

THE WAY

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A UNIVERSAL CALL TO HOLINESS



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Learning from a Saint Next Door: The Pursuit of Holiness in Thomas Merton and Pope Francis

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Since the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic Church has recognised a ‘universal call to holiness’. In other words, sanctity is not the preserve of those living a particular way of life, as a priest or a nun, for example, but something offered to all Christians. Daniel Horan traces this idea in the writing of Thomas Merton, and in the ways that it has been developed by Pope Francis.

Family Structures and Spiritual Freedom

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A principal aim of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius is to lead those making them to a place where they can make free choices, specifically about how they can best answer the call of God in their lives. How can this work, Suzanne Krudys asks, when the exercitant is, for instance, already a wife and mother, living within a network of long-established ties and responsibilities?

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It is now generally acknowledged that if interfaith dialogue is to move beyond a hard-won mutual toleration of different beliefs, a careful comparison of different theologies is needed. Rolphy Pinto contributes to this debate by comparing and contrasting elements of the Hindu *Bhagavad Gītā* and the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*.

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Thomas Flowers

More than fifty members of the Society of Jesus have been canonized. These men came from different centuries and parts of the world, and exercised a variety of ministries within the Church. What unites them, as Thomas Flowers shows here, is a commitment to living a life of holiness, and their very diversity can help us reach a clearer understanding of this elusive quality.

Augustine Baker: A Wise Mystical Guide

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Augustine (or Austin) Baker was a seventeenth-century Welsh-speaking Benedictine monk, a convert from Protestantism, and a spiritual writer who wrote ‘as a contemplative and for contemplatives’. Here the Dominican Louis Roy asks how his work might instruct those today who wish to deepen their own lives of prayer.

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The Old Testament’s Book of Ruth tells the attractive story of a Moabite woman marrying into a Jewish family, and thereby becoming one of the ancestors of King David, and so of Jesus. Paul Dominic here offers a reading of this text that draws out its continuing relevance both for married people and those who live the consecrated life of religious.

The Spirituality of Marriage Today

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Robert E. Doud

Taking a cue from St Paul’s remark ‘It is better to marry than to be aflame with passion’ (1 Corinthians 7:9), Christianity has sometimes presented marriage as a lesser option, allowed for those who cannot live the better, celibate life. Recent church teaching offers a much more positive view of married life, as Bob Doud shows in a personal reflection.

*Spirituality and Living****Etsi ficus non floret: An Examen of the Landscape of My Life***

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Ian Coleman

People make pilgrimages for many reasons: out of devotion to a particular saint or shrine; to ask a favour of God; in thanksgiving for gifts received—the list could go on. Here Ian Coleman, who lived the Jesuit vocation for four years before leaving the Society, and is now a permanent deacon and a proud father, makes a pilgrim journey to revisit that original calling.

Our Common Home

An Ecological Spirituality

90–94

Yvonne Prowse

The fact that living out the Christian gospel must include a commitment to care for the whole of creation is becoming ever more widely accepted. In this article Yvonne Prowse considers how those making a retreat might be presented with the kind of spiritual resources that will enable them to sustain such a challenging commitment.

From the Archive

Moral Education

95–108

Gerard J. Hughes

Gerard J. Hughes, who died recently, was a Jesuit philosopher of the British Province, and a prolific writer, not least in the pages of *The Way*. As a memorial to him, we reprint an article on moral education, first published in the *Way Supplement* in 1974, which deals with the moral virtues, a theme that has since returned to the centre of contemporary ethical debate.

Book Reviews

Timothy W. O'Brien on the letters of St Ignatius

Nicholas King on prayer

Lizette Larson-Miller on Pope Francis and the liturgy

Kathleen Taylor on comparative theology

Gerald O'Collins on Vatican II

Tessa Holland on John of the Cross and desire

Paul Moser on the experience of the Holy Spirit

Luke Penkett on Karl Rahner

Janet Ruffing on spiritual direction and the saints

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.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foreign-language quotations are translated by the article author unless otherwise noted. The scripture quotations herein are generally from the New Revised Standard Version Bible © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, and are used by permission. All rights reserved.

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|--|
| <i>Autobiography</i> | 'Reminiscences (Autobiography)', in <i>Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings</i> , translated by Philip Endean and Joseph A. Munitiz (London: Penguin, 1996) |
| <i>Constitutions</i> | in <i>The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms</i> (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996) |
| <i>Diary</i> | 'The Spiritual Diary', in <i>Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings</i> , translated by Philip Endean and Joseph A. Munitiz (London: Penguin, 1996) |
| <i>Dir</i> | <i>On Giving the Spiritual Exercises: The Early Manuscript Directories and the Official Directory of 1599</i> , translated and edited by Martin E. Palmer (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996) |
| <i>Exx</i> | <i>The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius</i> , translated by George E. Ganss (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992) |
| <i>GC</i> | General Congregation, in <i>Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 31st–35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus</i> (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009) and <i>Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus</i> (Boston: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2017) |
| <i>MHSJ</i> | <i>Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu</i> , 157 volumes (Madrid and Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1898–) |
| <i>Papal documents may be found at www.vatican.va</i> | |

FOREWORD

A CENTURY AGO it would have seemed self-evident to most Roman Catholics, and many other Christians, that different ways of life within the Church were associated with different levels of sanctity. From this perspective monks and nuns living an enclosed life within an abbey or monastery were usually thought of as the most holy, then vowed religious living an apostolic life. In this view the ‘secular’ clergy came next, and last in line were laypeople. Even here, those who had chosen to live a single life came in ahead of the married. There were other factors, such as martyrdom, that might move you up the scale, and within the different states of life some individuals clearly appeared to be more holy than others. But, at least at the level of popular piety, this way of ordering the life of the Church was largely unchallenged.

The reflections of the bishops who gathered at the Second Vatican Council changed all that. Their document *Lumen gentium*, issued in November 1964, spoke of a ‘universal call to holiness’. All the baptized are intended to live holy lives, although what this will look like in practice will differ. A married laywoman is no less intrinsically holy than an enclosed monk, and the one has as much access to God, and to the gifts of God, as the other. In the six decades since *Lumen gentium* was promulgated, the Church has continued to work out its implications, as can be seen in the articles gathered in this issue of *The Way*.

The US Cistercian Thomas Merton was one of the first to popularise this new way of thinking, and Daniel Horan explores ways in which his thought finds echoes in that of the present Pope. Although the writings of Augustine Baker, a seventeenth-century Benedictine monk, deal extensively with contemplative prayer and were intended principally for religious, Louis Roy believes that they can now be of use to those seeking holiness in a variety of states of life. This same broad understanding informed the work of Gerard J. Hughes, the Jesuit philosopher who died recently, and whose essay on moral education (first published within a decade of Vatican II) is reprinted here as a tribute to him.

The idea that married people have their own call to holiness, and the nature of that call, interests several of our writers. Bob Doud reflects on how his own views have developed in the years since the Council.

Suzanne Krudys considers what the freedom which is, according to St Ignatius, one of the goals of the Spiritual Exercises, looks like for someone who must care for a family. The Old Testament Book of Ruth can speak about their commitment both to married people and those in vowed religious life, according to Paul Dominic. And Ian Coleman, who left the Jesuits and is now a married deacon and father, describes a pilgrimage he undertook, coming to a deeper understanding of his own response to the summons to sanctity.

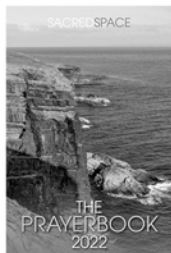
Even within the life of a single religious order, holiness can take a variety of forms. In his essay Thomas Flowers looks at the experience of the 53 members of the Society of Jesus who have been formally canonized, noting the differences between them as well as what unites them in their responses to the call to holiness. The contribution of Rolphy Pinto moves beyond Christianity to compare its paths to holiness with those found in the Hindu scriptures, in a way that would again have been impossible before the Second Vatican Council. Finally Yvonne Prowse invites the reader to ask how a contemporary commitment to holiness can be rooted in a concern for the whole of creation.

Although the command to 'be holy' occurs repeatedly in both Jewish and Christian scriptures, it can be tempting to think that it is addressed to some other group or class, and not to oneself. For sixty years now, Roman Catholic teaching has been clear that there is no one exempt from that command. Taken together the essays gathered here suggest a variety of ways in which a response to this universal call might be made.

Paul Nicholson SJ
Editor

BOOKS TO CELEBRATE

Ignatius
IGNATIUS 500



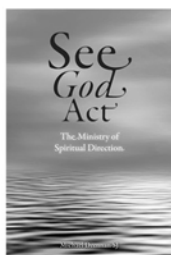
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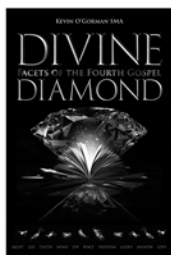


Joy in God: Rekindling an Inner Fire

Joachim Hartmann SJ and Annette Clara Unkelhäußer

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LEARNING FROM A SAINT NEXT DOOR

The Pursuit of Holiness in Thomas Merton and Pope Francis

Daniel P. Horan

THE WELL-KNOWN US Jesuit author James Martin concluded his 2006 bestseller *My Life with the Saints* with the affirmation:

The universal call to holiness is an invitation to be ourselves The invitation to holiness is a lifelong call to draw closer to God, who wants nothing more than to encounter us as the people we are and the saints we are meant to be.¹

This is not an insight unique to him; as he earlier explains, Thomas Merton was a significant influence on his understanding of holiness and identity. But what Martin summarises well is the central conviction that preoccupied Merton over the course of his monastic career. As Merton explains in *New Seeds of Contemplation*, ‘For me to be a saint means to be myself, and the only way to discover who we really are is to discover ourselves in God.’² Sanctity—holiness—is not about becoming something or someone that we are *not*, but instead about striving to be more authentically who it is God created us to be—in our particularity, uniqueness and distinctive context.

On 9 April 2018, more than half a century after Merton wrote about holiness and what it means to be a saint, Pope Francis released a surprise apostolic exhortation ‘on the call to holiness in today’s world’, titled *Gaudete et exsultate* (‘Rejoice and Be Glad’). While he does not mention Merton by name in this document (as he did three years earlier during his address to the joint session of the United States Congress), Pope

¹ James Martin, *My Life with the Saints* (Chicago: Loyola, 2006), 390.

² Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions, 1961), 31.

Francis nevertheless lays out a pattern of Christian holiness that evokes the life and writing of the late US Trappist monk.³ I should like to highlight here how Merton's writings anticipate the nature of Christian discipleship presented in Pope Francis's magisterial teaching, and to suggest that Merton is precisely one of the non-canonical 'saints "next door"' whom Pope Francis describes.⁴

Holiness Is a Universal Call

The bulk of Thomas Merton's writings on holiness were completed before the Second Vatican Council. In this way, his affirmation of a 'universal call to holiness', as Vatican II's *Lumen gentium* ('The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church') would put it, anticipated what would be formalised in that document. Nearly a full decade before the promulgation of *Lumen gentium*, Merton dedicated a lengthy chapter in *No Man Is an Island* to the concept of vocation as a universal attribute.⁵ He begins that essay with the following reflection:

Each one of us has some kind of vocation. We are all called by God to share in His life and in His Kingdom. Each one of us is called to a special place in the Kingdom. If we find that place we will be happy. If we do not find it, we can never be completely happy. For each one of us, there is only one thing necessary: to fulfill our own destiny, according to God's will, to be what God wants us to be.⁶

He goes on to add: 'All vocations are intended by God to manifest His love in the world'.⁷ Wherever we find ourselves, in whatever time, no matter who we are or what we do, each of us has received a call to follow God's will and present the love of God to our sisters and brothers in our particular contexts.

Years later, Merton would pick up this theme in *New Seeds of Contemplation* and *Life and Holiness*, among other places. In the latter book, Merton explicitly uses language that will appear in the conciliar debates

³ See Pope Francis, 'Visit to the Joint Session of the United States Congress' (24 September 2015). Given the limitations of space, I have chosen to focus on Merton's 1963 book *Life and Holiness*, which contains essays originally published in the years 1961 and 1962, and which reflects a period of Merton's thinking on contemplation, faith and sanctity that notably intersects with his so-called 'turn to the world' about this same time.

⁴ Pope Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*, nn.6–8.

⁵ Thomas Merton, *No Man Is an Island* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1955), 131–163.

⁶ Merton, *No Man Is an Island*, 131.

⁷ Merton, *No Man Is an Island*, 153.

and the final texts.⁸ He writes: ‘Every Christian is therefore called to sanctity and union with Christ’.⁹ Later in *Life and Holiness*, he explains:

The way of Christian perfection begins with a personal summons, addressed to the individual Christian by Christ the Lord, through the Holy Spirit. This summons is a call, a ‘vocation’. Every Christian in one way or other receives this vocation from Christ—the call to follow him.¹⁰

The language we find in *Lumen gentium* reads:

Fortified by so many and such powerful means of salvation, all the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord, each in his own way, to that perfect holiness whereby the Father Himself is perfect (n. 11).

Pope Francis takes this particular line from *Lumen gentium* as the starting point in his exhortation *Gaudete et exsultate*. In a way that echoes Merton’s own concern that too many people reduce the striving after Christian holiness to an activity reserved for consecrated religious or the ordained ministers of the Church, Pope Francis states bluntly: ‘To be holy does not require being a bishop, a priest or a religious. We are



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⁸ This is not to suggest in a causal sense that Merton directly influenced the formation of *Lumen gentium*. Rather, it shows in a correlative manner that Merton was thinking alongside some of the *periti* of the council and other leading theological voices of the age. It also affirms Merton’s theological and spiritual outlook as entirely orthodox, contrary to what some contemporary or later naysayers might suggest.

⁹ Merton, *Life and Holiness*, 13.

¹⁰ Merton, *Life and Holiness*, 34.

frequently tempted to think that holiness is only for those who can withdraw from ordinary affairs to spend much time in prayer.' He unequivocally affirms Merton's insights, stating: 'This is not the case. We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves.' Reiterating the universality of the call to holiness, the Pope ties this vocation to baptism, exhorting Christians to 'let the grace of your baptism bear fruit in a path of holiness'.¹¹

But what is the holiness that all Christian women and men are called to seek? This is another dimension of sanctity's universality that Merton and Pope Francis share in common. Both make clear that authentic Christian holiness has absolutely nothing to do with individual perfection or sinlessness. To claim otherwise is to contravene doctrinal statements on the consequences of original sin and our ecclesial status as a Church always already holy and sinful.¹² Merton warns us that we should 'not therefore delude ourselves with easy and infantile conceptions of holiness', which are too often reduced to the hagiographic tales of superhuman heroism. He rejects this otherworldly perspective on holiness, and adds,

Hence sanctity is not a matter of being *less* human, but *more* human than other men It follows that a pretended 'way of perfection' that simply destroys or frustrates human values precisely because they are human, and in order to set oneself apart from the rest of men as an object of wonder, is doomed to be nothing but a caricature. And such caricaturing of sanctity is indeed a sin against faith in the Incarnation.¹³

Merton puts a great deal of effort into combating this mistaken understanding of holiness as personal perfection. He writes:

That is why it is perhaps advisable to speak of 'holiness' rather than 'perfection'. A 'holy' person is one who is sanctified by the presence and action of God in him. He is 'holy' because he lives so deeply immersed in the life, the faith, and the charity of the 'holy Church'.¹⁴

And herein lies the clue about what sanctity and holiness mean: 'The true saint is not one who has become convinced that he himself is holy',

¹¹ Pope Francis, *Gaudete et exultate*, nn. 14–15.

¹² See Brian P. Flanagan, *Stumbling in Holiness: Sin and Sanctity in the Church* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2018).

¹³ Merton, *Life and Holiness*, 19, 24.

¹⁴ Merton, *Life and Holiness*, 20.

Merton explains, ‘but one who is overwhelmed by the realisation that God, and God alone, is holy’. Sanctity is marked by participation in God’s holiness, a welcomed surrender to the transcendent sign of love and peace working through us because of God, and not because of us. In this way, Merton articulates what it means to be a saint.

The saint, then, seeks not his own glory but the glory of God. And in order that God may be glorified in all things, the saint wishes himself to be nothing but a pure instrument of the divine will. He wants himself to be simply a window through which God’s mercy shines on the world.¹⁵

Elsewhere he elaborates on this point, making a sound Trinitarian argument for the participation in God’s holiness as conformity to Christ in the Spirit.¹⁶

This sense of authentic Christian holiness as participation in the singular holiness of God conforms to the ancient Hebrew understanding of sanctity witnessed in the Old Testament. The theologian Elizabeth Johnson has argued for the retrieval of this understanding in her important 1998 book *Friends of God and Prophets*.¹⁷ Like Merton and Johnson, Pope Francis also emphasizes authentic sanctity as participating in God’s holiness, and does so with a particularly Christological valence. He explains:

**Participation in
the singular
holiness of God**

At its core, holiness is experiencing, in union with Christ, the mysteries of his life. It consists in uniting ourselves to the Lord’s death and resurrection in a unique and personal way, constantly dying and rising anew with him.¹⁸

Invoking—without attribution—Merton’s most famous spiritual contribution, the Pope writes: ‘Sooner or later, we have to face our *true selves* and let the Lord enter’.¹⁹

Given that the only real holiness which exists is God’s holiness, the universal call to participate in the life of God necessarily leads to reflection on the Church for, as Pope Francis reiterates in this exhortation and

¹⁵ Merton, *Life and Holiness*, 26.

¹⁶ For example, see Merton, *Life and Holiness*, 58–59 and throughout.

¹⁷ See Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum, 1998).

¹⁸ Pope Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*, n. 20.

¹⁹ Pope Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*, n. 29, emphasis added.

elsewhere, Christianity always implies community—the community of believers, the communion of saints. Or, as Merton says, ‘The whole Christian life is then an interrelationship between members of a body unified by supernatural charity, that is by the action of the Holy Spirit, making us all one in Christ’.²⁰

Sanctity Is Particular

There is a telling passage in *Life and Holiness* about saints and the particularity of holiness, which is often overlooked in our narratives about exemplary Christian models of living. Merton writes:

The popular idea of a ‘saint’ is, of course, quite naturally based on the sanctity which is presented for our veneration, in heroic men and women, by the Church. There is nothing surprising in the fact that the saints quickly become stereotyped in the mind of the average Christian, and everyone, on reflection, will easily admit that the stereotype tends to be unreal. The conventions of hagiography have usually accentuated the unreality of the picture, and pious art has, in most cases, successfully completed the work. In this way, the Christian who devotes himself to the pursuit of holiness unconsciously tends to reproduce in himself some features of the popular stereotyped image. Or rather, since it is fortunately difficult to succeed in this enterprise, he imagines himself in some sense obliged to follow the pattern, as if it were really a model proposed for his imitation by the Church instead of a purely conventional and popular caricature of a mysterious reality—the Christlikeness of the saints.²¹

Merton goes out of his way to deconstruct the false narrative of cookie-cutter sanctity too often depicted in the rote ‘lives of the saints’ that are nothing more than misleading caricatures. Since holiness is participation in the life of God, and each child, woman and man experiences God in distinctive times and places, Merton asserts, ‘It is in the ordinary duties and labors of life that the Christian can and should develop his spiritual union with God’. Later he adds:

Each one becomes [holy], not by realizing one uniform standard of universal perfection in his own life, but by responding to the call and the love of God, addressed to him within the limitations and circumstances of his own particular vocation.²²

²⁰ Merton, *Life and Holiness*, 40.

²¹ Merton, *Life and Holiness*, 22.

²² Merton, *Life and Holiness*, 9, 29.

In this way, Merton's reflections on the 'true' and 'false' selves offer a profound gift to those discerning how best to understanding the pursuit of Christian holiness. As inspiring and important as the 'lives of the saints' are, they do not offer a how-to guide for Christian living in every context. This is where attention to our prayer life and ongoing and deepening discovery of who we are in God is the foundation for Christian holiness. Pope Francis spends a fair amount of time addressing this topic. He writes:

We should not grow discouraged before examples of holiness that appear unattainable. There are some testimonies that may prove helpful and inspiring, but that we are not meant to copy, for that could even lead us astray from the one specific path that the Lord has in mind for us. The important thing is that each believer discern his or her own path, that they bring out the very best of themselves, the most personal gifts God has placed in their hearts, rather than hopelessly trying to imitate something not meant for them.²³

In so many ways, this is much more easily said than done, a fact that both Merton and Pope Francis acknowledge. A life pursuing Christian holiness, then, requires discernment, prayer and action rather than unreflective repetition of hagiographic stereotypes. Pope Francis states directly that participation in the life of Christ, that is God's holiness, ought to lead to concrete actions—actions that do not necessarily relate to the miraculous or incredible. He says: 'This holiness to which the Lord calls you will grow through small gestures'.²⁴ Reiterating *Lumen gentium's* teaching and Merton's insistence on the particularity of sanctity, Pope Francis explains that how we live our lives, interact with those around us and choose to spend our time, energy and resources all contribute to a life of Christian holiness in keeping with the tradition.

There Are False Forms of Holiness

Another aspect of a theology of holiness shared by both Merton and Francis is the reality of false forms of holiness. I have already mentioned the problematic of romanticising caricatures of heroic sanctity and personal perfection. Additionally, both Merton and Francis are concerned about limitations on the scope of who qualifies as *potentially* holy—namely, ordained ministers and consecrated religious alone. Merton

²³ Pope Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*, n. 11.

²⁴ Pope Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*, n. 16.



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anticipates, and Pope Francis reiterates, Vatican II's affirmation that *all women and men* are called to holiness, regardless of their state of life, social location, education or context.

While these are indeed illustrations of what we might call 'false forms of holiness', at least by omission if not by description, there are two other kinds that troubled both Merton in the 1960s and Pope Francis today. The first was the reduction of faith to propositional claims. This is an intellectualising of faith that Pope Francis calls 'contemporary gnosticism'.²⁵ He warns about the tendency to mistake what one knows (or thinks one knows) *about* faith claims *for* authentic Christian faith. He explains that people who do this think holiness is about having all the right answers, memorising catechetical statements, having the most compelling apologetic response in an argument. He says:

A healthy humble use of reason in order to reflect on the theological and moral teaching of the Gospel is one thing. It is another to reduce Jesus' teaching to a cold and harsh logic that seeks to dominate everything.²⁶

While Merton does not address this particular form of false holiness directly in *Life and Holiness*, he does spend a fair amount of time on it in *New Seeds of Contemplation* in his chapter on 'faith'. He writes: 'Too

²⁵ Pope Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*, nn. 36–46.

²⁶ Pope Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*, n. 39.

often our notion of faith is falsified by our emphasis on the statements *about* God which faith believes, and by our forgetfulness of the fact that faith is a communion with God's own light and truth'. He highlights the dangerous effect that results from this amnesia about authentic faith, noting that:

If instead of resting in God by faith, we rest simply in the proposition or the formula, it is no wonder that faith does not lead to contemplation Faith goes beyond words and formulas and brings us the light of God Himself.²⁷

Holiness is not measured by how much one knows or how often one wins an argument or theological dispute (however such a showdown is adjudicated), and yet in an age of increased fear and polarisation, when communications technology and scientific discovery pervasively affect culture and experience, a gnostic or intellectual reduction of the faith can seem secure and appealing. But it is not reflective of Christian holiness.

The second form of false holiness is a restrictive or legalistic view of Christian faith, or what Pope Francis describes as 'contemporary Pelagianism'.²⁸ In his *Life and Holiness*, Merton contrasts Christian charity—truly a sign of active participation in the life and holiness of God—with forgetfulness about the real purpose of the Church's organizational discipline, rituals, teaching authority and hierarchy. He explains: 'If we forget that the laws and organization of the Church are there only to preserve the inner life of charity, we will tend to make the observance of law an end in itself'.²⁹ Sadly, for many today, this is what it means to strive for holiness.

Pope Francis likens this sort of attitude and behaviour to the various forms of the ancient Pelagian heresy, which basically describes a radical sense of self-sufficiency that precludes the need for grace or the work of God in our lives. If Christian holiness is signified by participation in the holiness of God in Christ through the Spirit, then one can see the immediate problem. And yet, so many self-identified Christians become so obsessed with rules and procedures, rubrics and canonical norms, that they miss the whole point of the faith. Merton says that for these

²⁷ Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 128, 129.

²⁸ Pope Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*, nn.49–62.

²⁹ Merton, *Life and Holiness*, 43.

sorts of people, ‘the Christian life becomes externalized’, and such a person ‘may eventually become so absorbed in the externals of law and of organization that he loses a real sense of the importance of charity in the Christian life’.³⁰ Pope Francis affirms this sentiment of Merton, writing: ‘Some Christians spend their time and energy on these things, rather than letting themselves be led by the Spirit in the way of love’.³¹

A Saint Next Door

It is rare to find such congruence between a modern magisterial document and the insights of anybody writing sixty years earlier. But in terms of their theology of holiness, Merton and Pope Francis are on precisely the same page. In conclusion, I wish only to draw attention to one logical consequence of the insights that both Merton and Francis offer; namely, that if authentic Christian holiness is a universal call, always particularly situated, and does not fall into the trap of false holiness, then there are far more ‘saints’ than we typically count in the Church’s liturgical calendar.

Pope Francis opened his exhortation acknowledging the under-considered truth that there have been countless women and men of faith over the centuries whom we might rightly call ‘the saints “next door”’. These are not people who draw the attention of the Church universal; often they are not affiliated with wealthy religious orders nor do they have prelates lobbying on their behalf. They are the ordinary, everyday, largely anonymous women and men who strive to live their faith in love, thereby signifying participation in the divine life—that is God’s holiness—to those they encounter. They are neighbours, friends, fellow parishioners, family members, mentors, teachers—and strangers. They reveal the compassionate face of God without fanfare and without the acclaim they might otherwise deserve, but their lives and work bespeak the truth Christ’s life, death and resurrection sought to reveal to us. These are people who are our companions on the pilgrim journey of faith; they are members of the great ‘cloud of witnesses’ the Letter to the Hebrews (12:1) describes; they are our models for what it means to walk in the footprints of Jesus Christ and to take the gospel seriously.

And I believe that Thomas Merton is just one such saint next door. This is not to claim that he should be formally canonized (I am

³⁰ Merton, *Life and Holiness*, 43.

³¹ Pope Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*, n. 57.

of several minds about that possibility and not quite sure where I stand in the debate). But it is to claim that we do not need such ecclesiastical affirmation to venerate his life and legacy, and be inspired by his words and deeds. Thomas Merton was, in Elizabeth Johnson's borrowing from the Book of Wisdom, a true 'friend of God and a prophet'. In this way he is already a saint, someone whose whole humanity was and is on display; someone who struggled to make sense of the gospel call in his particular location and time and context—and someone who continues to call us to discern likewise through the struggle, so that each of us may participate too in the holiness of God and share in the divine life.

Daniel P. Horan OFM is professor of philosophy, religious studies and theology and director of the Center for Spirituality at Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana, USA. He is the author of numerous books, including *Reading, Praying, Living Pope Francis's 'Rejoice and Be Glad'* (2019) and *Catholicity and Emerging Personhood: A Theological Anthropology* (2019). He is also a columnist for *National Catholic Reporter* and the co-host of *The Francis Effect Podcast*, both of which explore topics at the intersection of faith, culture and politics.

FAMILY STRUCTURES AND SPIRITUAL FREEDOM

Suzanne Krudys

TWO OF THE GREAT QUALITIES of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius are their universality and their adaptability. Perhaps now more than at any other time in their history, the Spiritual Exercises find efficacy in so many different contexts and with so many people, from Christians to non-believers and from spiritual discernments to secular boardrooms. Indeed, there seems no limit to the *plasticity* of the Spiritual Exercises. If not as a complete method, then certainly as a toolkit from which individuals can pick and choose, the Spiritual Exercises seem to offer something to just about anyone who must make a decision about her or his life, within her or his life, or who wants simply to come to a better understanding about her or his life.

What is remarkable, however, is that this seeming universality and adaptability exist almost despite the text of the *Spiritual Exercises* itself. That is to say, while the underlying method of the Spiritual Exercises seems to offer something to everyone, the text—and especially the examples and metaphors Ignatius uses to illustrate and demonstrate his Exercises—can be alien in numerous ways to a contemporary audience. The world of Ignatius is much further away from us than we often acknowledge. The underlying anthropology and theology of the Exercises require translation for modern people, as do many of the cultural and historical accessories that give structure and identity to the individual exercises.

For many contemporary women, in particular, the world within the Exercises presents obstacles. Whether it be the martial metaphors of contemplations such as the Two Standards or the Call of the King, or the assumptions about human freedom and the ability of an individual to make *a choice in life*, there are elements fundamental to the Exercises which are not always felt in the lived experience of many women. Yet we know that Ignatius himself offered the Exercises to women and, from

his own time until today, women have been among the most dedicated and active participants in and practitioners of the Spiritual Exercises. The spirituality of Ignatius shapes the spiritual tradition of many women's orders within the Church, and women are among the most sought-after spiritual directors across the world.

The question of how women have engaged with the Spiritual Exercises has become an area of academic study in recent decades.¹ My purpose here is not to add to that conversation so much as simply to reflect on my own experience as a woman who has made the Spiritual Exercises, who prays with them regularly and who also works within the governance structure of the Society of Jesus. From that perspective and experience, I find myself drawn to the question of freedom within the Exercises and the spiritual tradition of Ignatius. I am drawn to the question of how a spirituality so focused on making choices and on seeking God's will in spiritual freedom is employed by individuals who do not necessarily feel freedom within the context of their lives, whose horizon is limited by social expectation and constraint and by the choices they have already made.

Specifically, I wish to reflect on the tremendous appeal of Ignatian spirituality to women such as myself: women who have raised children and are established personally and perhaps professionally, who are bound by the consequences of the previous choices they have made in their lives—choices for marriage and motherhood in particular. Such women find the idea of spiritual freedom, and of making choices in life that promote greater freedom and joy, particularly appealing. They wish that the freedom of a life lived as Ignatius proposes were truly available to them. What does the appeal of that freedom suggest about women who continue to seek intimacy with God?

This interest in spiritual freedom comes largely from my own introduction to Ignatian spirituality. Unlike many people who first encounter Ignatian spirituality in a retreat or presentation, I was introduced to it by working within one of the governance structures of the Society of Jesus itself. Unlike many Jesuits even, my introduction to Ignatian spirituality came through a lived experience of the *Constitutions*

¹ See, for example, Katherine Dyckman, Mary Garvin and Elizabeth Liebert, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed: Uncovering Liberating Possibilities for Women* (New York: Paulist, 2001); and *The Way Supplement*, 74 (Summer 1992).

of the Society of Jesus before I had any experience of the Spiritual Exercises. It was working in Jesuit governance that led me to recognise that there was something in the Spiritual Exercises that I wanted to experience and understand for myself.

What piqued my interest in Ignatian spirituality was the way my Jesuit colleagues insisted on understanding *why* they were making the choices they were making, not only regarding our work, but also within their lives. They spoke frequently about interior freedom, about concerns over what was motivating their choices, about the ways they and our other collaborators, Jesuits and laypeople alike, were *free* or not in the choices they were making. They spoke about what their prayer seemed to be suggesting to them about future assignments, the contexts in which they would like to serve and live, what it was that God wanted for them, understood in what they desired for themselves.

I was intrigued by these discussions because they were so unlike the way decisions were made in my house and unlike the way my own faith had been presented to me as a practising Roman Catholic who had been active in diocesan circles for many years. Far from freedom, my life seemed to be shaped by a never-ending series of responsibilities and obligations that were coming from outside me. As a wife and mother of over thirty years, far from having the space to imagine what God might want for me next, I had no shortage of people who shaped my day with their needs and their expectations about my responsibility to fulfil them.

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Supporting this perspective was the God who had been presented to me throughout my adult life: the God who expected me to attend Mass on Sunday; who expected me to be attentive to the needs of my husband, children and ageing mother; who expected me to be active in my parish and in my children's Catholic schools; who expected me to be responsible and responsive to my friends and neighbours. My life had a very clear path to salvation, found not in *freedom* but in its opposite: in fulfilling the responsibilities placed upon me through the social constructions that framed the living-out of choices I had been offered as a woman in the context into which I was born.

If there was a 'cannonball moment' for me, like the one in the life of Ignatius whose anniversary we are currently celebrating, it came when one of the Jesuits with whom I work asked me directly, *what is it you desire for yourself?* The question left me speechless. I could not answer because, first, no one had ever asked me such a question and, second, I had never felt the freedom to ask it of myself. What I desired could hardly matter in a world where God Himself seemed to reinforce the expectations woven into the everyday structure of my life, in responding to the needs and assumptions of a husband and (now adult) children.

But if I was paralyzed by the question in the moment, I was nevertheless interested in learning how I might answer it. I began to read about Ignatian spirituality. I asked questions of the Jesuits around me in our office. I began making Ignatian retreats and receiving regular spiritual direction, sought academic and educational opportunities and programmes related to Ignatian spirituality, and eventually made the Nineteenth Annotation format of the Spiritual Exercises.

Throughout this experience, as I grew in my own knowledge and understanding—both intellectual and felt—of Ignatian spirituality and the Exercises, I was confirmed in the overwhelming belief that the women in my social circles, in particular the Catholic wives and mothers of adult children that I knew, would be as attracted and compelled by Ignatian spirituality as I was. I knew that they too wanted *freedom* in their lives, but that those lives, and their very sense of living a fulfilling life orientated towards God, were not rooted in *freedom* but rather in *obligation*—in service, if not servitude—and that, like me, no one had ever asked them, *what is it that you desire for yourself?* What could it mean to discern in freedom when the very idea of discerning between options seemed like such a luxury? Our lives did not involve discernments. We were expected simply to do what needed to be done each day.

When I finally felt that I understood enough about Ignatian spirituality that I could help introduce others to it, I suggested to some Catholic friends forming a faith-sharing group. All were (or had been) wives and were mothers. All were active in their parishes and practised their faith to some degree. All prayed. We began by gathering and reading some of the same books that I had found helpful myself, and their response confirmed the insight that I had. Each of these women felt great attraction to what Ignatius was presenting through the Spiritual Exercises and were most strongly attracted to the idea of freedom and the free choice to seek God's will for them in their lives, to seek what they believed they would find fulfilling, not just what was expected of them as women and wives and mothers.

What was interesting, however, was the way that so much of the popular writing on Ignatian spirituality, whether by religious or laypeople, assumed a freedom to make choices about one's life that did not seem to account for the reality of people like us, women whose obligations were so deeply entrenched as to become our identities as well as our lives. We had stopped being, for all intents and purposes, individuals whom God calls by name, like Jeremiah or Samuel, or the person whom Christ the King calls to join with him on his quest. For us, whose names had been largely lost the first time someone called us *mum*, or the moment we changed our names to become someone's wife, the freedom to choose God's will in our lives seemed no longer available. Even the very ability to wonder about God's will for us appeared to have been subsumed into obligations and responsibilities to care for others that could not just be set aside.

While it is true that Ignatius worked with married women and mothers in his own time, the world within the Exercises does not always account for the reality of women such as me. We should perhaps always remember that Ignatius himself did not imagine many exercitants, perhaps especially married women and mothers, engaging with exercises beyond the First Week.² Perhaps he, better than we, understood that to introduce exercises that promote the seeking of God's will to those who have already chosen a state of life opens exercitants to tensions within their existing state of life that cannot be addressed by 'amending and reforming' (Exx 189). In their fullest form, the Exercises encourage

² For the practice of Ignatius and the early Jesuits giving the Exercises in a 'simplified' form to women and others, see John O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard U, 1993), 128–132.

bold desires, great service, engaging the world in its vastness. But such imagining is not something we always encourage in women who are already wives and mothers.

Perhaps the clearest example of this obstacle is the Call of the King (Exx 91–100). Among the most significant of the exercises in Ignatius' programme, the Call of the King has been subject of much criticism in recent years for its martial and colonial overtones. It is, no doubt, for many retreatants, a significant experience. But for me, it is not simply the martial metaphor that is foreign, it is the very invitation to discipleship that seems so alienating. The horizon of the Call of the King is the whole world into which Christ the King invites the retreatant to enter with him (Exx 95). But that is a hard invitation to accept knowing that it is your responsibility to be home by 6.00 p.m. to provide dinner for your husband.

The very invitation to discipleship ... seems so alienating

How do you follow Christ the King when the perimeter of your world is so circumscribed? What does one who wishes 'to show greater devotion' (Exx 97) do when the circumstances of his or her life make it impossible to give the total commitment that Christ the King desires? It does not mean that a person cannot hear the call of Christ the King in the context of a life already filled with responsibilities; this is, of course, the experience of many people who pray it. But to limit the horizon within the meditation is already to do more than just *translate* it into a contemporary context: it is to change it.

The text of the *Spiritual Exercises* does not really address the moment when the Call of the King takes someone beyond the limits of her or his life. For women, particularly, too often this impasse is overcome by *domesticating* the great crusade of Christ the King to mean overcoming evil in the world limited to one's home and family. Eloise Rosenblatt's article 'Women and the Exercises' offers one such example.³ In writing about the meditation on the Two Standards, Rosenblatt, a theologian and Sister of Mercy, notes well how the overriding masculine topos of two world leaders engaged in a stand-off over the future of their subjects can seem foreign to women and difficult for many women to enter. Rosenblatt suggests that women can still play out the drama of the meditation in the context of the home, and the same time perhaps challenging the *maleness* of the meditation by bringing it into another

³ Marie-Eloise Rosenblatt, 'Women and the Exercises: Sin, Standards, and New Testament Text', *The Way Supplement*, 70 (Spring 1991), 16–32.

context. She acknowledges however that women must still adopt a *male* perspective of combat, of overcoming, of victory and defeat, to do so.

I agree with much of what Rosenblatt says, but my concern is that domesticating meditations such as the Two Standards or the Call of the King already changes them. The *greatness* of what the meditations invite us to imagine, the universality of Christ's mission, in the end reinforces the structure from which the Exercises invite us to find liberation. I would love to say yes to Christ the King and the purpose he proposes. But if, as a married woman and mother, that means simply reapplying myself to the obligations I already have, then what am I really choosing? Is the grace of the Exercises simply to have the structures in which I am already living reinforced?

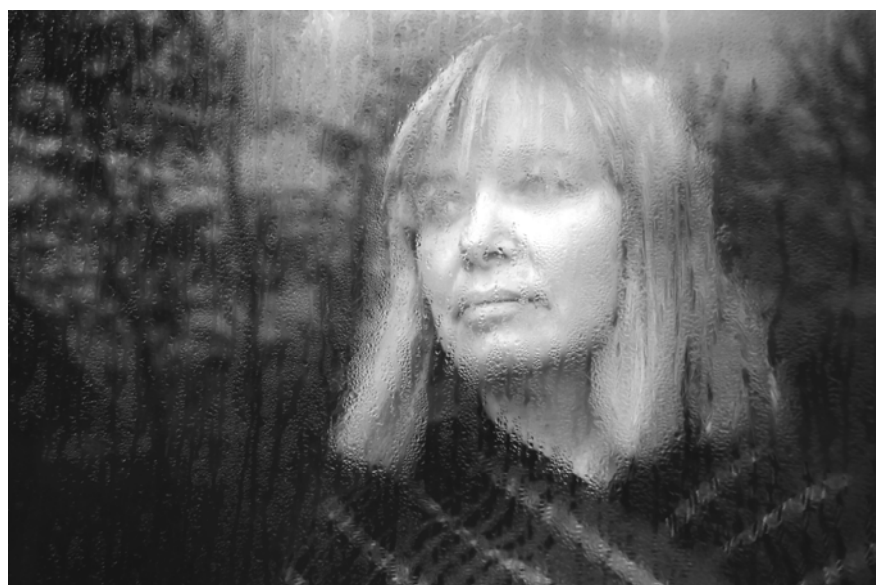
Of course, this is a reality that the Gospels themselves understood. When I made the Exercises, as part of the Call of the King meditation my director had me pray with the gospel passage in which Jesus invites someone to follow him who replies by saying 'first let me go and bury my father' (Luke 9:59; see Matthew 8:21). We see in this passage the same tension in biblical times as I am describing for myself. How do we negotiate between the great desires that come in discerning God's will and the obligations of everyday life? How do we believe that God might be calling us to something greater than the reality we live, rather than only reinforcing the responsibilities that are given to us through social structures?

To use another biblical image, in my prayer I may wish to be Mary rather than Martha and to sit at the feet of Jesus in rapt attention (see Luke 10:38–42). But my life is not shaped by the choice of seeing myself as either Martha *or* Mary. I chose to be Martha long ago because that is what I was told I should desire as a woman, and for the most part I have found great fulfilment in that choice. But now I wish to be more like Mary. I have grown in my life. I have changed. The responsibilities I have had as a wife and a mother demand less of me, but beyond leisure and grandmother duties, what *great desires* does my culture (or my Church) really suggest for me? My prayer tells me that I desire other things for myself, great things, all in service of God's Kingdom. So how do I engage those desires? How do I continue to be Martha while choosing the 'better part' that Mary did? How do I be both without reinforcing the tired (and exhausting) feminism which suggests I can (read: *should*) 'do it all'? How am I to be liberated from the social

structure that both benefits from my choice to be Martha and wants me to find fulfilment in the responsibilities she represents?

For religious or for others whose circumstances support seeking the will of God as a way of shaping choices and responsibilities, the Exercises offer much. But for those whose previous choices in life have shaped obligations and responsibilities which cannot be easily changed or would require a radical change of life, then the sort of freedom and decision-making that the Exercises offer can seem a little fanciful, if still appealing. Within the structure of religious life, seeking God's will in freedom so as to find fulfilment and purpose is fundamental. But within the family structure, particularly for women as wives and mothers, the freedom to seek God's will and to follow Christ into the world is more threatening. The emphasis placed on women as fulfilling socially defined roles, and the Church's reinforcement of those roles, makes it difficult to understand how discerning God's will for me as an individual would be supported in the same way it would be for a religious within the Church, male or female.

I intend this essay to be more than a lament. Rather, I hope it is an articulation of an area for further reflection by those interested in Ignatian spirituality and how it is presented to a cohort of people that Ignatius himself might not have considered, people whose anthropology and sense of their humanity would be very different from those available to Ignatius. This cohort—contemporary women in the developed world



over the age of fifty, who can rightly expect to live an active life for another thirty years or so and who can imagine the freedom to make choices about their life and how it is lived—were not a demographic group familiar to Ignatius. Such women, whose desires for themselves with regard to their state of life might aspire to more than ‘amending and reforming’, but who have perhaps lost touch with a sense of self that is not synonymous with their state of life, present a particular challenge to the Spiritual Exercises. What does *freedom* in the Ignatian sense mean for them? What can they hope to hear from the Christ who invites them into the world, that might rightly be understood as consistent with the call of Christ in the Exercises yet also consistent with a sense of fulfilment and flourishing in the contemporary world? I do not have the answers. But in the question the Spiritual Exercises have yet again shown their efficacy by opening a pathway to God for yet another cohort of people.

Suzanne Krudys is special counsel to the president of the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States and also its operations manager. Previously she enjoyed a long career as an attorney for the United States government and was a small-business owner. She met the Society of Jesus when her sons attended a Jesuit secondary school. After completing the Spiritual Exercises, she earned a certificate in Ignatian spirituality from Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, a certificate in servant leadership from Cornell University and is currently pursuing one in theological studies at Australian Catholic University. As part of her work for the president of the Jesuit Conference, she leads Ignatian formation programming for Jesuit Conference staff and organizations related to the Jesuit Conference.

THREE WAYS

The *Bhagavad Gītā* and the Spiritual Exercises

Rolphy Pinto

IN RECENT TIMES, especially after the receptive response of the Second Vatican Council to other religions, Christians in the West have taken a keen interest in the prayer forms of the great religions of the East, especially Hinduism and Buddhism.¹ Prayer forms are constitutive of paths, ways or means to be in contact with the divine. In a cursory reading of the history of spirituality in Western Christian and Hindu traditions, two strikingly similar expressions will catch the eye of the reader—*triplex via* and *mārgatraya*, both of which signify three ways or paths. The *via purgativa*, *via illuminativa* and *via unitiva* are together called the *triplex via* in the Christian tradition. *Karma-mārga*, *bhakti-mārga* and *jñāna-mārga* are together called *mārgatraya* in the Hindu tradition. Though the collective terms are strikingly similar at first glance, however, their individual components are diverse. The comparison between them reveals, if not contradictions, differences. Are these differences complementary and mutually enriching? I should like to explore this question by examining the doctrine of the *mārgas* in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, and the doctrine of the *viae* in the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola.²

¹ *Nostra aetate* is a breakthrough document, see n.2; and see Francis Vineeth, 'The Contemporary Relevance of Knowing as Becoming: A Hindu Christian Search into the Spirituality of Becoming', in *Seeing the Seeker: Explorations in the Discipline of Spirituality*, edited by Wendy Litjens and Hein Blommesteijn (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 538–539; Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, 'Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Christian Meditation', n.1; John Pradeep, 'Ignatian Spiritual Exercises and Eastern Prayer Methods: Dialogue and Practice', *Ignis*, 49/1 (2019), 5.

² The *Bhagavad Gītā* is the divine song of Kṛṣṇa revealed to the war hero Arjuna in the epic hymn *Mahābhārata*. The *Bhagavad Gītā* is one of the main sacred texts of Hinduism and is definitely the most popular text that sustains and nourishes the faith of the Hindus across the world. It is often referred to as the *Gītā*. References here cite *The Bhagavad-Gītā*, translated by Robert Charles Zaehner (London: Oxford U, 1973). See Sebastian Painadath, 'Bhagavad Gita and the Ignatian Ideal', *Ignis*, 17/2 (1988), 61.

The Classical mārgas of Hinduism

Mārga—way or path—from the Sanskrit root *mṛg*, is a trail left behind by an animal (*mṛga* is a deer). Through association, the meaning extends to following the trail, searching and hunting. *Mārga* thus is a path or road to or through something. It ‘suggests striving for a goal following the tracks that indicate the way’ to attain the goal.³ In order to unite human beings with the divine, the Hindu tradition prescribes three main *mārgas*.⁴

Karma-mārga

In common parlance, *karma* is often taken to mean the fruit of an action done that determines one’s fate or destiny. Its true meaning, though, is more complex. The root verb is *kṛ*, ‘to do’ or ‘to act’. The termination *ma* makes it *karma*, the action done. In the Vedic literature it refers to the ‘great action’, that is, the act of cre[kṛ]ation, in which humans cooperate through sacri[kṛ]ifice. In the Śramaṇic culture of renunciation, *karma* took on the meaning of personal or ethical action.⁵ Here, the basic insight is that one’s actions determine the future. Consequently, freedom and responsibility are associated with *karma*. The ideology of reincarnation argues that even past *karma* determines the present. In ancient times *karma-mārga* meant ritual activity; in modern Buddhism *karma* is responsible personal action.⁶

Bhakti-mārga

Bhakti is perhaps the most popular religious word in India. From the root verb *bhaj*, ‘to partake’ it has many concentric circles of meaning: separation, partition, division; portion, share; devotion, attachment, loyalty; faithfulness; belief, reverence and worship. *Bhakti* is thus a means of salvation and denotes an aspect of human relationship with the Divine Reality. The earliest *bhakti* elements are to be found in the Vedas and Upaniṣads.⁷ Love of a personal deity (*arādhya deva*) is the core of *bhakti*.

³ Stephen Raj, ‘Mārga’, in *Gems from India: Reflections on Significant Indian Religious Words*, edited by George Gispert-Sauch (Delhi: ISPC, 2006), 85. And compare Rudolf Valerian d’Souza, *The Bhagavadgita and St John of the Cross: A Comparative Study of the Dynamism of Spiritual Growth in the Process of God-Realisation* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1997), 95.

⁴ ‘Yoga’, in *Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, edited by Constance A. Jones and James D. Ryan, (New York: Facts on File, 2007), 511; James B. Robinson, *Hinduism* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2004), 39, 59.

⁵ Śramaṇa is an ancient Indian ascetic tradition. See Jeffery D. Long, *Historical Dictionary of Hinduism* (Lanham: Scarecrow, 2011), 284.

⁶ George Gispert-Sauch, ‘Karma’, in *Gems from India*, 88–90.

⁷ See, for example, *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 3.20, in *The Upaniṣads*, translated by Max Müller (Oxford: OUP, 1900). All subsequent references to the Upaniṣads are to this edition.

The *bhakta*, or devotee, partakes in the portion the deity generously shares with him or her. The relationship between the *arādhyā deva* and *bhakta* is one of faith and love. The *bhakta* lovingly surrenders to God and thereby enters into union with God through participation.⁸

Jñāna-mārga

Of the *mārgatraya* the *jñāna-mārga* is the most refined, distinguished and exalted. *Jñāna* come from the root verb *jñā*, ‘to know’, which is also the root of the word *gnosis*. That liberation (*mukti*) comes from knowledge alone is the fundamental tenet of the *jñāna-mārga*.⁹ The origins of *jñāna-mārga* are to be found in the Upaniṣads and in the yogic tradition. The nature of this knowledge is not rational, discursive, theological or credal. It is a knowledge that comes after a process of the negation of finite concepts¹⁰ resulting in a new level of consciousness which is fruit of grace,¹¹ leading to a sort of sudden enlightenment (*satori*).¹² Through *jñāna* the seeker acquires a new consciousness and comes to the realisation that the Ultimate Reality is not dual (*dvaita*) but non-dual (*advaita*), and that he or she is essentially part of and not separate from the Ultimate Reality.¹³

It could be said that the three *mārgās* are three alternative ways to reach one and the same goal.

Mārgatraya in the Gītā

The *Bhagavad Gītā* does not use the word *mārga*, but employs the term *yoga* for what has later widely been referred to as *mārga*. *Yoga* derives from *yuj*, meaning to yoke, join or unite. The noun *yoga* thus denotes union, and hence an exercise, discipline or practice that unites the mind and body. Analogously, it unites the *ātaman*, or individual self, with the *Brahman*, or absolute self. Controlling the mind and the flow of interiority is an indispensable demand if one wants to attain unification. Robert Zaehner argues that the *yoga* propounded in the *Gītā* is an integration

⁸ George Gispert-Sauch, ‘Bhakti’, in *Gems from India*, 91–93.

⁹ The proponents of the *Jñāna-mārga* hold that the ways of *karma* and *bhakti* prepare one to move to the higher stage of acquiring liberating knowledge.

¹⁰ ‘How should he know Him by whom he knows all this? That Self is to be described by No, no! He is incomprehensible, for he cannot be comprehended How, O beloved, should he know the Knower?’: *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 4. 5. 15.

¹¹ ‘That Self cannot be gained by the Veda, nor by understanding, nor by much learning. He whom the Self chooses, by him the Self can be gained’: *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 1. 2. 23, and *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 3. 2. 3.

¹² *Kena or Talavakāra Upaniṣad*, chapters 3 and 4.

¹³ George Gispert-Sauch, ‘Jñāna’, in *Gems from India*, 94–96.

of all the powers of the human personality into the divine, and he thinks that it can best be translated as *spiritual exercise*.¹⁴

The term *sādhana* belongs to the same semantic field as *yoga*.¹⁵ It is hard to find one single word that would translate its meaning into English. It is a persevering striving, often of an ascetic kind, involving appropriate practices. Derivatives of *sādhana* are *sādhya* and *sādhak*: *sādhya* is the goal to be attained, that for which the *sādhak*—the practitioner—strives. *Sādhana*, as *yoga*, may also be understood as a spiritual exercise, a methodical spiritual discipline. In this sense, *sādhana*, *mārga* and *yoga* are not merely ascetic practices (exercises) but have a spiritual component—the divine aid that accompanies the ascetic-human element.¹⁶

Bhagavad Gītā offers the three *yogas* or *mārgas*—*karma*, *bhakti* and *jñāna*—to the *sādhak* in order to arrive at *mukti*, liberation.¹⁷ *Mukti* in the *Gītā* is not restricted to the notion of exiting from the *saṁsāra*, the cycle of reincarnations. The meaning of *mukti* is extended to denote union with God or God-realisation (*sākṣatkāra*).¹⁸ The focus of the *mārgas* is on *Bhagavān*, the personal loving God (see *Gītā*, 18.64). The *Gītā*, while not denying the concept of a formless and attribute-less Absolute (*Brahman*) also conceives of the Absolute as *Bhagavān*, the personal God: 'Do works for Me, make Me your highest goal, be loyal-in-love to Me, cut off all [other] attachments, have no hatred for any being at all: for all who do thus shall come to Me' (*Gītā* 11.55).¹⁹

This verse makes allusions to all the three *mārgas*: *karma*, 'Do works for Me'; *bhakti*, 'be loyal-in-love to Me'; and *jñāna*, 'Make Me your highest goal'. These *mārgas* lead the *sādhak* to *Bhagavān*: 'For all who do thus shall come to Me'. It is to be borne in mind that 'In whatsoever way [devoted] men approach Me, in that same way do I return their love' (*Gītā*, 4:11). In other words, the God of *Gītā* shares himself with the one who seeks him, irrespective of the way chosen. The ways or *mārgas*

¹⁴ *Bhagavad-Gītā*, translated by Zaehner, 11, 24, 146; Henry D'Almeida, 'Yoga', in *Gems from India*, 133; Painadath, 'Bhagavad Gita and the Ignatian Ideal', 60.

¹⁵ Souza, *Bhagavadgita and St John of the Cross*, 95–96.

¹⁶ See *Gems from India*, xvii; Javier Melloni, *The Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola in the Western Tradition*, translated by Michael Ivens (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998), 21; Painadath, 'Bhagavad Gita and the Ignatian Ideal', 60.

¹⁷ It should be noted that the three *mārgas* are not the only means; the *Gītā* does not exclude other paths. See Robert Charles Zaehner, *Hinduism* (London: Oxford U, 1966), 125.

¹⁸ See Richard Lopes, *Indian Christology of the Way* (Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 2011), 34.

¹⁹ Here and elsewhere bracketed material is the translator's. See Painadath, 'Bhagavad Gita and the Ignatian Ideal', 61; Suvira Jaiswal, *The Origin and Development of Vaisnavism: Vaisnavism from 200 BC to AD 500* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1981), 118.



Kṛṣṇa dictates the Bhagavad Gītā to Arjuna, eighteenth century

are subordinate to union with God. There are, however, verses that speak specifically of each *yoga* or *mārga*.

Karma

Karma in the *Gītā* is human cooperation with the divine in God's liberating action. The action nevertheless has a distinctive quality described as *niṣkāma-karma*, disinterested or desireless action.

[But] work alone is *your* proper business, never the fruits [it may produce]: let not your motive be the fruit of works nor your attachment to [mere] worklessness. Stand fast in Yoga, surrendering attachment; in success and failure be the same and then get busy with your works. Yoga means 'sameness-and-indifference'. (*Gītā*, 2.47–48)

Not every action is liberating, but only those done without self-interest and those done only for the glory of God. Action that seeks fruits—that is self-seeking, rather than liberating the person—binds him or her. Further, 2:49b–50 add this:

How pitiful are they whose motive is the fruit [of works]! Who so performs spiritual exercise with the soul (*buddhi-yukta*) discards here [and now] both good and evil works: brace yourself then for [this] Yoga; for Yoga is [also] skill in [performing] works.

Acts performed in this manner rid the person of inordinate attachments and thus are also purifying.²⁰

Bhakti

The *Gītā* is considered the classic of *bhakti*. The God of *Gītā*, in the concluding chapter, explicitly professes his love for the *bhakta* (devotee), and this revelation is considered the great ‘secret’:

And now again give ear to this my highest Word, of all the most mysterious: ‘I love you well’. Therefore will I tell you your salvation. Bear Me in mind, love Me and worship Me, sacrifice, prostrate yourself to Me: so will you come to Me, I promise you truly, for you are dear to Me. (*Gītā*, 18.64–65)

These verses contain the essence of *bhakti-mārga*. Who are those dear to Kṛṣṇa? The second half of chapter 12, traditionally called the *bhakti-yoga* or the ‘Yoga of the Loving Devotion’,²¹ answers this question: the compassionate, those who have made themselves indifferent to pleasure and pain, those who worship Kṛṣṇa with love and loyalty without any expectation, and those who have mastery over the self (*Gītā*, 12.13–19). The *bhakta* who has a part (participates) in the love of God is the one who lives a life of undivided love (*ananya bhakti*, see *Gītā*, 11.54). The *bhakta* lives in the Lord and the Lord lives in the *bhakta* (see *Gītā*, 9.29).²²

Jñāna

Jñāna is a recurring term in the *Gītā*, appearing as a noun (over sixty times) and a verb (twenty times) and in other equivalent forms. The Upaniṣads propound the knowledge of the *Brahman* and the *ātman*, at the level of pure consciousness, as the saving knowledge. But in the *Gītā* the saving knowledge is that of the mystery of Lord Kṛṣṇa: ‘Knowing Me to be the proper object of sacrifice and mortification, great Lord [*Maheśvara*] of all the worlds, friend of all contingent beings, he reaches peace’ (*Gītā*, 5.29). The great Lord is also the friend of all beings. The knowledge sought is not merely intellectual, but felt interior knowledge of the core of Divine Reality.²³ What role does the divine grace play in the *sādhana*? According to Sebastian Painadath, spiritual growth takes place only when there is a mutual cooperation between

²⁰ See Gispert-Sauch, ‘Karma’, 88–90.

²¹ See Zaehner, *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 321.

²² See Gispert-Sauch, ‘Bhakti’, 91–93.

²³ See Gispert-Sauch, ‘Jñāna’, 96.

sādhana and *siddhi* (divine grace). He writes, 'No spiritual growth is possible without the supporting divine grace, and no grace is available without a personal human participation'.²⁴ Painadath, following *Gītā*, 12.6, summarises the three *mārgas*: 'The awareness of the divine mystery (*jñāna*); the encounter with the divine master (*bhakti*); the creative response to the divine immanence (*karma*)'.²⁵

The Classical viae in the Christian Tradition

Among the different ways to God described in the Christian tradition, one of the most well known and widespread is the *triplex via*.²⁶ It is structured progressively in three consecutive stages: the *via purgativa* (way of purification), the *via illuminativa* (way of illumination) and the *via unitiva* (way of union). The first to envisage this tri-partition was Origen (c.185–c.254). His mystical theology was fundamentally biblical. His programme included spiritual practices of prayer, asceticism and biblical study which had a successive pattern: beginning-progressing-culminating.²⁷ He related the three Old Testament books attributed to Solomon to the three mystical ways: purification (*katharsis*) to the Book of Proverbs, which prescribes purification through ethical conduct; illumination (*phōtismos*) to the Book of Ecclesiastes, which makes us see what lies hidden beneath the surface of things; and union (*teleiōsis*) with the Song of Songs, which leads us to union with God.²⁸

The patrimony bequeathed by Origen found fertile ground in the monasticism that flourished in the fourth century, especially around Evagrius Ponticus (c.345–399), who systemised and developed what he received. His mystical theology went on to influence both the East and, through his disciple John Cassian (c.360–c.435), the West.²⁹ In *The Celestial Hierarchy*, Pseudo-Dionysius (c. fifth to sixth century)

²⁴ Painadath, 'Bhagavad Gita and the Ignatian Ideal', 59.

²⁵ Sebastian Painadath, *The Spiritual Journey: Towards an Indian Christian Spirituality* (Delhi: ISPCCK, 2006), 37. 'Through *yoga* the *sadhaka* surrenders his powers of perception (*jnana*), love (*bhakti*), and action (*karma*) totally to the Lord': Painadath, 'Bhagavad Gita and the Ignatian Ideal', 61.

²⁶ See Franz Jalics, *Called to Share in His Life: Introduction to a Contemplative Way of Life and the Jesus Prayer (a Retreat)*, translated by Lucia Wiedenhöver (Mumbai: St Pauls, 2000), 15; Adolphe Alfred Tanqueray, *The Spiritual Life: A Treatise on Ascetical and Mystical Theology*, translated by Herman Branderis (Tournai: Desclée, 1932); Peter Tyler, 'Triple Way', in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, edited by Philip Sheldrake (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 625.

²⁷ Bernard McGinn, 'The Genealogy of Mystical Traditions', in *The Oxford Handbook of Mystical Theology*, edited by Mark Allen McIntosh and Edward Howells (Oxford: OUP, 2020), 67; and see Philip Sheldrake, 'Journey, Spiritual', in *New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, 388.

²⁸ Anselm Grün, *Mystik: Den inneren Raum entdecken* (Freiburg: Herder, 2009), 37; Tyler, 'Triple Way', 626.

²⁹ See McGinn, 'Genealogy of Mystical Traditions', 67, 74.



Christ Resurrected between St Teresa of Ávila and St John of the Cross, by Michel des Gobelins Corneille, 1524

established the three ways in their mature form.³⁰ In the West the doctrine was usually associated with the Carmelites St Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582) and St John of the Cross (1542–1591).³¹ It had long been known through the famous texts *De triplici via*, by the Franciscan Bonaventure (1221–1274), and *Ejercitatorio de la vida espiritual*, by the Benedictine García de Cisneros (1455–1510).³²

The pattern set by Origen of beginning-progressing-culminating saw a slight modification in its language in the modern period: in the terms of John of the Cross beginners (*principiantes*), proficientes (*aprovechantes*) and the perfect (*los perfectos*) corresponded to the three *viae*.³³ In addition, the successive pattern has itself been questioned. As Philip Sheldrake writes:

... in a fundamental way, union with God is not so much a stage above and beyond other stages (achieved essentially through contemplative practice) but, in the sense of the prior actuality of God's grace, is a prerequisite of all spiritual growth.³⁴

Be it the purgative way or the two subsequent ways, each interacts with divine grace.

The purgation of the soul primarily take place in the purgative way, but it continues in the successive ways. Likewise, the soul can benefit from

³⁰ Tyler, 'Triple Way', 627.

³¹ Sheldrake, 'Journey, Spiritual', 389.

³² See Luke Dysinger, 'The Ascetic Life', in *Oxford Handbook of Mystical Theology*, 165.

³³ See John of the Cross, *The Dark Night* (1.1.1) and *The Spiritual Canticle* (1–2; 22.3), in *The Collected Works of St John of the Cross*, translated by Kieran Kavanagh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington, DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1991); and Bernard McGinn, *Mysticism in the Golden Age of Spain (1500–1650)* (New York: Crossroad, 2007), 262.

³⁴ Sheldrake, 'Journey, Spiritual', 389.

divine illumination also in the purgative stage.³⁵ Though spiritual growth is usually presented as a linear journey, in reality, purgation, illumination and union are often superimposed and take place simultaneously and in varying degrees. The predominance of one does not mean the absence of the other processes; spiritual growth is cyclical or spiral in nature.³⁶ The union that human beings experience with God on this earth, in whatsoever degree, is always partial. Union in fullness is reserved for the beatific vision after the earthly journey. One who arrives at the unitive way on this earth can still roll back and fall into sin.³⁷

The Purgative Way

The purgative way marks the beginning of the way to God. This part of the journey is typically ascetic in nature.

The Epistle to the Hebrews makes a distinction between ‘infants’ and ‘teachers’ in the spiritual journey. Beginners are infants fed on ‘milk’, that is, taught by the ‘mature’ masters who can manage solid food. The beginners need training (Hebrews 5:11–14; also Ephesians 4:12–16). In the *triplex via* this training consists of purification or the purgation of all inordinate passions, which presupposes a felt awareness of one’s own sinfulness and the need to know oneself. Moved by the love of God, the pilgrim turns to God (conversion) with the help of sacred scripture, vocal and discursive prayer, and mortification. Such persons also begin to perform works of charity. A spiritual discipline enters into the life of the person, which further leads him or her to a deeper consciousness: the awareness that what the person needs is not only the forgiveness of sins but an integral reformation of the foundations of his or her life. The pilgrim moves from self-centredness to other-centredness or God-centredness. Purification of the self implies the shedding of all that is ungodly from the person’s life, such as anger, hatred, pride, greed and sloth. Such purgation also liberates the person from false images of God. David Perrin summarises:

... negatively, the Purgative Way is a movement away from bad habits, sinful behaviour and unhealthy attachment to material things. Positively, however, the Purgative Way is a movement toward

³⁵ Sheldrake, ‘Journey, Spiritual’, 389; S. Possanzini, ‘Perfezione, gradi di’, in *Dizionario di mistica*, edited by Luigi Borriello (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1998), 1011.

³⁶ David Perrin, ‘The Purgative Way’, in *New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, 517; see Michael Ivins, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises: Text and Commentary* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998), 10–11.

³⁷ See David Perrin, ‘Unitive Way’, in *New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, 629.

more truthful relationships, more authentic self-giving to others and a more conscious decision to perform acts of charity, prayer and almsgiving.³⁸

The Illuminative Way

The pilgrim who perseveres through the purgative way enters the illuminative way. Through the practices of self-discipline and discursive prayer, he or she becomes self-possessed and attains a more contemplative mode of prayer. How is the pilgrim 'illuminated'? This refers to a state of quiet and peace in which the loving grace of God reveals to the pilgrim both knowledge of God and knowledge of the self and the world in relation to God. The contemplative prayer into which the pilgrim enters has a noetic quality through which he or she grasps profound truths regarding all aspects of life. Consequently, the pilgrim develops, informed by the gospel, right relationship with God, others and creation. His or her senses become attuned to the spirit. Pilgrims in the illuminative way cultivate a depth of character which encourages a profound moral integrity. They come across as loving, joyful, generous in acts of charity, and forgiving and seeking reconciliation. Above all, they experience an enduring awareness of the profound love of God.³⁹

The Unitive Way

While how the pilgrim prays after making the transition from the purgative to the illuminative way obviously changes, a shift is not very clear when he or she progresses to the unitive way. The clearest change is in the quality and intensity of contemplative prayer. In the illuminative way, which may last for years, there are occasional moments of union with God. Those moments now become a habitual awareness of the presence of God along with an immediate (unmediated) experience of God. The nature of union here is 'substantial'. The transformation wrought in the person in this process of divinisation is what John of the Cross calls becoming God through participation.⁴⁰

The triplex via in the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius

The *Spiritual Exercises* were composed at a time (1522–1548) when the threefold pattern of the spiritual journey was firmly established in

³⁸ Perrin, 'Purgative Way', 518.

³⁹ David Perrin, 'Illuminative Way', in *New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, 356–358.

⁴⁰ Perrin, 'Unitive Way', 629–630.

the West. Ignatius was almost certainly familiar with the *Ejercitatorio de la vida espiritual* of García de Cisneros. This work clearly outlines spiritual progress in the *triplex via* scheme. The influence of this work on the *Spiritual Exercises* is well established.⁴¹ In the tenth annotation, Ignatius writes,

For ordinarily the enemy of human nature tempts under the appearance of good more often when a person is performing the Exercises in the illuminative life, which corresponds to the Exercises of the Second Week, than in the purgative life, which corresponds to those of the First Week. (Exx 10)

In the First Week, exercitants become aware of their inadequacies and strive intensely to rid themselves of inordinate affections (Exx 21), which is what the purgative way is. And in the Second Week they contemplate the life of Christ, seeking to know him more fully, to love him more completely and to follow him more faithfully (see Exx 104), which is what illuminative way is.

That said, one cannot help noticing that Ignatius is taking a certain distance from the *triplex via* tradition. First, he does not mention the unitive way explicitly anywhere in the *Spiritual Exercises*. Second, he replaces ‘way’ with ‘life’ and speaks of purgative and illuminative *lives*. This stance of Ignatius does not seem to be casual but deliberate. What could be the reasons for it? Ignatius’ preference for the term ‘life’ over ‘way’ has the advantage of suggesting that purgation and illumination are lifelong processes.⁴² But does the silence of Ignatius regarding the unitive way also mean that it is absent from the *Spiritual Exercises*?

This problematic did not go unnoticed by the early Jesuits. They (though not the First Companions of Ignatius), felt the need to fit the journey of the *Spiritual Exercises* into the schema of the classical three ways. The many directories of the *Spiritual Exercises* that appeared after the death of Ignatius either associated both the Third and Fourth Weeks with the unitive way or included the Third Week in the illuminative way and associated the Fourth Week with the unitive way.⁴³ In the Third Week the exercitant contemplates the passion and death of Jesus and in

⁴¹ See Melloni, *Exercises of St Ignatius*, 8, 10.

⁴² Dir 43: 277.

⁴³ Dir 43: 273–277; and see Brian O’Leary, *To Love and to Serve: Selected Essays Exploring the Ignatian Tradition* (Dublin: Messenger, 2020). The chapter titled ‘The Third and Fourth Weeks: What the Directories Say’ (44–58) addresses this issue.

the Fourth Week the resurrection of Jesus. The graces sought in these weeks are unitive in nature (Exx 203, 221).

One possible reason why Ignatius abstains from explicitly mentioning the unitive way in the *Spiritual Exercises* could be this. The Exercises, divided into four weeks with their internal dynamics, last for roughly thirty days in a closed retreat. Though no limits can be set on the working of God in the exercitant, and though he or she could receive the grace of enduring union in this short period, most often this is not the case. The Exercises lay the foundation necessary for the unitive way, or unitive life, by ordering the life of the exercitant—‘preparing and disposing our soul’ (Exx 1). The journey of seeking union with God has to continue after the thirty-day retreat concludes.⁴⁴

In this light, Javier Melloni affirms, ‘the Ignatian name for union is “election”’.⁴⁵ The end of human beings is ‘to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by means of doing this to save their souls’ (Exx 23). In order to *serve*, exercitants need to *elect* or *choose* how or in what way they should serve. They strive to discover God’s will for them. This discovery is realised through a process of discernment which involves emptying oneself of self-love, self-will and self-interest (Exx 189) and listening intently. Once the will of God is strongly felt in the depths of their souls, the exercitants *decide* to fulfil it. When one does what pleases the other, a bond of union is created. Exercitants, in electing and fulfilling (acting) what was discerned as the will of God for them, experience union with God. Acting continuously according to the will of God, they develop a habit of being in union with God. Towards the end of his life, Ignatius told Luis Gonçalves da Câmara that he was, ‘always growing in devotion, i.e., in facility in finding God, and now more than ever in his whole life. And every time and hour he wanted to find God, he found him.’⁴⁶

Mārgatraya and the triplex via

By now it is sufficiently clear that, though these terms have an initial resemblance, the realities they point to are not similar. The *mārgas* are three distinct (though not necessarily independent) paths to liberation,

⁴⁴ See János Lukács, ‘To Be Changed as Deeply as We Would Hope: Revisiting the Novitiate’, *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 51/3 (2019), 4. Lukács is talking here of a radical transformation of the exercitant which is not wrought completely in the thirty-day period but goes beyond it. The same could be affirmed with regard to union.

⁴⁵ Melloni, *Exercises of St Ignatius*, 50.

⁴⁶ *Autobiography*, n. 99.

while the three *vīae* are consecutive paths or stages in one single journey to union with God.

Some authors have tried to see a parallel between the *mārgatrāya* and the *triplex via*. Richard Lopes, for example, affirms, 'Jnana Marga stands for the way of illumination (intellect), Karma Marga stands for the way of purification (action) and Bhakti Marga stands for the way of union (devotion)'.⁴⁷ While there seems to be a logic in this parallelism, in the Hindu tradition all the *mārgas* lead to union, not *bhakti-mārga* alone. It is true that an aspect of *karma-mārga* is purifying, but it cannot be identified with the purgative way because the main goal of *karma-mārga* is not purification but union.⁴⁸

The differences between the two traditions notwithstanding, their complementarity is worth noting. The need for purgation at the beginning of the spiritual journey is explicit in the Christian tradition. Proposing a preliminary purification at the beginning of each of the *mārgas* would benefit a Hindu spiritual pilgrim taking up the spiritual journey. The graduality that is inbuilt into the *triplex via*, which is lacking in the *mārgatrāya* explicitly, is another factor that can contribute to understanding the dynamics of a spiritual journey. Conversely, the *mārgatrāya* have the advantage of offering a choice to the spiritual pilgrim who is free to pick a way that fits his or her temperament and aptitude. Envisioning the spiritual path as a successive threefold path in the Christian tradition has often been a sort of obsession which, at times, is more a hindrance than a help. Perhaps Ignatius was aware of the possible risks of imposing one set pattern for all, which led him not to insist on the threefold path in the *Spiritual Exercises*.

The *Gītā* says that all the *mārgas* lead to Kṛṣṇa (*Gītā*, 11.55) and, by so doing, it subordinates the means to the end. The *Spiritual Exercises*, in its Principle and Foundation, puts forth a similar principle. After specifying the end of the human being, the text continues, 'From this it follows that we ought to use these things to the extent that they help us toward our end, and free ourselves from them to the extent that they hinder us from it' (Exx 23). The three *mārgas* that are indicated in the *Gītā* are also to be found in the *Spiritual Exercises* in varying degrees.⁴⁹

**Understanding
the dynamics of
a spiritual
journey**

⁴⁷ Lopes, *Indian Christology of the Way*, 36.

⁴⁸ Perrin, 'Purgative Way', 518. It is to be borne in mind that in the purgative way the pilgrim begins to perform works of charity as a consequence of purification and not the other way around.

⁴⁹ *Jñāna-mārga* could be seen as broadly parallel to the illuminative way of the Second Week. Francis Vineeth argues, based on the Upaniṣadic texts, that the very process of knowing is also the process of

The one that stands out is the *karma-mārga*. The doctrine of the *niṣkāma-karma* (desireless action) of the *Gītā* is a way to union with God. This is so in the *Spiritual Exercises* as well.⁵⁰ In doing the will of God in life, a will revealed to the exercitant in the process of Election, he or she attains union with God. This action, though, must be disinterested, divested of self-love, self-will and self-interest (Exx 189), which is also the nature of the action required in the *Gītā*. The motivating spiritual principle of the *karma-mārga* in the *Spiritual Exercises* is contained in the questions that Ignatius prompts the exercitant to ask in the colloquy of the First Week: ‘What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I to do for Christ?’ (Exx 53).

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

becoming. Following this argument, it could be affirmed that in the illuminative way union is already taking place, because one becomes what one contemplates. See ‘Contemporary Relevance of Knowing as Becoming’, 537–546. For *bhakti-mārga* in the *Spiritual Exercises*, see Rolphy Pinto, *A Tale of Two Saints: Bhakti Mysticism of Narsinh Mehta and Francis Xavier* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 2018), 160–173.

⁵⁰ For a treatment of the link between prayer, discernment and *niṣkāma-karma* see Rolphy Pinto, ‘Iniziazione pratica alla preghiera e discernimento’, in *Iniziazione alla vita spirituale*, edited by Mark Rotsaert and Rossano Zas Friz de Col (Roma: Gregorian, 2017), 151–153.

THE JESUIT WAY TOWARDS HOLINESS

Thomas Flowers

IN THE CORSICAN BAY OF BASTÍA in 1767, on one of the ships overcrowded with the exiled Spanish members of the Society of Jesus, a letter reached St Joseph Pignatelli SJ from his brother. His brother offered Fr Pignatelli a way out of the mess in which being a Jesuit had landed him when the king had ordered the expulsion of all Jesuits from his realm. If he would renounce his membership in the Society, his brother assured him, his family could make certain he would be welcomed back into Spain and find a comfortable position as a priest. Fr Pignatelli responded: 'I have no intention of abandoning my present state. On the contrary, it is my firm determination to live and die a Jesuit.'¹ He would live to see the Society suppressed and would die before its universal restoration. But through a quirk of the confused ecclesiastical politics that accompanied the Society's suppression and restoration, Fr Pignatelli did, indeed, die as a Jesuit, having re-entered the Society years later through the Russian remnant of the Society which had never been fully suppressed.

Joseph Pignatelli is one of the 53 canonized saints of the Society of Jesus. His reputation for holiness depends, more than anything else, upon his loyalty to the Society and his Jesuit brethren in the face, first, of the Jesuit exile from Spain and, then, of the universal suppression of the Society by Pope Clement XIV in 1773. That a stalwart member of a religious order that one pope suppressed could be named a canonized saint by another pope is remarkable.² But Pignatelli never regarded his loyalty to the Society as detrimental to his loyalty to the Pope, and he never wavered in his devotion to the Church. This is, in many ways, what makes

¹ Quoted in D. A. Hanly, *Blessed Joseph Pignatelli: A Great Leader in a Great Crisis* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1937), 78–79.

² Joseph Pignatelli was declared a saint by Pope Pius XII in 1954.

for a Jesuit saint: devotion to the Church expressed through devotion to the Society of Jesus. The Society did not serve, for Jesuit saints, as a refuge from the problems of the Church or the world—the Society was the best way they knew how to serve the Church that they loved.

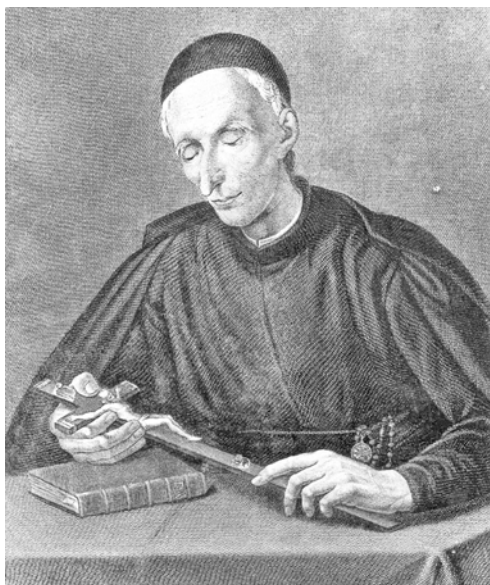
Given the Society's long-standing diversity of ministries, any more precise profile for a Jesuit saint would make little sense. From the beginning, Jesuits never did just one thing. A brief glance at the original ten Jesuits named in the papal bull that confirmed the foundation of the Society in 1540 reveals, among others: St Francis Xavier, the missionary to India and Japan; Diego Laínez, the renowned theologian at the Council of Trent; Nicolás Bobadilla, who reformed countless monasteries and served as the first Jesuit military chaplain; St Pierre Favre, who lived his brief Jesuit life travelling about preaching, hearing confessions and giving the Spiritual Exercises; and Simão Rodrigues, who served as both a provincial superior and a confidant and spiritual adviser at the Portuguese royal court. The Society did not have a predominant ministry in its earliest days and, even when the decades passed and the Society became more and more associated with the myriad schools it founded and ran, nevertheless, beyond the ranks of schoolteachers and administrators, there were always Jesuit missionaries, confessors, preachers, chaplains and theologians, not to mention scientists, writers, doorkeepers and cooks.

What defines Jesuits as Jesuits depends less on what they do and much more on how they do it—what the Society has long referred to as 'our way of proceeding'. The ubiquity of the phrase in the Society's internal documents is only rivalled by the diverse definitions for it provided by Jesuits and historians alike. Yet what remains clear in the various, and sometimes contradictory, meanings attributed to the phrase is that it intends to describe the characteristic style of the Jesuits in the varied ministries in which Jesuits engage. Thus, it is a phrase rooted in Jesuit spirituality—in the way Jesuits learn to pray, discern and act contemplatively from their earliest experiences of making the Spiritual Exercises. Its use at the beginning of the Jesuit *Constitutions* offers a particularly revealing glimpse of its implications: here, Ignatius explains that Jesuits 'should always be ready, in accord with our profession and way of proceeding, to roam in every part of the world whenever it is enjoined on us by the Supreme Pontiff or our immediate superior'.³ It is 'in

³ *Constitutions*, Examen 4.35 [92] (my translation).

accord with' the Jesuit way of proceeding that Jesuits need to be ready to go anywhere, and to do anything the Pope ask them to do. At the heart of the Jesuit way of proceeding lies Jesuit availability to serve the Church wherever the need is greatest.

This is why Jesuit saints appear in such motley array. From missionary martyrs such as Ss John de Brébeuf, Roque Gonzalez and John de Brito (martyred in North America, South America and India, respectively), to St Alphonsus Rodrigues, the Jesuit brother



St Joseph Pignatelli, by M. Cabañas, published 1893

who was doorkeeper at the Jesuit college in Majorca, to St Robert Bellarmine who was a controversial theologian and eventually a cardinal, the list of Jesuit saints parallels the diversity of the Society itself. There are great teachers and founders of schools such as St Peter Canisius, pastors and confessors such as St José Maria Rubio, and even the famous trio of Jesuit saints who died during their formation: St Stanislaus Kostka, who died as a novice; St John Berchmans, who died while studying philosophy; and St Aloysius Gonzaga, who died while studying theology. Not only does no single ministry unite these Jesuit saints, but they are similarly unlike one another in temperament and personality. They range from the appealing humility of St Alphonsus Rodrigues, who wrote, 'in dealing with Jesus and Mary I go along with holy fear as I speak with them, and they answer me with gentle sweetness and teach me', to the startling zeal of John de Brébeuf, who promised the Lord to 'bind myself in this way so that for the rest of my life I will have neither permission nor freedom to refuse opportunities of dying and shedding my blood for you'.⁴

⁴ Quoted in the *Supplement to the Divine Office for the Society of Jesus* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2002), 90, and *The Liturgy of the Hours*, volume 4 (New York: Catholic Book Publishers, 1975), 1503.

If such diverse Jesuits garnered their reputations for sanctity in such varied ways and settings, then the question arises as to what bearing their being Jesuits had on their becoming saints. The answer leads us away from the stories told of their heroic exploits and virtue, and towards the quiet of their interior lives. St Stanislaus Kostka died before his eighteenth birthday at the Jesuit novitiate of Sant'Andrea in Rome. The building where Kostka lived for his brief time in the Society has been demolished, but in the present community that has since been built nearby, there exists a shrine to Kostka in the form of a replica of his room, which contains several features salvaged from the original. Just outside the door that leads into the room laden with an enormous baroque marble statue of Kostka in repose on his deathbed, a letter has been affixed to the wall that is sometimes described in pious words as 'a letter from a saint to a saint about a saint'. This description is technically accurate, for the letter was written in 1567 by St Peter Canisius to St Francis Borgia and one point in the letter describes Canisius' impressions of St Stanislaus Kostka. Canisius, then provincial of the Superior Germany Province, explains to Borgia, then superior general of the Society, that Stanislaus had been unable to enter the Society in his native Poland because of his family's opposition, and so had fled with the intention of entering the Society in Rome. Canisius assured Borgia that Stanislaus had already 'showed himself ever faithful to his duties and constant in his vocation,' and so 'we hope for great things from him'.⁵

Beyond the marble statue of Stanislaus and the pious reverence given to this missive for its association with three different holy men, the story speaks eloquently of what it means to be a Jesuit saint. Canisius and Borgia were companions in the Society of Jesus, and although Borgia was by that time the superior general, Canisius had entered the Society before him. Their relationship, even in their letters, was one marked by warmth and mutual esteem. Canisius was constantly asking for Borgia's prayers, and in the preserved diary of Borgia on 5 February 1568 Borgia notes, 'prayers said for that matter of Canisius'.⁶ These two companions, who devoted a considerable portion of their lives as Jesuits to the governance and care of the Society itself, saw Stanislaus' determination to be a Jesuit and recognised him as one whose zeal would serve the Society well. Their mutual commitment to aid him in

⁵ Quoted in James Brodrick, *Saint Peter Canisius* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1935), 675.

⁶ Quoted in Brodrick, *Saint Peter Canisius*, 686.

entering the Society despite his family's opposition was rooted both in their concern for his welfare and their hopes for what he would bring to the Society's mission. In the end, this preserved moment of encounter in the lives of these three Jesuit saints points to the centrality of their identity as Jesuits in the way they approached their service to the Church and the world. It was confidence such as Borgia and Canisius had in each other, and the sort of hope they both had in Stanislaus, that allowed all three the freedom to live lives of remarkable holiness.

There is, in the end, only one way that all the canonized saints of the Society of Jesus became saints: by serving the Church according to the Society's particular way of proceeding. The Society taught these Jesuits how to be available to serve the Church as the Church needed. And the Society gave them the care they needed to serve well. Undoubtedly, the Society sometimes fails to live up to these standards: sometimes Jesuits are not cared for by their superiors as well as they need to be, and sometimes Jesuits are not as free to serve the Church as they ought to be. The foibles of the Society and its failures in serving the Church are well known.

But what the canonized saints among the Society's membership represent is the Society at its best. They represent a Society that is not tied to one particular sort of ministry, but is instead available for whatever ministry for which the moment calls. They demonstrate the care the Society's leadership takes in cultivating and forming vocations, and the mutual support Jesuits give to one another. And they underline that Jesuit holiness is always conceived of in service to the Church. St Joseph Pignatelli would not abandon his Jesuit vocation in order to save himself from the consequences of the suppression of the Society. But neither did he ever dream of ceasing to serve the Church as a priest. He could only understand his priestly vocation in the context of his Jesuit formation. But he would not let the Church's suspicion of the Society keep him from being a faithful servant of the Church as a priest. There was no contradiction for him, as there was no contradiction for any other Jesuit saint: they found their way to holiness by serving the Church as Jesuits.

Thomas Flowers SJ recently completed a PhD in Jesuit history at the University of York and is currently teaching Jesuit history to Jesuits in formation in the USA.

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AUGUSTINE BAKER

A Wise Mystical Guide

Louis Roy

THE BENEDICTINE AUGUSTINE BAKER (1575–1641), sometimes known as Austin Baker, a Welsh-speaker who was educated in England and later converted from Protestantism, deserves more attention than he has traditionally received. Sixteen years after his death, Fr Serenus Cressy, a friend and disciple, published, under the title of *Sancta sophia* (holy wisdom), a huge compilation of his writings (662 pages). It consists of three very long treatises, followed by an extensive series of ejaculatory prayers.¹

A Rather Obscure Spiritual Master

Fortunately Baker's writings have recently become better known among Benedictines and others thanks, for instance, to a conference held in 2000 at his birthplace, Abergavenny in Wales.² Perhaps he has been, by and large, neglected by the Benedictines because he focused on personal contemplation, apparently underplaying the importance of the Divine Office (the *Opus Dei* or work of God) so strongly emphasized by St Benedict in his *Rule*: 'Nothing is to be preferred to the Work of God' (43.3).

Thus an expert on Baker's doctrines explains:

Baker, who wrote as a contemplative and for contemplatives, had little regard for or interest in prayer that was not highly interior, spiritual and simple He had a special antipathy for the discursive prayer commonly called 'meditation' that was gaining wide popularity among English recusants through the influence of Jesuit missionaries.³

¹ For reasons of space I shall not delve into Baker's autobiography, titled *Confessions*, about which James Gaffney wrote: 'Most of the doctrinal content of the *Confessions* is presented more fully and in better order by *Holy Wisdom*'. See Gaffney, *Augustine Baker's Inner Light: A Study in English Recusant Spirituality* (Scranton: U. of Scranton, 1989), 18.

² See *That Mysterious Man: Essays on Augustine Baker with Eighteen Illustrations*, edited by Michael Woodward (Abergavenny: Three Peaks, 2001).

³ James Gaffney, 'An Unpublished Treatise of Augustine Baker on Discernment', *The American Benedictine Review*, 25 (1974), 235–245, here 240. Gaffney's article cites MS 22 in Downside Library,

However, Baker did not favour any abandonment of the Divine Office by Benedictine monks and nuns. His Benedictine prior stated, unsurprisingly:

It is supposed as a ground in all those collections and observations [by Baker], that the Office of Choir, and actions of obedience, and conventual acts, and all other things prescribed by Rule and statute, are most exactly to be kept and observed: yea, preferred before all other private exercises whatever.⁴

While he valued ‘an attention or express reflection on the words and sense of the sentence pronounced by the tongue or revolved in the mind’, which is ‘the lowest and most imperfect degree of attention’, Baker also commended ‘an attention to God, though not to the words’, which ‘is far more beneficial than the former’ (347–348). He proposed a sort of integration of these first two degrees of attention, as he wrote:

A third and most sublime degree of attention to the divine Office is that whereby vocal prayers do become mental; that is, whereby souls most profoundly and with a perfect simplicity united to God can yet, without any prejudice to such union, attend also to the sense and spirit of each passage that they pronounce, yea, thereby find their affection, adhesion, and union increased and more simplified (348).

Baker was sent by his superiors to the convent of Benedictine nuns at Cambrai, in Flanders, to be their spiritual adviser.⁵ There he was accused of teaching that inner mystical experience stood above obedience to confessors; hence, a shadow of suspicion covered his reputation, although he was never censored by his Benedictine supervisors. As Liam Temple has shown, however, ‘these criticisms ... were, rather, the product of deeper anxieties concerning power and control within early modern Catholic convents’.⁶ According to James Gaffney, Baker’s views

which is part of a collection of manuscripts that Baker himself titled *The Remains of Other Works*. The short treatise bears the long title, ‘The Means and Manner How a Soul Should Behave Herself for to Know What She Were Best to Do in a Doubtful Case That Is of Moment’.

⁴ ‘A Memorial Written by the Late V. R. F. Leander Á S. Martino’, in Augustine Baker, *Holy Wisdom: Directions for the Prayer of Contemplation Extracted out of More than Forty Treatises*, edited by J. Norbert Sweeney (London: Burns and Oates, 1911), 555 (subsequent references to *Holy Wisdom* in the text).

⁵ Interestingly, from that convent his influence continued in its foundation in Paris. The spirit of Baker was kept alive in the transfer of the English Benedictine nuns to their native country during the nineteenth century. See Benedict Rowel, ‘Baker’s Continuing Influence on Benedictine Nuns’, in *That Mysterious Man*, 82–91.

⁶ Liam P. Temple, ‘The Mysticism of Augustine Baker, OSB: A Reconsideration’, *Reformation and Renaissance Review*, 19 (2017), 213–230, here 213.

concerning the nuns' capacity to discern the will of God regarding their practical decisions in personal prayer smacked, for the ecclesiastical authorities, of the Protestant accent on the individual believer's freedom.⁷ So Baker was blamed for inciting the nuns to follow their personal inspiration. It must be pointed out that Baker equally cared for the nuns who were unsophisticated, since he complemented his praises for the highest states in prayer with a very long succession of ejaculatory prayers, obviously providing for both the more advanced and the less advanced in their spiritual life.⁸

To what spiritual masters was Baker indebted? He was mostly influenced by the Bible, by the fourth-century monk John Cassian, by the sixth-century Gregory the Great and the Byzantine Dionysius (the Pseudo-Areopagite), by several medieval authors—Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, Johannes Tauler, Walter Hilton, Julian of Norwich, the anonymous writer of *The Cloud of Unknowing* and Herp (Harphius)—by the sixteenth-century Jesuit Baltasar Álvarez, the Carmelites Teresa of Ávila and John of the Cross, and the seventeenth-century Capuchin Benet of Canfield.⁹ He was indeed widely read in spirituality.

Main Themes

I shall single out six principal themes in Baker's writing: divine inspiration, humility, flexibility, the will of God, the signs indicating that a person is called into mystical consciousness, and the experience of desolation.

Divine Inspiration

Several experts consider Baker's doctrine of how prayerful people (including the Benedictine nuns at Cambrai) can perceive *divine inspiration*, which Baker called 'Inner Light', to be the most original theme in his teaching. James Gaffney remarks that correctly understanding divine inspiration requires a premise:

His teaching on inspiration presupposes his teaching on propensities God normally inspires in accordance with the proclivities of nature, and spiritual directors must keep individual and general propensities well in view if they hope to guide effectively in the way of inspiration.¹⁰

⁷ See Gaffney, 'An Unpublished Treatise', 236–237. I return to the believer's freedom below.

⁸ See Augustine Baker, 'Certain Patterns of Devout Exercises of Immediate Acts and Affections of the Will', in *Holy Wisdom*, 563–662.

⁹ I am mentioning the names that frequently recur. For a longer list, see Baker, *Holy Wisdom*, 87.

¹⁰ Gaffney, *Augustine Baker's Inner Light*, 31.

Gaffney also notes that such inspiration is given to ‘those who follow a contemplative vocation’ and consists in ‘enabling and inclining them ... to know and do the will of God’. He goes on to say: ‘The sort of inspiration on whose importance Baker insists should not ... be confused with such out of the way experiences as mysterious voices, apparitions, and the like’.¹¹ So, even though the inspiration comes directly from the Holy Spirit, it is not an extraordinary phenomenon.¹² Baker emphasized the duty of consulting with a spiritual director (527–530), provided he or she is capable of understanding the complexities of contemplative prayer—the kind of person that Baker regretted not



Augustine Baker, attributed to William Faithorne, 1654

having encountered. As the psychiatrist Richard Lawes points out, as far as Baker himself was concerned, after a dramatic religious experience, ‘his decision to become a Catholic came not from pure inward illumination, but a slower and more scholarly process of reading various authorities’. This prudence in not rushing towards a decision ‘is in keeping with Baker’s view that inner illumination, however important, must be constantly verified by careful resort to trustworthy figures in the mystical tradition of the Church’.¹³

Concerning ‘how much certainty one should attribute to such inspiration’, Gaffney tells us that Baker thought,

¹¹ Gaffney, *Augustine Baker’s Inner Light*, 32.

¹² Baker was acquainted with Thomas Aquinas’ teaching that the gifts of the Holy Spirit were ‘motions’ offered to all, and not the result of reasoning; see *Summa theologiae*, 1. 2, q. 68 and 2. 2, q. 45.

¹³ Richard Lawes, ‘Can Modern Psychology Help Us Understand Baker’s *Secretum Sive Mysticum*’, in *That Mysterious Man*, 211–233, here 216. The *Secretum sive mysticum* is one of Baker’s several writings that include autobiographical passages.

‘one who proceeds obediently and dispassionately by recollection and resignation to seek the will of God can rest assured of the divine authorship of those inner promptings which commonly follow’.¹⁴

Humility

Virtually all Christian mystics praise *humility* as ranking among the central virtues. As a good Benedictine, Baker was aware of its great importance.¹⁵ He writes: ‘The deeper thou groundest thyself in humility, the higher thou raisest thyself in charity’ (60). He also highlights the connection between humility and the joys of contemplation:

Now this same humility is to be exercised, not so much in considering thine own self, thy sinfulness, and misery (though to do thus at the first be very good and profitable), but rather in a quiet loving sight of the infinite endless being and goodness of Jesus; the which beholding of Jesus must be either through grace in a savourous feeling knowledge of him, or at least in a full and firm faith in Him (60).¹⁶

Flexibility

Baker advocates *flexibility* to those who are called by God to pass from a mainly active prayer to a passive one:

If thou findest that through custom such works do in time lose their savour and virtue to increase this love, and that it seems to thee that thou feelest more grace and spiritual profit in some other, take these other and leave those, for though the inclination and desire of thy heart to Jesus must ever be unchangeable, nevertheless thy spiritual works thou shalt use in thy manner of praying, reading, &c., to the end to feed and strengthen this desire, may well be changed, according as thou feelest thyself by grace disposed in the applying of thy heart. Bind not thyself, therefore, unchangeably to voluntary customs, for that will hinder the freedom of thy heart to love Jesus, if grace would visit thee specially. (61)¹⁷

¹⁴ Gaffney, *Augustine Baker's Inner Light*, 39. Instructively, without referring to Baker, a twentieth-century German mystic took up the same position as our British Benedictine: ‘One should seek out an experienced person and tell him everything. The advice of such a person should be taken seriously, while at the same time one should reserve the freedom to act according to one’s own innermost conscience in case one has not been fully understood or one senses the danger of being unduly influenced.’ (Romano Guardini, *The Art of Praying: The Principles and Methods of Christian Prayer*, translated by Prince Leopold of Loewenstein [Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute, 1994], 124–125.)

¹⁵ See Terrence G. Kardong, *Benedict's Rule: A Translation and Commentary* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1996), index s.v. ‘Humility (*humilitas*)’.

¹⁶ Later, in his second treatise, second section, he writes a long chapter on humility (chapter 13).

¹⁷ And see 421, 423 and 425, especially the phrase ‘due liberty of spirit’.

Despite his accent on a freedom of decision that leads to wordless prayer, Baker recommends ‘a totall indifferency & resignation in the matter’ of a decision to be discerned.¹⁸ This is perhaps an allusion to Ignatius of Loyola’s *indiferencia*, which characterizes the entire readiness to accept the will of God throughout the process of discernment.

The Will of God

Baker stresses the importance of resignation or submission to *the divine will*. He offers this very wise—and original—advice:

There is in acts of Resignation far more security and less danger of propriety or self-interest than in acts of immediate love, which being apt to cause stirrings and pleasing motions in corporal nature, very few souls can practise them purely and without propriety, except they be exalted to a supreme degree of spiritual divine charity. Again, there is in Resignation exercised more directly true mortification and contradiction to self-love and interest than in any other kind of internal prayer, and consequently it is a prayer more purifying. (451)

Signs of a Mystical Calling

Like the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* and like John of the Cross, Baker proposes *signs* indicating that a person is called to wordless prayer. He concurs with these authors that the person called by God to this new kind of prayer experiences a kind of impotence in practising discursive meditation at the same time as a fruitful rest and repose in God.¹⁹

In treating meditation as seemingly opposed to entering into a post-meditative state, and as presumably amounting to a countersign, Baker acknowledges the objection that it would be deleterious *not* to meditate on Christ’s passion, which ‘is never to be set aside’ (423). He maintains that the relationship to the suffering Jesus does not require attention to *the details* of his passion, provided the prayerful people satisfy two conditions:

¹⁸ Augustie Baker, *Remains*, edited by John P. H. Clark (Salzburg: U. Salzburg, 2009), 4.

¹⁹ Both *The Cloud* and Baker’s *Holy Wisdom*, however, lack the second sign described by John of the Cross: ‘The memory ordinarily turns to God solicitously and with painful care, and the soul thinks it is not serving God but turning back, because it is aware of this distaste for the things of God’ (John of the Cross, ‘The Dark Night’, 1.9.3, and see 1.10.1, in *The Collected Works of St John of the Cross*, translated by Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, rev. edn [Washington, DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1991]). The context here is the dark night, whereas later in his life, in *The Spiritual Cantic* and *The Living Flame of Love*, he would become more serene.

1. In their internal prayer, wherein they produce the same affections and acts of love, humility, and patience of which our lord gave there a pattern in His Passion. 2. In their external doings, really on occasions practicing the same virtues (which are proper to the Passion) with far more perfection in virtue of such prayer than they could be meditation, and so do show themselves to be more true disciples of His. (423–424)

The Experience of Desolation

Towards the end of *Holy Wisdom*, Baker touches on what he calls the ‘Great Desolation’. This desolation is similar to the dark night of the spirit described by John of the Cross. As in the latter, Baker notes that the soul ‘begins to suspect that by some great unknown sin she has procured all this, or, however, that her resistance is now so feeble and inefficacious that she deserves that God should quite cast her off’. With his usual precision, he observes, ‘this most afflicting martyrdom oftentimes continues many months, yea, in some persons several years (not always in extremity, but with some intermissions)’ (538).

However,

... the truth is that in this case of desolation the soul doth by her free-will or rather in the centre of the spirit beyond all her faculties, remain in a constant union and adhesion to God, although no such union do appear unto her (540).

In addition, Baker draws attention to ‘the fruits and benefits flowing from this most sad estate (supported with patience and tranquillity of spirit)’ (540). The principal benefit is this:

Hereby the devout soul obtains a new light to penetrate into the mystery of our Lord’s desertion in the garden and on the cross, and from this light a most inflamed love to Him; now she ceases to wonder why He should deprecate a cup so mortally bitter as this, and that it should work such strange effects on Him, or that He should cry out, *Eli, Eli, lamma sabachthani*, and by this desertion of His (which lasted till the very last moment of His life) she hopes to have an end put to hers (540).

The Entry into the Contemplative Mode

In his first treatise, Baker defines the *contemplative mode* in general as consisting in, ‘reducing our thoughts as much as may be, from multiplicity to unity, by fixing them continually on the divine love which is that *unum necessarium*’ (98, and compare Luke 10:42).

In the third treatise, he distinguishes between three degrees of 'internal prayer': 'meditation'; 'acts of the will', also called 'affections of the will'; and 'contemplation', also called 'passive union'. Although he acknowledges the importance of meditation, the principal thrust in his treatises is in favour of the second and the third degrees.

Acts of the Will

The second degree is divided into 'forced acts of the will' and 'exercises of aspiration'. On the one hand, forced acts occur 'without a distinct or express motive represented by the understanding, or else suitable to such a motive, yet without any formal discourse of the understanding'. They are called 'forced acts' because the soul, 'will need to use some force upon herself for the producing of the said acts of the will, which are imperfect contemplation'. On the other hand, the exercises of aspiration,

... are in substance little differing from the former Yet by reason of the facility wherewith they are produced without force, foresight, or election, purely flowing from an internal impulse of the Divine Spirit, we therefore give them another name. (432)²⁰

Baker directly contrasts the acts and the aspirations:

Immediate acts are not only produced with deliberation and choice, but ordinarily with some degree of force used upon the will. But Aspirations proceed from an interior impulse, indeliberately, and as it were naturally flowing from the soul, and thereby they show that there is in the interior a secret, supernatural, directing principle, to wit, God's Holy Spirit alone, teaching and moving the soul to breathe forth these Aspirations, not only in set recollections, but almost continually (512).

Contemplation

Contemplation, the third degree of internal prayer, is discussed in the fourth section of Baker's third treatise, which begins by delineating 'Contemplation in General':

²⁰ Much later, in his second edition (1830–1831) of *Der christliche Glaube*, Schleiermacher also distinguished between the facility and the difficulty (joy and sorrow) felt in the feeling of absolute dependence. See Louis Roy, *Mystical Consciousness: Western Perspectives and Dialogue with Japanese Thinkers* (Albany: SUNY, 2003), chapter 6, section titled 'Feeling'. In that section, I showed that for Schleiermacher 'feeling' is not a feeling in the usual sense; actually it is very close to what Baker meant by 'aspiration'.

There is a mystic contemplation which is, indeed, truly and properly such, by which a soul without discoursings and curious speculations, without any perceptible use of the internal senses or sensible images, by a pure, simple and reposeful operation of the mind, in the obscurity of faith, simply regards God as infinite and incomprehensible verity, and with the whole bent of the will rests in Him as her infinite, universal, and incomprehensible good (504).

I must confess to finding it difficult to distinguish this ‘contemplation in general’ from the second kind of the second degree, the ‘exercises of aspiration’. Furthermore, chapter 2 of this section is titled ‘Of the Prayer of Aspiration’—which seems to bring us back to the second degree! In fact, Baker calls this state the ‘last term of Aspirations’ (510), thus implying that the third degree is simply the perfecting of the second kind of the second degree.

But while the exercises of aspiration are mostly active, contemplation is mostly passive, and this third degree is the state that Baker wished many of the cloistered nuns to achieve. It goes without saying that the Holy Spirit, today as in the past, invites a good number of prayerful people to enter into this blessed state.

Clarity and Practicality

From wide reading on mystics and mysticism, I can assert that no one among the mystics has been as precise as Augustine Baker about prayer and contemplation. Teresa of Ávila gives us a wealth of practical observations, but her analyses are less coherent than Baker’s.²¹ And John of the Cross mentions fewer concrete details than Baker about the variety of situations and states in which people involved in mystical consciousness are engaged.²²

Therefore, if readers of *The Way*, even those who see themselves as novices in mysticism, peruse at least a few sections of Baker’s lengthy book, they will probably agree with Anthony Low: ‘His discussion of the approaches and first stages of mysticism is unsurpassed in its clarity and practicality’.²³ Low explains:

²¹ On Theresa of Ávila’s lack of coherence, see Bernard McGinn, *Mysticism in the Golden Age of Spain (1500–1650)* (New York: Crossroad, 2007), 120–229, especially 145, 150, 160–161, 196 and 201.

²² See Louis Roy, ‘The Experience of the Absence of God according to John of the Cross’, *The Way*, 55/1 (January 2016), 89–98.

²³ Anthony Low, *Augustine Baker* (New York: Twayne, 1970), preface [vii].

Baker also combines, in his own way, the elements of unlimited spiritual goals with common sense in attaining them. He is one of the most reliable guides for beginners in the mystical way, because he presents his doctrines in sober, discursive, carefully qualified form, making no attempt to sway the reader's emotions.²⁴

I wish to leave to James Gaffney the final assessment of Augustine Baker's importance for today:

Baker's solicitude for spiritual freedom, his repudiation of formalistic piety, his denunciation of legalistic obedience, his pursuit of a simplified asceticism, his awareness of the interplay of grace and natural character, his emphasis on the individuality of vocation, and his conviction that lack of spiritual direction is not an insuperable handicap, all these are views with obvious relevance to some of the most acute problems of contemporary Catholic spirituality.²⁵

Louis Roy OP holds a PhD from the University of Cambridge. After teaching for twenty years at the Jesuit university of Boston College, he is now professor of theology at the Dominican University College in Ottawa. He has published books in English and French, some of which have been translated into Spanish and Vietnamese. He is interested in intellectual, affective and mystical approaches to God in our contemporary world, in religious experience and revelation, and in interreligious dialogue.

²⁴ Low, *Augustine Baker*, 118.

²⁵ Gaffney, *Augustine Baker's Inner Light*, 149.

THE SWEETNESS OF FINDING MORE THAN A HOME

A Telescopic View of Ruth

Paul Dominic

HOME IS SWEET. But it is sweeter when people leave their parents' home and make another home as husband or wife. A sweeter home can be found without marriage, too, when people join a community of men or women living happily together, consecrated as priests or religious, in a community forming a diocese or a religious congregation. Either type of home is good; and the goodness of each should influence the other to make it happier and better. In this spirit here is an attempt to focus appreciatively on Ruth and her marriage, and hopefully stumble upon some findings for consecrated living as well as married life.

A Hermeneutic of the Book of Ruth

Whatever the variety, if not divergence, of opinion among scholars about the purpose or theme of the Book of Ruth, there is only unanimity that it is a lovely, idyllic story about making a new home. At the same time, they admit various possible readings of the book in different life settings and walks of life.¹ This can lead to a lively and lovely enquiry among consecrated persons, especially when they chance upon the rabbinic view that the story was meant 'to teach how great is the reward of those who do deeds of kindness'.² So, can that charming, covenantal story of Ruth reveal something equally charming about their common living in fidelity (Hebrew *ḥ esed*), and about their mission of goodness, irrespective of language, talent, age, race and nation? Does it offer an unsuspected preview of the sweetness of consecrated life, which is

¹ See Kathleen A. Robertson Farmer, 'The Book of Ruth', in *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), volume 2, 895.

² Farmer, 'Book of Ruth', 894.

basically only an intense form of human life in which, as Christians dare to hope, 'there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!' (Colossians 3:11)?

The story of Ruth is 'more like an extended parable than a historical report'.³ With its themes woven together seamlessly in an attractive pattern it has the power of revealing us to ourselves, not only as we are but also as what we could be or ought to be.⁴ Several characters in the story have names whose meanings are significant: Naomi means *delight*; Mahlon means *sickness*; Chilion means *wasting*. The characters can reflect for us bits and pieces of ourselves and our continuing relationships, caught up in the experiences of pleasure, trial, growth, hope and consolation in our covenantal living in community as consecrated persons.

Redemption Looking to the Law

All of us are in need of redemption of various sorts throughout our lives, and redemption is an important theme of Ruth; the word occurs 23 times in the small book of 85 verses.⁵ The whole plot of the story revolves around finding life through hesitant romance, hoping for marriage despite the bitterness of death—in fact three deaths of husbands, those of Naomi and of her two daughters-in-law. In their search for new life all the characters in the story are impelled by the constancy of their faith in God. Ruth, the Moabite, demonstrates her newfound faith in an especial manner when she professes her fidelity to Naomi, her mother-in-law, after her husband's death:

Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die—there will I be buried. May the Lord do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you! (1:16–17)

The story ends with Ruth finding Boaz, a kinsman, happily willing to redeem her from her widowhood, childlessness and foreignness—all according to the law by which they lived (4:1–13).

³ Farmer, 'Book of Ruth', 891.

⁴ Farmer, 'Book of Ruth', 893.

⁵ Farmer, 'Book of Ruth', 892.



Ruth Swearing Allegiance to Naomi, by Jan Victors, 1635

Their son, Obed, becomes a restorer of life for Naomi also and for her dead son Mahlon, and perpetuates their memory through his descendants—including Jesus himself (Matthew 1:5), whose very name means Saviour, surpassing his ancestors. He came, as he himself declared, that all would have life in abundance (John 10:10) in ways expected, or altogether unexpected and even unsuspected. The most unsuspected of all was his call to some to live in an altogether new, if also strange, way—married not to one human person, as from the beginning of creation, but to the whole of the human community in the manner of himself, marking a new social beginning and forming a new law. Thus he became the primogenitor of consecrated people.

Redemption Looking beyond the Law

All religious-minded people will appreciate the spontaneity of the self-giving love that fulfils God's law regarding neighbour (Leviticus 19:18) and 'also reflects God's love, in a marvellous joining of human and divine actions (compare 2:12 with 3:9)'.⁶ This latter experience leads to

⁶ NIV Study Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 364.

a birth and inheritance that continue the human lineage and reveal a divine intervention. That is the message acted out by Ruth and Boaz.

People consecrated to God through the intensive following of Jesus will go beyond this human message. They will seek redemption, enjoy life and learn to move from destitution to security and despair to delight (Ruth 1:1–5; 4:13–17), not by the perpetuation of themselves in the lives of their descendants, but living according to the will of God for them. While imitating the wholehearted faith of Naomi, Ruth and Boaz they will set their hearts not only on the law of marriage and its fruitfulness, but beyond it. They will keep seeking the plan of God focused on Jesus, implicit in the end of the Book of Ruth and the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew, unlike the Sadducees, for whom earthly life meant everything and life after death meant nothing (Matthew 22:24–33).

Their specific attraction to Jesus will be to follow him as the master of even the Sabbath law. They will be disciples of him who was the master of all laws, including the levirate law, and so fulfilled and perfected all law (Matthew 5:17), including the law of human generation (Genesis 1:28; 2:24). In this light they will take note of his place in his genealogy: he brought to an end the genealogical tree, culminating in his person (Matthew 1:1–17) and prolonged in his community of believers (John 1:12–13; 3:3–7; Matthew 16:18).⁷

This idea—is it far-fetched?—is worth comparing with another, with which a scholar springs a surprise. In telling the story of the following of levirate law, the writer of the Book of Ruth uses, repeatedly (1:15, 16; 2:2, 7, 9; 3:10)—knowingly or unknowingly—certain words such as *back* or *behind* or *after*. One may detect in this idea of pursuing or following another theme of the book, with its own unsuspected import. Remarking on this theme, Nicholas King goes on to make a striking suggestion: ‘Readers of the NT may be aware that Mark’s gospel uses similar words to denote discipleship (1:17, 20, etc)’.⁸

Certain traces of Christian discipleship may be discovered in Ruth. For example, true discipleship cannot be embraced without proper discernment. Ruth, in her childless widowhood, was enlightened enough

⁷ See Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, *I Say unto You*, volume 1 (Rajneeshpuram, Or: Rajneesh Foundation, 1983), 11.

⁸ See note on 2:2 in *The Old Testament: The Historical Books*, translated by Nicholas King (Stowmarket: Kevin Mayhew, 2012), 93.

not to seek out any sort of man for herself; but, imbued with her sense of covenant loyalty to God and her adopted family, she was anxious to find and claim the right, appropriate husband in an opportune manner, so that the son she bore would be legally and rightly claimed as the son of her dead husband (3:10–11).⁹

If one is attracted by this view, one cannot but be pleasantly surprised, even if not persuaded at once, by another suggestive thought connected with the very name of Boaz, the sober hero of the story. It so happens that Boaz is also the name of one of the two columns before the temple of Solomon (1 Kings 7:21). And this can remind interested seekers who choose to be disciples of Jesus to claim a promise made by his Abba God through Isaiah. Finding themselves uninterested in marriage by virtue of their call to follow Jesus, they ‘have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven’ (Matthew 19:11–12); so they come to inherit God’s promise to the eunuchs who hold fast to God’s covenant and do the things that please God: ‘I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off’ (Isaiah 56:5).

Redemption from Traditional Divisions

A third theme in the Book of Ruth concerns the traditional dealings of the ‘insider’ with the ‘outsider’, that is, of those who belong to one’s own race and religion and those who do not. The old sanctimonious law, with its spirit of exclusion of the outsider (Deuteronomy 23:3), whatever its function in Deuteronomic times, also needs redemption in later ones. If Naomi is redeemed from her misery and her dead son, Mahlon, is redeemed from having no posterity, it is through a son born to them thanks to the foreigner Ruth.

Ruth’s son Obed, of mixed blood, points to the greater son, David, a liberator, and even to the greatest son, Jesus, who turns out, in name and in fact, to be the foremost redeemer of all, reconciling all. Jesus made it a point to welcome all, the popularly virtuous and the proverbially sinful—and also racially segregated outsiders. He recognised the good done by people calling upon his name even if they were not formally

⁹ See Alice L. Laffey, Ruth in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, edited by Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1991), 557.

his followers like the apostles; he would let them do good even against the apostles' wishes (Luke 9:49–50). What is more, he defined the term 'neighbour' beyond the sacrosanct limits of one's own race or religion, and widened it to include anyone who is in need (Luke 10:29–37).

Those who follow in the spiritual line of Jesus and are consecrated to him as his particular followers will know to stand by him, who not only gathers the scattered flock of his people but also brings together all flocks into one fold (John 10:15–16; 11:51–52). They will serve the cause of unity through openness and dialogue by recognising how God includes every sort of outsider into the universal plan of redemption (Matthew 8:11–12; Ephesians 1:10–11), in ways beyond telling.

The story of Ruth already passes beyond the prohibition of foreigners in the assembly of God (Deuteronomy 23:3). Here is a double good news that can strike us as revelation when we see ourselves reflected in the story, not only as we really are, like Orpah (who is content to stay with her own people), but also as we ought to be, like Ruth and Boaz (who are determined to meet and mix with others), to widen our humanity and embrace all our neighbours.

Pondering on God's redemption in the life of the humble women, Ruth and Naomi, we must grasp at once the primary action of God on everyone, both insider and outsider, and the degree of response that is possible to all. Ruth comes to respond to the unseen intervention of God in terms that recall father Abraham himself. As Abraham leaves his home, relatives and gods at the bidding of God so, spontaneously, does Ruth. She speaks her mind to her mother-in-law clearly and firmly: 'your people shall be my people, and your God my God'.

With such a bold faith, despite her pagan origin, Ruth becomes an admirable and worthy daughter of Abraham, who put his faith in God after breaking with his native polytheism. Her conduct follows Abraham's original paradigm of answering God's call and can lead us to a fuller sense of our own vocation, our redemption from flesh and blood.

Commitment Born of Redemption

Ruth's commitment to God and God's people (exemplified by Naomi) was unwavering. Her determination can offer inspiration to those who decide upon or dream of following Jesus and his mission. Ruth needed no telling how to stay committed in her life; when urged by her mother-in-law to return to her parents' home, she stood her ground,



Ruth and Boaz, by Louis Hersent, 1819

unshaken by an uncertain future among unfamiliar people (1:18). Ruth can teach a necessary lesson to those who think to follow Jesus in making their commitment. They need to learn and appreciate the cost of that commitment. It was not for nothing that Christ said to a potential follower: 'No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God' (Luke 9:62).

In her faith Ruth was not enclosed in some spiritual cocoon. She acted on that faith in her response to her mother-in-law, in the urgent circumstances of life and death. She could translate her faith in God in terms of God's people: Ruth, an apparent outsider, spontaneously embraced not only God but also God's people, in a complete act of faith. Her commitment brings home to us the promise Jesus made to his followers: those who leave their home and kith and kin will not lack any home or be wanting in love—any more than Ruth. They will become the kinsfolk of Jesus, and receive a hundredfold as they discover new hearts, new homes, new relationships and new loves (Matthew 19:29), cutting across age, gender and class, and form part of the family of Jesus.

The more alive we are to this open, venturesome grace prefigured by Ruth (in contrast to her sister-in-law, Orpah, also a Moabite) the more we shall become aware of our own failures—as Jesus drives home in his story of the Samaritan.

The admirability of the 'other' in the story (be they Samaritan or Moabite) should serve primarily to convict us of our own repeated failures to recognize the despised 'other' as an agent of God's redemptive activity in the world.¹⁰

We shall then be sensible enough to respond to God with trust, even in the difficult moments with others living among us. We shall also value others in their admirable response to God. But for Ruth's characteristic behaviour, Naomi would have ended her life in the bitterness of sorrow. There is no telling what God would do for us through others who are different from us, if only we could welcome them in our midst and let them make their home with us.

The Social Institution of Service

Striving for and exhibiting an ever-clearer response to God in their own way, distinct from that of those who choose marriage, consecrated people appear in the world as belonging to an important institution of service, with their own worth, and corresponding reputation and social standing, though not without suffering. To them, therefore, could be applied what is said of Boaz: *gibbôr ḥ ayil* (2:1), translated as 'a pillar of society'.¹¹ This status is prominently defined by servanthood, as evoked by his son's name of Obed (*worshipper*).¹² When consecrated souls project a picture of healthy humanity, their presence and influence will be a beneficial phenomenon in society. Many will welcome them like family, fulfilling the promise of Jesus to his disciples (Matthew 19:29). They will rejoice and sing: 'How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity' (Psalms 133:1)!

Consecrated people have every right to believe they have been called and chosen to live for God in community. At the same time, they need to be free from any sense of superiority or segregation from others who are not so chosen. The others who are unlike us may well be like Ruth, the outsider, through whom God worked God's plan in the community of the chosen people.

¹⁰ See Farmer, 'Book of Ruth', 893.

¹¹ Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, 'Boaz, Pillar of Society: Measures of Worth in the Book of Ruth', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 45 (1989), 45–59, at 44, quoted in Farmer, 'Book of Ruth', 915.

¹² See *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 557.

Many consecrated people will know how, in the development of religious life, the element of community living became prominent because of a man who was not a Christian at birth. A forced conscript into the Roman army, Pachomius came to know the existence of Christians when some of them visited him and other prisoners to help them. Once released, he sought them out, received baptism and began living like them, doing good and drawing many to himself. When, in time, many began living around him, sharing in his Christian spirit of doing good, he formed them as a community. That gave rise to coenobitic (from Greek *koinos*, meaning common) life which took on the appearance of a family, and accorded the title of *Abba* (father) and *Amma* (mother) to those in overall care of the members.¹³

In our common living, too, it is likely that those whom we may, for whatever reason, consider to be like Ruth, an outsider may prove to be surprising channels of new grace. This is certainly not the meanest of Ruthian graces.

Paul Dominic SJ was born in 1941 in Tamil Nadu, India, and ordained in 1972. After a stint of lecturing in maths, from 1980 he worked at Satyodayam, the retreat house in Secunderabad, India, giving the Spiritual Exercises and writing. From 2007 to 2010 he worked in the Jesuit Region of Guyana (part of the British Province), and is now back at Satyodayam. He has published in India, the Philippines, Europe and the USA.

¹³ See *The Continuing Quest for God: Monastic Spirituality in Tradition and Transition*, edited by William Skudlarek (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1982), 50–53.

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THE SPIRITUALITY OF MARRIAGE TODAY

Robert E. Doud

JUST RECENTLY, the reading came up in the liturgy about Abraham almost sacrificing his son Isaac at the command of God. There is a discomfiting bolt of shock that comes with this reading, that God would test Abraham in this unusual way. We experience a feeling of relief, no matter how many times we have heard the story, as the angel stays the hand and arm of Abraham at the last second. I know that if a friend came to me and confided that God had asked him to murder his own son as a gesture of faith in and obedience to God, I would offer immediately to drive him to the mental ward of a hospital. I would not allow my friend to go home and pray about the idea, and I would alert the authorities immediately.

As I listened to the scripture read at Mass, my thoughts went to Sarah. One thought was that much of the Bible consists of an extremely sexist set of documents, in which a woman's, even a mother's, point of view could be excluded without question. Could a husband in any time or place make a decision to take the life of his own child without at least informing his wife, the mother of their child, that he was about to do so? And what would Sarah have done if she had an inkling of Abraham's intention as they set out on their three-day hike on Mount Moriah? The Bible shows no concern for the rights or feelings, or the power and position, of Sarah. As we read the story today, can we avoid feeling that an important part of it is missing? Can we avoid feeling that the God we know would not play with Abraham's mind and devotion in this arbitrary and callous manner?

How different it was at the wedding feast of Cana, where Jesus is presented as being attentive to the wishes of his mother! It is Mary who lets her will be known about sparing the couple and their families the embarrassment of running out of wine. Jesus performs his first miracle by respecting the wish and gentle command of his mother. On all sides, it is a situation of sensitivity and gentleness, quite the opposite of

arbitrariness and callousness. This miracle of transformation shows that we need to go back into the Old Testament and allow our interpretation of it to be transformed by the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's gifts of faith, hope and love. The Cana story might raise in our minds a faint sense of wonder about why and whether Jesus needed to remain single, about his sexuality, and about the question of affectivity in his life.

Our growth in spirituality shows itself in the way we interpret the Bible. The Bible only makes sense in the full context of a tradition that is always renewed, again and again, by the Holy Spirit. Our understanding of marriage, in the Bible and in our lives, grows through the discerning experiences of married couples. Likewise our interpretation of the Church as a living covenant with Christ grows and deepens through history and tradition. The eucharist grows in our understanding as the nourishment needed to preserve and enhance these covenantal bonds. The mystery deepens as the Church ponders these things in its heart.

Brooklyn in the 1950s

Marriage involves complex social relationships that may evolve over time and differ, country to country and culture to culture. Considering the spirituality of marriage requires an appreciation of how such a context operated in one's own past, how it functions today, and in what direction it is headed in the future. My own context, formative of my personal ideas and feelings, began in Brooklyn, New York, in an Irish Catholic neighbourhood, in the 1950s.

Nearly all of my relatives attended Roman Catholic schools, both at the elementary and high school levels. My aunts and uncles, all younger than my parents, were married in either of two churches. In a third church, in the Bay Ridge section of Brooklyn, I became an altar boy at the age of eight and, even while I was still tripping over the hem of the shortest cassock available, learnt to serve at a nuptial Mass. This usually meant receiving a tip from the best man. Jumping far ahead, in my first few years as a priest, I officiated at the weddings of three cousins, and concelebrated at the nuptial masses of several more. Thus, weddings were institutions, gatherings of the clan and rites of passage for members of my family.

A year or two after the weddings of my aunts and uncles, so I observed, new cousins began to appear on the scene. The couples, with their infants and toddlers, eventually moved from small city apartments to larger homes in the suburbs. Men seemed as wedded to their jobs



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A Brooklyn wedding in the 1950s

and to their cars as they were to their wives and families. Saturdays always seemed to involve hardware stores, car repairs and football games. We all went to church on Sundays. Uncles helped each other, repairing roofs or painting walls and ceilings. Religion was not something anyone thought much about, except to remember what the nuns were like during their school days. There was an enormous amount of gift-purchasing for family birthdays, graduations and other occasions.

Marriage involves not only the formal contract between the spouses but also a web of agreements and understandings among other couples and the wider family. Nobody ever used the word *covenant*, but the relationships between the partners among the various couples in my family were certainly regarded as sacred bonds and inviolable mutual commitments. Marriages involved families, clans and neighbourhoods. Eventually, two of my aunts were divorced, and the rest of the family surrounded them and their children with care and support. Neither ever remarried.

And so, marriage was the bedrock of society as I knew it growing up. And, yes, marriage and the home were the places for the generation and education of children. The homes of these families were centres for celebrations of all kinds—birthdays, anniversaries, first communions, graduations, Christmas holidays and Easter. Outdoor picnics or beach outings were held on Memorial Day, the Fourth of July and Labor Day, and on intervening summer weekends. Home was also the place for

doing homework. The family prayed together before meals, and said the rosary before bedtime.

We learnt about marriage by living the life of the family. There was a special love between parents that began usually after their high-school years of dating and courtship. Our teachers in high school about the delicate matters of intimacy were religious sisters, brothers or priests, all of whom were celibate. Supplementary counselling, along with example—good and bad—was provided by our peers, whose advice was measured against whatever it was our religious teachers had taught us. Parents occasionally addressed these issues briefly over the kitchen table.

We were led to understand that the nuptial blessing brought special graces into the lives of a married couple. The actual contract was made in the exchange of vows. The couples themselves were the ministers of the sacrament. In former days, a beautiful description of married life was read to the couple and to the congregation. ‘Henceforth’, it said, ‘you will belong entirely to each other; you will be one in mind, one in heart, and one in affections’.¹ The nuptial mass felt like a renewal of vows and contracts for all the other couples in attendance. It was also an example and an instruction to teenagers who were attentive and anxious about matters of sex and marriage. It was sometimes said that the new home would be an *ecclesiola*, a little church, and a symbol of the relationship between Christ and his Church. The people of God, collectively understood, are the bride of God.

Sacrament and Mystery

So, marriage is a sacrament, and a very deep mystery. It is a sacrament that helps to explain all the other sacraments, and that throws light upon the notion of sacramentality as such. Sacramentality involves the

**A sacrament
that helps to
explain all
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sacraments**

idea that the seven sacraments are based in scripture and are in some sense gestures of Christ himself. The sacraments continue and prolong the ministry of Jesus and the incarnation of Christ throughout history. The intimacy of sex in marriage is an experiential example of the intimacy of God and humanity in the cosmic embrace of the Church. The mystery of the incarnation is pictured and presented for contemplation in the intimacy of sex in marriage.

¹ William J. Byron, ‘Pre-Vatican II Advice for a Happy, Lasting Marriage’, *America* (20 November 2015).

The Church is for lovers and can be understood as a giant, history-long love affair between the God in Christ and each couple as an interpersonal community in which natural love and divine grace are entwined. This throws theological light upon the eucharist and all the other sacraments. The eucharist involves the real presence of Christ himself; it is there as spiritual sustenance for the home and family, and, especially, for the sacramental couple. The mass renews the spiritual covenant between Christ and his Church, and so does marriage, not only on the wedding day, but in the ongoing process of day-to-day life in the Christian family.

This sacrament was created as an exclusive contract between lovers, and shows that the Church itself is a contract between lovers. The loving couple are themselves the priests who confer this sacrament upon one another. There is not only a priesthood of all believers, there is a kind and quality of priesthood that only married couples can enjoy. In future, perhaps, married people will become recognised as the quintessential priests in the Roman Catholic Church! Celibate and monastic priesthood will be seen as deriving its meaning and validity from the priesthood of the married. Priesthood is not based on the asceticism of celibacy, but on the community of the married couple.

Community and Joy

Marriage is not a static and steady state that is to be preserved against the buffets and batterings of life; rather, marriage is a process of development for both partners and for the marriage itself. For both partners, there is the relationship to nurture and to maintain, above and beyond the interests and benefits of the respective spouses. Growth and ongoing mutual service are the name of the game. The careers of each of the spouses are to be regarded equally. And, if education is for each a lifelong process, then each must be allowed time and opportunity for developing talent and accumulating achievements.

Modern couples share the responsibilities of rearing children, from changing diapers, to spending time over the children's homework. Family time together must be planned and enjoyed. Praying and discussing matters of conduct and values have to be worked into busy schedules. Friendships with other adults and children are to be encouraged, as children learn to be generous and to discern what is appropriate and not appropriate in connecting with others. The charming side of life must

be balanced with the challenging side of life. It was said as advice to the couple in their wedding ceremony in earlier times: 'Love can make it easy; perfect love can make it a joy'.² Joy is a gift from God and a virtue to be practised, even when a family is working together to address problems.

Planning life together, year by year and day by day, will involve some sacrifice. Planning family vacations and celebrations may require scrimping a bit on other things for a few months ahead, and dealing with some debt for a few months afterwards. Children may have to understand that the gifts they receive may not be as elaborate as those their friends receive. Sacrifice is a notion and a value that will be demanded and celebrated in every Christian home. One sacrifices the enjoyment of some extra time and cosiness in bed on a Sunday morning in order to join others in worshipping God at Mass. One has to work attitudinally to experience liturgy as the meaningful and attractive event that it really is. Biblically speaking, one is called often, in ways large and very small, to pick up one's cross and to follow Christ.

Something needs to be said about the marriages of our LGBTQ+ friends and relatives. By now, many of us have been invited to the commitment ceremonies of same-sex couples. Of course, we go to honour our friends in their conscientious decisions and commitments. We also honour the vocations and ministries of the many homosexual clergy who serve us. We probably do not think of LGBTQ+ commitments as sacramental relationships. Even so, we may sense the presence of grace and providence in the lives of our friends. Would God want us to hurt our friends and family members by regarding them with rejection, exclusion or unkindness? What would Jesus do? What is the Holy Spirit telling us today?

The Holy Spirit guides us through the various and evolving circumstances of life. With prayer and a desire in all things to do what is right, we can expect to receive special graces that are tailored to help us meet the demands of our personal vocation and mission in life. Attentiveness in this process is what the Jesuits call the discernment of spirits. Our view of Church and ecclesiology is germane here. Is the Church the forger and enforcer of a set of rules and a code of conduct? Or, is the Church more basically a set of relationships, first of all to God

² Byron, 'Pre-Vatican II Advice for a Happy, Lasting Marriage'.

and to ourselves, and then to our loved ones, friends, neighbours, the poor and needy, and even to those who cause us difficulty? The view we have of Church and theology will affect our practical attitudes, and our personal attitudes and decisions will help to shape the Church's attitude towards itself.

Our spirituality is catholic and global. It is also processive and relational. Our spiritual growth takes place within a fabric of relationships in which our marriage partner has primacy of place and consideration. If another relationship becomes a challenge or an obstacle to our commitment to our spouse, then the distracting or interfering relationship must be curtailed. A beautiful friendship with a person of the opposite sex can become, ironically, *too* beautiful; that is, it can become a menace to the even more beautiful relationship of love for our spouse. Prudence is the virtue that governs our judgments and shapes our conscience. Prudence should also govern our heart-strings, our attention and affection, and the incoming stimuli from the social environment. Even at church, friendliness can become flirtation, and flirtation can become infidelity. Working at keeping a faithful marital relationship means at times telling our own heart to mind its own business and to stop working overtime in new directions.

Divorce and Complexity

The New Testament scriptures declare the indissolubility of marriage. In the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible, divorce had been allowed because of our human weakness and frailty, that is, because of our hardness of heart. In the United States today, about half the marriages wind up in civil divorce. Strictly speaking, civilly divorced Roman Catholics are not allowed to remarry. This is a vexed question, since many divorced Catholics do decide to remarry. The Church has a process called *annulment*, through which a previous marriage can be declared void for a variety of reasons, declaring that the spouses may marry again.

Civil divorce is permissible because, for a couple with grave differences, living together can be psychologically damaging to one or both parties, and physical harm inflicted by one on the other may be possible. It may also be harmful to their children. If one party is carrying on an adulterous love affair with another person, and the matter cannot be resolved, even after counselling, divorce is recommended. Indeed, in modern societies, the lack of a civil divorce procedure would be

viewed as unenlightened, medieval and even barbaric. Most Catholic families today would be very understanding of a member of the family who had, after counselling and attempts at reconciliation, obtained a divorce and subsequently remarried. Some families, and indeed some pastors, find no scandal in remarried persons receiving communion when no annulment has been declared. Such matters, it is believed by some, are best left to individual conscience.

The spirituality of Catholics today is often complex, and is embedded in a context of issues and relationships that pull in several directions. A now loveless or even hostile relationship cannot be considered to be a marriage, even on the basis of vows made long ago. The lost love involved here may have become irretrievable. At what point should the basis of marriage be recognised as gone or absent, and the openness to new relationships be allowed or encouraged? In what ways should the good of the children in the home be considered? No easy or uniform list of answers to these questions exists. The pain involved in working these matters out may itself be redemptive and spiritually valuable.

The Future of Marriage and the Church

The future of marriage will involve two-career couples seeking spiritual nourishment, not only from their parishes, but from programmes offered by Catholic and ecumenical institutions in the wider community. Clubs and associations devoted to social action, prayer groups and contemplative opportunities will be part of spiritual growth for married Catholics. Spiritual books and periodicals will be found in every Catholic home. Children will be introduced to the scriptures and will be part of conversations about spiritual topics, which will include diversity, social attitudes and the inclusion of others. Egotism, self-centredness and selfishness will be addressed as undesirable habits and attitudes.

So far, my remarks have been directed to church members who are citizens of Western democracies. It is out of this experience that I come. I do realise that there are other countries and societies, in other parts of the world, where marriage can be a very different experience, and where, as well, the experiences of women are very different. In some places women are not regarded as equal partners in a marriage relationship. In some places, the roles of women are narrowly defined. Women are there only to prepare meals, care for children and attend to the sexual needs of their husbands. To people in these places, my remarks may sound strange, unrealistic or idealistic.



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A twenty-first-century Anglican wedding

Christian marriage should be an ideal and an example to couples of other faiths and none. Mutual assistance between the partners and the education of their children should be obvious as being of paramount importance. In the future, there will be, eventually, married priests and women priests. If or when so, there will be more priests available to share and spread the work of liturgies, confessions, counselling and administrative duties. Priests, male and female, may be teachers in schools, loan officers in banks, insurance brokers, athletic coaches, hospital workers, college instructors and mechanics. Pastors will have a variety of talents to choose from as they organize their many parish programmes. As sacraments, priesthood and matrimony will share practical aspects and common functions. Catechetical education will be seen as not only for children and young adults, but much more along the lines of lifelong learning programmes for all ages.

Ecumenism will flourish, as the lifestyles of Roman Catholic priests will resemble more closely the living patterns of ministers in other denominations. We can envision more contact with non-Catholics as children of different denominations meet and play with one another. Teams need other teams to play against. Adults who volunteer to coach and supervise need not belong to the Church in which they serve. Priests and ministers, and their families, will socialise and learn from one another. Communities will be enriched by these interactions. Historical differences between Churches will be studied, understood,

and overcome, in some respects, and warm interactions will occur between Christians and non-Christians.

Wondering about the mystery of marriage and pondering over the experience of marriage are part of the gift and prayer of contemplation. How grace comes into our lives and the transforming effect of what grace does need to be mulled over in prayer. Our contemplation ought not to be only an occasional escape into silence and solitude but, more often, a lavish experience of saturation in the graces of our experiences in living. In our deepest spiritual moments, we should imagine ourselves not as celibates walking in monastery grounds, but as loving spouses in a family environment. Our own background and our own journey in life bring us ample food for reflection on the tremendous experience of living. The eucharist nourishes us on this journey, and marriage is the context in which this food is prepared, served and enjoyed. These sacraments belong together in our imagination and in our experience.

Robert E. Doud is emeritus professor of philosophy and religious studies at Pasadena City College in California. He has a particular interest in bringing together philosophy and poetry, using poetry to offer insight into philosophy and philosophy as a tool in interpreting poetry. His articles have appeared in *Process Studies*, *Review for Religious*, *The Journal of Religion*, *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *Philosophy Today*, *The Thomist*, *Religion and Literature*, *Horizons*, *Soundings* and *Existential*.

ETSI FICUS NON FLORET

An Examen of the Landscape of My Life

Ian Coleman

Though the fig tree does not blossom ... yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the God of my salvation. (Habakkuk 3:17–18)

ON THE SLOW TRAIN from Welwyn my son Michael points out where we stop to wait for the track to clear before setting out across the Digswell viaduct. Here, the four tracks of the main line are reduced to two and we seem to fly weightlessly and low over the houses and meadow as we cross over that fine Victorian structure. Michael, who is on the autistic spectrum, is something of a connoisseur of detailed railway knowledge, and thoroughly enjoys the experience. But, that very same afternoon, I come back on my own, leaving my wonderful family behind, to get to Cambridge and, from there, to cycle to Birmingham.

Why would I want to do that? In order to retrace a journey I made in my first year of university, from St Catharine's College in Cambridge to Manresa House in Harborne, as an enquirer for the Society of Jesus—a prospective Jesuit novice. What do I remember now of that time? I recall writing to 'The Vocations Director SJ'—with a certain thrill of awe at those two little letters 'SJ' on the envelope, letters of such great historical weight. In my letter I said I might have a vocation to the Society of Jesus, and he duly wrote back, inviting me to visit Manresa House, the Jesuit noviceship in Harborne, which is a suburb of Birmingham.

The name was familiar to me, not only from the Catalan town near to which Ignatius of Loyola made his spiritual retreat, but also because I had already encountered another Manresa House, in Roehampton, south-west London. The year before I had taken some time out, during a quick visit accompanying a friend to his audition for music college, to visit this place—just a mysterious name in the *London A–Z* but, for me, an intriguing destination. I knew that it was the place where the poet

Gerard Manley Hopkins had made his own Jesuit novitiate, and I wanted to find out more.

I did not then know that the Society had long since vacated this Manresa House, leaving only two—magnificent—mementoes: a little graveyard, with the fateful ‘SJ’ on every headstone of the Fathers and Brothers buried there, and a jewel-like miniature neo-Baroque chapel. This turned out to be entirely occupied by climbing-frames and other playgroup equipment when I visited, since the splendid mansion had been taken over by the local authority, and was being used as a community college and crèche. This encounter was only the first of the many whimsical twists and contradictions which characterized my relationship with the Society that Ignatius founded.

I had gone by bus to Roehampton, and travelled by train to Harborne but, this time, I determined to make my journey on a bicycle. This had its effect on the route I took. It was quite different from the wide meander that the railway forces on any traveller attempting to cross England from east to west. By train, one first goes north to the cathedral towns of Ely and Peterborough, further north again to Stamford, then south to Leicester, followed by a gentle south-westerly progress through Hinckley, Nuneaton and finally Birmingham.

I recalled the thrill—a rather comical thrill in hindsight—I felt as I penetrated deeper into a part of my own country I knew nothing about. It was not London nor the North, not East Anglia, which was my own region, nor Wales nor the West Country, both of which were familiar from childhood holidays. It was, it seemed to me then, a quiet and forgotten land. Each station sign, especially Narborough and Water Orton, seemed to signify a further descent into the unknown for my nineteen-year-old self.

Sometimes half-mockingly called ‘The Big Heart of England’, these Midland areas were to me, somehow, also a sacred heart—the heart to which my vocation led me. Particularly vivid was the memory of a noisy gaggle of schoolchildren who got on at Nuneaton and off at Water Orton. They were somehow like the children who had colonised the old chapel in Manresa, Roehampton; the contrast between the light-hearted excitedness of their travelling home from school that Friday and the intensity of my own inner journey once again seemed oddly whimsical—there was a warm and humorous bathos to it. Here I was, a putative Jesuit priest, a follower of Ignatius, Campion, Southwell and Hopkins, and there they were, unwitting companions on my trip, shouting, teasing,

provoking and laughing, with a winning nonchalance I rather wished I could share.

Cycling, by contrast, is fundamentally silent. Any ambient sounds—traffic, chatter, birdsong, wind and weather—are very transient; as the old saying has it ‘the dog barks, but the caravan goes on’. My solitude as I cycled along was more absolute than the emotion of loneliness I had felt on my train journey, because there were now no laughing schoolkids, or indeed any fellow travellers, to highlight it. This was certainly part of what distinguished the fifty-something me from the teenage me.

On the train had swept, slowly, along the last gentle curve, where the various main lines and suburban lines all begin to gather, to the south-east of central Birmingham—a little patch I was to get to know well as a novice, since it was where I was assigned to gain a little pastoral experience in a parish. It was all tower blocks and workshops—just how I imagined Birmingham to be—scruffy and down-to-earth, with a lingering smell of solvent in the air. In my heart, I later associated it with the crucifix that hung in the chapel of the new Manresa House, made of light oak, clean and clear. This crucifix seemed to me to hang equally over the landscape of Ashted and Vauxhall in the evening light, the encounter between the Cross and the City.

But another moment of bathos awaited me as the train reached its destination; and my half-formed vision was dispelled when, having got off, I tried to find the two Jesuits who were coming to meet me. I was sure I had spotted them when I saw two serious-looking types in black clericals standing near the ticket barrier. I confidently strode up and asked, ‘Are you from Manresa House?’ But all I received by reply was a



diffident 'No' and a puzzled look. A little further on, in very ordinary and somewhat ill-fitting clothes, I came across another pair, who were actually holding up a little card with the same fateful designation 'Manresa House'. It turned out to be the novicemaster and one of his recent graduates, a somewhat intimidatingly rugged South African who soon left the Society (*who soon left the Society* was, I was to discover, a frequently repeated refrain during my brief but life-changing four years in the order).

All of these memories, alternately hazy and surprisingly vivid, turned and turned in my mind as I reached Cambridge, mounted the bicycle and set off westwards. My first section was chosen to take me past the care home where my grandmother had died, early on in the first year of my novitiate. Near to St Neot's and now called Eltisley Manor, I had known it as Weald House, the destination of frequent, tense journeys with my parents in my late teens. My grandma, whom I always called 'Nana', had mainly brought me up when I was very little, as my mother was recovering from a stroke. To her I owed much of my basic sense of Christian life, in acts of kindness as well as a strict moral instinct (always very indulgently applied). She had suffered latterly from an upsetting form of Alzheimer's disease and the gradual disintegration of her sense of self and place had provoked in her a growing unease that she clearly could not account for. Consequently, visiting her caused my mother very much pain.

Pulling off the busy trunk-road which had replaced the cheerily pastoral lanes through Barton, Comberton, Caxton and other handsome, half-remembered villages, I recognised, with the shock of thirty years distance, the inscribed stone 'Weald House'. It had been placed over the door of an extension to the care home, and I suddenly recalled that this extension had been finished roughly half way through my Nana's stay there. Indeed, the care-home manager had proudly shown us that stone during one of our visits. I saw that there had been several more extensions since—a witness, in bricks and mortar, to the ageing profile of England's population. It still seemed an isolated place, even though it was now twice as big, and its old name, 'Weald House', conveyed that isolation better than 'Eltisley Manor'. Perhaps, indeed, that had been the reason for its change of name. In any event, I said some heartfelt prayers there for the quiet care and testimony which my Welsh Baptist Nana had brought to my nascent Catholic life.

Of course it was a pilgrimage I was engaged in. And bathos, humour and comic misunderstandings have always been integral to pilgrimages.

Ignatius of Loyola himself made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and wished to offer himself and his companions as missionaries there. But it was a wish that came to an anticlimactic—even bathetic—end.¹ And other accounts of pilgrimages, fictionalised and spiritualised, also refer frequently to the various detours and humorous or dangerous sidetracks that beset the pilgrim. Geoffrey Chaucer's pilgrims in the *Canterbury Tales* are seeking the 'holy, blisful martir' Thomas Becket, but it is their various foibles and fables which take over the narrative. Will Langland's *Piers the Plowman*, and John Bunyan and Walter Hilton's pilgrims all have to contend with positively lethal distractions. Bunyan, in verse, advises:

This book will make a Traveller of thee,
If by its Counsel thou wilt ruled be;
It will direct thee to the Holy Land,
If thou wilt its Directions understand²

And Hilton advises his pilgrim to keep constantly in mind, and on his lips, the thought 'I wish to reach Jerusalem' when confronted by the numerous temptations and obstacles in his spiritual path.³ 'I wish to reach Birmingham' has a different ring to it. And the obstacles that came my way were mainly traffic-related—huge trucks just inches from me, and a steady stream of cars. There were also, it is true, rain, wind and mysterious deviations from the map, but, on the whole, my pilgrimage was smoother than any of the literary ones mentioned above.

From St Neot's, I set out the next day once more on smaller roads; the first—Bushmead Road—long and straight, led me into the Midlands proper. As I navigated, I had to take care not to be drawn into the orbit of larger towns—Bedford or Coventry—where the route might have become more snarled up. So, I became accustomed to the strange, musty, evocative sound of English village names, Stapley, Bletsoe, Odell, rising to something of a climax with Bozeat and Easton Maudit, where Norman and Viking accents clashed, forming a deep substratum to the countryside I passed. By a curious coincidence, the 'orbit' of Bedford, some distance to the south of my path, is also the orbit of John Bunyan. Not only was he a native of that town, but he eventually became pastor

¹ For an account of the frustrations of Ignatius and his companions in pursuit of their aim, see James Broderick, *The Origin of the Jesuits* (London: Longmans, 1940), especially 43 and 60.

² John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005), 11.

³ Walter Hilton, *The Ladder of Perfection*, translated (from Middle English) by Leo Sherley-Price, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957), 135.

of the Puritan 'Bedford Meeting', after spending some twelve years in prison because he refused to give up preaching. His great allegorical work, truly a spiritual best-seller, is set in a fictional, symbolic landscape, with evocative locations, such as the 'Slough of Despond' and the 'Delectable Mountains', locations which, as many have pointed out, have their real counterparts in the landscape around Bedford.

But it was the ancient Anglo-Saxons who provided my next stops. In a distant, all-but-inaccessible era they had posted two extraordinary sentinels astride the broad and marshy valley of the river Ouse: two churches, both set high on the gentle hills of that region, Earls Barton and Brixworth. Both are dedicated to All Saints and both are remarkable, precious survivals. At Earls Barton I found a welcoming lady churchwarden to show me round. Brixworth was locked and aloof, so instead I lay back on the turf of the churchyard and looked straight up at the imperious walls of its nave.

Not for the first time, I felt the conviction that what is most distinctive and irreplaceable about England is the inexhaustible variety of its country churches. Of course they are works of art that bear witness to countless communities of men and women over many generations, worshipping Almighty God. But, more than that, they are witnesses to the land and the soil itself. They are built out of it, they stand over it; the people who shaped them also shaped it and were shaped by it. No

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Church of All Saints, Earls Barton

other category of human endeavour is so intimately part of the nature and geography that surrounds it as an ancient place of worship. The churches are in symbiosis with the land.

Bunyan's ingenious renaming of places local and familiar to him is an example of that tendency that all human societies have to appropriate familiar physical surroundings and then raise them to a higher power, as it were. For a writer such as Bunyan, we would call this process 'allegorising'. For the builders of churches, just as for the namers of towns and villages, we might even go as far as saying that there is a process of 'sacramentalising the land' at work. And for the pilgrim, such as myself, there is an opposite process of uncovering, revealing the land behind the land, the human lives lived and dignified by these long-inhabited places, the dignity of a life raised to a higher power.

After these evocative churches—Brixworth is somewhat grandiosely described as 'perhaps the most imposing architectural memorial of the seventh century yet surviving north of the Alps'—the next stage of my journey was bound to be something of an anticlimax.⁴ In fact, Bunyan's 'Slough of Despond' met me head-on in the form of ever-increasing drizzle, trucks and other evening rush-hour traffic on the long, rather dreary road into Rugby. The next day started no better: everything that was not already a shade of pale grey turned out to be made of mud.

But there were two subtle changes taking place. Firstly, the countryside was becoming more rolling, with more substantial hills and more vividly green hedgerows and, secondly, by the time I reached Nuneaton I was, at last, on the same route as my first, fateful rail journey. Suddenly, three things happened together: a long downhill stretch on a straight country byway (always a joy for the cyclist), a sudden burst of late-afternoon sun, and the distant view of the Birmingham skyline. I was approaching my journey's end. After stopping to celebrate at another magnificent hilltop church—Coleshill this time—and singing the *Salve Regina* at the top of my voice to some unimpressed cows, I headed for the fabled Water Orton station, paid my homage to those chatty schoolkids (who must now be entering middle age!), and started a long progress through the suburbs. I had in mind two further stops on my pilgrimage: first that strange, visionary little corner where the railway lines meet and where I had my first taste of pastoral work, and, secondly, Harborne, with the elusive Manresa House.

⁴ Alfred Clapham, *English Romanesque Architecture before the Conquest* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1930), 33.

As I neared the city centre, I was struck by how good the years have been to Birmingham: how the grimness and decay that had made a fierce impression on me back then had been replaced by greenery and town planning with a more human face—including, much to my delight, cycle routes! The tower blocks where I brought Holy Communion to the housebound or visited a young family or two were still there, but seemed softer, better cared-for, more homely in scale. Unbidden, some memories instantly returned: of a retired engineer who had worked on digging the Channel Tunnel, of a Vietnamese mother and son, who served me quails' eggs (the first time I had ever tasted them!), and of two impossibly carefree and energetic Irish teenagers, looking to make their way in life. And, at Harborne, true to form, I found that Manresa House, my home for the two years of my Jesuit novitiate, had slipped away from me again—just as its ancestor had in Roehampton. The community had relocated, for the time being, to the seminary at Oscott. There was, however, still another surprise for me, compensation and reward for the miles covered and the aching legs.

As I headed back from the suburb of Harborne to Snow Hill station, where I would hoist my bicycle on to the London train, I passed by the oratory on the Hagley Road, home—and now shrine—of St John Henry Newman. It seemed an opportune moment to stop, and I found that the evening Mass was about to start. Newman had been, and continues to be, an important person in the life of my son Michael, whose birthday is the saint's feast day. Michael and I travelled to Birmingham for John Henry's beatification and then—one glorious weekend—to Rome for his canonization. As the murmured Latin echoed around Newman's Oratory Church, I felt a great and undeserved joy—joy at another place where the land and people are raised to a higher power, this time by the mighty intellect and unassuming holiness of a great pastor.

There is, to everything we truly learn, experience and assimilate, both an outside and an inside—an exterior and interior quality. The great writers of the pilgrimages of English literature all reflect on this. For Will Langland, as for John Bunyan, the exterior is the English landscape itself: the transfigured, muddy plains and low hills of Bedfordshire for Bunyan and the sublime modesty of the Malvern Hills (not too far from Birmingham) for Langland. The interior is the dream-journey of two ordinary characters: Christian and Piers the Ploughman.

With Chaucer, Walter Hilton and St John Henry himself (whose *Apologia pro vita sua* also makes him a significant pilgrim figure in

English literature), the exterior journey may well be a specifically religious one: the Canterbury pilgrimage, the ascent to perfection of a vowed contemplative, the twists and turns of priestly life for a Victorian cleric. But inside is a meeting of these circumstances with deeply personal and individual traits. Chaucer's pilgrims, for instance, are insistent and raucous in their individuality—and yet they would have been mute and inglorious indeed without the exterior circumstances of the physical journey itself, which provides the setting for their respective tales. Even the lives of anchorites and scholars are deeply imprinted by their surroundings and the circumstances of their calling.

St Ignatius, in the *Spiritual Exercises*, offers this guidance to the retreatant in making the Examen, or survey of the spiritual 'character' of a day spent in retreat:

Then the retreatant should make the first examination, exacting an account of self with regard to the particular matter decided upon for correction and improvement. He or she should run through the time, hour by hour or period by period, from the moment of rising until the present examination. (Exx 25)

As Christians, it is right that, from time to time, we should demand an account from ourselves. And, as living beings, bound by time and space, we are assisted in this task by seeing the hours, periods, days—or even years—that have passed.

My pilgrimage, going over old and hallowed ground, was such an account—was an Examen of the landscape of my life. In making it, I was brought up against the realities of past and present: both the past shape of the land and the past shape of my life; the land's history and my own history; the ideals of the past—especially of the Christians of the past—and the realities that have resulted. There is always a melancholy side to such a process—the realities of ideals not realised, vows not kept, plans and projects for a community, or even a nation, unfulfilled. For me, making this journey at the time I did, there was the shadow of the Coronavirus pandemic. Even if the regions I passed through were not locked down, there were still many reminders of the restrictions placed on our lives by this bewildering and unexpected scourge.

As the prophet Habakkuk says, sometimes the fig tree does not blossom. Yet the land, the nation and its churches have seen all this and more before. When Ignatius, Bunyan, Hilton, Newman or Langland talks of the trials and snares of the pilgrim's life and journey, each

had had a more direct experience and recollection of wars, plagues and pestilence than most of us have, and these real scourges of Nature and of humanity provided their imaginations with rich allegories for the scourges that the human soul, too, encounters.

But the prayer and desire of the pilgrim, peculiarly rooted and grounded as they inevitably are in the dust, mud and great structures of a physical journey, must also tend towards the greater reality, the higher power—indeed the only reality—of God. And while God is not to be identified with the physical attributes of my land or your land, of my life or your life, we cannot seek God without encountering these attributes—or, at least, the God that we encounter will not be the ‘God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of philosophers and scholars’ as that arch-enemy of the Jesuits, Blaise Pascal, put it.⁵ Rather, we find the living God at that meeting point of what Ignatius, following Augustine, calls the three powers of the soul: memory, understanding and will.⁶ Or, for the pilgrim: where have I come from? Where am I now? Where do I go next?

So, the train pulled out from Snow Hill and I watched that mystical Midland scene recede from me and, with it, the awkward, idealistic young man that I had been. And, if my life has clearly not taken the path and the shape that my younger self thought it would, how is that different from anyone else’s life? Instead of that particular calling, to ‘perpetual Poverty, Chastity and Obedience in the Society of Jesus’, as the vows ringingly have it, I have more unpredictable, more spiritually diverse calls on my time and my attention as musician, father and deacon. And so, like Bunyan (and with a similar trepidation as to how it will be received), I feel the need to conclude in verse.

Ian Coleman is a permanent deacon of the diocese of Westminster, and is also director of music at the church of Holy Redeemer and St Thomas More, Chelsea, London.

⁵ Blaise Pascal, ‘The Memorial’, in *Pensées and Other Writings*, translated by Honor Levi (Oxford: OUP, 1995), 178.

⁶ Exx 234, and see also Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 10.11.

To Loyola's Death-Mask

Man! Or should I rather whisper 'God,
Staring from out the phosphor-bronze,
Bright as the sharpened and cogged
Door to a smooth Swiss vault'. Sons

Of this least Society, gaze on the ophanim,
With eyes before and behind, which trick
Out God's chariot! Consider also him,
Blind-sided by death, in all its slick

Importunity. From the very heart
Of his sumptuous golden leer,
Two bowls of deep ice peer, and part
To reveal the blue pupils of the seer.

The riddle of the sands: the sphinx
Blinks, not nearly so blind as she
Seems. But everyone rethinks
Iñigo's image as they want to see

It: My recruiter, his shilling now,
Eyeless in silver. Surely I bore
That shiny badge of my first vow
And borrowed adamantine virtue four

Swift years. But now, O blessed
Master, I can no longer carry
The weight of your blueness, dead
In my hushed arms. Sure I am sorry

To part from you, for certainly
That was a night to remember
(How did they ever dawn on me,
Those *dies admiranda*?)

Nevertheless, and still in thrall
To that more hushed and hidden tone
(As into the *Paropsis* He let fall
The bread) than to your Agamemnon,
I hear his message to his gathered friends:
'The Father has put all things into my hands'.

AN ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY

Yvonne Prowse

IT IS EARLY AUTUMN. The maple trees have begun their brilliant transformation to red, orange and gold. They seem almost to sing in the sunlight as Fr Bill Clarke SJ goes to pray with them. Bill is preparing to welcome retreatants for the forty-day Spiritual Exercises. He is also preparing himself to talk with the retreatants about God's creating love—the great love story of God and the universe, including, of course, each of us. Many of the retreatants have travelled far for this sacred time. All of them bring deep desires and needs. So Bill asks the trees what he ought to say to these pilgrims. To his surprise, the trees seem to answer very clearly: *Tell them we love them.*

This moment occurred many years ago. It was so palpable that Bill went again to the trees the following year and the next. Each time the trees seemed to respond. The second year, Bill stood among the trees and heard the wind whispering in the branches as they gently swayed to the wind's rhythm. It seemed the trees were saying, *Tell them to listen and to let the Spirit move them.* Another time it was raining softly; the trees' message for the retreatants was, *Just be here and let God's grace, God's love, like rain pour over you and soak into you.*

Many people who embrace Ignatian spirituality are accustomed to applying their imagination to praying with the scriptures and to listening to Jesus or one of the saints speak directly to them in a gospel scene. We may be less accustomed to applying this prayer of the imagination to God's first and primary revelation: Creation. This is precisely what Bill was doing, and it is how we begin the Spiritual Exercises at the Loyola House retreat centre in Guelph, Ontario. During the Disposition Days, as

retreatants are settling in, we open with a contemplative tour of our land, followed by Bill's talk. Then comes the first prayer exercise. It is to find a tree somewhere on the land that wants to adopt you, or perhaps a rock or bird, a particular slope or a bend in the creek that may want to hold you and help you be present and to listen to God's love song. Quite often retreatants say they didn't so much choose the tree; rather it seemed to choose them. They have a sense of being sought and found by God that touches them deeply. So they return again and again to their tree, finding it supports them and their prayer throughout the retreat.

Nature plays an important part in many people's spirituality, sometimes recognised and named, often not. Consider the peace and hope that arise as one watches the sunset or tends one's garden. With those who meet me for spiritual direction, whether in retreat or in daily life, I encourage paying attention to this.

The Jesuit priest and lichenologist John McCarthy wrote,

Today we have come to recognize that 'theology is necessarily ecological' and 'ecology is eminently theological by nature'. In other words, how we think of God colors our view of the world, and, for the believer, the world cannot be considered apart from the mystery of God.¹

In our prayer and ministry in Guelph, nature, science, theology, scripture and spirituality meet and intermingle. The groundbreaking and



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¹ John McCarthy, 'Faith and the Earth: Part I', in *Faith and Science Matters*, edited by Michael O'Hern (Toronto: Novalis, 2013), 101, quoting Denis Edwards and Leonardo Boff.

intentionally accessible theology of the late Denis Edwards, diocesan priest of Australia, is instrumental. He tells science's fourteen-billion year story of the birth and emergence of our universe through a prayerful heart and a mind praising the Creator.² The renowned work of Elizabeth Johnson has led the way for many of us in North America. In her theology it is typical of Johnson to break open the scriptures to reveal truths hitherto unrecognized, such as this exegesis on John's prologue:

The original Greek does not speak of the Word becoming human (*anthropos*), but flesh (*sarx*), a broader reality The flesh that the Word became is part of the vast body of the cosmos The Word of God entered into solidarity not only with all humanity but also with the whole biophysical world. Hence the incarnation, a densely specific expression of the love of God already poured out in creation, confers dignity on the whole of earthly reality.³

Johnson and Edwards were both deeply influenced by Karl Rahner. They also open the teachings of the early church synods and theologians to speak to our current ecological call. Other influences on my colleagues and me include Thomas Berry and, of course, Teilhard de Chardin.

In presentations and prayer exercises, I also weave the saints and mystics of our tradition who related deeply with Creation. For example, I encourage those who pray to greet the birds and the flowers like Francis of Assisi—for something opens when one says hello or, 'Praise to you brother sun! I am so glad to see you after many grey days'. We seek not to anthropomorphize, but to open the 'I-Thou' relationship rather than remaining habitually in the utilitarian 'I-It'.⁴

Once we can say hello, we can be moved more deeply. Borrowing an exercise by the ecopsychologist Joanna Macy, I encourage retreatants to listen to one specific being. Prayerfully invite a creature to enter your imagination. Don't predetermine what creature; allow one to choose you. Once there, gently notice all you can about it. With the ears of your imagination listen as it speaks to you. Let it complete these two

² Denis Edwards, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2006).

³ Elizabeth A. Johnson, 'An Earthy Christology: "For God So Loved the Cosmos"', *America* (13 April 2009), 29.

⁴ This distinction was established by Martin Buber. The 'It' is the object of perception or experience; the 'Thou' is a partner in relationship: 'As experience, the world belongs to the primary word I-It. The primary word I-Thou establishes the world of relation.' (*I and Thou*, translated by Ronald Gregor Smith [Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1937], 6)

sentences: *I am ... and I want you to know*⁵ When I led this exercise on an eight-day ecology retreat, Fr Bill encountered a beautiful monarch butterfly. It wanted Bill to know that it is frightened at the prospect of its entire species becoming extinct. Bill was moved to tears. He has never forgotten the encounter.

Have you ever considered how God has been blessing you, throughout your life, in and through God's creation: through a relationship with a favourite pet, poignant moments in nature, the joy of baking bread, sharing meals with friends? Praying with one's own story—what we call praying your Blessed History—is a common practice in North American Ignatian spirituality. Praying it with a particular focus on creation has brought countless people to a deeper connection with the natural world.

We can also pray with Jesus and his relationship with nature. This helps us grow in relationship with creation as well as with Jesus. After all, Jesus knew the natural world intimately. Many of his parables use natural images such as wheat, vineyards, mustard seed. He fasted for forty days in *the desert*. I encourage those who pray to note what the desert was like. Jesus healed a man's deafness using his own spittle and mud. What was his connection with earth that he would use mud this way? Is this perhaps part of what helped Hildegard of Bingen receive this wisdom: 'For when the Word of God resounded, that Word appeared in all creation, and its sound was life in all creation?'⁶ Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well and spoke of life-giving water. So we pray with water. In another exercise adapted from Macy, called 'Bowl of Tears', we make a prayer of grief. Dipping our hands in a bowl of water as we name what we grieve for in this world, we offer the losses and sorrow to God while seeking hope.

Jesus knew the natural world intimately

I made the Spiritual Exercises by the sea in mid-winter, near a rugged, rocky coastline. As I approached the Fourth Week and felt the first stirrings of resurrection, before turning to contemplate the Risen Christ's appearance to his mother I first went out to the big rocks; for I recalled Jesus' words as he was entering Jerusalem for the Passover and was asked to silence the joyful crowds. 'He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out"' (Luke 19:40). I thought—yes,

⁵ Joanna Macy and Molly Brown, *Coming Back to Life* (Gabriola Island: New Society, 2014), 165.

⁶ Hildegard of Bingen, *The Book of Divine Works*, translated by Nathaniel M. Campbell (Washington, DC: Catholic U. of America, 2018), 1.4.105.

the very stones that have been part of this planet for millennia, they knew him, and they knew the resurrection. I don't know what the 'knowing' of stones is like, but they were here and had some experience of it. So I stood in the early morning salt wind and prayed on the ancient rocks, savouring the stirrings of resurrection within me, trusting they were somehow shared by God's creation. It helped open me to the truth that in Christ 'all things in heaven and on earth were created ... and in him all things hold together' (Colossians 1: 16–17).

Yvonne Prowse is a spiritual director at the Ignatius Jesuit Centre in Guelph, Ontario, Canada. She chairs training programmes in spiritual direction, teaches many aspects of spiritual direction and Ignatian spirituality, and supervises other spiritual directors. Yvonne has been leading retreats and lecturing on spirituality for over three decades, with an emphasis on ecospirituality and feminine spirituality. Yvonne holds a Master of Arts in spirituality and spiritual direction from Fordham University. She has also trained with indigenous elders of North America and of Burkina Faso. Her ministries in the USA included care for homeless adults and children, and interfaith peace and justice work.

From the Archive

MORAL EDUCATION

Gerard J. Hughes

IN SEVERAL OF THE PLATONIC DIALOGUES, Socrates objects rather strongly to those people who, when they are asked to say what something is, reply by giving a list of instances in which it occurs. The answer to the question *What is virtue?*, he insists, is not adequately provided by giving a list of saints or heroes, or by giving a list of virtues, or by giving a list of virtuous actions, however loving or evocative or perceptive our descriptions of these people and activities might be. If I am asked to say what moral education is, Socrates will not be satisfied if I do no more than point to notable examples of morally well-educated men or women.

Nonetheless, I find the question of whether I know any morally well-educated people a stimulating and instructive one. Stimulating, because it is perhaps not a question which one habitually asks about one's friends and acquaintances; and instructive, because it forces one to reflect on what exactly it is that one is looking for. Examination of the end product might well be a good way of approaching the problems connected with the process by which the end product is produced. Even Plato did not altogether disdain this kind of starting point for his own enquiries, inadequate though he considered it to be. I shall begin, then, by asking not what moral education is, but a slightly different question. What would we be looking for in trying to find a man whose moral education had been successfully carried through?

Well, one might look for someone who consistently acted in ways which seemed to be morally admirable (forgetting, for the moment, about all the disputed questions which at once arise when one asks which

This article was originally published in *The Way Supplement*, 22 (1974), 41–52. The gendered language is of its time and has not been amended.

ways of acting are morally admirable). Here, one might be tempted to say, is a man in whom the process of moral education seems to have reached a happy conclusion. But the suggestion is no sooner made than it is seen to be inadequate. As Aristotle reminds us, the moral person is not just the person who does just actions, but the man who does just actions in the way that the just man does them. The moral life is not simply the reproduction of certain approved patterns of behaviour; it has to do not merely with action but with understanding what it is that one is doing and why.

Unless this understanding is present, education itself is seen somehow as a mere conditioning process; and the difficulty of conditioning is that it is difficult for someone who has been well conditioned to respond to one particular set of circumstances, like a rat in a maze with which he has long been familiar, to adapt his responses to the apparently labyrinthine complexities of very unfamiliar moral situations. The boy from the sheltered home and the protective school may be morally totally at sea in the new world of his job or a university.

So when we look for understanding in the morally well-educated man, we are looking for something far more than, for example, the mere ability to recite a series of admirable moral principles. Reciting moral principles, however correctly, is quite a different matter from knowing how to apply them, or from knowing which ones are the ones to be applied. What we are looking for above all in the moral man is an adaptability in his moral behaviour and his moral understanding—the quality that Aristotle called *phronesis*, moral discernment. Not that we should forget the elements of behaviour and theoretical understanding.

As Aristotle also suggests, adaptable moral behaviour is itself impossible without the virtues; and adaptability easily becomes mere gullibility unless it is guided throughout by some degree of theoretical understanding of what the moral life is about. I shall therefore say something about each of these three qualities which we look for in the morally well-educated man—virtue, discernment and understanding.

Virtue

I make no apologies for the Aristotelian framework in which my treatment of moral education is cast. I think it is a good framework in itself; and I also think that a return to Aristotle (and thereby a return to much of what is authentically Thomist in Aquinas, if I may so put it) is at once closer to the terminology in which Catholics, at least, are

more accustomed to discussing morality, and a useful corrective against some more recent views on such topics as natural law which appeal with little justification to Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle.

Perhaps our current understanding of the term 'virtue' is a case in point. 'Virtue' has become a cover-all word, about as general as 'goodness' or 'moral uprightness', and has as a result acquired many predominantly intellectualist overtones. Much closer to what Aristotle had in mind when he spoke of the moral virtues would be some term such as 'emotional stability'. It is Aristotle's view that emotional stability is the indispensable foundation of morality, and an essential prerequisite for moral understanding and moral discernment, as well as the basis of our ability to act morally with constancy and comfort.

***To act
morally with
constancy
and comfort***

Aristotle was well aware that 'emotional stability' itself is a morally loaded term, and that our conception of which emotional reactions should be encouraged and which should not will depend completely on our moral theory as a whole. The discussion rapidly becomes circular, because the emotional reactions which one wishes to inculcate in a child are precisely those which will unfailingly support him in what is the right course of action, and make him emotionally disinclined to do what is morally wrong. In the end, then, any adequate discussion of the required sense of emotional stability must follow, and not precede, a discussion of moral theory.

However, there is perhaps also a very general and fundamental sense of emotional stability which, although it does inevitably embody several moral assumptions, still does not presuppose any particularly controversial moral positions. Just because this level of emotional stability is so fundamental, I suppose that it is likely to depend on a child's early environment and, in particular, on his home, rather than on his school. The main lines of the solutions to the child's emotional problems are probably sketched in early on, and thereafter may prove very difficult to change to any radical extent. Nevertheless, it would seem to me to be obvious that a good deal can depend on the school, and that the school must take some responsibility for the emotional stability of the children if it takes any responsibility for moral education at all.

As a minimum, I would suggest that a counselling service should be provided which involves not simply career guidance but the possibility of really teaching the children to understand their own and other people's feelings and emotional reactions. It also seems to me that this

might well be a normal part of the curriculum, quite apart from whatever provisions are made for helping seriously maladjusted children by, for example, referral to a specialised clinic. It ought to be taken for granted that a real understanding of the role of the emotions in the moral life is an integral part of moral education for the normal child, rather than something which might have to be undertaken as a last resort in the case of a child who is seriously disturbed. To restrict this aspect of moral education to some quasi-platonic view that emotions are to be controlled in the interests of morality or, better still, ignored if this is at all possible, seems to me to be a primitive and totally inadequate approach, and one which is all too widespread.

It is not the moral philosopher's job to attempt to make detailed suggestions about how this might best be achieved in the ordinary day-to-day school situation; this is something which will have to be left to competent educational psychologists and trained psychological counsellors. So I shall leave the matter simply as a suggestion which I urge others to take seriously.

For similar reasons, I shall not elaborate on the necessity of every teacher becoming as aware as possible of the levels of emotional interaction which are present in his or her own classroom. I imagine that any good teacher tries to do this already—although perhaps not as consciously with older students as with the very young. Suffice it to point out that I believe that Aristotle stresses the importance of good



example first of all in the realm of emotional stability rather than directly in connection with right action. He would, I think, regard it as extremely important that a young person pick up the emotional colouring which accompanies the moral behaviour of the well-educated adult, and that this emotional colouring should be the correct one.

Some sensitive areas in this connection might be the emotional attitudes colouring our behaviour concerning race, sex, the expression of disagreement, anger, the treatment of notably less gifted children, the exercise of authority. Virtue—the right emotional background to right action—is perhaps harder to come by in these areas. Just for that reason it is extremely important that children should be helped by instruction and good example to be virtuous in these areas long before they are of an age to begin to understand the moral principles which are involved. Merely telling young children what to do and what not to do and getting them used to doing what they ought is no substitute at all for training them in virtue, which is altogether a more demanding exercise for everyone concerned, teachers and pupils alike. Aristotle mentions a very large number of other moral virtues, most of which, as I have already pointed out, can be properly defined only after a detailed discussion of the moral principles which underlie them.

Space clearly does not permit me to do more than give a few examples of the kinds of problem which can arise. It is important to remember, and to keep reminding ourselves, that when we are speaking of training in virtue it is above all the communication of attitudes which concerns us, rather than the enunciation of principles, or the mere eliciting of behavioural responses. Consider, then, the attitudes towards justice which are communicated by a teacher or a school, if they simply ignore or show little interest in the social problems of the area in which they live; if they never speak of the major issues of justice in our society, or do so in a very one-sided way; if they do nothing to help a child who has been unfairly treated by another member of staff; or if they run away from the problems posed in such a situation by the conflict between justice and loyalty. Once again, it is the attitude communicated by the teacher which is just as important as anything he might say or do. The same goes for such moral virtues as a real desire to discover the truth, to be tolerant, to be generous.

So much, then, for the element of virtue—emotional stability—and for the communication of attitudes in which training in virtue consists. It would appear to me that the implications for the curriculum

of the need for training in virtue are largely unexplored in practice. Discussions about moral education are apt too hastily or impatiently to treat of a few well-worn moral problems. I hope that by placing this section first, as Aristotle does, I might encourage someone to give some serious thought to a very underdeveloped area in the field of moral education.

Discernment

Phronesis—practical wisdom, or moral discernment—is the ability habitually to notice and to weigh up all the morally relevant features of a particular situation. There has been a great deal of philosophical discussion about whether this is an intellectual or a moral virtue; and at any rate it is clear that it has some largely intellectual elements bound up with it. I shall try to say something about these in the third section of this article.

The intellectual element in moral discernment is perhaps mostly concerned with the weighing up of the morally relevant features of moral situations. The element which Aristotle called ‘moral’, and we might describe as emotional, is principally involved in the recognition of the morally relevant features of particular situations. I would suggest that this aspect of moral discernment might helpfully be looked at as a combination of sympathy and imagination. It will follow that the development of these moral qualities will also be an essential and integral part of moral education.

One of the main aims of moral education should be to help the student or child to develop the capacity for a genuine emotional sympathy with an ever-widening range of different kinds of people. This is so because without such an ability a person is rendered much less capable of even noticing morally important features of the situations in which he is involved. He will find it difficult to know who is being hurt and how, who is being helped and how, and what factors in the rest of the situation might be considered to be morally operative by different people. Aristotle is surely right to regard the lack of this capacity for sympathy as a basic moral defect, indeed as one of the most potentially crippling of moral vices, leaving a man intolerant, bigoted and limited.

One of the best ways of developing this kind of moral sympathy seems to me to be through the development of the moral imagination—the ability to think oneself realistically into the moral shoes of people

whose moral outlook may be quite different from one's own, really to see the moral world as they see it. Examples of how this might be done are easy enough to provide from teaching the history of ethics. Thus, it is of the greatest importance, it seems to me, that the student of moral philosophy should study Kant: and that in studying Kant he should not content himself with simply knowing about the categorical imperative, or the postulates of practical reason, or the meaning of the kingdom of ends. The student will not understand Kant until he has learnt of his Lutheran background, and something of the emotionalism and relativism against which Kant was reacting. To understand Kant's theory involves living imaginatively in Kant's moral world, just as to understand how Butler could hold the views he did, involves developing an imaginative sympathy with the comfortable, aristocratic, stable society in which Butler moved. To see Bentham as more than a somewhat tedious moral arithmetician it is necessary to feel something of the dead weight blocking all efforts at moral and social reform, and grasp how it was that someone could hope that hard-headed calculation might provide a sharp weapon against entrenched moral and political prejudice.

No doubt it is a commonplace to suggest that in a school this is best achieved through the study of history and literature. But it is worth repeating, I think, because it should be stressed how important it is that this imaginative effort should be made not simply in the case of those historical or literary figures whom one finds initially sympathetic or edifying. Some major effort should also go into imaginative identification with those whose whole outlook is unfamiliar or whose moral judgment seems to us to be misguided. Imagination and sympathy must be stretched if our powers of moral discernment are to develop at all.

It will, I hope, have become evident from all that I have said that I believe moral education to be a very wide-ranging project indeed. In particular I have tried to stress the affective side of it, because I believe that this is often either left out altogether, or is relegated to other subjects in the curriculum instead of being made an integral part of a course of moral education. Morality itself is all too often reduced to questions concerning sex or the right to life; and even here it is reduced still further to a mere consideration of moral truths—answers to questions about what one may or may not do.

But surely morality, and therefore also moral education, should cover the whole range of human interactions, the whole wide spectrum of human happiness and misery, where there are many other questions

besides those surrounding sex or killing. And there are many other aspects of morality besides the attempt to provide practical answers to questions about the rightness and wrongness of actions. Small wonder that the traditional answers so often cut little ice, when they have been divorced from the whole imaginative and emotional context in which they have to be lived out, and when children have never been trained in the affective perceptivity required in order to appreciate and evaluate them over against other answers which might be given.

Understanding

For these reasons, I have relegated my treatment of understanding, or moral reasoning, to the third part of this article. Understanding is indeed important, but it cannot operate effectively in an emotional or imaginative vacuum. That being said, though, it must also be admitted that moral understanding is just as important as emotional and imaginative maturity for a balanced moral education.

Now, in speaking of moral understanding, we can talk about two different things. One is the intellectual virtues (as Aristotle would have called them) required in order to have any facility in thinking about morality (or anything else, for that matter); and the other is the substantive content of morality which is there to be understood. Or, to put roughly the same point in a different way, we could speak of content or we could speak about method. In practice, of course, we must surely be concerned with teaching both content and method, if only because it is hardly possible to teach method at all without having something on which the methodical skills can be exercised; and it is hardly possible to teach content with any hope of its being really grasped and understood unless we teach something about good and bad method as well. This, I take it, would be axiomatic and obvious to the good teacher of any other subject in the curriculum, be it physics, literary criticism or cookery. But one wonders how many of those engaged in moral education have any clear idea about the theory of moral argument, or about the methodological problems which could be raised about ethics?

There is, in any case, a particular difficulty in the interaction of method and content which is more prominent in ethics than in other fields (though it is equally serious, if more hidden, in mathematics and the physical sciences). Consider a teenage boy who is asked what it is that the fifth commandment forbids, and who replies that it forbids



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killing, anger, vindictiveness and so on. He is then discovered beating up some other boy and, when asked did he not consider this wrong, he replies that he considered it an expression of legitimate anger and justified punishment. Did he simply not know the fifth commandment properly, or did he have a faulty knowledge of the method for applying it to particular cases? Take someone who is firmly convinced that murder is always wrong, and who nevertheless has no compunction about performing certain abortions; is the dispute here about content, or about method?

In general, what does one have to know or understand in order to have a proper understanding of the content of a moral principle? To demand a knowledge of all its possible applications would seem to be to ask for the impossible; and yet if we require that someone at least know how it could be applied, we seem to be shifting away from content towards method. Indeed one might go so far as to assert that agreement about the content of morality tends to presuppose a large measure of agreement about method. Accordingly, I shall concentrate my attention on questions of method, rather than on the content of moral education, a procedure which has the additional advantage of not requiring a detailed discussion of the whole range of moral problems which should enter into a course on moral education.

One way of trying to discuss method in ethics is to ask what counts as a good reason for adopting a course of action. To begin with, we should be clear that appeal to an authority may indeed be a sufficient

reason for adopting a course of action, but it cannot be an ultimately sufficient reason. Ultimately, we are either driven to saying that the authority itself is simply arbitrary in its commands, or else we are forced to admit that the authority's claim to be an authority must in the end rest on the validity of the commands which it issues; and this issue can be determined only by appeal to some criteria apart from the existence of the authority itself.

One example of this is the familiar old conundrum as to whether something is right because God says it is, or whether God says it is right because it is right. To adopt the first answer is ultimately to be led into a voluntarist position in which God issues arbitrary commands. And although the second position has to be modified in order to be a fully adequate statement of the truth of the matter, it is basically correct in so far as it insists that God's commands to us are based on the kind of beings that we are. It follows from this that we can check what God's commands mean, and also whether an alleged expression of the will of God genuinely is God's will in so far as we can determine whether it does accord with the kind of creature that man is. *A fortiori* we can do the same for the commands of other alleged authorities, be they parents, the Church, one's peer group, the customs of one's society, one's political or military superiors.

Consequently, as soon as children are able to see the point of the distinction between something being right because an authority says so, and an authority being an authority because what he says is right on independent grounds, they should never be subjected to authoritarian argument just on its own. To do so is to give the children a radically false impression of method in ethics. 'Because the Church teaches so' may on occasion be an acceptable short cut; but it can never be, and should not be, presented as the end of any discussion on morality. On the other hand, neither is it helpful to present as the alternative to authoritarianism an anarchic individualism which, in effect, sets up the individual as an authority in his own right. What is wanted is a set of criteria which stand some chance of not simply reflecting the moral prejudices of any given individual or group.

At this point I shall have simply to dismiss in the most cavalier fashion all the still unsolved controversies which surround philosophers such as Kant, and deontological theories of ethics generally. All that I have the space for is to present in the briefest outline a sketch of one part of one kind of ethical theory, and no more than mention the other

part in passing. In essence, then, I would argue that an ethical theory is based on the satisfaction of individual needs, tempered (in the case of irreducible conflict between the interests of individuals) by a theory of justice. I shall say little about justice; partly because the questions surrounding the concept of justice are extremely complex; partly because I believe that irreducible conflicts of interest are in any case less frequent than they appear to be; and partly because those which do arise in, say, a school, seem to me to be comparatively easily resolved.

To say that morality consists in the satisfaction of needs, however, is too bald and oversimplified. We need some way of evaluating and criticizing the needs we, and other people, have. I suggest that there are three main ways in which we might argue that it is irrational to try to satisfy a need.

When We Have the Need Only Because of a False Belief That We Hold

Thus, a person might want to go to a university only because he believes (falsely, let us suppose) that unless he does he will be unable to earn a good living. John might want to marry Angela because he believes (falsely, let us suppose) that she will be happy with him and he with her. If it is true that these beliefs are false, then they cannot function as justifications, as good reasons, in support of the actions in question. Now, of course, it may be far from easy to determine whether the beliefs are in fact true or false. But that is not directly a moral issue; it is a matter of morally uncontroversial information. Hence, to settle the moral issue, we need as much information as possible. An essential part of moral education is therefore to stress the necessity of making moral decisions on the basis of the best information available, and the necessity of subjecting one's factual beliefs to proper criticism before making them the basis of moral decisions.

When We Falsely Believe that Two Needs Can Be Jointly Satisfied

Quite commonly, we like to think that we can get all the things we want when in fact this is just not possible. It may simply be out of the question both to spend the Easter vacation holidaying in a ski resort in the Tyrol and to pass one's A-levels. It may be impossible to continue a particular relationship and avoid damaging any of the people involved. It may just not be possible to retain a given structure in society and to avoid a bloody racial conflict. It is irrational, and therefore, I suggest, immoral, to act on the basis of a set of needs which cannot be jointly

satisfied. Of course, most of us like to have our cake and eat it, and we at times do our best to conceal from ourselves that this is what we are doing. An essential part of moral education will therefore be to help the student to identify cases where this kind of hidden conflict is likely to arise in his life; and to stress the importance of the personal honesty required in order to deal with this kind of situation when it does arise. He will need to be given many examples, and asked to provide many of his own. He will need to be taught how to look not just at his present needs, but also at the future needs with which his present needs are in potential conflict. It is at this point that he will need to call on the imaginative perceptivity and emotional stability on which I spent so much time at the beginning of this article, in order to identify what his needs are, and to project them into the future.

When Our Needs Have Been Incorrectly Identified

There are many times when we are simply not clear about what it is that we want, or what our own needs really are. And there are, it seems to me, many occasions on which we thought we knew, but, when we obtained what it was we thought we wanted, we discovered that we were still somehow quite unsatisfied.

A man who is unhappy just may not know whether his dissatisfaction springs from his job, or from his marriage, or from his misuse of his leisure time, or from his own temperament. He may think that a change of job will solve his problem, and may find out that this problem remains in essence unaltered. It is instances of this kind that I wish to refer to as misidentified needs. And, of course, we can misidentify not only our own needs, but also the needs of those with whom we live or for whom we work. Such misidentification can be the cause of great unhappiness both in ourselves and in others. I would suggest that misidentification



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of needs lies at the root of many of the most apparently intractable moral problems with which ordinary people are faced in their ordinary day-to-day lives.

Here, once more, the possibility of learning correctly to identify needs in ourselves and in others will make heavy demands on our sympathy and imagination, and will, I think, normally demand the services of teachers who are specifically trained to assist with this process. Moreover, moral education at this level will make heavy demands on the integrity and honesty of the teachers themselves. They will have to make available to their students at least something of their own experience of learning how to identify their own needs, and feed this information into the discussion of the many moral issues which students will wish to raise. How many teachers would be willing or, indeed, able, to involve themselves in a discussion at this level about sex, marriage or their jobs? Or about their religion? Yet it seems to me that all of this must be a central component of any worthwhile programme of moral education if it is going to reach the students at the kind of level which would really help them.

I suggest, then, that these three are the principal elements in the intellectual and moral virtue of understanding. If this is correct, it will readily be seen how method and content are so intimately related in morals, and why it is that I have found it most helpful to lay most of the emphasis on method, at any rate as a point of departure. It is my conviction that to conduct moral education along these lines will both be more defensible theoretically, and of more practical use to the students, than an approach which starts from direct answers to practical questions about what may or may not be done. I also believe that to do this effectively requires a professional training in moral theory as well as personal qualities of the highest order. It has frequently been remarked that proper qualifications are normally demanded by a school in every subject on the curriculum, but not for theology, and that this is a lamentable state of affairs. The same is true, in my opinion, also of moral education. Simply to be an averagely good man is not, if I am right about any of this, anything like a sufficient qualification for being a good teacher of morality.

* * *

There are many other topics I might have discussed, and which I will simply mention if only to show that I am not unaware of their existence. The first is the relationship between moral education and religious

education. I believe that what I have said about moral education could in large measure also be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to much of religious education as well. I also believe that religious education has an important role to play in moral education, and vice versa; but it is my view that an adequate discussion of what that role should be will depend on a great deal of theoretical discussion about the precise relations between theology and ethics generally. I must content myself with hoping that nothing I have said here about moral education falsifies that relationship.

Even more briefly, I must mention the set of difficulties connected with the relationship between moral education and discipline. I should like simply to say that it is important to allow people to learn from their own mistakes as far as possible, and to concentrate on helping them to refine the techniques which they are using to discern their own moral situations, and insisting that they be honest enough with themselves to do this properly.

Finally, I have not even mentioned the problems concerned with the relative importance these elements in moral education should assume with children or students at different ages, or of widely differing intellectual abilities. All I would say is that a process of moral education that never takes full understanding as a goal rapidly becomes indoctrination. And one which excludes virtue and discernment rapidly loses all contact with the real lives of the pupils and becomes, as a result, largely ineffective. It therefore seems to me that something of all three of the elements I have mentioned should be present at every stage, and that enough time should be made available in the curriculum, especially higher up the school, to enable all these elements to be communicated as fully as they deserve to be. Moral education is too important and too demanding to be relegated to one or two periods a week, in which religion has to be taught as well. Morality, after all, is something in which we are all examined; and the examination is likely to be, sooner or later, an extremely searching one. We owe it to ourselves, and to one another, to be as well prepared as we can.

Gerard J. Hughes SJ (1934–2021) taught philosophy at Heythrop College, University of London, for many years before becoming master of Campion Hall, Oxford from 1998 to 2006; he was a fellow of Campion Hall until 2018. He published books on ethical theory, on philosophical issues regarding God and on Aristotle. He contributed a number of articles to *The Way* and *The Way Supplement*.

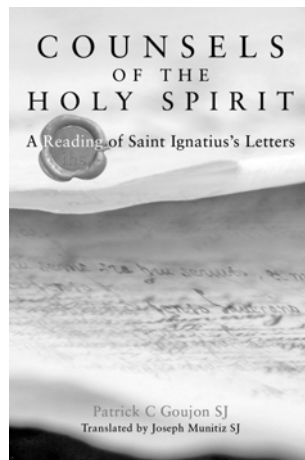
RECENT BOOKS

Patrick C. Goujon, *Counsels of the Holy Spirit: A Reading of Saint Ignatius's Letters*, translated by Joseph Munitiz (Dublin: Messenger, 2021). 978 1 7881 2318 1, pp.192, €14.95.

Numbering more than 7,000 letters, the correspondence of Ignatius Loyola ranks among the largest of any figure in early modern Europe. Despite their number, and despite the fact that they offer valuable insight into his spirituality, Ignatius' letters have received scant attention compared to his *Spiritual Exercises*, the Jesuit *Constitutions* and the text commonly (if misleadingly) called his 'Autobiography'. The neglect of Ignatius' correspondence has been particularly glaring in anglophone scholarship.

For this reason, the appearance of Patrick Goujon's *Counsels of the Holy Spirit* is noteworthy and welcome. Indeed, one of its key contributions is to bring this important and often overlooked source base to a wider audience. The volume under review here is Joseph Munitiz's skilful translation of the original French edition (Lessius, 2017). Despite what the book's subtitle might suggest, it does not pretend to offer a comprehensive study of all the Ignatian epistles. Instead, Goujon engages with just eight letters in the course of six chapters. He does so in 'slow motion', considering each very carefully and asking his readers to do the same. In this way, the book offers a kind of pedagogy for reading Ignatius; it is a methodological template for continued individual reflection on Ignatius' voluminous correspondence.

Though they emerge from diverse historical circumstances, all of the letters studied in this book involve instances where Ignatius offered spiritual advice. This is why Goujon believes the epistolary genre to be so important: it allows us to see how Ignatius gave counsel in concrete circumstances and in real time. This focus allows Goujon to pose a series of related questions. For instance, if Ignatius believed that God deals directly with the individual human soul, why is there need for advice in the first place? How



can contemporary readers reconcile the fact that Ignatius offers so many rules for the spiritual life with his oft cited desire to respect the freedom of his correspondent and the Creator's freedom to interact directly with the creature? Thus while the book is relatively modest in its ambitions, it skilfully raises important issues that go to the heart of the spiritual life.

Counsels of the Holy Spirit convincingly maintains that Ignatius' letters must be considered in any rigorous discussion of the history and practice of his spirituality. At the same time, Goujon clearly rejects the notion that Ignatius' correspondence can be read in isolation from the rest of his works. Instead, Goujon adopts what might be called a symphonic approach to Ignatian sources. His attentive and sophisticated reading of the letters involves a constant dialogue with other texts, especially the *Spiritual Exercises* and the *Constitutions*. While this demonstrates the author's own familiarity with the range of Ignatius's *œuvre*, it also underscores an important methodological conviction: that understanding Ignatius and his spirituality requires broad and deep interaction with extant sources.

Patrick Goujon's reading of Ignatius displays a remarkable literary sensitivity. He is alert to the different genres of Ignatian writing, and to the ways that a text's genre colours its interpretation. Without question, Goujon is a very capable guide for readers wishing to enter deeply into Ignatius' thought. Still, elements of the book will prove challenging for some readers. In various chapters, Goujon reprints Ignatian letters in full. This has obvious benefits: it juxtaposes the original text with Goujon's commentary on it, and it reduces the need for a reader to have knowledge of the corpus of Ignatius' letters before picking up this book. On the other hand, readers less familiar with the French mode of *explication du texte* or those seeking a blunt, argument-driven analysis may find Goujon's ruminative approach somewhat frustrating.

Counsels of the Holy Spirit is not a book for beginners in Ignatian spirituality. Rather, it provides a rigorous yet accessible treatment for those seeking to deepen their engagement with a range of important, if little known, Ignatian texts. It is clearly a scholarly work, though it is never pedantic. Those seeking pithy mottoes or sound-bite takeaways will be disappointed. By contrast, readers in search of a perceptive and thoughtful reading of Ignatius Loyola and a deeper understanding of his spirituality will find in this short book a treasure to be savoured.

Timothy W. O'Brien SJ

Gerhard Lohfink, *Prayer Takes Us Home: The Theology and Practice of Christian Prayer*, translated by Linda M. Maloney (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2020). 978 0 8146 8806 9, pp.224, £17.99.

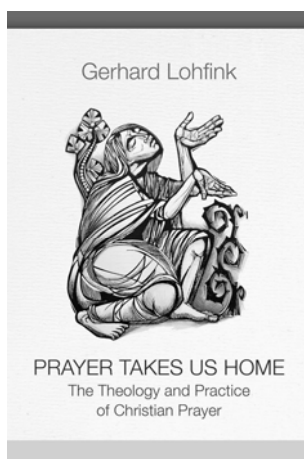
In recent years, Gerhard Lohfink has produced a number of short and manageable volumes on various aspects of Christian theology, each of them packing something of a punch, each of them profoundly rooted in scripture. And each of them, it must be said, is shrewdly aimed at making sense to a world that has lost its feel for religion; Lohfink always invites us to see things differently.

For this author, prayerful worship in communal services should always stand before the living God and the story of God; and we must recognise that we cannot worship unaided: all prayer is always and already a matter of God praying within us. Not only that, but we have to think of the triune God as a ‘conversation’; and this enables Lohfink to offer an admirable explanation of how to speak of the Trinity to a puzzled Muslim or Jew: ‘faith in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit rests on historical experience in which God has revealed God’s own self’ (17); ‘an unceasing conversation that takes place in love’ (19).

In considering whether or not intercessory prayer is permissible, Lohfink makes the point that, for Jews and Christians, God acts in the world, but not like an earthly cause, rather a ‘cause beyond and outside the world that sustains everything, effects all that is good, guiding everything towards its goal, all without eliminating human free action’ (34). God’s action is always reticent, never in the foreground (as, for example, when the prophet Nathan is sent to David to charge him with adultery and murder).

The chapter headings already tell us, economically enough, where we are going, which is no bad thing: ‘The Church Has Many Forms of Prayer’ (chapter 3, though here Lohfink does well to remind us, against the nineteenth-century form critics, that there is very rarely any such thing as a ‘pure’ form); and ‘Should We Ask for Things in Prayer?’, for instance. These chapters are excellent examples of the general point that Lohfink is not afraid to face the difficulties about prayer in a thoroughly challenging way.

Petitionary prayer (chapter 5), since the Lisbon earthquake and since the Holocaust, has been seen as problematic; broadly, Lohfink’s answer is



that petitionary prayer does not change God but the petitioner: prayer should simply be a pouring out of the heart to God. Both for the authors of the Old Testament and for Jesus, it is natural to cry out to God (as it is for us); and the basic attitude is one of trust in God ('ask, seek, knock on the door'); but the reason that prayer is heard is not because the person praying has worked hard but because God is God.

Lohfink offers an excellent exegesis of the Lord's Prayer, making the point that we do not pray for anything and everything, but only for the Reign of God: 'all dimensions of reality are to be placed under God's rule' (88). It is even permissible (as Psalm 88 demonstrates) to go in for thoroughgoing lament, in which we are invited to accuse God: 'the whole Psalter is intended to be a meditative response to the Sinai Torah' (103), he asserts. In fact Lohfink is also excellent on the Psalms, with impressive and attentive exegesis; in many cases he shows how psalms adjacent to each other in the book are there because they are placed in dialogue, and how new depths of meaning emerge once they are seen in this light. 'The Psalter is a book of powerful emotions' (126), he argues, helpfully.

Meditation is of course a part of Christian prayer, but we must understand it aright: it 'is only preparation for one thing: turning wholly and solely toward God's history in the world' (146). Interestingly, the author invites us to see the eucharistic prayer as a multilayered archaeological site, and he offers a helpful examination of the evidence of Justin, and of the eucharistic prayer attributed to Hippolytus, emphasizing their dialogical character, and with no patience for 'transubstantiation magic' (183).

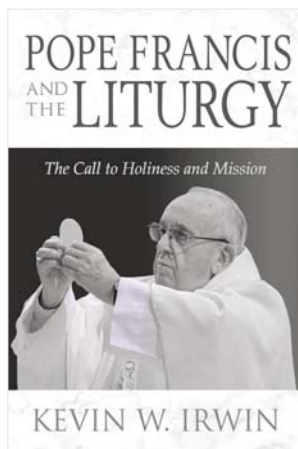
The final chapter, 'Each of Us Has a Personal History of Prayer', argues that everyone has experience of it, in a charming piece of third-person autobiography which will speak to many readers, especially perhaps those who think that they have never prayed; they may find what he says of the 'silence of God' particularly helpful, and his suggestions about what you do if prayer seems hopeless. This chapter may seem like an unconnected series of thoughts; but Lohfink knows what prayer is about, and he concludes with two sentences of great wisdom (once again, in third-person autobiography): 'Sometimes he prays that in his last hour he will still have the strength to lay his many years, indeed his whole existence, in the hands of God. Of course, he knows that this is not accomplished just by asking, but he has to begin today.' (207) This is a book to be relished by readers of *The Way*; and Linda M. Maloney has once again done an outstanding job of translating Lohfink's German into English.

Nicholas King SJ

Kevin W. Irwin, *Pope Francis and the Liturgy: The Call to Holiness and Mission* (New York: Paulist, 2020). 978 0 8091 5471 5, pp.192, \$29.95.

Many people might be surprised to hear of a whole book on Pope Francis and liturgy. The current Pope is more often associated with concern for the poor and care for the environment than liturgy. That makes this small book even more important, because Pope Francis has actually had much to say about liturgy, particularly as it is woven into the larger fabric of Christian holiness and mission.

Monsignor Kevin Irwin, a priest of the archdiocese of New York, has taught liturgical studies at the Catholic University of America for many years. He is a prolific author, a beloved teacher, an admired administrator and a frequent commentator on global Roman Catholic liturgical concerns. In this book, Irwin hopes to introduce people to Francis's focus on liturgy and, at the same time, reassure those who feel Pope Francis does not care about the liturgy of the Church that this is incorrect. Fr Irwin begins with an overarching thesis in the introduction:



Pope Francis views the liturgy 'from the inside' he draws out the inherent theological and spiritual meanings of the reformed liturgy. This is the meaning of the phrase *the life of the liturgy*. He also consistently draws out the mission and real-life implication of what the liturgy celebrates. This is the meaning of the phrase *the liturgy of life*. (xi)

This summary emerges from Pope Francis's understanding of holiness, which is both a lifelong growing into union with Christ and the root of loving actions towards others. Irwin takes this central definition and unfolds it in five thematic chapters, each of which underlines the continuity that the current Pope has both with his immediate predecessors in the papacy and with longer liturgical directions. A shorthand map introduces John Paul II as 'the philosopher pope' who 'emphasized *what* we believe', Benedict XVI as 'the theologian pope' who 'emphasized *why* we believe what we believe', and Francis as 'the pastoral pope' emphasizing '*how we live* what we believe' (x).

The first of these chapters, 'A Papal Triptych', looks at the three recent popes and their complementarity, as Benedict XVI develops some of the teaching of John Paul II and Francis develops the teaching of both. Irwin supports this presentation of consistency by relying primarily on official documents rather than secondary sources, here and elsewhere. The second

chapter, 'Pope Francis's Liturgical Initiatives', reveals the breadth of Francis's teaching on liturgy by tracing his own development of a number of liturgical practices and understandings, including daily Mass, foot-washing, Holy Thursday, baptism, marriage, confessions, feast days and more, weaving these together with the call to holiness and mercy for the marginalised (particularly migrants). Chapter three turns back to a greater emphasis on the continuity between the teachings of these three different popes, especially regarding the issues of inculturation, participation in the liturgy and the vernacular. Quoting multiple and diverse documents, Irwin draws together evidence for a consistent development throughout the whole of the twentieth century, despite recent claims to the contrary.

Chapter four ('Continuity and Development') returns to the unfolding continuity and development in liturgical teaching, but this time within Francis's own teaching, from the 2007 CELAM document written under his guidance as archbishop of Buenos Aires to the apostolic exhortation *Gaudete et exsultate* (2018). Here the central document is the 2015 encyclical letter *Laudato si'*, which Irwin treats as the heart of Francis's contributions thus far on liturgy and sacramentality. This leads into the fifth and final thematic chapter, 'Sacramental Theology after *Laudato si'*', centred on sacramental theology within the document and how it is unfolding through developments within particular liturgies.

In this final full chapter, Irwin points to Pope Francis's sacramental world view springing from creation. We are 'called "to accept the world as a sacrament of communion, as a way of sharing with God and our neighbours on a global scale"' (105, citing Patriarch Bartholomew). The honouring of creation and our stewardship of it have been very much an ecumenical endeavour between Eastern and Western Christianity, and Mgr Irwin gives an excellent overview of that cooperative work—which is not as well known as it should be among Western Christians. *Laudato si'* is also at the root of Francis's expressed concerns about sabbath rest and restoration, increasingly challenged by our growing reliance on a digitalised virtual world rather than direct subjective encounters. How can we rehearse 'relating to a personal God' (113) when we do not encounter one another as fully embodied images of God? This important chapter moves through the centrality of creation and incarnation as the contexts of teaching us about divine mediation, made manifest in 'every celebration of the liturgy' as 'an act of "mediated immediacy"' (116). The chapter concludes with a celebration of the co-creative activity of God and humanity, striving together toward that time 'when sacraments shall cease' (125, quoting Charles Wesley).

The brief conclusion summarises one of Kevin Irwin's primary concerns regarding perceptions of the current Pope's relationship with liturgy. Instead of joining in the celebration of liturgy as 'the amazing grace that changes and challenges minds and hearts' (130), so many in the Church continue to resist the reformed liturgy (even after sixty years). Irwin concludes by reminding us that 'a major lesson we can learn from the Francis effect on the liturgy is that one of the purposes of celebrating the liturgy is not to get the rite right but to get life right, or at least to get life less wrong' (131).

Well written, containing a wealth of official documents and theologies, Irwin's small book is a masterpiece for correcting many misconceptions about Francis on liturgy, at the same time as it presents a primer for the multifaceted splendour of liturgy, sacramentality and celebration in response to God's gracious and ongoing invitation to us.

Lizette Larson-Miller

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Doing the Work of Comparative Theology: A Primer for Christians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020). 978 0 8028 7466 5, pp. 321, \$35.00.

The author presents this book as a 'primer' or textbook for students. It places some core Christian concepts and values alongside key doctrines of four other major world religions: Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. It has an admittedly Christian-centred approach, which points out similarities but also highlights differences. Usefully for newcomers to this field, almost every statement is footnoted and references are provided to a range of literature, amid which the student might perhaps have appreciated more guidance as to relative usefulness. A single volume, it is based on the same author's five-volume *A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World* and follows a similar thematic approach, although with a slightly different choice of themes (ix).

The introduction deals with theoretical issues; it differentiates 'three interrelated yet distinct disciplines ... religious studies ... theology of religions, and comparative theology' (3). The first of these disciplines is the modern



descendant of what used to be called 'comparative religion'. It aims to operate from neutral ground as regards faith and, while it is an independent field of study, might approach the subject through a variety of other disciplines such as sociology or psychology. Theology of religions and comparative theology are both faith-based and are concerned with Christian reflections on and relations with non-Christian religions. Comparative theology, in the view of the author, concerns mainly doctrine. It 'makes every effort to consider in detail specific topics in religious traditions' (3). Thus his approach is narrower than that of Francis Clooney—quoted on the same page—whose definition covers 'ideas, words, images and acts'. This book's focus on doctrine skims over discussion of imagery, ritual, devotion and much else that would give a fuller picture. Within its own set limits, however, it provides a readable introduction to the field and aims to be objective.

Ten chapters are each devoted to a particular theme which, for the author, defines Christian belief, such as 'the triune God', scriptural authority, creation, salvation and 'atonement', religious community (the Church), the Holy Spirit and eschatology. Kärkkäinen is described on the back cover as 'one of the leading evangelical theologians for the pluralistic world', and the book's protestant-evangelical theological base is evident. It leaves out some themes that Catholics might look for, such as devotion to Our Lady (in relation to the Goddess traditions of India, for example), and there is only a passing reference to sacraments or the eucharist (227–228).

Each chapter begins with a presentation of its chosen theme in terms of Christian doctrine. This is followed by a discussion of the same theme in the light of the four other faith traditions, 'based on sacred scripture, authoritative tradition and (where necessary) the thought of some modern teachers'. In practice it draws extensively on academic authors. Then 'a careful and hospitable Christian engagement follows by highlighting potential common affirmations and important differences' (11).

In this engagement, the author strives to be objective and, in passages where he highlights differences, to avoid value judgments. He is careful to acknowledge Christianity's debt to Judaism, which he describes alongside Islam as a 'sister religion'. He dissolves some old prejudices, for example the view of Buddhism as 'nihilistic'. Summarising any aspect of a living religious tradition is complex, and those who know these four religions more closely may disagree with some of his emphases and conclusions. Nevertheless, this book is a useful starting point and students who wish to know more may find their own way through the literature that the author opens up. There is a comprehensive bibliography.

The closing epilogue brings some interesting reflections on the nature of religious belief. Quoting Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*, we are reminded that our fundamental beliefs are not justified by 'neutral, non-committal reasoning':

Rather, these basic beliefs are partially given; we are drawn to them; they are based on something given; and they form some kind of 'system' that supports us as much, or more, than we can support them. Furthermore, these beliefs, far from being merely answers to intellectual curiosity, have everything to do with our way of life, our practice. (276)

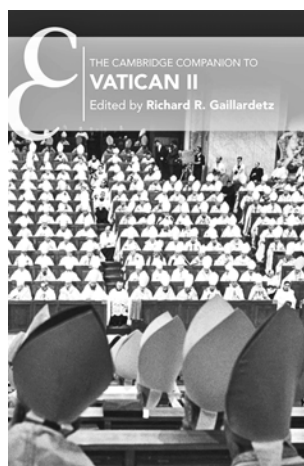
Kathleen Taylor

Richard Gaillardetz, *The Cambridge Companion to Vatican II* (Cambridge: CUP, 2020). 978 1 1084 5763 7, pp.350, £26.99.

In creating this book, Richard Gaillardetz assembled an outstanding team that includes some of the best-known experts on the Second Vatican Council.

Mark Francis opens the first part, on the context of Vatican II, with a superbly evocative chapter on 'Church Life in the First Half of the Twentieth Century'. He rightly recalls the huge contribution of religious sisters (5, 7) but, surprisingly, omits mentioning religious brothers. Brothers were widely engaged, among other things, with the ministry of teaching in the British Isles, North America, Australia and elsewhere.

(In a later chapter, on 'Professed Religious Life', Gemma Simmonds remedies this omission by attending also to the specific call of religious brothers [268].) Gabriel Flynn takes the research further with a study of 'Theological Renewal in the First Half of the Twentieth Century'; he writes of 'a profound desire for *spiritual* renewal', a 'broad confluence of intellectual and *spiritual* movements of renewal' that 'reached its zenith in the fecund reform programme of the Second Vatican Council' (19; *italics mine*); I shall return to conciliar spirituality, a rich theme that includes what Joseph Ratzinger called the 'spiritual awakening' of the bishops (quoted by Ormond Rush, 102). Karim Schelkens completes the picture with a chapter on 'Papal Leadership in the First Half of the Twentieth Century: Resistance and Renewal'.



Massimo Faggioli describes the governing bodies of the Council, the participants and the process ('parliamentary and pneumatological') involved in drafting and approving the sixteen documents. He recognises how this 'spiritual assembly' was shaped by the 'daily experience' of the celebration of the liturgy (75–76). His chapter is followed and complemented by Peter De Mey's account of 'The Role of Non-Voting Participants in the Preparation and Conduct of the Council'. De May rightly stresses the ecumenical impact of such participants; they welcomed the principle of 'the hierarchy of truths' (88; see also 165–167, 285). Like other valuable insights endorsed at Vatican II, this principle had more than one promoter; in this case, as a classical study by William Henn explains, it also came from Yves Congar (the most influential *peritus* at the Council) and his Thomist roots.

Ormond Rush contributes a brilliant chapter on conciliar hermeneutics and the threefold nature of any comprehensive interpretation. He persuasively argues that we should attend to the interplay of authors, readers, and texts: what I have called, for better or worse, the *intentio auctoris* (the meaning intended by the authors of the documents), the *intentio legentis* (the meaning creatively received by readers) and the *intentio textus ipsius* (the meanings and messages of the text itself).

A great strength of part 2, on the themes and reception of the council, is found in Gaillardetz's chapter on revelation, as well as in a number of chapters which explore the enduring significance of Vatican II for the Church as it exists today in its historical (pastoral and theological) context. Catherine Clifford also provides a valuable appendix on the resources available for the scholarly study of the Vatican II.

Commenting on the Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei verbum*), Gaillardetz correctly observes how the council failed to distinguish 'explicitly' between the Tradition (the presence of Christ and his Spirit in the life of the Church) and particular traditions, which may be corrected or even discarded (164). Yet, implicitly and even explicitly, principles for making such a distinction do emerge.¹ Gaillardetz's chapter on *Dei verbum*, along with repeated appeals to *Lumen gentium* made throughout the book, also leaves us with a question: in the light of one or other of the four constitutions produced by Vatican II, can we organize its sixteen documents, and in what way might we do so? *Sacrosanctum concilium* (the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), the first document to come from the Council, arguably functions as a kind of *lex orandi* to the *lex credendi* elaborated in the subsequent fifteen texts.

¹ See my 'Vatican II and Principles for Discernment and Decision', in *One Bread, One Body, One Church: Essays on the Ecclesia of Christ Today in Honor of Bernard P. Prusak* (Leuven: Peeters, 2021). I spell out criteria that Vatican II employed to discern particular traditions and reach decisions about their eventual reform.

Among the chapters on the Church, in 'The Pilgrim Church' the late Gerard Mannion explains how, in place of a self-understanding that was 'triumphalist, self-congratulatory, and exclusivist', the Council developed a view of the people of God that was eschatological and committed to social change and justice (117). Stephen Bevans describes Vatican II's view of the Church as 'communion-in-mission' (137). And Brian Flanagan's chapter on the presence of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying the Church develops themes from Yves Congar's christology and pneumatology. Where Mannion proposes the Council's 'eschatological turn', Flanagan highlights the 'trinitarian and pneumatological turn' (204).

Thomas Rausch rightly urges the strengthening of the authority of episcopal conferences, reforming the synod of bishops and reclaiming the *sensus fidei*. James Keenan presents a fundamental change in moral thinking, reflected at Vatican II and inspired by several European theologians—not least, by Bernard Häring's christocentrism ('the principle, the norm, the centre, and the goal of Christian moral theology is Christ'; 323). Apropos of Paul VI's expanding the birth-control commission, Keenan reports the view that the Pope added more conservative members to counterbalance the revisionists (334). Professor John Marshall, one of the six original members of the commission (which John XXIII and then Paul VI enlarged to have eventually 64 members), tells a somewhat different story.²

Writing this review for *The Way*, a journal of Christian spirituality, alerted me to the question: what does *The Cambridge Companion to Vatican II* offer to the theory and practice of spirituality? At times the contributors note the Vatican II theme of the universal call to holiness, elaborated in *Lumen gentium* (the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, nn. 39–42). They write about 'the actual life of grace' (Rausch, 233), 'the spiritual nourishment' of the scriptures (Gaillardetz, 172), the liturgy as 'the summit and source of a living, dynamic Christian faith', and moving 'the hearts and minds of the faithful' (David Farina Turnbloom, 175). Turnbloom invokes the Council's vision of 'the Christian way of being in the world', which is liturgical by nature (195). Richard Lennan shows himself, more than the other contributors, ready to use the language of 'spirituality' (251), 'spiritual' (254), 'priestly spirituality' (258), and 'spiritual development' (260).

Yet the fact remains that the volume contains no chapter on the spirituality of the Council. As far as I know, my *Spirituality of the Second Vatican Council* (2014) is, regrettably, still the only book on this topic. We need someone or, better still, a competent team of experts, to tackle this

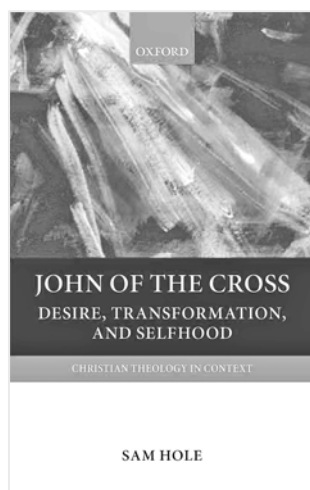
² See his 'My Voyage of Discovery', printed as an appendix to Gerald O'Collins, *Living Vatican II: The 21st Council for the 21st Century* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2006).

theme. Any spirituality that takes its bearings from the Second Vatican Council will need to be christocentric; liturgical; nourished by the eucharist and the Bible; returning to sources for its inspiration (especially to the Fathers of the Church, great mystics and other charismatically endowed figures); conscious of sharing through baptism in the life of the Trinity and in the priestly, prophetic and kingly mission of Christ (Osheim, 222–224); and, in a collegial spirit, ready to deploy personal charisms as gifts in the service of the pilgrim Church and the furthering of justice. It will be a spirituality of those constantly aware of being ‘on the way’ towards a common eternal life in Christ (Osheim, 219). This liturgical, collegial spirituality fulfils the wider purpose of the family as ‘the domestic church’ (Osheim, 225).

The index of subjects for this volume needs to be enlarged. Significantly, it contains no entry for ‘spirituality’! Likewise, and more acutely, the index of names needs to be taken further, and that means including the many important names which occur in footnotes. Nevertheless, this recent addition to the Cambridge Companions series is a scholarly and insightful contribution to the study of Vatican II. May it inspire everywhere a richer commitment to the Council’s teaching.

Gerald O’Collins SJ

Sam Hole, *John of the Cross: Desire, Transformation, and Selfhood* (Oxford: OUP, 2020). 978 0 1988 6306 9, pp.240, £65.00.



This is an authoritative and in-depth study which argues that the subject of desire deserves to be treated as an integral part of the Christian understanding of transformation and life in Christ. The Anglican priest Sam Hole presents his case through a detailed, sympathetic study of the sixteenth-century Spanish Carmelite St John of the Cross (1542–1591). John is considered to be a major Christian mystic, poet and theologian whose ascetical approach to desire, Hole argues, is holistic, integrated and far from negative.

Publishing as part of a series of volumes in the field of academic systematic contextual theology, Hole’s broad aim is to challenge a modern tendency to treat a text as immediately applicable to today. In examining the historical context of John’s

writings, his particular focus is 'to restore desire to its rightful centrality in John's thought and to promote this account as worthy of contemporary attention' (6).

His first chapter, 'The Neglect of Desire', is a panoramic review of literature on John of the Cross. This highlights how the reception of John has been adversely affected by what he calls a 'restricted understanding of desire' (10). He critiques theological studies which have presented desire as solely human and primarily sexual, and considers that many discussions have preferred love (*agape*) over desire (*eros*). He suggests that John's approach to desire is more holistic. While John was not uncritical of aspects of human desire, Hole's assessment is that he balances a recognition of human sinfulness with 'expectant hopefulness in the possibilities of transformation in this life' (16). Hole argues for a renewed understanding of the way in which John treats desire: not as a problem to be solved, but a necessary part of the process of transformation in Christ.

In an illuminating second chapter, Hole continues his recovery of desire through an in-depth contextual study of the poetry and prose of John. He explores the historical influences, traditions and understandings of desire and the way in which these are appropriated and reworked by John. In particular, Hole suggests that parallels can be drawn between John's thought and the work of Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274).

Moving on from historical context and influences, Hole turns his attention to John as a poet, arguing that his poetry is central to an understanding of his approach to desire. Chapter 3 is an examination of the role of poetic narrative, metaphors and form in each of John's major poems, including *Romances*, *Dark Night*, *The Spiritual Canticle* and *The Living Flame of Love*. Hole clearly demonstrates that desire is a central theme in John's poetry.

In chapter 4 he examines the prose works, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* and *Dark Night*. There is a valuable explanation of the theme of 'dark night' and how this develops through the night of sense and spirit. It is through and in this dark night that the desires of the soul are redirected towards God. Hole sees the necessity of recovering John as one who redirects desire on an ascetic path of negation which does not destroy desire but enables its recovery. In *The Spiritual Canticle* and *The Living Flame of Love* he attends to the development of the relationship between the soul and God, exploring the themes and language of beauty, spiritual betrothal and marriage, and union. He argues that the desire of the soul is finally satisfied in the revelation that not only does God desire the soul, but that this same desire is generated at the heart of the Trinity.

Hole concludes his persuasive case by suggesting that the writings of John of the Cross offer an integrated vision for the transformation of the desire of the soul. This vision is one where redirected desire works together with love to culminate in the intimate meeting together of the soul and God. For Hole, John's poetry and prose offer a vision of the soul journeying from the limitations of self-centred desire to the freedom of self-giving desire for God. Through union with God, who for John of the Cross is always the Trinity, the soul receives a renewed vision for and engagement with the whole of creation, energized by divine desire.

This book is an insightful and welcome investigation into a field of study that has been neglected in Christian theology. As a detailed study originating in a PhD thesis it has some complexity of ideas and language, and thus requires careful reading. But it is thoroughly researched, and the bibliography is extensive. The theme of desire and Hole's positive approach to the writings and thought of John of the Cross deserve attention alike from theologians and practitioners across a range of fields. To this end, for readers of *The Way*, it will be of interest and value to those studying John of the Cross and Carmelite spirituality, particularly as part of wider reading. Those involved in spiritual direction and Christian formation, or who have an interest in theologies of desire, will find much to challenge, encourage and develop understanding in this vital area of Christian thought.

Tessa Holland

Simeon Zahl, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Experience* (Oxford: OUP, 2020). 978 0 1988 2778 8, pp.272, £65.00.



Christian spirituality has something to do with the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of God has something to do with human experience of God. All inquirers should be able to agree on this much, but after that the plot thickens. A big question is: *how* does the Spirit of God bear on, or relate to, human experience? Even if we leave room for due mystery, this question still merits our attention.

Simeon Zahl holds that human experiences are often crucial to theology, in the development of theological doctrines and in their practical applications. Focusing on experiences understood

to come from the Holy Spirit, he gives special attention to the role of affect and its bearing on emotion, feeling, desire and delight in connection with experience of God. Augustine is the main influence on his account, but there are considerable contributions also from Martin Luther and Philip Melancthon.

Zahl favours Augustine's view that 'God brings it about by the enticements of our perceptions that we will and that we believe' (192). In particular, God 'alone' generates certain delights within humans, making certain practices attractive and delightful for them, and thereby attracting them to God's will. Zahl thus claims that 'the manner and extent and progress of sanctification in a given case are ultimately determined by God, who alone generates truly effective conditions for fostering delight in righteousness and fleeing sin' (227–228).

This process, according to Augustine, and Zahl, is a 'providentially ordered process of God' whereby 'the object of one's desires and delights [is] reordered to the one in whom alone creation can find its "well-being"' (190–91). Note the passive voice with 'reordered'. Zahl thus cites Augustine's view that God's Spirit changes people by 'substituting good desire for evil desire, that is, pouring out love in our hearts' (222). This kind of emphasis on divine providence 'alone' is familiar not only from Augustine but also from Pascal, Calvin and Luther (under Augustine's influence), and it raises an important question: is an adequate role left for human freedom and responsibility in the redemptive process? If God 'alone' generates righteous delights in humans and thus 'brings about' what we will, why does God do this selectively regarding human conformity to God's good will? This question bears on God's goodness: God has evidently left many, if not most, humans without the needed delights in God's will when God could have generated the needed delights in *all* people. A God who genuinely loves all people and can generate the satisfaction of their need to delight in God would not leave people inadequate here. Divine failure in this regard would count against God's goodness, if God actually has the power to resolve the problem.

Zahl wants to avoid 'appeal to a sheer overriding of human capacities in Christian transformation' (207), but it is not clear that he seeks to avoid a *non-sheer*, or indirect, overriding by God. He emphasizes the importance of 'the freedom of the (divine) Spirit' (201–202, 227, 230–231), but he gives no attention to the corresponding importance of free agency in human recipients. (The index includes no entry for 'freedom'.) If Zahl's worry is about a Pelagian tendency in an account of redemption or sanctification (230), this is misplaced for the present concern. God can give humans the power to

(choose to) lean towards God or away from God regarding redemptive help (if only to ask or not to ask for help), and this power can be courtesy of what some theologians call 'prevenient grace'. Human exercise of this power need not be a matter of 'earning', or even intending to earn, God's approval. It could be, instead, human exercise of a gift from God, with no claim to meriting the gift or its results. So, this option does not lead to a discredited Pelagian view. Of course, if a Pelagian view is simply a recognition of human agency, then such a view is not to be discredited.

In some of his parables, including the parable of the sower, Jesus assumes that humans have the power to choose for or against the word he sows. Luke's version of the parable of the sower speaks of those who 'hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance' (Luke 8:15). Such holding fast is a voluntary, cooperative moral commitment to God. The key role for human cooperation emerges also in Jesus' parable of Rich Man and Lazarus: 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead' (Luke 16:31). Listening to Moses and the prophets here includes cooperating with the redemptive message from God.

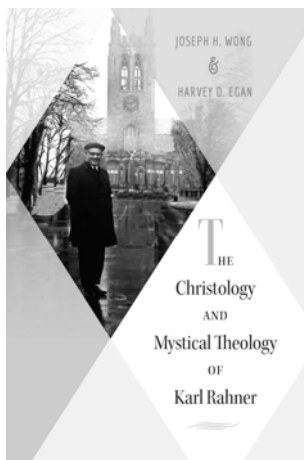
The apostle Paul acknowledged a voluntary human role in receiving redemption from God. Regarding the people of Israel, he remarked: 'To this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed' (2 Corinthians 3:15–16). Such 'turning' is a voluntary action performed by a human, but it does not earn or merit God's removing the veil of misunderstanding. Paul held that it is the way a human actively and voluntarily *receives* the gift of God's removing the veil of misunderstanding. If the process of illumination were God's work 'alone', as claimed by Zahl, Paul would have had no point in mentioning the condition of *human* 'turning to the Lord'.

We neglect the voluntary reciprocity in a loving relationship with God if we omit the role of free agency on both sides. We thus should avoid portraying 'God alone' as effecting such a relationship. Zahl's account goes astray here, but it does merit attention for seeking to give a central role to human experience in redemption.

Paul Moser

Joseph H. Wong and Harvey D. Egan, *The Christology and Mystical Theology of Karl Rahner* (New York: Crossroad, 2020). 978 0 8245 0138 9, pp. 250, \$89.95.

Back in April 2013 *The Way* published an article by Harvey D. Egan on 'The Mystical Theology of Karl Rahner'. Then, four years later, Egan's chapter, 'Karl Rahner (1904–84) and His Mystical Theology', was included by Robert Aleksander Maryks in Brill's *A Companion to Jesuit Mysticism*. Now, joined by Joseph H. Wong, Egan has brought out a book-length study not only of Rahner's mystical theology but—and this is a real treat for theologians working on Rahner—his christology. Egan writes, 'Because Rahner views God's Self-communication to every person as the foundation of his mysticism



of the experience of grace, and Jesus Christ as the irreversible high point of this Self-communication and its definitive acceptance, Mystical Theology and Christology interlock' (1).

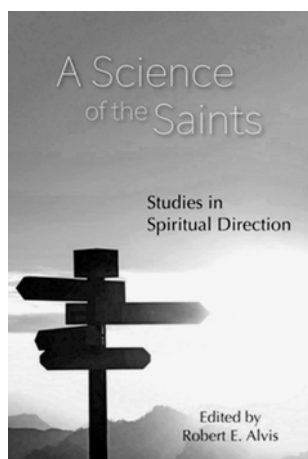
It is this same interlocking that gives substance and depth to what is an extraordinary book. Emphasizing the profound influence of Ignatius Loyola on Rahner, it explores how Rahner not only embraces the *person* of Jesus Christ, but with both his penetrating theological mind and his Christ-and-person-centred Jesuit heart he is able to define the human person as enabled to be God in the world. For Rahner, closeness to God and the integrity of the human creature grow and develop in like proportion; and for Wong and Egan alike, Rahner is a 'sapiential theologian' (2).

Harvey D. Egan is a Jesuit theologian, emeritus professor of systematic and mystical theology at Boston College. His doctorate in theology was directed by Karl Rahner himself. In addition to several books, Egan has translated many of Rahner's writings. Above all, he is perhaps best known for his *Anthology of Christian Mysticism* (1991, 1996). He writes in his introduction about how he came to know Joseph H. Wong after reviewing his work and was 'delighted to be asked to co-author his present manuscript' (1). Wong is a Benedictine monk of the Camaldolese Congregation and a member of the Pontifical Academy of Theology. He has taught systematic theology at the Salesian University in Rome and is the author or editor of several books and articles in Chinese, English and Italian. The book has a foreword by another former student of Karl Rahner, Leo J. O'Donovan, who is also a Jesuit theologian.

This is truly a magnificent publication, accessible enough for those coming to Rahner for the first time, deep enough for those who are nourished by solid food. Its sections, subsections and conclusions amply guide the reader through its content; there is no need for an index. Its endnotes are sufficiently detailed that they, likewise, negate the need for a bibliography. Presented in this way, it is possible to perceive each new chapter as a meditation which gives grace and meaning to the whole.

Luke Penkett C/JN

Robert E. Alvis, *A Science of the Saints: Studies in Spiritual Direction* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2020). 978 0 8146 8804 5, pp.240, \$24.95.



This fascinating volume breaks fresh ground in the study of spiritual direction by characterizing it as a process of learning how to live a spiritual life from the 'saints' themselves and counselling others to do the same, across the trajectory of Christian history. Beginning with the Desert Mothers and Fathers of the fourth century and ending with twentieth-century saints, theologians and fiction writers, it tells the story of various approaches to spiritual direction, discussing sometimes surprising figures throughout the ages without focusing on one particular school or tradition over another. There is a strong

emphasis on lifting up for our consideration theologians and saints who were also gifted spiritual directors from various schools of spirituality.

The essays are written by members of the theological faculty of Saint Meinrad's Seminary and School of Theology, many of whom also serve as spiritual directors for students in their school. The authors are mostly Benedictines, and all men with the exception of Jeana Visel. They treat the desert Fathers and Mothers, Benedictines (Gregory the Great and then twentieth-century figures up to and after Vatican II, including Marmion, Merton and Louf), Teresa of Ávila and John of the Cross in the sixteenth century and St Francis de Sales during the Counter Reformation. The volume then moves to the twentieth century, turning to St Faustina Kowalska and St Benedicta of the Cross. Private revelation is treated through St Faustina, and spiritual direction through the correspondence of St Benedicta, who had, of course, also been a professor before she was snatched from her

Carmelite monastery by the Nazis. She corresponded with many who sought her spiritual counsel until she was arrested.

A unique contribution by Keith Lemna is the chapter on the Oratorian Louis Bouyer, whom he treats as the spiritual master at Montmartre, around whom a group of young theologians gathered, including Jean-Luc Marion and Hans Urs von Balthasar. Pope Paul VI recommended reading Bouyer to the Roman clergy to improve their doctrinal horizons, and their teaching and preaching. Bouyer was himself a superb spiritual director and his writings on spirituality held together the mystery of God and God's face turned towards the world. He was steeped in the theology that Vatican II embraced, and his influence on theologians was significant.

Guerric de Bona treats Ignatius of Loyola creatively through film, concretely demonstrating the first and second sets of rules for discernment of spirits using Elia Kazan's *On the Waterfront* for the first set of rules and Robert Bresson's *Diary of a Country Priest* for the second. Since discernment of spirits involves a whole-bodied reflection on one's experience, these films might be used in spiritual direction training programmes with great effect. In the final chapter of the volume Denis Robinson turns to the fiction of Flannery O'Connor, Muriel Spark and Hugh Benson for twentieth-century examples of writers who portray the human condition in explicitly Christian ways which illuminate the spiritual and not so spiritual dynamics of human life. It also gestures toward other art forms that might function in a similar way.

The volume as a whole is fresh and engaging, and of interest both to spiritual directors and to the many engaged in mentoring others into this ministry.

Janet Ruffing RSM

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