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GRACE IN A WORLD OF SUFFERING

Book Reviews

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 conversion, so articles in this area will be particularly welcome.

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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 *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, 1898–)

Papal documents may be found at www.vatican.va

FOREWORD

ANY FAITH IN GOD must always face the challenge of why an all-powerful and all-loving God permits human suffering. No single answer to this conundrum has been found to be adequate, but one avenue worth exploring is the fact that grace can be experienced as present even—perhaps especially—in the most difficult of times. The articles gathered in this issue of *The Way* bear witness to this, in situations ranging from environmental destruction to civil war, from the struggle to live a contemplative life to coping with the polarisation of views within the Church.

If at times the concepts of conversion and discernment have been presented in ways that seemed individualistic and detached from wider social and political engagement, this situation is changing rapidly. Séverine Deneulin and Yvonne Orengo, two researchers in the field of international development, use case studies from across the globe to illustrate the idea of ecological conversion, pioneered by Pope John Paul II. Ambrose Mong shows how the outspoken Archbishop Óscar Romero of El Salvador underwent his own conversion to become the voice of an oppressed and suffering people, and of the price that he paid for this. Riyako Hikota reaches the perhaps surprising conclusion that it is by maintaining a sense of humour that it becomes possible to avoid the lure of entrenched positions and demonizing opponents.

Many stories in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures illustrate ways in which the experience of suffering can lead into a deeper reception of divine grace. Mary, at the foot of the cross, shared her son's passion, an idea developed by Magdalena Randal. Miriam, a key figure in the Exodus narrative, undergoes disease and isolation in ways which, for Karen Eliasen, speak directly to our current experience of pandemic. Jesus himself is born into poverty, foreshadowing his death and resurrection, as Gerald O'Collins shows, and has to cope with violent rejection by the people of his home town, a scene contemplated by Eric Jensen.

There is, of course, no guarantee that the experience of suffering will lead to a deeper awareness of the grace of God. If it is not simply to produce bitterness and resentment, certain conditions will need to be met. One is perhaps an openness to others, rather than turning in on oneself, a virtue outlined by Jakub Walczak as he considers the meaning

of Christian hospitality. Another is the cultivating of a contemplative attitude by which one is better able to recognise the signs of God at work, an attitude that Robert Doud finds present in the poetry of the US Trappist monk Thomas Merton.

Even so, no matter how spiritually fruitful the experience of suffering can be, there are times when the correct response is to oppose, rather than simply accept, it. This is as true at the social and environmental levels as it is at the personal. The *Spiritual Canticle* of St John of the Cross gives poetic expression to the unity and interconnectedness of the whole of creation. According to Ian Matthew, this presents humanity with the task of combating environmental degradation and restoring the harmony which was part of the divine plan since the beginning.

There is sometimes a fine line between the passive acceptance of suffering, of the kind that lay at the root of Nietzsche's critique of Christianity, and a genuine discovery of God in that suffering, even when working to overcome it. The Church has not always avoided the temptation to offer simplistic explanations of hardship as God's will, or as something to be easily offset by future joys. Yet any faith that is to survive the challenges of everyday struggles must find ways to discover God as much in them as in more obviously consoling experiences. The writings gathered in this issue of *The Way* together suggest a variety of routes by which this discovery can be made.

Paul Nicholson SJ
Editor

ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISCERNMENT

Séverine Deneulin and Yvonne Orengo

ONE OF THE CENTRAL ARGUMENTS of Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato si'* is that one cannot address environmental degradation without also addressing human and social degradation (n.48). As he puts it in an often-cited passage:

> Today … we have to realize that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor* (n.49).

Laudato si' calls for an ecological conversion at all levels of society—self, family, workplace, neighbourhood, church, city, region and state—to stop and redress socio-environmental degradation.

The term 'ecological conversion' was first coined by Pope John Paul II in 2001.[1] In a public statement of 1990 he had already argued that the ecological crisis was primarily a moral crisis and a lack of respect for life.[2] More recently, following the Synod for the Amazon, Pope Francis has introduced the expression 'ecological sin' into the theological vocabulary. The final document of the synod defines this as,

> … an action or omission against God, against one's neighbour, the community and the environment. It is sin against future generations, and it is committed in acts and habits of pollution and destruction of the harmony of the environment.[3]

[1] John Paul II, general audience, 17 January 2001, n.4.
[2] John Paul II, message for World Peace Day, 1 January 1990.
[3] Final document of the Amazon synod, 'The Amazon: New Paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology', n.82.

Turning away from ecological sin, or embarking on a process of global ecological conversion, requires 'profound changes in "lifestyles, models of production and consumption, and the established structures of power which today govern societies"'.[4]

We would like to unpack these arguments in relation to two areas of socio-environmental degradation—the Atacama region in northern Chile and the Anosy region in southern Madagascar—focusing on the relationships between discernment, ecological conversion and structures of power, and deriving implications for how we might all practise discernment as citizens given our connection to these places through globalisation. Both contexts illustrate strikingly how the deterioration of the earth is inseparable from the deterioration of people's lives and, most importantly, the decline of their political voice. The paradox is that the socio-environmental degradation in both places is driven by green intentions: substituting petrol cars for electric cars in Chile, and offsetting biodiversity loss in Madagascar.

Discernment in the Socio-Economic Realm

Mark Rotsaert has argued that discernment is a universal practice which is not confined to the Ignatian spiritual tradition; it is, 'a human capacity as old as humanity itself'.[5] For him discernment is about pondering and reasoning with 'the horizon that is God'. In the same special issue of *The Way*, however, Cécile Renouard proposes to extend the relevance of the practice of discernment to those who do not share Christian—or any religious—beliefs. She argues for a collective discernment among Christians and others that bears on the means of achieving ecological transition, given that the end is undisputed.

How might the practice of discernment so understood be meaningful for socio-economic policy? Could the 'horizon that is God' be left out of the picture or take another form acceptable to those who reject the existence of God? One way of achieving this might be to substitute 'the horizon that is life and love'—especially love for nature and compassion for the most vulnerable. How could such pondering and reasoning within the horizon that is life and love manifest itself in collective socio-economic decision-making?

Pondering and reasoning within the horizon that is life and love

[4] *Laudato si'*, n.5, quoting John Paul II, *Centesimus annus*, n.58.
[5] Mark Rotsaert, 'Spiritual Discernment: The Horizon That Is God', *The Way*, 58/4 (October 2019), 99–110, here 99.

Social Choice Theory

The works of the Indian economist and philosopher Amartya Sen on collective decision-making and social choice theory offer us some particularly useful tools. Social choice theory is a field in economics that deals with the question of how to make collective decisions, such as about which rules should guide international trade, regulate the movement of people, capital or goods, or govern carbon emissions and so on.[6]

In democratic societies such decisions are made through a deliberative process. People elect their representatives, who debate in a parliament and make decisions by voting following the debate; and debate also occurs in society at large. All citizens get to ponder and reason in one way or another whether decision A is better than decision B. And this involves having some criteria to judge what constitutes 'better'. Is the decision to build a third runaway at Heathrow Airport better than not building it? Is investing in solar energy better than investing in wind energy, and are they both better than nuclear energy? How do we rank these alternative courses of action?

A first contribution that Sen makes is to say that we do not need to wait until we can reach a decision on ranking before taking action. For example, is 'having a carbon-pricing through market mechanism' better than 'regulating and banning certain carbon activities'?[7] Some people may rank alternative A as better than B, and others vice versa, but there is a danger that the outcome of this disagreement—alternative C, doing nothing—is worse than either. Sen argues that, in such cases, leaving the alternatives unranked is not unreasonable; it 'may even be a common outcome of reasoned analysis of ethical and political evaluation'.[8]

A second contribution from Sen—and this is where love and life come in—concerns the framework used to rank situations or alternative courses of action. Sen has long objected to using income as information in comparing economic situations. Brazil, might seem to be in a better position if it increased its gross domestic product per capita by exporting more soya, beef and timber, but after bringing information about environmental degradation into consideration, can one conclude that Brazil would actually be better off as a country and that Brazilians would

[6] Amartya Sen, *Collective Choice and Social Welfare* (London: Penguin, 2017), x.
[7] Sen, *Collective Choice and Social Welfare*, 461.
[8] Sen, *Collective Choice and Social Welfare*, 458.

live better lives? Instead of using incomes to judge whether situations are better or worse than others, Sen has argued for introducing information about the types of lives that people live as basis for making value judgments and ranking alternative courses of action: whether people are able to avoid hunger and lead a healthy life, take part in the life of a community, relate to the world of nature, relate to their ancestors, or have a sense of place and belonging.

A third contribution is a strong emphasis on giving *reasons* for valuing A over B, and on bringing these reasons into critical scrutiny in dialogue with others.[9] For example, if Britain considers renewing the Trident nuclear weapons programme as a better use of £3 billion than improving NHS mental health facilities, what are the reasons for this position, and do they stand critical examination? An attitude that Sen highlights is that of accepting responsibility towards others, and especially the most vulnerable and those who suffer.[10] One can see here some clear parallels with Pope Francis's words in *Evangelii gaudium* about avoiding a 'globalisation of indifference', 'being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people's pain' (n. 54).

Sen's work in social choice theory suggests an interpretation of discernment in the socio-economic sphere based on three characteristics: decision-making in the absence of any 'best' option; the use of information about the quality of people's lives, including their relationship to nature, to rank different courses of action; and giving reasons for one's decisions which do not ignore the cry of the earth and the poor. The conduct of such discernment in specific circumstances also brings to light a fourth characteristic: analysing the structures of power at work and examining one's place within them.

Lithium Extraction in Northern Chile[11]

Lithium is a key component in batteries, such as the ones powering our mobile phones, laptops, power tools and, most importantly, electric cars, as well as batteries used in the storage of renewable energy.[12] The

[9] Sen, *Collective Choice and Social Welfare*, 466–467.
[10] Amartya Sen, 'The Contemporary Relevance of Buddha', *Ethics and International Affairs*, 28/1 (2014), 15–27, at 23–24.
[11] This section is based on research by Séverine Deneulin for an interdisciplinary case study designed for postgraduate students at the University of Bath. She visited the Atacama region in August 2019 to collect primary data.
[12] See the market report by the mineral resource consultancy firm Roskill published in July 2019 at https://roskill.com/market-report/lithium/.

market in electric cars, in particular, has surged in recent years as a means to achieve the green transition. The growing demand for lithium generates, however, a cry of the earth and of the poor that is often silenced or left unarticulated in public debates in Europe.

Nearly 60 per cent of the world's lithium reserves are found in what is known as the lithium triangle, a series of salt lakes between Bolivia, Chile and Argentina, where it is extracted from brines.[13] Chile has the best quality reserves and cheapest extraction processes, because the Chilean government has strictly controlled lithium production since the late 1970s, for a variety of reasons. Given soaring global lithium demand, the Chilean government is under intense pressure from international investors to relax regulation and increase quotas, with serious consequences locally.

The area where lithium is extracted, in the Atacama desert region in northern Chile, is home to one of the country's nine officially recognised indigenous groups, the Atacameños. The main town is San Pedro de Atacama, which has about 10,000 residents but, since the *New York Times* advertised the town as one of the top fifty places to visit in the world, it received around 300,000 tourists a year until the coronavirus pandemic.[14] There are serious concerns about the negative

Lithium mine in northern Chile

[13] See Elizabeth Gonzalez, 'Explainer: Latin America's Lithium Triangle', *Americas Society/Council of the Americas* (17 February 2021), at https://www.as-coa.org/articles/explainer-latin-americas-lithium-triangle.
[14] Matthew Bloch and others, '52 Places to Go in 2017', *New York Times* (4 January 2017), available at https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/travel/places-to-visit.html.

impact of this tourism such as overcrowding and problems with water use and waste disposal.[15] Local residents who live on the outskirts of the tourist centre often suffer water cuts for several hours a day so that tourists can have water.[16]

The biggest water users are, however, not the tourists but the two lithium-extracting companies (Albermarle and Sociedad Quimica Chilena, or SQM), which have licences to operate in the nearby salt flat.[17] There is no official independent body to monitor water use, so estimates vary. According to one, every second the two companies extract 2,000 litres more than the natural capacity for regeneration (water in the desert comes from aquifers supplied by melting ice higher up in the Andes).[18] Another study estimated that 70 per cent of the water use in the region goes to the mining sector, 17 per cent to agriculture and 13 per cent to human consumption.[19]

And lithium is not the only mineral extracted. The Atacama region supplies most of Chile's copper, which is the country's main export and a major source of government's revenues. The production of an electric car requires more than four times as much as copper as a fossil-fuel powered car, and copper extraction is particularly water-intensive.[20] In that regard, the Anglo-Australian company BHP, which operates the largest mine in the world in Atacama, has announced it will stop taking the water from the salt flat for its copper mine from 2030 onwards and use a desalination plant with water pumped directly from the ocean.[21]

[15] '¿Es San Pedro de Atacama un destino turístico sustentable?', *El Diario de Antofagasta* (12 August 2019), at https://www.diarioantofagasta.cl/regional/san-pedro-de-atacama/107323/es-san-pedro-de-atacama-un-destino-turistico-sustentable/.

[16] Personal communication from Francisco Mondaca, Council of Atacameños Peoples, 15 August 2019.

[17] Albermarle is a US company. SQM is Chilean, but the Chinese company Tianqi has now acquired nearly a quarter of its shares. See Ernest Scheyder, 'Tianqi Says Happy "For Now" with Stake in SQM: President', *Reuters* (10 July 2019), at https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-lithium-electric-tianqi-lithium/tianqi-says-happy-for-now-with-stake-in-sqm-president-idUKKCN1TB20K.

[18] Data taken from Ben Heubl, 'Lithium Firms Depleting Vital Water Supplies in Chile, Analysis Suggests', *Engineering and Technology* (21 August 2019), at https://eandt.theiet.org/content/articles/2019/08/lithium-firms-are-depleting-vital-water-supplies-in-chile-according-to-et-analysis/.

[19] Figures are for 2017, taken from 'Atacameños exigen una mayor protección de las aguas del salar', *Chululus: Revista de San Pedro de Atacama* (8 October 2018), at https://www.chululo.cl/pages/recortes2.php?id=10102018_023118.

[20] See Cecilia Jamasmie, 'Impact of Electric Cars in Medium-term Copper Demand "Overrated", Experts Say', *Mining.Com* (12 April 2018), at https://www.mining.com/impact-electric-cars-medium-term-copper-demand-overrated-experts-say/;.

[21] See Cecilia Jamasmie, 'BHP to Supply Water for Escondida Mine from Desalination Plant Only' *Mining.Com* (4 February 2020), at https://www.mining.com/bhp-to-supply-water-for-escondida-mine-from-desalination-plant-only/.

Given the rising global demand for lithium, in 2017 the Chilean government gave Albermarle a licence to triple its quota until 2043.[22] This is putting an even greater strain on water availability in the region. There is, to date, no hydrological model for the salt flats (*salares*), except those computed by the mining companies themselves.[23] The plant and animal life of the salt flats is already affected by water scarcity.[24] The local population is being forced to abandon agriculture as a livelihood as it has become harder to grow crops and breed animals. Those who cannot make a living from tourism have to migrate.[25]

The relationship between locals and the mining companies is complex. Residents are represented by the Council of Atacameños Peoples, which in 2014 signed an agreement with Albermarle to receive 3 per cent of their revenues from sales of lithium. This is the first case in Chile of a mining company distributing part of its revenue to a local community. It is the community itself which can decide how to spend the money. There are, however, concerns about who belongs to this 'community' and how representative it is, and about whether the extractive company should be supporting local projects (such as a football pitch or tourist facilities), while at the same time having such a negative and irreversible impact on the ecosystem of the region.[26] Some local activists have started to speak of an 'eco-colonialism of lithium' and of 'zones of sacrifice', to convey the idea that these communities are paying the price for the green transition.[27]

Current conservation efforts are concentrated, as a matter of urgency, on stopping the new exploitation of salt flats and restricting the quotas of the two existing operating companies. There are also efforts to introduce a special 'law of salt flats', as salt flats fall neither under the current wetlands nor aquifers legislation; they include both

[22] See Dave Sherwood, 'A Water Fight in Chile's Atacama Raises Questions over Lithium Mining', *Reuters* (18 October 2018), at https://www.reuters.com/article/us-chile-lithium-insight/a-water-fight-in-chiles-atacama-raises-questions-over-lithium-mining-idUSKCN1MS1L8.

[23] Personal communication from Ramón Balcázar, director of the environmental NGO Fundación Tantí, 21 August 2019.

[24] Sherwood, 'A Water Fight in Chile's Atacama'.

[25] Grace Livingstone, 'The Farmers Who Worry about Our Phone Batteries', *BBC News* (15 August 2019), at https://www.bbc.com/news/business-49355817.

[26] Personal communication from Ramón Balcázar, 21 August 2019.

[27] The idea of 'zones of sacrifice' originates from Diego di Risio and others, *Zonas de sacrificio. Impactos de la industria hidrocarburifera en Salta y Norpatagonia* (Buenos Aires: América Libre, 2012), available at https://opsur.org.ar/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Zonas-de-sacrificio-impactos-de-la-industria-hidrocarbur%C3%ADfera.pdf.

but the composition of the ecosystem is different from either.[28] In February 2019, an Observatory of the Andean Salt Flats was created, whose aim is to protect the environment and human rights in the area, and there are plans to revise water legislation, and deprivatise it, in the new Chilean Constitution that is being drafted.[29]

How might the practice of discernment look in such a context? What would 'pondering and reasoning with the horizon that is life and love' entail here? One can already draw the conclusion that there is no 'best' course of action for someone living elsewhere. Should one buy a new low-carbon-emission petrol car instead of an electric car? Should one volunteer one's skills, or simply stand in solidarity (in whatever form that might be expressed) with Chilean activists as they try to stop new extraction licenses being granted? Or should one start raising awareness about the negative consequences of the shift from petrol to electric cars as a means to achieve the green transition?

There is one clear conclusion, though: our rising demand for lithium is affecting the ability of people who live in the region where it is mined to do and be what they value, such as living in close relationship to the land of their ancestors. This land will soon be uninhabitable if the current level of water extraction continues. Whatever course of action we decide upon, whether at the individual or collective level, it cannot remain indifferent to the cry of the Andean salt-flat ecosystems and of the local populations who make a living out of the land. This cry is multiplied throughout the planet wherever minerals are extracted—in Latin America alone, there are an estimated 250 conflicts in relation to this industry with local populations.[30]

Ilmenite Extraction in Southern Madagascar [31]

Over 80 per cent of the rural population of Madagascar are subsistence farmers. They are wholly dependent on natural resources for survival, and identify themselves through their connection to the land of their

[28] Personal communication from Ramón Balcázar, 21 August 2019.
[29] See *Observatorio plurinacional de salares Andinos*, at https://observatoriosalares.wordpress.com/; Javiera Martinez, 'It Could Be a Blow to Mining: Chile Voted for the Protection of Territories, Water and Women', *London Mining Network* (19 May 2021), at https://londonminingnetwork.org/2021/05/it-could-be-a-blow-to-mining-chile-voted-for-the-protection-of-territories-water-and-women/
[30] See the Observatory of Mineral Conflicts in Latin America, at https://www.ocmal.org.
[31] This section is based on Yvonne Orengo's two decades of involvement with local communities in southern Madagascar, and her research and advocacy work around the evolution of the QMM mine.

QMM ilmenite mine, Anosy, Madagascar

ancestors (*Taninadrazana*). Madagascar contains one of the richest ecosystems on the planet: some 85 per cent of the species living there are unique to the island. It is also one of the poorest countries in the world, with 77 per cent of the population estimated to live in multidimensional poverty: not only economically poor but deprived of at least a minimum level of education, health and standard of living.[32]

The country has been host to international conservation organizations for decades. Policies to protect the island's natural heritage have led to significant commitments in the 1990s to expand its system of environmentally protected areas. But, reflecting a worldwide trend towards liberalising economies and facilitating foreign investment, at the same time Madagascar liberalised its investment policies to stimulate economic growth and provided incentives for international extractive companies to invest in the country. The Malagasy government at the time essentially defined 'the environment' as a new sector for generating revenue from activities such as private conservation, ecotourism and pharmaceutical research.[33]

[32] See *United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Reports: Madagascar*, at http://www.hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/MDG. For more information about how the multidimensional poverty index (MPI) is calculated and the situation of poverty in Madagascar, see 'Global MPI Country Briefing 2019: Madagascar', *Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative*, at https://ophi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CB_MDG_2019_2.pdf.

[33] See Amber Huff, *Black Sands, Green Plans and Conflict: Structural Adjustment, Sectoral Reforms and the Mining–Conservation–Conflict Nexus in Southern Madagascar*, IDS Evidence Report 183 (Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, 2016), 23.

One of the largest and most controversial mines to advance under Madagascar's policy reforms was the ilmenite operation of the Anglo-Australian mineral company Rio Tinto in the Anosy region on the south-east of the island, one of the poorest areas of the country where 91 per cent of people are living in multidimensional poverty.[34] The mine is operated by Rio Tinto's local subsidiary QIT Minerals Madagascar (QMM), and extraction began from the coast's mineral sands in 2009.

As a condition of World Bank funding, QMM was required to mitigate the environmental impact of its activities, which will remove 6,000 hectares of littoral forests. In 2010, in partnership with the International Union for Nature (IUCN), Rio Tinto made a global commitment to a biodiversity strategy of 'net positive impact' (NPI).[35] This strategy pledges to leave local ecosystems where minerals are extracted better off because of mining activities than they would have been otherwise. In order to achieve Rio Tinto's NPI targets in Madagascar, QMM claimed three 'biodiversity offsetting' zones in the Anosy region. Biodiversity offsetting is premised on the idea that it is possible to compensate for damage to land, forest and biodiversity in one area by protecting or creating an area of the same or similar value somewhere else.[36]

Antsotso is one of the villages that sit within a QMM offset zone, some 50 km north of the mine, in the nationally protected forest of Tsitongambarika. As a result of the QMM offset, hundreds of Antsotso villagers have been denied access to the forest resources on which they have depended for generations. Their traditional practice of growing manioc in the forest, which could yield enough harvest each year to sustain the community for two, was halted. Food production that had once been close to home, secure and productive, was now forced on to a hot, sandy and windswept beach where the community could not

[34] See Rowan Moore Gerety, 'Mining and Biodiversity Offsets in Madagascar: Conservation or "Conservation Opportunities?"', *Mongabay* (30 August 2009), at https://news.mongabay.com/2009/08/mining-and-biodiversity-offsets-in-madagascar-conservation-or-conservation-opportunities/; 'Global MPI Country Briefing 2019: Madagascar', 9.

[35] Gerety, 'Mining and Biodiversity Offsets in Madagascar'.

[36] See Friends of the Earth and the Andrew Lees Trust, *New Frontiers, New Tricks: New Threats to People and Nature from Biodiversity Offsetting Linked to Mining and Development* (London: Friends of the Earth, 2019). The idea that biodiversity destruction can be 'offset' is based on a series of assumptions about how nature can be quantified and costs placed upon it; see Sian Sullivan, 'After the Green Rush? Biodiversity Offsets, Uranium Power and the "Calculus of Casualties" in Greening Growth', *Human Geology*, 6/1 (2013), 80–101, at 95.

produce more than two months' food supply. Villagers who cut trees for pirogues in order to fish were criminalised and fined, and their boats were destroyed.[37]

The biodiversity offsetting scheme was introduced without informed consent. Villagers complain that they were lied to and misled. They had been told they would be engaged in helping to protect the forest, would be paid for tree-planting activities and receive other benefits. Asity, a local NGO affiliate of BirdLife International, which manages the offsetting scheme with QMM funding, did not deliver what it promised. Only a few people were employed in planting and there were no payments for the work of nurturing and watering the trees, only for planting them. As one Antsotso villager testified: 'Asity has forbidden us to use the forest because it will be a protected area. If we use it we have to pay a fine. But how can they talk about money with us? We don't have any.'[38] To compound their problems, the Malagasy environmental regulator has told the community they have no rights to compensation for their losses and should negotiate with QMM for help.[39] Robbed of their land, forest access and food security, villagers have fallen into conflict about how best to address the situation.

After some negotiation with QMM, a rice-growing project was introduced. However, the lowland areas where villagers are expected to grow rice are of poor quality, and they only know cultivation on hillsides. Villagers complain they do not know how to produce rice harvests in these poor quality lowlands. For global investors, the mine's biodiversity offset has given the company green credentials. But the local community has been left without food and without its traditional livelihood. As a villager put it:

> We understand the importance of protecting the forest. But they should have started the projects to help us grow food before stopping us from using the forest. Otherwise we are left with no food and this is a problem.[40]

[37] Jutta Kill and Giulia Franchi, *Rio Tinto's Biodiversity Offset in Madagascar Double Landgrab in the Name of Biodiversity?* (World Rainforest Movement, 2016).
[38] Kill and Franchi, *Rio Tinto's Biodiversity Offset*, 16.
[39] Meeting between the ONE (Office Nationale pour l'Environnement) and Antsotso villagers at Iabokoho in October 2017.
[40] Kill and Franchi, *Rio Tinto's Biodiversity Offset*, 11. See also interviews with villagers conducted in 2019, in Malavika Vyawahare, 'Raze Here, Save There: Do Biodiversity Offsets Work for People or Ecosystems?', *Mongabay* (28 February 2020), at https://news.mongabay.com/2020/02/raze-here-save-there-do-biodiversity-offsets-work-for-people-or-ecosystems.

Local residents have very little, if any, resources to challenge or change this situation. They are subject to unequal structures of power. The alliances that Rio Tinto/QMM has built with the Malagasy government and with international conservation NGOs mean that actions are often taken unilaterally or without full consultation and consent, and consequently can have profound, irreversible and negative effects on the lives of the local community. The company's social engagement practices have been criticized for the way they aim to pacify and neutralise dissent and contestation, rather than empower locals or respect their rights and entitlements.[41]

The government owns 20 per cent of the QMM mine, and conservation NGOs including Conservation International, BirdLife International, Asity and the IUCN are partners in QMM's conservation programme. The resulting powerful corporate–state–NGO nexus closes off the space where citizens might claim or advance their rights.[42] Madagascar's poor track record on transparency and governance further curtails citizens' rights and equitable dialogue.[43] The ensuing isolation and disenfranchisement felt by villagers is palpable. Despite their heavy reliance on natural resources, the poorest have no voice in decisions made. They have little power to influence policy, control resources or enjoy legal protection in the face of large-scale investment.

It is hard to reconcile how a programme that is internationally lauded for protecting the environment can carry such a heavy price for local people. We are confronted here with another 'zone of sacrifice' like the lithium case in the Chilean Atacama region. The personal cost to Malagasy villagers for delivering Rio Tinto's green credentials is never measured, their well-being is not valued, nor are they adequately compensated for their losses, and they are silenced whenever they raise their concerns. For example, when solidarity actions with international activists exerted pressure on QMM to address Antsotso's rights and food security problems, villagers were cautioned by QMM

[41] See Amber Huff and Yvonne Orengo, 'Resource Warfare, Pacification and the Spectacle of "Green" Development: Logics of Violence in Engineering Extraction in Southern Madagascar', *Political Geography*, 81 (August 2020).

[42] See Amber Huff, Yvonne Orengo and Barry Ferguson, 'State-Corporate Alliances and Spaces for Resistance on the Extractive Frontier in Southeastern Madagascar', ERPI International Conference: Authoritarian Populism and the Rural World, 17–18 March 2018, available at https://www.tni.org/files/article-downloads/erpi_cp_3_huff_et_al.pdf.

[43] See the Transparency International Index for Madagascar at https://www.transparency.org/country/MDG.

staff to end their relations with external agencies: 'polygamy is forbidden', they were told (meaning, 'if you want our help you must only work with us').[44]

Socio-Economic Discernment and Social Justice

These two cases offer stark evidence in support of *Laudato si*'s argument that all environmental questions must also integrate questions of social justice. In the Atacama, the salt flats are drying and ecosystems are dying because of the lack of regulation and monitoring and, most importantly, because the voices and rights of the local people have not been taken into account in policy decisions. In Anosy, mining destroys forests while locals are forbidden to access vital resources for their survival and livelihood. What makes the two cases even more tragic is that both populations are sacrificed in the name of environmental protection and 'progress'. The people of the Atacama lose their livelihoods for the sake of the green transition from petrol to electric cars, and the people of Anosy for the sake of corporate biodiversity offsetting.

All environmental questions must also integrate questions of social justice

Both situations also reveal the deepening crisis over competing interests in natural resources and demonstrate that reconciling them may appear almost impossible. Consumers have needs for certain resources to sustain their lives and thereby create demand. Some institutions seek good investment returns to sustain their activities, which mining companies provide. There are governments that require revenues from mineral exports and royalties from mining companies to finance public services. For example, in some Latin American countries such as Bolivia and Ecuador most of the social progress and reduction of multidimensional poverty this century has been financed in most places by revenue from the extraction of natural resources.[45] In contrast, the failure to deliver social services in Africa on the back of significant extractive revenues is a cause for concern.[46]

[44] Fieldwork report from Trano Aro Zo, local human rights organization in Anosy, to the Andrew Lees Trust in January 2018.

[45] See Diego Sánchez-Ancochea, 'The Surprising Reduction of Inequality during a Commodity Boom: What Do We Learn from Latin America?', *Journal of Economic Policy Reform*, 24/2 (2021), 95–119.

[46] See Anthony Bebbington and others, *Governing Extractive Industries: Politics, Histories, Ideas* (Oxford: OUP, 2018); Rosemary Thorp and others, *The Developmental Challenges of Mining and Oil: Lessons from Africa and Latin America* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

How can we enjoy and ensure a dignified life for all without losing the biodiversity on which every living creature depends? Which actions should we take for this to happen? Going back to the four characteristics of discernment in the socio-economic sphere, a first answer to that question is that whatever course of action we take, there is no 'best' action. Second, our actions demand compassion for the most marginalised and love of nature as their horizon. Third, it follows that our actions need to be based on an assessment of what is happening to the poor and marginalised and the earth on which they live. Are the people in the Anosy and Atacama regions more, or less, able to live lives that they value—feeding themselves on manioc from the forest and fishing with wooden boats in the sea, or making a livelihood from animal breeding and taking care of the land their ancestors have given them—as a consequence of our actions? Fourth, our attitudes and actions can reinforce the structures of power: who defines what 'development' or 'progress' means and how to pursue it?

As the two cases have illustrated, local people are often voiceless, collateral damage in the onslaught of powerful interests that advance a specific understanding of what 'development' and 'progress' mean. In Anosy, the head of the QMM social programme was overheard to express her frustration at villagers' lack of cooperation with the company's agenda, saying that the villagers did not want the 'gifts of development' that the mining company had to offer.[47] In the Atacama, with some revenues from Albermarle being redistributed for local community spending, it is easier for opposition to the extractive activities to be dismissed or criticized, given the 'gifts' received.

The challenges are extremely complex, but the final document of the Synod for the Amazon offers some hopeful ways forward:

> We may not be able to modify the destructive model of extractivist development immediately, but we do need to know and make clear where we stand, whose side we are on, what perspective we assume, how the political and ethical dimension of our word of faith and life are transmitted.[48]

The actions proposed include disinvestment campaigns—shareholders can positively influence corporate policies—and commitments to

[47] Huff and Orengo, 'Resource Warfare, Pacification and the Spectacle of "Green" Development', 10.
[48] Final document of the Amazon synod, n. 70.

alternative goods and energy resources that do not rely on the destruction of the environment and people's livelihoods.[49]

Making decisions with the horizon that is life and love, especially considering the most vulnerable and the earth, may seem challenging. However, having the power to make such decisions and the freedom to embrace options can already be recognised as a privileged position, especially when we take time to reflect upon and empathize with the plights of indigenous villagers in Antsotso and the Atacama. The Ignatian spiritual tradition has developed many tools over centuries to 'make decisions with the horizon that is God' in our personal lives. Further work critically needs to be done to take that discernment beyond individual decisions to collective decisions at all levels of society so that the cry of the poor and the earth may be responded to adequately. The process of global ecological conversion of the Church demands this of us.

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[49] The Church of England, for example, is investing only in companies that comply with the Paris Climate Agreement, see 'Church of England Restricts Investment in Companies That Don't Meet Its Climate Standards', at https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/news-and-statements/church-england-restricts- investment-companies-dont-meet-its.

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Away in the loveable west,
On a pastoral forehead of Wales,
I was under a roof here, I was at rest

Gerard Manley Hopkins, Jesuit poet

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BEING CONNECTED

Laudato si' and the *Spiritual Canticle*

Iain Matthew

> Because all creatures are connected, each must be cherished with love and respect, for all of us as living creatures are dependent on one another.
>
> *Laudato si'*, n. 42

POPE FRANCIS'S INSISTENCE in *Laudato si'* on the connectedness of things is fundamental to his vision for global healing.[1] St John of the Cross (1542–1591) is a helpful interlocutor here. Pope Francis explicitly calls upon John's witness toward the end of the encyclical (n. 234), quoting from his *Spiritual Canticle*. I should like to further the conversation here between the call to care for our common home and the voice of this Spanish Carmelite poet, pastor and mystic.

In his quiet way, John has a lot to contribute. One of his confrères relates how, 'at recreation … [John] would normally sit on the floor among his brothers, and they, following his example, would do the same'.[2] This gesture shows his ability to integrate a community through humility. His writings, too, describe connections: his stated goal, 'union of love', speaks of relationship, not separateness; and the divine subject of that relationship—union of love 'with God'—puts the world's potential for unity on a sure footing. We may hope, in reading John of the Cross, for help in seeing and living the connectedness of things.

The author has based the present article on his Italian version 'Cristo, chiave della connettività nel Cántico di san Giovanni della Croce', in *'Tutte le creature sono connesse tra loro' (Laudato si' 42). Il principio di integralità nella visione dell'humanum*, edited by Silvano Giordano (Rome: Teresianum, 2017), 161–177.

[1] This is one of the 'themes which will reappear as the Encyclical unfolds. As examples, I will point to the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet, the conviction that everything in the world is connected' (n. 16). 'Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society.' (n.91) 'When we fail to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities—to offer just a few examples—it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself; everything is connected' (n.117).

[2] 'Fragmentos historiales para la vida de Fr Juan de la Cruz', National Library of Spain, Madrid, MS 8568, fol. 119.

Mystics and Morals

What place can the Christian mystics have in a discussion of such an earthy subject as care for the planet? Pope Francis asks a related question in chapter 2 of *Laudato si'*, 'The Gospel of Creation'. He began by presenting the encyclical to all people of good will. So why, he now asks, should it include a chapter dealing specifically 'with the convictions of believers' (n.62)? Francis offers two answers. First, the global debate on the ecological crisis needs all the help it can get. Care for the planet is a complex issue requiring a multifaceted response, and no source of wisdom should be excluded. The second answer is that faith convictions, while not shared by everyone, will indeed illuminate those who are Christian believers in their effort to protect 'our common home'. If the world's two billion Christians wake up to this issue, that will be of benefit to the rest of the earth's population.

In the same way John of the Cross deserves a place in today's discussion, because as a poet, a thinker and a man of deep spiritual experience, his voice can be expected to enrich the global conversation. Moreover his message illuminates Christian faith, shows its radiance and beauty, and so has the potential to help Christians specifically in their ecological commitment.

A specifically Christian contribution is going to centre on the risen Christ. Faith in Christ, risen in flesh, cannot but say something to the world's struggle to survive. Easter matters for ethics.[3] In this light, too, John of the Cross is helpful. His mysticism is, precisely, the risen Christ impressing himself upon the mystic. His writings disclose Christ's transforming power: 'Flame which burns and gives no pain'.[4] In John, theological truth is written in fire. His mysticism thus takes us inside the content of faith.[5] It also awakens us to what lies before us—the genuine facts about things. 'People do not know how to rejoice rightly or to mourn rightly', he says, 'because they do not know the distance between good and evil'.[6] John's experience of the real dimensions of things—in particular, of just how interconnected reality is—can refresh the ethical quest.

[3] See Anthony Kelly, *The Resurrection Effect* (New York: Orbis, 2008), 159–160, 163.

[4] St John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle*, 39.1. Most quotations come from the second redaction—the final version of this work—and subsequent references are given in the text.

[5] 'Mysticism is the interiority of faith by the interiorisation of the mystery': Henri de Lubac, 'Mysticism and Mystery', in *Theological Fragments*, translated by Rebecca Howell Balinski (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989), 56.

[6] St John of the Cross, *Sayings of Light and Love*, n.63.

What Can We Expect from the Spiritual Canticle*?*

Out of John's four major writings—*The Ascent of Mount Carmel, The Dark Night, The Spiritual Canticle, The Living Flame of Love*—I shall focus on the *Canticle*, John's prose commentary on his own forty-stanza poem, *¿Adónde te escondiste?,* 'Where Have You Hidden?' Its value here resides in its experiential quality: the verses have been 'composed in love in abundant mystical understanding' (prologue, n.2). It is the author's conviction that his verses echo his experience—a 'mystical' or gifted experience in which the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ surprised John by grace. He intends to be talking about reality, about the way things actually are.

So the *Canticle* is a prose commentary on a lyrical poem—a lyrical poem echoing John's lived experience. The author recognises, however, that the final work is complex. On the one hand, it is meant to 'sing and say forth the greatness of the Beloved' (14.2): to let the richness of the experience that gave rise to the poem unpack itself in prose. On the other hand John wants to address issues regarding spiritual growth: 'to deal with some points about prayer' (prologue, n.3). So, alongside the mystical-lyrical, there is a doctrinal dimension which serves to make the commentary more universal. But John remains convinced that the book is about the real world, real life, his life; this is why it deserves a hearing in today's debate about how to save the world from catastrophe.

Two seminal episodes in John's history ground the work. First, there was his nine months' solitary imprisonment in Toledo (1577–1578). Most of the poem was composed in this extremity of physical and mental suffering. Yet, precisely here, John was enabled to encounter Christ and to receive Christ, in a way that times of greater competence had not, it seems, allowed. Stanzas 14–15 echo this encounter:

> My Beloved, the mountains,
> solitary wooded valleys,
> newfound islands,
> thundering rivers,
> love's whisper carried by the breeze,
>
> The tranquil night
> at one with the rising dawn,
> silent music,
> resounding solitude,
> the supper that renews the heart in love.

View of Toledo, *by El Greco, c. 1596–1600*

There is a cascade of images here, splashes of colour, the fruit of a knowing too close for full sentences. This perception of the Beloved took place in the darkness of John's imprisonment: in the powerlessness and the vulnerability which exposed him to the gift.

The second seminal episode relates to the final stanzas of the poem, which were written some years after John escaped from his Toledo dungeon. Francisca, a Carmelite nun, recounts that John asked her how she prayed. She replied, 'By gazing on God's beauty, and rejoicing that he has it'.[7] This extraordinary answer evoked in John, attentive listener that he was, an equally extraordinary response: the composition of five stanzas expressing the beauty of Christ and his transforming power. They begin thus:

> Rejoice with me Beloved,
> let us meet in your beauty,
> on the mountain and the hillside,
> where the clear water flows;
> deeper in the woodland let us go. (36)

Noteworthy is the way John's word here arose in dialogue with Francisca, in a context of a shared quest, of a common pilgrimage.

The Canticle *and Connectedness*

The *Spiritual Canticle* affirms, displays and delights in the interplay of things. The universe connects, not like the internet—not as a neutral

[7] Francisca de la Madre de Dios to P. Jerónimo de San José, in 'Información sobre la vida y milagros de san Juan de la Cruz para su beatificación', National Library of Spain, MS 12738, fol. 1461.

platform for endless ramifications—but like an oasis, an ecosystem, where there is abundant variety in symbiotic dependence. So, having begun with a cry, 'Where are you?', the poet turns to creation for news on where the Beloved might be:

> You woodlands and dense forests,
> planted by the hand of the Beloved!
> Fields fresh with green,
> jewelled with flowers,
> say if he has passed your way. (4)

John's commentary on this stanza brings a puzzling change of pace. Up till now, the poem has been an impatient quest for the Bridegroom, yet here in his commentary the author gets distracted, delighting in the variety of things, 'delightful woods … chock-full with living things': the elements of earth, water, air, fire, each a natural habitat for 'innumerable animals and plants and different fish, and a great variety of birds'. John emphasizes the play of contrasts in the world: 'variety', 'diversity' (4.2). All this he sees as created and held in being by, and consequently as evidence of, the Beloved.

Perhaps, then, John's delight in the world, far from being a distraction, is showing his awareness that here, in this interplay of nature, the nurturing hand of the Beloved—of the Bridegroom whom the bride seeks—can be seen working. In this rich multiplicity, he is displayed. An eyewitness account of John of the Cross at prayer suggests just such an awareness: 'He would give himself to prayer and be looking at the rivers and springs, the sky, the plants, in which he said one could see the trace of God'.[8]

Another of John's confrères has this to say about his delight in the harmony of things: at night John would go outside, and sometimes,

> … take me along with him, and then he would talk about the beauty of the sky and the light of so many stars, and he would say how, even though so many, they were as different in kind one from another as a horse from a lion![9]

We almost find this dialogue transposed on to the page of the *Canticle,* commenting on stanza 4, 'fields fresh with green':

[8] Testimony of Fr Jerónimo de la Cruz, companion of John de la Cruz, in Beas de Segura, Vatican Library, MS Vaticano 2862, fol. 8.
[9] Testimony of Juan de Santa Ana, National Library of Spain, MS 8568, fol. 407.

> Such is contemplation of the heavens. She calls them *fields fresh with green*, because what is created there is unfailingly fresh, and doesn't break off or wither away with time …. And this gaze at the sky sees too all the variety of beautiful stars and other heavenly planets. (4.4)

Contemplation in faith has enabled John to see the beauty of the cosmos as God sees it, to participate in God's way of seeing the world in its truth.

> In living contemplation and knowledge of creatures, the soul comes to see such abundant graciousness and power and beauty with which God has endowed them, that creation appears clothed with wonderful beauty and natural strength, super-derived and communicated from that infinite supernatural beauty of the face of God, whose gaze clothes the earth and all the heavens with beauty and joy. (6.1)

Respondencia

A term John employs to express the interconnectedness of things is *respondencia*. In all of John's corpus, the word occurs only in the *Canticle*, and it is characteristic of a writing that sees reality as a symphony, multifaceted, majestically beautiful and interdependent. So begins the commentary on stanza 5, creation's answer to the poet's plea for news of the Beloved.

> God created all things swiftly and with great ease, and in them he left some trace of who he is, not only giving them being from nothing, but indeed endowing them with countless graces and qualities, rendering them beautiful with wonderful order and unfailing interdependence, *respondencia*. (5.1)[10]

Respondencia—interdependence or interrespondence, one thing answering another: this evidently spoke to John's soul.

The term recurs in the commentary on stanzas 14–15, that litany of praise composed in Toledo. In the encounter with Christ, all creation becomes like music, a symphony, a delicate fugue, in which no element is dispensable. The Beloved is 'silent music', in whom the soul perceives the interplay and harmony of creatures, all of them endowed with a certain *respondencia,* all answering God, 'each in its way giving voice to that which in it is God', 'a sublime harmony, a concert which surpasses all the melodies of the universe'. Here, the cosmos, which exists because it is wanted, responds by being itself, and so showing forth the

[10] I am adopting here the Segovia manuscript's reading.

God who wills it to be. The Beloved himself is creation's music, *musica callada,* 'the sweetness of music and the stillness of silence' (14.25).

Respondencia is there again in the final stanzas of the *Canticle,* where the bride gives words to her hope: that she should love God with God's own love (first redaction, 37.1–2). The penultimate stanza tells out that hope in a series of word-pictures:

> Soft breathing of the air,
> the nightingale's sweet song,
> the graceful woodland grove,
> in the tranquil night,
> a flame that burns and gives no pain.

John allegorizes these sublime images. They refer respectively to love, the praise love evokes, a new recognition of creation, the contemplative gaze which makes this possible and, again, transformation in love. The third of these, the new recognition of creation, relates to the phrase, 'the graceful woodland grove' (*el soto y su donaire*). Here is the commentary:

> The soul also longs to see the gracefulness of the grove, which is the giftedness and wisdom and gracefulness which each creature has from God, and which they have in their relation to each other, as they give wise and fitting answer [*respondencia*] one to the other …. This is knowing creatures in a contemplative way. (first redaction, 38.8)

The summit of Christian life here involves perceiving how everything is connected. According to John, this is factual, empirical reality: things are interdependent because they are held in God. Recognising this truth, however, is not automatic. It is 'contemplative'. The next image of the poem describes this *via contemplativa*:

> *The tranquil night.* This *night* in which the soul longs to see these things is contemplation, because contemplation is dark, which is why it is also called mystical theology, which means a hidden, secret divine wisdom, in which, without the noise of words … as in the silence and quiet of the night, in darkness as to all that is sense-based and merely natural, God teaches the soul in a most hidden and secret way, without her knowing how. (first redaction, 38.9)

'In Him All Things Hold Together'

On the journey of self-emptying, the person adopted into Christ can be befriended by all creation. So in his 'Prayer of a Loving Soul', John rises to this declaration:

> You will not take from me, my God, what you once gave me in your only Son Jesus Christ, in whom you gave me all I desire; so I shall rejoice, for you will not delay if I do not fail to hope ….
>
> Mine are the heavens and mine is the earth; mine the peoples, the just are mine, and mine the sinners; the angels are mine, and the Mother of God, and all things are mine, and God himself is mine and for me, because Christ is mine and all for me.[11]

Now, the point is this: the centre of this connected universe, this cosmic ecosystem, is Christ. Accordingly the *Canticle* celebrates not only the harmony of creation, but also the fact that this harmony finds its rightness, its fullness, its reality, in Christ. Accordingly, the litany of praise—'My Beloved, the mountains …'—receives this commentary:

> *Mountains* are high, vast, beautiful, gracious, abundant in flowers and fragrance. These mountains, my Beloved is for me.
>
> The *solitary wooded valleys* are quiet and kind in their freshness and shade, full of sweet streams and all kinds of woodland and sweet birdsong which is a joy to see and a delight to hear, refreshing and restful in their solitude and silence. These valleys, my Beloved is for me. (14.6–7)

The rich harmony of our common home reflects, shows forth, 'is', Christ—'my Beloved is for me'. The key in which the silent music is played, its rhythm and form, is Christ. The *respondencia* (14.25), the interconnectedness of creation, derives from and inheres in Christ.

In *Spiritual Canticle*, 14–15, this Christ who sums up creation's beauty is more proclaimed than explained. Turning back, however, to stanza 5 which—in the progress of John's poem—is creation's answer to the poet's appeal for news of the Beloved, the true identity of creation is set forth with breathtaking theological perception. Has the cosmos news of my Beloved? The answer is:

> Pouring out a thousand graces
> He passed these groves in haste,
> and casting his eyes upon them
> the fair gaze of his face
> he left them clothed in beauty.

[11] John of the Cross, *Sayings of Light and Love*, n. 26.

God, who holds all in being, in its variety and interdependence, 'does all this in his wisdom, through which he created them, who is his Word, his only-begotten Son' (5.1).

A sketch, the fruit of a smile, flung out from a loving glance, creation is the artwork of the Son of God striding across chaos and causing beauty to be.

> 'God gazed upon all the things he had made, and they were very good' (Genesis 1:31). To gaze on them [as] very good was to make them very good in the Word, his Son ….
>
> … 'the splendour of his glory and the form [or *countenance*] of his substance' (Hebrews 1:3). (5.3–4)

The Father's countenance, his gaze, is his Son, and the fruit of that gaze has a Son-like logic: it pulses to the rhythm of the Logos, is homesick for the Logos. Hence creation itself is a preparatory work, a prelude to the principal act which is the 'incarnation of the Word and the mysteries of the Christian faith' (5.3).

The Son's coming in flesh responds to humanity's divine potential, written into it since its creation in him. In the Son's incarnation, humanity becomes itself, finds itself, and finds the key to its harmony with everything else:

> And not only did God communicate natural being and grace in gazing upon [the cosmos]; but further, with his Son's countenance alone did he clothe them with beauty, communicating supernatural being to them. This took place when the Son was made man, raising up humanity in the beauty of God, and, in consequence, raising up in God's beauty all creatures in him, having united himself with the nature of them all in man. (5.3)

It is as if the world had become a tired and bedraggled garden, all the plants and elements drooping, until Christ entered their fabric, whereupon the plants lifted, refreshed by the dew and the sun. The dew is the incarnation, impelling from within. The sun is the resurrection, bathing in light and calling into the future.

> Hence the Son of God himself said: 'If I be raised up from the earth, I shall lift up all things to myself' (John 12:32). Just so, in this uplifting of the incarnation of his Son and of the glory of his resurrection according to the flesh, the Father made creatures beautiful not only in part, but we can say that he entirely clothed them in beauty and dignity. (5.4)

Christ Appears to St John of the Cross, *by Domenico Piola, c. 1675*

John's emphasis on incarnation-and-resurrection here as the pivot of salvation history is extraordinary for a theologian of sixteenth-century Spain. What is clear is that for him creation exists, beautifully, because it is held in the magnetic field of the risen Christ. And what Christ gives to the cosmos is his own 'beauty'. At root all is connected in a harmony which is radiant (*hermosura*) because all has been reached by Christ (incarnation-resurrection) and lifted in him into God.

The closest echo I know of this statement—that in the resurrection all nature attains a supernatural beauty—comes in *Laudato si'* itself, where we read that scripture (Colossians and 1 Corinthians 15) shows Christ,

> … risen and glorious, present throughout creation by his universal Lordship …. Thus, the creatures of this world no longer appear to us under merely natural guise because the risen One is mysteriously holding them to himself and directing them towards fullness as their end. The very flowers of the field and the birds which his human eyes contemplated and admired are now imbued with his radiant presence. (n. 100)

The point is that what this document of the magisterium affirms, John of the Cross tastes, knows from the inside, corroborates with the vitality of divinely gifted experience.

The Call to Serve

We have seen how John's *Spiritual Canticle* displays the connectedness of creation, its harmony and interdependence. An exploitative approach to the earth is blind to this; but it discloses itself to a contemplative

gaze, to receptive faith in the God who gives Godself. Further, John knows the source of this cosmic connectivity: all things exist in the Son; they pulse to the logic of the Logos. This potential for togetherness has been actualised in the Son's becoming creature, becoming human, and rising in created, divinised flesh. He, Christ, is the reason why all is connected, as both inner ground and ultimate goal.

There is one more occurrence of the word *respondencia* in the *Canticle*, which suggests how John's vision is also a call to serve. The commentary begins with a recognition which cuts the bride-disciple to the heart: she sees that life matters and that she is responsible. Success in life's project is not automatic. The urgency is powered, too, by a recognition of how little she has appreciated God's love in creating and redeeming her. This extraordinary divine love calls her love to give answer, calls for the '*response* of her love and willing' (1.1).

Here the *respondencia* is a task: a journey to be made, a beauty to be attained—that of the Son of God, who is at work to transform her. 'Rejoice with me Beloved, / let us meet in your beauty'. Divine adoption, given through baptism (23.6) has to claim the whole person, and so the whole Church:

> … in your beauty. This is the adoption of the children of God who will truly say to God what the Son himself said to the eternal Father … 'All mine are yours and yours are mine' (John 17:10). He, in essence, because Son by nature; us, by participation, being children of adoption. So he said this not only for himself, the head, but for his whole mystical body, which is the Church. (36.5)

The success of this project is not inevitable; it is a work of fine art, easily spoiled, but of supreme value if achieved. Early in the *Canticle* the bride had asked creation—the *woodlands and dense forests* (*espesuras*)—for news of her Beloved. Now, at the climax of the work, there is still somewhere to go, a deeper entry: 'deeper in the woodland let us go'. The *dense forest* here is not only creation, but the unfathomable wisdom of God's saving deeds. It is also the forest of suffering, which alone renders the person capable of humble union and contemplative perception. The experience of night, *noche oscura,* of being taken beyond our own security and competence, of poverty of spirit in which our self-assurance and self-worship are undone, constitutes this journey 'deeper in [*más adentro*]'.[12]

[12] St John of the Cross, *The Dark Night of the Soul*, 2.10.8.

Charity brings it about, drawing together our scattered self and our dispersive desires, and, in John's evocative expression, 'making the will whole'.[13]

> We are speaking of an attitude of the heart, one which approaches life with serene attentiveness, which is capable of being fully present to someone without thinking of what comes next, which accepts each moment as a gift from God to be lived to the full. Jesus taught us this attitude when he invited us to contemplate the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, or when seeing the rich young man and knowing his restlessness, 'he looked at him with love' (Mark 10:21). He was completely present to everyone and to everything, and in this way he showed us the way to overcome that unhealthy anxiety which makes us superficial, aggressive and compulsive consumers. (*Laudato si'*, n. 226)

The night—that which comes upon us, lived in faith and love—unclenches our fingers, and teaches delight through dispossession; reality held on open palms, like a butterfly which would be crushed if we closed our grip.[14]

A delightful episode in John's life recounts that a hare, frightened by a fire and by over-excited friars, ran to take refuge in the habit of Father John; and though the brethren twice pulled it out by the ears, the hare ran back, again and again, to its adopted guardian.[15] So, on the journey of self-emptying, the person adopted into Christ can be a shelter for creation. John prays thus:

> You will not take from me, my God, what you once gave me in your only Son Jesus Christ, in whom you gave me all I desire; so I shall rejoice, for you will not delay if I do not fail to hope …
>
> Mine are the heavens and mine is the earth; mine the peoples, the just are mine, and mine the sinners; the angels are mine, and the Mother of God, and all things are mine, and God himself is mine and for me, because Christ is mine and all for me.[16]

The connectedness sung in the *Canticle* is also, then, a task: a mission. 'The love of many will grow cold', the Lord warns (Matthew 24:12).

[13] St John of the Cross, *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, 2.6.1.
[14] See St John of the Cross, *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, 3.19–20.
[15] See testimony of Martín de la Asunción, in *Procesos de Beatificación y Canonización*, volume 5 of *Obras de San Juan de la Cruz* (Burgos: El Monte Carmelo, 1931), 97.
[16] John of the Cross, *Sayings of Light and Love*, 26.

Faced by this threat of global cooling, those who seek Christ in contemplative love exercise supreme care for our common home. There is a contemplative charity which will not feature in international agreements but which is crucial for global healing: it takes the world into Christ and reconnects it there. The *Canticle* has described a journey in which the symphonic harmony of all things—a multiple *respondencia*—finds its voice in the person's union of love with Christ. John affirms that this love, the love that has gone deeper into the forest of the cross, and been taken to the connective centre which is Christ, is of supreme value. 'For a little of this pure love is more precious to God and the soul, and does more good to the Church', and so to the cosmos, 'even though it seems to be achieving nothing, than all these other works put together …. In short, it was for this goal of love that we were created.' (29.2–3)

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MARY'S CRUCIFIXION

Magdalena Randal

SEVERAL TIMES IN MY LIFE Mary has stopped me in my tracks. When I reflect on the ways her spirit has reached out to me, I am astonished. She is far beyond the timid virgin she is sometimes depicted as being. Her courage has informed my way. She was there in each female role that stirred me as I studied cinema. She edified me in a classroom when I followed a course in Marian theology. She has always been a wry presence in churches for me, her true nature shining through in spite of the patronising ways she is glorified in the statues there. Recently, in the Lady Chapel at Campion Hall in Oxford, she stopped me dead.

There, all the times I had experienced Mary were brought together by way of a curious painting by Charles Mahoney—who was an atheist. Standing before the image he created of her, I was struck by the power of her resolute compassion. It is the kind of presence every human really seeks: the very presence Jesus walked around embodying and extolling, the presence that is peaceful accompaniment, no matter what. In my daily life I can model this in the same way the Jesuit who stood next to me as we looked at the picture did, by just being quiet and still next to someone. If I can keep modelling this accompaniment in quotidian moments, I stand a better chance of rising to the occasions when I am challenged to embrace my powerlessness, to be with someone who is suffering deeply in physical or emotional pain, without seeking to fix or save.

For this is Mary's crucifixion: the crucifixion that every person who is capable of mirroring another's despair—without taking it on—may experience. This is what distinguishes Mary. She was able to be present to horror without descending into it. After the crucifixion she quietly disappears—according to the Gospels. In the Marian theology course I took, my interest in Mary was ignited by the teacher, who admitted he was only teaching the course because nobody else was available. In typical Jesuit fashion, his obedience, he said, afforded him an unexpected appreciation of the world of Marian devotion. Mary may have disappeared quietly yet she keeps reappearing to people in resounding ways.

Now, when I am in any gathering, listening intently, I often remember the words from Luke's Gospel, 'And Mary kept all these things, and

pondered them in her heart' (2:19; KJV). It helps me stay focused if the topic or the speaker is not very engaging. It makes it easier to sustain my interest and presence in circumstances of trauma or mourning. I am better able to stay composed if a situation escalates in a positive or negative way.

The memory of seeing Mary, arms wide open and clothed in a blood-red dress, in the Lady Chapel also incites me to speak out. I have been fascinated by the way in which artists are so often prescient about how stories and symbols will be interpreted in a time after their actual creative expression. Did Charles Mahoney know how contemporary his Mary would be for someone today when he created this mural in the second half of the last century? Or was he simply being true to his method and style which sought to bring into the present, to make relevant, traditional and mythological themes?

At first glance the mural is a bucolic depiction of Mary in a garden, being crowned Queen of Mercy, with her arms open. Standing for some time before the painting I felt very strongly that this was a bold statement about how Mary suffered as much as her son during the crucifixion. It is a real reversal of the roles, right down to the people kneeling at the foot of her metaphorical cross. Instead of Mary Magdalene and the other women there are four men. All are kneeling, with their eyes cast up at Mary, who is painted larger than life. Above her are four angels who appear *busy*—busy coping with suffering, like Mary. At the very bottom of the image there are four little cherubs dressed as children.

Researching the painting I was keen to know about the actual people depicted in the work—especially those kneeling before Mary. It was intriguing to learn that the figures were indeed based on individuals who were in and around the chapel at the time of the artwork's creation.

One was a Jesuit who was also a prolific contributor to this very publication; another was the handyman who would have taken part in the upkeep of the chapel itself. In recognising the power of the symbolism Mahoney has achieved, I find a deeper appreciation for what Mary represents, as opposed to who, exactly, she may have been.

For me, Mahoney's mural speaks to our current culture of 'me too', though this example of a woman bearing suffering is the very opposite of the vociferous accusations that are currently serving to facilitate debate on and acknowledgement of women's suffering. Mary is enduring the crucifixion, not by directly experiencing the physical wounds created by nails driven through her body, but by feeling the death of her child as if there were a sword thrust into her heart. The mural at Campion Hall lends itself to the possibility that Mary is standing, arms wide open with all of us, as we are crucified daily by the events of our lives. After all, isn't Jesus anyone, everyone in a way?

Arms Wide Open with All of Us

As I continue on my journey, I see her, arms wide open in her blood-red dress, in the faces of people I meet; Valerie, who sells me apples each day and treats me with the loving-kindness of a good parent and a good friend, is one of my Marys. Charles Mahoney must also have felt Mary's encouraging embrace as he diligently worked on the murals. He left them unfinished after years of dedicated work. I imagine him still embraced by Mary. She is no longer static, holding her pose as a model for the artist's composition. She is free to appear before us as a spirit informing the actions of the human beings who can share her empathy for the human race.

Mary has been here with me as I struggle to put into words what the sight of her bearing the world's pain did for me. *I am not a timid virgin*, she whispers. *I am a concerned citizen*. Isn't that what makes a real mother, who knows how to be the spirit of 'me too', rather than just shouting it out? One Jewish tradition holds that Mary was the victim of rape by a Roman soldier. There is debate about exactly who that soldier was, and it is argued that the story is just a way to dismiss the idea of a virgin birth. But aren't we all victims of rape if it happens to one of us?

Charles Mahoney's depiction of Mary has made her more available to me in the world. It is very different from the myriad versions of her experience described elsewhere by men. From Maximus in the seventh century to Colm Tobin's book (now a Broadway play) men have responded to Mary's powerful, often silent, presence by creating lengthy

descriptions of what she might have thought or said during her experience with the Christ, her son. Some have described her as the first disciple of Christ; Mahoney presents her as his mirror image.

Silence beyond Representation

There is in Mary's thunderous silence a silence that brings to mind Native American culture. On a writing assignment some years ago I visited Cypress Hills, a site in the wilds of Saskatchewan in Canada. There, at Fort Walsh, a band of Assiniboine were massacred by wolf hunters. The Canadian government had erected a visitors' centre, where the event was described and presented in English, French and the Nakoda indigenous language. Yet I felt a communication far stronger than the carefully composed official account of the event.

At that site the land itself, Mother Earth, had a tremendous sorrow about it. All I could think was how silent so many indigenous people have been in the face of horrific abuse. This led me to explore the tradition of silence, and discover that it is not only a tactic or a way to cope with catastrophe, it is also a way to be soberly present in joy. Standing before an artwork such as the Virgo Pacis created by Georges Serraz for the Sacré Coeur in Paris, I see the rapture of motherhood. I also see the inevitability of pain and suffering for anyone who gets too attached to some person, place or thing.

There is a power beyond all representations of God that this silence honours. In a way it evokes a divine equality beyond human battles for justice. The story of Mary mirrors that of Jesus. An exercise in our Marian theology course, indeed, tasked me with arguing that Mary is more important than Jesus, for without her he would not be. It was a woman's 'yes' that allowed God to become human and truly enter into our suffering.

A Harder Crucifixion

I imagine a dialogue in the heavens, where Mary is quite happy existing in the time and space that must be a model for Eden. *Why do you want to emerge amongst those you created?,* she asks God, who seems to me like a restless bachelor in the way he has been depicted by the men who created the story of creation. *Well, ever since Adam, they just aren't getting it!* God might reply. *And whose fault is that? If you had done your work more carefully in the beginning, Adam would have been satisfied being alone with the knowledge and understanding of your presence. If he hadn't been 'lonely', as you like to have your scribes describe it, you wouldn't have had to disturb one of my girls out of a perfectly fine existence. Eve was never interested in being someone's 'partner'—in crime or anything else! She could have lived a perfectly wonderful life—enjoyed an infinite existence without having had to assuage someone else's discontent! Come to think of it, if you'd put her in the garden first she likely would have happily existed in those fine environs. In fact, I would have even said yes to that.* God remains silent as God does when God knows God has made an egregious error …. *Well, at least I can admit that I need you to go first so I can go next* …. So really, as the Divine parent, God arrives first as a human being via a woman, Mary.

Mary submitted herself to a crucifixion harder to bear than Christ's physical one: the way of suffering with someone, not suffering for everyone. We never see Jesus giving up a relationship that means a great deal to him. He's always headed back to his buddy the Father! Though he is betrayed by his followers—something many leaders experience—he never commits himself the way a parent does. He gives his life as an example to set the record straight for everyone who can't give up their own life because they are too fixated on it. But Mary gave up her life too, her life as extended in the flesh and blood and spirit of her offspring. So Mahoney's evocation of her tells me.

As I remember standing before the painting I am struck again by how much more courage it takes to care for the person who thinks he is gallant for taking a bullet than it does to take a bullet.

Magdalena Randal's work combines creative writing with religious contemplation. Some of her compositions are at work in various publications, including the Canadian Jesuit website IgNation.ca, while others are resting at https://magdalenarandalwrites.wordpress.com/.

THE CRUCIFIED PEOPLE

Óscar Romero and Martyrdom

Ambrose Mong

EL SALVADOR WAS THE NAME given to the city, and future nation, by the Spanish conquistador Pedro de Alvarado in honour of Jesus, the Saviour of the World. Mirroring the life and death of Jesus, many people in this country, especially the poor and indigenous populations, have been cruelly treated and died under the weight of colonial exploitation, social injustice and despotic rule. These victims who lived in poverty and died by violence are the 'crucified people'. Ignacio Ellacuría, one of the Jesuits murdered by the Salvadoran regime in 1989, taught that:

> This crucified people are the historical continuation of the servant of Yahweh, whom the sin of the world continues to deprive of any human features, which the powers of this world continue stripping of everything, wresting his life from him as long as he lives.[1]

Archbishop Óscar Romero (1917–1980) was the voice of the crucified people. In a nation torn by conflict and violence, Romero preached forgiveness and reconciliation, convinced that peace can only exist when there is justice and truth. Thus his death inspired the Church to redefine its understanding of martyrdom in modern times.

Be a Patriot. Kill a Priest

In the 1970s, groups of teachers, students, workers, priests, and religious brothers and sisters in El Salvador began to organize themselves and

A version of this article appears as chapter 5, 'The Crucified People: State Oppression in El Salvador', in Ambrose Mong, *Forgiven but Not Forgotten: The Past Is Not Past* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2020).

[1] Quoted in Jon Sobrino, 'Our World: Cruelty and Compassion', in *Rethinking Martyrdom*, edited by Teresa Okure, Jon Sobrino and Felix Wilfreld (London: SCM, 2003), 18. For a comprehensive study of the violence and its agents, see Americas Watch Committee, *El Salvador's Decade of Terror: Human Rights since the Assassination of Archbishop Romero* (New Haven: Yale U, 1991). See also José Lucia, 'The Anthropolical Function of Dialogue in Political Reconciliation Processes: Ethical Analysis of Ignacio Ellacuría's Thought on the 25th Anniversary of His Death (1989–2014)', *Ramon Llull Journal of Applied Ethics*, 5 (2014), 125–141.

demand a more equitable sharing of wealth and resources in the nation. In the rural areas, peasants demanded fairer wages and land distribution, and better living conditions. The main peasant groups, led by Catholic activists, were the Christian Peasants' Federation and the Union of Farmworkers. Fighting for social justice, they established bases for Christian communities, and pastoral and education programmes. Quite a few priests and sisters actively encouraged their flock to participate in these popular movements.

Progressive candidates were elected as president in 1972 and 1977, but they were unfairly disqualified by the existing regime amid substantial electoral fraud. Government-backed right-wing death squads began to assassinate opposition activists, and community and church leaders. These death squads consisted of heavily armed soldiers, police and national guardsmen in civilian clothes. Some of them were members of ORDEN, a paramilitary group founded by national guardsmen, and the notorious White Warriors Union. One of their slogans was: 'Be a Patriot. Kill a Priest', an assignment which they carried out frequently. These death squads sought to repress activists, divide the opposition, and create a 'culture of fear' by their random killings.[2]

Guerrillas in Perquin, El Salvador, 1990

[2] Anna L. Peterson, *Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion: Progressive Catholicism in El Salvador's Civil War* (New York: SUNY, 1996), 63, 33.

The Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation (FMLN), composed of students, teachers, factory and farm workers, and former government officials, was established in 1980 to fight against the regime by armed resistance. It was named after a militant attorney who led Salvadoran peasants during the 1920s and was killed in the *Matanza* ('Slaughter'), an uprising that was brutally suppressed by the military. The FMLN wanted to establish a democratic government which was inclusive and willing to accept the cooperation of different political organizations. They demanded that the perpetrators involved in kidnapping and murder be prosecuted and convicted before they would lay down their arms. In addition, the FMLN advocated land reform and a mixed economy.

Sadly, increased resistance from the FMLN followed by intensified state repression led to a fully fledged civil war. The El Salvador military was determined to eliminate the FMLN's sphere of influence with large-scale bombing, resulting in the displacement of a quarter of the nation's population. The civil war divided the country geographically into three different kinds of territory: government controlled, mostly in the cities; conflict zones, where the FMLN and the government army fought for control; and 'liberated zones', in the mountains and coastal areas, controlled by the FMLN.[3]

The United States government considered the FMLN a 'terrorist organization', because they were financially supported by the Soviet Union and had close connections to the socialist governments in Cuba and Nicaragua. In spite of documented gross human rights abuses, including the killing of US citizens, the Reagan and Bush administrations supported the government of El Salvador throughout the 1980s in the hope of eliminating the 'communist' FMLN.[4] Between 1980 and 1990, the Salvadoran government received over four billion dollars in US aid, military training and advice, which enabled the army to launch a brutal counter-insurgency war on the rural areas controlled by the FMLN. Aerial bombings and mortar attacks in the 1980s killed more civilians than guerrillas.[5] Óscar Romero wrote to President Carter pleading with him to stop supporting the murderous regime in his country.[6]

[3] Peterson, *Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion*, 36.

[4] The Reagan and Bush administrations called the military regime in El Salvador the 'good guys'. See 'Truth or Consequences in El Salvador, United Nations Truth Commission Human Rights Report, (Editorial)', *America*, 168/11 (1993), 3.

[5] Peterson, *Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion*, 35–36.

[6] See James R. Brockman, *Romero: A Life* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1989), 227.

Nonetheless, with around 13,000 regular fighters in addition to some 40,000 part-time militia members, mostly in the rural areas, the FMLN had developed into a formidable force. Widely supported by the civilian population and with good military strategies, the FMLN were able to maintain a stalemate with the government forces. Though relatively small in numbers and with inferior arms, the guerrillas were highly motivated compared with the government forces.

On 11 November 1989, the FMLN launched a nationwide assault and held the capital city, San Salvador, for weeks. Determined to crush the insurgency at all costs, the government ordered aerial bombing of urban areas and arrested scores of activists. Entering the campus of Central American University (UCA), the military killed six Jesuit priests, leading intellectuals in El Salvador who were vocal critics of the government, along with their two housekeepers.

The 1989 offensive proved to be a turning point in the history of El Salvador. The killing of the Jesuits and their two helpers at UCA sparked off international outrage and prompted the US government to support peaceful negotiation rather than training the Salvadoran army. Criticizing the US assistance to the military in El Salvador, Joseph A. O'Hare SJ, president of Fordham University in 1989, asked this question, 'Can we hand weapons to butchers and remain unstained by the blood of their innocent victims?'[7] The killing of the Jesuits underlines the Roman Catholic Church's deep involvement in the struggle for justice and peace on behalf of the poor in the nation. This was already evident from the brutal murder of Óscar Romero, which made a deep impact on the people and on the Jesuits who worked at UCA at that time.

Óscar Arnulfo Romero

Born on 15 August 1917 in Ciudad Barrios, El Salvador, Óscar Romero came from a humble family. Since his parents could not afford to send him to school after the age of twelve, he worked as an apprentice carpenter. Determined to become a priest, Romero entered the seminary at the age of fourteen and was ordained in 1942 when he was 25 years old. Realising the power of transistor radio, he attempted to reach out to the peasant farmers by broadcasting his Sunday homilies through radio stations. In 1970, he was made the auxiliary bishop in San Salvador and, in 1974, the bishop of Santiago de Maria.

[7] 'Is Justice Still a Long-Way off for Jesuit Martyrs in El Salvador?' *America* 222/6 (6 March 2020), 3.

A traditionalist, Romero supported the hierarchy and conformity to church teachings. He was against political activism that challenged the government. In fact, when news came from Rome that Romero had been chosen to succeed Archbishop Chávez, the government of El Salvador and the oligarchy were very pleased. They believed that Romero, being a conservative, would not threaten the status quo. Most clergy in the archdiocese, however, were disappointed; they thought that Romero was more keen to maintain good relations with the government than to serve the needs of the people. They were mistaken. Soon Romero proved his mettle by championing the rights of the poor and downtrodden. It was not a sudden change, but a gradual transformation as he began to appreciate the social reality in El Salvador.

After two years as bishop of Santiago de Maria, Romero came to understand that the social injustice existing in Salvadoran society was the root cause of all its evils. He witnessed children dying because their parents were too poor to seek medical help. Using the resources of his diocese, Romero began to help the poor. Over time, he realised that charity was not enough. To dismantle unjust economic and social structures there must be a conversion of hearts. Convinced that the Spirit was speaking through the suffering of the people, he defended activist priests fighting for the rights of the poor. When Rutilio Grande, a Jesuit working for the poor in rural areas, was murdered in 1977, he realised he had to take sides, but also be prepared to forgive.

At the funeral mass for Rutilio Grande and the two companions who were killed with him, Romero preached that the Church, inspired by love, is able to reject hatred:

> We want to tell you, murderous brothers, that we love you and that we ask of God repentance for your hearts, because the church is not able to hate, it has no enemies. Its only enemies are those who want to declare themselves so. But the church loves them: 'Father forgive them, they know not what they do'.[8]

Later Romero acknowledged that it had been the assassination of Rutilio Grande, his personal friend, which motivated him to put into practice the teachings of Vatican II and the Latin American bishops' conference at Medellín, calling for solidarity with the poor, marginalised and dispossessed.

[8] Quoted in Brockman, *Romero*, 10.

Though devastated by the brutal killing of Grande, Romero harboured no ill will or hatred, but continued to preach reconciliation:

> Let there be no animosity in our heart …. Let this Eucharist, which is a call to reconciliation with God and our brothers and sisters, leave in all hearts the satisfaction that we are Christians …. Let us pray to the Lord for forgiveness and for the due repentance of those who converted a town into a prison and a place of torment.[9]

As a man opposed to violence, Romero believed that those who kill by the sword will die by the sword. He pleaded for repentance from the perpetrators so that God's mercy and kindness would fall upon them like the rain and they would all become brothers and sisters.

Romero continued to bear witness to more atrocities committed by the military when he became the archbishop of El Salvador in 1977. Confronting President Carlos Humberto regarding human rights violations, he became the 'voice of the voiceless', one who offered his people faith and hope for a better life.[10] He defended progressive priests, religious sisters and lay persons who dared to denounce the atrocities of the authorities. Visiting churches in his archdiocese, especially those harassed by the military in the rural areas such as Chalatenango and Aguilares, Romero also made a passionate plea for the rights of his people to protest. During Sunday homilies in the cathedral, he denounced the brutality of the army and greed of the government as well as the oligarchy, those who controlled most of the country's natural resources.

An outspoken, vocal critic of the violent activities of right-wing groups—as well as the leftist guerrillas, Romero began to raise global awareness with reports on the murder, torture and kidnaps that were rampant throughout the country. Addressing soldiers and policemen, Romero cried: 'I beg you, I implore you, I order you … in the name of God, stop the repression!'[11] Unfortunately, his pleading fell on deaf ears. Yet he never gave up working towards peace and reconciliation in his country. He avoided partisan political positions and advised his priests to do the same. Viewing the country's division and the Church's involvement in the unrest as social rather than ideological, Romero

[9] Quoted in Brockman, *Romero*, 63.
[10] Jon Sobrino, *Witnesses to the Kingdom: The Martyrs of El Salvador and the Crucified Peoples* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2003), 15.
[11] Brockman, *Romero*, 242.

held that the conflict was not between the Church and the state, but between the state and the people. The Church stood with the people because the people are with the Church.[12]

Romero with Rutilio Grande (back right)

In order to restore trust and confidence between the Church and the state, Romero was prepared to engage in dialogue with the government. He wanted the authorities in El Salvador to account for the disappearances and end torture and arbitrary arrests, and afford due process to priests who had been deported.[13] In setting the conditions for a successful dialogue with the authorities, Romero wanted all sides to be present and all violence to cease, especially government repression of civilians. The subject for dialogue was the call to dismantle unjust structures that promote violence. Terrorists and those who supported violence would lay down their arms if they had a sincere desire for dialogue. Romero emphasized the critical importance of protecting the freedom of expression through various labour organizations—these would be the signs of the presence of democracy in El Salvador.

Romero's outspoken defence of the poor and victims of violence made him a target of violence himself. In the face of threats to his life, he declared his willingness to sacrifice himself for 'the redemption and the resurrection of El Salvador'.[14] Ironically, the president of El Salvador offered protection by providing Romero with security guards and an armoured car. Romero politely rejected this offer of protection, and wrote to the government in 1979: 'I wouldn't accept that protection, because I wanted to run the same risks that the people are running; it

[12] Peterson, *Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion*, 62.
[13] Brockman, *Romero*, 84.
[14] Quoted in Brockman, *Romero: A Life*, 248.

would be a pastoral anti-testimony if I were very secure, while my people are so insecure'.[15] Instead, Romero took the opportunity to ask the president for protection for the people, especially at military checkpoints and roadblocks. Like most people, Romero was afraid of violent death, but he never neglected his duty and responsibility to accompany his flock when they were in danger. Neither did he seek protection for his priests. He said:

> How sad it would be, in a country where such horrible murders are being committed, if there were no priests among the victims! A murdered priest is a testimonial of a church incarnate in the problems of the people.[16]

Persecution produces Christian hope for the Church.

Two weeks before his death, Romero had already forgiven his killers:

> If they kill me, I will rise again in the people of El Salvador …. You can tell them, if they succeed in killing me, that I pardon them, and I bless those who may carry out the killing. But I wish that they could realize that they are wasting their time. A bishop will die, but the church of God—the people—will never die.[17]

Just before his death, Romero uttered these prophetic words: 'Those who surrender to the service of the poor through love of Christ will live like the grain of wheat that dies …. The harvest comes because of the grain that dies'.[18] On 24 March 1980, while celebrating Mass in the chapel of Divine Providence Hospital, Óscar Romero was gunned down by an assassin belonging to a right-wing death squad.

In spite of prevailing violence, tens of thousands of mourners attended Romero's funeral, transforming the service into one of the biggest demonstrations the country had ever witnessed. Romero lives on in the lives and memories of his people, especially among the poor, with whom he identified. Even before his beatification, the people considered Romero a martyr.

[15] Quoted in Peterson, *Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion*, 62.
[16] Quoted in Jon Sobrino, *Archbishop Romero: Memories and Reflections* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1990), 38.
[17] Óscar Romero, *Voice of the Voiceless: The Four Pastoral Letters and Other Statements*, translated by Michael J. Walsh (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985), 51.
[18] Romero, *Voice of the Voiceless*, 191.

Violence against the Church

The repression of peasant movements and popular organizations leading to the killing of thousands of indigenous people has taken place in Latin America since colonial days. But persecution of the Church was a recent phenomenon, given the fact that Roman Catholicism was the dominant religion in the continent. This attack on the Church coincided with the Church's teaching on the preferential option for the poor in the 1960s and the establishment of base Christian communities. As a result, thousands of Catholic activists, clerics, religious and lay persons were imprisoned, tortured and murdered by the military for their involvement in fighting for justice and equitable distribution of land. Between 1971 and 1990, more than forty religious sisters and priests, and one archbishop, were killed in Latin America. Most of these murders took place in El Salvador.[19]

Archbishop Romero and the other activists were assassinated not for their faith but for denouncing the government and the elites in El Salvador, who were responsible for running a country that systematically exploited the poor for their own advantage. Romero said: 'Our church is persecuted precisely for its preferential option for the poor and for trying to incarnate itself in the interest of the poor'.[20] The victims were mostly the poor and those who defended them. The attack on the clergy led to widespread persecution of the Christian community.

The conservative establishment in El Salvador, including many bishops, insisted that this attack was committed in retaliation for Romero's political involvement. They blamed left-wing Catholics for getting involved in politics, thus incurring the wrath of the government and the military. Romero, they maintained, should stay out of politics and confine himself to the spiritual care of his flock. In fact, even sympathetic citizens in El Salvador interpreted the attack on the Church as politically motivated. The oligarchy colluding with the government and the military sought to crush all opposition, whether secular or religious. The growth of base Christian communities, led by the clergy and lay leaders, became a threat to the established order. Hence, some were brutally killed by death squads, not because they were Catholics

[19] Peterson, *Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion*, 63. For a review of works written about the violence in El Salvador, see Charles D. Brockett, 'El Salvador: The Long Journey from Violence to Reconciliation (Book Review)'. *Latin American Research Review*, 29/3 (1994), 174–187.
[20] Quoted in Peterson, *Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion*, 62.

but because they threatened the wealth and privilege of the elites. As such, can these Catholics, priests and laity, who were murdered because they stood by the side of the oppressed and downtrodden, be regarded as martyrs in the Church or of the Church?

Martyrdom

In the twentieth century in Latin America, many Christians who fought for justice died at the hands of their fellow Christians because of difference in political ideology. Can these be regarded as martyrs in the Catholic tradition? Óscar Romero and Rutilio Grande were killed by death squads in El Salvador—were they Christian martyrs or victims of political assassination? In a broad sense, they were martyrs who died struggling for justice on behalf of the poor against a ruthless military regime. Even though they may also have been baptized Catholics, the leaders who ordered the killings and those who carried out their orders were anything but Christian. Victims of repression in Latin America have inspired the Church to expand and redefine the meaning of Christian martyrdom.

Mural of Óscar Romero in San Salvador

In the light of the situation in Latin America, Karl Rahner argued that someone who dies fighting for a cause related to his or her Christian convictions can be regarded as a martyr, provided the death is not directly sought. Of course, not everybody who dies fighting on the Christian or Catholic side in a religious war is a martyr. But in Rahner's opinion, someone such as Romero, who died while fighting for social justice owing to his profound Christian convictions, should be considered

a martyr. Rahner regarded Christians who died struggling for justice and other Christian virtues as martyrs. His notion differs from the traditional understanding that a martyr is someone who died for his or her faith, such as the Christians in the early Church who were brought to court and sentenced to death. In favour of a legitimate political theology, Rahner called upon the Church to be aware of its responsibility to promote justice and peace in society.[21]

John Paul II in fact broadened the term 'martyr' in his 1995 encyclical *Ut unum sint*:

> In a theocentric vision, we Christians already have a common Martyrology. This also includes the martyrs of our own century, more numerous than one might think, and it shows how, at a profound level, God preserves communion among the baptized in the supreme demand of faith, manifested in the sacrifice of life itself.[22]

These martyrs included religious who were killed during the Spanish civil war and in the Nazi concentration camps. In Latin America, there were many who died as Christians protesting against the atrocities of military dictatorship. Faithful to the Gospel and church teaching on the preferential option for the poor, they stood for social justice and peace.

Romero himself taught that those who died fighting for justice were martyrs:

> For me those who are true martyrs in the popular sense … are true men who have gone to dangerous areas, where the White Warrior Union threatens, where someone can be pointed out and eventually killed as they killed Christ.[23]

Romero himself, in fact, was popularly venerated as a martyr and saint immediately after his death in 1980. Many people came to his tomb to pray and to lay flowers at the cathedral of the Holy Saviour in San Salvador. He was declared a martyr by Pope Francis on 3 February 2015 and canonized as a saint on 14 October 2018.

The situation in Latin America is problematic for declaring someone a martyr because Christians are killing Christians. A Catholic bishop

[21] Karl Rahner, 'Dimensions of Martrydom: A Plea for the Broadening of a Classical Concept', in *Martyrdom Today*, edited by Johannes Baptist Metz, Edward Schillebeeckx and Marcus Lefébure (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1983), 10.
[22] John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, n. 84.
[23] Quoted in Sobrino, 'Our World: Cruelty and Compassion', 18.

might be killed by soldiers ordered by officers, perhaps with the permission of the president of the country, all of whom were baptized Catholics! Thomas Aquinas taught that a martyr is simply a Christian killed by enemies trying to destroy the Catholic faith. Liberation theologians have expanded the definition of martyrdom to include those who die while defending the poor against the injustice of the state; such martyrdom occurs frequently in Latin America.

Leonardo Boff, a Brazilian theologian, views Jesus as the proto-martyr and emphasizes that it is not the suffering and death that makes a martyr but the cause.[24] The Gospel teaches: 'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven' (Matthew 5:10); 'you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles' (Matthew 10:18). Stressing the politically subversive nature of Christianity, Boff holds that early Christians were killed because they threatened the political-religious foundation of the Roman empire and its leaders. Stretching the concept of martyrdom, Boff thus asserts that modern-day martyrs died for their faith like Christians in earlier times:

> Not a few Christians … because of the Gospel, make a preferential option for the poor, for their liberation, for the defence of their rights. In the name of this option they stand up and denounce the exercise of domination and all forms of social dehumanisation. They may be persecuted, arrested, tortured and killed. They, too, are martyrs in the strict sense of the word.[25]

With this supposition, martyrs include those Christians who died for their faith in their effort to defend their brothers and sisters from injustice and exploitation.

Jon Sobrino writes that, in our time, the situation in Latin America has produced Christians who have died violently not 'on account of their witness to faith but because of the compassion that stems from their faith'.[26] They are 'Jesus martyrs' who suffered violence and death like the saviour. Strictly speaking they are not those 'who *die for Christ*' but 'those who *die like Jesus for the cause of Jesus*'; they are 'martyrs *in* the church but not martyrs *of* the church'.[27] These martyrs find their

[24] Leonardo Boff, 'Martyrdom: An Attempt at Systematic Reflection', in *Martyrdom Today*, 13.
[25] Boff, 'Martyrdom: An Attempt at Systematic Reflection', 13.
[26] Sobrino, 'Our World: Cruelty and Compassion', 17.
[27] Sobrino, 'Our World: Cruelty and Compassion', 19.

configuration in the life and death of Jesus. They are killed because of hatred, not for their faith but for their involvement with the lives of the poor and dispossessed, in mercy and compassion for God's people. They include clergy and religious, lay workers, peasants, students, lawyers and journalists. In one way or another they have exposed the unjust structures in society that have caused the suffering and death of many poor people. They are compassionate individuals who have fought against the social, economic and political elites determined to maintain their wealth and privileges at the expense of the poor.

The reality of El Salvador prompted Romero to preach about the significance of Rutilio Grande's death: 'What does the church offer in this universal fight for the liberation from all this misery?'[28] The liberation that the Church offers is exemplified by the ministry of Rutilio, working for and with the poor in solidarity against injustice and exploitation. Rutilio died because he was faithful to the social doctrine of the Church. Romero thanked the Society of Jesus for sending men such as Rutilio Grande to El Salvador and 'illuminating so many on the roads to Aguilares'.[29] The roads to Auguilares symbolize the El Salvador way of the cross, where suffering and death for justice, peace and righteousness will lead to the resurrection. Rutilio Grande was the first Salvadoran priest to be killed in the 1970s for political reasons. But he was regarded by many in the country as a martyr for justice.

Willing to sacrifice his life for his fellow Salvadorans, Romero has taught that martyrdom is a grace of God. He pardoned his enemies so that they would know that they were wasting their time—a bishop will die but the people of God, the Church, will never perish. The many martyrs in El Salvador manifest that the Church is persecuted for its fidelity to the teaching of Jesus Christ. This sad state of affairs, persecution and martyrdom, is also a glorious witness to the faith of the people in the nation which has the Saviour himself as its patron.

Peace and Justice

Romero was convinced that peace and non-violence could only be achieved when there is justice. In other words, violence is a product of unjust economic and social structures in society, which the bishops at

[28] Quoted in John S. Thiede, *Remembering Oscar Romero and the Martyrs of El Salvador: A Cloud of Witnesses* (Lanham: Lexington, 2017), 41.
[29] Quoted in Thiede, *Remembering Oscar Romero*, 42.

Medellín characterized as institutional violence. This institutionalised or legalised violence comes in the form of economic exploitation, political domination and military violation of human rights. The fact is: 'violence starts with the structures of violence'.[30]

The Maryknoll sisters Maura Clarke and Ita Ford, Maryknoll lay missionary Jean Donovan and Ursuline sister Dorothy Kazel, all from the United States, were raped, tortured and killed on 2 December 1980, the same year Romero was murdered. And yet, the United States continued to support the military government in El Salvador throughout the 1980s. On 11 December 1981, an armed battalion executed more than 800 civilians in a village called El Mozote—this event is now referred to as the El Mozote Massacre.[31] The deaths of priests and religious represent a tiny fraction of the more than 80,000 Salvadorans killed by government-backed death squads since 1979.[32] The victims were people working in both religious and secular organizations demanding land reform and better working conditions for the poor. We can consider these victims 'anonymous martyrs' because they died fighting for the kingdom of God.

In El Salvador, when people started to organize themselves to dismantle those structures of violence, the elites would retaliate with further violence with the help of the military. The wealthy class would do all they could to stop revolutionary change that threatened their lifestyle—the 'privileged few repressed the ones seeking change, so this violence of oppression became a violence of repression'.[33] Many of the oppressed believed the only way to bring about change is through the violence of revolution. But Ignacio Ellacuría insisted that the solution is to struggle against the first violence so as to prevent the violence of repression and revolutionary violence through negotiation, dialogue and reconciliation.

While the Church permits a 'legitimate defence' as a means to uphold human rights, it fervently promotes non-violence based on gospel teaching—turning the other cheek to an aggressor.[34] Not simply

[30] Thomas J. Gumbleton, 'If You Want Peace, Work for Justice', in *Romero's Legacy: The Call to Peace and Justice*, edited by Pilar Hogan Closkey (New York: Rowman nad Littlefield, 2007), 38.
[31] Christopher M. White, *The History of El Salvador* (Westport: Greenwood, 2008), 101–102. And see the short history at https://www.teachingcentralamerica.org/history-of-el-salvador.
[32] White, *History of El Salvador*, 109.
[33] Gumbleton, 'If You Want Peace, Work for Justice', 38.
[34] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2263 following.

a passive response, turning the other cheek requires moral strength and the conviction that peace is more powerful than violence. Unfortunately in El Salvador, there existed fanatical groups who believed in 'divinizing violence as the only source of justice'.[35] But with or without such responses, violence is not going to stop if there is vast disparity between the rich and the poor. There is no justice and no peace if widespread poverty prevails.

Back in 1967, Pope Paul VI wrote an encyclical entitled *Populorum progressio* (On the Development of Peoples) where he lamented:

> In certain regions a privileged minority enjoys the refinements of life, while the rest of the inhabitants, impoverished and disunited, 'are deprived of almost all possibility of acting on their own initiative and responsibility, and often subsist in living and working conditions unworthy of the human person'.[36]

Most wealthy faithful do not see structural injustice, nor do they feel obliged to reach out to those who are in need.

In 1971, Paul VI called a synod of bishops and produced a document entitled *Justice in the World*. This synod was of historical importance as it put the Church squarely on the side of those who fight against injustice—on the side of the poor, oppressed and voiceless. The synod placed the theme of social justice and concern at the centre of the Church's life. The document acknowledges the concept of structural or institutionalised injustice in society. Liberation in Christ includes all aspects of life and not merely inner spiritual transformation. Education is not just learning traditional values but 'conscientization and criticism of structures, standards and values obtaining in various societies' and 'social reform has been firmly included as an essential element of the pastoral ministry at all levels'.[37] Structural social injustice occurs when the community at the national or international level is organized in such a way that it works to the detriment of some individuals or groups, and favouring others in that society.

Liberation in Christ includes all aspects of life

John Paul II, too, highlighted how our social mechanisms can lead to poverty, which is the thrust of his teaching on structural sin: 'social,

[35] Brockman, *Romero*, 143–144.
[36] Paul VI, *Populorum progressio*, n. 9, quoting *Gaudium et spes*, n. 63.
[37] John F. X. Harriott, 'The Difficulty of Justice', *The Month*, 5 (January 1972), 9–18.

economic, and political structures, which are frequently agents of violence and injustice'.[38] This means no peace, no justice. Today, we have 20 per cent of people living in abject poverty, 60 per cent in some degree of poverty, and the remaining 20 per cent enjoying 87 per cent of the earth's resources and wealth.[39] This happens not because those living in the northern hemisphere are more intelligent or work harder than the poor people in other parts of the planet. It is because they have manipulated the economic order, the structures and systems of society, solely to their advantage and benefit.

According to Gustavo Gutiérrez, poverty is the result of how we have organized our society: not only the way we distribute our resources, but the way we think about and classify racial, cultural and gender issues. Poverty has many aspects, including economic, cultural, racial, social and gender-related. We now understand that poverty is not destined; it is artificial, a misfortune produced by injustice which can be avoided. Theologically speaking, the root of poverty is injustice, which is the refusal to love. The core of our Christian faith is love, and thus refusal to love is sin.[40] It is thus no wonder Oscar Romero said, 'Let us not tire of preaching love; it is the force that will overcome the world'.[41]

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[38] Final Declaration of Participants in the Symposium on *The Spiritual Resource of the Religions for Peace*', Rome, 16–18 January 2003.
[39] See United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019*, at https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2019.pdf
[40] Gustavo Gutiérrez, 'Liberation Theology for the Twenty-First Century', in *Romero's Legacy*, 50.
[41] Óscar Romero, *The Violence of Love* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004), 20.

MIRIAMIC PRESENCE IN PANDEMIC TIMES

Karen Eliasen

A THREESOME OF GREAT CHARACTERS dominates the second (Exodus) and fourth (Numbers) books of the Hebrew scriptures: Moses, Aaron and Miriam—although some might not immediately appreciate Miriam's place up there alongside Moses and Aaron. We have heard of Mosaic law and Aaronic priesthood, but who has ever heard of Miriamic anything? Even if such a thing is out there, is it scripturally kosher? And even if kosher, how is that at all relevant to us scripture readers today, caught up as we are in a twenty-first-century pandemic?

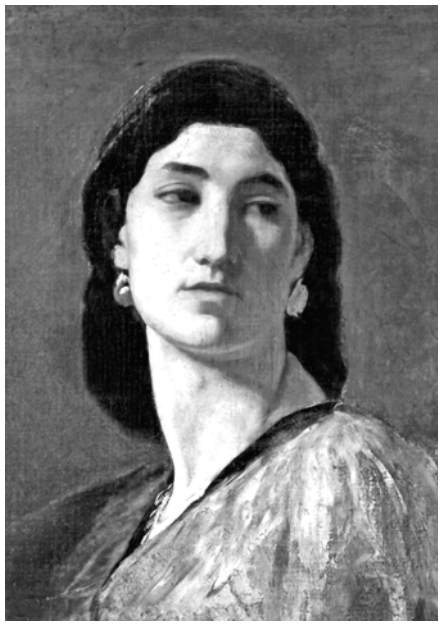
Well, I have heard of something called 'Miriamic presence', and I am convinced that such a concept is scripturally kosher … and I want to make a case for its relevance to us here and now. Like Miriam and her people, we too find ourselves a-wandering in a wilderness.

The most obvious scriptural text to turn to if we want to explore what Miriamic presence might encompass is Numbers 12, the story of Miriam's wilderness bout of leprosy, or more modernly put, her bout of 'a harmful skin disease'.[1] In Numbers 12 we find a gripping story about Moses, Aaron and Miriam, all hotly engaging with each other, and with God, in a complex mix of power struggle, emotional outbursts, disease, isolation—and even spitting. Add to this already compelling mix the timeless ur-issues of gender and prayer, and the juicy ingredients are all there to be squeezed for contemporary pandemic relevance.

So where have I heard of Miriamic presence? In the writings of one of the earliest and most influential feminist voices in Hebrew Scripture scholarship, Phyllis Trible.[2] There is a double-edged take on the word

This article was first published in *Thinking Faith* (1 July 2020).

[1] All scriptural texts are taken from the wonderfully clear 2002 translation, *The International Children's Bible*.
[2] Phyllis Trible, 'Bringing Miriam out of the Shadows', in *A Feminist Companion to Exodus to Deuteronomy, First Series*, edited by Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994). This book, and the second series, has many other interesting essays about Miriam.



Miriam, by Anselm Fueuerbach, 1862 (detail)

'presence' in Trible's usage as, on the one hand, Miriam's textual presence within the scriptures themselves and, on the other hand, her character's presence to her people within the wilderness story. There is far more to both these edges than first meets the eye, something that did not escape rabbinic readers through the centuries.

They creatively engaged in developing a number of traditions about Miriam, the heftiest of which involved a special well. Miriam's well was imagined to be like a portable rock with holes that acted as a spring when the people needed water. When Miriam died, the rabbis duly noted, they promptly—very promptly—ran out of water (Numbers 20:1–2): Miriam's living presence had been a source of water for the people in the direst of waterless conditions.

For me the question now looms, what does such a sense of a Miriamic presence have to do with what happens to Miriam in Numbers 12? What does it have to with her bout of 'a harmful skin disease' and her seven-day isolation outside the camp? The events of Numbers 12 take place at the very beginning of the wilderness wanderings, so Miriam and her people are facing an almost forty-year-long haul ahead. Perhaps there is some aspect of Miriam's experience of disease and isolation that prepares her for what is still to come. In surmising such a link, I am going to indulge in some old-fashioned intertextuality.

A reference to Miriam in Deuteronomy is the first text to visit intertextually, and it is a reference by virtue of which the relevance of Numbers 12 soars to a whole new level. The reference is one of a handful of exhortations from God to 'remember' (translating that theologically important Hebrew word *zakar*) a particular event. So, in Deuteronomy 24:9 we read: 'Remember what the Lord your God did to

Miriam on your way out of Egypt'. This verse appears right on the heels of a warning to be careful when someone has 'a harmful skin disease', so it may seem an obvious assumption to make that what God did to Miriam was punish her with this disease. Such an assumption on God's behalf about direct cause and effect rankled wildly down the rabbinic centuries: of course God punished Miriam, because in God's eyes she deserved to be punished. And it is still rankling away in feminist writings: of course God punished Miriam, because it is men telling a story about an outspoken woman—and for that reason she didn't deserve it.

The Numbers 12 text itself makes no 'punishment' claims about what God did to Miriam. What God did, as things heated up in Numbers 12, was speak, get angry and depart. Then, the cloud lifted, and the Hebrew text in its minimalist way simply notes: *hinei* (meaning 'behold') … 'Miriam had a harmful skin disease'. The relationship between cause and effect is left fully to the reader's imagination, and that makes me as a reader consider moving away from any 'punishment' assumptions.

In questioning the understanding that whatever God 'did to Miriam on her way out of Egypt' was punishment, it is worth taking note of the overall 'events-company' the Miriam-event keeps. Here is briefly what those other events, the ones God asks his people to remember, look like. The first comes in Exodus 20:8, that Israel is to remember the Sabbath; the next one is in Deuteronomy 5:15, where Israel is to remember that God brought them out of slavery in Egypt; next comes Deuteronomy 8:2, in which Israel is to remember the way God led them for forty years in the wilderness; then our Deuteronomy verse on remembering what God did to Miriam; next in Deuteronomy 32:7, Moses the man of God exhorts Israel to remember their past, chequered as it has been, all the way back to creation; and lastly, in Esther 9:28, the Jews are asked to remember to keep two days of Purim every year, in celebration of how Esther and Mordecai saved the Jews from the Persians. These texts all suggest an events-company of consolation and cause for celebration: how God was there with his people throughout everything, doing great deeds when needed. It is this kind of event that God insists his people remember—not angry punishments, but joyful sabbaths.

Miriam's inclusion in such company should jog a serious rethink about what happened to her in Numbers 12, and about the meaning of her seven-day isolation outside the camp in the wake of her disease. Can we even begin to imagine how on earth such an experience of crisis, emotional upheaval, disease and isolation could set Miriam on a

path towards a sabbath-like consolation? Taking the rabbis' tales of Miriam's well to heart can prod us a long way towards such a radical rethink. It is as if something happened to Miriam in Numbers 12, something that helped her get in deep touch with that 'presence' the future would require of her. A 'Miriamic presence' sent by God to his people in need, just as was the Mosaic law and the Aaronic priesthood.

Another intertextual example relating to Miriam's disease further supports such a move away from any 'punishment' mode of understanding her experience. Miriam's disease turns her 'white as snow', a metaphoric coupling found in two other places in the Hebrew Scriptures. The first is part of the story of Naaman's disease in 2 Kings 5, at the end of which the prophet Elisha curses his thieving servant Gehazi, leaving the man diseased and 'white as snow'. This is a case of explicit punishment, but it does not involve God, only an angry prophet and a thief. The second story does involve God, but not punishment. In Exodus 4:6, God makes Moses' hand diseased, turning it 'white as snow', and then proceeds to heal it. Moses is subjected to this brief experience of disease as he is trying to gear himself into returning to Egypt, and God presents it as 'proof' of what is possible. But Moses remains sceptical and anxious, making God angry. When God brings disease that is 'white as snow' on his servants—be it Moses or Miriam—tempers flare all round because the huge challenge ahead is a matter of life and death for God's people.

There are legitimate reasons why Miriam properly belongs with Moses and Aaron, not as a peripheral tag-on but as equally a servant of God. However those reasons were understood; they did not escape the final redactors of the Hebrew Scriptures. So memorable was this threesome in the ancient Hebrew imagination that it survived intact in two surprising places elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures: Micah and First Chronicles. In Micah 6:4, God reminds his people (whom he accuses of having tired of him): 'I brought you from the land of Egypt. I freed you from slavery. I sent Moses, Aaron and Miriam to you'.[3] Next to no women from Israel's past found their way into the prophetic collection as a whole. There is Sarah as mother in Isaiah 51:2; there is Rachel weeping for her children in Jeremiah 31:15; and then there is Miriam in Micah. Extraordinarily, refreshingly, the scriptural Miriam is not a mother—she is not even a wife.[4]

[3] Another rabbinic appreciation of Miriam from midrash was the conviction that Miriam, like Moses and Aaron, was in death kissed by God.

[4] An unbearable situation for all those rabbis commenting on Miriam down the centuries. They married her off to Caleb, he of spies fame (Numbers 13).

She comes to us as a woman complete unto herself in her relationship with God and with her people, her communal life-sustaining function not to birth sons but to do something else. To be something else, maybe—a Miriamic presence? This aspect of Miriam as someone who is not a mother nor a wife, but as someone sent by God along with Moses and Aaron, is reiterated in First Chronicles 6:3. Here the chronicler includes Miriam under the Hebrew *benei* (sons) somewhat oddly, because in genealogies female children are usually separated out as daughters: 'Amram's *benei* were Aaron, Moses and Miriam'. Amram is of course the grandson of one of the original twelve, Levi, and Miriam is the only female listed here in the whole of Levi's genealogy (in contrast to the chronicler's Judah-genealogy, where a good number of women are listed, although always as either mother or wife).

All of these background observations suggest that whatever it was about Miriam that made her so essential, and therefore memorable, to her people, she stood out in a way that she can stand out for us today. Imagine this outstanding Miriam still alive to us, imagine her not being punished for past behaviour or being sidelined in a power struggle; imagine her instead being prepared for what lies ahead. This Miriam knows a thing or two about speaking out truly in a crisis; knows a thing or two about disease and isolation; she knows a thing or two about drawing on God-given consolation in dire times; and she also knows that whatever lies ahead, it cannot be a return to Egypt. Knowing these things helps make her a life-sustaining presence for wilderness people, in possession of a portable well. We are now a wilderness people, and we need a 'Miriamic presence' to survive. Do we have a prayer for Miriam as she prepares for what lies ahead, as she prepares to become that presence? Moses had a terrific prayer for Miriam in Numbers 12:13, a prayer that is as short and simple and powerful as prayers come. It could be our prayer: 'God, please heal her!'[5]

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[5] It seems relevant that the God who heals announces himself as such in Exodus 15:26, where in the immediate aftermath of the Red Sea the lack of water or its bitterness threaten the people's survival. Some suggest that Miriam's name may derive from the Hebrew root for bitter. Then again, it may derive from an Egyptian word meaning beloved. Both are worth appropriating, I think.

HOW DID JESUS DO IT?

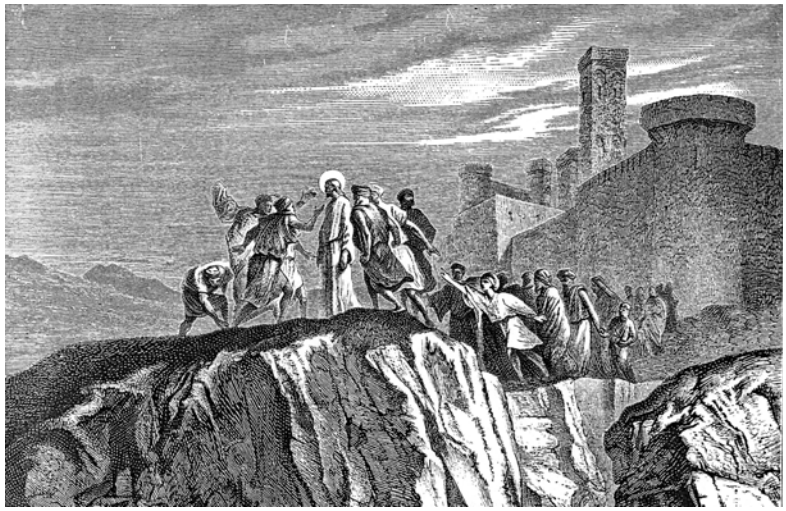
Eric Jensen

A note on Luke 4:30—'But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way'.

IN MY GIVING of the Spiritual Exercises I have often suggested a contemplation on Luke 4:16–30 as a helpful way of coming to know Jesus at the beginning of his ministry. Kenneth E. Bailey devotes a 23-page chapter to this passage in his *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes* to helping us understand why the people of Nazareth would react so strongly to Jesus' use of Isaiah 61:1–2.[1] It is the final verse in Luke's text, however, 'But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way', that had always left me wondering: how did Jesus do it? Bailey mentions John Wesley who, with 'nothing but his gentle presence … was able to melt murderous opposition to his preaching', and Charles 'Chinese' Gordon who … 'was cut from the same cloth', as examples of men who give us insight into what Jesus may have done.[2] I was given an insight from another source—our mid-sized, mixed-breed dog, Nimkii.

Nimkii, whose name means *thunder* in the Algonquin language, had come to us from Wikwemikong, the First Nations' reserve on Manitoulin Island in Georgian Bay, Lake Huron, and lived in the Red House, where Jesuits working at nearby Loyola House reside. She had a gift for knowing when someone needed her companionship and, if spiritual direction is best described as accompaniment, she was almost a spiritual director. She was gentle, but also very territorial. Once, when another Jesuit from Manitoulin Island was staying with his dog, also a female, in the hermitage behind our residence, Nimkii could scent the other dog's

[1] Kenneth E. Bailey,'The Inauguration of Jesus' Ministry: Luke 4:16–31' in *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2008), 147–169.
[2] Bailey, 'The Inauguration of Jesus' Ministry', 168.



Jesus Rejected at Nazareth, *by Alexandre Bida, 1873*

presence and was eager to be let out. I asked him through the almost closed door if it was all right to release her and he said, 'Yes, my dog is quite socialised'. On the reserve there are dogs running wild everywhere; his dog had learned how to deal with them, and so I opened the door. Nimkii, fangs bared, flew right in the face of the other dog, which just stood there: there was no fight, no flight. Nimkii calmed right down, and soon the two began to play together.

I had never before seen anything like this. I thought, if a dog could do such a thing, surely Jesus could also do so. He didn't resist by fighting back against the mob, nor did he try to escape by running. *He simply stood in his own truth.* The mob was somehow cowed and let him walk through its midst and go on his way. More than just his gentle presence, it was also his clear conviction of who he was, and in this he stood. He was not only Joseph's son, he was also the Anointed One, the Christ, on whom the Holy Spirit had rested at his baptism, and in the power of this Spirit he went on his way to complete his mission.

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THOMAS MERTON

Seeds and Fruits of Contemplation

Robert E. Doud

THOMAS MERTON (1915–1968) was a US Trappist monk who was also a writer, theologian, mystic, poet, social activist, critic of Church and culture, and scholar of comparative religion. Complex and versatile, Merton embodies the silence of the monk and the volubility of the literary celebrity. Indeed, silence, solitude and contemplation are the values and practices that lie at the heart of all that he teaches. They also lie at the heart of his prolific poetry-writing, which I shall be exploring here.

Merton was ordained to the priesthood in 1949, and his monastic name was Father Louis OCSO. His autobiography, entitled *The Seven Storey Mountain*, had been a bestseller in 1948, the year before his ordination, inspiring a surge of religious and monastic vocations as young men entered monasteries in search of inner peace and deeper meaning for their lives. The title of the book refers to the mountain of purgatory in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. But Merton later distanced himself from this book, as if its author had been someone who Merton no longer was. It is probable, as well, that Dante and his masterpiece had become to Merton relics of a medieval outlook that was no longer valid for the new Church and theology he came to espouse.

As time went on, Merton continued to grow in importance as an author. His *Seeds of Contemplation* appeared in 1949 and was considered a minor classic of the spiritual life. That book was later dismantled and reconstructed by Merton after the Second Vatican Council, reappearing with the title *New Seeds of Contemplation*. The new book was immediately recognised as a major work, as it is to this day and will be forever. In it Merton speaks not only to monastics and members of Roman Catholic religious orders, but all people as addressed by God and the offer of God's grace.

The Way, 60/3 (July 2021), 65–75

> Every moment and every event of man's life on earth plants something in his soul. For just as the wind carries thousands of winged seeds, so every moment carries with it germs of spirituality that come to rest imperceptibly in the minds and wills of men. Most of these unnumbered seeds perish and are lost, because men are not prepared to receive them; for such seeds as these cannot spring up anywhere except in the good soil of freedom, spontaneity, and love.[1]

And, again, later on, we read: 'The seeds that are planted in my liberty at every moment, by God's will, are the seeds of my own identity, my own reality, my own happiness, my own sanctity'.[2] The instantaneous, moment-by-moment instigations for self and personhood that are provided me by God on the trajectory of my own emergent existence are Merton's *germs of spirituality* or *seeds of contemplation*. They are seeds of life itself, seeds of life's continuation, seeds of identity, seeds of freedom and seeds of love, all at once.

The poems of Merton are symbols in that they embody the unimaginable that comes to expression, paradoxically, in the incarnate flesh of language. These poems as symbols mediate the immediate experience of God in one soul so as to pass on the same experience to other souls. This is *contemplata tradere* or *contemplata aliis tradere,* that is, to pass on the fruit of contemplation that incites and ignites in us as readers a contemplation of our own.[3] Merton wrote his poems as occasions for God to provide the seeds of purpose that initiate contemplation within us, and that enkindle the burning desire for our mystical union with God.

'The Trappist Cemetery—Gethsemani': Poetry and Death [4]

Gethsemane is the name of the biblical garden where Christ suffered his great psychological agony and cowardly betrayal by his beloved disciples. It is also the name of the remote monastery near Louisville, Kentucky, where monks of the strictest and most ascetical observance spend lives of prayer, work, fasting, keeping night vigils and forgetting

[1] Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions, 1972), 14.
[2] Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 33.
[3] See Anne E. Carr, *A Search for Wisdom and Spirit: Thomas Merton's Theology of the Self* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1988), 146; '*contemplata tradere*: that his vocation requires that he share with others, through his writing, what he has learned'.
[4] Thomas Merton, 'The Trappist Cemetery—Gethsemani', in *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1977), 116–118.

The cemetery at Gethsemani Abbey

the world. It is a joy to the monk also to think that the world has forgotten him. In the monastery's cemetery, 'The simple crosses are content to hide your characters'.

The monk's vocation is to lead a hidden life: a life that is hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:2–3). The dead monks in their graves await the resurrection of Christ and of themselves. They are still part of the monastery, its community, its prayer and its quiet work. The monks are like people on a journey:

> And we, the mariners, and travellers,
> The wide-eyed immigrants,
>
> Praying and sweating in our steerage cabins,
> Lie still and count with love the measured bells
> That tell the deep-sea leagues until your harbor.

In this poem, the whole monastery is like a cemetery, where men who are dead to this world await the joy of the resurrection. At night, they lie on their cots and count with love the moment-by-moment toll of the monastery bells. Even as anchored in the stability of the monastery, the monks are on a pilgrim path as mariners, travellers and immigrants.

One might grimly state that all poetry is on some level concerned with death—with extremity and the end of life, the brevity of life and the passing away of joys and pleasures. The impermanence and ephemerality of worldly satisfactions is very often lamented even as they may be

praised and savoured. Here the future of the monk, awake at night in his cell, is known to be the grave that will be crowned with a tiny cross. The monk's awareness, his humility and compunction, are based in this realisation.

'Night-Flowering Cactus': The True Self [5]

'Night-Flowering Cactus' is perhaps the most interior and central poem Merton wrote, containing the idea that serves as the core and fulcrum for all of his poetry.[6] Night is a special time for Merton: the time of precious hiddenness, solitude and contemplation. It is the time when nature quietens down and grace takes over, flowing abundantly into the mystical soul, when the soul is bathed intimately in indolent bliss and receptive dilation. This poem expresses and embraces the passion, even sublimated sexual passion, of the night, and transforms this passion into a yearning for the virginal soil of God: 'I am the extreme purity of virginal thirst'.[7]

Pushing its way up and out of the hard and spiny skin of the cereus cactus, this most lovely and delicate flower blossoms in the night and holds its bloom for only one night a year. The splendid blossom then withers away into the warmth and light of sunrise. It is too shy to remain alive any longer. Its appearance in the night is a great gift to the universe: 'There is no reply to my munificence'. The flower's only feeling is one of its own private dignity, expansive generosity and hidden importance.

> I know my time, which is obscure, silent and brief
> For I am present without warning one night only.[8]

The shy, fragile and only briefly appearing cactus bloom is a symbol for the true self, which is also like the shy deer that appears briefly at the edge of the forest elsewhere in Merton's writing.[9] The true self is the real self who hides behind the false self, the shell of deceptions and delusions that we show brashly and defensively to the world. Meanwhile,

[5] Thomas Merton, 'Night-Flowering Cactus', *Collected Poems*, 351.
[6] See Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, translated by Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 160; 'Every great poet creates his poetry out of one single poetic statement only'. And then, 'The poet's statement remains unspoken'. Every poem a true poet writes approaches this unspoken inner poem in some way.
[7] Merton, 'Night-Flowering Cactus', 352.
[8] Merton, 'Night-Flowering Cactus', 352.
[9] See Carr, *Search for Wisdom and Spirit*, 41; and George Kilcourse, 'A Shy Wild Deer: The "True Self" in Thomas Merton's Poetry', *The Merton Annual*, 16 (2003), 97–109.

the true self thrives as it hides inside us in a permanent, but often unconscious, state of contemplation. Many people never get to know their own inner potentially authentic true self, or even know that they have a true self hiding within them. As we grow in prayer and self-realisation, the false self loses power and the true self blossoms like the pure flower of the night-flowering cereus cactus.

In her book on Merton, *The Wisdom and Spirit of Thomas Merton*, Anne Carr singles out this salient quotation:

> All we can do with any spiritual discipline is produce within ourselves something of the silence, the humility, the detachment, the purity of heart, and the indifference which are required if the inner self is to make some shy, unpredictable manifestation of [its] presence.[10]

Cables to the Ace: *A Prayer that Absorbs Everything* [11]

Cables to the Ace (1968) is a manic, excessive, self-indulgent and wildly meandering poem that tries to take in more data than it could ever hope to assimilate. Its unity is not in expansive inclusion or in its power of organization. Its unity and power lie in the focus the poem manages to maintain on the hidden Christ and on the true hidden self who descries Christ's presence in all things, in spite of the overwhelming details and distractions the poem presents. The true self at the summit of the soul is the 'ace of freedoms'.[12]

Picture Merton on a plane flying off to a conference or retreat somewhere, hearing crackling messages come over the cabin radio, as the pilot communicates with the tower before takeoff:

> I am about to make my home
> In the bell's summit
> Set my mind a thousand feet high
> On the ace of songs
> In a mood of needles and random lights
> To purify
> The quick magnetic sodas of the skin[13]

[10] Thomas Merton, *The Inner Experience: Notes on Contemplation*, edited by William H. Shannon (New York: HarperOne, 2004), 6. Originally published in *Cistercian Studies* (1983) and quoted in Carr, *Search for Wisdom and Spirit*, 41.
[11] Thomas Merton, *Cables to the Ace*, in *Collected Poems*, 396–454.
[12] Merton, *Cables to the Ace*, 454.
[13] Merton, *Cables to the Ace*, 453.

The bell is a central and recurring symbol in the poetry of Merton. It represents the monastery, and its voice calls the monks to prayer and to other exercises; in the monastery, the bell is the voice of God. Like the airport, the monastery chapel has a tower, and the pilot is the ace who keeps constant contact with the tower. The bell might also stand for the summit of the soul, the high point of the true self. About to fly high in the sky, 'needles' suggest excitement, perhaps rain hitting the windows; dots and smears of 'random lights' surround the plane. The outer or empirical, world-experiencing self is a skin that takes in the stimuli touching the epithelium. Something like purification is taking place as the moment of ascent approaches.

Scattered, garbled, fragmented, the cables may be read at length as prayers addressed to the Ace, Christ, as the heroic pilot of our lives. The cables offer as prayers all the fevered contents of a mind, memory, imagination and consciousness. The themes and topics of the poems undergo many vagaries and transmutations. The last of these is prayer itself, a prayer that absorbs everything at once: frustration, distraction, resistance and excitement. This ocean of garbled words fails to express what the words intend to mean. But, Jesus is the Ace, the emergent listener. The impression left behind is one of self-parody (humility) and world-parody (solitude). In stanza 80, Jesus finally approaches through the chaos and jumble of electronic messages:

> Slowly slowly
> Comes Christ through the garden
> Speaking to the sacred trees …[14]

'In Silence': Everything Is on Fire [15]

In *Cables to the Ace* the consciousness of Merton is global and universal. In this poem, which appears in *The Strange Islands* (1957), his world is the monastery only, 'the stones of the wall'.

But eventually Merton tells us,

> … The whole
> World is secretly on fire. The stones
> Burn …

[14] Merton, *Cables to the Ace*, 449.
[15] Thomas Merton, 'In Silence', *Collected Poems*, 280–281.

We may begin to think that this fire is one of temptation, worldliness and self-destructive delusion. But perhaps Merton is talking about a different kind of fire: not the fire of worldly distraction but an unquenchable spiritual fire, the fire of yearning for God with an ever-increasing intensity.

This fire is the soul's burning in the mystic, and the mystic's realisation that all creation yearns and groans with him for an ointment that salves only as it keeps burning. Everything that is, is holy. Reality burns with holiness. The whole world is mystically on fire, and in the burning itself we find its only relief. The asceticism of the monastery is sustainable only because of the consolation in the intensity of its prayer. Even the stones are on fire. The very silence we seek is on fire. In silence the true self seeks itself, that is, the true self seeks the self it is in permanent mystical union with God. The stones of the monastery walls bid us to risk passing through the fire in order to reach the condition of silence. The silence Merton talks about poetically is the one in which he dwells, the richest and most complete of all human experiences.

The very stones of our planet call out to us for a response that involves our self-realisation. To hear and obey the stones is to find the true self within ourselves. The stones conspire to encourage our ascent to truth. There is nothing in nature that does not share in the aspiration to receive and reverence God's grace. Merton retrieves from the contemplative and monastic tradition the idea of the true self that God is constantly trying to create within us: a self which involves cooperation and co-creation by our own freedom. 'Hidden with Christ in God', the true self buds and blossoms into the outer self as salt to the earth and light to the world.[16] God acts in us persuasively and moves us to a decision that involves and increases our personal autonomy. We learn to live, accordingly, by the ancient and ever valid axiom: 'The glory of God is man (and woman) fully alive'.[17]

The true self that God is constantly trying to create within us

'Freedom as Experience': The Love of the Trinity [18]

In 'Freedom as Experience', Merton connects the endless and abundant love of the Trinity with the idea of infinite freedom. The inference for

[16] Thomas Merton, *The New Man* (New York: Bantam, 1981 [1962]), 24.
[17] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4. 20. 7.
[18] Thomas Merton, 'Freedom as Experience', in *Collected Poems*, 186–187.

us to draw as human intellects is that our involvement with the Trinity grants us boundless liberty, and not restricting laws and obligations. He works on the paradox between law and freedom, and, with the help and consideration of love, he makes liberty into the ultimate law. Our ability to love can only be as great as our freedom to love. Thus, involvement with the Trinity is the ultimately liberating experience.

> Compared with Love, Your Triune Law,
> All the inexorable stars are anarchists:
> Yet they are bounded by love and Love is infinitely free.

'The Fall' and 'Tao': Negative Theology [19]

Negative or apophatic theology is the theology that takes account of the failure of thought ever to adequately express or represent the transcendent nature of divine reality. It is often associated with the writing of St John of the Cross or Meister Eckhart. Such theology contemplates the virgin point, or *point vierge*: the timeless moment just before a person is created, when that person is still nothingness, is yet radically one with the creator, and is yet to appear independently as a creature. Mysticism often involves the desire to retrieve and to re-experience this state of primal union with God as a blessed condition. Merton expresses his aspiration to reinstate his primal state of precreatedness, or primal *namelessness*, 'The Fall':

> There is no place where in you a paradise that is no place
> and there
> You do not enter except without a story.
>
> To enter there is to become unnameable.

To return to this pre-primal state is paradise. To live as we do in this world and in our created existence is to live in *the fall*, that is, in the state of original sin and its attendant circumstances. Merton enjoys the dark and empty rhetoric of negative theology as well as its paradoxical ability to express what is in principle ineffable. Such expression cannot be literal, and must resort to poetry.

Merton comes into his own and finds himself and his voice in translating the poetry of Chuang Tzu (Zwangse). The supreme mystical

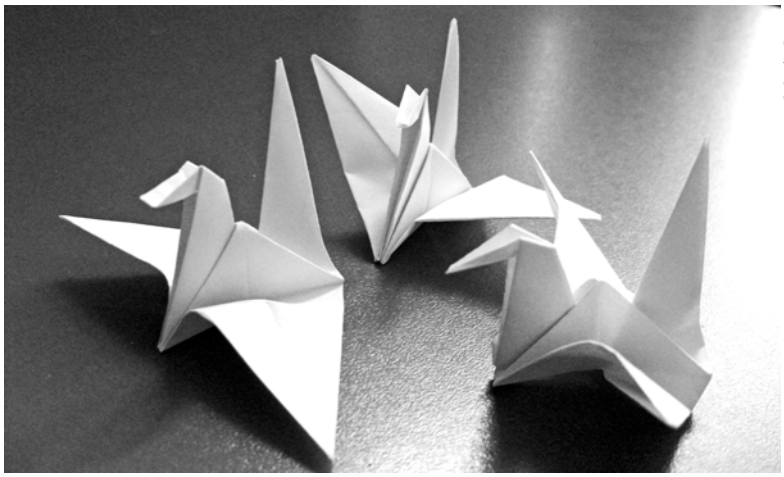
[19] Thomas Merton, 'The Fall' and 'The Tao', in *Collected Poems*, 354–355 and 901.

reality is the ineffable principle that cannot be seen, touched or known. Yet, the *Tao*, or the *Way*, knows us very well and is even benevolent towards us in some transcendent way. It hovers over us and abides within us like Heidegger's *Seyn* (being) or the Kabbala's *Ein Sof* (God before creation).[20]

> To name Tao
> Is to name no-thing ….
>
> Tao is a name
>
> That indicates
> Without defining.

'Paper Cranes': Peace [21]

A fine poem by Merton concerns the origami cranes that are made by the Japanese in great numbers as a symbol of peace. In the process of making these cranes the paper itself is symbol of the sacred. The very word for *paper* in Japanese is *kami*, which is also the word for one of the sacred and beautiful spirits that are present in nature, or even at times



[20] See Elliot R. Wolfson, *Heidegger and Kabbalah: Hidden Gnosis and the Path of Poiēsis* (Bloomington: Indiana U, 2019), 6: 'the Heideggerian *Seyn* and the kabbalistic *Ein Sof* each denote a presence that is always a nonpresence, a presence that can be present only by not being present, the mystery manifest in the nonmanifestation of the mystery, the nothing about which one cannot speak in contrast to there being nothing about which to speak'.
[21] Thomas Merton, 'Paper Cranes', in *Collected Poems*, 740.

for the supreme god. The occasion for writing the poem was the arrival of survivors of the Hiroshima bombing, who came to visit Gethsemani in 1964. 'A paper bird', the poem tells us, is 'stronger than a hawk' because it has no enemies and no cravings. Merton thinks of the child who folded this bird into its shape: the child's hand, heart and eye, all innocent and life-giving. The child's hand, 'Wins no wars and ends them all!'

'The Quickening of St John the Baptist': The Contemplative Vocation [22]

Merton's contemplative vocation was one he held in common with the other great contemplative orders of the Church. This he acknowledges in a poem called 'The Quickening of St John the Baptist.' The moment of quickening is when John first leaps or kicks within the womb of Elizabeth, cousin of Mary. In one opinion, *quickening* is the moment when a foetus first experiences independent life. Merton finds John the Baptist to be a hermit, an anchorite, and a patron for all monastics. And John the Baptist as foetus, hidden and enclosed in the womb of Elizabeth, is the quintessential contemplative:

> Your ecstasy is your apostolate,
> For whom to kick is *contemplata tradere*.
> Your joy is the vocation
> Of Mother Church's hidden children—
> Those who by vow lie buried in the cloister or the
> hermitage

There is, most likely, no better description of the monastic or contemplative vocation in so few words anywhere than this poem.

Seeds and Fruits of Contemplation

Merton went on to experiment with many forms of verse—humorous, esoteric, surrealistic, countercultural, the antipoem, Buddhist and Zen. Beneath it all is his quest for the true self and for expression of his own hidden inner poem. His work aims to plant the seeds of contemplation, seeks to pass on their fruits and to share, in pious frustration, his attempts to imagine the unimaginable.

[22] Thomas Merton, 'The Quickening of St John the Baptist', in *Collected Poems*, 199–202.

The central core and persisting goal of Merton's poetry and poetics became the matrix for the social vision and active engagement of his later life and poetry. Sr Thérèse Lentfoehr writes:

> This was Merton's central vision—the God-awareness at the center of one's being. And this was his essential theme, whether implicit in the earlier poems, or explicit—though veiled in metaphor—in the later ones. Nor does this mean to understress the areas of his social concern which in his later works were to become so widely inclusive. For these sprang from this contemplative center as their matrix—a continuum of experience that was world-encompassing as sieved through the creative mind of a man whose spiritual horizons were limitless.[23]

It is difficult or impossible, in delving into a few of Merton's poems, to do justice to the scope and complexity of the man's personality and work. Nevertheless, to touch near the nerve of his keen poetic sensibility and contemplative core may be enough to encourage the reader to enter, like a shy deer, more deeply into the dense forests of Merton's writing.

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[23] Thérèse Lentfoehr, *Words and Silence: On the Poetry of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1979), 142.

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HUMOUR AS *ANALOGIA ENTIS*

Riyako Cecilia Hikota

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH TODAY is widely regarded as suffering from an increasing internal polarisation which seriously threatens its unity and naturally hinders the efforts of evangelization as well.[1] On the one hand, there are 'conservative' believers, who tend to be suspicious of modern liberalism and postmodern relativism; on the other hand we have 'liberals', who are keen to adapt the Church to the contemporary world. The existence of these opposing positions itself has never been a problem for the unity of the Church. Rather, it can even be considered a strength, for the vision of catholicity precisely lies in maintaining opposing positions in balanced tension so they will correct each other without collapsing either. The Catholic Church has always grown organically while being enriched and strengthened by its internal diversity—maintained, somehow, in balanced tension. However, the recent polarisation is alarming because this distinctively Catholic tension, or what we might call 'the Catholic middle', seems to be growing weaker.

Exactly what do we need in our life of faith in order to maintain or strengthen a balanced attitude between opposing positions? The twentieth-century Swiss Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar once gave an unexpected but profound answer: *a sense of humour*! He even described humour as 'a mysterious but unmistakable charism inseparable from Catholic faith'.[2] The sense of humour Balthasar spoke of has nothing to do with an ability to make jokes or mere frivolity. Rather, he theologically connected a sense of humour with the balance

[1] For example, see *Polarization in the US Catholic Church: Naming the Wounds, Beginning to Heal*, edited by Mary Ellen Konieczny, Charles C. Camosy and Tricia C. Bruce (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2016).

[2] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church*, translated by Andrée Emery (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2007), 330. For an analysis of this statement and exploration of the significance of humour for life of faith, see Riyako Cecilia Hikota, 'A Charism Inseparable from Catholic Faith: Hans Urs von Balthasar on Humour', *The Way*, 56/2 (April 2017), 63–72.

that makes 'the Catholic … pliable, flexible, yielding, because [his] firmness is not based on himself and his own opinion but on God, who is the "ever-greater"'.[3] In short, Balthasar presented humour as an important quality which distinguishes genuine faith from fanaticism, because ultimately a Catholic sense of humour is about having a balanced view while loving both God and God's creation, or God and oneself. To put it differently, it is understood as an expression of love and humility.

It is also worth noting that Balthasar discussed humour in the same context where he discussed the theological importance of the Catholic 'And'—the conjunction linking '"faith and works", "nature and grace", "reason and revelation"'—in contrast to the *soli*, the 'only's, of the Reformation. In his words,

> Should not one rather say that this '*And*' is the expression of the creature's acknowledgement of God's sovereignty to be himself even outside of himself?—an acknowledgement that he, the Creator who grants freedom, is also free to be the Redeemer, 'through whom, with whom and in whom' we can praise the Father in the Holy Spirit?[4]

Since Balthasar limited his discussion to a few pages, we might be tempted to brush it aside as something random, but these references to God the 'ever-greater' and the Catholic 'And' seem to suggest that it is roughly based on the principle of *analogia entis* (the analogy of being), which was famously developed by Balthasar's mentor, the German Jesuit theologian Erich Przywara, as the formal principle of Catholic theology.

Przywara himself did not actually use the word 'humour' in his writings. But by combining insights drawn from them and from Balthasar, I would like to argue that a Catholic sense of humour can be regarded as a concrete expression of *analogia entis*, and thus genuinely 'a charism inseparable from Catholic faith', as Balthasar describes it.

Przywara's Principle of Analogia Entis

First of all, what is *analogia entis*?[5] Przywara by no means invented this principle. It has a long history, going back to the Thomistic tradition: 'in

[3] Balthasar, *Office of Peter*, 330.
[4] Balthasar, *Office of Peter*, 329.
[5] For Przywara's development of *analogia entis*, see Erich Przywara, *Polarity: A German Catholic's Interpretation of Religion*, translated by A. C. Bouquet (London: Oxford U, 1935); and Analogia Entis: *Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, translated by John R. Betz and David Bentley Hart (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014). For a concise exposition, see John R. Betz, 'Erich Przywara and the *Analogia Entis*: A Genealogical Diagnosis and Metaphysical Critique of Modernity', in *Christian Wisdom Meets Modernity*, edited by Kenneth Oakes (London: T. and T. Clark, 2016), 71–91.

fact Przywara calls St Thomas Aquinas *the* teacher of the *analogia entis*'.[6] It has probably been one of the most discussed—and misunderstood—ideas in the theological scholarship of our time. It has drawn attention not only from Catholic but also Protestant theologians, largely because of Karl Barth's harsh criticism: he called the principle of *analogia entis* (or what he thought it represented) 'the invention of Antichrist'.[7] Then Balthasar stepped in to argue that Barth had misunderstood the *analogia entis*; in fact, Barth's own christocentrism and *analogia entis* are not incompatible, because the analogy itself is nothing other than the provisional and abstract expression of the ultimate truth of the Incarnation.[8] A christocentric universe can be realized fully only with *analogia entis*, and not without it.[9]

The provisional and abstract expression of the ultimate truth of the Incarnation

Let us see first Przywara's own simple explanation of the principle:

> … *analogia entis*, as it is given its classical expression in the decree of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 (cap. 2): *Inter creatorem et creaturam non potest tanta similitude notari, quin inter eos major sit dissimilitudo notanda*—God and Creation are like one another, and yet even in this resemblance completely unlike.[10]

In short, *analogia entis* is the principle defining the analogical relation between God the Creator and God's creation, the world. As John R. Betz explains:

> … the 'analogy of being' basically means two things … on the one hand, that finite being is grounded in and derives its being from infinite being (herein lies the moment of proximity and similarity); on the other hand, that finite being cannot be equated with its ground, with infinite being, but remains both essentially distinct from it and infinitely transcended by it (therein lies the moment of distance and ultimate dissimilarity).[11]

In his later work, Przywara further clarifies his definition:

[6] Betz, 'Erich Przywara and the *Analogia Entis*', 77 (italics original).
[7] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, volume 1, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, translated by G. T. Thomson and Harold Knight (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1970 [1956]), viii.
[8] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, translated by Edward T. Oakes (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 147–148.
[9] See Betz, 'Erich Przywara and the *Analogia Entis*', 78.
[10] Przywara, *Polarity*, 31.
[11] Betz, 'Erich Przywara and the *Analogia Entis*', 77.

> *Analogia entis* is an abbreviated way of stating what the Fourth Lateran Council ... defined in 1215: that … 'one cannot note any similarity between creator and creature, however great, without being compelled to observe an ever greater dissimilarity between them' …. *analogia entis* signifies that what is decisive in 'every similarity, however great', is the 'ever greater dissimilarity'. It signifies, so to speak, God's dynamic transcendence', i.e., that God is ever above and beyond [*je-über-hinaus*] 'everything external to him and everything that can be conceived'.

The 'ever greater dissimilarity' between the creator and the creature is explained in terms of identity and non-identity between essence and existence, based on St Thomas Aquinas' conception: while essence and existence are identical in God, they are not identical in the creature. As a consequence, the creaturely being is characterized by 'becoming'. In Przywara's words,

> There remains then, in view of the undeniable character of 'becomingness' in the creaturely, which excludes the idea of an identity between essence and existence (for this would involve the complete reality of essence and so its incapacity to 'become' anything)—there remains then no other alternative than the completely *open tension* between essence and existence; essence as inward process essentially *within* existence, and yet never as complete essence, essentially over or above existence: essence *in-over* existence.[12]

In addition to characterizing creaturely being as 'becoming' understood as 'open tension between essence and existence', Przywara writes here that the essence is both *within and over* existence. Accordingly, because of the analogy of being between God and creation, Przywara further concludes that '*God in us and over us* is … the synonym of *analogia entis*'.[13] Here Przywara is applying his reading of St Augustine in order to reinterpret the Thomistic concept of analogy of being in terms of divine immanence and transcendence. As Betz writes:

> … though the basic structure of Przywara's *analogia entis* comes from Thomas, who lays bare the original structure of essence and existence, the rhythmic, beating heart of it comes from Przywara's reading of Augustine. Indeed, only by dint of this creative synthesis does it become clear how the *analogia entis* is the original dynamic of created being.[14]

[12] Przywara, *Polarity*, 32 (italics original).
[13] Przywara, *Polarity*, 33.
[14] Betz, 'Erich Przywara and the *Analogia Entis*', 86.

For Przywara, the *analogia entis* functions on two different levels: the level of the immanent tension between essence and existence within the creaturely being; and the level of the transcendent relation between the Creator and the creature, held in 'open tension'. We cannot reduce this principle to a simple definition. This would be precisely against the spirit of what Przywara is trying to do: the analogy here is presented—rather like 'open tension' or 'rhythm' themselves—as something dynamic, not static. The creaturely being is characterized by 'becoming', that is, as a process or dynamic movement, and ultimately as 'endless striving toward God', but such a dynamic process is made possible because of the '*essentially super-creaturely absolute fixed point … found within Deity*'.[15] It is also described as '"the unrest towards Deity" combining with "adoring rest in the presence of Deity", and the unrest of the "endless striving towards God" with the "endless striving in the presence of God", who Is and is ever greater'.[16]

God Creating Heaven and Earth, *by Jan Breughel the Younger, 1650*

[15] Przywara, *Polarity*, 38 (italics original).
[16] Przywara, *Polarity*, 55.

Applying the Principle

Since the way we think about the relation between God and God's creation affects everything in life, we can eventually say that the principle of *analogia entis* can be applied to everything. A sense of humour is no exception. Moreover, for Przywara, *analogia entis* understood in this way constitutes the basis not only for Catholic theology but also for all areas of Catholic spirituality, piety, ethics and civilisation. Przywara tried to present the *analogia entis* not only as an abstract principle of metaphysics but also as a basis for all kinds of Catholic ways of thinking and behaving; he conceived of the practical implications of *analogia entis* being ideally applied.

The creaturely attitude based on *analogia entis* is described as 'persistence amid process' and as 'a certain easy-goingness in the rhythm of life and work'.[17] And so Przywara located it as the 'Catholic middle position' between 'pure traditionalism' (simply resisting change) and 'pure dynamism' (simply being open to change). In his words,

> … therefore, the Catholic middle position of the *analogia entis* rules itself off from a pure traditionalism, so that for it the individual essence of the creaturely is ever in motion, so it also excludes a pure dynamism, in that this essence is also for it a persistence in the midst of process. The tranquil rhythm of this 'self-maintenance amid self-evolution' has, however, its deepest root in that this latter Catholic compromise is secured precisely by means of the reverent and humble consciousness of the relation of 'difference', where God is concerned.[18]

Balthasar's discussion of humour and the Catholic balance between opposed positions within the Church contains many echoes of Przywara and this 'Catholic middle position'. First of all, Balthasar describes the Catholic 'And' in terms recalling the principle of *analogia entis*, as 'the expression of the creature's acknowledgement of God's sovereignty to be himself even outside of himself'. While the *soli* of the Reformation ironically undermine the sovereignty of the Creator despite their contrary intentions—'forbidding God to be anything other than himself (man, for instance, if he should so wish)'—the Catholic 'And' as *analogia entis* can maintain both divine sovereignty and creaturely freedom

[17] Przywara, *Polarity*, 56–57.
[18] Przywara, *Polarity*, 55–56.

without collapsing either.[19] Further, in the same context, Balthasar calls the Catholic with a healthy sense of humour 'pliable, flexible, yielding, because [his] firmness is not based on himself and his own opinion but on God, who is the "ever-greater"'. He criticizes the extreme positions of humourless 'progressives' and 'integralists', which are simply different ways of naming the 'pure dynamism' and 'pure traditionalism' identified by Przywara.

For Balthasar, as for Przywara, *analogia entis* describes a 'balanced tension' or 'unity-in-tension' between opposing positions on different levels of immanence and transcendence. Further, as the fundamental principle defining the analogical relation between the Creator and the creature, *analogia entis* is meant to provide the basis not only for Catholic theology but also for all areas of Catholic spirituality and praxis. Therefore, it makes sense to consider the type of humour described by Balthasar in connection with the Catholic balance as one concrete expression of *analogia entis*.

Further, it is relevant to note that Przywara's analysis and development of *analogia entis* also present this principle as a basis of humility and love. Przywara writes,

> *Analogia entis* denotes… (1) the release of the creaturely being from all absolutizing by bringing it to the consciousness of a universal transitoriness in relation to a Deity who alone is Absolute; and therein also (2) the rending of the artificial barrier between creature and creature by bringing each and all to the consciousness of that common creatureliness transcending spatio-temporal limitations, which in God's presence is the common property of them all. [20]

On the one hand, *Analogia entis* is meant to make us humble because of the awareness of the dissimilarity between ourselves as creatures, who are finite and transitory, and the Creator, who is infinite and absolute. On the other hand, such a humility can lead us to the awareness of the common creatureliness of others, which can build the basis for community. Thus, *analogia entis* can also define the intercreaturely or interpersonal relationship in addition to the God–creation relationship, which makes it all the more relevant for a Catholic sense of humour, for it can also be expressed as a loving sense of humility.

[19] Balthasar, *Office of Peter*, 328–329.
[20] Pryzwara, *Polarity*, 63.

Keeping the Balance

What is the point of making a connection between *analogia entis* and sense of humour? We can note two implications, from both sides. First, by associating the principle of *analogia entis*, which sounds so abstract and metaphysical on the surface, with something so commonplace as a sense of humour, we can make *analogia entis* more relevant for our daily life of faith. Considering its enduring importance for Catholic theology and spirituality, it is meaningful to bring *analogia entis* out of the metaphysical and theoretical sphere and make it 'alive' in a concrete way. Secondly, from the perspective of humour itself, grounding it in such a central principle as *analogia entis* might enable a theological exploration of the significance of humour for faith to be further developed, as humour is not yet receiving the amount of serious attention it deserves in current theological scholarship.[21]

Going back to the alarming problem of polarisation in the Church today, it is vital to strengthen the 'Catholic middle position', which is characterized by holding a balanced tension between opposed positions with loving humility. Such a middle position, which really represents the Catholic 'And', is always necessary for the unity of the Church. For this purpose, I have to tried to show that such a balanced position is theologically supported by the Catholic principle of *analogia entis* and can be concretely expressed in a good sense of humour, which is, after all, an expression of loving humility of the creature who is meant to strive endlessly towards God while being in God's presence.

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[21] See Hikota, 'A Charism Inseparable from Catholic Faith', 63–64.

THE CONDITIONS OF CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY

Jakub Walczak

NOWADAYS, WE THINK ABOUT HOSPITALITY primarily in the context of social events. We reduce it to common feasting at one table, to the skill of welcoming guests or visitors. Sometimes we think more widely about recognising the rights of foreigners or some form of help for those in need. But even a cursory etymological analysis of the word, and a cursory analysis of what the Bible says about it, demonstrate that the social is only one of its dimensions, and probably not the most important. By reducing hospitality to a common meeting at the table, or to some form of philanthropy or humanitarianism, we get a shallow and distorted image, at least from a Christian perspective.

The Word 'Hospitality' and Its Etymology

Dictionaries alone are not adequate to reveal the depths of hospitality's meaning. Some definitions include: 'a friendly treatment of guests or strangers', and 'the act or practice of being hospitable'.[1] In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, for example, words such as *reception*, *entertainment*, *liberality* and *goodwill* occur among the synonyms associated with hospitality. We also learn that the word derives from the Latin *hospes*, meaning *guest*.

For a better understanding of hospitality, a good place to begin is Émile Benveniste's classic and comprehensive study of Indo-European etymology. According to him, the Latin *hospes* is an ancient compound word which consists of the elements **hosti-pet-s*, whose primary roots are *hostis* and *pot* or *pet*.[2] In order to understand their meaning and mutual etymological connections better, Benveniste suggests analysing these two roots separately: **potis* and *hostis*. **Potis*, in its simple aspect,

[1] *The Barnhart Dictionary of Etymology* (Bronx: H. W. Wilson, 1988); *Oxford English Dictionary*.

[2] Émile Benveniste, *Dictionary of Indo-European Concepts and Society*, translated by Elizabeth Palmer (Chicago: Hau, 2016), 62. Whenever an asterisk is used it shows that the Indo-European word is hypothetical; it has been constructed by linguistic scholars and there is no written evidence for its existence.

appears as 'master' or 'husband' in Sanskrit or in Greek. It is also present in compound words whose first element means the name of a social unit: for example *master of the house* or *master of the clan*. It designates someone who has power over something and is able to dispose of it. If the second component of **hosti-pet-s* means 'master', *hospes* literally signifies 'the guest-master'.[3]

This etymological understanding of hospitality accentuates the power the host has as a master: the authority to welcome or refuse, to include or exclude whomever he wishes. Analysing Kant's use of the German words *Wirtbarkeit* and *Hospitalität*, Jacques Derrida postulates a 'law of the household' whereby the master gives a welcome in his house, remains in his house and sets the rules of hospitality. The result of this is that there cannot be an unconditional welcome or an unconditional passage through the door into the house of the host.[4]

The roots *-pet-*, *pot-* and *-pt-*, however, originally related to personal identity. In the Indo-European linguistic family, these roots form the basis of a series of adjectives, signifying variously 'himself' and 'of himself'. Therefore **potis* relates not only to the master, but to the master who is 'eminently "himself"': the only one who matters, who assumes the personality and identity of the whole group: the only one who incarnates them in himself.[5] It demonstrates that the concept of hospitality is linguistically rooted in the notion of personal identity, and that the master who offers hospitality has to be the master 'at home', not just in the sense of a dwelling place, but in the sense that the master resides within his identity where he is 'at home', 'eminently himself'.[6]

The second root, *hostis*, also demonstrates ambiguity. Originally, like its Gothic counterpart *gasts*, it meant 'guest'. But while the Gothic word retained its original meaning, the Latin *hostis* changed from meaning 'guest' to 'enemy'. According to Benveniste, when communities evolved into large sovereign states, the intimate relations between people and clans, which had been the basis of *hostis* as guest, were replaced by abstract relations between impersonal states, and *hostis*, assuming a *hostile* flavour, was applied to the enemy.[7] The word *hostis* itself

[3] Benveniste, *Dictionary of Indo-European Concepts and Society*, 62–65.
[4] Jacques Derrida, 'Hostipitality', translated by Barry Stocker and Forbes Morlock, *Angelaki*, 5 (2000), 3–18, here 4.
[5] Benveniste, *Dictionary of Indo-European Concepts and Society*, 64, 61.
[6] Tracy McNulty, *The Hostess: Hospitality, Femininity, and the Expropriation of Identity* (Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota, 2006), x.
[7] Benveniste, *Dictionary of Indo-European Concepts and Society*, 65–66.

supposedly derives from a word for 'stranger', and hence we have both a benevolent stranger who is a guest and a hostile stranger who is an enemy.


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There is also an aspect of reciprocity associated with this word *hostis*. Benveniste shows that in ancient Rome the *hostis* was a foreigner who gained equal rights as a Roman citizen on the basis of a pact or contract and remained in a relation of *compensation* with the other: 'This recognition of rights implies a certain relation of reciprocity and supposes an agreement or compact'.[8] The bond of equality and reciprocity was established between them. *Hostis* always seems to involve the notion of reciprocity.

The above brief etymological analysis reveals the oxymoronic character of the term *hospitality*. On the one hand, it is defined by reciprocity, exchange and the openness of the host, who opens the door of his house and of his identity, and welcomes a guest who can sometimes be a foreigner, a stranger, someone without a name or completely unknown to the one who opens the door. On the other hand, *hospitality* is defined by power, mastery, the upholding and protection of one's own identity. Therefore, hospitality involves the giving of oneself to the other but also the preservation of clear boundaries between the self and the other.

Christian Hospitality

Hospitality is an essential component of the Judaeo–Christian tradition.[9] The practice of receiving a guest or a stranger graciously was something

[8] Benveniste, *Dictionary of Indo-European Concepts and Society*, 67.
[9] See Kerry Godfrey, 'Hospitality', in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* (Minnesota: Liturgical, 1993).

natural and well known during the period when the Old and the New Testaments were composed. The Greek word most often associated with hospitality in the New Testament and in Septuagint is *xenos*, which means *foreigner*, *stranger* or *enemy*.[10] In the story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus calls us to the moral heroism of loving strangers and enemies.

The verb used for extending hospitality is *xenizo*, which means to provide lodging, receive as a guest or entertain. It appears ten times in the New Testament: seven times in Acts, twice in 1 Peter and once in Hebrews. The meaning that the verb conveys most frequently is *to receive as a guest*: there are seven occurrences, six of which are in Acts. The frequency of these shows the importance of hospitality in early Christian communities.[11]

Abraham's Guests

The very first Biblical person who demonstrates a hospitable attitude towards others is Abraham, who receives the three messengers of God (Genesis 18: 1–16). His attitude towards the travellers can be considered a paradigm of hospitality.[12] Abraham is at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day; it is quite significant that the three travellers arrive to stay with him at the time least appropriate for hospitality. We can find three fundamental steps in Abraham's attitude: the look ('he looked up'), the run ('he ran … to meet them') and the welcoming ('and bowed down to the ground').[13] One action takes place directly after another. We know nothing about the travellers, and Abraham also has no information about them. However, it is he who approaches them and greets them first. He asks them neither for their names, nor where they come from, nor where they are going, nor for what purpose. He greets his guests without any questions. He bows down in deference to the visitors.

According to the archaeologist Roland de Vaux, 'Hospitality … is a necessity of life in the desert, but among the nomads this necessity has become a virtue, and a most highly esteemed one. The guest is sacred ….'[14]

[10] See John Koenig, 'Hospitality', in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1996).
[11] See Johann H. Friederich, 'Xenizo', in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991).
[12] See Claudio Monge, *Dieu hôte. Recherche historique et théologique sur les rituels de l'hospitalité* (Bucharest: Zeta, 2008), 373–386. It is worth noting that Abraham is an important figure in the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Islam and Christianity. In each of them he appears as a great example whom we should follow in our lives.
[13] Luigi Di Pinto, 'Abramo e lo straniero (Genesi 18,1–16). 2. L'ospitalità celebrata', *Rassegna di teologia*, 38/6(1997), 736–769, at 736.
[14] Roland De Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Social Institutions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), 10.

However, in the ancient Near East, hospitality was simply a gesture of service. The manner of greeting depended on the attitude of the host, and Abraham shows that the visitors have a human dignity in his eyes 'free from social hierarchies and ethnic maps'.[15] He demonstrates what is fundamental and crucial: to understand and to accept the other in his or her uniqueness, 'not to predetermine a stereotyped image or force him into a projection of what we are and what we would like him to be'.[16] Abraham sees three newcomers, and between hospitality and hostility he chooses hospitality. He is open and ready for dialogue and encounter.[17]

Since the guests remain unknown, they cannot have a name and it is impossible to call them by name. Despite the fact that there are three of them, Abraham turns to them and calls them, in the singular, *Adonai—my Lord*, *Sir*. He calls himself *your servant*, without revealing his name, and asking the newcomers not to go on and pass him by.[18] The Hebrew word *'ābar* (to pass) is used in the Bible in reference to God passing, appearing and revealing Godself. Its use here reflects how Abraham treats his guests.

Then Abraham moves on to the typical activities involved in receiving a guest: he offers them water to wash their feet and bread to eat, in a way that makes us think about how important certain values were for him. Another element is the tree in whose shade he invites them to rest and to wait for the meal.[19] Hospitality always costs something, and here it is not just about what is offered, but about its quality: we have the best flour and also meat to eat. Only the one who is the owner can give something to someone: Abraham is the master of his house. In this case we have a community (Abraham, Sarah and their servants) which takes what it has and who it is and offers it, gives it, to the guests. Everything is done in a space, in an atmosphere, which communicates the fact that the guests belong to the family. To give something means to detach, to separate from it. In Abraham's attitude, however it is impossible to see any gesture that might offend or exclude the visitors. Abraham shows his generosity and openness; he is free from the prejudices and stereotypes which so often create a barrier between people, groups or even nations.

[15] Luigi Di Pinto, 'Abramo e lo straniero (Genesi 18,1–16). 2. L'ospitalità celebrata', *Rassegna di teologia*, 38/6 (1997), 735–769, here 737.
[16] Di Pinto, 'L'ospitalità celebrata', 763.
[17] See Luigi Di Pinto, 'Abramo e lo straniero (Genesi 18,1–16). 1. Un'introduzione all'ospitalità', *Rassegna di teologia*, 38/5 (1997), 597–620, at 614.
[18] See Di Pinto, 'L'ospitalità celebrata', 738–739; Monge, *Dieu hôte*, 400–404.
[19] See Di Pinto, 'L'ospitalità celebrata', 742; Monge, *Dieu hôte*, 407–410.

Abraham does not pay attention to the inconvenient time when the visitors arrive; he does not ask a lot of questions but just welcomes them. More than this, despite the fact that he is the master of the house, he takes an attitude of service towards his guests. He shares with them in a sincere and unobtrusive way. He does not overwhelm them. The end of the passage shows that both parties give and receive something. The guests find shelter in the house of Abraham, and they announce to him the birth of his son. Abraham gives the newcomers welcome and they give him a totally different perspective on life, when he and Sarah might have been expecting nothing more than death.[20]

Loving the Stranger

In the Old Testament the stranger has an important place. There are two types of stranger in Hebrew: *gēr*, someone who did not belong to the chosen people but lived permanently among them; and *nēkār*, someone who was passing through, who was staying temporarily. In the book of Leviticus *gēr* is almost a synonym of *tôšāb, tenant*: 'with me you are but aliens [*gērîm*] and tenants [*tôšābîm*]' (Leviticus 25:23).[21] The memory of the fact that the Israelites had been foreigners in Egypt was an important factor in ensuring a positive attitude towards foreigners and strangers.

This had practical consequences in the law which, in a special way, protected and took care of the poor, the needy, orphans, widows and foreigners, in the image of God who cared for Israel (Deuteronomy 24:17–18). The law made Israelites and foreigners equal (Numbers 15:15). Foreigners were assimilated as guests staying permanently in the territory of Israel. But the *gēr* had to accept circumcision if he wanted to be treated as an Israelite and his family to be admitted to their society.[22] In spite of scriptural orders, suggestions, incentives and rebukes, the road to openness, tolerance and reception was really difficult for the Israelites. Their philanthropy, although having theological motivations, reached a threshold which could not be crossed. Although important and having its place in daily life, hospitality was treated like an obligation towards the other, the stranger, the newcomer.

[20] See Di Pinto, 'L'ospitalità celebrata', 757–759.
[21] And compare Leviticus 25: 35, 47. See Gabriele F. Bentoglio, '"Il signore protegge lo straniero" (Sal 146,9). Riflessioni di teologia biblica', *Credere Oggi*, 154/4 (July–August 2006), 19–29, at 19–20.
[22] See Bentoglio, '"Il signore protegge lo straniero"', 21–23.

Who Is My Neighbour?

Christianity makes a step forward from being obliged to show hospitality to being open to God and to others, to the proclamation of *kerygma*, the *diakonia* of welcome which precedes charity. This is visible in the daily life of Jesus, who welcomes others, particularly those who need his help the most. We have an example in the parable of the Good Samaritan, which tells about attending to the needs of one who professes a different religion and has different cultural traditions. Jesus expands the range of the term *neighbour*: it is someone who needs our help regardless of their religion, cultural and ethnic identity. Everyone who wants to inherit eternal life has to enter into this dynamic.

St Paul refers to this, writing to ethnically diverse Christian communities (some were converted pagans, others converted Jews, which is why there were tensions between them) to give reciprocal reception to each other since all of them are Christians (Romans 15:7). It is also reflected in the verb that he uses: he does not use *xenizo*, which means to welcome the stranger, the foreigner, but *proslambano*, which just means to welcome the other person.[23] In his letter to the Romans Paul writes about the obligation of hospitality using the word *philoxenia* (Romans 12:13). According to Claudio Monge, '*philoxenia* therefore

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[23] See Bentoglio, '"Il signore protegge lo straniero"', 24–25.

expresses *philadelphia*, or brotherly love. This is realised in the meeting of Christians as members of one body and as pilgrims from a single people on their way to the heavenly homeland.'[24] The same word is used in the same context in Hebrews 13:1–2: 'Let mutual love [*philadelphia*] continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality [*philoxenia*] to strangers ….' Welcoming strangers thus takes part in *agapē* (love or Christian charity): the word *welcome* is present among the primary synonyms of the verb *agapein*.[25] Only someone who really loves has an open and receptive enough heart to welcome the other person. This mutual reception had the purpose of forming one family, one household on the road to salvation.[26]

When St Paul writes to the Christian communities his teaching aims at unity between them since, despite their differences, they all form one body. This is why they have to avoid antagonisms among themselves and look for reconciliation. However, as Gabriele Bentoglio demonstrates, the scene of the final judgment (Matthew 25:40–45), the parable of the Good Samaritan and the teaching of Jesus Christ more generally give us the idea that openness cannot be limited to believers: we must be open to the other person without any exception. The word *synagein*, *welcome*, used in the scene of the final judgment (25:43), does not refer 'merely to the exercise of a work of mercy'; the other 'not only needs to be cared for, but to be recognised and protected in his or her dignity as a human person'. *Synagein* means a community gathering, where communion develops through mutual participation and joy. It is significant that 'it is important to avoid the temptation of exalting particular cultures which are given priority', but rather to unite people together around Jesus Christ.[27]

We must be open to the other person without any exception

In this way Christian hospitality is something much deeper than merely a kind of philanthropy or humanitarianism, and becomes a form of Christian charity towards others: 'In sum, the other, including the immigrant, is no longer merely the "object" of attention, but becomes the protagonist of new interpersonal relationships'.[28] Hospitality understood in this way is not merely the impulse of a compassionate heart, but a

[24] Monge, *Dieu hôte*, 322–323.
[25] *New American Standard New Testament Greek Lexicon*, s.v. ἀγάπηο,
[26] See Bentoglio, '"Il signore protegge lo straniero"', 25–26.
[27] Bentoglio, '"Il signore protegge lo straniero"', 27.
[28] Bentoglio, '"Il signore protegge lo straniero"', 27–28.

constant attitude of the human person based on faith in God and on the conviction that the image of God is present in the other person. Christians bear witness to their identity by expanding their hospitality from supporting one another to demonstrating that we are one human family.

The Challenges of Christian Hospitality

Hospitality, as we have seen, has a complex and ambiguous nature: it is a dynamic encounter that may embody specific kinds of tensions. On the one hand we have the host, or the group or culture in whose name the host acts and gives a welcome to the other. First of all, the host has to feel at home within his or her identity and, secondly, as master of the house, the host also has the right to set the rules of hospitality. On the other hand, we have the other participant in the encounter, the guest who is admitted by the host. At times the guest may be unexpected, sometimes he or she is not named but, whomever the guest may be, he or she influences the host and introduces something foreign into the house.

This encounter between host and the guest,

> … can be a source of anxiety, rivalry, or hostility, in which the host's power over the guest is conceived in a threatening manner, or in which the guest threatens to overtake the host's place as master by usurping his home, personal property, or social position.[29]

At times the host who gives a welcome to the guest may be made the hostage of the one who is being welcomed. We might also have the opposite situation: the guest may actually be the host's enemy:

> Hospitality therefore poses the question of the stranger: a being distinguished because he is unknown, comes from without, is passing through, does not follow the local customs and is for that reason a source of suspicion.[30]

The host may be a prisoner in the metaphorical house of his particular ideas, subjectivity or projections and it may be the guest who liberates him.[31] The encounter constitutes a space for reciprocity.[32] It is said that there is a thin line between love and hate. Similarly there is a close

[29] McNulty, *Hostess*, xi.
[30] Monge, *Dieu hôte*, 7.
[31] See Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, translated by Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford U, 2000), 123–125.
[32] See Henri Nouwen, 'Hospitality', *Monastic Studies*, 10 (1974), 1–28, at 8; and Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Put: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 66.

relationship between 'hostility' and 'hospitality'. This is why the French philosopher Jacques Derrida coined the term 'hostipitality' (*hostipitalité*) to emphasize the fact that the ambivalent nature of hospitality inextricably links it with the possibility of violence.[33]

The Conditions of Hospitality

Our daily practice of being hospitable to others is thus connected with the risks involved in openness and welcome. What we should consider is the extent to which the host ought to welcome the other: the guest, stranger or foreigner, the one without a proper name, without any identity marker. There emerges the problem of the conditions of hospitality. And especially on Christian grounds we should ask ourselves about our motivations and intentions.

It follows that our hospitality towards others should be a sign of our faith and a manifestation, or a form, of the love we demonstrate to other people. Claudio Monge shows that the institutionalisation of hospitality that is evident in the appearance of 'orphanages, industrial schools, hospitals, insane asylums, retirement homes, night shelters, etc.' has overshadowed the original meaning of hospitality, which was strictly connected with Christian charity (*caritas*).[34] The new emphasis

[33] Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, 45; Derrida, 'Hostipitality'.
[34] Monge, *Dieu hôte*, 359.

was humanistic and, in consequence, hospitality became simply the right of every human being: God was ousted from hospitality. At the same time, the poor, the homeless and strangers often came to be treated as possible dangers. This shift in emphasis is also visible in the growing dichotomy between the spiritual and social dimensions of hospitality.[35]

In addition, love itself can and should be purified. The ideal to which we should strive is selfless love. When our love is not purified, it becomes more and more egoistic and self-interested. We do something only because it *pays off*, because we will get something out of it, or just for show, to show ourselves to others. It is possible to do something good and positive—even to do great things—without, unfortunately, a great, unselfish love. Thus in our activities, in our daily practice of hospitality towards other people, we should also look at the accompanying intuitions and motivations.

Let us assume that a person is welcoming a group of friends. He offers them something to drink and something to eat, they spend time together talking to each other and joking. Someone who looks at this encounter might say: what a great host who receives his guests so well and cares about them! Inside the host there may, however, be a different dialogue: he asks himself why these people came and when they will leave so that he can do something else. Is this host hospitable towards his guests or not?

The problem of the conditions of hospitality is huge and very widely discussed. The commandment to love our neighbours is only one side of the coin. The other side is the human condition of other people caused not only by original sin but by every sin they themselves have committed and the way they live their daily lives. We know from everyday experience that we are capable of destroying ourselves and other people. No one needs to be convinced of how much violence is present in our world today, and the fact that we love somebody does not give this person the right to harm us, to put our lives at risk or to destroy us.

Unconditional hospitality would be equal to the acceptance of whatever the other might choose to do. This would be a contradiction of love, because love is not something merely emotional, or temporary, or naïve, but an attitude that shows itself in the continuing protection

[35] See Monge, *Dieu hôte*, 359–364. Henri Nouwen and Jean Daniélou both raise the issue of a certain growth of closeness alongside individualism, mutual aversion and hostility and, in effect, the loss of the primitive hospitable attitude; see Nouwen, 'Hospitality', and Jean Daniélou, 'Pour une théologie de l'hospitalité', *Vie Spirituelle*, 367 (November 1951), 339–348.

and help we give to another person. Hence to love does not mean to accept and to tolerate everything. It is possible to tolerate, for instance, a variety of musical, culinary, aesthetic and literary tastes, but there is a certain limitation on our tolerance or acceptance in matters of human behaviour or human values. This is why it is crucial not to be naïve, but to be someone who judges the situation in a logical and realistic way.

In the book of Sirach we read: 'Do not invite everyone into your home, for many are the tricks of the crafty' (11:29). Hence, showing or withholding hospitality depends on the attitude of the other person and our obligation to defend our own identity and those who depend on us from anything that might hurt them. The rules of hospitality are necessary in order to protect the household so that the host can really feel comfortable with his or her guests.

We can see this in daily life. There are conditions governing whether someone may enter a theatre, club or sports stadium. No venue can contain more people than the space allows. The conditions, the rules, of hospitality are necessary in order to keep order inside, help the guests feel at home and maintain safety for everyone. And it is also a right of the master of the house to refuse hospitality; to say either *please enter*, or *please leave* when a guest's attitude is inappropriate. Refusal of hospitality does not mean hostility, which contains an element of violence and aggression. The guest should be aware of and respect the rules of hospitality maintained by the master of the house, that is, by the host.

Hospitality and Discernment

This is why discernment and foresight should accompany the exercise of hospitality by Christians in their daily life. Establishing the conditions of hospitality, and when hospitality should be refused, is a task as important as it is difficult. The first Christian communities faced this kind of dilemma when they had to defend themselves against various heresies (2 John 1:10). When establishing criteria for hospitality, we should be exercise maturity, responsibility, respect and love for others.

We should not assume in advance that there are those to whom we need never be hospitable and those to whom we should always be hospitable. When the host is not free from prejudices, his or her capacity for hospitality is limited; in the house of the Pharisee, Jesus pointed out to his host that it was the woman washing his feet who had truly showed him hospitality (Luke 7:36–50). Recognising the other as also created in the image and likeness of God, the human heart should be free from stereotypes and prejudices in principle. The mere fact that, for instance,

someone is a woman, a man, a Christian, a Buddhist, a foreigner, tall, small, slim, obese or comes from Africa cannot be the reason for the refusal of hospitality. And, generally, gender, age, parentage, social background, weight, height, faith, skin-colour or disability in itself cannot become the criterion for hospitality.

There have to be other reasons to support such criteria. For instance, a child wants to play the violin, but does not have good enough pitch, or has paralysis of the hand which is serious enough to make playing impossible. In consequence the child is not accepted by a music school, not because he or she is physically challenged as such, but because the disability in itself does not allow him or her to play the instrument properly, or because he or she does not meet the objective criteria for admission to the school.

Hospitality, therefore, is strictly connected with discernment, that is, it requires a way of thinking that is logical, precise, critical, realistic, and free from stereotypes and any form of prejudice. Hospitality presented in this way, which requires the commitment of the whole human person with all of his or her faculties and abilities, is undoubtedly a great challenge for us, both in its practical aspect and in determining its possible conditions or boundaries. Our care for our spiritual life can help us.

When Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment, he pointed to love of God and neighbour as the principle of all human action. Although Jesus speaks of the two commandments of love, they determine three relationships: between God and a human person, between two human beings, and between a human being and his or her self. We believe that each one of these three relationships needs the other two to develop fully. They form as it were, one constellation. The care for each of these three relationships ensures a harmonious development in all our human dimensions. Thanks to this, it will be easier to practise the attitude of hospitality, which consists in being open to and welcoming another person, as well as setting and enforcing the rules and criteria of hospitality in a mature, responsible manner, expressing respect for the other person and showing the Christian love due to that person.

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THE NATIVITY IN VIEW OF THE CROSS AND RESURRECTION

Gerald O'Collins

IN HIS NOW CLASSICAL COMMENTARY on the Gospel of Luke, François Bovon discusses the Roman census that brings Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:1–5). He draws attention to 'the striking juxtaposition of [a] the emperor [Augustus, the ruler of the *imperium romanum*, which counted as the *oikumenē* or inhabited world] known to all with [b] the hidden Messiah'.[1] In the contemplation on the nativity to be made in the second week of the Spiritual Exercises, St Ignatius Loyola hints at this juxtaposition. He mentions 'the tribute which Caesar had imposed' (Exx 111), and eventually describes it in terms of Joseph 'express[ing] his obedience to Caesar' (Exx 264).

Elsewhere Ignatius alerts retreatants to the humility that Christ showed and the humiliations he suffered. In the Meditation on the Two Standards he imagines how Christ our Lord, 'the supreme and true leader … takes his place … in an area which is lowly' (Exx 143–144). Before proposing the Elections, Ignatius wants retreatants to 'consider' and 'ponder' three kinds of humility, the third of which incorporates imitating Christ in his poverty and in 'contempt … rather than honours' (Exx 164, 167). For the contemplation on the nativity, Ignatius might have contrasted the humility and anonymity of Christ, born in a lowly place, with the 'honours' and earthly power of Augustus, ruling his empire from his Roman palace. But it is a cross that takes the form of 'extreme poverty' that Ignatius highlights.

The Poverty of the Nativity

For the contemplation on the nativity, Ignatius proposes watching and considering what 'Our Lady, Joseph, and the maidservant' are doing:

[1] François Bovon, *Luke: A Commentary*, 3 volumes (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002–2012), volume 1, 82. This commentary has appeared in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish—a striking witness to its status.

'journeying and toiling, in order that the Lord may be born in greatest poverty; and that after so many hardships of hunger, thirst, heat, cold, injuries, and insults, he may die on the cross' (Exx 116). In his notes for 'the mysteries of the life of Christ our Lord', Ignatius adds details from Luke 2:7: Mary 'brought forth her first born Son, and wrapped him up in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger [because there was no place for them in the inn]' (Exx 264).

Summing up the circumstances of Jesus' birth as those of 'greatest poverty', Ignatius anticipates the suffering that would ensue when Jesus grew to manhood: a ministry characterized by 'so many hardships of hunger, thirst, heat, cold', the passion when Jesus faced 'injuries, and insults' and, finally, death 'on the cross'. Being placed after birth in a feeding trough for animals is not the only detail explicitly cited to explain what constituted the 'greatest poverty' which opened a life of suffering that would end in crucifixion. In the composition of place for the contemplation on the nativity, Ignatius speaks of the 'cave' in which Jesus was born (Exx 112). 'Because there was no place for them in the inn [*kataluma*]', Jesus was born in a cave. Here Ignatius follows an early tradition about the birth of Jesus which was derived from the *Protoevangelium of James* (18.1) and St Justin Martyr (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 78) in the second century, and Origen (*Contra Celsum*, 1.51) in the third century. On his own pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the cave of the nativity could well have been one of the shrines Ignatius visited, even if he does not explicitly mention this.[2]

Modern biblical scholarship supports Ignatius' notion of 'greatest poverty' through the various translations it recognises for 'manger [*phatnē*]'. While it probably means a feeding trough for animals,[3] it could also mean an indoor or outdoor 'stable' or 'stall' where animals were tied up or penned (as in Luke 13:15), or 'a feeding place under the open sky, in contrast to *kataluma*, a shelter where people stayed'.[4] Any of these three meanings indicates the extreme poverty that characterized the place where Mary and Joseph stopped and where Jesus was born.

[2] *Autobiography*, nn. 44–45.

[3] Bovon allows that *phatnē* might mean here a 'stable' or a 'half-open feeding place, sometimes located in a cave'. But he opts for 'manger' and suggests that 'the manger was probably made of stone (perhaps chiselled into the wall of a cave or the face of a rock) or of mud; wood was too expensive' (*Luke*, volume 1, 90).

[4] See *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, edited by Walter Bauer and others, 3rd edn (Chicago: U. of Chicago, 2000), 1050.

He came into this world, not in a proper shelter for human beings nor in a proper place for a birth, but among the animals.

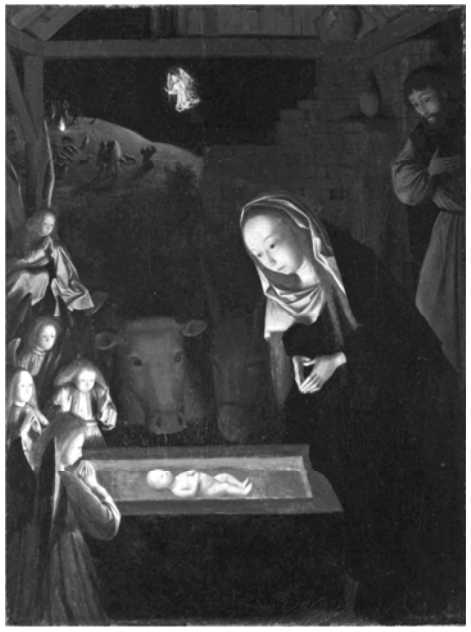
The text of Ignatius does not incorporate literally the early tradition of animals being present around the manger, a tradition inspired by words of Isaiah 1:3 and incorporated in the practice of Christmas cribs launched by St Francis of Assisi (d.1226).[5] But Ignatius has already included in the first preamble to the contemplation on the nativity a donkey on which Mary rides from Nazareth to Bethlehem and an ox that Joseph and a servant girl bring along as well. Two animals have shared the journey from Nazareth and are presumably present to share also in the birth at Bethlehem (Exx 111).

One modern interpretation of *phatnē* connects it with the entombment of Jesus. When born, he was placed in a manger, just as after his crucifixion he would be placed in a tomb (Luke 23:53).[6] This view, unintentionally, coincides with icons of the nativity created by Eastern Christians. They portray the newly born Christ Child wrapped in what might pass as a shroud and lying in a kind of trough that is cut out of a large rock and could seem like a tiny tomb.

In Luke's nativity narrative, the swaddling clothes symbolize the ordinary, human condition of the newborn Christ Child. Like any baby, he was wrapped in cloth bands (see Wisdom 7:4–7). Mary 'did for Jesus what any ancient Palestinian mother would have done for a newborn babe'. What she did expressed her 'maternal care'.[7] Some Western artists link the swaddling clothes of the Christ Child with the loin cloth he will wear on the cross. Thus on the Isenheimer altarpiece, painted by Matthew Grünewald, in his portrayal of Christmas, Our Lady holds her child 'in the same cloth that Jesus will wear at the end of his life on the cross'.[8] Sometimes, as in the case of Sandro Botticelli's *The Mystical Nativity*, the swaddling clothes are associated with the shroud in which he will be buried.

Geertgen Tot Sint Jans (d.*c.*1490) does not make either of these links; he omits the swaddling clothes altogether. In his *The Nativity at Night*, found in the National Gallery, London, the Child lies completely naked

[5] 'An ox knows its owner, and a donkey its master's stall' (Isaiah 1: 3; Revised English Bible). On the Christmas crib, see Thomas of Celano, *The First Life of St Francis*, 30.84.
[6] *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 1050.
[7] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX* (New York: Doubleday, 1981), 408.
[8] Roman A. Siebenrock, 'Jesus Christ: Life as Passion for the Kingdom of God', in *'Godhead Here in Hiding': Incarnation and the History of Human Suffering*, edited by Terrence Merrigan and Frederik Glorieux (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 37.



in a rough, hard container, more a tomb than a cradle. His future suffering can also be detected in the way that Geertgen's composition is enclosed by the wooden beams of a stable. On the one hand, the beams show us that the Child, though naked, is protected by a roof. On the other hand, the way the beams extend into the sky hints at the wooden arms of the cross on which the Child will die for us.

Sacred art, of both East and West, converges with Ignatius in linking the birth of Christ with his crucifixion. But we should not neglect the way Ignatius (and before him) Luke introduce elements of cross *and resurrection* in presenting the story of the nativity. Both Ignatius and Luke do this through the angels who encounter the shepherds and send them to Bethlehem. Luke also includes elements of cross and resurrection through the three 'inns' that punctuate his narrative: Luke 2:7, 10:34 and 22:11.

The Shepherds

In his notes on the mysteries of Christ's life, Ignatius quotes from Luke's Gospel 2:13–14 to propose the third point for prayer inspired by 'the Nativity of Christ Our Lord': 'There was … a multitude of the heavenly army saying: "Glory to God in the heavens"' (Exx 264). Following straight on from the second point for the contemplation on the nativity ('she brought forth her first born Son, and wrapped him up in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger'), the third point implies that the heavenly multitude came to the place of Christ's birth and there proclaimed 'glory to God in the heavens'. From appearing to shepherds out in the countryside, Ignatius has moved the multitude of angels into Bethlehem, where they announce the glory of God revealed in the lowly

birth of the Messiah. This does not correspond to Luke's narrative, in which the angels leave the shepherds and return 'into heaven' (Luke 2:15). The 'divine glory shines not around the manger but around the angels', appearing outside Bethlehem to shepherds. It is they alone who can then go into town and 'bear witness to a heavenly revelation'.[9]

Ignatius belongs squarely in a tradition, reflected in Christian art both before and after his time, which placed an angelic host proclaiming the nativity right there in the stable or cave where Christ was born. This tradition, through the presence of angels in Bethlehem, associates heavenly glory, and not merely the cross, with the cave where Jesus was born and the manger in which he was laid. *The Mystical Nativity* (1500–1501) by Botticelli (now in the National Gallery, London) portrays Jesus as born in an open cave, but includes twelve angels dancing under the golden dome of heaven right above the Child, who is lying on a sheet in his rustic manger. For good measure, at the bottom of the painting three further angels are embracing three men. Botticelli's masterpiece blends earthly poverty and lowliness with heavenly joy and celebration, the cross with the glory of risen life.

The notes of Ignatius for a contemplation 'on the shepherds' (Luke 2:8–20) immediately follow those for a contemplation on the nativity, and feature even more heavenly glory and corresponding human joy. According to the first point, 'the birth of Christ our Lord is made known to the shepherds by an angel: "I

[9] Bovon, *Luke*, volume 1, 82, 97. I have not found any commentator on the Spiritual Exercises who remarks on the way, apropos of Christ's nativity, Ignatius' notes for the mysteries of Christ's life differ partially from what has been stated in the contemplation on the nativity in Exx 110–117.

bring you good news of great joy, for this day is born to you the Savior of the world"'. Ignatius closes his sketch for a contemplation on the shepherds with the third point: 'the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising the Lord'. The glory and joy of the resurrection pervade the first and third points. Poverty and the cross make their appearance in the second point. The shepherds 'found … the Infant lying in the manger', when they went to Bethlehem (Exx 265).

In his contemporary commentary, Bovon presents a vision of Jesus' birth that 'intertwines glory and lowliness'. A heavenly army of angels witnesses to the greatness of Jesus who is Saviour and Christ the Lord; the manger expresses the lowliness of his birth. The 'humble birth … stands under the sign of the cross', conveyed specifically through the sign of the manger. Bovon notes 'the thrice-repeated, refrain-like occurrence of "child lying in a manger"'.[10] Mary 'laid' her newborn son 'in a manger' (Luke 2:7); the sign the shepherds received from the angel of the Lord was that of 'a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger' (Luke 2:12); when the shepherds went to Bethlehem, they found 'the child lying in a manger' (Luke 2:16). But heavenly glory was not absent.

Bovon uses two sermons by Martin Luther, a contemporary of Ignatius, to summarise the message of human 'misery' and heavenly 'glory' conveyed by the Lukan account of Jesus' birth. The Saviour was 'born so wretchedly on earth', but there followed 'the happy song' of the angels.[11] The sign of the manger interpreted the birth of one who would die on a cross, but that birth was also the occasion of a revelation of divine glory (Luke 2:8–9) and of a heavenly liturgy led by an angelic choir (Luke 2:13–14). That revelation and liturgy acclaimed the 'peace' that God conveys and the human 'joy' it occasions (Luke 2:10, 14). Bovon appropriately points to an *inclusio* that, through the presence of angels, binds together the humble 'birth' of Christ and 'his rebirth in the resurrection'.[12] At the end angels will attest 'the hand of God at work' in the resurrection (Luke 24:4), when 'the people experience peace' (Luke 24:36) and 'great joy' (Luke 24:52).[13] The *inclusio* joins cross and resurrection.

[10] Bovon, *Luke*, volume 1, 89, 93, 90.
[11] Bovon, *Luke*, volume 1, 93–94.
[12] At least as old as the eighth-century BC epic poet Homer, *inclusio* is a technique for linking the beginning and end of a poem, drama, novel, essay, prayer, biography or any other piece of writing, short or long. *Inclusio* may be used for an entire work or simply for a section of it. We detect the presence of an *inclusio* by noting the similar or even identical material found at the beginning and the end of the work or section.
[13] Bovon, *Luke*, volume 1, 88.

Three Inns as Scenes of Cross and Resurrection

Reflecting on the inn where Mary and Joseph found no room, Bovon notes how 'the holy duty of hospitality' had waned somewhat since the days of tribal nomads.[14] But the inn in Bethlehem is only the first of three 'inns' in Luke's Gospel where such a place of hospitality is endowed with meaning drawn from the cross and resurrection.

Luke's story of Jesus' birth states that the baby was 'laid in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn [*kataluma*]' (Luke 2:7). The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) translates *kataluma* as 'inn', as do the Revised English Bible (REB) and the Jerusalem Bible (JB). Suggesting that 'inn' is probably intended 'vaguely', Bovon thinks of 'a room in a private house in which travellers could usually spend the night'. But he also speaks of a 'roadhouse, a place where one can stop and unharness a mount or draught animal … a provisional place to spend the night'.[15] The Greek noun *kataluma* has a related verb, *kataluō* ('to let/bring down'). Its meanings vary widely but include putting down one's baggage, unharnessing an animal, unloading its burden, stopping doing what one is doing, and so to halt, rest, find lodging (*kataluma*) and receive hospitality. We find this verb used with one or more such meanings in Luke 9:12 and 19:7.

Almost halfway through Luke's Gospel, Jesus delivers one of his most famous parables, that of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37). The Samaritan takes a wounded traveller to an 'inn' (NRSV, REB and JB), does his best for him, and leaves him next day in the care of the 'innkeeper' (NRSV, REB and JB). The two terms in Greek are, respectively, *pandocheion* and *pandocheus*; each term occurs only here in the entire New Testament. Etymology suggests their meaning: *pan* (all) *docheion* (receiving), that is to say, receiving/welcoming anyone and everyone.

Towards the end of the Gospel, Jesus sends Peter and John into Jerusalem to prepare the Passover; they are to tell the owner of a house:

> The teacher asks you, 'where is the guest room [*kataluma*], where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large room upstairs [*anagaion*], already furnished. Make preparations for us there. (Luke 22:8–12; NRSV).

[14] Bovon, *Luke*, volume 1, 86.
[15] Bovon, *Luke*, volume 1, 80, 86.

In this passage the REB translates *kataluma* simply as 'the room' rather than 'the guest room', and continues: 'he [the householder] will show you a large room upstairs, all set out'. The JB renders *kataluma* as 'the dining room' and then, by inserting 'with couches', adds to what we find in the Greek text: 'the man will show you a large upper room furnished with couches'.[16] It is only in Luke 2:7 and 22:11, and Mark 14:14 (on which Luke 22:11 draws) that we find *kataluma* in the whole New Testament.

The magisterial *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* judges 'inn' to be only a possible translation in Luke 2:7, with *kataluma* 'best understood' as 'lodging' or 'guest-room', as in Luke 22:11.[17] The context of Luke 22:11 (and Mark 14:14) would also permit 'the sense [of] dining room'. *Pandocheion* (Luke 10:34) is the more specific term for 'inn', where a traveller could find lodging.[18] Thus the *Lexicon* prefers 'lodging' or 'guest-room' for Luke 2:7, 'inn' for Luke 10:34 and 'lodging', 'guest-room' or 'dining room' for Luke 22:11.

So much for the translation of three passages from Luke. How might this use of *kataluma* (twice) and *pandocheion* (once) be drawn together and nourish meditation on the cross and resurrection? Jesus came into this world, not in a *kataluma*, which offered normal shelter where people on a journey could stay, but in some kind of stable, where Mary placed her newborn child in a trough for feeding animals. That 'there was no room for them in the inn' offers much prayerful thought about the presence of the cross right from the beginning of Jesus' story.[19] But we have also seen how this failure in hospitality was offset by the anticipation of resurrection conveyed by the heavenly glory and

[16] Bovon (volume 3, 144–145) argues convincingly against introducing hard 'furniture' such as couches; what Luke has in mind are soft objects like carpets or even blankets.

[17] *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 521. Joseph A. Fitzmyer prefers to translate *kataluma* in Luke 2:7 as 'lodge'. But this choice carries a distracting burden of modern meanings, as in 'the local Masonic lodge', 'the president's hunting lodge' and 'the porter's lodge', for instance. Fitzmyer himself goes on at once to suggest 'a public caravansary or khan, where groups of travellers would spend the night under one roof': *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX*, 391, 394, 408.

[18] *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 753.

[19] Raymond E. Brown joins others in questioning 'the image of the hard-hearted innkeeper turning Joseph and Mary away from the door. Rather, all that Luke is saying is that because travellers were sheltered in one crowded room', the inn was not a fitting place for the birth. The innkeeper was 'correct rather than hard-hearted. He refused accommodation to (the obviously pregnant) Mary because if she went into labour and gave birth in the place where people were lodged, the other guests would have been inconvenienced by having to go out from it.' Nevertheless, Brown shows himself at least open to the notion of 'rejection'. It fits 'the larger Lucan picture', by anticipating 'the career of the Son of Man who will be rejected': *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, rev. edn (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 670.

angelic message revealed to the shepherds. We find life, even heavenly life, as well as death in contemplating the story of Jesus' nativity.

The Inn of the Good Samaritan

In Luke's Gospel, after the nativity story we hear no more of Bethlehem or mangers. But an inn (*pandocheion*) returns with the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29–37). Even before that, the verb which corresponds to *kataluma* has turned up. At the end of a day when Jesus had spoken in a deserted place to a crowd of five thousand 'about the kingdom of God' and 'healed those who needed to be cured', the twelve apostles came to him and said: 'send this crowd away, so that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside, to find lodging [*katalusōsin*] and get provisions'. Instead Jesus multiplied five loaves and two fish and fed the crowd (Luke 9:11–17). The apostles had presumed that, late in the day and even for such a large number of people, lodging and food would be available elsewhere. Despite the differences between the miraculous feeding (concerning the needs of thousands) and a story involving only a handful of people, an 'example story', as some call the parable of the Good Samaritan, a similar presumption shows up.[20] The Samaritan seems to take it for granted that he will find shelter and care for a wounded man at a nearby 'inn'.

Unlike some parables which may feature only one or two characters—for instance, the sower and the seeds (Luke 8:4–15) and the lost sheep (Luke 15:3–7)—the parable of the Good Samaritan includes several dramatis personae: the man travelling to Jericho, the robbers, a priest, a Levite, a Samaritan and an innkeeper. The hero who practises compassion towards someone in dreadful need is undoubtedly the Samaritan, described by Bovon as 'a nondescript person with a despised background', someone 'usually associated with evil'. The Samaritan's heart goes out to the wounded traveller; through administering first aid and transporting him to a nearby inn, he 'establishes a relationship' with him. 'Having done his part, the Samaritan passed the torch to others'—in particular, to the innkeeper. He has 'taken care' of the wounded man and asks the innkeeper to do the same.[21]

[20] Bovon, *Luke*, volume 2, 56. Bovon lists here 'example stories' that Luke has drawn from L, his special source: the rich farmer (12:16–21), the rich man and the poor Lazarus (16:19–31) and the Pharisee and the tax collector (18:10–14).
[21] Bovon, *Luke*, volume 2, 56–59.

Beyond question, it is the example of the Samaritan that provides the central answer to the question: 'who is my neighbour?' (Luke 10:29). But what of the innkeeper? Does his heart go out to the wounded traveller? We do not know, but we do know that he establishes a relationship with the man by agreeing at once to give him shelter and care. He does not object: 'there is no room for badly wounded people in my inn'. To be sure, he is given two denarii by the Samaritan, who promises that, on his return, any further expenses will be repaid. The innkeeper does not supply lodging and help for nothing.[22] But he lives up to the meaning of his name in Greek, someone who 'receives everyone'. His kind help may be less spectacular but it does carry further the concern and care of the Good Samaritan. The innkeeper is also a true neighbour to someone in great distress. If this example story invites its readers to 'be a Good Samaritan', it also invites them, albeit secondarily, 'be a Good Innkeeper'.

Ancient Christianity provides examples of writers positively appreciating the inn and the innkeeper, and not merely the Good Samaritan. Bovon summarises Origen's account of an earlier interpretation which understood the innkeeper as 'the head of the Church, in charge of administration'. Bovon goes on to quote from Origen's *Homilies on Luke*, 34:7: 'The Samaritan … carries the dying man and takes him to an inn, i.e. into the Church that welcomes everyone, does not refuse aid to anyone, and to which all are invited by Jesus'.[23]

Bovon notes how 'in the past the image of the Samaritan was often applied to Christ giving help to humanity, rather than to some charitable Christian'.[24] He has no quarrel with this christological application, provided that it is not 'done at the expense of the ethical dimension'. He explains: the 'christological structure is rooted in God, who is compassionate and active, and acts through the Church, whose members carry on their Lord's charitable acts by means of their faith and practice'. Bovon also recalls how 'Samaritan' in Hebrew means 'watchman' or 'shepherd'.[25] Being a Good Samaritan hints at the Good/Beautiful Shepherd, who lays down his life for his sheep (see John 10:11, 14).

[22] A denarius was a day's wages for a labourer (*Anchor Bible Dictionary*).
[23] Bovon, *Luke*, volume 2, 60–61.
[24] Bovon, *Luke*, volume 2, 51, and see 59 note 50, 64. Martin Luther identified Christ as the Good Samaritan and made the inn a kind of field hospital: Erwin Mülhaupt, *D. Martin Luthers Evangelien-Auslegung*, volume 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1968), 152–156).
[25] Bovon, *Luke*, volume 2, 58 note 35.

Cross and resurrection belong to the example story that Jesus told, in the sense that it turned on a traveller in great distress. He had been robbed, beaten and left half dead, only to be rescued and nursed back to life in the shelter of an inn. But we should not ignore the personal loss and personal risk suffered by the Good Samaritan. His kindness cost him some oil, wine, clothing and money—as well as the loss of time caused by an unforeseen break in his journey. We should also remember the element of danger: if one traveller had been robbed, bandits could still have been prowling around to attack and rob others. It was dangerous to stop at the side of the road and then move slowly ahead keeping a badly wounded man from falling off his seat on the pack animal.

The life of Jesus, as Christian preachers and others have appreciated, dramatized his role as the Good Samaritan.[26] Luke encouraged them to do so by providing a link through a striking verb, 'his heart went out [*esplanchnisthē*]', with which he described not only Jesus' reaction to the widow of Nain, who had just lost her only son (Luke 7:13), but also the reaction of the Samaritan (Luke 10:33) to the half-dead traveller. At his own personal risk and cost, Jesus stopped to save wounded people who had been robbed and stripped. But in this case, however, compassionate love for his neighbours cost much more than possessions, money and time. Jesus as the Good Samaritan was stripped and wounded in his passion. He became the Victimized Traveller, not rescued but left to die on a cross.

Jesus as the Good Samaritan was stripped and wounded in his passion

To conclude, the parable of the Good Samaritan reflects its lights and shadows back over the earlier story of Christ's nativity. It does so not only through the contrast between two inns, the first in which there was 'no room' for the birth of the Messianic shepherd (prophesied by Micah 5:2–5a) and the second in which a wounded traveller found unquestioning shelter and care, but also through the figures of the Good Samaritan (or Good Shepherd) and the Good Innkeeper. The cross and the resurrection belong in both the parable and the story of the nativity.

The 'Inn' of the Last Supper

Before we arrive at the *kataluma* where Jesus celebrated the Passover with his disciples on the night before he died (Luke 22:7–13), we should note the related verb in the account of Jesus' visit to Zacchaeus

[26] Bovon, *Luke*, volume 2, 64 note 75.

in Jericho: Jesus went 'to be the guest [*katalusai*]' (Luke 9:7) of a notorious sinner, a chief tax collector (Luke 19:1–10).[27]

The identity (as 'Lord' and 'the Son of Man') and mission ('to seek out and save the lost') of Jesus are prominent in this meeting between Zacchaeus and Jesus. Zacchaeus begins by 'wanting to see' the traveller and ends by recognising him at a meal as 'Lord' and showing his repentance by what he does and promises to do. As with the Passover to come, Jesus initiates this meal: 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your home today' (Luke 19:5). But then a totally critical audience ('all who saw it') grumble (Luke 19:7) at Jesus agreeing to accept hospitality from a very disreputable man—unlike those involved in preparing the Passover, the last meal Jesus will eat with his disciples.

Jesus prepared to eat the Passover by sending Peter and John to the owner of a house in Jerusalem. They were to ask him what Jesus 'the teacher' told them: 'where is the guest room [*kataluma*], where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' (Luke 22:11). The house owner at once showed Peter and John 'a large room upstairs, already furnished'; there they prepared the Passover (Luke 22:12).[28] Jesus knew in advance who would offer hospitality to him and his apostles. To be sure, 'the inhabitants of Jerusalem were prepared to make space available to the pilgrims' who wanted to celebrate the Passover. 'They were even expected to perform this service free of charge'.[29] Nevertheless, without hesitation the anonymous house-owner did what Jesus asked through Peter and John. While Jesus was in command of the situation, the three of them collaborated to put his plan into action; Jesus and his apostles could all sit down to eat the Passover meal.

Because they were able to eat in the privacy of a guest room upstairs—a *kataluma* in that sense rather than in the sense of being a public shelter for a random group of travellers—celebrating the Passover provides Christ and his core group of followers with a 'wonderful intimacy'.[30] The Jewish feast served 'as the framework for the Last Supper. This will become the first example of a new Christian rite, which itself will look forward to the banquet of the kingdom.'[31]

[27] See Bovon, *Luke*, volume 2, 591–602.
[28] Here Peter and John act as servants; after the resurrection and Pentecost they will be twinned as the Church's first leaders; on Peter and John leading together, see Acts 3:1, 11; 4:3, 19; and 8:14.
[29] Bovon, *Luke*, volume 3, 143.
[30] St Bonaventure, as cited in Bovon, *Luke*, volume 3, 146.
[31] Bovon, *Luke*, volume 3, 143–144.

At the Last Supper (Luke 22:15–20), Jesus defined in advance the meaning of his imminent death and resurrection—by the words of institution over the broken bread ('this is my body, which is given for you) and the wine ('this cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood'). The 'for you' pointed to the group sharing the meal with Jesus as the immediate beneficiaries of his death and new covenant. But, since Jesus called for the future repetition of the ritual ('do this in remembrance of me'), he wanted to confer on an indefinite number of others the saving benefits of his life, death and resurrection. He desired to establish also with them his continuing place and presence in the meal fellowship he had instituted with a small core group of disciples.[32]

The Last Supper came at the end of a life that began in Bethlehem with a birth outside the shelter of a public *kataluma*, moved through a ministry that included the parable of the Good Samaritan (assisted by the Good Innkeeper), and ended with a final celebration in a Jerusalem *kataluma.* The command 'do this in remembrance of me' (Luke 22:19) extends beyond the ritual established on the eve of Jesus' death to concern his whole story, and hence the three inns that punctuated it. Thus 'doing this in remembrance of me' can *also* be understood as an invitation to show the hospitality which failed at the birth of Jesus but which was inculcated by the parable of the Good Samaritan and supremely exemplified by Jesus the Good Innkeeper in an upper room in Jerusalem.

Ignatius proposed for retreatants a contemplation of the nativity that included overtones of the cross and resurrection. Attention to the three inns of Luke's Gospel fills out further possibilities for that contemplation. Like Mary at the end of the visit of the shepherds, we can 'treasure all these words and ponder them' in our hearts (Luke 2:19).

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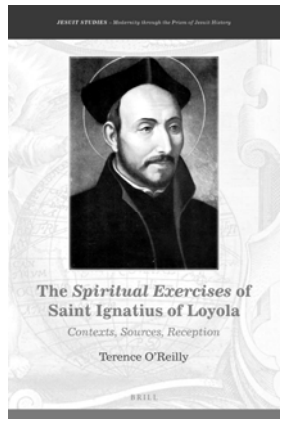
[32] On this see more fully Gerald O'Collins, *Salvation for All: God's Other Peoples* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), 100–120.

RECENT BOOKS

Terence O'Reilly, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Contexts, Sources, Reception* (Leiden: Brill, 2020). 978 9 0044 2975 8, pp. 364, €149.00.



Anyone familiar with the work of Terence O'Reilly will welcome this new collection with joy. For over forty years, from his base as professor of Golden Age Spanish literature at University College, Cork, he has been publishing sensitive, scholarly studies in the area of Spanish Jesuit spirituality. The advantage of this present book is that it is focused specifically on the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius, and thus has a unity that was lacking in his previous Variorum collection of 1995.[1]

This new collection splits into three parts, each consisting of four studies that deal respectively with the context, the sources and the reception of the *Spiritual Exercises*. But another theme running through them all is the person of Ignatius himself. Although two of the studies (chapters 1 and 3) date from the last century and are reproduced here without change, six are more recent, and four (chapters 2, 6, 7 and 12) are new. Repetitions are inevitable in a collection of this sort, and more cross-references would have improved the book. It has a useful introductory foreword by Thomas M. McCoog, and the publication is equipped with an invaluable index.

In the first part the wider context of the *Spiritual Exercises* is explored: they were produced before the Counter-Reformation was under way, and there are fascinating parallels with the thinking both of Martin Luther (chapter 2) and of Erasmus (chapter 3). Thus, dealing with the vexed question of, 'the freedom of the will and the power of reason characteristic of Erasmus …. In this respect he [Ignatius] was, *like Luther*, closer than Erasmus to late-medieval tradition and popular religious feeling of the day' (p. 72,

[1] Terence O'Reilly, *From Ignatius Loyola to John of the Cross: Spirituality and Literature in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (London: Routledge, 1995).

my italics). However, in the understanding of scripture, 'Ignatius, it appears, was responsive to the change of sensibility that Erasmus voiced. When contemplating events in the Gospel, his retreatant opens up to the spiritual sense of Scripture, the mystery of Christ.' (p. 120) At one point, dealing with the reaction of Ignatius to the *Enchiridion* of Erasmus, O'Reilly writes:

> Ignatius was not enthusiastic about the *Enchiridion*, and this at first sight is surprising for it shares certain features with the *Exercises* … including an emphasis on interiority, a preoccupation with the person of Christ known in the Scriptures and the image of the Christian knight (p. 140).

Already in this first part Melchor Cano, the fierce critic of Ignatius, makes his appearance (chapter 4), when the problem is discussed of the link between Ignatius and the *alumbrados*, who became such an important factor in Spanish spirituality while Ignatius was a young man.[2]

It is in part 2 that a couple of important new studies appear: chapter 6 devoted to the origin of the Rules for Discernment (Exx 313–336) and chapter 7 to the controversial concept of 'Consolation without a preceding cause' (Exx 330). O'Reilly shows how traces of the rules can be found in the books read by Ignatius while convalescing in Loyola, notably the *Vita Christi* and the *Flos sanctorum*, which enabled him to envisage the rules and put them into practice in his own life. With Ignatius' formulation of 'consolation without preceding cause' he laid himself open to accusations of heresy (p. 183) and critics (such as Cano) were quick to attack. A Spanish specialist in Ignatian studies, José García de Castro, has noted (p. 177) that one should not identify such a consolation with the sudden conversions mentioned in the first time of Election (Exx 175). O'Reilly agrees, but notes that caution about such attacks may be the reason why Ignatius, in his final recension of the *Exercises*, omits drawing attention to its role in the Election (pp. 183–184).

The final chapter in this second part is the classical study of 'Fear and Love' first published in 2010, showing the development from fear to love, or rather from servile to filial fear found in the *Exercises*. It closes with the debated question:

> What, then, is the relationship in the *Exercises* between the movement toward union that comes to a head in the Fourth Week and the discernment of God's will in the disposition of one's life that reaches its climax in the Second Week? Does the work have two goals, one of them explicit, the other implicit?' (p. 208)

For Javier Melloni there are two 'peak moments', even if 'in reality they are not two peaks: they are the same unique summit seen from two different

[2] Also known as *illuminati* and considered a danger by the Inquisition.

angles'.[3] O'Reilly himself acknowledges: 'The text … though it raises the problem, nowhere resolves it explicitly', but closes with the thought that for the early Jesuits the relationship 'was not a mystery, but something perfectly understood by those giving the Exercises and receiving them' (p. 209).[4]

Of the four chapters in part 3, the first is an affectionate tribute to the great Irish commentator on the *Spiritual Exercises*, Joseph Veale. This is not a hagiography—O'Reilly admits that Veale could 'overstate' a case (p. 225)—but he points out that the great contribution of Veale was to move from a blinkered view of the text, limiting it to its ascetical role, to a revelation of its mystical thrust. The other three chapters contain fascinating information: a full new edition of Melchor Cano's vicious attack on Ignatius, the *Exercises* and the Society (chapter 10); a recent study of the young Jesuits who became key confessors to St Teresa and helped her to develop (chapter 11); and a new investigation of the Spiritual Diary of St Ignatius, linking it to the *Exercises* (chapter 12).

Among the themes that recur throughout this book special attention should be given to the concept of 'contemplation'. Fr Veale had argued that Ignatius changed the use of the term, when he used it in the *Exercises* for the imaginative evocation of scenes in the life of Christ (as opposed to 'meditation', which consists in reflection on certain truths). Along with Simon Tugwell, O'Reilly points out 'that in late-medieval writings the connotations of the word *contemplatio* were not stable' and that the danger is 'to read back into its usage the meanings it later acquired in the works of the discalced Carmelites' (p. 218), who use it for the gift of mystical infused prayer.[5]

While the *Exercises* are constantly at the centre of this collection, it is probably the picture of Ignatius himself that emerges most strikingly. Our understanding of him as a person has changed radically over the last fifty years. An appreciation of his mystical gifts now outweighs what was known of him as courtier-soldier. Ironically a three-dimensional view of Ignatius is possible thanks to his most violent critic, Melchor Cano. The *Censuray parecer* document, a report criticizing the Society of Jesus, once thought to be lost but rediscovered largely thanks to Prof. O'Reilly, brings out how one

[3] Javier Melloni, *La mistagogía de los Ejercicios* (Bilbao: Mensajero and Santander: Sal Terrae, 2001), 24, quoted by O'Reilly, 209 note 85.

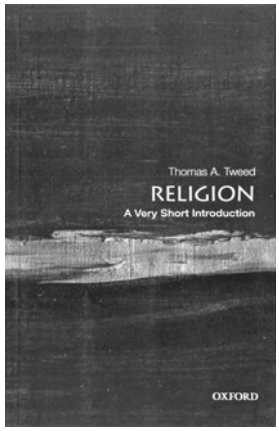
[4] In an earlier chapter the problem had appeared and the opinion of Sylvie Robert is quoted ('Union with God in the Ignatian Election', *The Way Supplement*, 103 [2002], 111), for whom both aspects are seen as 'elements of the same relational reality' (p. 87).

[5] O'Reilly refers to Tugwell's review of Bernard McGinn, *History of Western Christian Mysticism*, in *Journal of Theological Studies*, 44/2 (1993), 685–687, and *Journal of Theological Studies*, 47/2 (1996), 713–722.

could see Ignatius as an *alumbrado*, and also vain, conceited and not to be trusted (pp.236–239). Fortunately, again thanks to O'Reilly, we also see how attentively Ignatius could read texts and retain their teaching. The author's own grasp of these fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Spanish texts allow an unrivalled appreciation of the mind of Ignatius. The book is to be strongly recommended to all interested in the *Spiritual Exercises*.

Joseph A. Munitiz SJ

Thomas A. Tweed, *Religion: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford UP, 2020). 978 0 1900 6467 9, pp.160, £8.99.



The Oxford University Press has now published over six hundred titles in its series of Very Short Introductions. Many of us, ashamed of our ignorance of—let's say—how computers work or the taxonomy of fungi, have reason to be grateful to the OUP coming to our rescue with one of these little books. The need met by these succinct texts—a gap in the market until they came along—is for something more substantial than a Wikipedia page but less than a tome telling us more than we want to know.

Thomas Tweed's subject is 'religion', a topic not wholly unfamiliar to readers of *The Way*. Yet many of us would be hard-pressed to define what religion is. Tweed's first chapter suggests that he too found the quest for a definition of religion a struggle, so much so that, rather than defining the essence of religion as such, he tells us instead what *religions*—plural—are. 'Religions', Tweed writes, 'are confluences of organic-cultural flows that intensify joy and confront suffering by drawing on human and suprahuman forces to make homes and cross boundaries'. It is, Tweed admits, 'a dense definition that needs some explaining' (p.12). Fortunately for us, Tweed's erudition is matched by his accessibility and he has a simpler summary of what religion is. Religion, he submits, is about our 'metaphysical anguish' or, yet more simply, about our 'worry and wonder' (p.68).

It is easier to identify what religion *does* than to define what it *is*. The function of religion is the subject of Tweed's second chapter. He emphasizes the role of religion in conferring identity and in cementing social bonds. Sikhs,

for example, identify themselves by the bodily adornment of the 'five Ks'. Religion, he says, is 'sticky' and thus religious groups acquire 'adherents', those who, typically, are 'bound' by a commitment or 'attached' to a cause.

To ask what religion does is to invite the objection, loudly voiced in our own time, that religion does more harm than good. Here Tweed wrestles with the paradox that religion appeals to both the best and the worst in us. Religious people have sought for peace and gone to war. They have campaigned for justice and persecuted minorities. They have fed the hungry and exploited the vulnerable. (In a more extended study something could well be said about how religion has lent its blessing to our less admirable appetites in the rapid escalation of the so-called 'prosperity churches'.) To illustrate how religion can be both the root and the remedy of wrong, Tweed presents us with an illuminating 'case study'. The rise and fall of apartheid in South Africa is a history in which religion has been crucially instrumental in demolishing a system which religion was largely responsible for creating.

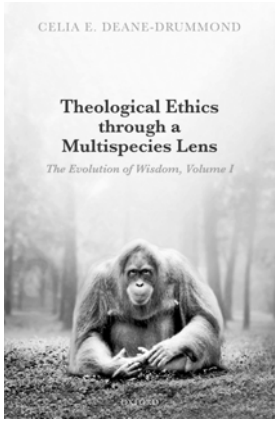
In chapter 3 Tweed considers how religion is expressed. Religion, he insists, is all to do with our bodies and senses, with tasting and touching, with hearing, seeing, and—not least—smelling. Concerns about air pollution in Taipei, we learn, are such that temples are having to reduce the use of incense. Religion is always changing. Chapter 4 traces religion's role in the key changes in ways of life across human history 'from foraging, to farming, to factories' (p.66). The interaction of religion, history and culture across the ages is an immensely complex story, but Tweed does not lose his way—or lose us—in telling it.

Tweed's fifth and final chapter, 'Global Religion Today', is a panoramic survey of the contemporary religious scene. It provides a brilliant, if giddying, panorama of a world in which religion—despite those claiming that God is dead—continues to thrive. It does so by constantly adapting, continually responding to social change and the turn of events, a process to which even most conservative religious traditions are not immune.

Tweed's closing pages are crowded with examples of how religion has embraced digital technology. 'BlessU-2' is a minister (of a sort) of religion, offering multilingual blessings on request. He/she/it is also a robot. Hindus can do *puja* on their smart phones, placing a virtual piece of fruit on a virtual altar. The cyber-pilgrim can make the haj to Mecca online. And so on. *Religion* was written shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic overtook us. Many have commented on how faith has flourished during successive 'lockdowns', an observation endorsing the thrust of this remarkably wide-ranging and perceptive little book.

John Pridmore

Celia E. Deane-Drummond, *Theological Ethics through a Multispecies Lens: The Evolution of Wisdom,* volume I (Oxford: OUP, 2019). 978 0 1988 4334 4, pp. 304, £75.00.



This groundbreaking book is a remarkable effort to synthesize two realms of scholarship often understood as disparate to the point of irreconcilability: evolutionary history and moral theology. With a doctorate related to each field—one in biology and one in systematic theology—its author is uniquely qualified for this enterprise as a scholar with a commanding knowledge of both.

Deane-Drummond's overarching goals are ambitious: to trace the role of evolutionary development in contributing to humans' capacity for wisdom and other aspects of moral thinking, to consider the implications of an evolutionary-ecological perspective as the framework for making moral assessments, and to propose a system of wisdom practices that fully recognises both human and non-human animals in their distinctiveness and worth.

After an introductory chapter in which she summarises and evaluates the complex history of the relationships between science and theology, Deane-Drummond lays the groundwork for her carefully sequenced subsequent analysis by opening the fundamental question of animals' moral standing. She evaluates the arguments of prominent thinkers concerning animals' potential roles in moral consideration, regarded both as individuals and as components of multi-species ecological communities. Querying the value of ethological studies for understanding human moral impulses, Deane-Drummond wants to develop an ethic that bridges a perceived gap between individual and communitarian approaches to understanding virtue, through understanding humans and other animals as members, albeit distinctive ones, of a shared community.

The book's next three chapters are each devoted to a key component of the 'moral world': justice, compassion or love, and wisdom. Deane-Drummond explores the potential evolutionary origins of each component, drawing on her deep scientific expertise to assess strengths and weaknesses of assembled evidence for past adaptations that may have seeded, for example, the cognitive

capacity for making assessments of what is just, or the foresight needed for wisdom to operate. The author notes such developments in humans did not appear at one particular point in evolution, but rather emerged gradually and in a 'distinctively human' way.

The relational character of each of these components of a moral life, Deane-Drummond proposes, renders critical the consideration of their evolution in the setting of a shared human/non-human community. She describes non-human animals' co-constructions of their own worlds and notes that 'immersion in the lives of others'—including those of other species—is essential to 'becoming selves' (p. 141) as well as increasing moral competence. Her analysis enfolds evolutionary biology and psychology into considerations of justice as a human virtue, strengthening both developmental and ontological expansions of what can be considered part of human nature, and carefully considers the extension of these principles to incorporate cultural evolution.

Using this developmental and communitarian framework, the author returns to the question of justice regarding non-human animals with a focus on refining contemporary understandings of natural law from both scientific and theological perspectives. Aiming to bridge the gap between scientific and philosophical understandings of natural law, Deane-Drummond attempts to reconcile fundamentally differing technical definitions of the terms 'natural' and 'law' in these two realms, drawing on the thinking of Aquinas, as well as John Polkinghorne and other contemporary scholars. She tackles the challenging question of how to maintain the claim to distinctiveness of human moral-social systems while also valuing animals' diverse lives, social interactions and constructed worlds. In a notable interpretative expansion, Deane-Drummond addresses applications of natural law to earth systems, considering how broadly the effects of Anthropocene human activity may be construed to affect global earth dynamics and evaluating whether the planet-wide system may be considered a subject of justice assessments.

Diverse indigenous traditions regarding right relationships with animals guide Deane-Drummond's reflections on domestication, with examples that portray complex relationships with bees, game animals, canines and horses, reflecting on the deep and varied character of these relationships. The author's goal in this section of the book is to argue for a 'stronger sense of collective responsibility through just institutions' (p. 215). Considering the work of Paul Ricoeur and Martha Nussbaum on the nature of the individual's conscience and animal ethics, and integrating her book's themes of biological and cultural evolution, Deane-Drummond evaluates whether conscience may

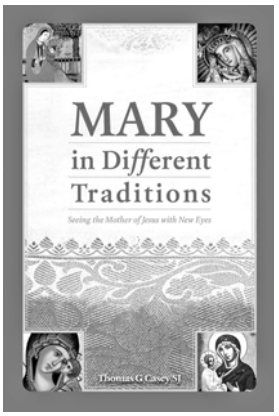
be understood as belonging not just to individuals within an interconnected web, but to the community as a whole. She outlines promising characteristics of extended mind and 'enactivism', which proposes that through holistic experience of the organism's world, which incorporates its environment along with body and mind, the living being 'enacts' its world, both actively constituting that world and being constituted by it.

These mutually constituting interactions profoundly affect not only what or who can be considered 'self' and 'Other', but also the fundamental nature of personhood in multi-species communities. Deane-Drummond summarises the potential contributions of the views on personhood of Aquinas and Kant, along with contemporary thinkers including Anne Warren, Charles Camosy and Tim Ingold, in addition to indigenous perspectives, and then considers personhood in a specifically Christian sense. This survey is preparation for evaluating anthropological evidence regarding pre-*Homo sapiens* personhood and the capabilities of early hominins that might allow experience of the sacred. After a cogent final summary of her arguments and a clarion call for practical wisdom, Deane-Drummond concludes by outlining some specific applications of her thinking to selected contemporary issues: agriculture and vegetarianism, and conservation ethics and biodiversity.

This work, on a dynamic intersection of critical questions concerning right living in a complex world, is comprehensive and densely argued. In setting the groundwork for her analyses of each dimension, Deane-Drummond addresses a carefully chosen array of scholars in a wide variety of fields, thoughtfully evaluating their contributions and challenges. Her knowledge is both broad and deep, and her arguments are in-depth and technical, with extensive footnotes and an expansive bibliography. *Theological Ethics through a Multispecies Lens* constitutes an ambitious undertaking: to construct a profound synthesis of evolutionary and theological assessments of the moral impulse. It will be of interest to scholars who desire an overview of the sweep of ideas related to these intersections, theologians who want to incorporate environmental concerns into their thinking, and ethicists who want to understand scientific—particularly evolutionary—dimensions of multidimensional human–animal relationships.

Trileigh Tucker

Thomas G. Casey, *Mary in Different Traditions* (Dublin: Messenger, 2019). 978 1 7881 2087 6, pp. 144, £8.95.



This is an unusual and delightful book. It deepens the reader's understanding of the importance of the Virgin Mary for our spiritual lives, and will almost certainly teach every reader something new. It is beautifully written and filled with gentle wisdom. Father Casey's intention is to get Roman Catholics to think afresh about Mary. He observes that she is frequently overlooked in modern Catholic practice, and he hopes to help revive devotion to Mary by presenting her through four unfamiliar lenses: the Marian writings of a number of Lutheran authors, the traditions of the Eastern Orthodox Churches, setting Mary in her Jewish context and the place of Mary in Islam.

In the Lutheran chapter, Casey considers the writings of Martin Luther himself, as well as those of the philosopher Søren Kierkegaard and the heroic pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer. If this sounds extremely scholarly, then do not be put off: it is clear that Fr Casey is familiar with his original sources, but he writes simply, fluently and without footnotes. The first work that he considers is Luther's commentary on the Magnificat, which is quite hostile to some aspects of Catholic teaching. However, Casey selects quotations, and reflects upon Luther's text, in a way which draws out Luther's deep concern that the Christian, like Mary, should turn all attention away from him- or herself, and only give praise to the Lord. Mary is the most shining example of Christian faith, as well as being the uniquely honoured Mother of God.

Turning to less well-known examples of Lutheran writing on Mary, Casey introduces us to those of Kierkegaard. Many philosophy students and others are acquainted with Kierkegaard's reflection upon Abraham's terrible summons to sacrifice Isaac. What they may be less familiar with is Kierkegaard's reflections on Mary's tremendous courage and trust in God, which Casey presents here. He then goes on to show how his third Lutheran, Bonhoeffer, sees Mary as a brave and revolutionary figure in her song, the Magnificat, and Casey sets this within the context of Bonhoeffer's own life.

Chapter 2 considers Mary in Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Casey thinks that a distinctive difference between the Eastern and Western Churches is that in the West the incarnation is seen only as the necessary condition for the saving work of the crucifixion, while the Eastern Churches are far more taken up with the incarnation itself, and hence with Mary, since it is

she who gave the Word of God his human flesh. There is room to disagree with Casey about this. It is undoubtedly true that a certain strand of Catholic practice has focused all its attention on the crucifixion as the saving event, rather than on Jesus Christ as the saving person; but the inheritance of authors as diverse as Louis de Montfort and Karl Rahner gives the lie to the claim that Catholicism does not contain strands which place the incarnation and the Mother of God in a central position.

Casey points to the vital presence of the Mother of God in the lives of Orthodox believers, and the centrality of the liturgy to their Christian devotion. In contrast to Catholicism, in Orthodoxy Mary is the object of very little in the way of formal dogma. Casey gives an engaging account of the importance of the Mother of God in the life of St Seraphim of Sarov, and draws out the way in which his devotion to her was integral to his whole saintly manner of living. Casey also narrates some of the traditions concerning the relationship of the Mother of God to Mount Athos, showing the enormous importance that she has for the Athonite monastic communities.

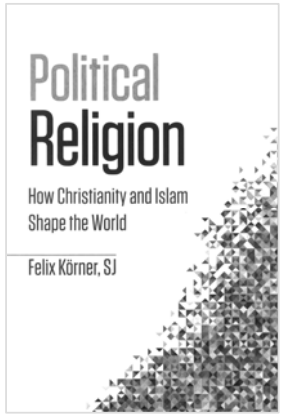
The next chapter, on Mary in her Jewish context, is not quite what it claims to be. Much of it is an attractive presentation of some of the Old Testament texts that Christians have read as being related to Mary—for example, the story of Queen Esther as a prophetic type of Mary as intercessor with the King of Heaven. Nevertheless, there are some striking comparisons made with Jewish women's honouring of the matriarch Rachel. Later in the book, Casey acknowledges that the Christian reading of the Old Testament is not the same as Jewish readings of the same texts, but says he hopes that Jews will appreciate Christian gratitude, both for these treasures and for producing the woman who gave birth to the Christian Messiah.

The final chapter is concerned with Mary in Islam, and is mostly devoted to narrating the story of Maryam as it is told in the Qur'ān. Casey points out that Mary cannot hold the same position for Muslims as she does for Christians, because Muslims do not believe that Jesus is God incarnate, and so cannot believe that Mary is the Mother of God. Nevertheless, their sacred book holds her in great regard. (Casey says that most ordinary Muslims are rather unfamiliar with the figure of Mary: this has not been my own experience.) He suggests that Muslims' refusal to recognise the possibility of the incarnation should help Christians to appreciate the wonder of our own doctrine.

The book's conclusion mentions Marian shrines shared by Christians and Muslims or by Christians and Hindus, and sees the common honouring of Mary as a possible route to future harmony between peoples who have held long-standing resentments towards one another. Mary 'helps us to see what marvels the Almighty has done for us' and 'enables us to rejoice in God our Saviour'.

Sarah Jane Boss

Felix Körner, *Political Religion: How Christianity and Islam Shape the World* (Mahwah: Paulist, 2020). 978 0 8091 5496 8, pp. 240, $29.95.



In this original and thought-provoking study Felix Körner, a Jesuit theologian and scholar of Islam, explores various forms of presence that religions can take in different societies. Körner presents his wide-ranging reflections in a clear structure. Chapters 1 to 6 are divided into three pairs, each exploring two contrasting models of the relationship of religion to society. Thus chapter 1 considers religion as culture: in this model people do not choose their own religion, but simply accept the givenness of the faith they have inherited. In stark contrast, chapter 2 focuses on religion as new identity: here authentic religion is a matter of individual decision rather than mere inheritance. Körner notes the limitations of each model but particularly emphasizes how the 'new identity' model can lead to the ideologization of religion and rejection of culture in both Christian and Muslim forms of Puritanism.

The focus then shifts to violence and political power, looking first (chapter 3) at how these are endorsed by religion and then (chapter 4) at how religion can relativise and critique them. Chapters 5 and 6 consider religion as 'representation of weakness' (for example the voice of the poor and deprived) and as 'inspiration in a plural society'. Finally, in chapter 7, Körner moves beyond the sociopolitical concepts of chapters 1–6 and defines religion as 'acknowledgement of the other', concluding that 'religion is only faithful to itself when it brings to bear its power to shape the world, not by using its power violently, but in acknowledgement of the other' (p. 238).

To appreciate the kind of book this is, and especially the type of engagement with Islam that it offers, it is helpful to understand that it arises from Körner's experience of teaching alongside a prominent Turkish Muslim scholar, Ömer Özsoy, a pioneer in new approaches to the interpretation of the Qur'ān and a leading figure in Muslim intellectual life in Germany today (p. xii). This gives a specific character and context to the book and helps us understand both what it does provide and what it does not.

Körner's aim here is to be a Christian interlocutor in exploratory, adventurous conversation with the kind of progressive, open Muslim intellectual discourse exemplified by Özsoy, and to do so in the context of contemporary Germany. Although the book moves through the carefully structured stages

noted above, it at the same time has a surprisingly unsystematic, eclectic character. The argument often moves fast from point to point, sometimes handling complex ideas very briefly before moving to something new, and also occasionally throwing in engaging personal anecdotes and historical asides. So the reader often feels in the midst of a lively and demanding intellectual conversation. My own experience was that while this approach can be very stimulating, Körner's multidisciplinary sophistication and the brisk tempo of his writing sometimes left me struggling to keep up, and wondering how the multitude of insights he offers ultimately hold together.

So although Körner writes with master's level students in mind, the reader should not expect a systematic, textbook-style overview of the most influential ways in which the relationship between religion and politics has been understood and practised. This clarification applies especially to the book's engagement with Islam, and explains what would otherwise appear to be very surprising omissions in a book concerned with how Islam shapes the world. For example, we hear virtually nothing of Islamic law (Shari'a) or of debates among Muslims about whether they should be seeking to create Islamic states. It is also striking that very few Muslim thinkers are mentioned at all; the occasional exceptions tend to be of the same broadly progressive outlook as Özsoy. A related aspect of Körner's approach is that for his frequent expositions of Qur'ānic perspectives he draws not on the work of Muslim exegetes but of Angelika Neuwirth, the doyenne of contemporary German Qur'ān scholarship.

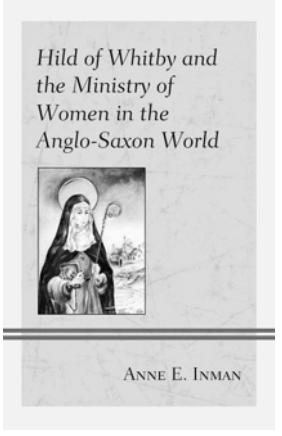
In a key passage towards the end of the book, Körner quotes Benedict XVI's acknowledgement (at Assisi in 2011) of the critique of religion as promoting violence and intolerance. Benedict posed to his multireligious audience the challenge of addressing 'a fundamental task for interreligious dialogue': how to so understand and present the 'common nature of religion' that this widespread critique is adequately addressed (pp. 221–222). Körner explicitly accepts this challenge as the task for his final chapter, asking 'Can religion be defined in such a way that its definition already shows how violence runs counter to its essence?' (p. 219)

As we have seen, Körner's response is that the true, non-violent essence of religion lies in 'acknowledgement of the other'. The tenfold exposition of this concept which follows is the book's finale. It is also what Körner has been working towards from the outset, where he notes the impact on him of a journalist's question about why religions can be used to justify violence (p. vii). One could say that the book as a whole is Körner's extended response to Benedict's question, developed during the pontificate of Francis and shaped in many ways by the approach Francis has adopted to interreligious relations.

While this book is concerned with how both Christianity and Islam shape the world, it approaches the two religions in very different ways, with significantly more space allocated to Christianity than to Islam. Körner's own account is that it 'is not a comparative study but a Catholic ecclesiology seeking to benefit from Islamic testimonies' (p. xii). In the midst of the book's details, it may not be immediately apparent how any one particular 'Islamic testimony' has shaped Körner's thinking. However, the bigger picture to which he refers here is that it is precisely his deep engagement with Islam that has prompted Körner to frame a work of Catholic ecclesiology largely in terms of political theology. In doing so, he has provided an unusual, rich and challenging contribution to a vital area for Christian reflection today.

David Marshall

Anne E. Inman, *Hild of Whitby and the Ministry of Women in the Anglo-Saxon World* (New York: Lexington, 2019). 978 1 9787 0066 6, pp. 254, £73.00.



The book offers three main lenses through which to explore the life and times of the seventh-century abbess and saint Hild of Whitby: the political landscape in which she lived and ministered; her life as a monastic abbess, as described mainly by the Venerable Bede; and the ecclesial tensions between the followers of the Celtic tradition of Christianity, as exemplified by Aidan of Lindisfarne, and those favouring the Roman tradition, as per Augustine of Canterbury.

The canvas on which Anne Inman paints her picture is carefully primed with the vital history of Hild's time and every care is taken to explain the political geography and sociological complexity of Europe, Britain and, to a lesser degree, Ireland, at a time when it was a map of warring kingdoms. Into this landscape is added the Christian Church with its evangelical priorities and fracture lines. The 'Celts' and the 'Romans' can be understood as simple shorthand for two main strands of ecclesiological tension, in much the same way as we today might struggle to find an accommodation between a local synodal model of Church and the centralised power structures of the Roman Curia in the Vatican.

Drawing on respected and authoritative sources, Inman describes the evidence unearthed from Celtic graves of the sixth century indicating that

women held high status within the faith communities of this period, and that this was later supplanted by a Roman patriarchal and misogynistic mindset which 'extinguished a once-legitimate way of living and spreading the Gospel message' (p.35). She also describes the marriage pacts which took place to cement the union of kingdoms, including that of Hild's great-uncle Edwin who became 'Bretwalda'—an 'over-king, a king who rules other kings' (p.8, quoting Michael Wood). Although Edwin's conversion to Christianity might imply that Hild would automatically have become Christian, it is noted that, as a young woman aged thirteen, she would have been regarded as an adult in her own right, able to take charge of inherited property from the age of ten or twelve years (p.12). Also, as Inman adds, it was not unusual for those within royal households to follow different faiths, so Hild's baptism would have signalled a serious personal conversion for her, not mere familial compliance.

Having touched on Hild's early years, the next detailed information on her life comes from the work of Venerable Bede, and Inman is keen to emphasize that Bede's account is not value-free, as he clearly wished to reinforce the authority of the Roman Church over and against the Celtic model. The humble spirituality of the Celtic monk Aidan was fundamental to Hild's understanding of her role as the abbess of Whitby, a calling which placed her in a position of considerable power and influence with political leaders as well as religious communities. She is identified as an overseer, teacher and indeed bishop-maker. Her overseer role is an interesting one, in which the jurisdiction over her monastic community of men and women was not given over to a bishop but remained with Hild as abbess. In the fullness of time, this changed within Anglo-Saxon monasticism with the adoption of the Benedictine model, which placed male-only monasteries under the authority of abbots.

Hild is also acknowledged as a patron of the arts, who managed to link the non-Christian epic sagas with the Christian story. A prime example of this is the work of the poet Caedmon, whose life at Whitby began as a cowherd. Hild saw in him a saintly poetic figure and, under her mentorship, he became a monk and flourished as one of the first Anglo-Saxon Christian poets. Her role as 'bishop-maker' credits her with the mentorship of five monks of her community who later became bishops.

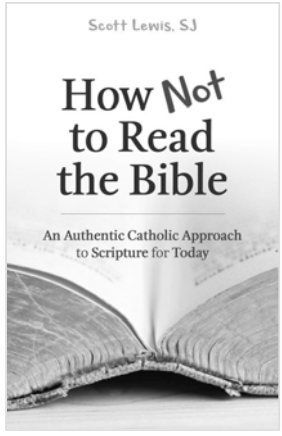
In terms of Hild's influence for our own time, I would suggest that her approach to the sacramental meaning of ritual is particularly relevant to us. In Hild's community, the embodied spirituality of time and place, processions and prayer were liturgical and sacramental, at a time when the seven sacraments, as we understand them, had not even been finally defined. The description of the gathered community around Hild's deathbed for reconciliation and the reception of *Viaticum* (food for the journey) indicates both liturgy and sacrament, although not presided over by a priest.

The ringfencing of forgiveness to ordained male clerics belongs to a later era. Although the Church's magisterium would assert that sacramental reconciliation must be undertaken in the presence of a priest, this was certainly not so in Hild's time and perhaps her ministry in this regard more accurately reflects the scriptural letter of James when he speaks of the 'elders' anointing with oil for both healing and forgiveness and confessing sins to one another (James 5: 13–16). This suggests, perhaps, that today's gates of orthodoxy have become both narrow and rusty and that the insights of Inman in this impressive account might help provide some welcome oil for the hinges. In her closing words Inman suggests:

> For the sake of a more authentic telling of the tradition and greater conformity with the mind of Christ, it is high time that the shadow of patriarchy that has so effectively blotted out Hild's role as one of the great spiritual mothers of the early medieval period was removed, so that her brilliant light might shine out more fully in the tradition she helped to shape.

Bridie Stringer

Scott Lewis, *How Not to Read the Bible: An Authentic Catholic Approach to Scripture for Today* (Mahwah: Paulist, 2019). 978 0 8091 5503 3, pp. 154, $19.95.



Mind the Gap—the mantra heard on London Underground platforms evokes the essence of this book: the gap between the books of the Bible, the context in which and for which they were written and the context in which we find ourselves today. Cultural relativism rears its head yet again!

The three chapters that make up this guide—'The Bible through History: The Evolution and Development of Biblical Scholarship', 'The Old Testament: A Rich and Diverse Library', and 'The New Testament: Many Streams, Many Voices'—all lead up to, and give the rationale for, what is contained in the conclusion. Indeed I would suggest that the reader, particularly the newcomer to scripture scholarship, start with the conclusion and then reread the book from the beginning.

The first three chapters concentrate heavily on the technical process by which sacred scripture has come down to us and may seem a little dispiriting, particularly to those who like clarity, lack of confusion and certainty, for Lewis presents us with the messy reality of the situation. He salvages something from this mess by asking us to be very mindful of the way we approach scripture. For scripture speaks to us, now, in our time, particularly in the liturgy of the Mass, in ways that are mysterious and profound. Our response to the Word is of prime importance, and in the Gospels the 'Word in the text is Jesus himself' (p.152). It has been said that the best interpreter of scripture is scripture itself: 'The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever' (Isaiah 40:8).

Lewis would like to see us 'encountering rather than reading the Bible' (p.148), because 'delving into the Scriptures is more than just reading a book—it is a process in which we take part' (p.149). Following St Ignatius of Loyola, he exhorts us to engage our imagination when looking at scripture, citing the practice of *lectio divina* as 'a matter of immersing ourselves in the story and allowing it to carry us along by the current. We enter into scripture so it can enter into us.' (p.150) As he concludes:

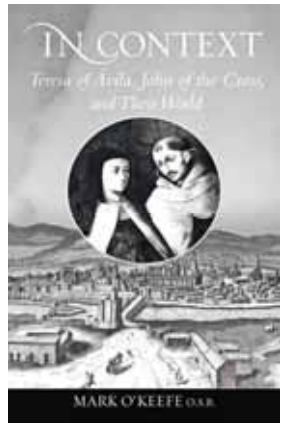
> The Bible is about us and no one else …. We meet all sorts of characters in the Bible—heroes, villains and many in between. And we are all of them …. Rather than using it as a weapon with which to judge others we can recognise it for what it is: a mirror of the soul. (p.150)

The reading of scripture is to be encouraged, but to do so without caution would be reckless. As Lewis reminds us 'there is a dark side to biblical tradition. Along with the many blessings it has brought, the Bible has incited fear, intolerance, bigotry, pain and bloodshed.' (p.8) We all wear glasses of a particular hue and write in a certain colour of ink. 'It is said that the Bible kills and gives life; wounds and heals; builds up and destroys. This all depends on who is doing the reading, the personal and collective baggage they bring to the text' (p.9). God is more than any text, no matter how sacred. The clergy know the truth of current biblical scholarship, but few take the risk of preaching about it. 'The latest biblical scholarship has been taught in seminaries and theology schools for the last 50 years, and very little of this information has reached the people in the pews' (p.17).

This book goes a long way towards filling the gap referred to at the beginning: it provides the reader of scripture with the necessary caution to enter into the sacred text as safely as possible. It is to be commended.

Alan Salmon

Martin O'Keefe, *In Context: Teresa of Ávila, John of the Cross, and Their World* (Washington, DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 2020). 978 1 9392 7285 0, pp. 312, $19.95.



The understanding of Teresa of Ávila in the English-speaking world changed markedly with the publication of four books between 1989 and 1996, which re-evaluated Teresa's social context and its impact on her writings. The first, Jodi Bilinkoff's *The Ávila of Saint Teresa: Religious Reform in a Sixteenth-Century City* (1989), brought a new appreciation of the complex set of forces both promoting and resisting reform in Ávila and of Teresa's skill in navigating them. The second, Alison Weber's *Teresa of Ávila and the Rhetoric of Femininity* (1990), showed systematic rhetorical strategies in Teresa's writing which she used to deal with the opposition that she faced on account of her gender as a 'feeble woman'. The third, Rowan Williams's *Teresa of Ávila* (1991), drawing on these and similar findings in the Spanish scholarship, sought to situate her thought in its social context—revealing how Teresa reacted in her spiritual teaching, for instance, against the contemporary obsession with honour in Spanish society. Finally, Gillian Ahlgren's *Teresa of Ávila and the Politics of Sanctity* (1996) extended Weber's feminist analysis to examine the process by which Teresa was accepted as a teacher of mystical theology and then as a saint, against opposing forces.

These books overturned older assumptions that Teresa was an artless ecstatic who received most of what she knew directly from God—a caricature, but one with a surprisingly strong hold. It became clear that her circumstances shaped her behaviour and her message more than was previously understood, and in ways that had not been considered. Though thirty years have passed since Bilinkoff's groundbreaking book, this change of perspective is still not widely known. The present book by Mark O'Keefe seeks to summarise what the scholars have been saying for a more popular audience.

O'Keefe describes what is now known about the Spanish Church, religious reform, the reform of the Carmelites, the situation in Ávila, social mores, gender relations and the Inquisition, with chapters on each of these topics, indicating how Teresa would have experienced them. Most of the book is about Teresa, while John of the Cross crops up only occasionally, reflecting

how much less is known about John's life. O'Keefe is more descriptive than evaluative, setting out the facts rather than going far into the question of exactly how they affected Teresa and John in their work and writings.

Spanish scholarship has been more extensive on the social and historical context than the scholarship in English, and O'Keefe provides the valuable service for English readers of summarising significant parts of the Spanish literature, for instance that by Eulogio Pacho and Melquíades Andrés Martín. There is a useful outline of the features of Spanish spirituality according to Andrés Martín (pp.128–137).

O'Keefe regards the Spanish scholarship as preferable to the Anglophone, being more extensive, and he refers to it more. He regards Weber and Ahlgren as overstating the feminist case. While this is arguable, it seems to be based on a misreading, treating Weber's 'rhetorical strategy' as implying some sleight of hand on Teresa's part, rather than showing a more positive capacity to craft her writing creatively at several different levels. More engagement with these works would be welcome, given their influence particularly in the English-speaking world, and with Rowan Williams's book, which is not mentioned. But O'Keefe is not trying to provide a critical survey of the literature. He seeks to bring the social and historical context to light, which he does clearly and accessibly.

Edward Howells