love and enjoy, and that God's love was for all. It remains my burning bush experience because I knew then I was on sacred ground, yet I counselled myself not to speak to anyone of this encounter as the God of home and school was a God to whom I was to be obedient and frankly, was rather joyless. My God of the flowering currant bush was both joyous and full of love.[1]

TODAY OUR WORLD is overwhelmed with noise. At the same time, many people are promoting the value of silence and meditation, even from secular contexts. Book after book is coming out about the significance of silence, and people are turning to meditation in all its various forms to try to cope with the multi-tasking lifestyle into which so many of us have let ourselves be seduced.[2] I recently stumbled upon a massive Buddhist meditation centre in the midst of a quaint New England town not far from where I live.[3] It seemed a bit out of place. You can now download several mobile phone apps for mindfulness training,

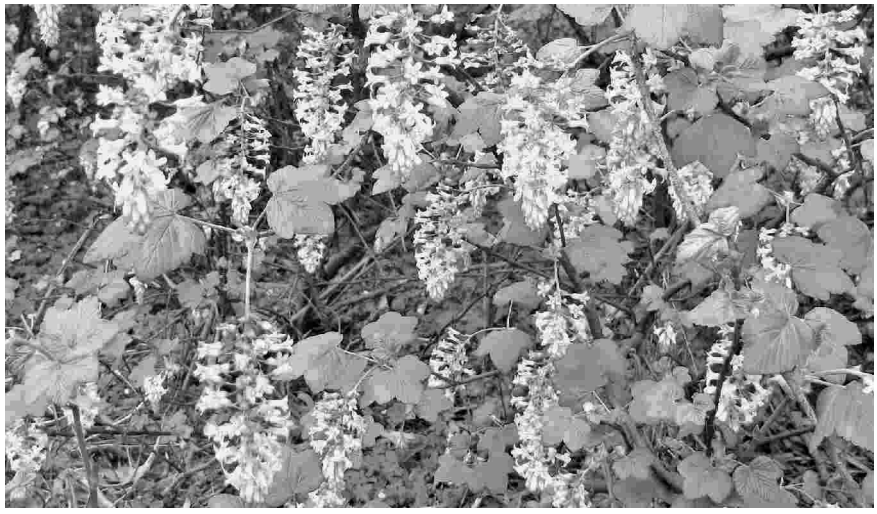
[1] Kate Harris, 'Finding God in Unexpected Places', at https://www.pathwaystogod.org/finding-god-unexpected-places. Kate Harris remembers a childhood experience that set her on a path to knowing God. She is a member of Christian Life Community and an active parishioner at Corpus Christi Boscombe.

[2] See, for example, Martin Laird, *Into the Silent Land: A Guide to the Christian Practice of Contemplation* (New York: Oxford UP, 2006); Robert Cardinal Sarah, *The Power of Silence* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2017); Robert Sardello, *Silence: The Mystery of Wholeness* (Benson: Goldenstone, 2006).

[3] Wat Nawamintararachutis Buddhist Meditation Center, 382 South Street, Raynham, MA 02767, USA.

as well as examine by the minute how many other people are trying to meditate at any given time. Many of these apps are not necessarily tied to religious faith at all.[4] Contemplative societies and organizations are popping up everywhere, and some of these are not linked to religious creeds or convictions either.[5] Sometimes this results in secular society hijacking what were formerly religious endeavours and giving them a rather worldly, pragmatic and pseudo-scientific spin.

We are all beginning to recognise that we need silence in order to function and think clearly as human beings. In no other place, however, is silence and meditation more crucial than in religious formation. To be able to still one's self and turn off the world, so to speak, is crucial if one wants to hear the voice of God. The Benedictine abbot Christopher Jamison rightly tells us that 'Silence is the gateway to the soul, and the soul is the gateway to God'.[6] If we lose silence, we run the risk of losing access to our soul, and that gateway may close. Little eight-year-old Kate could only encounter the God she met in her burning bush during that cool April day by having the opportunity to listen, and to see the beauty in a quiet, still garden. To cultivate silence for the many different levels of faith formation needs to be a deliberate effort. We have to plan for it, make room for it and beg God to give us the graces for it.



[4] See https://www.mindful.org/free-mindfulness-apps-worthy-of-your-attention/. The Insight Timer app proclaims '420,065 meditations today, 5,059 meditating right now'.

[5] See http://www.contemplativemind.org/about/vision.

[6] *The Big Silence*, television series produced by Dollan Cannell (London: BBC/Tiger Aspect, 2010), quoted in the series booklet, Paul Nicholson, *Growing into Silence* (London: Society of Jesus, 2010), 3.

Taizé, Days of Silence, Adoration, Dharma Dialogues and More

Taizé

A few years ago, my parish began to host Taizé prayer services, those ecumenical services that originated at Taizé in France after World War II and are composed of scripture, simple chants, beautiful artwork and silence.[7] The services are dramatic, since they are set in candlelight, with large hangings of red and orange fabric which symbolize the Holy Spirit's presence and serve as a backdrop for icons. Scripture is read, chants are sung, prayer intentions are voiced and there are several periods of silence. The senses are surrounded by stimuli intended to bring people to prayer. Since young adults often respond dramatically to this type of service, I took several of my college classes to experience Taizé as well.

Of all the parts of the service, participants repeatedly stated they valued silence the most. The parishioners liked it so much that they began to ask questions about why silence is so valuable. The parish hosted a few video showings of *The Big Silence*, a reality television series from the BBC in which five very busy people of different ages and backgrounds begin to examine how they might incorporate more silence into their lives. In the series, the participants first go away to Worth Abbey in West Sussex for a weekend to experience a little silence, before returning home to try it out in everyday life. All fail rather miserably, but then they agree to try harder and wind up at St Beuno's Jesuit retreat house in Wales for an eight-day silent retreat. Immersing themselves in silence and meeting with a spiritual director for only twenty minutes a day, they are all dramatically changed by their experience.

Days of Silence

After the parishioners viewed the BBC series, some began to ask for more opportunities for silence for themselves. Challenged by the programme, they wondered if they could cope with a single day of silence. So we tried a Day of Silence with Scripture, posting scripture quotations on trees all around our rather extensive parish property and invited them to reflect on the passages. (The parish land is adjacent to a diocesan day camp and includes lots of lovely pine trees along a lake.)

[7] See Karen Howard, 'Taizé, Contemplative Prayer and the Holy Spirit', *The Way*, 56/1 (January 2017), 63–75.

Some looked forward to this day with relish; others came to it with trepidation: a silent retreat, even for six or seven hours? It sounded daunting. But people who came to that first Day of Silence loved it, and wanted more. At the pastor's suggestion, we began to offer more of them, pairing them with the insights of a particular saint or spiritual master. The next one offered was a Day of Silence with Augustine; then came Catherine of Siena, John of the Cross, and later Julian of Norwich, Bernard of Clairvaux, Thomas Aquinas, Thomas Merton, Thérèse of Lisieux, Francis of Assisi, Gregory of Nyssa, Josemaría Escrivá and Dorothy Day. Padre Pio will be next.

These were outdoor retreats, so they were only offered in the spring, summer and autumn. Each day began with coffee and pastries, and an introduction offering a brief biography of the subject, then an opening prayer incorporating his or her words. After that, participants were invited to move into silence and left to wander around the property, stopping at any one of twelve stations to read what the chosen master had written. Selections were made the best to represent that person's thought and contemplative insights. Participants ate lunch on their own, but then gathered for prayer and a brief discussion of what they had learnt about God and/or themselves through the lens of the particular master. After that, they went back into silence for the remainder of the day. A chapel and a library were available during the whole day; confession was offered in the afternoon; and, if people wanted to do so, they could stay for the regular weekend liturgy right after the retreat ended.

The more times these days were offered, the more people began to tap into their meaning. They seemed to find a whole new way of thinking and reflecting by being in silence. They became better able to meet that silence and encounter the Holy One. Many who attended began to recognise that we need to unplug if we are ever to hear God's Word or voice. We cannot listen to God's wisdom in the midst of noise. As one woman put it after a recent Day of Silence, in order to hear God's voice, *we have to do this, somehow, every day.*

Eucharistic Adoration

It is not accidental that the devotion of Eucharistic Adoration is making a comeback in many parishes. Some even offer it around the clock and do not seem to have trouble finding adorers. To sit still before the Lord has a tremendous appeal for those who are harried by the world's events or dramas. In an article in *America*, Nathan Schneider gives the example

of Eucharistic Adoration as something vitally important upon which to focus when the world around us is so fragmented: 'This is a time of enthusiasms, of all-absorbing demands on our attention. From whatever direction we look, it's an especially hard moment to keep our eyes on the center, on the God of love ….'[8]

Devotion to the eucharist comes with silence. It comes with a stillness that can cultivate opportunities to hear the voice of God amid the noise. We can enter into the eucharistic heart and be at rest, taste that kind of rest described in the fourth chapter of Hebrews: a Sabbath rest, a complete rest.[9] At the heart of Eucharistic Adoration is silence before the One who matters, but it is not meant to be just for 'me and God', but for me, God and the whole Church. This silence has represented for many people a whole new way of thinking, of exploring our inner self and of listening for that one small whisper (1 Kings 19: 11–13) in order to have a meaningful conversation and relationship with God and with others.

Pope Benedict XVI would say, perhaps, that the renewal of Eucharistic Adoration comes just in time, for he sees it as a return to the *ressourcement* ('back to the sources') theology of the 1940s and 1950s, typified by Henri de Lubac and others, in which an examination of the New Testament and the early Church Fathers brought about a unity between dogmatic

[8] Nathan Schnieder, 'Adoration Economy: Where We Pay Attention, We Lend Our Power', *America* (3 April 2017), available at https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2017/03/07/adoration-economy-where-we-pay-attention-we-lend-our-power.

[9] 'A sabbath rest still remains for the people of God; for those who enter God's rest also cease from their labours as God did from his' (Hebrews 4: 9–10).

theology and the lived experience of the mystery of Christ and his Church. Robert Imbelli writes that Benedict's christology is beholden to de Lubac, who considers the mystery of Christ in a tripartite fashion, in terms of Christ's resurrected body, the eucharist and the Church.[10] Benedict himself ties Eucharistic Adoration to the liturgy and to a whole new maturity in faith:

> Receiving the Eucharist means adoring him whom we have received. Only in this way do we become one with him, and are given, as it were, a foretaste of the beauty of the heavenly divine liturgy. The act of adoration outside Mass prolongs and intensifies all that has taken place during the liturgical celebration itself. Indeed, only in adoration can a profound and genuine reception mature. And it is precisely this personal encounter with the Lord that then strengthens the social mission contained in the Eucharist, which seeks to break down not only the walls that separate the Lord and ourselves, but also and especially the walls that separate us from one another.[11]

The Dharma Dialogue Experiment

While adults in general are beginning to recognise and crave peace, silence and meditation time, because they may remember a simpler time and have enough life experience and wisdom to know that humans thrive on some of that, young adults are a different story. Those in the millennial generation have grown up with technology and seem to require almost permanent electronic appendages to their bodies. Unless they are forcibly unplugged, they may not even know what they are missing.

Two years ago, I introduced an assignment for my college freshers called 'Dharma Dialogues'. The Buddhist term *dharma* simply means 'attentive listening'; after a conversation with a colleague who was experimenting with a similar idea, I tried something rather simple, with a bit of a twist. What happened for these young college students was phenomenal. Early in September, I randomly paired students with a partner. They were told that, once a month from September to December, they needed to go out with their Dharma Dialogue partner for two hours; they could go to a film or a lecture or an exhibition, or even just out to dinner together. They were to get to know each other a bit, and then

[10] Robert Imbelli, 'The Christocentric Mystagogy of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI', in *The Renewal of Mystical Theology: Essays in Memory of John N. Jones*, edited by Bernard McGinn (New York: Herder, 2017), 238–262.
[11] Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum caritatis*, n. 66.

talk about the *ideas behind* the film or exhibition or lecture; if they just went out to dinner, they were to talk about ideas we were discussing in class.

During these Dharma Dialogue trips, however, they were to take no mobile phones, no GPS devices and no laptops, iPads or other internet gadgets. When students heard this assignment, especially as new freshers who had not yet even settled into college life, they were absolutely terrified! But by Christmas they thought it was the best part of the course. They learnt how to have a conversation with another human being, without the crutch of their phones, looking another person in the eyes—which many millennials seem to have difficulty in doing.[12] Students learnt to talk to each other, to get to know another individual rather quickly and quite personally, and to discuss ideas. They started to become more comfortable with using their own minds instead of turning to Wikipedia and Google.

While Taizé may have introduced students to silence and quiet, Dharma Dialogues brought these things into conversations and relationships, and a whole other way of communicating. They became more attentive to each other and more comfortable with silence and reflection. At the end of term, in their papers, some even wrote about how they could now communicate more with their parents and understand them better! In the spring semester I assigned new Dharma Dialogue partners and they could not wait to start getting to know another classmate whom they might have only passed in a row of desks.

Becoming more comfortable with silence and reflection

By the time we got to that second semester, I was starting each class with three minutes of silence after putting up a phrase on the board, usually from a thinker we were studying. The students loved the silence to begin a class; it helped them focus, and when they saw lines such as Descartes' '*Cogito, ergo sum*' placed alongside St John Paul II's '*Sum, ergo cogito*', they did not have to pull out their mobile phones or tablets to Google their significance.[13] They began to use their minds, in silence, to think. As an unexpected bonus, I found the Dharma Dialogue partners took things even further: they were studying together outside class, checking each other's papers before they handed them in, and discussing with each other concepts from class that they did not understand.

[12] If anyone is in any doubt about this, check out Sherry Turkle, *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age* (New York: Penguin, 2015).
[13] Descartes: 'I think, therefore I am'; John Paul II: 'I am, therefore I think'.

These simple exercises have had tremendous benefits for student resilience and maturity, which is a huge problem on college campuses today, and can have an even greater impact on faith formation. Helping each other become more comfortable with silence, and with genuine conversations which may have their own silent periods, as well as learning how to be attentive listeners, have a huge impact on prayer and on how we relate to a God who wants to be in an intimate relationship with us.

Children, Silence and Sound

Children today are just as over-scheduled as adults. Earlier generations allowed children to be children and to go outdoors, often unsupervised, simply to play. Today, children have 'play-dates' and organized events almost from the time they get up in the morning until the time they go to bed. Some of this stems from parent's concerns about their children's safety in a world that seems ever more dangerous. Some stems from the fact that often, in a household with two parents, both are working outside the home; and many children today are being raised by a single parent who *must* work outside the home.

The economy has curtailed free time, and time with their children has become a rare commodity for parents. Many children go from home to day care to school, back to day care, then to organized sports or activities, and then home, where they might have that play-date or they might not, but they simply must do their homework, eat supper and go to bed—only to start all over again the next day. Children do not have any 'downtime' or time simply to be. Nor do they have much quiet time. And those of younger and younger ages now have their own mobile phones. I have gone to birthday parties for four- and five-year-olds and seen children of that age group playing with internet devices. Children need quiet and silence just as much as adults—perhaps even more, since their brains are still developing.

From Erikson to Piaget to Kohlberg, we have learnt that humans progress through stages of psychosocial, cognitive and moral development.[14] James Fowler, in his works *Stages of Faith* and *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian*, applies a similar model to faith development.[15] In the

[14] Erik Erikson (1902–1994), Jean Piaget (1896–1980) and Lawrence Kohlberg (1927–1987) are foundational twentieth-century figures in developmental psychology.

[15] James Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper, 1981); James Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith* (San Francisco: Harper, 1984).

'synthetic-conventional' stage, during the early teen years, he describes how young adolescents are becoming open to abstract thought and exploring their own interiority. They thrive on silence and reflection if directed that way. This is an ideal time to begin to offer these young teens retreats and prayer experiences that utilise silence and reflection.

Long before Fowler, the well-known Italian educator Maria Montessori noticed how very young children, as young as three years of age, are also open and attuned to reverence and silence, especially if they are shown how to explore these, for example through the 'Silence Game'.[16] A catechetical programme developed worldwide in the 1950s by Sofia Cavaletti, a scripture scholar also from Italy, based its pedagogy on Montessori's insights.[17] Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is still being used in over thirty countries today and incorporates silence with every class.

No matter what catechetical programme is used with children, they have to be carefully taught. They have to be guided to use silence and reflection and reverence in order to approach their own burning bushes and begin to understand the relationships involved in faith. Burning bushes need cultivation.

Sharing Insights

Cultivation is an agricultural term. To cultivate a plant usually means preparing and tilling the ground in which it is to be planted, making sure it is watered and fed, taking care of weeding and allowing it plenty of time to bask in the sun. Perhaps one of the most telling aspects of learning how to cultivate silence is to open up the topic for discussion; farmers share secrets. Discussing prayer experiences with each other and the impact of silence on our prayer life helps us to learn better cultivation.

I was recently able to do this with a few parish cell-groups. These were formed as small groups to praise, sing, discuss and share faith while learning from one another how to evangelize better and become intentional disciples. One woman, for example, found that she thrived on silence; she said that she meets herself in the silence and loves it, especially the times she spends in Eucharistic Adoration and during the Days of Silence. She felt that when we are able to be still before the eucharist, that is when

[16] See Maria Montessori, *The Montessori Method: Scientific Pedagogy as Applied to Education in 'The Children's Houses'*, translated by Anne E. George (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1912), 211–212.
[17] See Sofia Cavaletti, *The Religious Potential of the Child* (New York: Missionary Society of St Paul the Apostle, 1983); Gianna Gobbi, *Listening to God with Children: The Montessori Method Applied to the Catechesis of Children*, translated by Rebekah Rojcewicz (Loveland: Treehouse, 1998).

we can most clearly hear the voice of God, above all if we are seeking an answer, or a direction, or struggling to understand something.

Another member of the cell-group felt that sometimes silence can simply be boring or empty, but added that, if one explores it deliberately, 'if one listens to the silence', one can dispel the boredom, enter into silence and meet God. Others pointed out that silence needs practice, that it begets more silence and that silence before the eucharist always seems to be fruitful. A man admitted that he struggles with silence and is trying to learn how to become more comfortable with it. Others felt that taking silence in small doses and then building, one step at a time, can dispel its scariness. Paying attention to breathing and posture or practising mindfulness can be a start. Engaging in *lectio divina* or pausing to gaze on an icon can also be helpful; so can honing our listening skills. The more we taste silence, the more we want. Jesuits have a word for that—*magis*. Recalling the Jesuit motto *ad majorem Dei gloriam,* for the greater glory of God, *magis* refers to the philosophy of always doing *more* for Christ, and therefore doing more for others. Silence invites *magis*.

One man talked about 'God-coincidences' in our lives, those times when multiple possibilities all seem to align themselves to get a message across. We cannot 'hear' these God-coincidences unless we are quiet and make room for an interior desert space where we can reflect on them. A woman recounted how she touches God the most in silence when she runs, especially when she runs at her preferred place, an outdoor

track. Running monotonously around the oval track functions almost like a labyrinth mantra or one of those repetitious Taizé chants. This is when she has the time to become quiet, to notice the sounds of birds or watch the clouds above. The rhythm of running in silence is what leads her to prayer.

Decades ago, I had a similar experience, which still surfaces today from time to time. It began when I started swimming early morning laps at a local pool. Swimming in laps, like running, can be monotonous, so I began to pair it with prayer, praying the 'Glory Be to the Father'. The more this continued, the more I felt I was experiencing the Trinity (and ever since then praying to the Trinity is my norm). I felt the three Persons of God enveloping and wrapping me in the water as I moved through it, trying to praise. Each stroke was part of the doxology. The rhythm of the water signalled to me a movement of the Trinity from one Person to the next, a reciprocal movement in love. When we are submerged in water, sound is muffled or even stilled. A particular primordial type of silence envelops us through water; we can touch God.

A man in the cell-group described how he encounters the living God in silence. He likened the experience to being a piano that is either in tune or out of tune. There is a vast difference between a tuned and an untuned piano.

> *In order to be able to respond as the instrumentalist intends* [God, in this case]*, the piano needs to be in tune, still and silent … tuning is derived through silence and when the tuning of our inner strings is not ready, we are less likely to be struck by the Word of God, less likely to resonate in the intended frequency and hear His voice. God presses the key and drops the hammer on the string. The more in tune we are the easier it is to produce the intended note and hear His voice.*

Encountering God, tuning our own strings and moving towards that perfect pitch is a profound encounter with the Holy One. As we get closer to that perfect pitch, God touches us and makes music with us. In order to tune a piano, it is necessary to be immersed in total silence.

Another woman spoke of walking the dog or having that cup of coffee after the children and husband have left for school and work in the morning. It becomes a sort of 'silent me time' to prepare for the day. It is a time for processing, and processing is one of the keys to the values of silence. In a world where we are inundated with facts, figures and noise, our brains need quiet to sort that data and process it before we can ever

own it and move on. Otherwise, we simply turn to the next pile of data. Processing our day is also a type of Examen. We need to ponder where Christ may be leading us and how we are following—or disregarding—his direction, if necessary correcting our path. Processing allows us to set our sails straight again. We need silence in order to hear his invitation and accept it.

More than one person talked about the power of the rosary in cultivating silence. It is a mediation that stills the busy mind and prepares us to enter into silence, though it can go deeper. In April of this year, our pastor gave a homily on the feast of the ascension in which he described how time is not a factor for God, and that the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and exaltation, ascension and pentecost are really one event of salvation, and simply form a historical 'loop' for us to understand. The rosary recognises the same cycle. It moves through the different sets of mysteries, from the joyful to luminous to sorrowful to glorious. When we recognise that, the rosary can draw us into a silence where we can bask in the mysteries of redemption. Basking is necessary from time to time for cultivation.

One man, who also linked timing to silence, talked about the importance of being in the present time to hearing God's voice in silence. Many of us come to prayer or silence heavily burdened with the cares of the day and of our lives—the worries, the problems, the things we have to do tomorrow—and it takes us time to settle and to let go of all our past and future musings, before we are actually in the present. Once we are, it does seem to be the easiest way to enter that loop of redemption and praise when time stands still.

Reality and Imagination

Some of the experiences or conjectures of people in silence may seem to come from overactive imaginations, but that does not mean they are any less real or therefore a bad thing. Ignatius saw the value in analysing a person's imagination to see where God was leading him or her. Two wise spiritual directors once told me: *theology is important so we don't let our imaginations run away with us*, and that is one of the most astute reasons for having a spiritual director; we often need the voices of the Church to keep our egos in check. But a second retreat director added:

> *Experiences can be both real* and *in one's imagination. God is all around us, and we can never adequately explain God or even explain our experiences of God. They will never completely describe God. That would be impossible.*

But that does not mean they are any less real. We need our imaginations to 'flesh out' God. They are, however, and always will be incomplete.

The musings and experiences I have recounted are very real to the participants; and imagery is one of the most powerful ways in which we process life; but they are all incomplete.

Christians have been valuing silence since Jesus went out to the desert to pray. This is not new, but in today's fast-paced technological jungle, more people are seeking that silent desert. A small book, *A Prayer of Love and Silence*, by an anonymous Carthusian, reflects on the silence of Mary, Our Blessed Mother, and her virtues, especially her gentleness. It makes a good passage for a closing *lectio divina*:

> We are told that gentleness is the summing up of all the Christian virtues. It consists above all of patience and kindness; of respect and love for souls, indeed for all animate being, since one who is gentle is gentle toward all living things …. There is no contemplative life without infinite patience; light only penetrates souls at rest. Tranquillity is the first disposition necessary, then, if the depths of the soul are to become translucent. The art of contemplating divine truths is the art of being still.[18]

Our Lady, Queen of Silence, pray for us!

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[18] *A Prayer of Love and Silence* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998 [1962]), 59.

FIVE CONCENTRIC CIRCLES IN THE PROCESS OF DISCERNMENT

Francis Pudhicherry

And his eyes were opened a little ….[1]

IGNATIUS' *AUTOBIOGRAPHY* is considered a key text in interpreting his developing understanding of discernment. At first childlike, Ignatius gradually polished his initial insights into the art of being able to sift, separate, distinguish and discern the inner movements of the spirits. Over the years he became a master in this art and contributed to the tradition in Christian spirituality called *diakrisis* (Greek) or *discretio* (Latin).

John Cassian, as early as the fourth century, included an entire chapter titled 'On Discretion' by Abba Moses in his *Conferences*, a collection of dialogues with the Desert Fathers.[2] This indicates that humility and openness of heart are important for acquiring the virtue of *discretio*. Though the chapter is primarily addressed to young monks, it is presumed that older monks, too, are far from perfect and need to grow in the virtue of *discretio*. This tradition was further elaborated by other spiritual writers within the patristic and medieval periods. While there is no doubt that Ignatius drew upon it, his insights into discernment were ultimately the fruit of his own experiential knowledge, shaped by his constant search for God's will.

An analysis of significant moments in the life of Ignatius reveals that his capacity for discernment moved from a rather simplistic understanding of personal discernment towards a complex process drawing in ever wider relationships and influences. Let me highlight five concentric circles of involvement that played a major role in his growing experiential knowledge of discernment.

[1] *Autobiography*, n. 8.
[2] See *John Cassian: The Conferences*, translated by Boniface Ramsey (New York: Newman, 1997), 77–112.

Inner Movements

Ignatius wounded at Pamplona, by Peter Paul Rubens, 1609

Ignatius became aware of his own inner movements during his convalescence at Loyola after being wounded at the siege of Pamplona (*Autobiography*, n. 1), when the absence of external activity led him into an inner journey that transformed his life. What had given meaning to his life up until then had been loyalty to the king and a career at court. This world-view was what had motivated him to fight the French, against all odds, at Pamplona. He lived primarily at an instinctual existential level, hardly aware of the movements within himself. Consequently, his imaginings and daydreams during his convalescence consisted in what gave him fleeting pleasure and satisfaction. However, two books, the *Flos sanctorum* and the *Vita Christi*, shifted him towards an alternative frame of reference offering him a more lasting meaning system. The moment of insight was when he was able to place the experience resulting from one system against that resulting from another, and choose the one that was more fulfilling. As Ignatius reflected upon his future course of action, the elements that made up his process of discernment consisted mainly in an awareness of these differing inner movements. He realised that both experiences gave him satisfaction, though one of them was qualitatively different from the other—and he chose the better one (*Autobiography*, nn. 5–9).

The Other

The second circle in Ignatius' growing understanding of discernment introduced the presence of a significant 'other' into the process. As at Loyola, so now in Manresa, 'the eyes of his understanding began to be opened' (*Autobiography*, n. 30) and he learnt to distinguish between the subtle inner movements inviting him to a life of greater inner freedom and other movements that, under the façade of holiness, were only enslaving him. If at Loyola his awareness was more direct, taking the form

of greater and lesser inner consolation, at Manresa it was primarily experienced through a second level of reflection in which he recognised life-promoting inner movements by their consequences and apparently spiritual but destructive inner movements by the serpent's tail.

Though this recognition was ultimately a personal experience, his awareness was aided by the presence of others who played an important role in his spiritual journey. During his initial sojourn at Montserrat he was helped by the Benedictine confessor Jean Chanon (*Autobiography*, n. 17), to whom he would occasionally return. Later, at Manresa, Canon Juan Bocotavi from the cathedral church and the Dominican priest Galceran Perello were his confessors and spiritual guides. They helped him discern the will of God during these critical moments, and protected him from causing harm to himself.

The experience at Manresa led to a radical conversion. Ignatius was no longer self-centred—looking for individual perfection—but a new man with an ardent desire to respond with gratitude to an experience of being touched to the core by God. 'All things seemed new to him' (*Autobiography*, n. 30) and he began to look upon his life, the world and all that surrounded him with new eyes. Ignatius had grown in his ability to discern. The child who could hardly babble a few words at Loyola was now learning to read and write, albeit haltingly. He was growing in the ability to form words and sentences by using a rudimentary grammar of discernment which would be refined and grow in complexity as he went from one experience to another.

The Church

The third circle took shape during Ignatius' experience in Jerusalem, on the eight occasions when he faced the Inquisition and in the papal clause of the vows that he and his companions took at Montmartre. He now realised the role of the ecclesial dimension in the process of discernment.

From his days in Loyola, Ignatius was keen on living out his life in Jerusalem and, armed with letters of recommendation, he set out for the Holy Land on 14 July 1523 (*Autobiography*, n.43).[3] However, the incidence of pilgrims being killed or kidnapped for ransom led the Franciscan Provincial to order him and the other pilgrims to leave (*Autobiography*, nn. 46–47). Ignatius believed that he had engaged in a process of personal discernment and the decision to remain in the Holy Land had been further

[3] For the date see MHSJ FN 1, 420 note 10.

approved by his spiritual guides, who did not find anything dissonant in his decision. But his experience in Jerusalem taught him that the ecclesial dimension was an important factor in any discernment.

The eight inquisitorial processes, as well as his self-offering made to the Pope, reinforced the significance of this ecclesial dimension for both personal and communal discernment. These experiences made Ignatius realise that discernment cannot be done in isolation, but must take place in the context of belonging to a body of persons who share a common faith experience. His frame of reference was broadened so that he understood his personal identity not in isolation but as being rooted in a shared faith experience of the Triune God.

Though Ignatius disagreed with some of the decisions and opinions of the ecclesiastical authorities, his experiential knowledge of discernment had taught him how the wisdom of the ecclesial community went beyond individual opinions. It is well known that the church hierarchy of Ignatius' time was far from exemplary. But he was able to transcend individual flaws and discover in the Church, and especially its authorities, an effective means that would aid him in his process of discernment. The decision of the Franciscan Provincial in Jerusalem to send him away, or the advice of the archbishop of Toledo, Alonso de Fonseca, that he should go and study in Salamanca (*Autobiography*, n.63), made Ignatius aware that conformity and harmony with the Church were an indispensable criterion for any Christian engaging in discernment.

Community

The fourth circle of discernment for Ignatius consisted in being open to the will of God as manifested in community—revealed through a process of dialogue with the first companions and other Jesuits of the nascent Society of Jesus. Ignatius' desire to be part of a group was evident from the moment he returned to Barcelona in 1524 (*Autobiography*, n.56). During this period he was the protagonist and his companions aided him in various ministries. The first part of his stay in Paris saw a repetition of what had happened earlier in Spain: Ignatius attracted followers motivated by his example (*Autobiography*, n.77).

Later, as he began his studies at the Collège Sainte Barbe, another kind of discernment took over and God, rather than Ignatius, became the protagonist. The group that began to emerge would go on to become the foundation of the future Society of Jesus. Ignatius learnt to recognise that discernment is at its best when there is a union of minds and hearts.

The process of discernment in common was used by Ignatius and the companions in Paris, as they discussed placing themselves at the disposal of the Pope in the eventuality of not being able to go to Jerusalem (*Autobiography*, n. 85), and later in Venice. By the time of the Deliberations in 1539 concerning the form that the Society of Jesus was to take, this art had been refined, leading to extraordinary results.[4] As the years went by Ignatius realised that many major decisions needed a process of communitarian discernment. Hence he, as Jesuit Superior General, emphasized the need for dialogue in any process of discernment, as did subsequent General Congregations. Ignatius underlined the fact that whenever there was unanimity in any decision taken by a group of persons (provided they were internally free and detached), it was more likely that they were choosing that which was according to the will of God.

Context

The fifth and final circle in the process of discernment was the context in which Ignatius found himself. Over the years he had grown in sensitivity to the promptings of the Spirit and was able to recognise the language in which God communicated with persons in their own social and cultural milieux. He realised that discernment consisted in the ability to go beyond the common-sense understanding of a situation, pick up the stirrings of the Spirit and also perceive the deceptions of the false spirit. The capacity to read the signs of the times in an external setting came about only after he had learnt the art of discernment by recognising a similar process that had taken place within himself.

To read the signs of the times in an external setting

Analysing Ignatius' openness to contexts as they emerge, we find him to be a person who was willing to look for all available information about the matter at hand in order to discern better. The unique contribution of Ignatius in the area of discernment was to make it an ongoing process—by contrast with the earlier understanding that considered discernment as a tool to be used only on special occasions. The composition of the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* is an excellent example of discernment understood as such a process wherein context plays a critical role. The text of the *Constitutions* began with the Deliberations of 1539 in which

[4] See Jules J. Toner, 'The Deliberation that Started the Jesuits', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 6/4 (September 1974), online at http://www.raggionline.com/saggi/compagnia/deliberation.htm; MHSJ Const. 1, 1–7.

the context was restricted to the future of a group of persons. Its final form would be the fruit of assimilating a variety of contexts such as the need for reform within the Church, the requirement for mobility among members of the Society, the right choice of candidates, challenges caused by the Reformation, the emergence of Jesuit schools, administrative concerns, missions to new continents, new ecclesiastical and political realities, criteria for the choice of means in taking forward a mission and so on. Ignatius interpreted discernment within the Pauline understanding of living a life in the Spirit always and being attentive to the signs of the times.

Ignatius was aware of the changing political, religious, social and spiritual realities of Europe and the world at large. Along with his contemporaries, he interpreted the signs of his times. However, his understanding of discernment and its application in context helped him to respond differently. His openness to the Spirit is best exemplified in the Formula of the Institute of 1550, the basic Rule of the Society of Jesus, written by Ignatius and included in Julius III's bull *Exposcit debitum*, which represented the final papal approval of the Society. An analysis of the changes between the Formula of the Institute of 1540, as it appeared in the earlier bull *Regimini militantis ecclesiae*, and that of 1550 reveal to us an Ignatius who was able to discern the invitation of the Lord by being attentive to his context and allowing the Lord to enlighten him so as to read the signs of the times and act decisively.

The Dynamics of Discernment

The importance of all five concentric circles within the process of discernment was realised by Ignatius through an experiential development. One who had begun like a simple child was to become an outstanding master of discernment by constantly passing among these five circles over a period of nearly 35 years. Given the complex nature of discernment and the risk of subtle and sophisticated deception, he was always alert and engaged in perpetual reflection upon all that he experienced. Despite this heightened sensitivity in the realm of discernment we find an account in the Spiritual Diary which narrates how even Ignatius fell prey to a subtle deception while discerning the kind of poverty the Society ought to observe.[5]

[5] See Diary, 12 March 1544.

Discernment is a lifelong process that involves a complex interplay between the five concentric circles. The connectedness of human existence constantly reminds us of the dynamic nature of discernment and cautions us against seeing it merely as a mechanistic process. It is a grace offered to everyone to the degree that they allow themselves to be guided by God and cooperate with the divine initiative. Ignatius' eyes of understanding were slowly opened to appreciate the varied ways in which God's will can be known and fulfilled. His experience offers us important insights and enlightens our personal and collective spiritual journey in this present time and context.

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ENCOUNTER WITH HINDUISM

Kathleen Taylor

BROWSING IN A BOOKSHOP in Newbury, Berkshire, when I was just sixteen, I picked out from the shelves the Penguin selection from the Upaniṣads, translated by Juan Mascaro.[1] Around the same time I also discovered the *Bhagavad Gītā* in the poetic translation by Christopher Isherwood and Swami Prabhavananda.[2] Both translations were very free and academically unreliable, as I was to learn in later years. I was a fairly orthodox Christian, yet the vision of God I met in these texts (in a sense, the very looseness of the translations made them into new 'texts' in themselves) was one that I instantly felt I knew. It was a moment of *recognition*, not of theological argument. It did not even occur to me to wonder whether this was the same God I had been taught about in school and worshipped in church. At the same time, however, I recognised that the God revealed in these texts emerged out of a different world of ideas from my own and this was part of their fascination, as well as constituting what felt at the time like proof that this God was real.

Among the Upaniṣads, I liked best the *Śvetāśvatara*, the text that is considered the most theistic among them. The name, which means 'white mules' or 'he who owns white mules', probably belonged to a real person—one of the many names that occur throughout these texts, lending them a sense of living connection with a far distant age. A comparatively short text, it contains passages that, even in Mascaro's translation, have technicalities, but it develops into a paean of praise to the God 'who is hidden in all things'.[3] The voice of the sage sings out: 'I know that Spirit whose infinity is in all, who is ever one beyond Time …'.[4]

[1] *The Upanishads*, translated by Juan Mascaro (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965). Mascaro does not number his verses, but I have imported the numbering given in all other translations.
[2] *The Song of God: Bhagavad-Gita*, translated by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood (New York: Mentor, 1954).
[3] *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 1.16, in *Upanishads*, translated by Mascaro, 87.
[4] *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 2.21, in *Upanishads*, translated by Mascaro, 90.

I felt that Śvetāśvatara, whoever he had been, was a person who really *did* know the Spirit. I felt he had known the same God that I knew, albeit that I knew this God more dimly. Yet there were significant differences, for this other person who knew God did so in aspects for which my own tradition did not seem to find words. I had not heard the term 'pantheism', so was not troubled by it:

> Thou this boy and thou this maiden; Thou this man, and thou this woman; Thou art this old man who supports himself on a staff; Thou the God who appears in forms infinite.
>
> Thou the blue bird and thou the green bird; Thou the cloud which conceals the lightning and thou the seasons and the oceans.[5]

Later I could compare this with Gerard Manley Hopkins: 'Christ plays in ten thousand places'.[6] The meaning is not exactly the same, for Hopkins is thinking of the humanity of Christ glimpsed in all human beings and the Indian text does not distinguish here between the human and natural worlds: God is immanent in everything. It was precisely this sense of God's immanent presence, both cosmic and intimate, which the text awakened in me and which remains with me even now, when I am near in age to the old man 'who supports himself on a staff'. My purpose here is to return to *Śvetāśvatara* with the explicit help of the reflective discipline of comparative theology.

God's immanent presence, both cosmic and intimate

Vedas and Upaniṣads

The Vedas—dating from around 1500 to 1000 BC—are collections of hymns, ritual instructions and speculations belonging to an ancient religion which is no longer practised; but they are nevertheless regarded by Hindus as the source of all their subsequent religious knowledge (*Veda* means 'knowledge'). The Vedas portray a polytheistic world of worship with many deities associated with natural and cosmic forces. A commentarial tradition grew up over centuries on the original four Vedas. The Upaniṣads, the final section of these commentaries, are called *Vedānta*—meaning the end of the Veda. They date from around 800 to 200 BC, but again this is approximate. The generic term Veda covers all this literature, including

[5] *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 4.3–4, in *Upanishads*, translated by Mascaro, 91.

[6] Gerard Manley Hopkins, Sonnet 34, 'As Kingfishers Catch Fire', in *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, edited by W. H. Gardner (Oxford: OUP, 1979), 90.

the Upaniṣads, and the whole corpus is regarded as revealed scripture: that is, *śruti*, or 'heard', because it was originally transmitted orally. [7]

Brahman, ātman *and* puruṣa

The Upaniṣads contain commentaries, meditations and reinterpretations of Vedic ritual, directed inward towards consciousness, or what we might call mystical theology, rather than outward towards ritual practices. They include a metaphysical quest for cosmic unity or an ultimate reality, to which the name *Brahman* is eventually given. The culmination of the quest comes when *Brahman* is identified with *ātman*, the self. Hence comes the realisation that the self, the soul, is of one nature with the essence of all that exists. The upanishadic 'great sayings'—'That thou art' (*tat twam asi*) and 'I am Brahman' (*Brahmāsmi)*—point to this insight. As Sara Grant phrases it: 'Realization … is the discovery that the deepest Reality within oneself is the deepest Reality at the heart of all being'.[8] It is powerfully and famously expressed in another of the 'great sayings', that of the sage Śāṇḍilya:

> This is myself within the heart, smaller than a grain of rice, than a barley corn, than a mustard seed, than a grain of millet or the kernel of a grain of millet. This is myself within the heart, greater than the earth, greater than the atmosphere, greater than the sky, greater than these worlds.[9]

The term *ātman* can refer either to the individual self or to the greater, higher or universal self—in the latter sense it becomes synonymous with *Brahman*. Another word used for the supreme principle is *puruṣa*, 'the Person'. R. C. Zaehner asks if any of these terms means the same as 'God'.

> Person, Brahman … and Atman ('Self') are, then, the three terms used more or less indiscriminately to represent the highest principle whether conceived as the spirit which indwells and controls the world or as that same spirit indwelling the heart of man. Is this spirit a personal God or an impersonal Absolute?

He answers that it is both. One important difference from Christianity he observes is that 'in Hinduism there is no *creatio ex nihilo*'.[10] Instead, as

[7] *The Upaniṣads*, edited and translated by Valerie Roebuck (London: Penguin, 2003), xxiv–xxvi.
[8] Sara Grant, *Toward an Alternative Theology: Confessions of a Non-Dualist Christian* (Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 2002), 37.
[9] *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 3. 14. 3–4, in *The Principal Upaniṣads*, edited and translated by S. K. Radhakrishnan (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1969), 391–392.
[10] *Hindu Scriptures*, translated and edited by R. C. Zaehner (London: Dent, 1966), ix–x.

Valerie Roebuck explains, the language used 'is that of emanation, begetting (or giving birth), or the ordering of a chaotic original material'. So where Christians speak of 'the creation', the Upaniṣads might refer instead to 'all this'—*sarvam idam,* meaning the whole of the phenomenal world.[11] Nevertheless they do sometimes use the term 'creator'. It might be more accurate to say that *Brahman, ātman* and p*uruṣa* sometimes mean 'God', but not always. *Brahman* can mean simply 'truth' or 'reality', *ātman* simply 'myself', and *puruṣa* has a wide range of meanings.

Theism

The concept of a personal God as Supreme Principle (theism) became more prominent in six shorter Upaniṣads, later than the other major ones, which share certain ideas and verses in common, although with these too dating is uncertain.[12] These share new speculations connected with a philosophical school called *sāṃkhya. Sāṃkhya* posited two fundamental principles, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, 'spirit' and 'matter'. They are sometimes translated as 'Man' and 'Nature', although neither of these translations is quite accurate since the latter term incorporates the mind and the senses as well as matter. An important aspect of *sāṃkhya* is that nature or *prakṛti* is composed of three qualities called *guṇa*:

> This primal matter, originally unmanifest, contains three qualities or strands (*guna*), goodness (*sattwa*), energy (*rajas*) and darkness (*tamas*). The visible and manifest universe has proceeded from the original primal matter; the three qualities are distributed in different proportions within the various constituents of the universe.[13]

Each of these qualities is assigned a colour: white, red and black respectively. Only the Supreme Soul is 'colourless'—that is, simple and not compounded of the three strands. For the individual soul in *sāṃkhya* 'liberation' is release from these three strands which constitute its material prison. This is achieved through early forms of yoga, whose philosophy is closely connected to *sāṃkhya.*

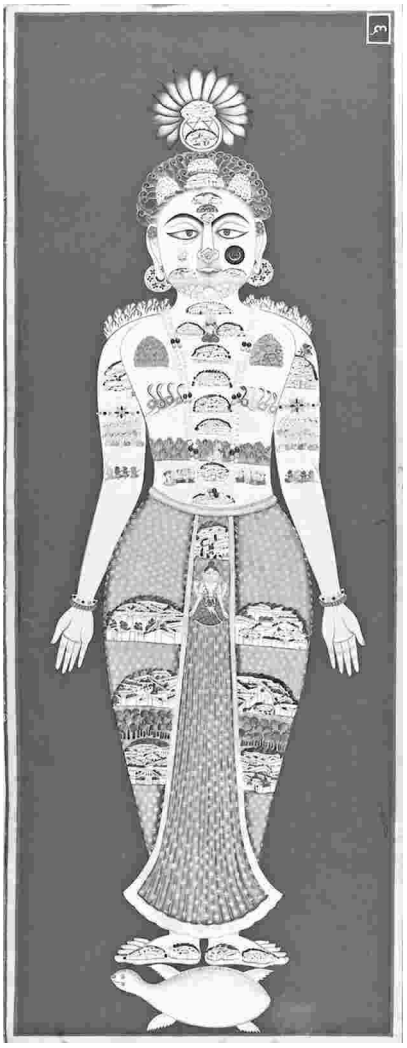
Why Śvetāśvatara*?*

Among these shorter Upaniṣads the *Śvetāśvatara* presents the clearest picture of a personal God as Supreme Being. Weaving between the *Vedānta*

[11] *Upaniṣads,* edited and translated by Roebuck, introduction, xxxi–xxxii.
[12] They are called 'middle Upaniṣads' to distinguish them from still later texts.
[13] *Upaniṣads: A New Translation*, edited and translated by Patrick Olivelle (Oxford: OUP, 1996), xlviii.

ideas of *Brahman* and *ātman*, on the one hand, and *sāṃkhya*'s *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, on the other, it presents a theistic version of both, in which the deity or Supreme Soul is placed as a third term, producing a triad in place of a duality. *Śvetāśvatara* is all but unique in using the word *deva*, 'the god', 'almost in the sense of "God" with a capital G'; complete liberation comes by knowledge of, and devotion to, this God.[14] Indeed, that liberation comes about 'by knowing God' is the great theme of this Upaniṣad, as we shall see.[15]

Nevertheless, it remains possible to read the text 'non-dualistically' if one chooses to—that is, according to the exegesis of the great Hindu theologian and philosopher Śaṅkarācārya, who composed commentaries on the Upaniṣads in the eighth century AD. He argued that there is no difference between any of the pairs mentioned above: between *Brahman* and *ātman* or between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. The apparent difference is due to illusion (which he called *māyā*). He thus allowed no separate reality either to an individual soul or to a personal God.[16] This understanding, known as *Advaita* ('not two'), is the version of the soul's relation to God or *ātman* that many non-Hindus encounter when approaching Hinduism today. Śaṅkarācārya himself was distant from the earliest Upaniṣads by about a thousand years, but his interpretation is still authoritative for many today.



The Equivalence of Self and Universe, *by Bulaki, 1824*

[14] *Upaniṣads*, edited and translated by Roebuck, 447–448, editor's note to *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*.
[15] See Dermot Killingley 'Notes on the Svetasvatara Upanisad' (unpublished).
[16] See *Principal Upaniṣads*, 24–27.

Even Śaṅkarācārya, however, allowed for a personal God at a lower level of understanding.

Mariasusai Dhavamony calls the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 'the gateway of Hinduism'.[17] Its theology prepares the way for future devotional (*bhakti*) sects, especially those that worship the deity Śiva as supreme being (Dhavamony's special study). The *Śvetāśvatara*, indeed, sometimes invokes its 'God' as Śiva, but probably as an epithet (meaning 'kindly') rather than a name. Śvetāśvatara himself, of course (if we view him as a historical figure, as we probably can), does not look forward to later Hinduism; rather he looks back towards what for him is already an ancient tradition. He situates his own new teaching amid the old, quoting hymns and invoking deities from the Vedas which his hearers would have known, but reinterpreting, reshaping them. 'I join the songs of olden times with adoration', he sings.[18] His is certainly not the last example of someone introducing something new by dressing it in old garments.

If one attempts the sort of textual parallel reading suggested by Francis Clooney, 'not in the sense of lining things up and measuring them by yet another standard, but by following the pathways back and forth between the traditions we begin in and those we visit, once and many times', the Christian texts that most spring to mind are some of the psalms and phrases from the liturgy, for this is a text of praise as well as a theological treatise.[19] It includes a theophany which is taken up and elaborated in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, and the two texts have many similarities.[20]

Why Mascaro?

Catherine Cornille, editor of a collection of Christian commentaries on the *Bhagavad Gītā*, warns of the dangers of appropriation, of assuming 'hermeneutical privilege', of 'universalising' by ignoring cultural context.[21] It might seem unwise, therefore, to base my discussion here on a translation which is often a free paraphrase, mostly avoids Hindu terminology and aims at making the text universally available. I choose it mainly because it was the one that attracted me to *Śvetāśvatara* in the

[17] Mariasusai Dhavamony, *The Love of God According to Śaiva Siddhanta: A Study in the Mysticism and Theology of Śaivism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 61.
[18] *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 2.5, in *Upanishads*, translated by Mascaro, 87.
[19] Francis Clooney, *Seeing through Texts: Doing Theology among the Śrīvaiṣṇavas of South India* (Albany: SUNY, 1996), xviii.
[20] *Upaniṣads*, edited and translated by Roebuck, 448.
[21] *Song Divine: Christian Commentaries on the Bhagavad Gītā*, edited by Catherine Cornille (Leuven: Eerdmans, 2006), 4.

bookshop in Newbury, and because other translations, though technically more accurate, often fail to reveal the beauties of this text.

Juan Mascaro was born in Majorca but settled in England, where he studied Sanskrit at Cambridge University. In his introduction to the translation he treats the Upaniṣads as part of a universal spiritual heritage. He draws comparisons from a wide range of saints, mystics and poets including St Francis, William Blake and Rabindranath Tagore among many others. Poetry is allied to truth: 'imagination and faith are one', he writes.[22] Thus he does exemplify some of the ethical issues raised by Cornille in the way he describes his motivation in the introduction: he appropriates by imposing his universalist ethic. I wish nevertheless to explore whether it is possible to read his translation honestly as a 'work' in the sense used by Paul Griffiths—'as a stable and vastly rich resource, one that yields meaning, suggestions (or imperatives) for action, matter for aesthetic wonder, and much else'.[23]

The poetic quality of Mascaro's translation lends itself to such an approach, but in the detailed reading of part 4 that follows, I compare it with a range of scholarly versions, mainly relying on the more recent translations by Valerie Roebuck and Patrick Olivelle, with the notes and introductions to both, and Radhakrishnan's *The Principal Upaniṣads,* which includes the Sanskrit text. I have found particularly helpful some unpublished notes on *Śvetāśvatara* which were kindly supplied to me by Dermot Killingley; they have also been used and acknowledged by Valerie Roebuck in her translation.[24]

Part 4 of Śvetāśvatara*: A Dialogue*

Part 4, which contains the favourite passage quoted at the beginning, opens with four verses praising God who, in verse 1, unfolds Himself into the manifold world by distributing His 'white radiance' (literally, colourlessness) into the many colours of 'creation'. This expresses divine simplicity: He is without attributes. In the Roebuck translation, He 'gathers all together' into Himself again 'at the end and the beginning'. Thus He is both origin and end (alpha and omega). He is invoked to give 'pure vision'; another translation has 'clear understanding' (*buddhi*: intuition).[25]

[22] *Upanishads*, translated by Mascaro, introduction, 27.
[23] Paul Griffiths, *Religious Reading: The Place of Reading in the Practice of Religion* (New York: Oxford UP, 1999), 41.
[24] *Upaniṣads,* edited and translated by Roebuck, 448. These notes also inform chapters in *The Upaniṣads: A Complete Guide*, edited by Signe Cohen (New York: Routledge, 2018).
[25] *Upaniṣads,* edited and translated by Roebuck, 305; *Principal Upaniṣads*, 731.

In verse 2, 'He is the sun, the moon and the stars; He is the fire, the waters and the wind; He is Brahma the creator of all; and Prajapati, the Lord of creation' (two names of the Creator God in the Vedas). The word for 'He' here is actually 'That' (*tat*), but clearly means God; He is invoked with (and assumes the role of) the gods of the elements along with Brahmā and Prajāpati. The next two verses are those I quoted, and they address Him directly as *tvam* (thou).[26] In verse 3, He is in human beings. He is unborn (in Himself), but manifest in whatever is born in the world of becoming. Therefore all faces are His (*viśvatomukhah*: having faces everywhere, in every direction).[27] Earlier I compared verse 3 to a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins in its recognition of God in human beings. But does this have the same connotation of love for humanity as it has in Hopkins? We do not know, though the seed of such an idea is present in the Upaniṣads, through the perception of the universal Self (*ātman*) in every person. 'Who sees all beings in his own Self, and his own Self in all beings, loses all fear.'[28]

Verses 2 and 3 are both quotations from Vedic hymns.[29] Verse 4 seems not to be a quotation, but continues in the same style, praising God's cosmic omnipresence. Some translators question whether the 'blue bird' and the 'green bird' (*patangaḥ*: flying creatures) are, in fact, birds or insects. Killingley suggests that the verse describes a random set of phenomena, all of which are manifestations of God—their colours contrasting with God's colourlessness or 'white radiance' in verse 1.[30] Unborn and uncreated Himself, all worlds are born from Him. I wonder, however, whether there is also something more.

Verses 3 and 4 are the only place in this text where God is addressed as 'Thou', and the four verses together seem to be constructed as a hymn of praise. Generally, the Upaniṣads turn inwards to an analysis of consciousness, and the monistic search for unity leaves no room for praise. *Sāṃkhya* also places a very negative valuation on nature (*prakṛti*),[31] and this is reflected in passages elsewhere in *Śvetāśvatara* that speak of it as a trap, such as the image of the soul lost in the great wheel of existence that occurs in the opening verses of part 1.[32]

[26] Compare *tat tvam asi*—'Thou art That'.
[27] *Principal Upaniṣads*, 732.
[28] *Īśā Upaniṣad*, 6, in *Upanishads*, translated by Juan Mascaro, 49.
[29] *Principal Upaniṣads*, 731. And see *Hindu Scriptures*, 23–26 (*Atharva Veda* 10.8, 27).
[30] Quoted in *Upaniṣads*, edited and translated by Roebuck, 455 note 4.
[31] At least in this context. Some forms of *Sāṃkhya* see a more positive role for *prakṛti*.
[32] 'In this vast Wheel of creation wherein all things live and die, wanders round the human soul like a swan in restless flying, and she thinks that God is afar': *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 1.1, in *Upanishads*, translated by Juan Mascaro, 87.

Yet Śvetāśvatara also expresses the earlier, more positive Vedic attitude to the natural world, and perhaps this is another aspect of his innovative teaching. Mascaro compares the Vedic relationship to nature with that of St Francis of Assisi, and quotes his Canticle of Brother Sun.[33] Roger Sorrell points to the innovation in St Francis' attitude by contrast to the Christian ascetic tradition.[34] For Saint Francis, Nature reflects God as God's creation; and for Śvetāśvatara it sometimes seems to do the same, as His emanation of Himself. For me, at any rate, reading these verses in Mascaro's translation evokes a sense of the divine presence in all things that recalls Gerard Manley Hopkins's poem: 'The world is charged with the grandeur of God/It will flame out like shining from shook foil'.[35] Evelyn Underhill quotes the same lines to illustrate what she calls illuminated vision: 'the vision of … an added significance and reality in the phenomenal world', which is 'sacramental, not ascetic'.[36]

The next verses, however, return to nature as a trap. The three 'unborn ones' in verse 5, one of whom is 'bound by the pleasures of nature', are followed in verse 6 by a famous image of two birds on a tree: 'There are two birds, two sweet friends, who dwell on the self-same tree.

Detail from* Rama Sita and Lakshmana at the Hermitage of Bharadvaja*, 1780

[33] *Upanishads*, translated by Juan Mascaro, introduction, 8.
[34] See Roger Sorrell, *Saint Francis of Assisi and Nature: Tradition and Innovation in Western Christian Attitudes towards the Environment* (New York: Oxford UP, 1988).
[35] Gerard Manley Hopkins, 'God's Grandeur', in *Poems and Prose*, 27.
[36] Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* (New York: New American Library, 1974), 254.

The one eats the fruits thereof, and the other looks on in silence.' Verse 7 interprets this 'parable': the first bird is a person—*puruṣa*, here meaning the individual soul—who engages with the world or nature (*prakṛti*), and feels powerless; but when it sees the 'Other', the 'Lord' (*Īśa*), it is freed from sorrow. We have here the triad: the Lord, the soul and 'nature' as separate. Alternatively, in a 'non-dualist' reading, there is but one soul in two aspects, a lower, bound to the objective universe, and a higher one that is free, having gone beyond it.[37] But either way, nature is bondage.

Verse 9 introduces the concept of *māyā* which, later on, in the philosophy of Śaṅkarācārya, came to denote the world-illusion. In *Śvetāśvatara* it does not have that connotation, but is associated with the magical net of the god Indra, mentioned in part 3.[38] The sense is of a conjuring trick. Most translations are not far from Mascaro's 'power of wonder':

> With Maya, his power of wonder, he made all things, and by Maya the human soul is bound. Know therefore that nature is Maya, but that God is the ruler of Maya; and that all beings in our universe are parts of his infinite splendour.

The Sanskrit says that the 'great Lord' (*Maheśvara*—later a name of Śiva) is the *māyin*—the possessor of *māyā*, the one who wields it. Roebuck has 'artifice' with the Lord as the 'artificer'; Olivelle has 'illusion' and 'illusionist'.

Yet the conclusion of verse 10 has a more positive connotation: all beings in the world are 'parts' of Him—his 'limbs' (*avayava*). This supports the interpretation of the eleventh-century Hindu theologian Rāmānuja that the world is the 'body of God',[39] rather than merely an illusory appearance, or is likened to the 'sparks' from a fire.[40] Moreover, God is the 'ruler' of *māyā*; it is a power that He actively wields, coming as close, perhaps, as Hinduism gets to the Judaeo–Christian notion of God as creator; although here He does not 'create' but projects or emits (*srijate*) the world.

The rest of part 4 repeats the main themes of the text: that the Supreme Lord (God) is the source and origin of all the worlds; that He

[37] *Principal Upaniṣads*, 733.
[38] See Killingley, 'Notes on the Svetasvatara Upanisad', 9. *Indrajāla*—Indra's net—is a word for magic, originally, in the Vedas, as a weapon to deceive enemies. It occurs in several places in the Upaniṣads as a metaphor for illusion.
[39] Dhavamony, *Love of God,* 230.
[40] *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 2.1.1, in *Principal Upaniṣads*, 680.

is hidden in all beings and in the human mind and heart; that He is ineffable; that the vision of Him brings peace and immortality. The echoes from Vedic hymns continue; for example, in verse 13: 'Who is the God to whom we shall offer adoration?', is a partial quotation from *Ṛg Veda*.[41] Verse 14 answers this question in phrases which are often repeated throughout the text, as Dermot Killingley puts it, 'like a refrain':

> He is the god of forms infinite in whose glory all things are, smaller than the smallest atom, and yet the Creator of all, ever living in the mystery of his creation. In the vision of this God of love there is everlasting peace.

God is 'the god of forms infinite' (*aneka-rūpam*) because He takes on the forms of all things, in which he is hidden. 'In whose glory all things are' is more usually translated as embracing, enfolding or encompassing everything (*parivestitāram*);[42] it recurs in verse 16 and elsewhere. It recalls the famous opening of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*: 'All this [*sarvam idam*] … is enveloped by God'.[43] 'Ever living in the mystery of his creation': other translations do not have 'mystery', but rather 'confusion', 'disorder', chaos'.[44] By recognising Him in the midst of the chaos of the world, one attains perfect peace. Verse 16 revisits an earlier image of God as 'hidden in the heart of all things, even as cream is hidden in milk'. He is hidden as the most subtle quality of everything, on the analogy of clarified butter (*ghee)* being refined from milk. God is so subtle that He is like some substance even more refined than the *ghee*, hidden in the various forms of the universe.[45]

Verse 18 echoes a Vedic hymn which describes the state before creation;[46] it recalls 'the glorious splendour' (*varenyam*) of the Vedic sun god Savitṛ, invoked earlier in part 2, in a prayer for inspiration.

> There is a region beyond darkness where there is neither day nor night, nor what is, not what is not. Only Śiva, the god of love, is there. It is the region of the glorious splendour of God from whom came

[41] *Ṛg Veda*, 10.121,1, in *Hindu Scriptures*, 10: 'what God shall we revere with the oblation?'
[42] Compare *Principal Upaniṣads*, 735; *Upaniṣads,* edited and translated by Roebuck, 307; *Upaniṣads,* edited and translated by Olivelle, 260.
[43] *Īśā Upaniṣad*, 1.1, in *Principal Upaniṣads*, 567.
[44] *Principal Upaniṣads*, 735; *Upaniṣads,* edited and translated by Olivelle, 260; *Hindu Scriptures*, 211.
[45] *Upaniṣads,* edited and translated by Roebuck, 456 note 14.
[46] *Ṛg Veda*, 10.129.1–2, in *Hindu Scriptures*, 11–12: 'Then neither Being nor Not-being was …. No sign of night or day.'

> the light of the sun, and from whom the ancient wisdom came in the beginning.

'The god of love', translates the epithet 'Śiva the benign one'. He is 'alone'—*kevala*—a technical term from *sāṃkhya* meaning utterly separate from nature or *prakṛti*.[47] Here, however, he is separate from the world because he is prior to it, and is about to 'create' it—emanate or project it—with the splendour of the sun. Wisdom, or intelligence, is born along with it from the beginning.

We know Him dwelling within us: 'This is the God whose work is all the worlds, the supreme Soul who dwells for ever in the hearts of men. Those who know him through their hearts and their minds become immortal.' Yet he is ineffable: 'The mind cannot grasp him above, or below, or in the space between. With whom shall we compare him whose glory is the whole universe?' The section ends with two more verses modelled on the Veda seeking protection from the fierce Vedic god Rudra (verses 21–22).

Resemblance and Otherness

I set out to revisit the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* in the translation which had first attracted me and to explore whether that early experience of recognition would change after comparison with more scholarly translations and commentaries. I wanted to see whether, once I knew more, I could still read *Śvetāśvatara* 'religiously'.

I found that a closer look at the conceptual background, helped by previous academic study of Hinduism, greatly enhanced my understanding of its significance. As for whether Mascaro's translation does it justice: I would answer a cautious 'yes'. He offers a paraphrase rather than a literal rendering in order to avoid technicalities that would need explanation, but, on the whole, is faithful to the meaning, while the literary quality of his work succeeds in conveying the beauty of the text. It can be read as a meditation, for which the alternatives mostly would not serve.

Francis Clooney says that comparison begins 'with the intuition of an intriguing resemblance'.[48] But resemblance comes amid otherness. *Śvetāśvatara* presented me with a God who was at once familiar and very

[47] *Upaniṣads,* edited and translated by Roebuck, 451 note 32.
[48] Francis Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning across Religious Borders* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 11.

different from what I knew because of the strong emphasis on immanence. A transcendent Supreme Being is amply evident in this text, as we have seen; it agrees with most of Aquinas' definitions except for 'creation out of nothing'.[49] There is a powerful dialectical relationship between transcendence and immanence, because of the deity's all-pervading nature. That, in turn, results from the idea that He is not wholly separate from creation, that He has evolved the world out of His own substance and therefore is indwelling in everything. Some call this 'pantheism', but that term excludes the dialectical relation with transcendence.

Śvetāśvatara is both a teaching and a praise text. It is possible that we actually see in it the emergence of a new concept of God. We perhaps witness the process of an epithet (*Śiva*) turning into the name of a deity.[50] We also possibly see the mythological and philosophical ideas around *puruṣa* turning into the awe-inspiring 'Supreme Person' as an object of worship. *Śvetāśvatara* weaves together different schools of thought with images and prayers from Vedic tradition in a creative synthesis. There is a strong note of praise, which resonates for a Christian with the psalms and the liturgy.

I had understood the verse that inspired me in the bookshop in Newbury—'Thou the blue bird …' (4.4)—to be describing a mystical experience of God through nature. This seems to be contradicted by a generally negative valuation of embodiment in the material world, in which nature was seen as a trap for the soul. Yet the four verses placed together at the beginning of part 4 suggested to me a personal vision and an act of praise. The verses had the effect on me of a sacramental moment. As I read them in the bookshop, the blue bird became more blue, the green bird more green, the oceans more vast, the seasons more majestic and regular in their turning, because all these things were illuminated by God within. I took this to be an experience of 'Hinduism', but it might have been as much an experience of Christianity. This too, is a fruit of comparison, which Clooney suggests works like a mirror, 'by which we see the other in light of our own, and our own in light of the other'.[51] One sees what one could not see before in one's home tradition through one's journey into the other.

[49] Augustine Aranjaniyil, *The Idea of a Personal God in the Major Upanisads* (Bangalore: Gregorian Pontifical University, 1975), 103–113, lists references.
[50] *Upaniṣads*, edited and translated by Roebuck, 454 note 10.
[51] Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 11.

The main place, however, where Śvetāśvatara directs us to find God is where all the *Upaniṣads* point: within the soul. It is by seeing God in the soul that one is released from sorrow, this sage says again and again. How far does the relation between the individual soul and God in this text seem akin to the Christian one? Is there projection on my part as a Christian reader? One has to be aware of such a temptation, and remain to some extent agnostic. We simply do not know very much about Śvetāśvatara's teaching, for this text is only a fragment. We do not know what ethics he taught, or how far the relation with God veered towards *bhakti* or devotion. One must also bear in mind the text's esoteric nature and its final injunction to secrecy: he did not intend us to read it.[52]

The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* seems to me to record a personal ecstatic vision of God in the soul and in nature. The words I would read alongside it are from the liturgy: 'Heaven and Earth are full of thy glory'. Whether that is what the sage Śvetāśvatara meant I can only really know if I meet him in the next life. I hope that I can.

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[52] 'This supreme mystery of the Vedanta which was revealed in olden times must only be given to one whose heart is pure and who is a pupil or a son': *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 6.22, in *Upanishads*, translated by Juan Mascaro, 97.

Thinking Faith

LOVE WHAT YOU DO

Discipleship and Work

Phil Callaghan

> The most serious of the evils that afflict the world these days are youth unemployment and the loneliness of the old. The old need care and companionship; the young need work and hope but have neither one nor the other and the problem is they don't even look for them any more.[1]

THIS STARK COMMENT from Pope Francis in an interview with the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* just a few months into his pontificate drew surprise and even criticism. Some commentators argued that the Pope's identification of the gravest evils undermined or diminished other problems in society.

I must confess that at first I, too, was surprised by Pope Francis's words. However, upon reflection on my own work and experiences with the Young Christian Workers (YCW) movement, I soon realised how astute the Pope had been. In March 2013, the YCW launched a campaign on working life and young people. Our first aim was to gain a deeper understanding of the reality of working life for our members. Our survey discovered three principal concerns that young people have in relation to work.

The first was, quite expectedly, unemployment. Following the global financial crisis of 2008 and the subsequent recession, unemployment across Europe soared. While other countries had higher levels of unemployment in general and youth unemployment in particular, in the UK young people suffered the consequences disproportionately in comparison with

[1] Pope Francis, interview with Eugenio Scalfari, 'The Pope: How the Church Will Change', *La Reppublica* (1 October 2013), available at http://www.repubblica.it/cultura/2013/10/01/news/pope_s_ conversation_with_ scalfari_english-67643118/.

older generations. Even though some economists have pointed to 'green shoots' of economic progress, the youth unemployment figures from March 2016 show that almost 14 per cent of people aged 16 to 24 are unemployed, compared with a figure of 5.1 per cent for the entire workforce.

The second concern was the rise of 'zero-hour' contracts, and the instability that arises from these arrangements. A member of our movement from East London offered an example of this. He told us that, after earning his university degree, the only employment he could find was a zero-hour contract with a catering business. He would receive morning phone calls on a regular basis to call him into work later that day. On one such occasion, he was unable to undertake the work owing to a prior arrangement; it was three weeks before he received any further offers of work. Advocates of zero-hour contracts point to the freedom that they give to workers. While this may be the case for some, it is clear from the scenario described above that there are also instances in which they must be regarded as insecure and exploitative.

The third prominent concern that came out of our research was a lack of value placed upon some jobs. When asked about their profession some respondents were embarrassed and would reply with phrases such as, 'I am just a cleaner' or 'I only work in a supermarket'. It is a sad state of affairs when individuals degrade themselves and their work in this way. This is something that I dubbed 'The X Factor Problem'. The language in which people referred to their own work or the way in which they looked down on the work of others reminded me of the negative way in which certain careers are portrayed on television talent shows. Individuals are given a hope of a new career, an 'escape' from their 'ordinary and mundane' working lives. While it is right that we should aspire to use our talents to the best of our ability this should never be to the detriment and devaluation of other, equally important, working roles.

Our findings therefore revealed a reality that is in stark contrast to the celebration of the dignity of work that is an integral part of the social teaching of the Church. The 1891 encyclical *Rerum novarum* took the 'worker problem' right to the heart of Catholic social teaching. But work already occupies an integral place in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Genesis creation narrative we are told that God, 'took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it' (Genesis 2:15): God created us to be workers who participate in and continue God's own creative work. This concept is reinforced in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, which recognises that work is integral to

Young workers protesting about precarious contracts in 2017

the human state: 'Work is part of the original state of man and precedes his fall; it is therefore not a punishment or curse' (n. 256).

Given the vast contradiction between the experience of working life for many people and the dignity to which the Church declares that workers are entitled, there are bound to be implications for society as a whole and specifically for the Church. The teachings of the Church on dignity and labour are clear; however, the teaching is not there merely to give us an image of a utopian life. Rather it offers us a vision of what God wants for us, and therefore inspires us to work for the realisation of that vision in our own lives and those of others.

The Church does not and cannot offer concrete solutions to every problem—after all, the teaching is universal and timeless, and responses may need to differ radically between culture and time. Rather, the Church offers us a methodology by which we can discern how best to respond to situations in which God's will is not being fulfilled. In the YCW we call this the Review of Life, but it is more commonly known as the Pastoral Cycle. This encourages us to see the reality, judge it in accordance with scripture and church teaching, and commit to taking concrete action. The method of 'See, Judge, Act' was first used by Joseph Cardijn, the Belgian priest and later cardinal who founded the Young Christian Workers. Such was the influence of this method that Pope John XXIII affirmed it in the 1961 encyclical *Mater et magistra*:

> There are three stages which should normally be followed in the reduction of social principles into practice. First, one reviews the concrete situation; secondly, one forms a judgment on it in the light of these same principles; thirdly, one decides what the circumstances can and should be done to implement these principles. These are the three stages that are usually expressed in the three terms: look, judge, act. (n. 236)

This approach was reaffirmed in *Gaudium et spes* and can be clearly seen in the writings of Pope Francis, especially in *Laudato si'*.

A good example of how this approach has led to an intervention at a national level has been the welcome move from the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales to promote the Living Wage campaign. More initiatives like this will show that the Church does indeed live out its teaching. It is right that the Church should work with secular institutions that share our values, including trade unions that support and fight for fair working conditions; and such collaboration is more likely to be effective. It also provides a platform for dialogue to enhance the relationship between the Church and others in society, and even an opportunity for evangelization.

It is also right that the Church uses its voice to point beyond the financial implications of unemployment and precarious work to the mental and emotional consequences of a lack of work or substandard working practices, just as Pope Francis has done. Good work allows people to exercise responsibility and accountability, to influence practice and decision-making in their workplace. Where these opportunities are not in place, we have a workforce which is unhappy and unfulfilled.

A good example of how the Church is working to restore agency in the workplace is the work done by St Antony's Centre for Church and Industry in Trafford Park, Manchester. For many years, supported by the local church, they have worked to promote a better understanding of the social teaching of the Church, especially in relation to industrial and economic issues. Part of this work has seen them develop community-based projects across the north-west of England to respond directly to the needs of the workforce, as well as establishing and leading training programmes for the unemployed in skills such as such as literacy, numeracy and IT. This provides the trainees not only with these skills but also with a place in which their dignity is valued.

The renewed vision of the laity at Vatican II has allowed many laypeople to understand their lives, including their work, as a vocation.

But there have been vast changes to working life in the fifty years since. People of working age in the UK spend almost forty hours of their week in the workplace, and so an authentic vision for the laity must have working life at its heart. As we look towards the future it is certain that the jobs market will change still further and working patterns will adapt, although it is hard to predict how.

One thing that is clear is that a time when most people found a stable, nine-to-five job post-education is unlikely to return. The first step to ensuring that we are prepared to respond to these changes is perhaps the most obvious, yet might be the most difficult. If we work, we must ensure that we see the value and dignity in what we do, even when that is a challenge. It is only through truly valuing our own work that we can begin to challenge the societal perception of low-paid work as less valuable or dignified than a job which pays a high salary. As the Body of Christ, we are called to tackle injustice wherever we see it, including in the workplace, and a commitment to seeing the value in all work is an act of solidarity that challenges this injustice. To make a commitment to valuing our own work, whatever it is, is the first step to enabling others to do the same and, therefore, offers some of the hope that Pope Francis recognises is lacking particularly in young people.

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RESISTANCE TO ACCEPTING THE CROSS

Some Reflections Based on Psychology and Ignatian Anthropology

Carlos Domínguez

WE NEED TO ACKNOWLEDGE, from the very beginning, that resistance to accepting 'the cross'—that is, pain and suffering—is a basic psychic dynamism deeply rooted in the very biological make-up of all living beings. Such reluctance must, therefore, be seen as something natural and human, and, in most cases, an indication of mental health. In addition, the lack of such a primary healthy resistance to suffering should be recognised as much more worrying; and this is especially so if, in its place, there is a contrary tendency, a sort of longing or desire to suffer. Jesus Christ himself both felt and clearly testified to his own resistance to suffering and the cross: 'I am deeply grieved, even to death …. My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me ….' (Matthew 26:38–39) It was the cross that made him feel abandoned by God (Mark 15:34). This initial acknowledgement is an essential context in which to give a just account of the attitude of a Christian to that inexorable companion of life: suffering.

The Inevitability of Suffering and the Imperative of Happiness

Various forms of suffering are present from the very start of life: from the traumatic moment of birth itself there are psychic conflicts, due to structural or circumstantial causes. And frustrations of different sorts accompany us throughout life until the final, most radical frustration of all, the moment of death. There are few facts less in need of demonstration than that suffering is an essential dimension of life. Truly, the saying might be, 'I am, therefore I suffer', or equally, 'I suffer, therefore I am'. The great problem that faces us all is how best to manage this suffering which, to some extent, falls to each and every one of us. For we are all

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also fully aware that suffering can be a source both of growth, and of harm and destruction.

There can be no denying that growth and maturity are only possible when a person faces inevitable troubles, frustrations and conflicts in an appropriate fashion. It has been definitively shown that creativity and personal development can occur alongside anguish, and that it is only when the anguish gains the upper hand that these may be blocked. Any important human undertaking necessarily involves coping with painful situations, with difficulties, and with both internal and external conflicts. A considerable expenditure of energy is needed to accomplish one's goal. The promotion of lofty ideals, whether in the social, political or religious sphere, has always met with powerful opposition, internal and external, and has required unavoidable sacrifices from those willing to be faithful to their aims and aspirations.

This capacity to accept suffering in a way that, far from harming, actually vitalises, is what is now known in the psychological field as 'resilience': the capacity to face up to adversity and emerge fortified and raised to a new state of personal excellence. Various factors—congenital, constitutional, and doubtless also biographical and experiential—play a decisive role in the process of acquiring this capacity.

We often find ourselves asking why it is that some individuals are able to maintain a steadiness in their lives, looking at both the present and the future with an attitude of gratitude and hope, in spite of the innumerable sufferings that they have had to undergo; whereas others are overwhelmed by the least difficulty, failure or disaster that they happen to meet. Doubtless a congenital disposition and the circumstances of their lives are determining factors in this difference. Among the essential elements needed to cope positively with pain there must be an ability to discard infantile feelings of omnipotence, an acquisition of tolerance in supporting frustration, and the possession of a system of belief which can give meaning to suffering. In the words attributed to Victor Frankl: 'Whereas pain needs an analgesic, suffering needs meaning'.

There are many ways in which pain and suffering can give rise to physical or psychic pathologies and this is not the place to enter into details. However, there can be no doubt that our own society breeds one particular attitude that has acquired special relevance: the denial of suffering under a feeling of obligation to be *happy*, and to appear to be happy, no matter what the cost. Suffering is either thought to be obscene, or, on the contrary, flaunted shamelessly.

Death is hidden away in morgues, at a distance from the houses and streets in which we live; the decrepitude of old age is concealed in geriatric homes, and attempts are made to remove from public view the begging of the indigent on the supposed grounds of what in Spanish is called *aporofobia*.[1] Or, on the contrary, violence is exhibited in paroxysms of crime, whose hidden aim is to exorcise what one fears: it is always the others who suffer on the multiple screens now at our disposal. We watch them knowing that our identification with them goes only as far as we want it to go. The philosopher Lipovetsky has called this the 'pornography of the appalling', whose sole purpose is to stupefy with intense emotions that pass in a flash.[2] Pain is regarded simplistically, while a superficial thrill is sought from the remote comfort of an armchair. All of this produces alienation and an impoverished anaesthesia with regard to pain.

An impoverished anaesthesia with regard to pain

From another angle, Pascal Bruckner analyses the state of modern culture and identifies what he calls 'the market of affliction', that is, an approach by which, almost automatically, one turns to complaint and lament about one's situation; this is accompanied by a parallel proliferation of claims to supposed individual human rights. Nothing painful ought to happen to us, and whenever it does, in however minor a fashion, someone has to be blamed. Our world has become full of 'victims', which is another way of expressing our resistance to the acceptance of any form of suffering. 'The most common activity nowadays is to lament about one's own state of affairs', claims Bruckner.[3]

The culture in which we live gives absolute value to well-being, which is understood to be the absence of any type of pain—physical, mental or social. To attain this state every method is used to eliminate any form of discomfort. This has led to what has been rightly called the 'chemistry of happiness': a mild form of drug-addiction by which we attempt to prevent any sort of physical or mental ailment by imbibing, without a second thought, all sorts of medication, both antidepressants and anxiety pills. We fly from anything which has a whiff of pain, and take an analgesic for a headache or an antidepressant for no matter how minor an anxiety. The result is a worrying diminishment in our capacity

[1] The Spanish neologism has been formed from the Greek *aporos* ('one without means') and *phobia* ('fear').
[2] Gilles Lipovetsky, *L'ère du vide. Essais sur l'individualisme contemporain* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), 205.
[3] Pascal Bruckner, *La Tentation de l'innocence* (Paris: Grasset, 1995), 239. English translation as *The Temptation of Innocence: Living in an Age of Entitlement* (New York: Algora, 2000).

to tolerate suffering. The pharmaceuticals remove the symptoms, but they also remove the capacity to evaluate and profit from the situation. These are evidence of our rush into a mindless search for happiness and wellbeing which are given absolute priority.[4]

The Sacralisation of Pain and Masochism

All spiritualities have maintained an important relationship with suffering. Karl Rahner, in a lucid text entitled 'The Passion and Asceticism', distinguishes three types of asceticism: *moral*, *ritual*, and *mystical*.[5] The first can be defined as the fight against all within us which comes from sin or leads to it. The spiritual person fights against all dangerous urges to evil within us due to cowardice, comfort and habit. It is a form of self-discipline with a view to attaining virtue. *Ritual*[6] asceticism has to do with the preparation of the subject for the celebration of worship. Under this heading comes the disposition to receive immediately union with the Godhead, as a grace from above. Finally, *mystical* asceticism covers a whole range of practices (sexual continence, fasting, mortifying of the flesh, and so on) adopted in order to prepare oneself for the experience of the divine.

Rahner insists, quite rightly, that none of these types of asceticism ought to be considered as properly Christian, no matter how important their role may be within our own spirituality. The final meaning of Christian asceticism is found in relation with the acceptance of death: 'the personal, free grasping-of-his-own-accord of his necessary being-unto-death'.[7] The asceticism of a follower of Jesus is 'nothing else but a the anticipating grasp of Christian death understood as the most radical act of faith', a 'letting-the-world-go-by' so that grace may come.[8] However, while making such a radical act of faith, the Christian must confess that it is possible to reach God just as well by immersion in the world as by an asceticism of rejection of the world. For the Christian, 'the "*fuga saeculi*" is always mixed up with the love of the world'.[9] The

[4] See J. González-Anleo, 'Sociología del dolor', in *El Dolor*, edited by Alberto Dou (Madrid: Comillas, 1992), 346.
[5] Karl Rahner, 'The Passion and Asceticism', in *Theological Investigations*, volume 3, *Theology of the Spiritual Life*, translated by Karl-H. and Boniface Kruger (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1967).
[6] Or 'cultural', as in the Spanish translation of Rahner, which is adopted by the author.
[7] Rahner, 'Passion and Asceticism', 73.
[8] Rahner, 'Passion and Asceticism', 91.
[9] Rahner, 'Passion and Asceticism', 84.

heart that is empty cannot be sure of possessing God; yet neither can the heart that is full of the splendour of creation possess God simply because of that. Christian asceticism is nothing except a 'yes' to Jesus, to the Cross, and to death.[10]

In another of his texts Rahner insists that 'once a man has placed himself under the Cross and has died with Christ … every act which is good in itself, therefore also one which is already meaningful within the world, can be supernaturally elevated by grace'.[11] The Christian, who quite legitimately flees from the world towards God, has to admit that it is also possible to reach that same God by means of the world. If not, that person's *fuga mundi*, asceticism, abnegation or mortification, cannot guarantee that they are Christian. And we are all too well aware of how often asceticism, love of the cross, has been thought to be (or confused with) a sacralisation of pain. Suffering has been adopted by an ambiguous theology of the cross and by very questionable—not to say clearly masochistic—psychic tendencies.

It is difficult to deny or hide how, over the centuries, the cult of suffering has impregnated Christian spirituality. One need only open certain spiritual writings to verify how suffering has been thought of as something good in itself, even desirable, and something that God Himself

Procession of Monks and Flagellants, *by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, eighteenth century*

[10] Rahner, 'Passion and Asceticism', 80–81.
[11] Rahner, 'The Ignatian Mysticism of Joy in the World', in *Theological Investigations*, volume 3, 289.

requests and is thankful for. A whole theory of salvation, too extensive to be properly dealt with here, is involved in this problem. Psychoanalysis would also have much to say on the subject.[12]

The fact is that, for many centuries, St Anselm's teaching on salvation, according to which this was only possible by means of an expiatory *satisfaction*, brought with it among other perverse effects the sacralisation of pain as something desired by God and as having a salvific value in itself. The whole life of Christ was understood only in the light of His being crucified, instead of the other way round. Salvation was seen as a purely individual affair and was directed towards the other life, as in this life there could only be resignation rather than a commitment to, and solidarity with, the project that led Jesus to His death. Jesus had to sacrifice his life so that God could *restore us to God's friendship*: and so suffering and the shedding of blood acquired in themselves a salvific value. It was not the love, capable of reaching even to the cross, that saved us, but the very cross itself.

To take up one's cross in the following of Jesus was then understood as an end in itself, and not as the condition for following him in person in a project which would of necessity involve complications, suffering and the cross. Many Christians forgot what was the purpose behind the words of Jesus: 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me' (Mark 8:34). To go *with* him and to *follow* him were brushed aside and the emphasis fell only on the denial of self and the taking up of the cross. Thus, the cross seemed to have a meaning on its own rather than as a condition and a consequence of the following.

The pains, sufferings, illnesses and failures then took on a sacred meaning as signifying the will of a God who, in his mysterious plans, was sending them for our good. And yet, never do we hear from the lips of Jesus, when confronted by those sick, possessed or excluded persons who came to him, any invitation to welcome those sufferings with resignation as an indication of either the will of God or his chastisement. His sole response to pain was to seek to assuage, console, cure and liberate. Looked at from a psychoanalytic perspective, such a way of envisaging God and salvation points clearly to unconscious infantile dramatization, which cannot be examined in any detail at this point.

[12] This is tackled more fully in my work, *Experiencia cristiana y psicoanálisis* (Santander: Sal Terrae, 2006), 77–102.

However, it is worth undertaking a minimal clinical analysis of the spirituality to which it gives rise, using the concept of masochism, which so often collaborates with the so-called *theology of blood*.

At times, the urge to accept and to want pain comes in response to the search for a forbidden satisfaction, and also as an unconscious way of avoiding greater dangers. Masochism has to be understood as a strange form of seduction which, by displaying pain, seeks to win over another's will. The other to whom one submits oneself is thought of, unconsciously, as a hated rival. The other side of the coin to masochism is always sadism.

There is no existing form of renunciation which in principle cannot be appropriated by masochism.[13] It is only when the rejection of a creature by abnegation goes hand in hand with the acceptance of that same creature in an act of thanksgiving that it is possible for us to maintain a criterion that judges what is authentic asceticism and mature abnegation. It is only, therefore, when a capacity to feel satisfaction exists, that we can be sure that the abnegation or the mortification has a right meaning. At the same time, as we saw with the theology of Karl Rahner, asceticism and abnegation can be truly Christian only when they run parallel with the acknowledgement that it is also by means of the world that one can reach God.

From an Ignatian perspective, it should also be borne in mind that even the love of the cross has always to be subordinated to *indifference* in the context of the Principle and Foundation, and one should never pretend to press forward in an illusionary 'advance' beyond that. The cross cannot be sought except in so far as God wills. The second kind of humility is legitimate only 'if my options are equally effective for the service of God our Lord and the salvation of my soul' (Exx 166). Thus, it is not a question of attaining 'the best', but of perceiving what God wants specifically for each individual. It may be 'dishonour' or 'poverty'. But it may not be. It only becomes possible to choose a life in conformity with the Third Kind of Humility 'when the options equally further the praise and glory of God' (Exx 167). Consequently, what is at stake is not an effort to win supposed 'sanctity' by conquest, nor to acquire God's favour by means of a display of suffering, but to orientate oneself by a radical disposition

The cross cannot be sought except in so far as God wills

[13] See Louis Beirnaert, 'Illusion et vérité dans le renoncement', in *Expérience chrétienne et psychologie* (Paris: Épi, 1966), 155–172.

to the service, glory and praise of God. In the Third Kind of Humility, what is required is not, by exercising a supreme violence on oneself, to choose the worst: insults, ignominy, being thought a fool and an idiot, and so on. Nor is it required to be heroes and saints, but rather to be disposed and willing to follow Jesus in a radical way.

From 'the Hatred He Had Conceived against Himself' to 'He Woke up as if from Sleep'

The personal evolution that Ignatius underwent regarding mortification and asceticism can be a great help in understanding the place that the cross can, and should, take in our lives. In addition, we are able to see at this point how the criteria for a spiritual theology, as outlined by Rahner, can combine with the conclusions to which a psychoanalytic perspective leads us.

The first plan formed by Ignatius after his conversion in Loyola was to go to Jerusalem in order to lead a life of personal renunciation, penance and extreme self-sacrifice: 'about going to Jerusalem barefoot, and about not eating except herbs, and about doing all the other rigours he was seeing the saints had done, and a little further, with all the acts of discipline and all the acts of self-denial that a generous spirit, fired with God, generally wants to do'.[14] He still did not know what he would do when he returned, and was clear in his mind about only one thing: always to live in penance, perhaps to go into the Charterhouse so as 'to practise the hatred he had conceived against himself'.[15]

As Ignatius left Loyola with the firm resolve to change his life, he was more and more obsessed with the notion, clearly coloured to some extent with masochistic overtones, of submitting himself to the Law of God. As he himself tells us, at that time 'his soul was still blind … without making the judgement that his sins were forgiven'; his penances were 'not so much to make satisfaction for his sins as to pleasing and being agreeable to God'. This submission to God, quite apart from any reference to sin, seemed to require the most radical negation of himself as an inescapable condition for being accepted. He has to achieve this, even as those saints, whom he now rivals, achieved it. But he goes about it, 'not knowing what humility was, or charity, or patience, or discernment in regulating and balancing these virtues'. Rather, 'his whole purpose

[14] *Autobiography*, nn. 8–9.
[15] *Autobiography*, n. 12.

A barefoot pilgrim sets out for Jerusalem, 1531

was to do these great exterior deeds because so the saints had done them for the glory of God, without considering any other more individual circumstances'.[16] Somewhat later in Manresa the severe mortifications practised by Ignatius have definite masochistic overtones, as William Meissner has shown: 'they reflected the intrapsychic conflict that he endured with regard to his instinctual life, and at the same time, they served him as an effective defence against his severe aggressive conflicts'.[17]

What confronts us here is the moral asceticism described by Rahner, not authentically Christian, which tries to force God's hand as if God were opposed to the world. At that time, Ignatius really does not know, 'what humility was, or charity, or patience, or discernment in regulating and balancing these virtues'. His sole aim was 'to pleasing and being agreeable to God … without making the judgement that his sins were forgiven'. He wants to force God's acceptance of him, an acceptance he does not grant himself, by means of a masochistic submission to the Law. But this is a dead end. The only thing he achieves is to involve himself in a terrible obsessive dynamic of scruples and culpabilities from which he does not know how to escape, to the point where he comes to be tempted to commit suicide. His first step is to consult with someone—the confessor; but that is no help. And on his own, he feels the urge to abandon the

[16] *Autobiography*, n.14.
[17] William Meissner, *Ignatius of Loyola: Psychology of a Saint* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1992), 371–372.

life he is leading. Yet that is when 'the Lord willed that he woke up as if from sleep'.[18]

This way of putting things is most revealing: 'the Lord willed'. Effectively, what happened was that Ignatius abandoned the imaginary world in which he had been living, he broke away from the narcissistic phantasy that he could win God over by seducing Him, as a child tries to do with a mother, or that he could capture God's favour by a masochistic submission to some Law which he imagined to be like the omnipotent will of a father. Ignatius had remained, in one way or another, in the realm of dreams, the imaginary, a sphere in which he could never experience in any authentic way the encounter with God. For in that realm, where all was fruit of imagination, the only relation possible was with his own imaginary constructs. The solution came not through his effort, not through his struggling and his immense ascetic prowess and extreme penances. It came because 'the Lord willed'. It was not that God found Himself forced or seduced by this display of mortifications and suffering. Only in this way could Ignatius open himself up to a free otherness, where no manipulation is possible, to a God who points the way to reality, to history and to other people, a way which is quite beyond any narcissistic dreams of heroisms and 'sanctities'. This is a way that will be plagued with unpleasantness, hostility, and persecution, with doubts and uncertainties. Briefly, it is a way leading to a cross that is not sought after, but which is taken up for love of Jesus and which is an inescapable condition for any following of him under his banner.

The Process of the Exercises: No Bed of Roses

The social imperative to be 'happy' that we mentioned earlier is simply one expression of the priority given to the narcissism typical of the postmodern era. We are all in thrall to the cult of self-esteem and 'human potentiality', the love of self, personal self-realisation and the glorification of the Ego at all cost. The contamination of such narcissistic tendencies has affected even the world of spirituality. One sees everywhere proposals for a spiritual interiority imbued with this psychologism which eliminates the frontier between spiritual growth and the merely psychological.

[18] *Autobiography*, n. 25. Compare Louis Biernaert, 'L'Expérience fondamentale d'Ignace de Loyola et l'expérience psychanalytique', in *Expérience chrétienne et psychologie*, 291–330.

As a consequence, a proposal to undertake the Ignatian exercises may also be in danger of being seduced by such tendencies, for example in cases where the sole motive for them is to achieve a personal ease of mind, or immersion in the Deeper Ego, or an escape from 'stress'. In such circumstances, it becomes absolutely necessary to introduce exercitants to the conditions explained in the Annotations so as to avoid false notions and possible frustration.

It is impossible in the space of this article to enter into a detailed account of the disagreeable situations which must be encountered by whoever undertakes the process as envisaged by Ignatius. It will suffice to recall however briefly, some elements of the situations in which exercitants will have to find themselves.

From the Principle and Foundation (Exx 23) the exercitants are confronted in grave terms with the question of existence: they have to ponder problems that generally they would prefer to avoid so as not to have to cope with the anguish and suffering that are essential elements in our condition as creatures, where we are constantly tempted by the promise: '… you will be like God' (Genesis 3:5). Following on from this, they will need to discern what are the bonds that impede their freedom in such decisive matters as how to maintain themselves 'indifferent'—with regard to 'wealth rather than poverty, or honour rather than dishonour, or a long life rather than a short one' (Exx 166). Illness, poverty, disgrace, a short life? From the start, exercitants must be willing to entertain considerations that enjoy little popularity when thought of from the perspective of the imperative to happiness, to the present moment and to consumerism.

These are reflections, moreover, that of necessity have to set in motion an interior struggle: the exercitants are affected and stirred by various spirits (Exx 6) which involve 'three kinds of thoughts' (Exx 32) within us and produce contrary movements. At times, following the principle of *agere contra* (Exx 13, 16, 97, 157, 319, 351), some will be led by necessity to deny themselves and 'work against their human sensitivities and against their carnal and worldly love' (Exx 97). Thus, when Ignatius chooses examples to explain the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits suitable for the First Week, he describes an internal warfare, certain mental struggles where there is a need to adopt certain strategies: for instance, there is the battle of the sexes (the man who grows strong or weak before a ferocious woman [Exx 325]); there is the conflict between law and transgression (the 'false lover' who secretly loves 'the daughter

of a good father or the wife of a good husband' [Exx 326]); and there is the battle in the strict military sense (the commander or leader who plans his strategy prior to the capture of a castle [Exx 327]).

Moreover, in an age when self-esteem is exalted, feelings of culpability enjoy little favour. *Don't feel guilty!* is nowadays the standard advice, whether explicit or implied. But in the process of the Exercises, it is not possible to advance at all without feelings that are utterly opposed to self-esteem, such as 'shame and confusion about myself' (Exx 48) along with 'growing and intense sorrow and tears' (Exx 55). All this aims to help one recognise with humility both that forgiveness has been granted by a merciful God and that salvation does not come as a consequence of an individual plunging into a masochistic world of penance.

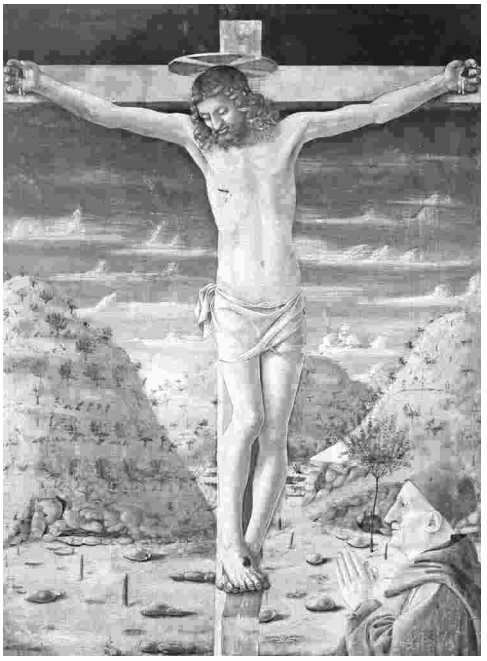
From the very threshold of the Second Week, exercitants will be challenged to a following of Jesus in which suffering and the cross are clearly delineated from the beginning. They ask for the grace to follow Jesus in 'pain' (Exx 95) and to be willing to give 'offerings of greater worth and moment' (Exx 97), being willing to endure 'all injuries and affronts, and any poverty …' (Exx 98). The conditions for such a following are perfectly clear. The exercitants are left with no room for doubt.

The struggle that must take place is shown immediately to be an interior one: the meditation on the Two Standards and that on the Three Classes are there to let exercitants see the strategies that the opposing forces are following within the soul. The challenge here is not asceticism or the sacralisation of suffering, but rather the ability to be able with the grace of God 'to keep … all our bodily faculties subject to the higher' (Exx 87), to attain that outlook which has regard for 'what is better for us' (Exx 211), and which enables 'a better method and order' (Exx 214), so that 'the soul … uses its natural faculties in freedom and peace' (Exx 177). The aim, in sum, is 'to be master of oneself' (Exx 216) in order not to 'be deaf' (Exx 91) to the call of Jesus, to deny oneself, to take up one's cross and follow Him.

In the course of the Third Week, this *following* takes on explicitly the name of the cross. As the week progresses, exercitants have to come to recognise, first of all, that faith does not free them from being mortal human beings. Alongside identification with the suffering Christ comes a clearer understanding of what it means to *follow* Him, and also what is authentically meant by the paternity of God. The role of this paternity is not to free us from our human condition, but rather to impel that humanity to its fullness through a generous granting of self for the sake

of others. And that is true even at times, when, as with Jesus, 'divinity hides itself' (Exx 196).

As a whole, the Third Week is built on a thorough acknowledgement that the God of Jesus is a *different God*. This is no infantile God who is there to satisfy the needs and desires of an 'I' having difficulty in accepting the conditions of being human. Rather, this is a God who does away with our imaginary constructions, and who reveals to us a love that is willing to undergo the greatest of all weaknesses—and thereby show His unique power. To accept that 'divinity hides itself' is to accept the challenge of recognising that only in the 'scandal' of the cross do we find the privileged moment of the self-manifestation of the love of God for humanity. Therefore, where it goes into hiding is precisely where one has to look for it.



Crucifixion, *by Giovanni Bellini, fifteenth century*

Jesus on the cross is the complete revelation of the God of Love set over against that God of Power that we have such difficulty in renouncing. This is not by any means a justification of weakness, failure and impotence; rather it is an understanding that love is the only authentic power. As Yves Congar has explained, 'Failure is in no way an ideal, except in so far as it is "in Christ" …. It is theological hope that surpasses human hope itself.'[19] There lies the challenge: to convince ourselves that the only strength, the only hope, the only power with the capacity to change the world is love, generosity, self-giving. It is not the power of miracles, not the wisdom of the Greeks, but the mystery of the love of God in the scandal of the cross.

[19] Yves Congar, 'La Vision chrétienne de l'échec', in *Les hommes devant l'échec*, edited by Jean Lacroix (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1968).

And yet, it has to be said again to avoid the ever-present temptation to sacralise suffering: it is not the Cross that saves us; it is the Crucified who saves. He saves us by revealing to us a God of Love, handed over, right to the very end, for all human beings. He saves us by opening our minds to a God who demolishes frontiers, a God who excludes no one, a God for whom we are all worthy and whose preference is for the weakest. The crucified tells us that this is the way God loves us. And this is what salvation is: pity, compassion. He saves us by opening our eyes. He saves us with the experience of love. He saves us by letting us feel that we are accompanied by Life which conquers death. He saves us because on the cross he shows us his victory over the world. For they could not take away from him one millimetre of Life, even though they killed him. They were unable to enrol him in the machinery of evil, of violence and vengeance. He came out untouched until he breathed his last. He saves us because in the cross we contemplate God better than anywhere else: here we cannot be mistaken. He saves us because he offers us the hope that, following him 'in the pain', we may also follow him 'also in the glory' (Exx 95).

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translated by Joseph A. Munitiz SJ

Spirituality and Living

BALANCING WORK AND LEISURE

Jane Khin Zaw

THE NOTION OF 'BALANCING' two different things would seem to suggest that the two are contraries, opposites as it were. And yet one cannot help seeing work and leisure as complementary rather than opposed. Both are occupations we practise at different times, sometimes even involving the same activities, though work is regarded as arduous and necessary, undertaken precisely so that we can then enjoy some leisure as a result—in other words, so we can earn our living.

Among the world's religious traditions, Buddhists do not value work for its own sake, but Hindus are encouraged to work hard and earn money. The Christian Bible sees things differently again. It begins with an account of God's Creation in which God 'works' for six days and rests on the seventh, the Sabbath day, enjoying it in 'leisure'. There is no sense of the work being arduous, but joyful, as God brings into being something from nothing, out of a formless void or chaos. I have always loved this text at the Easter Vigil (Genesis 1:1–2:2) and like to read it as triumphantly bringing the good news of something *new*, first setting the stage in all its variety and beauty and then working up to a climax with the creation of humanity.

Another biblical account of creation adds a further element to God's final purpose by telling us that before any plants could spring up it was needful that there should be someone to 'till the ground' when the rain came (Genesis 2:4). God, in fact, is bringing forth a co-creator to take possession of the garden that God had planted, giving the man a helper in this task by creating a woman so that together they may be fruitful and multiply. Everywhere in the Bible we see people at work: 'People go out to their work and to their labour until the evening' (Psalm 104:23). This is how God's creation flowers and we rejoice in it.

Because of all this, and being made in God's image, human beings are truly themselves when they have work to do; unemployment is not natural to us, but something to be avoided. Whether or not we need to earn our living, idleness amounts to a denial of our humanity. Unemployment seriously affects our state of mind and self-esteem and can lead to mental health problems such as chronic depression and anger, especially if we are the breadwinners of a family.

There is also a dark side to the story, as a result of sin. Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden of Eden and henceforth the earth becomes a wilderness where thorns and thistles grow. Work becomes hard and painful, a fight against the odds. Leisure then becomes something we have to earn and can enjoy only after we have done much labour. And there is an even more negative kind of work, such as Israel experienced in Egypt:

> … forced labour at an exhausting pace, under pitiless surveillance, among a hostile people—work systematically organised to reduce a people to nothing and make them incapable of resisting. This is already the world of the concentration camp. Work under oppression.[1]

Simone Weil vividly and realistically describes her own experience of working in a factory: 'A modern factory reaches perhaps almost the limit of horror. Everybody in it is constantly harassed and kept on edge by the interference of extraneous wills while the soul is left in cold and

[1] *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, edited by Xavier Léon-Dufour (London: Burns and Oates, 2004).

desolate misery.'[2] 'An obviously inexorable and invincible form of oppression does not engender revolt as an immediate reaction, but submission', she writes elsewhere.[3]

Whatever impels or compels us to work, our final gain or reward at the end of life is the ability to rest in God's presence as we shall eventually do in heaven:

> In this laborious world of thine, tumultuous with toil and with struggle, among hurrying crowds shall I stand before thee face to face ?
>
> And when my work shall be done in this world, O King of kings, alone and speechless shall I stand before thee face to face?[4]

I have encountered both ways of understanding work—as joyful and inherently human and as burdensome toil—in my own life as a Carmelite sister. When I entered in 1962, the Second Vatican Council had only just begun, with its aim of renewal and bringing up to date of all aspects of religious life; so of course it did not actually impinge on our lifestyle for many years. A work ethic seemed to prevail most of the time, and work in Carmel then was contrary to leisure rather than complementary. 'Leisure' scarcely entered into the question, indeed, being replaced by or understood as 'prayer'.

Not only was prayer to be continual, as the Primitive Rule prescribes ('Each one of you is to stay in his own cell or nearby, pondering the Lord's law day and night and keeping watch at his prayers unless attending to some other duty'), but so was work ('You must give yourselves to work of some kind so that the devil may always find you busy; no idleness on your part must give him a chance to pierce the defences of your souls').[5] These two requirements are in fact fulfilled when we grow so closely united to the Lord that we are in his presence and praying at every moment, whatever we are doing and whether we are alone or in company. We are transformed into true friends of the Lord, open and welcoming to each other as a result, living for others and not just for ourselves. 'The Lord walks among the pots and pans', as St Teresa was fond of reminding us![6]

[2] Simone Weil, 'Human Personality', in *Selected Essays, 1934–1943: Historical, Political, and Moral Writings*, edited and translated by Richard Rees (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1962), 17.
[3] Simone Weil, 'Factory Journal', in *Formative Writings, 1929–41*, edited and translated by Dorothy Tuck McFarland and Wilhelmina Van Ness (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), 164,
[4] Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali* (London: Macmillan, 1913), n. 76.
[5] *The Rule of St Albert*, translated by Bede Edwards (Aylesford: Carmelite, 1971), nn. 10, 20.
[6] St Teresa of Ávila, *The Book of Her Foundations*, 5.8, in *The Collected Works of St Teresa of Ávila*, translated by Kieran Kavanagh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington, DC: ICS, 1976–1985), volume 3.

To get down to the practical nitty gritty of our lives then: our work included all the housework, cleaning and washing in the laundry, which could be quite heavy at times. We had a large garden, which gave endless scope for those of us who were gifted that way. Gardening time was always from one to two o'clock. I was never interested in growing flowers, except violas and pansies to press and dry to make flower cards. I grew cherry tomatoes and small honeydew melons in the greenhouse, in growbags on the shelf. Not being strong enough for the heaviest work—digging or carting about barrowfuls of manure—I was at least able to grow vegetables—marrows and courgettes and aubergines. I'm afraid my contribution to weeding was chopping off the tops of dandelion plants, leaving the roots to grow again! However I did have quite a big job, which was the bonfire. There was a large space for it enclosed by a hedge of sorts and the fire was underneath an oak tree, so that often the lower branches caught alight as well.

We worked to earn our living, too, making vestments and altar linen, and producing cards of all kinds. In those days there were no colour printers, so we had to paint by hand endless batches of birthday and Christmas cards, 'get well', 'sympathy' and 'thank you'. Sometimes when the pressure was too great we would take spiritual reading time for it, and as Christmas approached we had to paint even during prayer time. As a novice this seemed to me too much of a good thing, so while I painted I had my copy of St John's Gospel in front of me and gradually learnt the whole Gospel by heart. There was certainly the opportunity and outlet for creativity in designing new cards, which was, in a way, a leisure activity, so in this card painting, work and leisure seemed to balance quite naturally. Outright leisure was able to take over sometimes, during our occasional holidays: a whole week each year and all Solemnities, as well as during the annual Community Retreat, when the timetable allowed us extra sleep.

Outside religious life, most people with families and jobs have to balance work and leisure in a rather more obvious way. This is far more of a practical problem for the great majority of people 'in the world' than it is for contemplative nuns living their sheltered, enclosed lives. No wonder we try to live fully our main vocation of praying for people all over the world; and we are grateful to them for all their support and help to us as well as for their own prayers.

We should also always remember that we in the West, whether lay or religious, live a privileged life, in stark contrast to the lot of the poorest

and most deprived in the developing world, as Pope Francis repeatedly points out: 'In all places and circumstances, Christians, with the help of their pastors, are called to hear the cry of the poor ….' And, significantly, for Pope Francis how we respond to the poor is not only a matter of charity and aid, but of a social justice that recognises *work* as a mark of their humanity:

> We are not simply talking about ensuring nourishment or a 'dignified sustenance' for all people, but also their 'general temporal welfare and prosperity'. This means education, access to health care, and above all employment, for it is through free, creative, participatory and mutually supportive labour that human beings express and enhance the dignity of their lives.[7]

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[7] Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, nn. 191–192.

HOPE AND THE COURAGE TO BECOME AND OVERCOME

Robert E. Doud

IN JUNE 2018, the eyes of the world were focused on news reports about the Wild Boars, a boys' soccer team from Thailand who had celebrated a victory by going exploring deep inside a cave. We all remember parts of the story. After the boys had walked for a mile or so, the narrow passageway started to fill up with water behind them. The twelve boys and their coach were soon trapped—the water would have been over their heads for a considerable distance, making escape impossible. Some of the reports said that none of them could swim. There was a danger that they would run out of air in the chamber where they took refuge. One of the first rescuers, an able swimmer and diver, drowned while trying to bring empty air tanks back out of the flooded cave. It was sad and ironic that this man died when, astoundingly, the entire team was rescued two weeks later. Hope never failed among those young soccer players. A world-class rescue operation was organized. In groups of four the boys were brought out by Thai Navy Seals. The coach, who had led them into the cave in the first place, managed to keep up their morale all the time that they were trapped, and also came out safely.

Hope makes heroes. We regard these boys as heroes just for surviving, for overcoming their fear and frustration, for keeping hope alive among themselves, for cooperating with their rescuers. Hope often implies courage as well, and courage has its roots in hope. Without hope, many brave and important deeds would never have been accomplished and many heroes might have given up before they completed their acts of heroism. It is hope that makes us stay in the battle and keep fighting until victory is won. It is hope that gives our favourite teams the grit they need to win the game.

If hope implies courage, it also entails *encouragement*. Encouragement means giving hope to others, sharing our hope with them. Etymologically 'en-*cour*-agement' means putting *heart* (French *coeur*) into someone else. Coaches and teachers, whatever else they do, have to give their students hope for success in learning something. Missionaries bring hope,

Rescuers at the Thuam Lang caves, June 2018

not only of salvation but also of an improved life for those to whom they are sent. The missionaries themselves hope that a growing life of faith, self-sacrificing love—and self-sustaining hope—will continue where they have worked and given years of their lives.

In the world of spirituality, we are all hope-mongers; we are all missionaries. Our courage means persisting against the odds, taking risks based on trust and never losing heart. The Lutheran theologian and spiritual writer Paul Tillich wrote a short philosophical book called *The Courage to Be*. Tillich is famous for his definition of religious faith as *ultimate concern*: 'concern directed towards the ultimate …. religion is at the origin of all cultural expression, giving substance, meaning, judgment, and creative courage to all the functions of the human spirit'.[1] In much of what Tillich says about faith, he speaks about hope as well. His view of hope, derived from his view of faith, sets Christian conviction and courage in this world and in our own life situation against the forces of discouragement, negativity and *nonbeing*.[2] Amid the lesser, *proximate concerns* of this life and this finite world, he reminds us of our ultimate concern, which, fully understood, includes hope, faith in God and love of neighbour as well.

[1] Walter Lembrecht, *A Handbook of Christian Theologians,* edited by Martin E. Marty and Dean G. Peerman (Nashville: Abingdon, 1965), 488.

[2] Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1952), 43: 'Man as man in every civilization is anxiously aware of the threat of nonbeing and needs the courage to affirm himself in spite of it'. And see Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, volume 1, *Reason and Revelation, Being and God* (Chicago: U. of Chicago P, 1971), 187: 'man participates not only in being but also in nonbeing …. There can be no world unless there is a dialectical opposition of nonbeing in being.'

Paul Tillich: Hope and the Courage to Become

The Courage to Be is a commentary on the sometimes pessimistic philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. This philosophy was based on a very raw form of the courage to be, something Nietzsche called the *will to power*.[3] Indeed, Hitler found inspiration in some of Nietzsche's cruder statements about the will to power. However others, such as the psychologists Rollo May and Viktor Frankl (who spent four years in Auschwitz) draw upon Nietzsche's more nuanced expressions, in which the will to power eventually sublimates its own energy into a disciplined and ethical way of life. For Frankl, the will to power becomes a *will to meaning* that drives us to find again the exuberance of life even when we are mired in conditions that make us despondent.

Tillich also talks about *being*.[4] This is a simple word, but one that we do not often use as a noun on its own. We speak of being happy, being sad, being sick, being alive, being dead, being fifty years old, being tired, being in a good place or a bad place, but we seldom talk about plain old *being*, just by itself. In Tillich, being is the *power of being*, the force that drives everything in the universe, 'which transcends everything that is and in which everything that is participates'.[5] The power of being, as we experience it under the conditions of time, worldliness and finitude, is hope. Being empowers us to defeat all odds and withstand all opposition. Ultimately, being is divinity itself. God is being.[6]

For Tillich, *courage* is the power of asserting ourselves over the rival forces of negativity and destruction. We need the courage to accept the things that we cannot change, especially if those things—or people—are disappointing to us. We need the courage to keep trying to change the things that we can change, in order to improve conditions for ourselves and others. We also need the courage to face our fears, failings, qualms and anxieties. We need to pick ourselves up after setbacks and disappointments, and to face the results of our own faults, personal failures and mistakes. We need courage to forgive others and to ask them for forgiveness. Courage is power; it is the power to *be*, and it is the

[3] Tillich, *Courage to Be*, 26–27; 'Nietzsche's will-to-power … designates the self-affirmation of life as life, including self-preservation and growth'.
[4] Tillich, *Courage to Be*, 34; 'Being has nonbeing "within" itself as that which is eternally present and eternally overcome …. Creatively, it [being] affirms itself, eternally and conquering its own nonbeing. As such it is the pattern of the self-affirmation of every finite being and the source of the courage to be.'
[5] Tillich, *Courage to Be*, 173.
[6] Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, volume 1, 235: 'The being of God is being-itself'.

power to *become*. It is the power and the will to be more when we are tempted to settle for having less and for being less.

We need the courage to be alone, to deal with loneliness and to get to know ourselves in solitude. We need the courage to make changes, to grow and to develop, especially in the face of discouragements. We need the courage to act, when the time and opportunity to act effectively are here. We also need the courage *not* to act, when our principles might be violated or when it would be just a matter of going along with the crowd. In so far as the courage to be is also the courage that helps us to face and to create the future, the courage to be is also the courage to become.

The power of being gives us the courage to be with others as well as to be alone, especially when we have excuses or inclinations to avoid or neglect others. Being is usually a being-with-others, and courage is not a lonely virtue. It comes in the company of other virtues, such as wisdom, patience, honesty and prudence. In more up-to-date language, we might say that courage comes with integrity, self-esteem and emotional maturity. Courage hits us in our hearts; it is there that we make the decisions, choices and commitments that define us as individuals. Courage and hope create a vortex in which they spin around each other. Courage gives us hope, and hope gives us courage.

Courage comes along with love. Loving someone else, or loving a cause—something bigger than ourselves—gives us power, purpose and perseverance. Love finds a way. Courage involves loving ourselves appropriately, and loving others by promoting their well-being and success. In Tillich's philosophy, *participation* is important.[7] Participation means taking a personal and individual role in what is going on; it also means letting others participate, take a role, share decision-making and responsibility, and make their individual choices. It means being accountable to others. The courage to become involves the courage to participate.

Sometimes we cannot explain where our courage and our hope come from. We find that success is not all up to us; that the power is coming from somewhere else. The universe seems to be supporting us. People appear in our lives to guide and encourage us. Sometimes when we need to become a source of courage and hope for someone else, our own lives get a boost of energy and meaning, and we ourselves become

[7] Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 88: 'For this is just what participation means: being a part of something from which one is, at the same time, separated …. participation is a partial identity and a partial nonidentity.'

more courageous beings. What I wish for myself, my loved ones and for all humanity is the surprise of being drawn up into that invigorating vortex of courage, hope and participating love.

Hope and the Theological Virtues

Hope is one of the familiar *theological virtues* of faith, hope and charity.[8] These three are organically one; they always go together. These are the most important virtues in the Bible and in Christianity. But often, we do not think of hope as one of the three most important virtues. Faith is obviously fundamental to Christian living, and charity or love (Greek *agape*) is the greatest of them all, according to St Paul (1 Corinthians 13:13). But we may forget about hope, think less about it, or fail to see it as something of which we need a greater understanding. Hope is a virtue, and it is also a gift; it comes to us first of all as grace. Starting as an attitude and an inclination, a virtue is something we practise, a habit, an attitude within us that seeps constantly into action, into action as prayer, and into our practice of the other virtues as well.

Hope is the virtue that manages time. Time is not only a measure of intervals between events, but it is also the mystery of how our lives are suspended in the flow of what we regard as past, present and future. It takes skill and practice to order our time well. Time, each moment of our lives, is a gift from God. Hope helps us to live our moments as best we can. Hope becomes patience and helps us to bide our time. But it can also be a sense of urgency that spurs and goads us to work effectively and quickly, to use our time well. Hope becomes perseverance when it makes us abide or endure the negative things in our experiences of life.

Hope helps us to live our moments as best we can

In hope, we learn to trust in God's power, God's mercy and God's guidance. With our often tiny, puny and picayune minds and manners of thinking, we have only barely begun to know who God is. We hope for an ever greater knowledge, an ever closer companionship, an ever stronger faith and hope. But in *Four Quartets*, T. S. Eliot warns us to be careful what we hope for:

[8] See Avery Dulles, 'Faith and Revelation', in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, edited by Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 105–106. 'Building on certain texts from Saint Paul, such as 1 Cor. 13:13, medieval theologians disringuished sharply among faith, hope, and charity, which they described as the three theological virtues …. Thomas Aquinas explained how the theological virtues order human beings toward the beatific vision … through hope we tend toward the vision of God as something that we can, through grace, attain.'

> I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope
> For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love
> For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith
> But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.[9]

According to Eliot, we may be hoping in the wrong way or praying for the wrong thing. He reminds us that faith is a mystery, and that, especially through times of frustration and defeat, a line of grace and redemption can be traced. Faith gives us the vision to see this line, and hope takes faith as its guiding light.

Faith relies on the evidence of things unseen. We might say that faith lifts us up out of time and gives us a glimpse of eternity—through a glass darkly, to be sure, but we have a strong inkling in our faith that God, grace and goodness are always there; they are with us somehow, in every passing circumstance. In the mystery of time, that is, in the mystery of God's finite creation, faith becomes hope: hope takes over. Time itself is unseen, and hope is the energy of anticipation that awaits and expects favourable outcomes. We are always learning and relearning the lessons of hope. Hope is closely allied with *patience*. Saint Paul often used the phrase *patient endurance* (Greek *hupomone)*. The Israelites in the desert, relying on God's promise, were given the Covenant, and had to learn over and over again how to hope. We need to learn hope on God's terms and not our own. Sometimes we pray to God as if we were telling God that God will do just fine if he or she just makes things turn out the way we want them to turn out. But this is not the way hope works. The lesson we must learn, over and repeatedly over again, is that God's ways are not our ways. To hope well is to pray well, and vice versa.

Humility teaches us that it is best to hope for whatever God wants of us, wants *for* us, wills to give us. We ask God for good things, and then we say: 'Thy will be done'. How do we serve the cause of hope in our daily lives? By *encouraging* others, holding on till the end, hoping for a gentle death in which we also hope for a new life that we cannot comprehend until we get there. Patience often takes the shape of psychological maturity or blessed indifference, by which we can sharpen our hoping skills in less exalted ways, hoping for what we prefer in small things, while resigning ourselves to accept whatever will be. Hope leads to maturity in faith and in love, with which we declare our trust in God and ask for

[9] T. S. Eliot, 'East Coker', in *T. S. Eliot: The Complete Poems and Plays 1909–1950* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1967), 127.

the graces of perseverance and patience, as we make a petition for an ever better, deeper and richer life of prayer. Here is found the basis of spiritual freedom—all freedom—which removes those 'd' words: depression, disquiet, despair, despondency, discouragement, darkness, disillusionment, feeling down. Hope triggers the freedom (*eleutheria*) that helps us create our own future with God.

Hope and the Omega Point

Some of us are used to what I would call the *old model* of understanding in theology. We might also refer to it as the *sin and grace model*. According to the old model, the incarnation happens in order to redeem us from our sins, and in order to bring us to personal conversion and relationship with Christ. All of this is still valid, of course. The point made by the *new model* is that this happens in a larger framework.

The old model says that incarnation happens for the sake of redemption. It was best articulated in St Anselm's medieval book *Why God Became Man.* The new model of understanding is what may be called the *creation–incarnation model.* According to this model, the incarnation happens for its own sake, as it were. On this view, God intends from all eternity, long before the arrival of humans and our descent into sin, to become human and to dwell with us in human flesh. The incarnation itself is the reason for the creation.[10] It takes the whole of history to complete this process. The entire cosmos is in a process of evolution towards the moment when God becomes man in Jesus. And, going beyond this, equally importantly, the incarnation continues as a process until every last human is created, redeemed and transformed into the Body of Christ.

Hope is important as the virtue that guides the way from the definitive realisation of the incarnation in the man Jesus, who comes at the midpoint of time, to what Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955) called Omega Point, the ultimate incorporation of the last human and the last morsel of created matter into the organic body of Christ.[11] The resurrection of Jesus' body points the way forward and serves as the basis

[10] See Denis Edwards, 'Teilhard's Vision as Agenda for Rahner's Christology', in *From Teilhard to Omega: Co-Creating an Unfinished Universe*, edited by Ilia Delio (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2014), 59: '[In] Franciscan theology, particularly Duns Scotus (c. 1266–1308), God's plan of creation always had the incarnation of Christ as its center'.

[11] See Ilia Delio, 'Evolution and the Rise of the Secular God', in *From Teilhard to Omega*, 47: 'As Omega, Christ is suprapersonal in nature, the divine depth of love who … gathers up all the biological and spiritual energies in the universe—that is, the goal of evolution'.

for the resurrection of all the rest of us. Not only that, but Jesus' resurrection works right now as a principle within nature and creation, bringing about the gradual transformation of all things into the *new creation* which is the cosmic Body of Christ.

The idea of the cosmic Body of Christ at its Omega Point is more or less the same as the familiar old idea of heaven.[12] The Body of Christ already embraces and incorporates us all, but its work of integration, like the work of the universe itself, is unfinished. It includes all of us— ever more effectively, transformed in glory, harvested into mutual relationship and brought to perfection in organic unity within the all-inclusive Body of Christ. Hope entails the vision that holds this promise, this plan, this eager yearning and expectation before us. Hope is also the energy of envisioning and transformation that we cling to as we await the final arrival of the fullness of the incarnation.

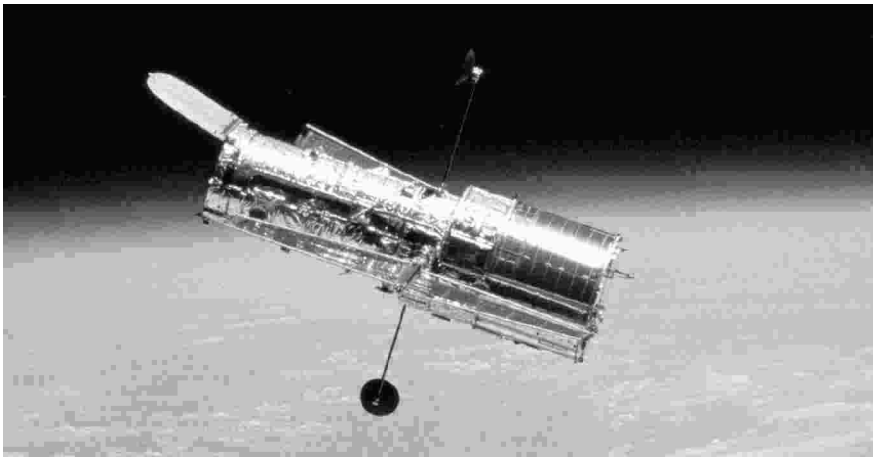
Heaven and the Hubble Space Telescope

The Hubble Space Telescope has told us an enormous amount about space, stars, gravity and electromagnetic waves.[13] We are more aware than ever that space is vast beyond our imaginations and filled with fascinating forces and objects. Nearly exact measurements between these objects are possible, and nearly exact measurements of their speeds as well. But the Hubble telescope has been serviced for the last time, and the term of its brilliant functioning is about to expire. Its successor will be the James Webb Space Telescope. This new telescope is in the advanced design stage now and will provide us with many multiples of data more than the Hubble.

Such telescopes, such instruments, help us to peer into the past and the future at the same time. Their awesome technology and the abundant data they collect and represent seem to come streaming towards us out of a distant future. Even so, the light and other electromagnetic rays that we receive actually come from objects in the far distant past, travelling millions of light years to reach our very tiny planet, Earth. We are all familiar with the literally astronomical figures produced when calculations

[12] Ilia Delio, *The Emergent Christ: Exploring the Meaning of Catholic in an Evolutionary Universe* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2011), 75: 'Heaven is not a place of non-materiality. It begins in this earthly life ….'

[13] See Adam Frank, *The Constant Fire: Beyond the Science v. Religion Debate* (Berkeley: U. of California P, 2009), 149: 'In 1928, Edwin Hubble, using the most powerful telescope of his day, found that every galaxy in the sky was moving away from us. The more distant a galaxy was from our own, the faster it appeared to be rushing outward.'



The Hubble Space Telescope

about the universe are made. The Hubble telescope and the Webb telescope are images of hope in which we gather up the past and launch ourselves forward into a future of which we cannot even yet conceive.

The Psalmist writes that God 'determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names' (Psalm 147:4). God knows and sees the stars better than human beings and their devices do. In the Bible, we find other images of the stellar universe and of the glory we hope to share with God. We see heaven as the place God has prepared for us. We see in the book of Isaiah (6:1–3) a scene that depicts the throne on which God sits, and angels surrounding the throne. The angels have wings, and there are throngs of adoring humans before the throne. In Ezekiel (1:26–28), the throne has four giant wheels, upon which it can move in any direction with great ease. Is this the real heavenly scene? Are we actually going to this place one day? For Paul Tillich, the Bible often contains depictions of symbolic value, and does not, for the most part, give us a literal account of these things. For us, what we envision and hope for has more to do with what we see through the Hubble and the Webb telescopes.

Our destiny and our final destination can equally be understood in other terms. The cosmic Body of Christ is even now invisibly absorbing and transforming all the matter of this massive universe into itself. Ultimately, the universe will be incorporated, organically and totally, in the living and undying tissue of the cosmic Body of Christ. Then, participation will be complete and all-inclusive. Each of us will be wholly realised in perfect participation with the living and saving Christ and with one another. This scene and this vision are roughly those described

by Teilhard de Chardin, a Jesuit priest, scientist and thinker of the same high calibre as Paul Tillich.[14] We ought then to look through the Hubble telescope and its successors, see the universe for what it really is, and then harmonize it with the best of what we know from the Bible and religion. In this way, we will learn, with the help of the Holy Spirit, what the ultimate meaning of hope will be.[15]

The Wild Boars as Buddhist Monks

Shortly after their rescue, the Wild Boars soccer team in Thailand became Buddhist monks. As a team, they made vows that would consecrate them to a life or prayer and meditation, to gratitude and mindfulness, as well as virtue and compassion. These virtues, they believe, will give them the power to become Buddhas themselves. They will overcome in themselves the inclinations and proclivities that might impede them in this process.

It is an honour to his family when a boy or man becomes a monk. Usually, in Buddhism, this is not a permanent or lifelong state. A young man will often spend a few years as a monk. In Herman Hesse's novel *Siddhartha*, a young Buddhist monk is asked what he has learnt from his experience. He replies: 'I can think, I can wait, I can fast'.[16] These turn out to be crucial skills as Siddhartha lives out the stages of his later life. When a Buddhist takes monastic vows, like the boy monks of the Wild Boars soccer team, he says: 'I take refuge in the Buddha; I take refuge in the Dharma [Buddha's teaching]; I take refuge in the Sangha [the monastic community]'.[17] To take refuge in something is to place your abiding hope in it. A Christian would say: 'I take refuge in Jesus Christ; I take refuge in the gospel; I take refuge in the Christian Church'.

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[14] Delio, *From Teilhard to Omega*, 1: 'Teilhard was a trained paleontologist, steeped in the science of evolution and human origins, and yet deeply committed to Christ'.
[15] Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, translated by William V. Dych (New York: Seabury, 1978), 297: 'Man hopes, and he goes to meet his future both making plans and at the same time opening himself to the incalculable'.
[16] Hermann Hesse, *Siddhartha*, translated by Helen Rosner (New York: Bantam, 1971), 64.
[17] Huston Smith, *The World's Religions* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), 145.

MISSION THROUGH THE RCIA

Marion Morgan

FOR ABOUT FIVE years I have been leading the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) in a city-centre parish. In 2018 one candidate was received into full communion in June and a catechumen was baptized and confirmed in November. (Candidates are those who have already been baptized in another Church; catechumens are those who are not baptized at all.) Three adults who had been baptized in the Roman Catholic Church were confirmed at the Easter Vigil. As in January 2019 there were no enquirers, it seemed a good time to reflect on the process and how it is being run in our parish, before a restart after Easter. We now have three men who started the course in May 2019.

There are many different ways of leading the RCIA, and each group is individual in its development. The challenge is to be flexible, to impart the knowledge of Catholicism that is necessary and, above all, to develop the individual's relationship with God through Christ and the Holy Spirit—which is what it is really all about. This faith is then incorporated and nourished within the Church, through the sacraments and teaching. These are simply reflections on my own personal experience of leading such groups in a city-centre church.

Because it is the main point of outreach to the world outside the church, advertising is an important consideration. A notice in the parish weekly bulletin will only reach existing church congregations. So we have tried printing leaflets to be passed to friends, local cafés and other public places. As far as I know, there has been no response to any of this. What enquiries there have been come either from casual explorers in the church—which is open every day, with Mass at 12.15 every weekday—or through the parish website. Our group has been widened to include lapsed Catholics as well as adults who have missed out on confirmation for a number of reasons: moving house, moving school, and so on. A good proportion of any such group consists of non-Catholics who have Catholic partners.

Challenges

The opening session of any series is, of course, given over to introducing ourselves to each other and hearing people's different reasons for coming to the group, if they do not mind sharing them. This is the first chance of learning about any existing Christian background, and immediately raises at least two challenges (let's not call them problems). There are vast differences in background knowledge.

Some enquirers are practising Anglicans, who may be discontented or confused with the Church of England or with some of its doctrines or practices. At least two catechumens I have had were Chinese. One was studying at the university but had only basic English. The other had come to the UK some years previously to study, and was working full-time as an electrical engineer. Both had Catholic partners and are now married. Neither had anything more than a very basic and idiosyncratic knowledge of the Catholic Church. Of two potential confirmands, one wanted to be married at her family church in Goa, where confirmation was required, and the other was to be godfather to his brother's child in Poland and, again, confirmation was required. He was just seventeen and there was no tradition of his family in Poland attending a church; he was living with his mother and her boyfriend in England. Sometimes over the years a group has included highly intellectual individuals, together with others who had only very basic education. How do you address all these different needs while keeping the attention of all?

The second challenge is that the people in any group do not necessarily all start at the same time. If we start in September but have an enquiry in May, I do not feel it is right to leave the May enquirer four months before replying to his or her questions. In fact, I usually carry on meeting right through the year, although I try and start the formal agenda in September. If someone joins the group a few sessions into the programme, do we go back to the beginning or just expect him or her to catch up somehow?

Then there is the question of the agenda: the programme itself. There are numerous guides, plans and suggestions for this. I have found the choice bewildering. No one programme seems to be suitable for everyone. Although one year we had six catechumens and candidates, it is more usual to have three, two or even just one. That makes for a very small group. Others do come just to join in: occasionally we have a rough sleeper who likes the warmth, the tea and the company—who am I to turn him or her away? Some previous members seem to like coming back, but this usually dies away within months.

Each member of the group needs a sponsor to support him or her through the process. Qualified people in the parish who might be able to help are not easy to find, and coming down to the city centre on a dark evening is not the most attractive of activities. We hold the class in the early evening to make it easy for city workers to come and also so that people can fulfil other engagements if they need to later on. I strongly believe that a group session should ideally be supplemented with one-to-one chats wherever possible. This, maybe, is a task for the sponsor, who should be involved from the beginning. Where a person has a Catholic partner, this is usually no problem. If someone has come from 'nowhere', as it seems, then maybe the group leader should either do extra follow-up him- or herself, or introduce the person carefully to a suitable potential sponsor. When we resumed this year after Easter, we hoped to have assembled a team of people who were also prepared to do one-to-one sessions where needed and appropriate. We are still working on this.

What are we trying to impart to enquirers? Some obvious topics for the beginning of the course, depending on their background, are:

- a knowledge of who Christ is and an idea of the Trinity; we start with their existing idea of God (some people do not seem to have one);
- basic prayers (the Our Father, Hail Mary), practices and beliefs (the creed) of the Catholic Church;
- an experience of God in prayer;
- how to behave in a Catholic church: the sign of the cross, genuflection, holy water and so on;
- an introduction to the Bible;
- salvation history, as found and recorded in the Bible;
- the significance of Mary;
- the sacramental life of the Church; Church as sacrament.

Later on, we move in more detail to the sacraments, the various seasons and teachings related to the liturgical year, and considerations of morality and social justice. The list of topics is vast and never exhausted.

What are the problems? There needs to be plenty of time for discussion and to pursue individual lines of thought. Jesus was born into a context. A whole people had been brought into being by God's direct intervention and taught over centuries about what God was like, what God wanted and what God was going to do: namely, send a Messiah, a chosen one. When

Jesus came, there were ways of recognising him, through reference to scripture. So do we start with the Old Testament and move on from there? Where is the context for Christ in the secular world which is, say, 95 per cent of the mindset of many of those starting instruction in the faith?

If I start with creation, it is often some weeks before we get on to what some people regard as the essentials of the faith. Meanwhile, these poor confused people are trying to go to Mass and understand their way around it. So, we break off to go through the form of the Mass. Sometimes I feel as though we are embarking on university before taking GCSEs! Some people consider that we should start off with simply sharing what we believe as Catholics, until a mindset begins to develop within which things begin to make sense. Obviously this is a reasonable line to take. But, to me, it separates people's existing life and experience from the new teaching. I would prefer to take them from where they are, answer their questions as well as I can, and gently try to move them along. They may suddenly make a great bound forward and begin to put things together for themselves. If they have a partner, this makes things much easier as they can discuss it together 'out of hours'.

With the seventeen-year-old Polish boy who needed to be confirmed in order to be a godparent, and who claimed to have no knowledge of Christianity, I eventually realised that the problem was that he was learning the faith in English. It was making little connection with what he had somehow absorbed for most of his life in Polish. Today, we cannot take for granted any more a basic knowledge of Christian stories. You cannot rely on school religious education to have given any knowledge at

all. How do you sort out confusion of Jesus with the baby in the bulrushes rescued by the Egyptian princess? Especially when someone has barely heard of Moses—unless he or she has seen a film. I have two wonderful charts from 1983 published by *Éditions de l'École* which show salvation history from Abraham up to the birth of Christ and then from then up to the present. They show what was going on in the contemporary world at the time of biblical events. The Christian one shows when the Church was taken to each country—of particular interest to the Chinese!

I am beginning to realise that, for some, at least two years of instruction are preferable. But for others—for example a discontented Anglican—six months seems a long time to wait. As in all mission ventures, flexibility seems to be the key word, along with a week-by-week discernment of what is needed.

- Do we start with where they *are*, or do we start with building a new mindset within which Jesus can be found?
- How much time is needed? This obviously varies with the individual. Some become very anxious to be able to receive the sacraments. Some need to be received into the Church because of dates already set, such as a wedding.
- Many of the doctrines that we hold can only begin to be understood with the help of the sacramental grace received through baptism, the eucharist, the giving of the Holy Spirit. How do we expect people to understand without these helps?

So—discernment is a key issue here. We need to discern fairly early on the best way of leading each particular enquirer. Is a group the best method for him or her? Is it a practical possibility? Would the person cope better with a one-to-one experience?

Suggested Solutions

A combination of many methods seems to me to work best. The agenda for an hour-long session might look like this:

- welcome and discussion (15 minutes);
- short presentation on an aspect of faith with discussion, together with handout for home consideration (30 minutes);
- meditation and prayer, maybe with a verse from scripture (15 minutes).

There may be extra time at an agreed point for individuals, as required, possibly with the sponsor or another appropriate person.

In addition to the various topics to be discussed, I try to emphasize the vital importance of people developing their own relationship with God through prayer. I might use an Ignatian-style meditation on John 1:38: 'What are you looking for?' or 'What do you want?' Another subject for meditation which goes down very well later in the course is the Prodigal Son.[1] It leads to discussion with which everyone can join in. Ignatian imaginative contemplation is a very helpful method of prayer in this context, partly because it takes seriously where the members of the group are at the moment, and the actual circumstances of their lives. I find I draw heavily on my own experience of the Spiritual Exercises. I also make sure the group members are aware of internet resources for daily prayer, and other activities in the parish where they can meet for prayer and get to know more people.

Developing their own relationship with God through prayer

In all this I have to bear in mind constantly that many people have no Christian background and no previous knowledge of the Bible. So when considering creation and the fall, for example, I tend to focus on the general state of the world and instances (which abound!) of sinful attitudes in the secular world: lack of consideration at work, exploitation of workers, injustice, destructive anger, revenge and so on. Everyone contributes to this. If personal sin is raised, then I follow the questions and train of thought, but say that this will be dealt with more fully later in the course. Until people have experienced love, honesty, integrity and even holiness, talk of 'sin' tends to become just a question of breaking rules, which is not especially helpful to the discussion.

In my limited experience, few come to the group because of a sense of sin. It is also quite difficult to talk about without appearing to be intrusive. If participants want to share aspects of their personal life, that usually comes later. At the beginning, they are feeling their way, testing the water, and I think it is important to keep discussion fairly light and general. I make it plain that if anyone is worried, he or she is free to see a priest to talk about personal issues. General questions about what is sinful can be raised, if anyone wants to.

I feel that the new enquirers should be allowed to develop a general sense of personal goodness and, in consequence, personal sin, over weeks and months. This can come through their experiences in prayer, by mixing with some of the more holy people in the church, by extending

[1] See Eric Jensen, 'Hell and the Image of God in the Spiritual Exercises', *The Way*, 57/3 (July 2018), 91–102, especially 92–97.

their reading to include devotional books and, of course, the Bible. I think it is important to stress the new life to which they are called, the joy and peace which can be given, the whole new perspective on ordinary life which true Christianity brings, rather than getting tied up with the breaking of rules and regulations. To appreciate the gravity of sin, we need a strong sense of the good, the holy and the upright.

There are plenty of opportunities to return to the subject of sin: when we consider advent and lent; when we approach the passion and cross; and when participants are prepared for their first confession. For those who are to be baptized, I am told that confession is not strictly necessary since baptism wipes out all their sins. In spite of this, I feel that omitting it may be a procedural mistake! People need to express in words to another person (the priest) what has damaged them, whether it comes from inside themselves or from the actions of other people.

There are many encouraging moments along the way. One of the most moving was when we were talking about the rosary. We went round the group, with each person saying one Hail Mary in a different language. We had Mandarin, Spanish, Polish, a Goan dialect, English and Latin. At the end we all felt a palpable sense of peace and unity.

Intellectual discussion is inevitably a part of any RCIA group—and also important—but it can be a bit of a distraction. I allow so much, and then tend to recommend relevant books, pointing out that there will be years to discuss and learn about the intricacies of the faith in the future. This is partly because I have found that any such discussion only engages a few of the group and the others may get a bit lost. It is also because it takes away from the equally essential task of awakening their relational side. They need to experience silent prayer and meditation, to get to know that Jesus is real. I try and encourage them to pray at home and certainly to come to Mass. I make a few suggestions and give practical information. It helps if the church also has prayer groups or social groups which they might like to join.

People come to the RCIA for many different reasons and I find the Parable of the Sower often seems very relevant. There are those who start off well but we rarely see them after a few weeks once they have been baptized. Others drop out of the course after one meeting. Have they found another course at a more convenient time? Have they decided it is not for them? Have other activities cropped up or their circumstances changed and they feel it is not the right time for such a major commitment? We just do not know. But, thank God, there are always one or two who

embrace the teaching wholeheartedly and become devout and active members of the congregation—at our church or another.

I am finding one or two examples of people enquiring about the Catholic Church because their interest has been aroused by reading or studying history. Because Christianity—especially Catholic Christianity—is very much less familiar than it was a few decades ago, could it be that this ignorance is in fact inspiring people to rediscover what it might be all about? Practically every other subject under the sun is the focus of someone's interest; could it be that Catholicism might actually benefit from being unfamiliar? One thing I do know: without the movement of the Spirit and the gradual growth that this brings about, there is no chance of getting very far. As with someone making the Spiritual Exercises, the RCIA leader's task is to discern where and how the Spirit is working in this particular person, and to try to nourish and feed that in every way possible.

Further Thoughts on Ignatian Spirituality and the RCIA

As I reflect on the experience of these five years, I realise the particular value of my own background in Ignatian spirituality. Our church was staffed by Jesuits when I first came to it, and I was instructed and received as a Roman Catholic by the Jesuit parish priest in 1969. He introduced me to St Beuno's spirituality centre, and I returned there regularly to make an eight-day retreat and also spent time in the summer helping out with the garden. At Christmas for several years I helped with the administration of the New Year conferences. This was in the 1970s and 1980s, when St Beuno's was beginning to open up the house to laypeople. I also did

one of the training courses for giving the Spiritual Exercises. Michael Ivens became my spiritual director. As a leader of the RCIA, I believe it is important not only to impart knowledge about the Catholic Church, but also to share my own faith, as and when appropriate, according to the maxim that faith is caught not taught. It is not surprising if this comes over with an Ignatian flavour!

A major feature of the majority of those who have come for instruction is that they are all either students or are working full-time in business or industry. The students are generally also working towards a position in the business world: one was studying business management to work in his father's company in Costa Rica; the Chinese lady is currently doing a PhD in communications. There was only one who I would say was 'academic'. So, with their dominant interests in the world around them, it seemed highly appropriate to start with considering creation and our role in it. The Spiritual Exercises, too, seems to begin and end with creation, from the Principle and Foundation at the beginning to the Contemplation to Attain Love at the end. Even pretending to be God looking down at the world and working out a solution to its problems provokes fruitful discussion, as well as material for private prayer. The consideration of sin and of misplaced desires and aims, which sets the scene for a right discernment and a sound election, concerns real and actual choices in the factual situations where we find ourselves. Thinking about God as the source, the author and originator of all our gifts, abilities and talents, widens the group's image of God enormously. Everything which is good stems from God—we are collaborators with God.

In an RCIA class there is obviously not time to go into any of this in depth. It is a question of imparting a vision, creating a context in which questions can be asked and a perspective through which to understand the confusing world around us. I tackle the problem of miracles: I cannot ignore the miracles of the Gospels, nor do I wish to banish awkward discussions of the virgin birth and the resurrection of Jesus, which may sound like fairy stories to those encountering them for the first time. Yes, I believe in them, but I take seriously how they sound in today's context.

So I use an image of two jigsaw puzzles. The one we are used to is the normal jigsaw of everyday life, which somehow fits together, and in which there are always many loose pieces not yet in the pattern. But then I say there is a greater jigsaw. Sometimes we come across one of the pieces, which is simply too large to fit into our normal jigsaw. This might be a special feeling at a sunset; a view from the top of a mountain; a

moment when we sense something of the beyond; the birth of a son or daughter—or a miracle. In time, if we treasure and store these moments, they begin to fit together into this greater jigsaw—the one that can accommodate miracles. I can start from this image to introduce the concept of the sacraments: moments when the ordinary is transformed into something greater. Finally, I can introduce a little eschatology: the concept of the new heaven and the new earth which awaits us at the End.

For the beginners, those without any Christian background, I rely heavily on working from what they do know and understand, and Ignatian spirituality gives me the confidence to do this. As the members of the group develop, it is possible to perceive the possible direction of their future spirituality, which is not always Ignatian. One girl was drawn to Carmelite spirituality; I could see that two other members of the classes over the years might be happier within a Dominican atmosphere. That is not really my business. If I find they are exploring other ways, I try and recommend appropriate books or groups or websites. I am open about my own background, but stress that there are many ways to pray: we have at least one session specifically talking about all the different ways even just to start to pray. But I still find the material of the Exercises an appropriate beginning for everyone. I certainly draw attention to the Ignatian colloquy. I also often refer to the different ways of saying the Lord's prayer in the Spiritual Exercises: they seem to respond to this.[2]

We can have interesting discussion regarding the discernment of spirits—and even talk about what these spirits are anyway. Where do thoughts come from? Is there a personal element to evil or is it just 'negative forces'? I can say that people use different language to describe these types of experiences, but then affirm that I personally believe (as does the Church) in personal, planned and directed evil in certain circumstances—without getting too hung up on it. I may find that members of the group want to talk about some of the horror films that abound. It is helpful that I have seen some of them—though not always from my own choice! This also gives us a chance to speak about angels, which discussion is usually received well.

It is easy simply to quote church teaching on these matters and I do use the Catechism and encyclicals where relevant. In fact, that is always the next step after discussion on any topic. But to my mind, nothing is as effective for beginners as engaging with someone who actually believes

[2] See the Three Methods of Praying, Exx 238–260.

the various doctrines heart and soul, and not just because they are taught. Believing because they are taught is of course valuable, but fairly easy for a questioner to break down. If you have been through what I once heard Avery Dulles refer to as 'the searing experience of radical doubt', and have reached a profound level of belief which includes your reason and intellect—even though it does not answer all the questions—then your words are more likely to be heeded and taken seriously. You can even move from that position to saying that the Church's doctrine has been developed through the centuries by holy people who have done just that: reasoned, and prayed, and been inspired by the scripture and the Holy Spirit. The teaching was not simply worked out as if the writers were at university preparing a thesis.

I am reminded of Newman's 'real' and 'notional' assent (or, at least, my own interpretation of these terms, once read years ago).[3] Sharing a personal 'real assent' and being authentic in oneself are powerful influences in the instruction. People who come for instruction are often seeking for answers—for meaning in their ordinary lives. Ignatian spirituality takes seriously their genuine worldly concerns and offers a bridge between the truths of Christian faith and the lives they are leading. It gives value to all the world, including their own work, their efforts and their own selves, but also sees injustice, poverty, evil in all its forms and seeks to remedy them. It points surely to the deeper mysteries, a deeper asceticism, which bring also the freedom to enjoy all things.

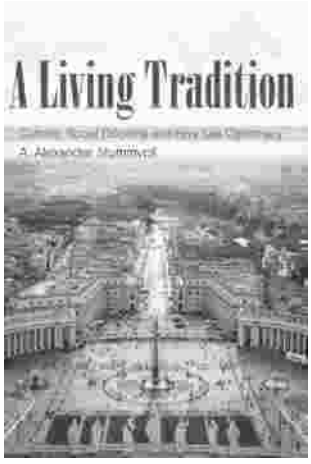
Other spiritualities may undoubtedly offer similar riches, but I can only write and share what I have myself experienced. Without the wide and deep experience of a lifetime of help from the Exercises I would in no way be able to face contentious and doubt-inducing issues head-on. But the group already knows the issues. This is what they want to talk about. And I think they are entitled to as much truth as I am able to share, even when this includes saying: 'I simply don't know the answer to that'.

Marion Morgan was received into the Roman Catholic Church in 1969 and has since been involved in ecumenism at local and national levels, parish work, freelance writing and caring for an autistic adult. This year she celebrates fifty years of living a consecrated life in the world. For the past ten years she has been a member of the Order of Consecrated Virgins.

[3] See John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (London: Burns and Oates, 1874).

RECENT BOOKS

A. Alexander Stummvoll, *A Living Tradition: Catholic Social Doctrine and Holy See Diplomacy* (Eugene: Cascade, 2018). 978 1 5326 0511 6, pp. 230, £22.00.



This book treats a fascinating subject: how does the Holy See translate church teaching into effective global policy? The author argues that it does so with prudence and pragmatism.

Many Catholics know the Church has a body of teaching called 'Catholic social doctrine' or 'teaching', which is anchored in values such as the dignity of the person, the common good and solidarity. What they might not know is that Rome not only preaches that message to Catholics around the world, but also advocates it through global diplomacy. On a host of political, economic and social issues, including war and peace, poverty and justice, sexuality and abortion, capitalism and communism, the Holy See tries to influence policy through diplomacy with nation-states and with international organizations such as the UN.

This diplomacy, however, is rarely studied by academics in the social sciences, and is a mystery to most Catholics. Stummvoll believes that scholars should explore how the Holy See engages in international diplomacy, and that such scholarship can be of benefit to a wide public.

So how does a religious authority advance its message in the world of politics? Stummvoll argues that one cannot understand the Holy See's diplomacy simply through an understanding of Catholic social doctrine itself. Rather, one must study how its leaders and diplomats prudently and pragmatically advocate its agenda in concrete circumstances. Ideas matter a great deal in politics, in this case Catholic social doctrine. But those ideas 'do not serve as an efficient cause for Holy See diplomacy in a mechanistic sense' (p. 172); they 'need to be interpreted and lived out by real people in real places' (p. 4).

Stummvoll argues that a number of 'mediating factors' shape Vatican diplomacy (pp. 36–40, 173–175). A central concern is 'safeguarding Catholic communities and the sacramental life of the church', which at times makes

the Holy See cautious (p. 41). The Holy See is also 'fiercely interested in presenting itself as a moral rather than political actor, both domestically and internationally' (p. 38). The Pope and the Vatican have considerable moral influence in global politics, and it is important that this influence be preserved. One way to lose it would be to become seen as a 'political' agent with self-interested motives, rather than a 'moral' authority seeking the good of all.

Other factors include defending 'doctrinal purity', 'papal personality' and 'the general organizational culture of the Roman Curia' (pp. 39–40). The Holy See seeks to be 'the indispensable unifying centre of Catholicism', and avoids anything that might encourage division with the Church (p. 39). This effort becomes tricky, however, when Catholics challenge church teaching. John Paul II's personality greatly shaped Vatican diplomacy in the late twentieth century, Stummvoll argues, although not always in the ways suggested by popular narratives. And the tendencies of the Curia, he notes, value long-term strategy and global perspectives.

Throughout the book, Stummvoll responds to at least two sceptical audiences. First, there are Catholics who question why the Holy See is not more prophetic (p. 178). For such Catholics, the Holy See must 'speak truth to power', and never countenance compromise, back-room deals and temporary coalitions. Stummvoll agrees that Rome's 'recurring key dilemma in global politics' is: 'Should the Holy See speak out for prophetic moral reasons, or remain silent for prudential considerations?' (p. 40) He believes, however, that speaking prophetically sometimes does more harm than good within the complexities of global politics.

Second, there are those who think the Holy See uses the values of Catholic social doctrine as a cover for its own narrow interests. This group includes scholars influenced by cynical but influential schools of social science (pp. 175–176). Stummvoll concedes that the Holy See must live out the 'inevitable tensions between ideals and reality' and between 'the morally desirable and the politically possible' (p. 178). Prudence in negotiating those tensions, however, should not be confused with a lack of principles (p. 178). Much work remains be done in persuading scholars of politics that religious ideals and values can play a role in politics.

Stummvoll explores his theory through four case studies. All are rich examples that leave the reader wanting more. Indeed, one of this book's greatest features is its bibliography, which offers a thorough assemblage of readings on the Vatican and politics. His second case study deserves special mention: John Paul II's engagement with communist Poland.

Stummvoll sets aside the narrative according to which John Paul heroically allied himself with Ronald Reagan to support Poland in the defence of capitalism and freedom. The truth is more complicated. John Paul opposed

Polish communism and did so in a prudential alliance with the US, yet he championed neither Western capitalism nor the Cold War rhetoric of Reagan. John Paul II spoke in defence of deep truths about the nature of humans, the world and God (p. 77). He continued to advocate those truths after the Cold War, and often in criticism of capitalism. Moreover, John Paul avoided both the 'confrontational approach' of Pius XII and the 'accommodating approach of John XXIII and Paul VI' (p. 81). The Vatican engaged with Poland prudently and as a 'purely moral' agent above 'geopolitical divides and party politics' (p. 108). Stummvoll probably overstates his case, but this is a challenging read, particularly for leftist US Catholics who are used to excoriating John Paul II for his supposed conservatism, and conservative US Catholics who worship him for the same reason.

Stummvoll's book challenges readers to ask how they integrate Catholic social doctrine into their own political outlook. He urges that the whole Church needs to become better acquainted with that teaching, and that it should not become captive to political ideologies. Here Pope Francis's example is instructive. If Stummvoll is right that Catholic social doctrine is made public through a variety of factors, then it becomes even more important that the core message of that teaching shine through. Pope Francis, in his teachings on the Gospel of Mercy and the Church as field hospital, offers a way to meet that challenge.

Bill McCormick SJ

Robin M. Jensen, *The Cross: History, Art, and Controversy* (New Haven: Harvard UP, 2017). 978 0 6740 8880 1, pp. 280, £28.95.

This is a comprehensive survey which ranges from the historical consideration of crucifixion as a mean of execution of criminals to the whole rich history of the cross and crucifix in Christian art over two millennia.

The first chapter considers in depth the horror of crucifixion and the real need of early Christians to come to an understanding of how God would let the Beloved Son suffer such a death until, not without difficulty, the cross was transformed into a 'figure of sacrifice and of triumph' (p. 24). The second chapter considers, among other matters, the typology of the cross

in the parallel with Moses raising the brazen serpent, and its reconfiguration from tree of death to tree of life, including the developing apocryphal narratives of Christ's cross deriving from Adam's tree, perhaps from a seed of the fatal apple buried in Adam's hand (as in the Piero della Francesca frescoes at Arezzo). This chapter illustrates the widespread use of the cross on the personal artefacts of the ancient world such as clay lamps and intaglio gemstones. The third chapter considers the cross in Imperial Roman art after the vision of Constantine before the battle of the Milvian Bridge and the subsequent (not unproblematic) narratives of the discovery of relics of the cross in the early 300s.

For a long time Christian art was content with an empty cross, but in the fourth chapter Prof. Jensen traces the appearance of the *corpus*, first on a Roman ivory casket of around 420, now in the British Museum among the Maskell Ivories. Chapter five—*adoratio Crucis*—explores the feasts of the cross, as well as monumental gemmed crosses such as the radiant heavenly cross in the mosaic apse of Sant'Appolinare in Classe outside Ravenna, which forms a fitting cover for the book. The sixth chapter traces the cross in poetry, legend and liturgical drama: the glorious hymns of the cross written by Fortunatus, including the *Vexilla Regis* and *Pange Lingua* which are still sung today, and the Old English poem *The Dream of the Rood* and its inscribed form on the Rothwell cross. (The subject is so impossibly rich that it would seem ungenerous to note omissions, but there are other British and Irish high crosses worthy of note, perhaps especially the ambiguous [or perhaps syncretic] Gosforth Cross.)

The Middle Ages are represented by the consideration of devotion to the dying Christ, from the stylised crucifixions of early Italian art to the anguished realism of the Isenheim altarpiece. There is then a thoughtful study of the cross and crucifix in the Reformation period, of the reformed distaste for the physically empathetic devotions of the late Middle Ages, and of the Counter-Reformation development of affective baroque devotion. The book draws to a close with a consideration of 'the cross in the New World, in Islam and in the modern era'. There is interesting material about the cross as a symbol of oppression in the Middle East of the Crusades, and also of the way in which the image of the crucifix does not accord with the Islamic apprehension of Christ as a prophet taken up into heaven.

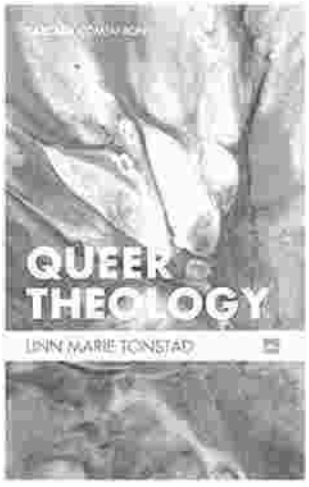
In the New World the history of the cross is essentially a history of syncretism, of the grafting of a Christian symbol on to a cross already venerated in central America as a representation of the four corners of the universe, of the use of panels of sacred obsidian to replace the face of Christ on stone crosses, of the grafting of the *cultus* of a resurrected Son of God

on to existing cults of the rebirth of the seed-god. Perhaps more could have been made of this last element, especially of those (usually Jesuit) crucifixes in Mexico which are either represented with corn-cobs for blood or, indeed, with the *corpus* made out of the corn-pith, which represented the seed-god.

The book closes with a consideration of the uncomfortable status of the crucifix and cross in a (sometimes litigiously) secular West. It is elegantly written and produced, and illustrated throughout in colour. As an introductory survey of a complex subject, it could hardly be bettered, although specialists may wish for more detail in particular areas, and there are, it must be admitted, areas of mysterious omission, as of most of the affective devotion of the baroque centuries.

Peter Davidson

Linn Marie Tonstad, *Queer Theology: Beyond Apologetics* (Eugene: Cascade, 2018). 978 1 4982 1879 5, pp. 168, £17.00.



How ambivalent is our use of the word *queer*? 'Nowt so queer as folk' or 'I'm feeling a bit queer' still crop up in popular conversation without suggesting any prejudicial intentions, yet *queer* can also be used as a term of hate-speech. Just as people of colour have reappropriated *black*, so lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people—and not only they—have reclaimed *queer* as their identity, thus nullifying any abusive connotation and moving beyond binary categories.

What do Christian faith and queer reality have to do with each other? How queer is Christianity, the Church? Linn Marie Tonstad seeks to respond to these questions and more, moving beyond the apologetics of inclusion to a queer theology that grapples with the fundamental challenges of the body, sex and death. Rather than a person's sexual identity, the only stable identity for theology is that of being baptized. Gender is, then, radically decentralised, and the moral norms for sexual conduct are derived from the self-understanding of the baptized as gathered into the community of Church.

Roman Catholic theological reflections on LGBT+ experience emerged slowly. As social and political movements overcame the historic criminalisation of variant sexual orientation, so biblical, systematic and moral theologians

began to move beyond the tick-box style of moral theology handbooks. This, of course, could either be used conservatively, to argue against more liberal legislation, or to support more inclusive, pastoral approaches. A growing number of theologians began to reflect upon their experience as LGBT+ Catholics *doing* theology from within their own sexual, gender and faith identities, rather than talking about them from a distance.

Often paramount in much earlier gay and lesbian theology was an apologetic approach, using the developing critical biblical research to argue for the acceptance of sexual minorities within the Church, to support growing legal recognitions of same-sex relationships, and to delve into liturgical traditions to identify their ritual celebrations. *Queer theology* might appear to have been slow to have an impact upon the Church's theological directions. In contrast to much earlier lesbian and gay theology, and using the insights of *queer theory* proponents, queer theology rejects as essentialist the idea that sexual identity serves as a stable foundation for any theology. The social construction of identity, including sexual and gender identities, constantly redefined by those dominant groups that have power, is central to the development of queer theology and thus challenges heteronormativity.

Tonstad notes:

> Much of what gets called queer theology in Christianity is theology that in some way is *about* queer people—that is, people who identify and understand themselves either as persons whose sexuality is not wholly heterosexual, or whose gender is not the one assigned by medical authorities at birth, or of course both. (p. 2)

For those new to this field, she offers a helpful terminological note on non-normative gender identification or performance, including non-binary understandings. She goes on: 'For many, queer theology indicates theologies in which 1) sexuality and gender are discussed 2) in ways that affirm, represent, or apologise for queer persons'. Tonstad is adamant that queer theology is not, nor should be, about apologetics, which she sees as peripheral to central Christian concerns and generally lacking in theologically rich, illuminating insights.

Here she reflects a view of the English theologian Elizabeth Stuart that,

> … the vocation of the lesbian and gay Christian is not primarily the attainment of gay ecclesial and civil 'rights' but the deconstruction of modern categories of sexual identity (of which the struggle for gay rights may be a part), the rethinking of relational paradigms and the search for the theological meaning of sex (if it has one).[1]

[1] Elizabeth Stuart, 'Exploding Mystery: Lesbian and Gay Theology and the Recovery of Tradition', Alan Bray Memorial Lecture, 12 October 2002.

Queer theology needs both the critical edge that queer theory offers and the prophetic challenges of liberation theologies, and Tonstad draws heavily on various Marxist analyses, notably that of the Argentinian professor of theology at Edinburgh, the late Marcella Althaus-Reid. Althaus-Reid proposed an 'indecent theology', contrasted with what she terms a 'T-Theology' or totalitarian theology which 'wants to impose and keep in place a sexual-economic-religious system that does not have the capacity to wrestle with the complexity of people's lives—that, indeed, devalues such complexity' (p. 85).

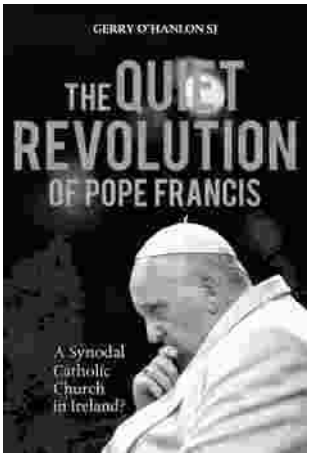
According to Tonstad, 'queer theology reflects the way religious or theological categories, economic exchanges and these processes of misrecognition and mystification all relate to each other, but it also makes the relation between sexual stigmatisation and economic exploitation central to its analysis' (pp. 84–85). Queer hermeneutics, ways of interpreting and knowing, search for the alternatives to false theological abstractions. 'They search for the bodies in which God is to be found.' (p. 87) The idea that God is in and with unruly bodies is a real challenge to any essentialist misinterpretations of the Theology of the Body, originally developed by Pope St John Paul II.

Envisioning 'Queer Theologies to Come', Tonstad ask if Christianity, or rather Christianities, can be queer, and suggests that two significant issues remain: whether and when Christianity makes a difference. These are questions of sin and death with queerness affirming the finitude of human existence. One is that finitude is malformed at a deep level by sin; another is that the attempt to escape, to deny death, is part of what leads to 'the intensity and ubiquity of violence in human life' (p. 131).

Although it is not referenced in *Queer Theology*'s comprehensive bibliography, index and excellent Suggested Further Reading section, Tonstad can be seen to reflect René Girard's mimetic theory. People can relate to one another without either victimising them or acting as victims. Christ's self-giving love completely relativises all anthropological structures and ways of being together which depend on identities derived against each other, on comparison, on rivalry and ultimately on death, enabling reconciliation and growth. *Queer Theology: Beyond Apologetics* is not simply a clearly written and lively introduction to the subject but is a provocative contribution to doing queer theology.

Martin Pendergast

Gerry O'Hanlon, *The Quiet Revolution of Pope Francis: A Synodal Catholic Church in Ireland?* (Dublin: Messenger, 2018). 978 1 7881 2000 5, pp. 168, €12.95.



Pope Francis was scheduled to meet a group of Jesuits in Dublin during his short visit in August 2018. The audience, just before the World Meeting of Families event in Croke Park, started a good half hour late, because his previous meeting overran. This was with the group of survivors of ecclesial abuse, including victims of the mother and baby homes scandal. The Pope was clearly shaken by the time he got to meet us, but gradually his spirits revived. *What kept him going?* was the final question in our audience. A sense of humour, he declared, was absolutely essential.

Gerry O'Hanlon's short but insightful overview of Francis's ecclesial project touches on a contribution on dissent in the Church from the German theologian Karl Rahner (not generally thought of as a humorist). Among seven criteria for healthy dissent, Rahner includes: a cheerful attitude of goodwill, such that 'one is able to laugh and is after all attached to the criticised men of the Church in loving benevolence' (quoted p. 86).

O'Hanlon considers the implications of Francis's 'quiet revolution' for a post-Christian Ireland. He is well placed to do so, as a former provincial of the Irish Jesuits and the author and co-editor of numerous studies of Ireland's socio-economic and political, as well as spiritual, challenges. There is, as a result, a reflective maturity about this work. It is not yet another book on Pope Francis, dashed off to satisfy a publishing trend. Nor is it parochial: O'Hanlon's diagnosis of what needs to happen in the Irish Church is grounded upon a more general analysis of the global 'quiet revolution'. His use of internationally known ecclesiologists (McBrien, O'Malley, Örsy, Gaillardetz) and the commentator Massimo Faggioli, as well as home-grown Irish 'talent' (Dermot Lane, Mary McAleese, M. P. Gallagher), ensures a breadth of coverage as well as local relevance.

The argument is simple. O'Hanlon asserts that the failure of the Church to embed the Second Vatican Council is due not to a lack of goodwill or theological vision but to an inability to put in place the institutional and organizational apparatus which this transforming vision required. He sees the missing piece of the jigsaw in Pope Francis's call for a 'synodal' way of being

Church: the recasting of church life and faith as *synodus*, 'the path which we walk together'.

Ladislas Örsy has spoken of the need for a 'a better balance without damaging vital forces' (quoted p. 14) in the Church. Francis envisages a *conspiratio*, a breathing together of the three branches of the Church's *magisterium* (teaching authority). This requires the rehabilitation of theologians, as well as the lay faithful—who embody the *sensus fidei*—if they are to complement the task of the bishops (including the Pope), as the formal source of church teaching. Such a project will involve a decentralisation of the Church's governance, but also an inversion of the pyramidal structure which has been sedimented into place in the 'long nineteenth century' that preceded Vatican II.

This book is a heartfelt plea for the completion of the task of Vatican II, unfinished because the institutional reform needed to embed its vision did not happen. For all that *Lumen gentium* proclaimed the Church to be the 'pilgrim people of God', the pyramid structure has remained intact. But O'Hanlon shows that what is at stake is much deeper and challenging than simple organizational adjustment. As the embittered opposition to Pope Francis makes clear, nothing short of a radically unsettling, even traumatic, conversion of mind and heart is being called for. There is a spiritual dimension, therefore, and the chapter on communal discernment, in line with the Pope's Jesuit formation, is helpful.

The 'takeaway' for the Irish readership of this book is in the final chapter, where some of the opportunities for—but also the obstacles to—a synodal Church are discussed. As in general, so in Ireland, the biggest threat to the Francis reforms may come from the passive aggression and apathy of church leaders rather than outright opposition. Such a lack of urgency would be especially problematic for this country, given the legacy of dismay and suspicion over the last two decades. This book was published before Pope Francis' visit in 2018. O'Hanlon's hope that this event might be a catalyst for revitalised leadership in the Irish Church seems to be misplaced; it would be hard to describe the visit of Pope Francis as transformative. At best, it provided an opportunity for sombre reflection on the changed landscape, but the 'path we need to walk together' will be a long one. Cardinal Kasper is quoted as saying that this will be a hundred-year project.

The book is hopeful rather than optimistic. O'Hanlon is not naïve about the scale of the challenge. One paradox of the Francis revolution is the Pope's conviction that genuine change requires long-term preparation, by way of dialogue, consultation, discernment; and yet our crises—whether it

be the dizzying downward spiral of church decline, the breakdown of political order, or the catastrophe of climate change—are painfully acute. The Francis revolution takes time; but time is what we do not have.

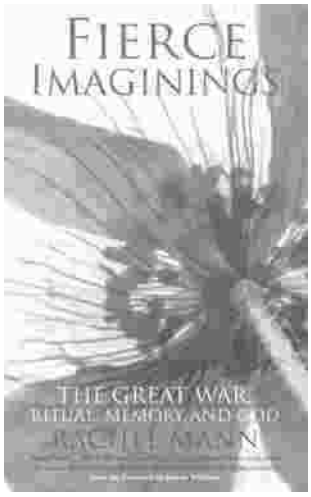
As suggested above, the book is a call for us to take seriously the ecclesial conversion of the Second Vatican Council, to be truly the people of God *en marche*. It is not surprising that O'Hanlon, and many of the authors he quotes, are indebted to Karl Rahner, as the theologian who anticipated, from within his German context, many of the problems with which the Church is grappling today. Rahner is acknowledged as one of the intellectual architects of the Council; but he was fully aware of the vulnerabilities as well as the strengths of its theological vision.

O'Hanlon compares our situation to the Irish peace process. Just as the Good Friday agreement is caustically referred to as 'Sunningdale for slow learners', so with the Francis reform: we are getting a second bite of the cherry which is the transformed Church envisaged at Vatican II. However the Church which seeks again to be reformed, fifty years on, is in many respects more vulnerable, at least in the West. Decline in mass attendance, and in priestly and religious vocations, and so on, are the most obvious quantitative statistics of its crisis. But one has to add in the loss of energy, optimism and confidence when we compare with the immediate post-conciliar 'euphoria'. Nor is the Church immune from its external cultural context. The frightening debasement and bitter polarisation of secular political culture—an evacuation of any 'cheerful attitude of goodwill'—will surely have a wasting effect on Catholics' ability to gather as a patient, discerning Church. What does the *sensus fidei* look like, and how do we access it, in the age of the blog and the Twitter feed?

Finally, as a theologian, I would draw attention to the dramatic impoverishment of theological resources in Ireland—and Europe generally—over the last four decades, with the closure and suppression of numerous centres of theological and spiritual formation. The intellectual 'deforestation' of the Church only makes more difficult the much needed 'rebalancing of the vital forces' of the *magisterium*—lay faithful, theologians and hierarchy in *conspiratio*. In short: the nagging question provoked by O'Hanlon's fine book is whether the 'quiet revolution' of Francis, a welcome 'second chance', has nevertheless come too late? Like O'Hanlon, I remain hopeful rather than optimistic. And to echo Pope Francis and Karl Rahner, we must not forget that sense of humour.

Michael Kirwan SJ

Rachel Mann, *Fierce Imaginings: The Great War, Ritual, Memory and God* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2017). 978 0 2325 3278 4, pp. 160, £12.99.



The Great War did not, as some had hoped it would, bring about the end of all wars, but it is universally understood to have marked a fundamental cultural and historical change. It was also, as Paul Fussell observed in *The Great War and Modern Memory*, an unprecedentedly literary war. Rachel Mann does not seek to dispute these familiar affirmations, but she does both enlarge and nuance them, drawing on a wider range of themes and texts, and going beyond the limits of a single genre of writing. The result is an absorbing and illuminating book, whether for the historian, the cultural critic or the general reader.

'Our history as the literary species', Mann writes, 'has been constructed through the rehearsal of that which we mark as significant' (p. 125). Cultural responses to the Great War, therefore, including cultural coping mechanisms, continuously incorporate themselves into its meaning, and this is true beyond the well-known narratives of twentieth-century literary history. The effect of the war on the rise of literary modernism is widely recognised, but Mann is interested in J. R. R. Tolkien as well as Wilfred Owen, Dorothy L. Sayers as much as Virginia Woolf.

This sense of the war as cultural construction, in its greatest possible complexity, is particularly important for us in the present moment, just as the historical events themselves have passed beyond the horizon of living memory. No one now remembers those events, and fewer and fewer of us have heard them described at first hand. 'We are so very distant from the war now', Mann says (p. 61). This is where two of the book's most distinctive aspects come into their own. One is its attention to our concrete relationship with the physical remnants of the past, evident in the focus of each of Mann's chapters: 'A Street Memorial', 'A Wallet', 'A Photograph'. The other is her own personal relationship to these objects and to the people who touched and were touched by them.

This book is remarkable in the balance that it is able to sustain between highly personal reminiscence and a sophisticated academic approach drawing on literary and cultural theory, philosophy, psychology and theology. This balance is apparent from the style, which displays a unique tension between

registers, closely reflecting a tension within the author's own experience of family, education and class that she explicitly thematizes. 'I'm worried', she writes. 'My grandfathers' presence in this book is in danger of going missing for the sake of some fancy philosophising.' (p. 151) But such self-consciousness of diction never blunts the intellectual edge of the philosophizing itself.

Mann describes her book as an 'extended meditation on "identity" and the symbols and rituals we use to shape it' (p. 57), and this is where the breadth of her analysis and her personal concerns come together most powerfully, in dealing with class, gender and religious belief. Class is central both to Mann's inclusive cultural itinerary and to her sense of family relationships. The unexpected parallel she draws between the elegiac fantasies of Tolkien and the psychological modernity of Sayers's aristocratic, shell-shocked detective centres, for example, upon the relationship between an officer and his 'batman', or military servant. Her own personal connections with the Great War—both of her grandfathers served, and one of them was himself a batman—are traversed by the distance between her own identity as 'an urbanite, a socialist and all the rest' (p. 71) (and as a trans woman), and theirs as 'working-class rural folk' (p. 69).

It is perhaps particularly relevant to the present moment that Mann's sense of class identity also involves a typically ambivalent reflection on Englishness:

> Reason and sense tell me that the England of my grandparents and parents, the England into which I was born, was an unfair, prejudiced and exploitative place. But it was an England … in which patriotism didn't necessarily mean xenophobia and … servant and officer class might face impossible situations in the worst war ever known and somehow not break. (p. 71)

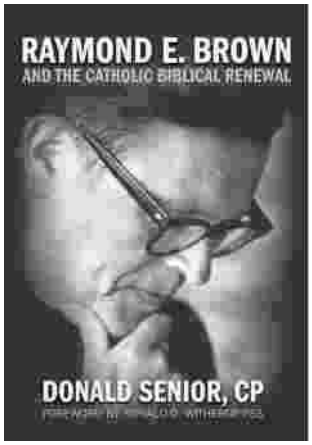
This Englishness relates closely to one of the most important and distinctive themes of the book: how the social and cultural changes brought by the Great War played out within the Christian Church, especially the Church of England, in which Mann is a priest.

'In our time the traditional churches are in crisis' (p. 43), Mann argues, and she relates that crisis to the failure of a 'patriarchal God' who 'could not—in the light of years of slaughter—quite hold the weight of expectations' (p. 44). Once again there is a complex tension between telling historical analysis of 'the naive and smug overconfidence of a proprietary church' (p. 38) and her relationship with the Church in which she now ministers and lives out her own Christianity. 'The Christian story was complicit in the war in any number of ways', she writes, 'but it also draws as close to an honest apprehension of state-legitimated violence as any other strategy we have' (p. 149). Ultimately she affirms the Church as a eucharistic community which is about 'being fed for living but also about taking the victim and the redeemer into the self and then into the world' (p. 151).

Fierce Imaginings is a powerful, individual and serious exploration of the legacy of the Great War—its victims, its myths and its survivors. Now, as the voices of a generation of our grandfathers, including Mann's, are 'lost forever' (p. 157), it offers us a highly necessary model for remembrance.

Elizabeth Lock

Donald Senior, *Raymond E. Brown and the Catholic Biblical Renewal* (New York: Paulist, 2018). 978 0 8091 0064 8, pp. 376, $29.95.



If you want to learn about the interpretation of scripture in the Roman Catholic Church during the second half of the twentieth century, and to see it through the life of a great biblical scholar, then this is the book for you. Raymond E. Brown was such a scholar and he died at the age of seventy in 1998. Twenty years seemed time enough to reflect on Brown's achievement, and the Sulpicians, to which he belonged, asked Donald Senior, a Passionist and also a well-known exegete, to write his biography. Senior has done a very good job of presenting Brown's life, especially his intellectual life, against the background of the Catholic biblical renewal which took place in the last century. He begins helpfully by providing an outline of the story of the Catholic Church and biblical scholarship during that period.

What were some of the elements that made Brown the greatest Catholic biblical scholar in the English-speaking world of his time? He produced a prodigious number of scholarly and popular books, and made a lasting impact, not just in Catholic circles. Brown was a New Yorker who entered the Maryland seminary in 1945. After studying in Rome he had two formative experiences. He completed his doctorate with the famous protestant archaeologist William Albright at John Hopkins University, and then spent a year in Jerusalem, working on the Dead Sea Scrolls. This gave him a deep knowledge of the Jewish scriptures and a love of ecumenism which may explain why, after spending twelve years at the Catholic seminary of St Mary's, Baltimore, he taught for twenty years in a major protestant college, Union Theological Seminary in New York. His last ten years were with the Sulpicians in California, where he devoted himself to writing projects.

Once Senior has dealt with the outline of his life he then concentrates on how Brown saw himself as an interpreter of scripture within the Church,

the many books he wrote, the ecumenical projects he pursued and the controversies he faced. Brown started to write when US Catholics had a rather antiquated approach to scripture. He was convinced that the historical critical method that he used would certainly challenge traditional attitudes but it would also deepen and enrich Christians' faith. After writing a huge two-volume commentary on St John's Gospel, which won great respect, he then focused on areas which were central to Catholic faith but which he felt had been neglected in scholarship.He wrote another large book on the infancy narratives, which had previously been treated either as pure history or just as folklore. He took what has been called a centrist view, trying to steer between hard-line conservatives and radical liberals.

Inevitably Brown faced a great deal of controversy and was attacked, especially by the fundamentalists. What comes across strongly in Senior's account is that Brown was a priest with a deep pastoral concern for the critical issues facing the Church. His scholarship, meticulous as it was, was written to help strengthen belief in these controversial topics. Then what he had learnt in study was passed on in more popular books, on the virgin birth, the resurrection of the body, the priesthood, the papacy and the role of women in the Church. He also wrote short books giving a sort of summary of the theological riches contained in the scriptural readings for the great feasts of the Church. And his short commentary on St John's Gospel sold over a million copies. He also spent a good deal of time giving talks to priests, to lay conferences and to parishes in many parts of the world.

He became a member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission in 1972. This advised Rome that there was not compelling evidence in scripture against the ordination of women. Most of the members lost their jobs. But in 1996 he was invited, at the recommendation of Cardinal Ratzinger, to rejoin the commission. Senior shows how, in *Biblical Exegesis and Church Doctrin*e, Brown answered the critics who had attacked him for well over twenty years, especially in the pages of the US magazine *The Wanderer.* He also gives an account of the famous conference on biblical interpretation, held in New York in 1988, at which Cardinal Ratzinger gave a critical assessment of the use of the historical critical method in some rather secular-minded European exegetes. Brown defended the methodology, pointing out that it needed also to be used with an attitude of faith. Ratzinger is reported to have said afterwards, 'I wish we had many scholars like Father Brown'.

As one who, over the years, would buy all Brown's books as they appeared (and use them in my own teaching and preaching), it is fascinating to learn the circumstances of their gestation. But these scholarly blockbusters kept coming. Another two-volume work is *The Death of the Messiah*, and then finally came his massive *Introduction to the New Testament*, which gave

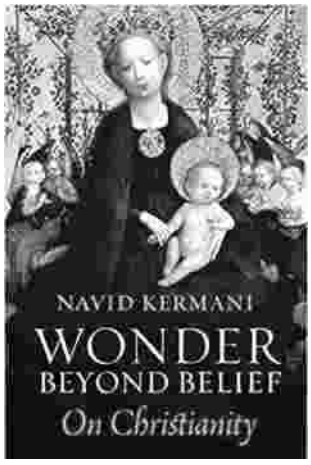
a mature assessment of all the writings of the New Testament. This sold 100,000 copies on its first printing. You might think Brown became a rich man.

Senior, who obviously has an enormous admiration for his subject, is not hagiographical. But there are not a lot of personal writings to research. Brown spent all his time on writing books—so many that some scholars thought there must be two Raymond Browns. But we are told something about the man. It seems he was rather a demanding teacher in his early days but this softened as he returned to New York, where he loved going to the opera. He had many good friendships, especially with women and families with whom he holidayed. But he lived simply, rarely bought new clothes, ate too much junk food and was very impractical! He left most of his money to the Sulpician community and some friends in need. But when he died unexpectedly at seventy there was an immense outpouring of grief from a large world-wide network of friends and colleagues.

Donald Senior has written an instructive, entertaining and in parts moving account of Raymond Brown and his involvement with scripture and the Church. I would strongly recommend it to an older generation who may have read his work, but also to a new generation of students of the Bible who will find in Raymond Brown a priest who used his intellectual brilliance, his theological insight and his pastoral sensitivity to reveal the riches of God's word in the service of his Church.

David Sanders OP

Navid Kermani, *Wonder Beyond Belief: On Christianity* (London: Polity, 2017). 978 1 5095 1484 7, pp. 272, £25.00.



Navid Kermani's parents are from Persia, but he is first of all a German writer. Kermani is a Muslim; but does not see himself as an Islamic spokesperson. He is a scholar of Islam but does not produce boring articles. He is, most prominently, a poet: a virtuoso of verbalisation. Kermani, the artist, in this book is under the influence of art: we hear his stream of thought when he looks at images of Christianity. His notes are so experiential that they seem merely experimental. The text sounds radically honest, innocent indeed; but is it? I think that we should read Kermani's contemplations by successively switching on three lights. The first is the light of the bystanders, the second is Johannine, and the third is the light of interreligious dialogue.

Our artist is not only a poet; he is an actor. In front of artistic masterpieces, he plays a role, I think. His role gets its character because he is never alone with the work of art before him. He has—let me read him thus—three bystanders. They seem to whisper remarks and questions over his shoulder. One of them is a Muslim. To his fellow believer, Kermani seems to say: 'Your love of what is your own—culture, country, person—manifests itself in your self-criticism. Your love of the other—person, culture, even religion—may be much hotter, may be unconditional.'[2] Those were his words on receiving the 2015 Peace Prize of the German Book Trade for the original German version of this book.

His second bystander is a Christian, 'the Catholic friend', as he keeps calling him: a person who must have opted for a confessionalist Catholicism, whose primary confession is the gratefulness for not being a Protestant—Catholic chauvinism. Protestantism, therefore, comes across as the most fleshless, bloodless and joyless form of life (if life at all); and that accords well with what Kermani seems to be telling his third bystander.

I imagine, as interlocutor at Kermani's readings of images, this somehow-still-Christian rationalist; it is really for him that Kermani plays his role: *I am a Muslim*, he seems to say, *and I love these images more than you do. I am in a more lively conversation with them than you, because I dare to see sex where you see a symbol of purity; and by the way, I dare to remind you of the atrocities and aberrations in your oh-so-humanist Christian Occident, which are no milder than what you consider to be typically Islamic. The belief that you have half forgotten strikes me—more than it strikes you—in its physical expressivity, but strikes me as unconvincing in its acclaimed rationality.*

Originally, Kermani wanted the book to be called something like *My Christianity*, and it really makes us sense what a Muslim feels when looking at Christianity with benevolent curiosity; what he feels is, as the book now aptly calls itself: *Ungläubiges Staunen*. I feel fascination, yes indeed, to a degree beyond belief; but I am also the observer not completely absorbed, not fully understanding, I am—and remain—the doubting Thomas. So Kermani himself is the bystander when he sees Christians (Catholic and Orthodox only, of course) live in the light of their art. As bystander, however, his view is anything but sober: it is excited and exciting, free, fresh, hot—but unbelieving. So Kermani's words sometimes sound like the Gospel of John. What Jesus does and is and says is constantly, amusingly and tragically misunderstood by some bystander; but why does the bystander touch the outside only? Or, rather, what is the inside, and why is it so hard to see?

[2] See 'Über die Grenzen—Jacques Mourad und die Liebe in Syrien', at http://www.friedenspreis-des-deutschen-buchhandels.de/445651/?mid=819312.

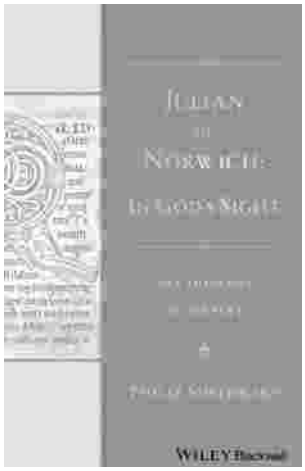
That brings us to the last light to be switched on: interreligious dialogue. It is often mistaken for a version of ecumenical dialogue. Ecumenism is looking for common belief formulae in order to overcome the divisions in our religious community. Interreligious dialogue does not need to show that basically we mean the same thing in our religions; because we do not aspire to become one religious community. We can be faithful friends in difference of belief. Still, we are interested in why others would find implausible what is for us the evident source of hope and joy: Christ Risen.

In the light of Kermani's respectful, indeed passionate, not-understanding, we can see that the transformation of comprehension that we call Christian faith is a gift. Then, however, we also want to respond to the questions that Muslims such as our poet implicitly ask. One is, how can you love as excessively as Jesus and still claim that the source for that can be found only in Jesus? I think the answer is: the joy of the Kingdom liberates us to that giving beyond counting.

Kermani, though, has not written his book to hear our answers. He has found his own; not in a sentence, though. Suddenly in the middle of all the works of art, he looks at a (we hope) living person: the Jesuit who launched the Mar Musa monastic community, Paolo dall'Oglio, abducted in Syria in 2013, a witness to that faith that drove him to be *innamorato dell'Islam*—to fall in love with Islam. It feels as if the poet and the priest were speaking together: 'Your love for the other may be much hotter, may be unconditional'.

Felix Körner SJ

Philip Sheldrake, *Julian of Norwich 'In God's Sight': Her Theology in Context* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018). 978 1 1190 9965 9, pp. 224, £60.00.



Philip Sheldrake is among that small but internationally acclaimed group of scholars who have firmly established the study of spirituality, and Christian spirituality in particular, as an academic field. As an undergraduate I can remember being grateful for his *Images of Holiness* (1987), which addresses the place of spirituality in our present culture. Then, four years later, his *Spirituality and History* (1991) appeared, and in it a handful of pages on Julian of Norwich. Julian is the subject of a chapter in Sheldrake's *Spirituality and Theology* (1998), in addition to being one of the central foci in his fifth Hulsean Lecture of

2000, 'The Mystical Way: Transcending Places of Limit', in which he 'explores the impulse within Christian mysticism to move beyond "place-as-locality" in themes of journey and perpetual departure'.[3] Continuing the theme of the interfaces between spirituality, history and place, Julian pops up in the chapter 'Spirituality in the City', in *Spirituality: A Brief History* (2006; 2013). Now we have an entire book on Julian, and it was well worth waiting for.

After an introduction in which Sheldrake records his intentions for the book—'to be a contextually grounded and text-related study of the key elements of Julian's own theology' (p. 5)—he examines in depth what we know about Julian and her texts, her historical, geographical, political, religious and social contexts, including why her gender is so important and why she wrote in the vernacular, creating the first text in English to have been written by a female. Sheldrake then explores Julian's own interface between being a theologian and a visionary mystic, setting out the nature of her theology—'including the Trinity, Christology, grace, creation, anthropology, sin and redemption, and eschatology'. As Sheldrake is at pains to point out, hers is no theological textbook; rather, these areas concerns out of Julian's 'multi-faceted and vital message to her fellow Christians about the true nature of God and of human beings "in God's sight" ' (p. 63).

Chapter three, 'Parable of a Lord and a Servant', is of seminal importance to Sheldrake's book, as the parable itself is to *A Revelation of Love*. Chapter 51 of the Long Text (the parable does not appear in the Short Text, Julian explains, because it required lengthy reflection and further divine revelation before its meaning began to become clear to her)—by far the longest—is an exposition of the compatibility of human sin and God's love. This central teaching is then wisely and gradually unfolded in Sheldrake's remaining four chapters on the nature of God, on creation and, in particular, human nature, on sin and salvation, and on prayer as a journey of desire.

Throughout Sheldrake's book, we are clearly, authoritatively and engagingly shown that the kernel of Julian's theology is the realisation of the very practical nature of God's compassionate and eternal living out of Trinitarian community. This invites, enables and leads Julian to greater and yet greater compassion for all her *evenchristens* or fellow Christians. Just as God's love is as fathomless as it is endless, her understanding of human nature is, perhaps necessarily, incomplete. This is why she, her writing and her readers are all in a continuing process of 'becoming'. Throughout her sixteen revelations Julian is shown the absolutely groundbreaking meaning of sin and God's response to it—one of the most profound love—and describes

[3] Philip Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred: Place, Memory and Identity* (London: SCM, 2001), introduction, ix.

this throughout her writing 'as a continuous thread' (p.136). Through theological reflection, intercession, meditation and contemplation Julian opens up herself to God and her contemporaries alike. The miracle of *A Revelation of Love* is that it continues to communicate her message to us today, and we are much in need of hearing it.

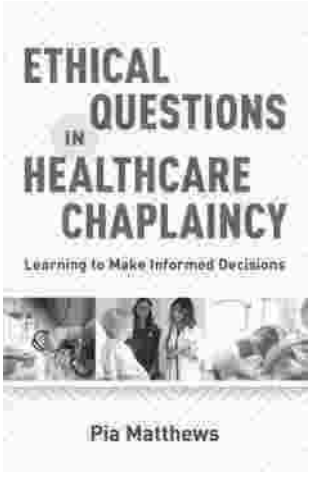
One of the very many distinguishing features that marks this book out is the frequent and helpful critiques of earlier studies. Another, and this is remarkable, is that it is mercifully free of the authorial speculations that mar so much other research on Julian. Instead we have one of the finest studies to appear so far, not only on Julian but also on the nature of God's compassion, which manifest's Sheldrake's admiration for both on every page.

Luke Penkett CJN

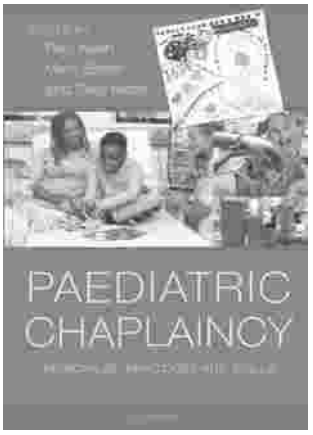
Pia Matthews, *Ethical Questions in Healthcare Chaplaincy: Learning to Make Informed Decisions* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2018). 978 1 7859 2421 7, pp.192, £19.99.

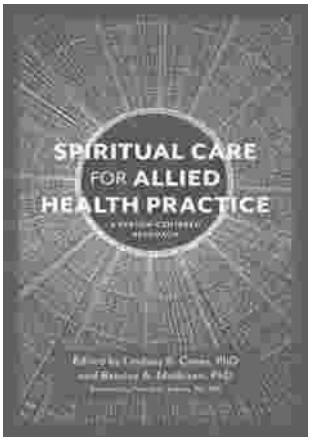
***Paediatric Chaplaincy: Principles, Practices and Skills*, edited by Paul Nash, Mark Bartel and Sally Nash (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2018). 978 1 7859 2076 9, pp.320, £22.99.**

***Spiritual Care for Allied Health Practice: A Person-Centred Approach*, edited by Lindsay B. Carey and Bernice A. Mathisen (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2018). 978 1 7859 2220 6, pp.280, £19.99.**



Pia Matthews has written a timely and informative book that speaks directly to its readers. Her approach is to offer straightforward and recognisable scenarios for any chaplain working in an acute hospital. She also touches upon issues of mental health and palliative care chaplaincy, along with specific concerns for the beginning of life and paediatric ministry. Matthews states clearly that her book is designed for healthcare chaplains but rightly suggests that others may find it of use, as healthcare is an issue that concerns all of us. Parish clergy and pastoral carers, among others, may find some of the chapters very helpful,





with their clarity in setting out both legal and ethical components, especially the introduction.

Amid the complex problems that arise in delivering healthcare, this book also pays attention to the routine and commonplace situations of chaplaincy and opens up the ethical questions behind these scenarios. Ethics is shown in this context to involve the manner in which we conduct ourselves in all encounters and not merely in the occasional situations that challenge us. An innocent question about a member of the congregation from a hospital volunteer encourages chaplains to reflect upon the use of confidential information they are privileged to know. Certainly placing someone's name on the prayer list without their consent does not comply with the law on data protection!

The models that Matthews offers in every chapter are useful guides to encourage chaplains to pause and reflect before they rush to offer support. I found the 'See, Judge, Act' model easier to apply than the acronym POETRY, (pray, observe, engage, time, remember, you). However, at the heart of any decision-making process is the need to allow time to think before rushing to act; to counteract the emotional pull of a situation that can make us feel uncomfortable with words and actions we have chosen too hastily in order to soothe or placate.

Pia Matthews' exploration of the issues is well supported by her reference to appropriate laws and their impact upon decision making. Most chaplains working in acute settings in Britain will be familiar with the effects of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 as they explore with older patients their wish to go home, alongside the families' concern for their safety and care. This book lays out the law concisely and helpfully, and guides chaplains in their pastoral care of patients and families where this is an issue. However as with any book that includes reference to legislation, there is a difficulty in keeping up to date. Already information about data protection has changed with the Data Protection Act 2018, which regulates how companies, churches and hospitals protect citizens' personal data. Alongside this, medical advances will bring their own new challenges as we move forward into the area of personalised and precision medicine.

Throughout the book Matthews is very good at looking at the basic rules of ethical engagement in healthcare provision and the chaplain's role within this. From this she goes on to consider those aspects of healthcare that do challenge and disturb, where what is legal may not coincide with what faith communities see as ethical—such as abortion and genetic testing for foetal abnormality. Given the wide-ranging debate in healthcare as to what counts as spiritual as opposed to religious, it would have been helpful to have the brief outline of a 'spiritual care assessment' at the beginning rather than in the penultimate chapter of the book. As she notes, hospitals have their own templates for this but given that the phrases 'spiritual assessment' and 'spiritual needs' appear in most of the chapters a more thorough discussion would have added to the book's clarity.

This book is to be commended for its breadth and the straightforwardness of its discussion. It could valuably be shared with all chaplaincy volunteers and is essential reading for anyone who finds themselves working for the first time as a healthcare chaplain.

Paediatric Chaplaincy focuses upon a more specialised area of chaplaincy in a healthcare setting. This book is a collaboration between chaplains from the United Kingdom and the United States. Despite their differing healthcare provision, the book covers case studies and research that open up wider perspectives—a 'major incident plan' is far more likely to be needed for hurricanes and bad weather in the US than in the UK! This is a very thorough book and is an excellent resource for paediatric chaplains.

Spiritual Care for Allied Health Practice takes a multidisciplinary healthcare team approach. Each chapter of the book looks at a different discipline and explores how care offered may also have a spiritual component. There is, of course, much that is common to all disciplines, such as empathy and resilience (discussed in the chapter on paramedicine) but each chapter contributes to a wide understanding of spiritual care and is written by an experienced practitioner or lecturer in their field of allied health medicine. It is a helpful book for hospital chaplains involved in the delivery of education on spiritual care. It is always good to start with an understanding of the place of the other before contributing from one's own standing place.

Caroline Worsfold