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THE HUMAN JOURNEY

Book Reviews

FOR AUTHORS

The Way warmly invites readers to submit articles with a view to publication. They should normally be about 4,000 words long, and be in keeping with the journal's aims. The Editor is always ready to discuss possible ideas. A Special Issue is planned on Ignatian mission, so articles in this area will be particularly welcome, but please submit them by mid-May 2026.

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ABBREVIATIONS

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

Papal documents may be found at www.vatican.va

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Away in the loveable west,
On a pastoral forehead of Wales,
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Gerard Manley Hopkins, Jesuit poet

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FOREWORD

THE TITLE OF THIS ISSUE is taken from an article by Teresa White fcJ, who passed away at the end of 2025, and to whom it is dedicated. All who met her sensed within her a spirit of great erudition and wisdom. Over a fifteen year period, she contributed numerous articles to this journal, especially on the topics of literature, religious life and spirituality. In the article quoted—and reprinted—here she reflects upon the experience of the former atheist Madeleine Delbrêl (1904–1964), who converted to Catholicism and embarked on a life with God through reading, reflection and prayer. Delbrêl began to seek out a simple life in communion with the poor. Rather than becoming demoralised by the bleakness of poverty, she was filled with the Spirit and, according to White, 'found meaning in the ordinariness and untidiness of the human journey'—a journey we share with human beings throughout history, and in which we can discover glimpses of heaven even in the humbleness of our daily lives. Delbrêl wrote: 'We are destined for the eternal love of God. But we can only come to this love in our human life, in the time that belongs to us and others, in the world here and now.'[1] The articles in this issue explore and reflect upon our human journey through this world and this present time.

Two of these articles tackle the question of where human beings are located within a wider cosmological vision. Frances Murphy explores the conversations that are possible between Christianity and Darwinian evolution, and how evolutionary theory can contribute to a Christian understanding of what it means to be human. Meanwhile, Patrick Riordan sounds a warning for those involved in the study and practice of spirituality. Although it might seem as though an anthropocentric world-view denigrates creation and displaces God, rejecting it completely runs the risk of neglecting that the human person is a primary locus for the encounter with God.

Although successive abuse crises have shaken many people's faith in making progress on our human journey within the Church, and despite the numerous Jesuits who have been complicit, Patrick Goujon discovers a

[1] Madeleine Delbrêl, *We, the Ordinary People of the Streets*, translated by David Louis Schindler (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 19.

bulwark against abuse in one of the fundamental principles of the Spiritual Exercises. St Ignatius writes that in spiritual accompaniment, 'the one giving the Exercises ought', without interference, 'to allow the Creator to deal immediately with the creature and the creature with its Creator and Lord' (Exx 15). He offers a simple yet remarkably powerful way to avoid the abusive dynamics that can occur within spiritual accompaniment, and to help people grow safely in relationship with God. David Clayton uses insights from organizational psychology to show how Ignatius started to discern the action of God in the face of apparent failure, coming to inhabit a deep-seated 'psychological safety' with God and his companions, and growing in freedom to respond to the love of God in his life.

I-Fong Wu invites us to equip ourselves with the Spiritual Exercises as we confront the climate crisis. They give us the perspective we need not just to address the problems in our own backyard, but also those faced by the whole of the planet: our common home. The narrative of the life of Jesus is crucial to deepening our response to this challenge. During the season of Easter, we recall the promise that new life can come from even the darkest moments of human history. Adam Grand draws out parallels between the bleak spiritual experience narrated in the Book of Job and the rules for discernment in the Spiritual Exercises. He concludes that although times of desolation can be difficult, they are allowed by God so that human beings can grow in virtue.

An even darker desolation is addressed by James McTavish, who writes from his pastoral experience with people living on the brink of despair. He notes how such moments resonate with the narrative of Christ's descent into hell after the crucifixion, and his return to open the gates of heaven to the just. Those who accompany people in such moments of 'living hell' can be reassured in their hope through their participation in this ministry of Christ as he rises from the dead.

Ignatius shows how God can use even the broken body of a soldier to bring about new life. María Dolores López considers the role of tears in his spiritual journey, and shows how they were a response to the deepest life-giving movements of his inner being: guiding his discernments, helping him to grow in reverence and bringing him to an overwhelming sense of God's love. As we celebrate the season of Easter, let us remain attentive in our everyday lives, and even to our tears, so that through them we might draw ever closer to that abundant love that God offers each and everyone of us.

Philip Harrison SJ
Editor

OVERWHELMED BY GRACE

St Ignatius and Tears

María Dolores López Guzmán

The Tears of a Soldier

SENSITIVE MEN are back in fashion. They enjoy a certain social recognition. You no longer hear people say that 'boys don't cry' or that they should be brave. That was what boys used to be told when they fell over and began to sob with fear or pain at the slightest scratch. Boys who did so were taken to be weak-natured, like girls. They had to dry their tears, hold them in, and carry on as if nothing had happened. It was considered a sign of manliness.

As the wounds St Ignatius suffered at the battle of Pamplona began to heal, his behaviour seemed to fit with this stereotype.[1] Once he had returned to his parents' home at Azpeitia from Pamplona, the medics had to reset the bones of his leg, because they had fused badly. In spite of what it must have felt like, 'he never uttered a word, nor showed any sign of pain other than clenching his fists tightly' (*Autobiography*, n. 2). It did not end there. The 'butchery' continued during his recovery from the operation when, for purely aesthetic reasons, he decided to have his misaligned knee bone corrected: 'His older brother was horrified, and said that he would not dare to suffer such pain; which the injured man endured with his usual patience' (*Autobiography*, n. 2). Later, when he had to answer to the Inquisition and was held prisoner in Alcalá and Salamanca: 'it was not displeasing to Ignatius that … he had some occasion of suffering for the honor of Christ, which he thirsted for, and for the help of souls'.[2]

This strong man, resilient to both physical and emotional pain, would nevertheless experience moments of his life in which tears played

[1] Juan Polanco, *The Life of Ignatius Loyola and the History of the Founding of the Society of Jesus*, translated by Kenneth Baker (Chesnut Hill: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2018), 10–11.
[2] Polanco, *Life of Ignatius Loyola*, 38.

St Ignatius sees a vision of St Peter while convalescing in leg splints, by Antoine de Favray, eighteenth century

a significant role. His image as a tough cookie, with 'measured speech, a desire for precision, and great practicality', would be imbued with the gentleness and extreme sensitivity that he would later display repeatedly throughout his life.[3]

Ignatius demonstrates for us that tears do not have to be synonymous with weakness. He was a great strategist, with a firm and sober character, but at the same time he was intuitive, passionate, attentive and selfless. For this reason he could adapt to different situations and was adept in relationships with people of diverse social statuses and backgrounds. He had 'the ability to move the minds of men',[4] making himself everything to everyone and fulfilling what Saint Paul proposed when he said: 'I have become all things to all people, so that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.' (1 Corinthians 9:22–23)

The Church has a long tradition of appreciating tears as a gift from God, and as an important part of the spiritual journey. But they do not

[3] Josep Maria Rambla, *El peregrino. Autobiografía de San Ignacio* (Bilbao and Maliaño: Mensajero and Sal Terrae, 1996), introduction, 7.
[4] Polanco, *Life of Ignatius Loyola*, 8.

always mean the same thing, nor possess the same value. In the fourteenth century, Saint Catherine of Siena wrote a 'doctrine of tears' in her work *The Dialogue*, where she makes an exercise of discernment over the kinds of tears and the moments in which they arise. She describes five distinct types, but they are all tears of the heart, 'The only difference lies in whether the love is ordered well or ill, is perfect or imperfect'.[5] On the other hand, the oral tradition of Judaism focuses on when God cries, and for whom.[6] The Lord cries with us, and we cry with His tears.

So it is strange that, although they are so highly valued and have such a profound meaning, there have been approaches to St Ignatius that barely take tears into account at all. It is strange because these are a marked and authentic characteristic of the author of the *Spiritual Exercises*, without which any sketch of his personality remains incomplete. Anyone who ignores them in painting the most approximate portrait of St Ignatius will be unable to capture the essence of the saint, for even physically 'his eyelids were shrunken and wrinkled from the many tears he continually shed'.[7] Diego Laínez affirmed that he was, 'so tenderly susceptible to weep about anything that recalls the eternal and the abstract that he told me he would find himself weeping tears regularly six or seven times a day'.[8] Such were the abundance and frequency of his tears that, on the advice of his doctor, he had to learn to hold them in, so they would not cause serious health problems. He acknowledged, 'my eyes ached painfully' (Diary, 12 March 1544). The first step in understanding the place of tears in Saint Ignatius' life will be to determine what caused him to groan with sobs and copious tears, when and under what circumstances.

Tears in Ignatius' Story

St Ignatius shed tears—a lot. There is evidence of this in many of his writings: in the *Autobiography*; in his Spiritual Diary; in a few of his letters; and in the recollections of the companions who knew him during his life. Since he was a man little given to displays of emotion and reluctant

[5] St Catherine of Siena, 'Tears', n. 91, in *The Dialogue*, translated by Suzanne Noffke (New York: Paulist, 1980).

[6] See Catherine Chalier, *Traité des larmes. Fragilité de Dieu, fragilité de l'âme* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2003).

[7] Pedro de Ribadeneira, *Vida del B. P. Ignacio de Loyola, fundador de la Compañía de Jesús*, 4. 18, MHSJ FN 4, 729.

[8] Diego Laínez, 'Letter to Juan Polanco Giving a Brief Biography of Ignatius of Loyola', n. 59, in *The First Biographies of St Ignatius Loyola*, translated by Joseph A. Munitiz (Oxford: Way Books, 2019), 32.

to share his interior life, the fact that he was able to dictate to Gonçalves da Câmara moments in which he could not suppress his tears, suggests not only that he was generous enough to communicate something that we have no right to hear, however much curiosity it might arouse, but also that he did so intentionally.

He shared what he did because he considered it important to reveal 'how the Lord had guided him from the beginning of his conversion', which is why he had agreed to tell the story of what had happened from the time of his convalescence in Azpeitia.[9] The purpose of seeing how the Lord led him to greater praise and service is essential, for it implies that Ignatius probably shed tears on other occasions that are not recounted since they did not arise through the action of God; and, by contrast, those he mentions are the ones that serve his purpose.

He narrates the episode that occurred after he gave his clothes to a beggar in Monserrat as though it were the first time in his life that he had shed so many tears. He told it to his confidant and the minister of the house in Rome a little over thirty years after the event had taken place. This distance favoured reflection and the internalisation of what had happened. He dictated this story in 1553 and 1555, near the end of his life; what he recounted occurred around 1522. By that time he had already become a pilgrim, deciding to 'clothe himself in the armour of Christ' (*Autobiography*, n. 17). Since he didn't want anyone to recognise him, he gave his clothes to a beggar and set off for Manresa. On the way, a man asked him if he was the one who had given clothes to the beggar. The tears 'poured from his eyes, tears of compassion for the poor man to whom he had given his clothes: compassion, because he realized that they were making things difficult for him, thinking he had stolen them' (*Autobiography*, n. 18). The first tears since the conversion of Ignatius, a man of strong character, bear the mark of humanity and compassion.

Settled in Manresa, he began to live an extremely austere life, until a pivotal moment arrived: the experience of profound desolation that provoked suicidal thoughts owing to an exhausting struggle against scruples he could not control. But his obedience to his confessor, his perseverance and his plea—'Help me, Lord: I can find no cure in human beings nor in any creature' (*Autobiography*, n. 23)—paved the way for the action of the Spirit. 'The Lord willed that he woke up as if

[9] Jerónimo Nadal, 'Preface of Fr Nadal', in *A Pilgrim's Journey: The Autobiography of St Ignatius Loyola*, translated by Joseph N. Tylenda (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1985), appendix 1, 123.

from sleep' and he was certain that 'Our Lord in his mercy had willed to liberate him' (*Autobiography*, n.25). The disquieting inner struggle ended. The surrender to grace was a turning point in his life. And it facilitated a further flow of tears.

From that point on, Ignatius realised that God was treating him as a child, teaching him and revealing to him the mystery of God's love through mystical graces. He then had a vision of the Trinity in the form of three keys on a keyboard, 'this with so many tears and so many sobs that he could not control himself' and 'at no point could he restrain his tears' (*Autobiography*, n.28). All of this was accompanied by great consolation. The tears flowed from a threefold experience: the gratuity of God's love, its immeasurability and the consolation that it brought.

What happened in Manresa was fundamental. It was the very reason that Ignatius composed the core of the *Spiritual Exercises* there—in which the proposed exercises included the tears he had lived for himself. We find them associated with the suffering of sin (Exx 55); the compassion for the Lord that moved him to have 'tears; and interior suffering because of the great suffering which Christ endured for me' (Exx 203); and consolation (Exx 316). He also warns retreatants about how temptation can act upon even the greatest of gifts.

Later on, he had a different experience that added another dimension to his weeping. It happened in Monte Cassino, close to Rome, where he learned of the death of Bachelor Hoces, the first Jesuit to die, to whom he himself had given the Spiritual Exercises. There he contemplated how Hoces entered into heaven, 'at this had great tears and great spiritual consolation' (*Autobiography*, n.98), which lasted 'not for one but for many days'.[10] This evidence that a companion had been received into the next life he took as confirmation of the resurrection, a consolation for the affection that he felt for his companion and a confirmation of the communion of saints—relevant for Ignatius since mediators were decisive in his spiritual journey. In this sense, Mary, Our Lady, deserves special mention for the place she occupies as intercessor in this process.

Two years later, the confirmation of the Society of Jesus by Pope Paul III gave Ignatius great joy. As superior general he left, as was his custom, some notes in his Spiritual Diary (1544–1545) that correspond chronologically to the deliberation on poverty and part of the composition of the *Constitutions*. These circumstances made him intensify his prayer,

[10] Polanco, *Life of Ignatius Loyola*, 59.

through which he experienced an increase in devotion and tears: 'This often used to happen as he was going along talking about important things, and that would make him arrive at assurance' (*Autobiography*, n. 99). 'He told me', said Gonçalves de Câmara, about 'decisions over which he had been forty days saying mass every day, and every day with many tears' (*Autobiography*, n. 100).

There are few occasions about which we know when St Ignatius cried out of sadness. But Ribadeneira recollected in his biography of the saint two episodes in which the founder of the Society shed many tears over the unedifying situations of his companions: in one case, over someone who was on the point of being lost to a serious temptation; in the other over persistent disobedience.[11]

In the last few years of his life, however, he received a lot of joy and spiritual consolation from thinking on death, which turned everything into tears. It occurred with such frequency that, on many occasions, he stopped thinking about it so as not to receive so much consolation. He had not always lived with the prospect of death like this. When he was sick in Manresa, what he wished was that the offences he had committed against God would not be forgotten. On another occasion, when he was travelling by ship from Valencia to Italy, he thought he was going to die in a great storm; he was not afraid of condemnation for his sins, but of not having done enough with the gifts and graces that God had bestowed upon him.

Aside from specific occasions, Ignatius had a custom that Ribadeneira noted, starting from his first vision of the virgin and child, just before walking to Azpeitia. He enjoyed 'looking attentively at the beauty of the heavens and the stars, which he did often and slowly.' He remained so 'enraptured and in suspense' with 'tears pouring from his eyes for the great delight that he felt'. 'He made habit of this that lasted for the rest of his life.'[12] For this reason, Diego Laínez recalled how, already in Rome, he went up on to the roof to look at the heavens: 'There he was, with head uncovered, shedding tears that streamed down his face, with such smoothness and silence that he did not feel either sobbing or moaning, or noise nor any movement of the body'.[13] At the end of his life, he was thrilled at the prospect of meeting the Father: 'It was time',

[11] Ribadeneira, *Vida del B. P. Ignacio de Loyola*, 5.2, MHSJ FN 4, 769.
[12] Ribadeneira, *Vida del B. P. Ignacio de Loyola*, 1.2, MHSJ FN 4, 95.
[13] Ribadeneira, *Vida del B. P. Ignacio de Loyola,* 5.1, MHSJ FN 4, 748–749.

wrote Polanco, 'that his constant work should arrive at true rest, his infirmities at true health, his tears and continuous suffering at bliss and perpetual happiness'. And so, 'he gave his soul to his creator and Lord without any difficulty'.[14]

The Memory of Tears

The moments when Ignatius shed abundant tears and sobbed—and noted it—could be categorised as 'experiences of transcendence'.[15] The 'most intense tears', together with 'greatly increased devotion' and multiple instances of the same, were effectively experiences in which the presence of the Lord became overwhelming and clear, for the most part linked with consolation and in conjunction with a God who, always greater, was gradually being revealing to him.[16] Recalling his 'excess of tears' (Diary, 16 February 1544), among other gifts ('a deepening of faith, of hope, of charity; spiritual joy and repose, tears, intense consolation,

Before Mass. *by Carlos Saenz de Teiada. published 1958*

[14] Juan Polanco to Pedro de Ribadeneira, 6 August 1556, MHSJ FN 1, 764, 767.
[15] José A. García and Felix Revilla, *El relato del peregrino. Lectura espiritual y pastoral de la Autobiografía de san Ignacio* (Bilbao: Mensajero, 2025), 56–57.
[16] Diary, 13 February 1544 and elsewhere.

elevation of mind, divine impressions and illuminations'), was for Ignatius the making of a memory of gifts received, one that was closely linked to remembering his poverty, his stubbornness and blindness.[17]

The brief overview of a few moments in the life of St Ignatius presented in the previous section, in which tears had a unique role, allows us to summarise in a few points the most noteworthy aspects of what Ignatius himself saw in them.

The Passage of God

The tears that Ignatius remembered and that held interest for him are those that give testimony to the passage of God through his life by means of an experience of consolation. Crying stirs up the emotions, reduces tension, expresses something uncontainable and opens the floodgates of the overflowing heart. The uncountable graces that Ignatius received produced a profound impression on him, and he never grew accustomed to them, for they only served to reinforce the boundless and undeserved love he received. The Lord constantly demonstrated to him how much He loved and needed him. In fact, the more Ignatius asked to be punished for the many sins he saw he had committed, and for which he shed so many tears, the more merciful the Lord was to him. God was captivated by his sincere repentance, and Ignatius by God's prodigious magnanimity.

Ignatius' interest was never in speaking of himself (in fact he abhorred it) but rather in telling others the story of consolation (of which tears were a part). This is why the guiding thread of his autobiography is the Spirit's way of proceeding from his conversion onward. Looking back, he became conscious that this loving companionship brought forth intense tears that he found satisfying because they gave free rein to the life surging within him. They were a gift through which his body expressed the impression made upon it by the love of God.

His body expressed the impression made upon it by the love of God

The 'great flood of tears' (Diary, 18 February 1544) that became greater over the years was not the result of the increasing weakness Ignatius might have experienced in old age, a time when emotions tend to run close to the surface owing to frailty and loss, but was brought about in him by the forcefulness with which infinite, gratuitous and undeniable

[17] Ignatius to Francisco de Borja, 20 September 1548, in St Ignatius of Loyola, *Letters and Instructions*, edited by Martin E. Palmer, John W. Padberg and John L. McCarthy (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2006), 255.

Love was revealed to him: always greater. What followed in the wake of that love was gratitude. Ribadeneira affirmed: 'among all the virtues our Father possessed, the one that especially stood out was that of gratitude, in which he was, it seemed to me, exceptional and admirable'.[18] This, along with praise and reverence, forms an unbeatable combination to confront reality, and tears are pregnant with all three. Ignatius was grateful for them, too; in them God gave him a channel of communication. But at times he did not receive them as he should have done.

Discernment

Letting himself be led by the Spirit helped Ignatius to detect temptations. He recognised that sometimes he had wanted, on the one hand, to hold on to his gifts and, on the other, to identify them solely with the Spirit. He struggled to accept that he was not supposed to absolutise the countless graces he received. He gradually learnt to receive them and to place them at God's service through discernment. He recognised, with disarming humility, his disordered affections in this area, as they appeared in the deliberations on poverty and in the drafting of the *Constitutions*. In both cases, he became obsessed with the search for confirmation for some decision he was making, and prayed constantly, taking note of his tears with this aim in mind—until he realised the trap. Under the appearance of the good (wanting to confirm and purify the election) he put what was more important on the back burner: the will of God, and above all, God's love, which goes above and beyond our compliance. From then on, consolation was no longer contingent on the intensity of tears. This is why he warned his companions against seeking tears indiscriminately, because everything should be subordinated to the greater praise, reverence and service of God.

Gonçalves da Câmara recalled that when the doctor ordered Ignatius not to cry because it would compromise his health, 'having accepted it through obedience, he finds, as often occurs in these matters, that now he receives much more consolation without weeping than he had previously'.[19] He thereby found that the Spirit would continue leading him without tears.

All human reality, tears and sobs included, has to be discerned, because it is subject to ambiguity, temptation and our own desires and

[18] Ribadeneira, *Vida del B. P. Ignacio de Loyola*, 5.2, MHSJ FN 4, 771.
[19] *Remembering Iñigo: Glimpses of the Life of Saint Ignatius of Loyola. The Memoriale of Luís Gonçalves da Câmara*, translated by Alexander Eaglestone and Joseph A. Munitiz (Leominster: Gracewing, 2005), n. 183.

interests. All that Ignatius learnt was reflected in the ninth rule of discernment for the First Week (Exx 322), in which the saint signalled three causes behind desolation: being lukewarm, lazy or negligent; making our greatest service dependent on consolations and 'increased graces'; and attributing devotion, intense love or tears to ourselves. It is hard to accept that 'all these are a gift and grace from God our Lord'.

Compassion

'The first tears that he shed after leaving his own country' were tears of compassion.[20] Some might have thought that the poor man to whom Ignatius had given his clothes had stolen them, and this deeply affected him. Ribadeneira adds to this episode an interesting reflection which he attributes to Ignatius: 'Woe to you sinner, who neither knows nor can do good to your neighbour without causing him harm and affront'.[21] Ignatius failed to grasp the consequences of his selfless act. He was unaware that charity, too, must be discerned. Yet those tears, regardless of his spiritual immaturity, pointed to a naturally generous heart: sensitive and predisposed to the good, with 'great spirit and generosity' (Exx 5).

The occasion was opportune because, on his way to Manresa, a substantial change began to transpire in Ignatius, from being preoccupied with his own sins and perfection, to desiring to please God with greater earnestness. This shift allowed him to bring order to his being 'destined for great things' and his eagerness to help others.[22] It stayed with him, which is why he remembered it. Perhaps that is why compassion, understood as identification with those who suffer, appears at important moments: in the *Spiritual Exercises* in the desire to be together with the crucified one, and 'ask for pain, tears, and suffering with Christ suffering', that is to say, to have having the same feelings as the Lord Jesus (Exx 48); and in the fact of putting at the centre of his vocation 'helping souls' (*Autobiography*, n.45). He put so much value on compassion that Polanco, in his name, wrote to a companion to communicate to him:

> When someone feels compassion for the miseries of the neighbor in the will and the higher part of his soul [and] desires to do what he can to relieve them … he needs no further tears or sensible feelings in the heart.[23]

[20] Laínez, 'Letter to Juan Polanco', n. 6.
[21] Ribadeneira, *Vida del B. P. Ignacio de Loyola*, 1.4, MHSJ FN 4, 107.
[22] Ribadeneira, *Vida del B. P. Ignacio de Loyola*, 1.3, MHSJ FN 4, 99; Polanco, *Life of Ignatius Loyola*, 8.
[23] Ignatius to Nicholas Floris, 22 November 1553, in *Letters and Instructions*, 449.

He understood that tears of compassion were a gift from God that made him sensitive to the suffering of others, including the Lord.

Devotion and acatamiento

In St Ignatius' writings on interior movements, 'devotion' appears frequently alongside tears. Of the 139 times the term is used in the Spiritual Diary, 82 are linked to tears. This is significant considering that it is placed first among the qualities of the superior general of the Society (*Constitutions*, IX.2.1[723]). It is a multifaceted virtue that signifies familiarity and union with God, readiness to serve and ease in finding God: 'every time and hour he wanted to find God, he found him' (*Autobiography*, n.99). The tears and devotion became especially abundant and continuous for St Ignatius in the celebration of Mass; the eucharist was an authentic source of consolation. This makes for a parallelism between the two realities, tears and devotion, in terms of their magnitude and power. Adjectives such as 'most intense', 'enormous', 'abundant', 'very intense', 'much' and so on complete the picture of the force of the experience in both cases. There was no doubt that what Ignatius experienced affected him profoundly in body, soul, action and relationship.

At the same time, between numbers 156 and 188 of the Spiritual Diary, Ignatius introduces a word, *acatamiento*, which he discusses in a brief but significant way. The concept means admiration, contemplation or paying homage. He uses it habitually with two adjectives: 'reverential', referring to his own act of adoration; or 'loving', as a counterpoint to fearful awe. He speaks of the two as the principal criteria that must be meditated in his relation with the Lord: that is to say, in placing himself at the feet of the Lord, to do what the Lord wants, whether or not that be tears and devotion. Doing so, the same loving awe 'always increased my devotion and tears' (Diary, 14 March 1544).

Superabundance

Following the thread of tears leads us to the conclusion that what prevailed within St Ignatius was the experience of being overwhelmed by the disproportion and greatness of what God made possible. Responding, somehow, was the least that he could do. Nothing could compare with what he had received. All the works of the Society of Jesus combined throughout the centuries will never compare what the Spirit wrought in St Ignatius and continues to work through him.

Tears, in his case, are not merely a matter of emotions, nor are they simply one gift among others, for he would not have granted them such a preeminent place otherwise. In his Spiritual Diary, of which some 25 folios remain, one can find nearly 450 references to tears. This document is a faithful record, in which the tears he shed practically every day are noted, most linked with the eucharist—the place of honour where the ever-greater God made Godself especially visible to him. He contemplated the breadth, length and depth of that love, and was left in amazement (compare Ephesians 3:18–19).

Overwhelmed by grace, the founder of the Society of Jesus wanted to leave a record of what he had experienced, which, in his case, manifested itself, among other gifts, through 'many and continuous' tears and 'great sobs'.[24] These became a conspicuous witness to the superabundance of God's love in him and, through him, in us. The apostolic fruitfulness of St Ignatius' work takes root here. He received everything and gave everything. It was not his own possession; it was God's.

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translated by Philip Harrison SJ

[24] Diary, 11 May 1544 and other entries; 14 February 1544.

Theological Trends

ANTHROPOCENTRISM

Good or Bad?

Patrick Riordan

ANYONE INTERESTED in Ignatian spirituality—and perhaps all spirituality—must be concerned about the widespread condemnation of anthropocentrism in theology. The objection seems to be that anthropocentric theology places the human at the centre of thought to the neglect of the rest of creation, animate and inanimate. Perhaps there are good reasons for this suspicion and critique, but if the rejection of anthropocentrism is consistently carried through, does it not undermine a fundamental premise of Ignatian spirituality?

The tradition holds that God deals directly with believers at prayer, leading them into a deeper relationship, and accordingly the exercitant supported by a director pays attention to his or her experience including interior motions. Putting the self at the centre of attention is not to exclude God or the Redeemer or the Sanctifier, but it is the way to discover God's action in one's life. Theocentrism and/or christocentrism are not jeopardized but facilitated and advanced by an appropriate focus on human experience.

Attention to interiority, to lived experience, is essential for spirituality, but is it also suspected of anthropocentrism? Is the focus on human experience jeopardised by the contemporary anxiety about anthropocentrism in theology? I will review the reasons that have led many to join the chorus of condemnation of anthropocentrism and I will sketch the senses in which an appropriate focus on the human is warranted in spirituality and theology.

Lynn White's Thesis

The charge of anthropocentrism against Christian theology was influentially made by Lynn White in a 1967 article, 'The Historical Roots

of Our Ecologic Crisis'.[1] Deliberately provocative, White challenged Christians to reconsider their relationship with the natural world, suggesting that the traditional reading of the creation story had fostered a purely exploitative attitude to nature. The destruction of the planet acknowledged by the emergent environmental movement in the 1960s could be blamed on a flawed theology. White,

> … helped shape the disciplines of the history of religion, ecotheology (now commonly called Religion and Ecology), environmental ethics, ecophilosophy, and environmental history, as well as American environmentalism as a social and intellectual movement.[2]

Among theology's supposed major flaws was anthropocentrism, the view of the human as transcending the rest of nature. Cosmologically privileged, humans were seen in the image of God, not of nature, and so placed in a superior position to the natural world. Humans were deemed divinely authorised to use whatever nature makes available to suit human purposes. White argued further that the great advances in applied science and technology provided this anthropocentric world-view with increased destructive power. The remedy was to rediscover the intrinsic value of nature and leave behind the prejudice that the gifts of nature could be evaluated in terms of their usefulness to humans.

[1] Lynn White, 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis', *Science*, 155 (1967), 1203–1207.

[2] Elspeth Whitney, 'Lynn White Jr's "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis" after Fifty Years', in *Religion and Ecological Crisis: The 'Lynn White Thesis' at Fifty*, edited by Todd LeVasseur and Anna Peterson (New York: Routledge, 2017), 18–32, here 18.

The reception of White's thesis went in two directions. On the one hand were those who accepted and reinforced the view of the destructiveness of human action as animated by a flawed theology. On the other were those who denied that the fault lay with theology, but recovered an acceptable interpretation of the scriptural texts while explaining the misappropriation of Christian doctrine for nefarious purposes.[3] But 'anthropocentrism' seems to remain as a fossil in the language of both parties. Even authors desiring to defend a reading of scripture while hoping to provide theological support for environmental concerns and action declare their ambition to avoid anthropocentrism in their theology.

Pope Francis's Response

In his 2015 encyclical *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis pleads for care for our common home, but insists that the 'cry of the earth' not be separated from 'the cry of the poor'. Genuine human interests are at the heart of the Pope's environmental concerns. The planet in crisis is the home for humankind, and so the sustainability of nature is intimately tied with the prospects for human life. In the encyclical Francis pleads for respect for the intrinsic value of everything, and proposes St Francis of Assisi as the model. In both these respects, then, Pope Francis echoes the appeal of Lynn White in his provocative article. Michael Stoeber notes this connection when he observes: 'In fact, it was White who first proposed Francis "as a patron saint for ecologists", suggesting that he advocated a *species-humility* in relation to other animals—and not merely a personal humility'.[4]

Pope Francis turns to biblical texts and to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to reject what he calls a 'tyrannical' and a 'distorted' anthropocentrism (*Laudato si'*, nn.68, 69). But he allies himself with White's thesis to the extent that he agrees the developments in technology have empowered humanity to do so much harm. Francis identifies the 'technocratic paradigm' (*Laudato si'*, n.101) as a significant mindset that sustains the exploitative behaviours of humankind in relation to

[3] See Ben A. Minteer and Robert E. Manning, 'An Appraisal of the Critique of Anthropocentrism and Three Lesser Known Themes in Lynn White's "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis"', *Organization and Environment*, 18/2 (2005), 163–176.

[4] Michael Stoeber, 'Sacred Groves or Profitable Commodities? Exploring Dispositions toward Our Environment in Interreligious Dialogue', in *Connecting Ecologies: Integrating Responses to the Global Challenge*, edited by Patrick Riordan and Gavin Flood (Abingdon: Routledge, 2024), 154.

its planetary home. He points to the need for a review of common assumptions about the good, appealing for a recognition that being useful (*Laudato si'*, n.69) does not exhaust the meaning of good for humans.[5] He insists there is an intrinsic goodness to be respected in everything that exists. He cites Pope Benedict XVI to stress the alternative vision that the goods of creation, including our common home, are divine gifts to be treasured, and so to be cared for and not abused whether as a resource to be exploited or a dumping site for our waste.

The label 'technocratic paradigm' is proposed as a replacement for 'anthropocentrism'. It appears to be a satisfactory alternative, since it encapsulates the twin concerns animating White's article: the denigration of nature and the goods of nature owing to the posited superiority of the human, reducing the notion of the good to what is useful for human purposes; and the corresponding mindset animating the worlds of technology and the economy. And yet the term anthropocentrism remains in currency, probably to draw attention to the great range of natural realities other than the human.

There is an argument to be made to defend a traditional metaphysics which would consider reality to be hierarchically structured such that humanity could be seen as enjoying a privileged position in the chain of beings in relation to other created orders. But that argument is not being made here. Instead, I want to focus on what is presupposed by any theology, including an ecotheology. The point of this investigation is to show that there is a perfectly legitimate sense in which theology not only is anthropocentric, but must be anthropocentric, even when that theology gives due consideration to the intrinsic goodness of all things, and values animals, plants and inanimate things as creatures of a benevolent God alongside the humans. In what sense, then, must theology be anthropocentric?

Theology not only is anthropocentric, but must be anthropocentric

First, I unpack the four elements of the question: the centre, the human (*anthropos*), the discipline (*logos*), and the divine (*Theos*). Admittedly, the number four is achieved by breaking up the discipline of theology into two elements, the logos (talking), about Theos (God). We begin at the centre.

[5] See Patrick Riordan, 'The Priority of Being Good over Being Useful', *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*, 141 (2019), 1–15.

The Centre

The question is about the seeming danger of anthropocentrism in the discipline of theology. From the label we might expect that the problem is that the discipline is centred on the *anthropos*, the human. The immediate philosophical question, then, is to ask in what sense is the element of 'centre' in the suffix intended? Two possibilities come to mind immediately. Assuming that any discipline has its practitioners and its field of exploration, which we might for convenience label the subject and the object, is anthropocentrism identifying a problem regarding the subject of the discipline or its object? There are good reasons to begin with the subjects of the discipline. Any *-ology* is a speaking about some object, but the speaking in question is without exception done by humans. Science is human speaking about some topic.

The Copernican revolution in the history of human scientific activity was the acceptance that the earth is not the centre of the solar system but is one of several planets revolving around the sun—that is, a shift from a geocentric to a heliocentric model of the solar system as providing a better explanation of observed phenomena. Any subsequent talk of centre or *-centrism* invokes this history and this image of the replacement of the earth by the sun in our modelling of reality.

When, in later centuries, Immanuel Kant formulated as critical philosophy the need to establish the limits of the powers of reason before tackling any metaphysical or theological question, he hinted at a revolution similar to that achieved by Copernicus. Many commentators saw the point of the comparison as the reversal of the *-centric* position: where formerly the sun replaced the earth, now the knowing subject replaced the known object. But there is no reversal required to maintain the comparison: in Kant's own words, in both cases it is a matter of looking 'for the observed movements not in the objects of the heavens but in their observer'.[6]

Norman Kemp Smith, the renowned translator of Kant, explicitly used the term 'anthropocentric' to explain what Kant was attempting: 'His aim is nothing less than the firm establishment of what may perhaps be described as a Ptolemaic anthropocentric metaphysic'.[7] The point of

[6] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, preface, B22, translated by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, rev. edn (Cambridge: Cambridge U, 2025), 77.

[7] Norman Kemp Smith, 'The Meaning of Kant's Copernican Analogy', *Mind*, 22/88 (1913), 549–551, here 549.

Kant's comparison is that as the explanation of the apparent movement of the sun and stars about the observer is to be found in the movement of the apparently static observer, so also the constitution of possible objects of science is to be discovered in the operations of the knower.

With the critical turn, every discipline requires of its practitioners that they can give an account of how they know what they claim to know. In other words, any and every discipline needs to be anthropocentric to the extent of attending reflectively to the conditions of human knowing. It is not an objection to point out that science is conducted by scientists, and that their products (hypotheses, conclusions, theories) are their constructs. But scientists who are unaware of these facts and fail to take account of their standpoint, methods and operations fail to be critical.

A relevant image is that of a climber who has reached a mountain peak that affords a view of the horizon. The standpoint of the viewer conditions what can be seen. Indeed, the viewer stands in the centre of a landscape, with a 360-degree view of his or her surroundings. Depending on the height of the peak, and how elevated it is above nearby mountains, the horizon surveyed will be near or far. Whatever the standpoint might happen to be, the object the climber views can be vast. Being centred somewhere conditions the view of the object, but it doesn't take away from the scale or vastness or magnificence of the scene viewed. It is unlikely, therefore, that anthropocentrism can be a valid criticism of any discipline.

Logos

Words ending in *-ology*, such as *theology*, *methodology*, *anthropology*, *psychology* and *sociology*, indicate a reliance on talking (from *logos*, the Greek for word, and also for reason and reasoned speech). The talking claims to be disciplined, within the accepted constraints of a community of qualified practitioners or exponents. Scientific communities are not distinguished by widespread agreement—on the contrary, they engage in disagreement, but in a structured way, so that the identification of relevant evidence, the formulation of hypotheses and the construction of arguments are all in conformity with established procedures. An *-ology* is structured, disciplined talk about some topic that, ideally, is prepared to give an account of its premises, presuppositions, procedures and operations.

In several humanistic disciplines there is notable disagreement about these premises, presuppositions, procedures and operations. The labels modernist, postmodernist, deconstructionist, structuralist, Marxist, critical-realist and others point to significant debates about method.

All the more reason, then, that any practitioner of a discipline be prepared to provide an account of his or her method.

It cannot be a sufficient account when a scholar is challenged about method to suggest that the literature sets up the question this way, defines the terms this way, and discusses the issues this way. 'I play the game that they play' does not answer the question as to whether the offside rule contributes to a good functioning of the sport of football, or whether it can be consistently implemented by referees. Similarly, in a scientific community, the appeal to fashion or convention is not an answer to a request for a reasonable account. The question as to why ecotheology must reject anthropocentrism is not answered by saying that all ecotheologians agree. Do they have good reasons for their agreement, or do they suffer from groupthink?

Anthropomorphism

To illustrate the concern with self-critique and accountability, consider the dangers of anthropomorphism and related tendencies. Anthropomorphism is used to label a danger in a discipline—for instance, in zoology—when the behaviour of non-humans is described in terms appropriate to humans, with the implication that there are similar psychological processes, such as emotions, imaginings, anticipations, going on in them to those that go on in humans. The renowned television presenter of nature programmes David Attenborough is not shy of anthropomorphism in his commentaries: he has helped viewers feel compassion for the mother polar bear who worries how she might raise her cubs as the ice floes disappear from the sea.

The danger of anthropomorphism in theology has been recognised from the beginning of philosophical reflection on the language we use when speaking about God. Xenophanes of Colophôn, writing about 530 BC, left us with this fragment:

> But if horses or oxen or lions had hands or could draw with their hands and accomplish such works as men, horses would draw the figures of the gods as similar to horses, and the oxen as similar to oxen, and they would make the bodies of the sort which each of them had.[8]

Long before Ludwig Feuerbach wrote about God as the projection of humanity, ancient Greeks were aware of the problem of projection, which we now might label anthropomorphism: putting a human shape on imagined gods. Or imagining gods as modelled on humans.

The medieval scholastics, Aquinas to the fore, were also aware of these dangers, and attempted to avoid them with their method of analogical predication in three steps. The way of affirmation: some perfection known to humans, such as reason, is attributed to God. Second, the way of negation: aspects of the perfection as experienced in humans are denied of God. And third, the way of eminence: what then is affirmed of God combines from the earlier steps something seemingly paradoxical: a mover who is unmoved, a knower who never learns. This medieval method reflected the double reality of the inevitability that human knowing would be human and could only proceed from human experience; and at the same time the method reflected the acknowledged danger of projection, of anthropomorphism. The danger persists also in our time that we project into our image or concept of God something we would wish to see there, but for which there are not reasonable grounds beyond the sincerity of our wishes.

Theos

The *topos*, or topic, of any discipline is provided by the first part of the label. Theology is disciplined talk about God; anthropology is disciplined talk about the human. Of course, the boundaries of any

[8] Xenophanes of Colophon, *Fragments*, translated by James Lesher (Toronto: U. of Toronto, 1992), fragment 15. And see James Lesher, 'Xenophanes', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, at https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2023/entries/xenophanes/.

discipline's topic are not clearly given with the label. Anthropology is not alone in being concerned with the human: many other disciplines—including theology—involve talk about human realities in a scientific, structured way.

As with any discipline, theology must pay attention to how questions are formulated, with what procedures they are pursued, what the relevance of possible answers might be and what material and intellectual resources are required. These questions are typically addressed to the practitioner of the discipline and enquire about the stance taken, which may have to be defended. They are issues of method, usually addressed under the heading of methodology. This is where I locate my question: is it appropriate to bracket out anthropocentrism when engaging in ecotheology? What is intended by the exclusion and what alternative is envisaged?

Method in theology raises particular questions for the practitioner. This is because among the data in theology are judgments and beliefs and commitments that are only accessible to a believer. The stance of the practitioner in terms of his or her own convictions and decisions is what makes the difference between religious studies and theology. Bernard Lonergan has argued this case in his *Method in Theology*, where he acknowledges that not all of the specialisations that make up the discipline require attention to the faith stance of the theologian.[9] But for four of the eight distinctive specialisations that he distinguishes, the theologian must take into account his or her own commitment since that is determinative of the matter being discussed.

The student of religious rituals can describe how Christians have a rite of initiation involving the pouring of water, which Christians understand in terms of cleansing or forgiveness of sins. But the believer can affirm that baptism joins the neophyte to the Christian community and initiates a relationship with Jesus the Christ. The student of religion can report on what Christians understand; the theologian proposes an understanding of what the theologian holds to be true. Where the practitioner of any discipline must be sufficiently self-aware to be self-critical, and to be alive to the dangers of bias, prejudice, partiality, incoherence and inconsistency, theologians must also attend

[9] *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, volume 14, *Method in Theology*, edited by Robert M. Doran and John D. Dadosky (Toronto: Toronto U, 2017).

to their own faith convictions and commitments. In a double sense, then, theology must be anthropocentric, in attending to the speaker of the theo-logos as well as to the object of the discourse. There will be more below on the distinction between speaker and object.

Theology

The opening question was about anthropocentrism in theology. Theology is disciplined talk about God. Not all religious language qualifies as theology, although most religious language will have an implicit theology. There is no theology other than human theology: humans speaking about God. As noted above, in the disciplined reflection on theological speech it has long been recognised that anthropomorphism is a real danger, and theology has taken steps to avoid the danger. This and related dangers have warranted a heightened attention to the prejudices that can creep into theology because of the filtering by the preconditions of the theologians, shaped by their circumstances.

Hence liberation theology, black theology, feminist theology, queer theology and other streams of theological reflection have emerged from the need to liberate theological speech from the domination of a particular mindset. As theologies, they in turn are challenged to avoid the introduction of new prejudices and distortions. Is ecotheology also engaged in a similar overcoming of restricted filters? This variety of theology is warranted in focusing attention on the doers of theology. To the extent that it draws attention to the limitations of (human) theologians, it is anthropocentric. Like the climber on the mountain peak, it pays attention to what may be restricting its view, whether that be an oxygen mask and goggles, a rocky promontory or a nearby mountain; but its main focus is on the horizon, the panorama of earth and perhaps sea spread out around. Being at the centre and caring about the standpoint does not diminish the extent of the circumference or the distance of the horizon.

For the theologian, God is the horizon, in the sense of being both object of his or her attention and also the limit of his or her aspiration, since there is with this particular discipline the acknowledgement that human knowing in this life cannot comprehend the mystery that is God. Sources for what can be known and said about God are usually accepted among theologians: scriptural texts, church doctrine, philosophical clarification and the classical literature from history.

Spirituality

The concern motivating me here is that the currently popular demonization of anthropocentrism in theology should not be allowed to infect the field of spirituality, both as practice and as disciplined reflection. The danger of cross-contamination arises as people respond to *Laudato si'*. The perennially valid aspect of the focus on the human is central to any spirituality that takes seriously the experiences of people and especially the interior movements by which the will of God is discerned. Perhaps the anxiety is exaggerated and the concern misplaced? The pervasiveness of the rebuke of anthropocentrism gives me no ground for thinking so.

In a collection of responses to the challenge of *Laudato si'* that I edited recently, not only are significant resonances from other world religions documented, but a number of authors explicitly address the need for a renewed spirituality.[10] Responding to Francis's call for a change of behaviour towards the world of nature, they see his encyclical as a summons to conversion, an invitation to discover a different spirituality that might ground a change of mindset and revise expectations of what is possible. Attentiveness to the world around us must be heightened, and our faculties of imagination and intellect must be freed from the influence of the technocratic paradigm. This dynamic of conversion should be a reorientation of the heart and of the spirit. The Pope's challenge addresses the interior resources of spirituality and theology, epistemology and world-view. These are primarily spiritual, and they name dimensions that are not merely personal but communal, constituting the shared meanings that underlie all our cooperation.

Douglas Christie appeals for a renewed spirituality.[11] Reflecting on a gathering for Vespers in a monastic setting he notes the impact of silence and reflection in learning to see and to feel the presence of God in everything and everyone, and at the same time, the heightened sense of vulnerability linked to the awareness of what was lost. Before an ecological spirituality might motivate a 'passionate concern for the protection of our world' (*Laudato si'*, n.216) it would have to be adopted and lived to an extent that persons would become mystics, their daily

[10] *Connecting Ecologies: Integrating Responses to the Global Challenge*, edited by Patrick Riordan and Gavin Flood (Abingdon: Routledge, 2024).
[11] Douglas E. Christie. 'Vespers: Contemplative Ecology and the Common Life', in *Connecting Ecologies*, 122–140.

awareness saturated with the divine milieu and their sensitivity to loss and vulnerability opening them to the precarity of life.

The vulnerability in question here is not simply an awareness of the fragility of living beings, but the observer's vulnerability in being sensitive to the pain and loss of the other. Christie recounts his sense of loss for the forests that have gone and the indigenous peoples who once inhabited them in the same place where now the monastic community lives and prays. The community's contemplative work is a critical dimension of the contemporary effort to respond to the living world with spiritual and ethical depth and integrity. The cultivation of such awareness requires a radical rethinking of our place in the world, and a relinquishing of long-held ideas of subjectivity, agency and control.

A Canadian contributor, Michael Stoeber, responding to Pope Francis's apostolic exhortation 'Querida Amazonia' following the 2020 Pan-Amazon Synod of Bishops, bemoans the tragedy facing the Amazonian region via a meditation on the exploitation and destruction of the white pine forests of eastern north America.[12] The depletion of this once thriving ecosystem and the loss of the indigenous peoples who lived sustainably in it provides a parable for what is happening in the Amazon rainforest. The commercial exploitation of the trees is contrasted with an appreciative contemplation of their beauty. A sense of appreciation and valuing is essential for the recovery of an

[12] Stoeber, 'Sacred Groves or Profitable Commodities?' 141–164.

integral ecology, and will not be achieved without the help of such meditations.

Stoeber affirms the need for aesthetic and artistic and literary stimulus to help people attain the perspective that would ground an integral ecology. Like Christie, Stoeber looks for resources in the traditions of spirituality and considers also those found in indigenous cultures. He advocates engagement through a process of interreligious dialogue as a contribution to developing an integral ecology that appreciates the interconnection of all things.

Appropriate Anthropocentrism

There is an appropriate anthropocentrism in any discipline to the extent that practitioners must be self-critical in their use of language and choice of method, and accountable in terms of their scientific procedures. The legitimate anthropocentrism I wish to defend might be labelled epistemological, since it is concerned with the conditions for knowledge. This is helpfully distinguished from two other kinds of anthropocentrism: metaphysical, whereby the entire material creation is asserted to be for human benefit; and normative or ethical anthropocentrism, whereby only humans and their interests are deemed to warrant moral consideration.

This distinction is borrowed from the work of Robin Attfield, a noted environmental ethicist.[13] It is helpful in clarifying the precise point I wish to make about the conditions of our knowing anything. Beyond the general remark applicable to any discipline, there is a specific concern for the practitioners of disciplines such as theology and spirituality, since their own personal experience, faith convictions and ecclesial commitments are among the constitutive elements of what is to be studied.

Pope Francis's critique of the technocratic paradigm captures what might be plausible in the condemnation of anthropocentrism, the reassertion of the priority of being over doing, the insistence on the intrinsic goodness of all beings, and the warning of the dangers of technology. The appeal for an adequate spirituality commensurate

[13] Robin Attfield, 'Social History, Religion and Technology: An Interdisciplinary Investigation into White's "Roots"', in *Anthropocentrism: Humans, Animals, Environments*, edited by Rob Boddice (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 281–306. I am grateful to my colleagues Dr Timothy Howles and Dr Tim Middleton for drawing the distinction to my attention.

with the extent of the conversion called for in *Laudato si'* underlines how a renewed concentration on the interiority and experience of persons sharing our common home is required. Not an abandonment of focus on the human, but an enriched reflection on human experience is a necessary condition of an integral ecotheology. Spirituality is key, but it is jeopardized by a naïve adoption of the critique of anthropocentrism.

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From the Archive

'GLIMPSES OF HEAVEN UPON EARTH'

Teresa White

APART FROM BREATHING AND SLEEPING, most of the things we need to do in order to keep ourselves alive and healthy demand energy, even, at times, a struggle: feeding and clothing ourselves, washing ourselves and cleaning our homes, taking exercise, making ends meet. The relentless daily repetition of routine chores can render aspects of our lives tedious, especially for those of us who have to count the pennies. It is heartening to realise that, if we are prepared to face the banal reality of the human journey, unwilled change begins to happen. The message of poets and artists is perennial and undeniable: the extraordinary can strike us in the midst of the most ordinary situations and occupations; an extraordinary thought can come into the mind, unbidden, when we are contemplating the most mundane objects.

Reflecting on this interplay between the ordinary and the extraordinary, little by little, the believer becomes aware that it is the Spirit of God who helps us to look beyond outward appearances; we learn to see unexpected interconnections, hear deeper resonances, in what happens to us. As this awareness sharpens, we find the monotony of the everyday broken by what Seamus Heaney calls 'glimpses of heaven upon earth'.[1] If we open our ears, we can hear amid the sounds of nature and restless human activity the music, sometimes sad, sometimes joyous, of life being lived. If we open our hearts and minds, soul-stirring insights will sometimes come to us.

John V. Taylor once said that Jesus, filled with the Spirit, 'saw all commonplace things with an artist's intensity of apprehension'.[2] To be met by the Spirit, liberating us, helping us to grow, is to enter the

[1] Seamus Heaney, 'Secular and Millennial Milosz', in *Finders Keepers: Selected Prose, 1971–2001* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 445.
[2] John V. Taylor, *The Go-Between God: Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission* (Oxford: Oxford U, 1979), 93.

eternal Now, where things are no longer dull or humdrum or uniform. When our eyes, like the artist's, are purified, we see that everything shines with a beautiful light that is all its own. In that light, the colour, shape, texture and structure of created things, aspects of those things which, in the seeming chaos and jumble of existence, had previously escaped us, become more clearly visible. And we begin not only to see things differently, but also to hear sounds we had not noticed before. When our ears are unblocked, harmonies and rhythms beyond our imagining are discerned. Our eyes catch only glimpses of heaven, our ears only snatches of the melodies of the divine, but these glimpses and snatches summon us to look with pure eyes, to listen attentively, lest we should unwittingly neglect 'the many-splendoured thing' of Francis Thompson's poem, with our lives the poorer as a result.

This awareness of the divine in ordinary daily life was especially marked in Madeleine Delbrêl, a twentieth-century French convert from atheism who became a respected Roman Catholic author, poet and mystic. Delbrêl was born in 1904, and her early years were spent in Mussidan, a town in the department of Dordogne (part of the historic province of Gascony; Madeleine always proudly referred to herself as a true 'Gasconne') in south-western France. Her middle-class parents were determinedly agnostic, and religion held little importance in the upbringing of their precociously intelligent daughter. Over a period of about fifteen years, the family moved to different parts of France, owing to Monsieur Delbrêl's numerous promotions in the upper echelons of the French railway service. For this reason, and also because Madeleine suffered from delicate health throughout her childhood, she never attended a regular school. Instead, her parents arranged for her to receive individual tuition at home. In the course of the family migrations, she met one or two priests who appear to have awakened her dormant faith. One of these prepared her for her first communion at the age of twelve, and a short period of religious fervour followed.

It was not long, however, before the adolescent Madeleine succumbed to secular influences. In later years she declared that, at fifteen, she was a 'strict' atheist. Even at this young age, however, it was clear that she was naturally philosophical, and her musings on life led her to see the world as increasingly 'absurd'. When she was seventeen, the family moved to Paris, where she began attending philosophy lectures at the Sorbonne and soon became deeply involved in the intellectual life of the French capital.

At the age of twenty, she underwent what she herself and those who knew her regarded as an astonishing conversion. In spite of her love of logical reasoning, in spite of her questioning nature and her strong rejection of faith and the trappings of religion, the conversion of this articulate young non-believer was not primarily intellectual. Her own words, simple yet profound, point to the mystical depth of her experience: 'By reading and reflecting, I found God; but by praying I *believed* that God found me and that he is a living reality, and that we can love him in the same way that we can love a person'.[3] These words do not simply mirror the enthusiasm of a recent convert. Those who knew her testified that the vibrancy of this initial encounter remained with her for the rest of her life. For her, Christian faith was an all-or-nothing endeavour, a covenantal relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and her desire was to proclaim 'God's eternal newness' (235) by her words and in her life.

After her conversion, Madeleine thought seriously of entering Carmel, but she was an only child, and she saw that her mother needed her. Instead, she discerned and followed another vocation: to live among the 'gens des rues' (people of the streets) in a tough Paris suburb. Not only was her inner vision clear and uncluttered, but her ear, too, was attuned to the silent music of the people around her. She lived by faith, which she described in *We, the Ordinary People of the Streets*, as 'the science of eternal realities … the art of knowing how to do God's will' (176). Faith, she held, is given to us in order that we might 'choose God with human acts' (177). She recognised and consciously entered what she called 'the poverty of a banal life'.[4] In

Madeleine Delbrêl

[3] Madeleine Delbrêl, *We, the Ordinary People of the Streets*, translated by David Louis Schindler (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 10 (subsequent references in the text).
[4] Madeleine Delbrêl, *The Joy of Believing*, translated by Ralph Wright (Sherbrooke: Paulines, 1993), 40.

the predominantly Marxist Paris suburb of Ivry-sur-Seine, where she lived (as a member of an experimental community of professional women, founded by herself after her conversion) from the mid-1930s until her death in 1964, her desire was simply to be present, unassumingly and unobtrusively, among her poor and working-class neighbours in that depressing *banlieue*. She wrote:

> Set out on your journey without preconceived ideas and without anticipated weariness, without a plan for God, or even a memory of him; leave without enthusiasm, without a library as you go to meet him …. Let yourself be formed by him in the poverty of a banal life.[5]

She grew to love her near neighbours and, from personal experience, discovered the truth so beautifully expressed in a line from the musical *Les Misérables*: 'To love another person is to see the face of God'.[6] Making no conscious effort to see ordinary human life against a background of the transcendent, she believed that the divine comes alive in us in the kindness of care, given and received, in sharing what we have, however little that may be, and in gratitude for small, unexpected, unmerited gifts offered to us. Madeleine Delbrêl was a prolific writer, and she gradually became involved in the major social, political, cultural and religious movements of twentieth-century France. But she is remembered, above all, for her solidarity with those who lived in her own neighbourhood, for her sensitive and loving concern for the people she met in the streets and the cafés, in the metro and on the buses of Paris.

Madeleine was prepared to face the banality of the everyday without flinching and without looking for an escape. In doing so, she came alive not only to the people of her drab neighbourhood, but also to the reality of herself, to her responsibilities in society, local and worldwide, and to the glory and tragedy of the world in which we all live and move and have our being. She learnt that we need one another in order to become ourselves. Above all, she came alive to the scriptures and the life of prayer, alive to the presence of Jesus Christ and to the vast, all-encompassing joy of God. She believed that the Christian life 'must be lived in the immediate, in the moment, in the particular' (177). And so, instead of passively accepting life in the dreary streets

[5] Delbrêl, *Joy of Believing*, 39–40.
[6] Alain Boublil and Claude-Michel Schönberg, *Les Misérables*, English lyrics by Herbert Kretzmer.

of Ivry-sur-Seine, she embraced the hard grind of that life, discerned its hidden beauty, perceived its inaudible music. Without setting out to do so, she embodied the message of Christ, and became a source of hopefulness in a town that believed it had rejected Christian values.

Madeleine Delbrêl died not long before the end of Vatican II, but in the way she thought about and lived her Christian faith she anticipated that Council's spirit of openness to the presence of God in all human affairs. She may never have read the Pastoral Constitution on 'The Church in the World' *(Gaudium et spes)*, in which the Church consciously put itself at the service of humanity, but her personal theology and approach to Christian living were solidly based on the principles contained in that document. She saw the mission of the Church as being in engagement with the world rather than anti-Modernist estrangement from it, which had been so strongly emphasized by the Roman Catholic Magisterium in the early years of the twentieth century. She would doubtless have agreed with John V. Taylor:

The mission of the Church as being in engagement with the world

> Christian activity will be very much the same as the world's activity—earning a living, bringing up a family, making friends, having fun, celebrating occasions, farming, manufacturing, trading, building cities, healing sickness, alleviating distress, mourning, studying, exploring, making music, and so on.[7]

The difference is, the same author continues, that 'Christians will try to do these things for the glory of God', sustained by their common faith in Jesus Christ, by the 'communion' that brings them together as God's people.[8] Madeleine would have shared that view, too. She believed that life in the Spirit is essentially human and 'worldly', that what matters is not what the Church does as the Church, but what Christians do as human beings, both individually and collectively.

Instead of becoming dispirited and demoralised by her surroundings, Madeleine was filled with the Spirit, led by the Spirit. She sought and found meaning in the ordinariness and untidiness of the human journey. Her life was changed by being with poor and powerless people, and she became aware of a depth of tenderness and compassion in herself she had not known she possessed. 'We are', she wrote, 'destined for the eternal love of God. But we can only come to this love in our

[7] Taylor, *Go-Between God*, 135.
[8] Taylor, *Go-Between God*, 135.

Madeleine Delbrêl's home in Ivry-sur-Seine

human life, in the time that belongs to us and others, in the world here and now.' (177) A promise kept, a hand raised in greeting or squeezed in solidarity or genuine sympathy, an affectionate glance, a sincere word of unqualified praise—these common marks of human companionship not only touch us but can somehow put us in touch with the God beyond ourselves and our immediate concerns. It is the Spirit who moves us to do these things.

After the baptism by John, we are told in the Gospels that Jesus, before beginning his public ministry, 'was led by the Spirit' into the wilderness. Although the wilderness episode, as it has come down to us in the gospel accounts, is anything but banal or monotonous, the phrase 'was led by the Spirit' is the origin of the phenomenon which, in theological circles, is sometimes called 'the divine passive'. Interestingly, even in non-religious language, we often refer using the passive voice to things, people, events and words that affect us deeply without any conscious word or action on our part. It seems to be a familiar human experience to 'be drawn' to see things differently, to 'be called' to do things we never imagined we could do. It can happen that suddenly we find ourselves comforted, cheered, touched, stirred, changed, encouraged, enthused, inspired. These moments are perhaps what the Jewish Midrashim (collections of homilies) describe as 'divine sparkles', by which God's people are illuminated from within.

In the Christian tradition, it is the Holy Spirit who transmits and bestows these 'sparkles of the divine', who awakens us to the radiance of God. In the Sequence for the feast of Pentecost, we ask the Spirit to act on what is passive in us: 'Lava quod est sordidum' (*wash what is soiled*), 'Riga quod est aridum' (*irrigate what is dried up*), 'Sana quod est saucium' (*heal what is injured*), 'Flecte quod est rigidum' (*make flexible what is hard-hearted*), 'Fove quod est frigidum' (*warm what is frozen*), 'Recte quod est devium' (*make straight what is false-hearted*).

'Blackbird Comes', written by my brother Ian, poetically captures the role of the Spirit in moving us from passivity to vitality, from banality to freshness.

> In the kitchen, at the back of the house,
> The voice of the News is speaking. Muted
> But unignorable, it reaches me
> In the cool gloom of this room at the front,
> Delivering its latest summary
> Of misfortune, mischief, and misery.
>
> Meanwhile (noting how many are feared dead,
> How many more starving, homeless), I spy
> A blackbird in a flooded roof-gutter,
> Taking a dip, after the rain. Handsome
> He is, sparkling up there in the sunlight—
> A prince, flinging wet diamonds about!
>
> O unguessable God, somehow I guess
> You do not deal out suffering, loading
> This one down with sorrow, leaving that one
> Carefree. But, still, suffering is; and since
> You never have been one for explaining,
> Happy I am that Blackbird comes, shining.
>
> Happy I am—for me and for all those
> The radio will not let me ignore—
> To see him frolic in the sun. Blackbird:
> Explaining nothing, while he yet proclaims,
> With a glitter or raindrops from his wings,
> The divinity at the heart of things![9]

When we are caught up in the banality that is intrinsic to every human life, the Spirit offers, not constant companionship, but fleeting

[9] Ian White, 'Blackbird Comes', *Review for Religious*, 54/5 (September–October 1995), 722.

'glimpses of heaven', sudden flashes of inspiration, bright but ephemeral 'sparkles' of God. Glimpses and flashes and sparkles are by definition transient: they come and go. But though they do not stay with us all the time, they influence our thoughts and words and actions, they shape our lives. What Abraham Heschel wrote of Awe (one of the gifts attributed to the Spirit of God in the Old Testament) is also true of the sure signs of the presence of the Spirit in our lives of which Madeleine Delbrêl became conscious in her unprepossessing Paris suburb: they enable us,

> … to perceive in the world intimations of the divine, to sense in small things the beginnings of infinite significance, to sense the ultimate in the common and the simple; to feel in the rush of the passing the stillness of the eternal.[10]

They also encourage us to stay alert and mindful, to keep our eyes and ears open, in the hope, in the knowledge that, when the time is right, the gentle or challenging Spirit, 'finger of God's right hand', will touch us again.

Teresa White fcJ, who died in November 2025, belonged to the Faithful Companions of Jesus. A former teacher, she spent many years in the ministry of spirituality at Katherine House, a retreat and conference centre run by her congregation in Salford.

[10] Abraham Heschel, *Who is Man?* (Stanford: Stanford U, 1965), 89.

CONFRONTING THE ABUSE CRISIS IN THE CHURCH

The Contribution of Ignatian Spirituality

Patrick Goujon

WITHIN EVERY SPIRITUAL FAMILY in the Church, whether a diocese or a religious order, abuses of power and sexual aggression occur. No one is exempt. Ignatius alerts us in the *Spiritual Exercises* to how 'the leader of all the enemy … summons uncountable devils, disperses some to one city and others to another, and thus throughout the whole world, without missing any provinces, places, states, or individual persons' (Exx 140–141). Any departure from this spiritual premise would be an act of pride. The Jesuits also have their share of abusers, to be found in their colleges, in their spiritual direction sessions, in their confessionals and even in the very formation of the Society of Jesus itself.

It is vital to realise that such abuses and aggressions are not isolated cases, as has been demonstrated by numerous studies.[1] If they have multiplied and resulted in an untold number of victims, the usual reasoning suggests that this is because the institution has prioritised aggressors over victims in order to protect its 'reputation'. This protection is unjust and complicit in the violence perpetuated against the victims, and it is part of the scandal borne by the institution. It offers undue impunity to the aggressors but, above all, it aggravates the harm done to the victims. The just determination of the perpetrator's guilt is one of the conditions that must be met for the victim to be able to recognise that he or she is not responsible for the harm done. One of the Society's current slogans is the promotion of justice, through which we are called to address, above all, what touches upon justice, that social institution which allows us to make progress towards the Kingdom of God.

[1] See for example the reports presented by the Church in the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and France.

It is to be hoped that Ignatian spirituality can contribute to the prevention of abuses and aggressions in the Church today. The whole of the Church is called to a transformation of the images through which it perceives itself as acting in favour of the other, or 'helping souls'. As a consequence, it is necessary to have a clear idea of how to live pastoral relationships, to regulate our practices and to subject ourselves to a theological debate about their basis. We have to be particularly attentive in the area of Ignatian spirituality. We shall start with this first point.

Fertile ground for abuse has been created by certain ways of conceiving of spiritual direction and by some errors with respect to our understanding of obedience. But the model of pastoral relationships proposed by the *Spiritual Exercises* is completely distinct. The relationship between the one making the exercises, God and the one giving the exercises is precisely defined by an encounter with the mystery of God within the consciousness of each person, in such a way that, for Ignatius, it delimits a space which has to be absolutely respected. We leave in the hands of the reader the task of evaluating, each in his or her own context, the pastoral practices within his or her competence in the light of these Ignatian principles.

Being Aware of the Risks

An ecclesial culture for the prevention of abuses of power and sexual aggression must begin by identifying the risks.[2] An independent analysis of the Society's practices would be extremely useful today. We begin, therefore, by recalling what in our tradition has permitted the development of something we might well call a culture of abuse. By that we do not mean that all Jesuits behave like abusers, nor that one of the objectives of the Society of Jesus has been to cause harm. But certain conceptions of what it means to be educated and to conduct spiritual direction can lead to behaviours in which another person is not respected in his or her conscience or body, as if spiritual growth authorised coercion and control. That does not mean subjecting Jesuits

[2] Hans Zollner and the Institute of Anthropology: Interdisciplinary Studies on Human Dignity and Care that he directs emphasize this point: https://iadc.unigre.it/academics.html. See also this initiative of the Jesuit Curia: https://www.jesuits.global/2024/01/25/society-of-jesus-launches-comprehensive-safeguarding-training-programme/.

to historical judgment, but trying to understand what has led to abuse in pastoral relationships.[3]

It is enough to delve into the history of a religious tradition to discover elements that still belong to the present of the institution, but simultaneously other practices and conceptions belonging to previous eras that, on occasion, have already disappeared. In 1995, the 34th Jesuit General Congregation presented a revised edition of the Jesuit *Constitutions* with some sections abrogated. This renewal, which drove the promulgation of the Complementary Norms, was one of the fruits of the *aggiornamento* taken up by the Second Vatican Council.

Some confusing points that were factors contributing to abuse were clarified, such as the mandatory distinction between confessor and superior. One of the crucial points was obedience. The generations of Jesuits who had lived through the Second World War and those who had entered at the beginning of the 1950s no longer wanted the rules to oblige them to act against their conscience.[4] The trauma of servile obedience given by both military and civilians to totalitarian and fascist regimes raised questions about the evangelical meaning of religious obedience.

The Society tackled the question head on, maintaining the vow of obedience and clarifying its evangelical meaning. The Complementary Norms were drafted to recover the spirit of the Society, through a faithfulness to the *Constitutions* adapted to the times in which we live. These norms abolished the Rules, which had prevailed for many centuries.[5] While these had the practical advantage of being an aide-memoire they had contributed to a change in the spirit of the Society. Obedience consisted in subjecting oneself to rules, whereas the *Constitutions*

[3] Permit me to refer to two of my own writings: *Counsels of the Holy Spirit: A Reading of St Ignatius's Letters*, translated by Joseph A. Munitiz (Dublin: Messenger, 2021); *Les Politiques de l'âme. Jésuites et direction spirituelle en France à l'époque moderne* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2019); and see my testimony in *Precarious: A Survivor of Clerical Abuse Remembers*, translated by Joseph A. Munitiz (Washington, DC: Georgetown U, 2024).

[4] In France, the spiritual currents of resistance led by Gaston Fessard, Henri de Lubac and many others following in the wake of the journal *Témoignage Chrétien* contributed to a profound renewal in relation to obedience and freedom of conscience. Similar instances exist throughout Europe and spread to other continents in subsequent decades, including Latin America, with the support of Jesuits dedicated to the poor and the liberation movement under military dictatorships, as well as Africa and Asia. An investigation into the forms of resistance within the Society of Jesus in the twentieth century would be worthwhile.

[5] St Ignatius invited rules to be established by superiors for individuals and institutions that would apply the spirit of the *Constitutions* to particular contexts, and be regularly reviewed. He also wrote a number of rules of his own for different situations. However many of the rules that had been handed down had become ossified and thus were no longer fulfiling the purpose for which the were intended. [Ed.]

demanded an obedience of judgment, which required discernment. The *Constitutions* presuppose a long period of learning a 'way of proceeding' which imprints on every Jesuit a *habitus* from which he makes his decisions, in accordance with the form of life of the Institute.[6]

For Ignatius and his first companions, the execution of an order was an impoverished understanding of the obedience owed in the Society of Jesus, since obedience demanded the adoption of the superior's point of view, which is to say, learning to abandon one's own perspective to enter into a more general vision.[7] The obedience of judgment is an opportunity for spiritual self-improvement, in line with the offering of self in the Exercises and religious consecration. The execution of an order may not require anything of the kind: one can obey, but remain fiercely opposed to what is ordered.

When the Rules replaced the *Constitutions,* the focus shifted from rules for decision-making, in the Thomistic sense of prudence, to rules to be followed blindly, an expression borrowed from the *Constitutions* but in this case subject to misunderstanding. The Rules undoubtedly appeared when the membership of the Society had multiplied to such an extent that there was a need to govern a large contingent of barely adult men. Over the centuries, obedience was reduced to only one of its original aspects: an institutional discipline to manage a global organization.

Within the Jesuits, this gave rise to a culture that understood all relationships in terms of the dichotomy of superior and subordinate, with a propensity to find spiritual justification in a conception of obedience based on God giving orders to human beings. This conception found strong support in the Tridentine ecclesiology and later in the Ultramontanism of the nineteenth century, both of which transformed the priest into an intermediary, if not the representative, of sacred authority. Since this principle of subordination governed the whole life of the Jesuits, at least in theory and in the self-image that they wanted to present, it was reproduced in all aspects of their pastoral relations, and therefore in education and in spiritual direction. This does not mean that nothing good was achieved, nor that there were not great

[6] See János Lukács, *Ignatian Formation: The Inspiration of the Formation* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2017).

[7] On this point see especially *Constitutions*, VI. 1.C [550]. We will soon refer to the concise article by Herbert Alphonso in *Diccionario de espiritualidad ignaciana* (Bilbao: Mensajero, 2007). But a history of obedience in the Society in the twentieth century remains to be written.

spiritual masters or educators, but rather that obedience to the spiritual father, the teacher and the confessor was the prerequisite for all relationships. This framework easily permitted all kinds of abuses. Moreover, after the restoration of the Society in 1814, it employed some violent forms of authority, as the history of many schools and colleges around the world testifies.

Other factors contributed to promoting a view of pastoral relationships based on the model of submission to authority. We will list them briefly. A little after the death of Ignatius, Jesuits began to speak of the 'spiritual director' and, later, the 'director of conscience'. Although absent from the vocabulary of Ignatius, the word 'director' captured the vision of the submission of the faithful, following the model characteristic of the Roman Catholic Church in the modern era. It formalised the function of the master of novices and the spiritual prefects for Jesuits in formation, and served as a model for the direction of religious and laity. It is not unusual to read in manuals of spiritual direction that the directee has to obey his or her director. It would be difficult to find an equivalent in the writings of Ignatius Loyola himself.[8]

[8] See Silvia Mostaccio, *Early Modern Jesuits between Obedience and Conscience during the Generalate of Claudio Acquaviva (1581–1615)* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014). For a history of spiritual roles, apart from the history of the novitiate that we have from Manuel Ruiz Jurado (*Orígenes del noviciado en la Compañía de Jesús* [Rome: IHSI, 1980]), see also Tibor Bartók, *Un Interprète et une interprétation de l'identité jésuite* (Rome: Gregorian Biblical, 2016).

The Catholic Church looked to the Jesuits as experts in resolving cases of conscience, what is known as *casuistry*.[9] While this might be considered a form of moral discernment, it is important to note that the approach had little to do with discernment as it is spoken of in the *Spiritual Exercises*. The casuist, as a role reserved to certain Jesuits, had the aim of determining with the greatest possible degree of certainty how a priest or member of the faithful ought to behave with respect to the laws of the Church to ensure his or her salvation. This type of pastoral morality, while reinforcing the authority enjoyed by the Jesuits, also fuelled all kinds of criticism. The Jesuit priest possessed a form of moral knowledge that he expressed skilfully and even—according to the Society's detractors—cunningly. The eternal destiny of the soul depended upon the detailed advice of the casuist. A Jesuit confessor or spiritual director who had consulted the casuist of the professed house symbolically played the role of mediator in the plan of salvation.[10] Almost unnoticed, the conditions for exercising control had been created. Some Jesuit authors even made this explicit. They felt it was necessary to take control of souls if the Church's sacred politics were to be accomplished in the kingdoms of the earth.[11]

The conditions for exercising control had been created

Could this merely be an adapted form of discernment? It is difficult to believe. Casuistry was closer to legal or theological reasoning than to a discernment of motions and spirits—which, moreover, had disappeared from practice. From that point on, decisions were made by seeking to balance the reasons 'for and against', the advantages and disadvantages.[12] The meditations in the *Spiritual Exercises,* preached from beginning to end, generated moments of devotion, deepened love of God and neighbour, but in reality did not lead to the making of decisions or life choices. This is hard to believe if we imagine that the Exercises have always been given with the same delicacy and in the same way. We should not forget the letter of Father Roothaan, at that time Superior

[9] This is the technical meaning of the word, although it has developed a strongly pejorative sense in everyday use. [Ed.]

[10] See Jean-Pascal Gay, *Morales en conflit. Théologie et polémique au Grand Siècle (1640–1700)* (Paris: Cerf, 2011).

[11] There are numerous reference in the passionate article of Carlos Zeron, 'Political Theories and Jesuit Politics', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Jesuits*, edited by Ines G. Županov (Oxford: Oxford U, 2018), 193–215. Also see my *Politiques de l'âme*.

[12] In the Exercises, this is the first way in the third time of election (Exx 177–183).

General, who wrote to the entire Society in 1834 saying, 'I advise everyone … to use our holy Father's own book in preference to any other'.[13]

A superficial reading of this risk assessment might lead us to despair, or perhaps to the conclusion that it is an exaggeration. The aim is not to reduce all pastoral activity, much less the spirituality of Ignatius Loyola, to these characteristics. Such risks are only elements within that activity that we feel compelled to point out. They can be read in reverse, as though looking at a mirror, as a precautionary measure. Every relationship that presupposes the obedience of the other person must be examined scrupulously: is it legitimate, imposed or chosen? What limits must it respect, not only according to the letter of the Ignatian tradition, but also with regard to canon law, human rights and ultimately the gospel? In the *Spiritual Exercises*, to which we will limit ourselves from now on, Ignatius Loyola establishes some clear principles that can offer a structure for a pastoral practice derived from his theological vision of the relations of salvation.

The Clarity of the Point of View of Ignatius Loyola

Let us return to Annotation 15 of the *Spiritual Exercises*, whose central argument is expressed in the following way:

> But during these Spiritual Exercises when a person is seeking God's will, it is more appropriate and far better that the Creator and Lord himself should communicate himself to the devout soul, embracing it in love and praise, and disposing it for the way which will enable the soul to serve him better in the future.

Ignatius does not consider this direct communication with God to be something absolute. It is interwoven with the advice and encouragement that, as Christians, we give to one another but, when making the Exercises, it is 'it is more appropriate and far better' to depend on communication with God.

Annotation 15 thereby establishes a comparison between the two ways in which a person is mobilised to make an important decision in his or her life. However, a cursory reading might overlook a detail present

[13] The letter is quoted in Cornelius Ligthart, *The Return of the Jesuits: The Life of Jan Philip Roothaan*, translated by Jan J. Slijkerman (London: T. Shand, 1978), 162–168, here 166 (note that the date of the letter is misprinted as 27 December 1847). I emphasize this point in *Politiques de l'âme*.

in both the original Spanish text and the Latin Vulgate. The mode of communication is profoundly different depending upon whether it is God, the one giving the Exercises or any other counsellor who is doing the communicating. On the one hand, a person can 'urge' or 'counsel' (*mover*) someone to choose what would seem best if he or she has an aptitude for it; on the other, it is 'far better' ….

The wording sets up a parallelism between the two interlocutors: on the one hand, 'the one giving the Exercises', who can inspire with words; and, on the other hand, God, with God's own mode of direct communication. The letter of the text demonstrates the difference: we might imagine that only God can incite us—in a direct way—and that, for this reason, no one should interfere with the resulting election. But God does not incite (the verb *mover* does not appear).

God's communication is not verbal action, but consolation, 'embracing it in love and praise, and disposing it'; it is perceived as an embrace,[14] and a 'disposition'.[15] God communicates by love and as love, but does not incite—much less compel. This leads to what the Exercises want to bring about: self-determination, along with receptivity to that communication of love which leads into decision. To go further and determine whether God is 'inciting', or even pushing, one to make a decision is a matter of extreme delicacy.

Therein lies the debate between Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar in their readings of the *Spiritual Exercises*. It is clear that Ignatius, always attentive to his vocabulary, does not use the term *mover* and that the polysemy of 'dispose' and 'disposition' prevents us from arriving at a definitive expression. Who acts when one makes a vital decision? Everything appears to indicate that the one making the Exercises becomes involved in a synergy in which his or her desire is nourished, strengthened and determined by the love of God that he or she experiences personally. Furthermore, after the election, the retreatant offers the disposition of his or her life to God, which supports this interpretation. God does not incite, but the experience of God's love allows the retreatant to sense that to which God is calling him or her.

[14] Between the first edition of MHSJ in 1919 and the second in 1969, the doubt persists between *abrasandola* (burning) and *abraçandola* (embracing).

[15] See the article 'Disposición' by Avelino Quijano in *Diccionario de espiritualidad ignaciana* on the richness of the sense of this movement of disposing oneself, or preparing oneself and 'putting one's own life at the disposition of': as Javier Melloni has demonstrated (*La mistagogia de los ejercicios* [Bilbao and Santander: Mensajero and Sal Terrae, 2001], 109), both senses are linked in the dynamic of the Exercises unifying at the moment of active preparation and receptivity to the 'ordering of our life' (Exx 1).

What does this all have to do with abuse? We have already seen the extreme sensitivity with which Ignatius addresses the core of the spiritual relationship. He delimits what, in religious terms, we might call a sanctuary. Each person can discover the unique way in which God enters into relationship with him or her and respond with complete freedom, which gives the person's life a unique form marked by his or her own following of Christ. What leads to this response—nothing less than the offering of oneself which is the response of love through which one hands oneself over—is, of course, an act of the will, but as with any gift of oneself it exposes us and makes us vulnerable, so the Exercises establish a perimeter of protection.

During the duration of the Exercises, when exercitants are supposed to open themselves up to God and give their trust—with no guarantee other than faith—the one leading the Exercises is not called upon to intervene. Moreover, as the continuation of Annotation 15 specifies, the one giving the Exercises must remain outside their sanctuary, in a position of balance that requires the training of an inner 'musculature' to prevent that person from succumbing to his or her own impulses:

> The one giving the Exercises ought not to lean or incline in either direction but rather, while standing by like the pointer of a scale in equilibrium, to allow the Creator to deal immediately with the creature and the creature with its Creator and Lord. (Exx 15)

It would be worthwhile reviewing all the annotations here (Exx 1–20) because they place retreatants' desire and relationship with God beyond the reach of the one leading the Exercises. Nevertheless, the latter must keep informed in order to guide the former, instructing them so that they can guide themselves by listening to the Spirit, discerning the

spirits and paying attention to the different movements that are taking place. The one who gives the Exercises must keep him- or herself at the margin of the relationship between the one making the Exercises and God: he or she just keeps listening without intervening.

That being said, the one accompanying does not disappear completely. He or she ensures that the retreatant takes a decision that is thoughtful, discerned and not merely the product of enthusiasm (Annotation 14). This requires tact and a sense of what is possible for the retreatant (Annotation 18). Annotation 17 allows us to understand the key role of the accompanier, and in general, his or her helpful attitude: he or she is not the one from whom the retreatant obtains the desired fruit, but the one who helps the fruit to be sought and recognised. We are a long way from the Tridentine theology of priesthood in which this role was understood to mediate salvation. The intimate revelation of one's inner self to the one accompanying is not a precondition upon which one's salvation depends, much less an obligation. What does depend on it is the search for what gives the greatest help in seeking and finding, through numerous meditations, the thing that only God can give. It is, in the first place, an experience of the merciful goodness of God, and God alone:

> It is very advantageous that the one who is giving the Exercises, without wishing to ask about or know the exercitant's personal thoughts or sins, should be faithfully informed about the various agitations and thoughts which the different spirits stir up in the retreatant. For then, in accordance with the person's greater or lesser progress, the director will be able to communicate spiritual exercises adapted to the needs of the person who is agitated in this way. (Exx 17)

We cannot recommend highly enough a reading of the letters—easily accessible in anthologies available in different languages—that Ignatius Loyola wrote to those who sought his counsel. In them Ignatius' complete commitment to listening, counsel and respect can be perceived, always full of sacred reverence. The 'faithful soul' in this exchange with God embarks on the task of self-emptying, and thus more fully enters into its freedom, discovering a new disposition for life.

In light of what has been said, the basic elements of pastoral care should be revisited in an Ignatian spirit. This is what has happened in many works when, by virtue of faith, the principle is recognised of God's communication of love, with all the demands that this entails (both law and wisdom, never one without the other), but also with all the snares

that threaten those who acknowledge being loved by God. The account of the life of Jesus, the beloved of God, begins with being led out, without delay, into the desert to be tested. Ignatius adds a new page to the gospel account of the temptation, divided between the Annotations and the Rules for Discernment, and intended for the spiritual director, for every person with pastoral responsibility and for every Christian.

It is important to remember the distinction made in Annotation 15 between the moment in which the heart of the relationship with God is touched and the moment of ordinary conversion. The *Constitutions* distinguish in the same way between what belongs to ordinary preaching (which is the word addressed to all), particular conversations and, *a fortiori*, the Exercises.[16] In the light of the life of the Spirit that animated Ignatius—who was persuaded that the same Spirit directed the Church and every believer, though he did not go further than this—it needs to be affirmed for these times, when the Church is searching for the truth in the face of the abuse crisis, that: 'it is more appropriate and far better that the Creator and Lord himself should communicate himself to the devout soul'.

This should not mean renouncing the pastoral role of helping each person to preserve the liberty that, as a grace, he or she has received from God (Galatians 5:13), nor trying to trap people in their own responses, where they have become vulnerable and offered themselves to God through faith in God's love.[17] Making an intervention and trying to capture this moment of interiority, which is the true core of the relationship with God, would demonstrate at once a lack of faith (not believing that the person is capable of learning how to be guided by the Spirit) and a lack of fidelity to the role of spiritual director. It would be to interfere in the life-giving relationship that God establishes with each of God's children: incestuous abuse!

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translated by Philip Harrison SJ

[16] *Constitutions*, VII.4.1 [636] – VII.4.12 [654]. It is necessary to reread this chapter before dealing with the media.

[17] See Tiziano Ferraroni, *La fortezza espugnata. Attraversare la crisi con Ignazio di Loyola* (San Paolo: Cinisello Balsamo, 2022).

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THE ENMITY, THE ACCUSER AND THE REDEEMER

Adam Grand

THE BOOK OF JOB is one of the most intriguing—and bewildering—of biblical narratives. It was penned by an unnamed hand, written about a Gentile man and constructed to showcase the subtleties of divine goodness amidst unthinkable atrocities. One hitherto unexplored tool for elucidating the book's perplexities is Ignatius of Loyola's rules for the discernment of spirits. I propose not only that Ignatius' rules for discernment shed light on the obscure details of Job's story, but also that Job is a fitting guide for living the rules, to the extent that he serves as a model for perfectly following them. Job, the righteous, suffering man, is a model for the Christian prayer life.

The Story of Job

The book of Job begins by introducing Job, a man who is 'blameless and upright', and who 'feared God and turned away from evil' (1:1).[1] Job not only cares for his own righteousness, but also for his children's righteousness, offering preemptive sacrifices on their behalf in case they sin (1:5). He is abundantly fruitful in his family life and abundantly prosperous in his work (1:2–4).

Suddenly, the narrative focus shifts to the heavenly court, where God is meeting with the angels (1:6). Satan also arrives at the meeting, whereupon God invites Satan to consider Job's righteousness (1:8). Satan challenges Job's fidelity, alleging that it arises solely from his material blessings (1:9–11). God agrees to let Satan try Job, and Satan proceeds to destroy Job's livestock, servants and children (1:13–19). Later, he afflicts Job himself with 'loathsome sores' (2:7). Scripture

[1] The phrase 'the book of Job' will always refer here to the book itself, while the name 'Job' on its own will always refer to the book's eponymous protagonist.

summarises Job's response to all these events: 'In all this Job did not sin with his lips' (2:10).

At this point in the narrative, Job is joined by three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, who intend to 'console him and comfort him' (2:11). Rather than fulfil this intention, Job's friends embark on lengthy speeches wherein they accuse him of some wrongdoing bringing about his afflictions as divine punishment (chapters 3–26). Amid these accusations, Job maintains his innocence. Eventually a fourth friend, named Elihu, joins the discussion, who also heaps accusations on Job, more vehemently and angrily than the three others (chapters 32–37). After Elihu's speech, God intervenes with an enigmatic description of God's absolute power and providence in creation (chapters 38–42). Job then acknowledges God's pre-eminent knowledge; God rebukes Job's friends; and, at the end, God restores Job's fortunes twice over (chapters 40–42).

Rules One and Two: Job, the Discerning Man

> *The First Rule*. In the case of persons who are going from one mortal sin to another, the enemy ordinarily proposes to them …. delights and pleasures of the senses, in order to hold them fast and plunge them deeper into their sins and vices. But with persons of this type the good spirit uses a contrary procedure. Through their good judgment on problems of morality he stings their consciences with remorse.
>
> *The Second*. In the case of persons who are earnestly purging away their sins, and who are progressing from good to better in the service of God our Lord … it is characteristic of the evil spirit to cause gnawing anxiety, to sadden, and to set up obstacles. In this way he unsettles these persons by false reasons aimed at preventing their progress. But with persons of this type it is characteristic of the good spirit to stir up courage and strength, consolations, tears, inspirations, and tranquility. He makes things easier and eliminates all obstacles, so that the persons may move forward in doing good. (Exx 314–315)

In Ignatius' first rule, he draws a distinction between the action of 'the good spirit' and the action of 'the enemy', referring to God and his angelic servants, and Satan and his demonic servants respectively. It is immediately apparent that this distinction fits the context of the book of Job: after presenting the setting and the main character, the book of

Job introduces 'the Lord' and 'Satan' (1:6), whose actions will guide the rest of the story. Moreover, Job's name (in Hebrew *Iyob*) etymologically means 'object of enmity'.[2] So Job himself is the battleground between God and Satan, the prize that each party seeks to claim. This is also true of each and every person. Each person is a battleground, whom God and Satan both seek to claim as their own, and who must discern the actions of each, so as to follow God and spurn Satan.

Scenes from the Life of Job, *by an unknown Flemish master, 1475–1500*

It is apparent that Job is a 'rule two person', not a 'rule one person'. By this I mean that Job is evidently 'progressing from good to better in the service of God', rather than 'going from one mortal sin to another'. Scripture clearly identifies Job as 'blameless and upright', and several of his virtues are apparent from his story. Thus, for Job, God's actions will be evident through things such as consolation and peace, whereas Satan's actions will be evident through things such as scruples and agitation.

The book of Job is the first biblical book which uses the word 'Satan' to refer to the tempter or the devil. In Hebrew, *Satan* stems from a verb which means 'accuse', 'slander' or 'be an adversary'.[3] Fittingly,

[2] Francis Brown, 'אִיּוֹב', in *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* edited by S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs (Oxford: Oxford U, 1939).

[3] David Noel Freeman, 'Satan', in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New Haven: Yale U, 1992). Freeman notes that in Job Satan acts as 'a supernatural accuser of humankind in the heavenly court … working for God …. The notion of the Devil as an independent evil power no longer in heaven but ruling a demonic kingdom and headed for judgment is absent in the OT.'

then, does the book of Revelation identify the *Diabolos* (the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *Satan*) as 'the Accuser' (Revelation 12:10). It is appropriate that the primary spiritual suffering with which Satan afflicts Job is false accusation. While Ignatius does not list false accusation by name when referring to Satan's attacks, he does list scruples, disquiet and agitation, all of which are likely to result from such accusation. While Job's physical sufferings certainly count as agitation, and scripture does identify Satan as their cause (1:12 and 2:5–6), it is his spiritual sufferings that are more relevant here.

Though Job's three friends have the apparent intention of consoling him, which would make them agents of God, they also trouble him with baseless accusations, which makes them agents of Satan. Examples of the friends' false accusations, both direct and implicit, abound, occurring in each of their speeches.

- Eliphaz's third speech: 'Is not your wickedness great? There is no end to your iniquities. For you have exacted pledges from your family for no reason, and stripped the naked of their clothing'. (22:5–6)
- Bildad's third speech: 'How then can a mortal be righteous before God? … If even the moon is not bright and the stars are not pure in his sight, how much less a mortal, who is a maggot, and a human being, who is a worm!' (25:4–6)
- Zophar's first speech: 'Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves' (11:6).

The three friends are evidently engaging in Satan's spiritual activity, not God's. They also have a suspect tendency to mention how certain spirits have influenced them.[4] For example, in his first speech, just before accusing Job of wrongdoing, Eliphaz states:

> Now a word came stealing to me, my ear received the whisper of it. Amid thoughts from visions of the night, when deep sleep falls on mortals, dread came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones shake. A *spirit* glided past my face; the hair of my flesh bristled. It stood still, but I could not discern its appearance. A form was before my eyes; there was silence, then I heard a voice. (4:12–16, emphasis added)

[4] Nathan Schmiedicke first brought this idea to my attention.

Zophar also mentions spiritual influence, again immediately preceding an accusation against Job: 'My thoughts urge me to answer, because of the agitation within me. I hear censure which insults me, and a *spirit* beyond my understanding answers me.' (20:2–3, emphasis added) One may reasonably ask, 'Who is this spirit?' Using Ignatius' rules for discovering that very thing, it is evident that the three friends—the accusers—are under the influence of the head Accuser, Satan. Job is a model for Christian prayer above all because he recognises when God is acting and when Satan is acting—and he utterly rejects Satan.

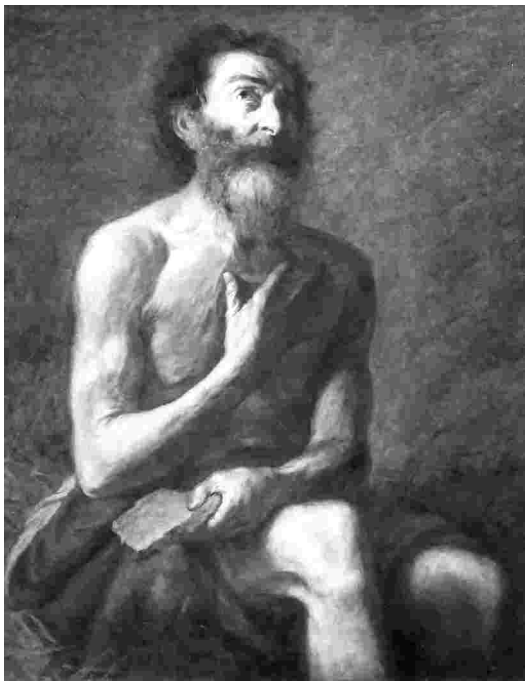
Rules Three, Four, and Five: Job, the Steadfast Man

> *The Third*, about spiritual consolation. By [this kind of] consolation I mean that which occurs when some interior motion is caused within the soul through which it comes to be inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord. As a result it can love no created thing on the face of the earth in itself, but only in the Creator of them all …. Finally, under the word consolation I include every increase in hope, faith, and charity ….
>
> *The Fourth*, about spiritual desolation. By [this kind of] desolation I mean … obtuseness of soul, turmoil within it, an impulsive motion toward low and earthly things …. These move one toward lack of faith and leave one without hope and without love …. separated from our Creator and Lord.
>
> *The Fifth*. During a time of desolation …. one should remain firm and constant in the resolutions and in the decision which one had … during a previous time of consolation. For … the good spirit is chiefly the one who guides and counsels us in time of consolation. (Exx 316–318)

Ignatius' rules three, four and five may be summarised to say that spiritual consolation and desolation are opposite inclinations, and the sentiments and experiences proper to each follow the actions of God or of Satan described in rules one and two. When someone experiences desolation, he or she must hold fast to judgments and commitments made when in a state of consolation.

Are there any judgments or commitments to which Job holds fast amid desolation? Yes: he maintains his own innocence before God: 'I hold fast my righteousness, and will not let it go' (27:6).[5] After Job

[5] John Bergsma and Brant Pitre, *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible: The Old Testament* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2018), 543.



Job, *by Jusepe de Ribera, 1630–1640*

receives the affliction of sores, Job's wife asks, 'Do you still persist in your integrity? Curse God, and die.' (2:9) Job immediately rebukes her. Elsewhere he asserts: 'I have not denied the words of the Holy One' (6:10). Most striking among Job's declarations of innocence is chapter 31, in which he performs an extensive examination of conscience, considering sins such as lust, deceit and greed, and finding himself innocent of them all.

The reader is assured that Job is correct in declaring himself innocent: the narrator twice affirms at the beginning, 'In all this Job did not sin' (1:22 and 2:10). And at the end, God twice affirms that Job, unlike his friends, has 'spoken of me what is right' (42:7 and 42:8). As Gregory the Great comments: 'Whoever then maintains that the holy man, when in the midst of the strokes, committed sin by the words which he uttered, what else doth he than reproach God, Who had pledged Himself for him … ?'[6] According to Gregory, since God vindicates Job, no one may condemn him, lest he chide God's own judgment.

By remaining steadfast in maintaining his own innocence, Job models how to remain faithful to God amid spiritual desolation. He vehemently clings to what he knows is true, and thus rebukes Satan and his co-conspirators (the three friends). The application for the faithful is simple: they must follow Job's example by remaining steadfast in the judgments and commitments wrought in consolation, especially when Satan afflicts them with desolation.

[6] St Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job*, translated by James Bliss (Oxford: John Henry Parker and J. Rivington, 1844), 1, preface, 8.

Rules Six, Seven and Eight: Job, the Trusting Man

> *The Sixth.* Although we ought not to change our former resolutions in time of desolation, it is very profitable to make vigorous changes in ourselves against the desolation, for example, by insisting more on prayer, meditation, earnest self-examination, and some suitable way of doing penance.
>
> *The Seventh.* When we are in desolation we should think that the Lord has left us to our own powers in order to test us …. God's help … always remains available, even if we do not clearly perceive it. Indeed, even though the Lord has withdrawn from us his abundant fervor, augmented love, and intensive grace, he still supplies sufficient grace for our eternal salvation.
>
> *The Eighth.* One who is in desolation should strive to preserve himself or herself in patience. This is the counterattack against the vexations which are being experienced.

Ignatius' rules six, seven, and eight each give advice about how to persevere through desolation. Rule six recommends prayer, penance and examination; rule seven recommends entertaining thoughts about God's constant help, even when it is undetectable; rule eight recommends calm patience to thwart the disquiet caused by Satan. Job employs all these methods. His first response when he is afflicted is a prayer of praise: 'The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord' (1:21). He engages in a thorough examination of conscience and still finds himself innocent. He does not perform penance for any faults because he rightly denies being guilty of any.

One of Job's most famous sayings reflects rule seven: 'I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then from my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side' (19:25–27). Here Job expresses unshakable confidence that he will receive help. This help will enable him both to 'see God' and to have God 'on my side'. The wording of the passage conveys an image of a heavenly courtroom, where Satan is the accuser, God stands (invisibly, it seems) as the judge, Job is the defendant and the redeemer takes the part of the defence attorney, who will not only win the judge's favour but, somehow, get his client a privileged, private audience with the judge.

Only God can grant such access, christological readings of the passage suggest. Or perhaps the redeemer is the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus calls the 'Advocate' (John 14:16), and whose Greek name (*Parakletos*)

signifies a defence lawyer.[7] Thomas Aquinas identifies the *Parakletos* as referring either to the Son or the Holy Spirit.[8] In either reading, Job expresses hope in a Divine Person's help to plead his cause, vindicate him and bring him to a vision of God (which is certainly a consolation). Job remains confident in divine help, as rule seven stipulates. Regarding rule eight, Job's patience is evident from the story. Thus, Job continues to demonstrate perfectly the steps for remaining faithful to God amid Satan's onslaught of accusations.

Rules Eleven and Twelve: Job, the Vindicated Man

> *The Eleventh*. One who is in consolation ought to humble and abase herself or himself as much as possible …. One who is in desolation should reflect that with the sufficient grace already available he or she can do much to resist all hostile forces, by drawing strength from our Creator and Lord.
>
> *The Twelfth*. The enemy conducts himself like a woman. He is weak when faced by firmness but strong in the face of acquiescence. When she is quarreling with a man and he shows himself bold and unyielding, she characteristically loses her spirit and goes away. (Exx 324–325)[9]

Rules eleven and twelve continue to expound the method of defence amid desolation. Rule eleven stipulates taking such confidence in God's power and help that one considers oneself all-powerful in the face of adversity. Rule twelve assures the reader that, when obdurately opposed, Satan will yield and flee.

But when in the story of Job does the divine strength prevail? When does Satan yield and flee? One character whose role in the book of Job we have not yet explored is Elihu. Elihu is peculiar for a number of reasons, all of which indicate that he is a demonic character, if not Satan himself. Elihu is the counterpart to Job's wife, who is associated with Satan by many commentators.[10] These two counterparts converge

[7] Joseph Thayer, 'παράκλητος', in *Thayer's Greek Lexicon* (Seattle: Biblesoft, 2011 [1841]).
[8] Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea*, John 14: 16.
[9] On the topic of women in this rule, and on the association between women and Satan that runs through Genesis and Job, see, for example, Elizabeth Liebert and Annemarie Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed: Uncovering Liberating Possibilities for Women*, 2nd edn (Mahwah: Paulist, 2022), 217.
[10] Nathan Schmiedicke first brought this idea to my attention. For Job's wife and Satan, see David J. A. Clines, *Word Biblical Commentary*, volume 17, *Job 1–20* (Dallas: Word, 1989), 51.

on *Iyob*, the 'object of enmity'. The first biblical occurrence of an object of enmity is in Genesis, when *the woman and Satan converge*: 'I will put enmity between you and the woman' (Genesis 3:15). Again looking back to the creation story, Elihu calls himself 'one who is perfect in knowledge' (36:4), which is obviously impossible and eerily similar to the serpent's temptation to 'be like God, knowing good and evil' (Genesis 3:5).

Elihu does not enter the narrative until chapter 32, but he is angry about the speeches made since the three friends arrived (32:3), and had 'waited' to speak (32:4). Thus, he has actually been there the entire time. Job's wife, on the other hand, speaks immediately after his afflictions, is mentioned during the debates (19:17), and is present at the end of the story (as evidenced by Job's many children, 42:13). Both characters have stood by and listened during the speeches, though Job's wife obeys his admonition (2:10) by becoming silent whereas Elihu, after initially keeping silent, spurns Job's words and becomes angry (32:2).

Becoming angry is Elihu's first action in the story: he is angry with Job because Job 'justified himself', and with the three friends because they 'had found no answer, though they had declared Job to be in the wrong' (32:2–3). In other words, Elihu is angry because Job has not admitted the guilt of which his friends accuse him. Thus, Elihu finds himself among the accusers, who, as we have seen, are on Satan's side. Elihu's name, 'Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram', literally means 'He-is-my-God the son of God-has-blessed the Scornful One from the High Clan'.[11] This name seems to imply a lofty, possibly angelic, lineage but one which Elihu has somehow tarnished, making him the 'Scornful One'. This fits well with Elihu being Satan himself. Lastly, Elihu disappears when God enters the debate. This, I propose, is the moment of victory, the moment when God's divine strength working in Job's steadfast fidelity causes Satan to flee.

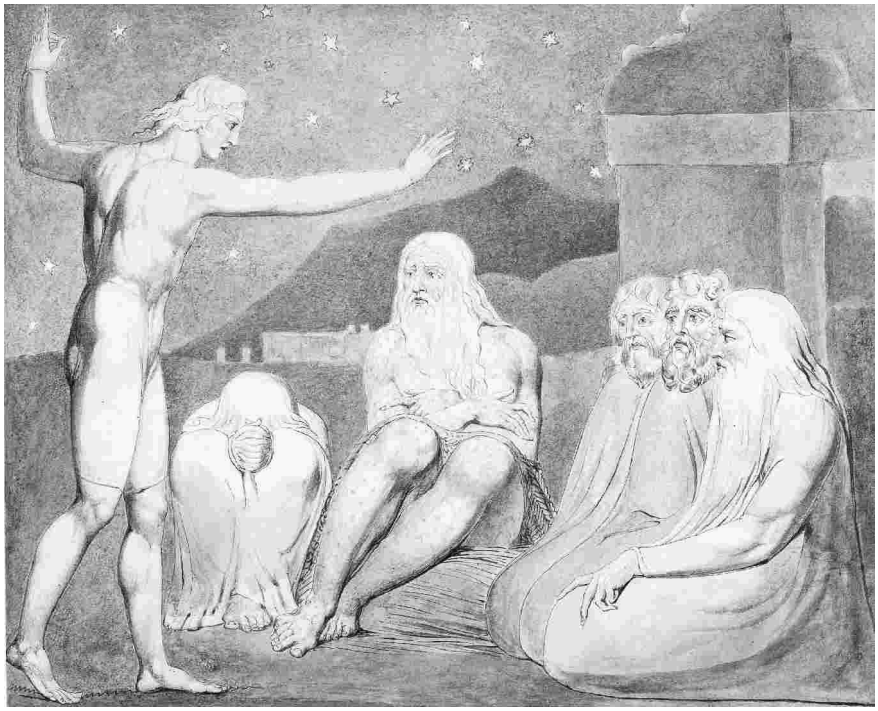
Notably, when God speaks at the end of the story, the text says: 'The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind: "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?"' (38:1–2). Though the conventional understanding of this text identifies Job as the one who 'darkens counsel', it is possible, if not likely, that God actually directs

[11] Robert Alter, *The Wisdom Books: Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011), 133.

this rebuke at Elihu. The grammar of the verses supports this reading, as Karl Wilcox points out:

> The syntax of v. 2 requires the acknowledgement of a third party, and thus the question 'Who is this … ?' (placed within the God/Job dialogue) cannot be read as referring to Job without violating the grammatical structure of the verse.[12]

Since God is answering Job, as established in the introductory clause of verse 1, a second-person address ought to be used if God is identifying Job as the one who 'darkens counsel'. Rather, the grammar suggests that God first rebukes the lead Accuser, Elihu, who flees, and then addresses Job directly. Elihu has already slandered Job by declaring, 'The wise who hear me will say: "Job speaks without knowledge"' (34:34–35), but God defends him, identifying Elihu himself as the one whose words are 'without knowledge' (38:2).



The Wrath of Elihu, *by William Blake, 1825*

[12] Karl G. Wilcox, '"Who is This…?": A Reading of Job 38.2', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 23/78 (1998), 87.

Satan may attempt to work through a supposed friend. He may even come across as pious and God-fearing. The tools of discernment, however, are always available, so that, like Job, the faithful may discern Satan's attacks, resist them and ultimately receive vindication from God.

Rules Nine and Fourteen: Job, the Virtuous Man

> *The Ninth*. There are three chief causes for the desolation in which we find ourselves. The first is that we ourselves are tepid, lazy, or negligent in our spiritual exercises. Thus the spiritual consolation leaves us because of our own faults. The second is that the desolation is meant to test how much we are worth …. The third is that the desolation is meant to give us a true recognition and understanding … that we cannot by ourselves bring on or retain great devotion, intense love, tears, or any other spiritual consolation, but that all these are a gift and grace from God our Lord ….
>
> *The Fourteenth*. … The enemy of human nature prowls around and from every side probes all our theological, cardinal, and moral virtues. Then at the point where he finds us weakest and most in need in regard to our eternal salvation, there he attacks and tries to take us. (Exx 322, 327)

Rule nine describes the causes of desolation, and rule fourteen describes how Satan attacks the weakest part of the soul. They are paired here because they often relate to each other. For example, God may allow the desolation of prideful thoughts in a prideful man (rule fourteen) in order to teach the soul to beg for grace in humility (rule nine).

Seeing now Job's triumph and vindication, it behoves us to consider why Job endured these trials in the first place. Considering rule nine, it is unlikely that God allowed Job's desolations on account of the first or second reason. The first is unlikely because the narrator describes Job as a 'blameless and upright' man who prays frequently; and the second is also unlikely because God already singles out Job among all the earth's inhabitants as a holy man. Thus, the third reason for Job's desolation is the most probable: it seems that God wishes to increase Job's gratitude for his gifts and humility before God.

Thus, Satan probably targeted Job's weakest point, which the text describes. Satan asks God,

> Does Job fear God for nothing? … You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth your hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face (1:9–11).

The weaknesses that Satan targets are gratitude (alleging that Job will hate God because he loses his possessions) and humility (alleging that Job will rise up and curse God 'to your face'). Fittingly, Job grows in both virtues through his trials, which God subtly affirms when he addresses Job at the end of the story (38–42).

The Old Testament scholar Zoltán Schwáb finds in God's speeches pedagogical tools, which teach Job the importance of these two virtues. God highlights Job's growth in gratitude by describing God's own masterful work in creating: 'By raising his eyes from himself to his fellow creatures, Job is brought by God into the true centre of the universe, into the disinterested divine delight in creation'.[13] God also highlights Job's humble, filial obedience to God by leaving Job's complaints unanswered (at least directly) in the divine speech. Schwáb calls this virtue 'a radically unselfish fear of the creator, a fear that does not expect any reward, even the reward of caring, divine attention'.[14]

It is wise for the faithful to consider why God allows desolation to afflict them. They can be assured that, even though Satan attacks their weakest area, God never withholds help, and directs such trials towards their growth in sanctity.

Vanquishing Satan

In his first epistle, Peter warns, 'Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour.' (1 Peter 5:8) It is imperative that Christians understand the method for discerning Satan's activity, so that they may reject Satan and cling to God. Ignatius of Loyola's rules for discernment provide this method. The rules also elucidate the story of Job, ultimately showing that Job is the faithful servant of God who engages with and conquers Satan. For the faithful who daily engage in prayer,

[13] Zoltán Schwáb, 'Does the Reader Fear God for Nothing? A Theological Reflection on the Divine Speeches in Job', *Journal of Theological Studies*, 73 (2022), 470.
[14] Zoltan Schwab, 'Does the Reader Fear God for Nothing?' 471.

and who trust in the methods of Ignatius, the book of Job provides both a vivid exemplar and a compelling encouragement for how to identify, combat and vanquish Satan, and so to enjoy the glorious freedom of the children of God.

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TO SEEK OUT AND TO SAVE THE LOST

Christ's Descent into Hell Continues

James McTavish

AS CHRISTIANS, WE ARE INVITED to allow the Lord to live his mysteries in us, to fulfil them and bring them to their completion. St John Eudes beautifully summarises this teaching.

> We must continue to accomplish in ourselves the stages of Jesus' life and his mysteries and often to beg him to perfect and realise them in us and in his whole Church …. For it is the plan of the Son of God to make us and the whole Church partake in his mysteries and to extend them to and continue them in us and in his whole Church. This is his plan for fulfilling his mysteries in us.[1]

For some of those mysteries, such as the suffering of Christ on the cross, we may easily connect our own experience with that of Jesus, and can feel that he suffers through us, with us and in us. When we experience a fruitful or successful outcome, such as finally passing a difficult exam or recovering from a prolonged sickness, we may be able to connect with the power of the resurrection in our lives. It is, however, more challenging to grasp how we can relate to the mystery of his descent into hell.

The Descent of Jesus into the Underworld

In the Apostles' Creed, we find the phrase 'he descended into hell'. In the Easter *Exsultet* (long form), sung during the Easter vigil, we have: 'This is the night, when Christ broke the prison bars of death and rose

The author would like to thank John Healy for his helpful suggestions.

[1] St John Eudes, *The Life and the Kingdom of Jesus*, cited in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 521.

Christ's Descent into Limbo, *by Andrea Mantegna, c.1470*

victorious from the underworld'. An ancient homily from Holy Saturday has the following:

> Today a great silence reigns on earth, a great silence and a great stillness. A great silence because the King is asleep. the earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and he has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began …. He has gone to search for Adam, our first father, as for a lost sheep. Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, he has gone to free from sorrow Adam in his bonds and Eve, captive with him—He who is both their God and the son of Eve … 'I am your God, who for your sake have become your son … I order you, O sleeper, to awake. I did not create you to be a prisoner in hell. Rise from the dead, for I am the life of the dead'.[2]

During the apparitions of Fátima, the children were shown a frightening vision of hell. Sr Lucia later recounted:

[2] St Epiphanius of Cyprus, sermon for Holy Saturday, quoted in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

> Our Lady showed us a great sea of fire which seemed to be under the earth. Plunged in this fire were demons and souls in human form, like transparent burning embers, all blackened or burnished bronze, floating about in the conflagration, now raised into the air by the flames that issued from within themselves together with great clouds of smoke, now falling back on every side like sparks in a huge fire, without weight or equilibrium, and amid shrieks and groans of pain and despair, which horrified us and made us tremble with fear. The demons could be distinguished by their terrifying and repulsive likeness to frightful and unknown animals, all black and transparent.[3]

It is important to note the difference between the 'hell' of the creed and the 'hell' of the children's vision in Fátima. This difference was explained by Pope John Paul II where, when referring to Christ's descent into hell, he stated:

> As a starting point, it should also be clarified that the expression 'hell' does not mean hell, the state of condemnation, but rather the abode of the dead, which in Hebrew was called *sheol* and in Greek *hades* (cf. Acts 2:31).[4]

The Catechism sheds light on what happened during the descent of our Lord into hell: 'He opened heaven's gates for the just who had gone before him'.[5] We are not talking about saving those who are already condemned: he does not go to free the 'damned' but those who had gone before. All those saints who had died before the coming of Christ needed to be redeemed. According to this vision, after Christ's resurrection there would be no further need to descend into the underworld; thus, this aspect of the mystery seems foreclosed. The Catechism states:

> The descent into hell brings the Gospel message of salvation to complete fulfilment. This is the last phase of Jesus' messianic mission, a phase which is condensed in time but vast in its real significance: the spread of Christ's redemptive work to all men of all times and all places, for all who are saved have been made sharers in the redemption.[6]

[3] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 'The "Secret" of Fatima: First and Second Part of the "Secret" According to the Version Presented by Sister Lucia in the "Third Memoir" of 31 August 1941 for the Bishop of Leiria-Fatima', at https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000626_message-fatima_en.html.

[4] Pope John Paul II, general audience, 11 January 1989.

[5] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 637.

[6] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 634.

My Life Was a Living Hell

We know that Christ came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). If we are called to allow Christ to fulfil his mysteries in us and bring them to fulfilment, it seems that the mystery of his descent into hell is already fully accomplished. Having freed all the captive saints, there would be no further need to descend there. It is precisely this apparent ending that I would like to take as a starting point, to consider some pastoral aspects or applications of the continuation of this mystery.

The aspect of beginning is important. The baptism of Christ opened the door for our baptism. His suffering on the cross gives meaning to our suffering and our crosses. His death redeems our death. His resurrection paves the way for ours. None of his mysteries is a strict end in itself; they are a springboard for our own participation, and his descent into hell can be no different. Looking at the world around us, we can see the essential need for Christ's saving mission to continue to rescue many of our brothers and sisters who are suffering and 'living in hell' in the here and now. Here are some examples.

- The designer and pop singer Pearl Lowe was a habitual drug-user who eventually developed a severe addiction. She described it as 'like being like in hell'. Of her recovery she says, 'You have very dark moments, but nothing as dark as when you're doing drugs. I knew I was following the light and getting out of a dark tunnel.'[7]
- A victim of human trafficking reported that 'my life was hell'.[8] There are millions of women and children trapped in the hell of trafficking and sexual exploitation.
- A prison in the Philippines was labelled a 'hellhole' owing to overcrowding, lack of water and poor healthcare.[9] So many prisoners worldwide suffer the hell of inhumane conditions, and often of unjust imprisonment.
- A woman whose husband was killed in an accident said his death had been 'like hell and a nightmare I'm not waking up from'.[10]

[7] See Pearl Lowe, *All That Glitters* (London: Hodder, 2007).
[8] Charlotte Rose and Dolly Carter, 'Nigerian Woman Speaks of Slavery and Rape in UK', *BBC News* (14 March 2024), at https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-68341674.
[9] 'Hellhole', *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (30 October 2019), at https://opinion.inquirer.net/124911/hellhole, accessed 25 April 2025.
[10] Steve Jones, 'Footballer Jailed for Causing Cyclist's Death', *BBC News* (24 April 2025).

- For many people, sickness or illness becomes a living hell. A cancer patient writes in his blog 'This life is hell on occasions and there's nothing I can do about it'.[11]
- The war in Gaza has been called 'hell on earth' by the head of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and in 2025 Israel developed a 'Hell Plan' to force Hamas to give up its remaining hostages.[12] Victims of war and violence can suffer hell on earth.
- Mr R came to me for pastoral advice. He had multiple sexual partners and lived a 'disorganized, disintegrated and chaotic' emotional and affective life: 'in the end, I was so miserable and sad, it was like my life was spiralling down towards hell'.

In all these examples, we can see how many continue to experience 'hell'.

'To Seek Out and to Save the Lost' (Luke 19: 10)

The Good Shepherd, *Holy Door, St Peter's basilica, by Ludovico Consorti,*

On the Holy Door of St Peter's basilica, a series of bronze panels depicts different biblical scenes. One of them is Christ as the Good Shepherd. He is poised dramatically, hanging off a cliff edge, holding tightly to the rock above with his left hand and stretching out his arm. His other arm is extended, straining to reach out and save a little lost sheep hanging from a bush on the side of the cliff face. Above the icon are the words *salvare quod perierat*, from Luke 19: 10 after Jesus has visited Zacchaeus, when our Saviour reveals that he has come 'to save the lost'.

This image on the Holy Door can help us to contemplate the

[11] 'How Much Pain Is Too Much Pain' (10 December 2025), *Macmillan Cancer Support*, at https://community.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-blogs/b/to-hop-on-or-hop-off-is-the-question/posts/post-235-how-much-pain-is-too-much-pain, accessed 1 April 2026.

[12] Imogen Foulkes, 'Red Cross Chief Says Gaza Is "Hell on Earth" as Israeli Assault Continues', *BBC News* (11 April 2025), at https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c4g2k4zgvppo; Julian Borger and Malak A. Tantesh 'Israel Prepares Gaza "Hell Plan" to Pile Pressure on Hamas', *The Guardian* (3 March 2025).

mission of Christ the Redeemer, who comes to seek and save what was lost in each and every one of us. For this, he is prepared to take a risk, to empty himself (Philippians 2:7) and to stretch out his arms on the cross to save the lost sheep. As Jesus announced

> … the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live …. Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice. (John 5:25, 28)

The story of Lazarus comes to mind, a dead man who heard the voice of the Son of God—'Lazarus, come out!' (John 11:43)—and came to life again. But the disciples of Jesus also had their moments of 'being dead'. At the transfiguration on Mount Tabor, having heard the voice of the living God, 'they fell to the ground' as if they were dead and buried, 'and were overcome by fear'. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, 'Get up and do not be afraid' (Matthew 17:1–8).

To Rescue Others

Surely, it is a great privilege to participate with Christ in his mission of reaching out and saving others. It takes a mature Christian not always to be a lost sheep. When we find ourselves getting bored with saying 'baa' and waiting to be rescued again, we can remember that the call of the Lord is also to become shepherds, concerned for the well-being and salvation of others. We should not only ponder, *Will I get to heaven?*, but also *How many others could I bring with me?* How many could we rescue from their particular hell on the way? This is the salvific will of God, who wishes all be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (see 1 Timothy 2:4). The Verbum Dei founder, Jaime Bonet, puts it beautifully this way:

> Undoubtedly, the best examination and analysis of prayer would not be to find out whether I had feelings or not, whether I have been happy or unhappy, encouraged or discouraged, asleep or awake, satisfied or fed up, with or without sacrifice, with or without emotions, recollected or dispersed; and much less, how deep was my prayer. But whether my prayer has truly transmitted the interest and concern of Jesus for the salvation of all people.[13]

[13] Jaime Bonet, *Y amé el desierto. Diario de ejercicios espirituales* (Madrid: Patrimonio Fundacional Verbum Dei, 2021), 53 (my translation).

So often, the emphasis with prayer is on whether it was deep, whether it gave me peace or made me feel good. It is novel, eye-opening and very challenging to measure the extent to which my prayer has transmitted to me Christ's interest and concern for the salvation of all people![14]

We have already listed various scenarios when others really suffer as if they are in hell, in hellish situations. The salvific will of Christ desires their rescue. We are called to participate with the Lord and help in this rescue mission. We can extend a helping hand and stretch out our arms to those in need. This is a sure path to ecstasy—the *ekstasis* of going out of ourselves. Pope Francis nicely describes this dynamic in *Fratelli tutti*:

> In the depths of every heart, love creates bonds and expands existence, for it draws people out of themselves and towards others. Since we were made for love, in each one of us 'a law of ekstasis' seems to operate: 'the lover "goes outside" the self to find a fuller existence in another'. For this reason, 'man always has to take up the challenge of moving beyond himself'. (nn. 88–89)

To be agile and able to move beyond ourselves, it is necessary to travel light—hence there is a need to imitate Christ and 'empty' ourselves. It is hard to climb a mountain carrying suitcases of rancour, laziness, timidity and self-centredness. Lord, help us reach out to others, to touch more people.

The mission of Christ continues to descend into the personal and social hell of each and every one of us, and to rescue us, bringing us safely into the embrace of the Father. Accompanying people experiencing suffering is akin to entering into the underworld, their personal *sheol* or *hades.* A missionary Church should be equipped and formed for such a task. Our faith is not just about attending yet another Mass, but about taking Christ's salvific mission more seriously, in which he wishes us to partake. Instead of being fixated on the hell in the hereafter, we would do well to focus on the hell experienced by many in the here and now, to direct our attention to alleviating the suffering of those who are

Alleviating the suffering of those who are already experiencing hell

[14] I am reminded of the missionary option for which Pope Francis ardently longed. 'I dream of … a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today's world rather than for her self-preservation.' (Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 27.)

already experiencing hell. In this way, we allow Christ to continue descending into hell, and help bring to completion his mission of rescuing those in need of salvation.

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THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF FAILURE

Ignatius Loyola and Psychological Safety

David Clayton

RECENTLY I HAVE NOTICED more and more that we live in a culture that recoils from failure. The language of productivity, achievement and self-improvement leaves little or no room for it. In the workplace, mistakes are to be covered, reputations maintained and weakness avoided; hard truths are often ignored in the process. In our personal lives, too, failure often feels like the end of the story: a verdict on who we are. And yet, what if failure is not final? What if the very events that undo us conceal the beginnings of transformation?

Ignatius of Loyola's life is often remembered for its achievements: the *Spiritual Exercises*, the founding of the Society of Jesus, the missionary zeal of his companions. Yet none of this would have been possible without failure. His most decisive moment was not a triumph but a wound.

Pamplona and Loyola

In May 1521, at the siege of Pamplona, in the midst of overwhelming odds, a French cannonball shattered Ignatius' legs, collapsing both his military career and his youthful ambition. For the aristocratic soldier, this was deep humiliation. His body was broken, his reputation diminished, his plans destroyed. But the experience proved not to be a terminus but a threshold.

Ignatius was carried back to his family home in Loyola to endure long and painful convalescence. There he experienced the stillness that failure enforces. Unable to return to court, too restless to remain idle, he turned to the only books available: Ludolph of Saxony's *Vita Christi* and a collection of saints' lives. What began as reluctant reading became an unexpected source of illumination. He noticed a difference in the after-effects of his imaginings. When he imagined knightly deeds of chivalry and romance, the pleasure was fleeting and left him empty. When he imagined following Christ or imitating the saints, the

Ignatius is Injured at the Battle of Pamplona *(detail), by Albert Chevalier-Tayler, 1904*

joy lingered, deepening rather than dissipating. Later, he would call this discernment of spirits: a capacity to notice the spiritual resonance of thoughts and desires.[1] But at the time, it was simply the discovery that failure had opened him to new horizons. His broken legs had made room for the entrance of grace.

This moment displays some striking parallels with what contemporary psychology calls *psychological safety*. The term, coined by the organizational scholar Amy Edmondson, refers to 'a shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking'.[2] In this kind of environment, people feel able to admit mistakes, ask questions or raise concerns without fear of ridicule or punishment.[3] Psychological safety is not about excusing incompetence or lowering standards; rather, it is about creating a climate in which candour is possible, errors can be identified quickly and learning together becomes more important than protecting appearances.[4] Studies have shown that teams with high psychological safety report more errors, not fewer—because individuals trust that speaking up will not be used against them. As Edmondson puts it: 'Team psychological safety … describes a team climate characterized by interpersonal trust and mutual respect in which people are comfortable being themselves'.[5]

[1] See *Autobiography*, nn. 1–8.
[2] Amy C. Edmondson, 'Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior in Work Teams', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44/2 (June 1999), 350–383, here 350.
[3] Amy C. Edmondson, *The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2019), 15.
[4] See William A. Kahn, 'Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work', *Academy of Management Journal*, 33/4 (1990), 692–724, at 708.
[5] Edmondson, 'Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior', 375, 354.

Ignatius' sickbed at Loyola was far from comfortable, yet it functioned in a similar way. It was a space where failure could no longer be hidden and where honesty was unavoidable. His broken body forced him to confront his restless attachments, just as psychological safety in a workplace forces organizations to face uncomfortable truths. Here, we glimpse a universal dynamic. Failure interrupts us. It strips away the illusion of control and leaves us vulnerable. But it also creates the possibility of re-imagining what matters. Failure is not the opposite of success but often the very path towards it.

In the silence of Loyola, Ignatius began to see that his restless desire for worldly honour could never satisfy him. He began, instead, to orientate his life towards God. Augustine's words ring true here: 'our hearts are restless until they rest in thee'.[6] Ignatius' cannonball thus becomes a clear metaphor for our own lives. Few of us will face literal cannon fire, but most will know moments that feel as devastating: the loss of a job, the collapse of a relationship, the diagnosis that changes everything. These are our cannonball moments: painful, humiliating, disorientating. The question is not whether they will come, but in how we respond when they do.

Psychological safety offers an important insight: if we can create contexts where failure can be acknowledged without fear, then growth becomes possible. Ignatius offers another: if we can interpret failure within the horizon of grace, then even our most humiliating defeats can become thresholds of transformation. In Christ no failure is final, for grace reconstitutes identity. Where psychological safety promises that one's place in the team is secure, Christianity promises that one's place in God's love is secure. Together, they suggest a culture, both organizational and spiritual, in which we can risk, fall and learn.

Of course, the parallels are not exact and the contexts are very different: the battlefield and the boardroom, the search for holiness and the pursuit of innovation. We should be careful not to equate them directly. What is fruitful, however, is to notice echoes, moments where psychological insight and spiritual tradition illuminate each other, without collapsing one into the other.

Montserrat and Manresa

If Loyola was where Ignatius discovered the possibility of a new horizon, Montserrat was where he realised it. Permanently limping from his

[6] Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.1.

injuries, he journeyed to the Benedictine shrine and laid down his sword before the Black Madonna (*Autobiography*, n.17). He kept vigil through the night, confessing his sins and renouncing the identity as soldier and courtier that had hitherto defined him.

This surrender was not a gentle reinterpretation but a costly reforging of identity through suffering that stripped him of old securities so that a new freedom could emerge. By relinquishing the weapons of his past, Ignatius created space for a new story to emerge. In the terms of the *Spiritual Exercises*, he was loosening the grip of his 'disordered affection' (Exx 21), the desire that tethers us to false securities. The ritual of placing his sword before the Virgin symbolized not only humility but a declaration that failure need not mean annihilation; it gave meaning to reorientation, a process of becoming.

For Ignatius, Montserrat was a safe threshold: the moment when he could admit that his former identity had failed him, without knowing yet what the new one would be. Leaders today face something similar when they acknowledge mistakes publicly, signalling that worth is not destroyed by failure but reframed by honesty and integrity. From Montserrat, Ignatius moved to Manresa, intending to stay briefly but remaining almost a year. Here, the theme of failure deepened. His zeal became excessive. He punished himself harshly, fasted to extremes, and was consumed by scruples—an obsessive anxiety that he could not make himself right with God. Far from liberation, he spiralled into despair and desolation.

Modern organizational life knows this pathology well. In environments where there is no psychological safety, people conceal errors, drive themselves to exhaustion and interpret every shortcoming as a threat to identity. High-achieving professionals often internalise failure as proof of unworthiness. Studies show that perfectionist cultures lead to burnout, disengagement and stagnation.[7] Ignatius' scruples were the spiritual analogue of such cultures: an unsafe inner environment in which the fear of failing God left no room for growth.

Christian thought distinguishes between failure as a mark of human limitation and sin as rupture of relationship with God. We fail because we are finite: our bodies break, our plans falter, our knowledge is partial.

[7] See Kim Byung-Jik and Lee Dong-gwi, 'Navigating the Impact of Organizationally Prescribed Perfectionism on Depression: the Sequential Mediating Roles of Psychological Safety and Burnout and the Moderating Role of Coaching Leadership', *Current Psychology*, 44 (2025), 2166–2191.

Ignatius at Pamplona experienced such limitation; no amount of courage could stop a cannonball. But at Manresa he also confronted sin: pride, self-reliance and the refusal to trust God's mercy. To conflate failure with sin is to misunderstand both; yet both expose our need for grace.

The turning point came by the River Cardoner. In his *Autobiography*, Ignatius recalls an illumination in which 'all things seemed new' (n.30). What shifted was not his external circumstances but his interpretation. He realised that his worth did not depend on perfect performance but on God's grace. In psychological terms, he moved from an unsafe to a safe interior space, from a culture of self-punishment to one of trust and integration. Psychological safety is not about avoiding error but about interpreting error differently: not as shame but as opportunity. Ignatius anticipated this insight at Manresa. His scruples taught him that without safety, whether in community or in the soul, failure can be crippling. With safety, failure becomes transformative.

Montserrat and Manresa together model a pattern still relevant today. Montserrat teaches the necessity of symbolic renunciation, the act of naming and releasing attachments that block freedom. Failure reveals where our loves are disordered, where freedom is compromised. Manresa teaches the danger of perfectionism in unsafe environments, and the possibility of illumination when safety is restored. Both remind us that failure needs to be reinterpreted, not denied. Both show that the path to transformation passes through the willingness to admit defeat and to discover grace within it.

Paris

By the time Ignatius arrived in Paris in 1528, he was almost forty years old. Limping, poor and with little formal education, he stood out among the young students of the Sorbonne. His earlier attempts at study in Spain had ended in suspicion and failure, he had been interrogated more than once on charges of heresy. Yet Paris, despite its hardships, became a new beginning.

Ignatius lodged in modest quarters and begged for alms to support his studies. He patiently endured ridicule for his age, his accent and his poverty. But here he also began to gather a circle of friends: Pierre Favre, Francis Xavier and others who would later become the first companions of the Society of Jesus. What united them was not worldly success but shared vulnerability. They prayed together, studied together and wrestled

Vows at Montmartre, ***by Carlos Saenz de Tejada, published 1958***

with questions of mission. In 1534, on the hill of Montmartre, they pledged themselves to poverty, chastity and a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

That pilgrimage never materialised. Political turmoil blocked the way. In organizational terms, the group faced a serious failure; the collapse of its founding plan. Yet it was precisely here that a new possibility opened. For Ignatius and his companions, the failure of their pilgrimage was not simply a logistical obstacle but a moment of discernment, an opportunity to interpret events in the wider horizon of God's providence. In Paris, Ignatius and his companions faced the failure of their plans, but grace reorientated them towards a deeper freedom: availability for mission, rather than attachment to their own designs.

One distinctive Ignatian contribution here is the method of spiritual conversation: speaking openly about the inner movements of consolation and desolation, and listening for the Spirit together. This practice, refined by Ignatius, became the engine of communal discernment. What emerged was a common perspective, recognised individually and collectively, as each companion let go of personal preference in favour of shared mission. Rather than disband, they placed themselves at the service of the Pope, offering availability for whatever mission the Church required. From this frustrated and failed plan the Society of Jesus was born.

The story of Paris is strikingly relevant for contemporary life. Psychological safety research has shown that teams may thrive more when they can adapt together to failure than when everything goes according to plan.[8] A safe team is not one without conflict or disappointment, but one in which members trust that setbacks will not destroy their sense of belonging. Safety does not mean comfort; it means support in the midst of risk. It is not the absence of difficulty but the presence of interpretation. The Paris companions model this dynamic. Their trust in one another created a psychologically safe space to admit to weakness, endure disappointment and reimagine mission. They did not deny their failure but discerned within it, thus vulnerability was able to become vocation.

Crossing the Threshold

Ignatius' journey was marked not only by moments of crisis but also by the ambiguity that followed them. After Pamplona, Montserrat, Manresa and Paris he often found himself in what anthropologists would call liminal spaces: situations in which the old identity had been stripped away but the new one had not yet fully emerged. Victor Turner, the social anthropologist who popularised the term, understood liminality (from the Latin *līmen*, threshold) as precisely a threshold state: unsettling, uncertain, but also generative.[9]

For Ignatius, each failure was a threshold in this sense. Pamplona stripped him of his former military role; Montserrat demanded the renunciation of honour; Manresa plunged him into despair; Paris revealed the fragility of communal plans. None of these moments offered immediate resolution. Each left him suspended between what had ended and what was not yet clear. Yet in these liminal spaces he learned to discern God's presence in his life with new attentiveness. Through them, transformed, he discovered new life: freedom, discernment, mission.

The challenge, both then and now, is that liminality feels unsafe: how do we remain honestly in our own liminal spaces without fleeing? When our identities are uncertain and our plans collapse, we can choose to retreat fearfully into old securities or to flee into denial. Or we can choose to stay, to reflect, to discern. What makes growth possible in

[8] See Amy C. Edmondson, *Right Kind of Wrong: The Science of Failing Well* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2023), 222.

[9] Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca: Cornell U, 1991 [1969]), 95 following. For more on liminality, see *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioural Sciences*, edited by James D. Wright, 2nd edn (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2015), volume 14, 131–137.

such times is the presence of safety. Psychological safety helps teams stay in liminality long enough to learn from it. Ignatius' achievement was to cultivate a spiritual analogue of this safety. Through prayer, sacrament and companionship, he created a framework in which failure could be endured without collapse. Ignatian spirituality helps individuals and communities stay there long enough to receive grace.

The integration of these perspectives suggests a practice: when failure occurs, we need to create conditions of safety, whether through supportive leadership, honest conversation or prayerful accompaniment, and then remain in the ambiguity long enough to discern what new horizon is being revealed. The Spiritual Exercises institutionalised this: the retreatant is invited into disorientating experiences of imaginative prayer and radical choice, but always with the accompaniment of a spiritual director.

Ignatius' categories of consolation and desolation offer a spiritual psychology of failure. Desolation often accompanies liminal states: loss of energy, restlessness, distance from God. Consolation, by contrast, arises not from quick success but from the assurance of God's presence even in failure. And Ignatius does not leave us with abstractions. He offers concrete practices by which human failure can become formative rather than destructive.

- **The Examen.** This daily prayer of reflection invites us to notice both grace and failure. Where was I drawn to life today? Where did I resist grace? What patterns emerge in my restlessness? For organizations, this resonates with After Action Reviews: structured reflection on what went wrong and what can be learned.[10]
- **Discernment of spirits.** Ignatius teaches us to attend to desolation not as God's rejection but as a call to perseverance and trust. In unsafe cultures, desolation spirals into despair; in safe cultures, it becomes revelatory. Leaders who help teams interpret discouragement as part of growth mirror the director's role in the Exercises.

[10] The idea of After Action Reviews originated with the US military. 'In practice, this means that all participants meet immediately after an important activity or event to review their assignments, identify successes and failures, and look for ways to perform better the next time around': David A. Garvin, *Learning in Action: A Guide to Putting the Learning Organization to Work* (Boston: Harvard Business School, 2000), 106.

- **Confession and eucharist.** In the sacrament of reconciliation, failure is named and absolved, transformed into a new beginning. In the eucharist, apparent failure, the broken body of Christ, becomes the very source of life. These sacramental practices remind us that no failure is final when grace is at work.
- **Accompaniment.** Ignatius knew that failure cannot be carried alone. His companions sustained him, and his Exercises are designed to be made with a guide—a spiritual director. In organizational settings, accompaniment takes the form of peer support, mentoring or coaching. Safe relationships turn failure from isolation into solidarity.
- **Indifference.** Perhaps most challenging of all, Ignatius calls us to holy indifference: to hold success and failure, health and sickness, honour and dishonour in equal regard, choosing only what leads to God's greater glory. This disposition frees us from the tyranny of outcomes. Leaders who model this detachment enable cultures where experimentation—and therefore failure—is not feared but welcomed as part of learning.[11]

Taken together, these practices suggest a rhythm for engaging with failure:

1. **Fall**. Failure occurs, exposing a limitation or disordered attachment.
2. **Reflection.** Through examen or other review, failure is named honestly.
3. **Grace**. In prayer or sacrament, failure is interpreted within a larger horizon.
4. **Renewal.** We return to mission, chastened yet freer.

This rhythm is cyclical, shaping our lives deeply over time into people and communities who are not undone by failure but deepened through it. Failure is not incidental but intrinsic to actual spiritual growth. It is the crucible in which God reshapes our desires, reorders our loves, and prepares us for mission. Ignatius' distinctive gift is to offer a practical pedagogy for inhabiting this paradox with attentiveness and freedom.

[11] See Garvin, *Learning in Action*, chapter 5.

Made Perfect in Weakness

Ignatius' vision of failure as threshold resonates with the broader Christian tradition. The Psalms give us language for collapse without concealment: 'Search me, O God, and know my heart … see if there is any wicked way in me' (Psalm 139:23–24). Failure becomes not a reason to hide from God but the very place of divine encounter. Paul, too, turns failure upside down: 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness' (2 Corinthians 12:9). Weakness, in this vision, is not an obstacle but a vessel for divine strength.

For the Christian, failure is not only pedagogical but sacramental. It participates in the paschal mystery: the pattern of death and resurrection that is at the heart of Christ's own story. To follow Christ is not to avoid failure but to enter into it, trusting that grace will transfigure it. Ignatius' life is compelling precisely because it mirrors this mystery. His defeats did not end his story; they became his formation. His cannonball wound, his renunciation at Montserrat, his scruples at Manresa, and the thwarted pilgrimage in Paris, all were experiences that, on the surface, looked like defeat. Yet each became a threshold of new freedom. What he could not have chosen for himself became the very material through which grace worked most deeply.

Psychological safety helps us to understand one dimension of this process. In organizations and communities alike, people flourish when they know that their worth is not destroyed by error. Cultures of safety allow individuals and groups to admit mistakes, learn together, and adapt creatively. Without such safety, failure corrodes; with it, failure teaches. The invitation, then, is twofold. On the one hand, we are called to build cultures, whether in workplaces, communities or families, that embody psychological safety: environments where mistakes can be acknowledged without fear, and where failure becomes a shared teacher rather than a source of shame. On the other hand, we are called to approach our failures prayerfully, to bring them into the examen, into sacrament and into community, so that they may be interpreted in the horizon of grace.

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MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD?

Frances Murphy

DARWINIAN EVOLUTIONARY THEORY and its development in such fields as sociobiology and evolutionary psychology are now staple features of the intellectual climate. To say that the relationship of evolutionary theory to religion, and in particular to Christianity, has been somewhat controversial would be an understatement; a commitment to one was for a long time assumed to preclude any adherence to the other.

However, despite the apparent difficulties of holding Christian belief and asserting the truth of the theory of evolution, several theologians from the mid-twentieth century onwards have begun to take seriously the arguments presented in favour of evolutionary theory, and attempted to incorporate evolutionary ideas into their theology, a notable example being the French Jesuit Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. In 1950, Pope Pius XII encouraged research into the theory of evolution 'in conformity with the present state of human sciences and sacred theology'.[1] In addition to the interest taken in evolution by theologians, there are many academics who would classify themselves primarily as evolutionary biologists who by no means reject the possibility of religious belief, even holding it themselves in many cases. Michael Ruse's *Can a Darwinian Be a Christian? The Relationship between Science and Religion*, for example, is saturated with affirmative answers to its titular question.[2]

[1] 'For these reasons the Teaching Authority of the Church does not forbid that, in conformity with the present state of human sciences and sacred theology, research and discussions, on the part of men experienced in both fields, take place with regard to the doctrine of evolution, in as far as it inquires into the origin of the human body as coming from pre-existent and living matter—for the Catholic faith obliges us to hold that souls are immediately created by God.' (*Humani generis*, n.36)

[2] (Cambridge: Cambridge U, 2001).

It might serve us well to take a moment here to remind ourselves what we mean when we refer to Darwinian evolution—not least because the Darwinian framework is not the only (although it is the most widely accepted) way in which to formulate evolutionary ideas—and Ruse provides a helpful definition:

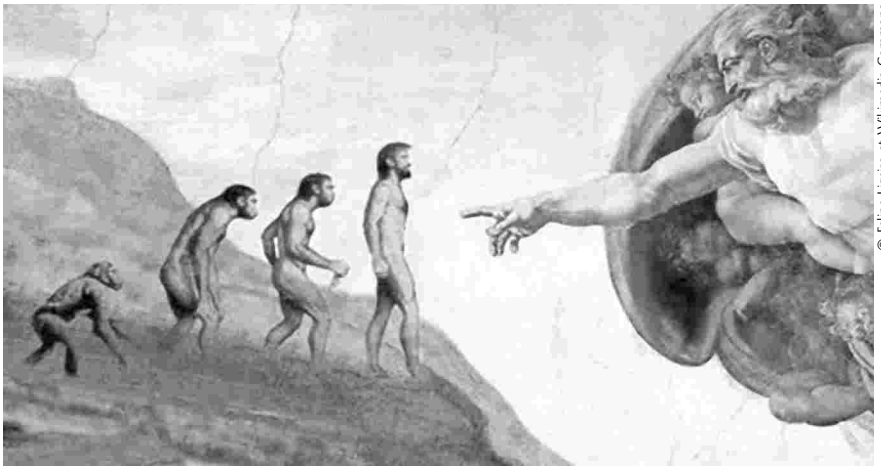
> By Darwinism I understand a commitment to evolution—that all organisms, living and dead, have slowly emerged from just a few primitive forms, probably ultimately from inorganic matter. I understand also a commitment to natural selection, that the chief mechanism of change is differential reproduction brought on by the struggle for existence, with the major consequence being adaptation. I do not think that Darwinism necessarily implies that selection is the only mechanism or that every last detail of organic life is adapted, but selection as cause and adaptation as effect are the overwhelming factor.[3]

Some of the reasons to which we can attribute the fault lines between Christians and evolutionists are obvious: we need only look to the opening chapter of the Book of Genesis to find one of them. A Darwinian explanation of the origin of human life, and in fact all life, is clearly incompatible with the account of God's creation of the world in six days that we find on those pages, if it is taken literally. However, we should not let the creationist opposition to Darwinian evolution be an obstacle to our attempts to discuss Christian faith and Darwinism together: the creation story in Genesis can be understood as allegory, as theology, as narrative; if we accept it as truth on a different level from a literal, historical level of truth then this need not be the end of the road of dialogue between Christian theology and Darwinism.

The Phenomenon of Man

But there have been other stumbling blocks on the path to dialogue between Christianity and Darwinism. One of the biggest challenges—and not just to Christians—that the advent of evolutionary theory has presented, is a calling into question of humankind's conception of itself as fundamentally different from—dare we even say superior to—the

[3] Michael Ruse, 'Darwinism and Naturalism: Identical Twins or Just Good Friends?' in *Darwinism and Philosophy*, edited by Vittorio Hösle and Christian Illies (Notre Dame: U. of Notre Dame, 2005), 83–91, here 83.



rest of the natural order. Aquinas was clear that it was our rationality that allowed us to be distinguished us from all other animals. But, according to Darwin, our common ancestry with all other living beings, be it traceable to (relatively) recent history, to the origins of life itself or to some point in between, suggests that the existence of our species is no more necessary or special than that of any other.[4]

Any differences between ourselves and other living beings have arisen through the same processes as all other differences between all other species: those of descent with modification. So can we still maintain that we are ontologically unique; can we say that we differ from the rest of the natural order by kind, rather than degree, as we might have done unquestioningly before we had Darwinism to contend with? How are we now to make sense of the Christian claim that human beings—and we alone—are made in the image of God? How can we make sense of what we would want to call our human nature in a Darwinian framework?

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin would seem to suggest that the difference between ourselves and other species occurred as one of degree … but led to a change in kind. He postulates the idea that the self-consciousness of humans represents a radical difference between human and animal, one that is not comparable to other evolutionary adaptations or increases in complexity:

[4] In fact, Darwin's individualist ontology makes the notion that all members of a species have some necessary and fundamental feature difficult to hold: a species is really a category used for convenience at any given time, it is not an immutable form of which all members of that species are instances, thereby defining and distinguishing themselves from members of other species, but as a means of classification it is immensely valuable even if difficult to define.

> Admittedly the animal knows. But it cannot know that it knows: that is quite certain …. In consequence it is now denied access to a whole domain of reality in which we can move freely. We are separated by a chasm—or a threshold—which it cannot cross. Because we are reflective we are not only different but quite other. It is not merely a matter of change of degree, but of a change of nature, resulting from a change of state.[5]

What is crucial to recognise in Teilhard's thought is that this 'chasm' that humankind has crossed does not entail a separatism between humanity and the rest of the biosphere. In fact, for Teilhard, the evolutionary process has been a steady journey towards consciousness, which the human race now possesses. 'Man discovers that *he is nothing else than evolution become conscious of itself*, to borrow Julian Huxley's striking expression.'[6] Humanity represents a new mode of being in the world, but is by no means separate from the world.

But how could this change of state that Teilhard postulates, occur? We want to maintain that the principles of descent and selection on which Darwinism relies were not violated, and that the appearance of self-consciousness, thought, a moral sense and so on, occurred through natural processes—but how? I will turn to this question shortly, as I would first like to consider briefly the question of whether the arrival of our human nature was random, inevitable or intended.

An Inevitable Outcome?

For Teilhard, social existence is the culmination of the biological process of evolution.[7] It is hard to read a statement such as this without connotations of progress, design or purpose arising, discussions of each of which in relation to Darwinism could easily be the subject of entire theses in their own rights. But they are not without importance here.

The philosopher Daniel Dennett states that the evolutionary process is an algorithmic one—one that conforms to a series of laws and patterns. It is tempting to see humanity as the final goal of such a process, as its 'final cause' to use Aristotelian terms. But Dennett makes it clear that this is a fundamental error.[8] Natural selection, the

[5] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (London and New York: Collins, 1955), 184.
[6] Teilhard de Chardin, *Phenomenon of Man*, 221.
[7] Teilhard de Chardin, *Phenomenon of Man*, 223.
[8] Daniel C. Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life* (London: Allen Lane, 1995), 56.

chief mechanism of introducing variation into life, is blind; it cannot foresee any end to its action. So to say that the evolutionary process, as driven by natural selection, has always been heading towards a certain end is incorrect. According to this view, the origin of the human species was as random an occurrence as the origin of any other species.

What implications does this have for the status of mankind in the biosphere? On this picture, mankind has the privilege of being a self-aware species, the only species that manifests an appreciation and understanding of its existence, but this is nothing more than a chance outcome of the evolutionary process. Humanity, then, while being arguably the 'highest' species (although we should be wary of using such terms: Darwin himself warned against using words such as 'higher' and 'lower' in terms of complexity of organisms), should regard itself not as privileged or chosen, or the completion of a process, but as one phase in evolutionary history.[9]

However, it has been argued conversely that evolution was always driving towards the arrival of humankind. This view has been argued for on scientific terms, even without any recourse to divine intervention or design. Dieter Wandschneider's contribution to a recent anthology on the philosophical implications of Darwinism is an example of such an argument.[10] Wandschneider is adamant that there is a tendency towards higher complexity in evolution, that it does exhibit progression, and he sees the human mind as evidence of this development. The human mind, he says, is nature's moving beyond itself. He concludes his argument thus:

> Evolution has a goal: the human mind. In it nature transcends itself as nature and gains at the same time the potential to reveal the essence underlying nature. One thus underestimates mind if one views it only as something unnatural. It is also basically the supernatural and thus the potential for the completion and elevation of nature.[11]

What the human mind here represents is nature's understanding of itself—the self-conscious mind is a product of the evolutionary process;

[9] Bernd Graefrath, 'Darwinism: Neither Biologistic or Metaphysical', in *Darwinism and Philosophy*, 364–379, at 373.
[10] Dieter Wandschneider, 'On the Problem of Direction and Goal in Biological Evolution', in *Darwinism and Philosophy*, 196–215.
[11] Wandschneider, 'On the Problem of Direction', 208.

only by producing the mind has nature been able to make any sense of itself, and it was always geared towards this.

Does Darwinism Have the Answer?

Whether the advent of human consciousness was a random occurrence or, in fact, the goal of evolution—and this question is surely of great importance to all who believe in a creator God and would be more inclined to hold something similar to the latter view in some form—we must still explain how it came about. Can we explain our seemingly unique ontological status in Darwinian terms? The origin of consciousness is hardly analogous to the origin of any physical feature, which a combination of Darwinian principles, Mendelian genetics and biochemistry can explain. The awakening of nature to itself most definitely deserves special consideration.

For the creationist Christian, and even for Christians who reject a literal interpretation of the Genesis account but will still allow for the possibility of divine action in the natural order, the question may well have a simple answer: God implanted souls in human beings and this accounts for their uniquely self-conscious state.[12] However, our approach at the moment is Darwinian and we cannot abandon the naturalism that it requires. We must try to explain the origin of self-conscious life, and this explanation typically arrives in the form of emergence.

An emergent property is one that arises as a result of interaction between other properties that have been selected for—it cannot be reduced to, or exhaustively accounted for, by the genetic combination from which it has indirectly resulted. It is

[12] Wesley Wildman argues that the Roman Catholic Church, in its moral teaching, to some extent defends the view that a soul is injected into each and every human being at some point. ('A Theological Challenge: Coordinating Biological, Social, and Religious Visions of Humanity', *Zygon*, 33/4 [December 1998], 571–597, at 579)

more than the sum of its parts. Our language, moral sense, emotion, self-awareness and so on can be classed as emergent properties. As the human genome came into existence through selection, it resulted in properties that no other organisms have possessed. The particular structure of the human being was a condition of the possibility of such mental capabilities that we have. That is not to say that any of the human capacities in question are reducible to a genetic level: we cannot point to any section of the human genome that codes for 'self-consciousness'.

Differences between organisms that arise as a result of emergence are as much a part of the evolutionary process as those that occur directly as a result of the linear selection of a particular genotype. What is unique about differences that arise as emergent properties is that they cross a threshold level and therefore appear as differences in kind rather than differences in degree.[13] The denial of an association between emergentism and reductionism is subtle but crucial:

> Human consciousness could thus be an evolutionary by-product of other capacities that were more directly favoured by natural selection. Such a biological account of the origins of human consciousness does not imply a reductionist materialism in the philosophy of mind, and it certainly does not imply that because of these humble origins the human mind is less valuable or less important for the picture we form about what it means to be a human being.[14]

It seems, then, that Darwinian evolutionary theory can offer insight into how we can talk meaningfully of the unique status of human beings in the natural world. Even so, there are many interrelated issues that still need to be addressed (some of which, such as ideas of inevitability and progress, have already been mentioned). Could self-awareness only have emerged in the species *Homo sapiens*? Is our species the pinnacle, or end point of the evolutionary process? To discuss all these issues is outside the scope of this article, but let us for now suggest briefly the possibilities of what further theological discussion might result from the conception of the nature of humankind that we have been discussing.

[13] Larry Arnhart, 'The Darwinian Moral Sense and Biblical Religion', in *Evolution and Ethics: Human Morality in Biological and Religious Perspective*, edited by Philip Clayton and Jeffrey Schloss (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 204–220, at 213.
[14] Graefrath, 'Darwinism', 368.

Taking It Further

John Milbank, in a discussion of the theology of Henri de Lubac, gives us an idea of how de Lubac, along with the earlier French Jesuit Teilhard de Chardin, would see potential in a Darwinian framework for theological discourse, and suggests how we might discuss direction in evolution meaningfully without need for recourse to ideas of design:

> … with Teilhard, he [de Lubac] reads the early stages of evolution not so much as teleologically directed to the later ones but more as 'typologically' foreshadowing them. What to atheist eyes might then seem the merely chance and adventitious in later 'random' mutation is rather, to the theologian, the sign of a completion in some sense 'required' by what went before, but nonetheless supplied as a surprising gift.[15]

De Lubac saw the evolutionary process as something that can speak to our faith and our theology, and I believe, in fact, that in de Lubac's discussion of grace and nature can be found a tool to help us speak meaningfully, in Darwinian terms, about the real and significant effect that the atonement may have had on our human nature.

The enormous change to our world-view that came about with Charles Darwin's work necessitates analysis, and particularly from the perspective of our faith. But we must be wary of doing our endeavour a disservice by falling into one of two traps. We must avoid falling victim to the all-too-rehearsed argument of the ultra-Darwinists, who would remove all objective content from religious belief by reducing it, and in fact everything we experience, including our own sense of self, to an illusion, an 'epiphenomenon' created by 'our' DNA for its own purpose, namely, replication. But we must also avoid, in our attempts to keep our faith away from the reductive grip of the ultra-Darwinist, being too hasty in saying that there are some aspects of our faith to which Darwinism cannot speak. We should not be so ready to invoke,

> … the traditional distinction between the 'order of nature' and the 'order of grace', arguing that the special events of the Atonement and the like were laid over and on the normal course of nature. After all, they would hardly have been that miraculous if they were

[15] John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate Concerning the Supernatural* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 56.

> common events! Of course, at some level you are stepping out of science here—out of Darwinism and methodological naturalism—but you are hardly denying Darwinism. Jesus did not make new species. The point is that you argue that Darwinism only goes so far, and then the miraculous takes over.[16]

To appeal to the 'miraculous' might not quite be our intention, but in any case surely we are beyond the days of science and religion being 'non-overlapping magisteria', to borrow a phrase from Stephen Jay Gould? As we seek knowledge and understanding about the world we inhabit, and about ourselves, we need to be open to the fruits of previous and further study into the theory that has revolutionised our world-view, and see the theory of evolution as an exciting subject matter and dialogue partner for theology, a source of insight into the human condition, rather than something to be dismissed or explained away.

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[16] Ruse, 'Darwinism and Naturalism', 83.

Our Common Home

ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION THROUGH THE LENS OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

I-Fong Wu

WE ALL KNOW WHEN there are urgent issues in our house, such as leaky pipes, electrical faults or broken windows. We address these problems immediately because they directly affect our living space. This helps keep us safe in our daily lives, in the places where we sleep, read, eat, drink and work. We will do everything we can to protect our home. But what about 'our common home', as Pope Francis called it—the Earth?

Everyone loves to watch a sunset, especially by a lake with green pines reflected in the water; it is a wonderful experience to feel the fresh air, follow the clouds and trace the sun as it goes down. But what if the water is foul and polluted, and the air makes us cough and feel dizzy? Imagine the smell of dead fish, the grey, dirty water with plastic floating in it, the withering trees. When we lose the wilderness, we lose our connection with nature, our food, our spirit. When we lose the rainforest, we lose our oxygen; when we lose the glaciers, we lose our fresh water. We lose our home, and with it a fundamental connection to God.

From the perspective of systematic theology, Denis Edwards suggests that humans' first transcendent connection with God is through nature.[1] God prepared an environment for Adam and Eve to live in, and they encountered God directly in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 1–2). The Earth itself is a manifestation of God's presence, where we can encounter God as Moses did. When God asked Moses to keep his distance and

[1] See Denis Edwards, *Jesus and the Cosmos* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1991); and Denis Edwards, *Breath of Life: A Theology of the Creator Spirit* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004).

remove his shoes (Exodus 3:5) this was not to avoid contamination: it was a sign that God wanted us to care for and respect what is on the Earth. In this contemporary world, most people feel God's presence in the wonders of nature, including those who do not consciously believe in God but still say, *I am spiritual but not religious*.

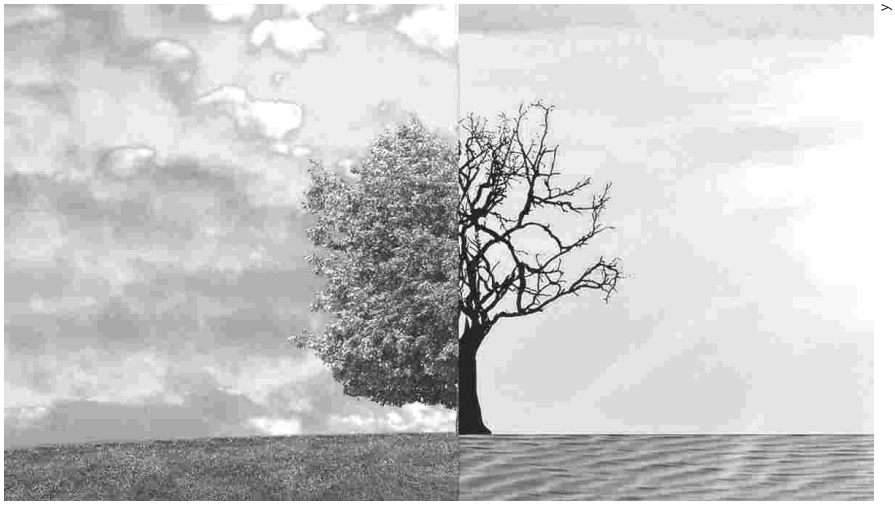
Moreover humans are part of nature, as the theologian Elizabeth Johnson reminds us in her reading of Psalm 104: 'Walking meditatively through this psalm awakens a view of creation as one connected community of different beings'.[2] Johnson guides us through a spiritual and practical meditation on human relationships with ecology. She encourages us to look around where we live, sense how beautifully God has created everything for us, and realise how much we depend on God's creation.

This also calls on us to extend our appreciation for creation to the continuity and empowerment of humanity. In Genesis 1:28 we read, 'God blessed them, and God said to them …. "Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth".' Johnson explains:

> In its original context, this divine commission gives humans a special responsibility to take good care of all the rest. Over time and especially in the modern era, however, the meaning of dominion has shifted to mean domination.[3]

Dominion is actually a responsibility that mandates humankind to be God's 'caretaker' on the Earth.[4] We are made in God's image (Genesis 1:26–27) and are invited to walk with God hand in hand, bearing a corresponding responsibility towards God's creation. We are not the rulers of the Earth, but stewards who are called to a partnership with creation. Johnson turns to the Book of Job to invite us to reflect on our place in it: 'Do you make the sun come up every morning? Do you control the snow, the rain, the wind, the storms?'[5] No, we certainly do not. Just like other species, we share rights with the entire ecology.

[2] Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Come, Have Breakfast: Meditations on God and the Earth* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2024), 14.
[3] Johnson, *Come, Have Breakfast*, 9.
[4] Reinhard Cardinal Marx, '"Everything Is Connected": On the Relevance of an Integral Understanding of Reality in *Laudato si*'', *Theological Studies*, 77/2 (2016), 298.
[5] Johnson, *Come, Have Breakfast*, 150, paraphrasing Job 38.



Many people have misinterpreted Genesis 1:28, thinking we own this land and can do whatever we want with it. The Earth has cried out about global climate change: wildfires, glacier melts, extreme weather and drought, which have altered and damaged the natural environment and ecology. Humans' irresponsible waste destroys animal habitats and leaves other creatures struggling to survive. Pope Francis stated at the inaugural meeting of the Economy of Francesco movement in Assisi in 2022, 'We human beings, in the past two centuries, have grown at the expense of the earth. The earth is the one that pays the price.'[6] He made this point powerfully in his film *The Letter*, about the background to the 2015 environmental encyclical, *Laudato si'*:

> We're building a tower of human arrogance with bricks of power, bricks of economy. And to build that, so many people work like slaves. And if a slave falls, nothing happens. But we've taken an extra step. If nature falls, nothing happens.[7]

Our social responsibility, as Francis emphasized in *Laudato si'*, is 'to develop a new economy, more attentive to ethical principles' (n.189) and to promote 'more balanced levels of production, a better distribution

[6] Pope Francis, address at 'Economy of Francesco', Assisi, 24 September 2022. The Economy of Francesco is an initiative established by Pope Francis in 2019 that seeks 'to support young researchers, entrepreneurs, and changemakers in promoting a global economic transformation oriented toward the common good, fraternity, and care' ('Our Story', at https://francescoeconomy.org/our-story/), accessed 1 April 2026.

[7] Pope Francis, *The Letter: A Message for Our Earth*, directed by Nicolas Brown (YouTube Originals, 2022), and see Austen Ivereigh, *First Belong to God: On Retreat with Pope Francis* (Chicago: Loyola, 2024), 92.

of wealth, concern for the environment and the rights of future generations' (n.109). Pope Francis places the Church at the centre of this challenge, engaging in a spiritual conversation and calling us to a new relationship with the created world.

It is time for us to turn to Jesus. In Jesus' public work, like his heavenly Father, he showed his gentleness, 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest' (Matthew 11:28). Our partner, the Earth, needs rest. If we neglect this partner, the Earth will not be able to care for us. The recklessness and self-focus of our unlimited desires will eventually lead us to self-destruction, which is not what God wants from us and is against God's plans.

The Spiritual Exercises

I often wonder what Ignatius of Loyola would say to today's world about what he has observed in it and how the Holy Trinity operates in ecological matters. In April 2018, Pope Francis wrote in *Gaudete et exsultate*, 'Holiness, in the end, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life' (n.15). He turned to Ignatius to show us the path towards such holiness:

> At its core, holiness is experiencing, in union with Christ, the mysteries of his life …. The contemplation of these mysteries, as Saint Ignatius of Loyola pointed out, leads us to incarnate them in our choices and attitudes. (n.20)

Ignatius understood our inner struggles and self-centred desires, recognising how easily our weaknesses could deceive us. He knew how the evil spirit can disguise himself as an 'angel of light' (Exx 332), appearing as a good motivation behind our decisions and deceiving our devout souls. What matters is living in God's love and embracing Christ's life. Ignatius and his Spiritual Exercises remain a valuable guide when we contemplate our connection to divinity within the global ecology.

The acknowledgement of our sins in Week One, the contemplations leading to Week Two's discernment, the unity of the paschal mystery in Week Three and the resurrection of Jesus in Week Four bring us to a deep understanding of the truth. Our relationship with the paschal mystery will profoundly influence how we perceive life in this ecological system where we encounter Jesus' ongoing, incarnate presence in the world.

Our Connection with Creation in the First Week

In the first week of the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius invites us to revisit our creation, see ourselves through the lens of God's plan for the world, and discover God's love and mercy on our journey. The Principle and Foundation teach us that everything in the world is a gift from God, created to help us feel, perceive, learn about, interact with and serve God: 'Human beings are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by means of doing this to save their souls'. God created all other things on Earth to help fulfil our purpose. With that in mind, instead of abusing and controlling what God has created for us, 'we ought to desire and choose only that which is more conducive to the end for which we are created' (Exx 23).

Ignatius encourages us to use contemplative prayer to stay connected with the brokenness of our relationship with God and creation. In terms of ecological conversion, we see our selfish, abusive control and domination over the other creatures; we hear the Earth cry out. We see our sins in abusing and ignoring God's love, and we ask for mercy to return to this ecological family of sacred gifts from God. In our triple colloquy, we feel remorse for what we have done to this environment; we pray for the encouragement to care for the Earth; and ask for the light to guide us in what we should do.

Ecological Choice in the Second Week

In the Second Week, it is time to choose and act based on the discernment tools that are given to us, such as the meditation on the Two Standards (Exx 137–147), which dramatizes the conflict within our inner selves between the standards of God and Satan. Here we stand at a crossroads with two diverging paths. We see that how we treat the Earth is rooted in what governs us, what we value and desire. As Austen Ivereigh puts it, in a retreat guide based on the writings of Pope Francis:

> What world do we desire? Do we want to resign ourselves to a rivalrous, individualist world or do we want to work toward solidarity and cooperation? Do we accept a world hurtling toward ecological devastation, a world in which the rich get richer and the poor get poorer? Or do we want to build a world in which people see the earth as 'a shared inheritance, whose fruits are meant to benefit everyone'?[8]

[8] Austen Ivereigh, *First Belong to God: On Retreat with Pope Francis* (Chicago: Loyola, 2024), 104, quoting *Laudato si'*, n. 93.

The Two Standards contemplation reveals what lies before us, shows the interconnectedness of God's creation and love, and explains how we can free ourselves to embrace God's grace by following the Standard of Christ. Ecology brings together the most instinctive human emotions and the sense of love through intrinsic mutuality. Douglas Christie uses the story of St Anthony the Great (251–356) to illustrate the integration of the individual and the community, a practice of contemplation and action, a 'contemplative ecological vision' in Christ.

> At the heart of this practice was the effort to realize in their lives what the monks sometimes referred to as purity of heart (cf. Mt 5:8), a way of seeing oneself and the world as whole and undivided. The self was a cosmos unto itself, as rich and intricate and profound as the physical cosmos, and the monks believed their fates were intertwined with one another.[9]

The world is beautiful—nature, animals, human beings, men or women, straight or gay, black or white … they are all good, created by God. God is satisfied and decides to live with us. God is mysteriously incarnate within nature, ecology and all life forms. We are partakers in God's glory and presence through the ecological and cosmic systems, contemplating God's incarnate love and living in Jesus' gracious resurrection.

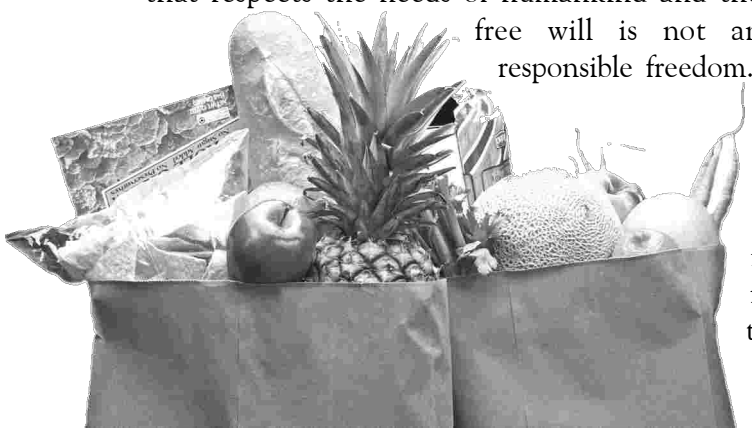
On the other hand, Satan is offering us a short period of happiness, but at the cost of God's creation and the expense of our future. It is the parable of the son who took his father's money, decided to leave and then eventually returned home (Luke 15:11–16). We all know what happened to this man before he came back to his father. The evil spirit has sought to cause harm to this world since the Garden of Eden, often by means of short-term economic benefits. Like taking heroin, abusing the planet can produce temporary pleasure. But the evil spirit disguises the long-term consequences, offering us consolation to deceive us.[10] We need to distinguish between true and false consolation, returning to the foundation of humanity and the love of God. The meditation on the Two Standards clears away the clouds that disguise the evil spirit and reveals the light of hope and love.

[9] Douglas Christie, *The Blue Sapphire of the Mind: Notes for a Contemplative Ecology* (Oxford: Oxford U, 2013), 41–53.
[10] See George A. Aschenbrenner, *Stretched for Greater Glory: What to Expect from the Spiritual Exercises* (Chicago: Loyola, 2004), 189–199.

When I was a child I remember chasing hundreds of dragonflies in my neighbourhood with other kids, smiling and laughing freely. We would lie on the grass, breathing in the fresh air filled with the scents of grass and trees, looking up at the clear blue sky, sharing fanciful thoughts and dreams. We had no fears about jumping into lakes or rivers to swim or catch freshwater shrimp. These rare divine gifts are often out of reach now, and the land has become toxic, no longer naturally clean. The river has no fish or shrimp. Even if there were any, the numbers would be much smaller, and they could be contaminated with chemicals, plastic particles and hormones. I miss those days when I felt free and connected to nature. I saw myself in nature. I felt, and smelt, God's presence through his creation and creatures.

It took me two years to get used to bringing a reusable bag while shopping for groceries. Looking back, I realise that I might have used at least ten large plastic bags weekly from different stores, totalling 21,000 bags wasted somewhere on Earth over the past forty years. Consider the number of people who go shopping worldwide! Overcoming climate change is no easy task. Human greed and the desire for self-sufficiency weave a complex and intricate economic web.

Being ordinary people, we might not have as much influence as we wish, but we possess more political power than we realise. We can raise our voices to echo the cry of the Earth, and each of our votes counts. We are also responsible for our lifestyle: 'The decisive point is for each individual to exercise their freedom responsibly on the way to development that respects the needs of humankind and the environment'. Our free will is not an unlimited but a responsible freedom. Cardinal Marx goes on: 'Ecological and social damage, "both are ultimately due to the same evil: the notion that there are no indisputable truths to guide our lives, and hence human freedom is limitless"'.[11]



[11] Marx, '"Everything Is Connected"', 305.

The Divine Appearance in Ecological Systems in the Third and Fourth Weeks

Weeks One and Two of the Spiritual Exercises invited us to look into our deeper selves and respond to God's calling. In the Third and Fourth Weeks our discipleship is renewed and transformed during our pilgrimage with Jesus. We discern on this devastated Earth, disregarding false consolations and journeying together with Jesus from the cross through the tomb to his resurrection. We witness his surrender to redemption and crucifixion, and we envision his ultimate humility, humanity and victory over death. Within this ecological system, we are part of God's plan for recovery and restoration.

We must undertake the Third and Fourth Weeks as a unified journey. When the Earth suffers, we suffer too, which is also Christ's suffering. Our intimacy with this Earth is intimacy with our Lord. This land, created by God, is the 'land flowing with milk and honey' (Exodus 3:8) that God has promised to all of us. It is the land where Adam and Eve first met God without fear or shame, where Moses met Yahweh—with fear, concerns and surrender—and where Jesus was raised. Jesus is the hope and fulfilment of the continuation of this promise. Without Jesus' redemption, nothing would persist or remain in the world. Life on Earth is a gift resulting from Jesus' passion.

In the Third Week, we stay with Jesus, accompanying him as he enters the chaos of what we have messed up. The increasingly extreme weather caused by climate change echoes the darkness and earthquake that fell over the land when Jesus died (Matthew 27:45–54); but this also prophesies the hope of restoration through Jesus' resurrection from death. At the foot of the cross in the Third Week, we are with Jesus in this beautiful but messy land, experiencing agony, sorrow and suffering. We recognised such affliction in Week One (*what have I done to Christ?*) and decided to align ourselves with Jesus' standard, becoming moral witnesses for Christ in the Second Week. In the Third Week the Earth is ruined, and both we and Jesus are ecologically, physically and spiritually traumatized. Now we aim to preserve God's Kingdom and promote ecological justice, even if it means sacrificing some joy or convenience.

The rescue and restoration process for us and the ecology continues in Week Four and beyond. The path towards healing all our wounds begins with Jesus' resurrection. Elizabeth Johnson focuses on the moment when, after rising from his death and tomb, Jesus invites us all to have

breakfast with him (John 21:12) in this renewed land. According to Johnson, this invitation, 'opens a portal into an ecological image of the living God, active with cordial hospitality toward all creatures, willing their good, wanting all to be fed'.[12] Johnson suggests that we deepen and hear anew the calling in this ritual with Jesus, as expressed in the words, 'Feed my lambs …. feed my sheep' (John 21:15–17), to contemplate further the internal and external vocation to care for ecology and tend to this divine land with Christ.

> The divine summons to 'Come, have breakfast' resounds with prophetic challenge. It cracks through the complacency of privileged people with insistence: stop global warming, make peace, change unjust business practices, feed the hungry, make it possible for every last person to start the day with nourishing food.[13]

You Open Wide Your Hand

I would like to conclude by sharing a photograph that I took in March 2025 while travelling through the countryside on my way to Nicaea, now known as Iznik, in Turkey. This is where the Council of Nicaea was held in 325 AD, and the Nicene Creed was first adopted. I saw the untouched land with the simple lives of the people, as if had I gone through a time tunnel that took me back to Jesus' lifetime, when he said, 'The gatekeeper opens it for him, and

[12] Johnson, *Come, Have Breakfast*, 212.
[13] Johnson, *Come, Have Breakfast*, 212.

the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out' (John 10:3).

Those goats looked at me with hope as if they were waiting for something from me. During our breakfast with Jesus, like his disciples, we are called, healed and reshaped and given the role of ensuring that the sheep have a place to live and meet God. In this co-constitutive world, we must provide food for all species through collaboration and care for them alongside Jesus, empowering them with what they need while they support what is essential to us in this ecological mutuality.

> The eyes of all look hopefully to you; you give them their food in due season. You open wide your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. (Psalm 145:15–16)

I-Fong Wu serves as a spiritual director at the Loyola Jesuit Retreat Center in New Jersey, the Christian Life Community of the USA and elsewhere. He has over thirty years of experience in the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises, and a mastership from Fordham University with a focus on Christian spirituality, pastoral counselling and theology. He formerly worked in the telecommunications and mobile technology industry.

IN MEMORY OF TERESA WHITE FCJ (1940–2025)

IT IS MY PRIVILEGE, on behalf of the Faithful Companions of Jesus community, to share some memories about Teresa, Tessie as she was known in her family, Sr Teresa as she was known here in our parish.

Teresa was born in 1940 and often reminded us that although she was indeed a Londoner, she was born in Loughborough in Leicestershire where her mother was evacuated owing to the war. She was the second of five children born to Reginald and Cecilia. Her sister Monica, one year her senior, sadly died aged 36. Teresa felt Monica's untimely death very keenly and spoke fondly of her relationship with her sister. Teresa was followed by her brother Ian, her sister Gay and brother Paul. Teresa loved her family and remained very close to them throughout her life. She kept in frequent contact with family members and enjoyed visits, phone calls and more recently e-mails.

Her early years were very much influenced by the war. She was four when it ended. Remembering her childhood during the war, she wrote 'shades of grey coloured those early years, I remember hearing sirens, was familiar with bomb sites, ration books, coupons for food

and, most important of all for us children, sweets!' Despite the challenges of growing up in post-war England, Teresa was keenly aware that this was also a time of hope and a new era which brought major changes to health and education. Although it was no secret that Teresa was not a royalist, she sometimes reminded us that the new Queen Elizabeth had smiled at her personally as she stood with other Girl Guides waving her flag on coronation day 1952.

The family lived in West Hampstead and one of her favourite places as a child was Hampstead Heath. All through her life, Teresa loved the outdoors and the beauty of nature. In her later years, she enjoyed a daily walk to admire the water lilies at Mulberry Place or a walk by the ever changing river Thames. During her final weeks at St Anne's nursing home, she loved to have her breakfast in the dining room gazing at the trees in their autumn beauty. Music was another love in Teresa's life, although sadly she lost her singing voice during her years in Switzerland. Her father was the choir master at St Thomas More Church and we can imagine Teresa as one of his ardent choristers.

Teresa followed her sister Monica to St Aloysius FCJ convent school for her secondary-school education. She blossomed as a student and was head girl in her final year. Sr Patricia Gallagher was her headteacher and, according to Sr Claire Sykes, she was 'an inspiration to Teresa who remembered Patricia teaching the older girls to write cursive text quickly and clearly'. Teresa's interest in writing and literature was nurtured and developed in her school years. As well as being a conscientious pupil she enjoyed playing netball and was very proud that her team beat many of those from other London schools! She kept in touch with her classmates and a few years ago she was delighted to celebrate a schoolfriend's 80th birthday.

After her education at St Aloysius, Teresa expressed interest in entering the FCJ sisters. However, following her mother's advice, she waited for some years. During that time, she worked at the War Office where she had to make a promise of confidentiality. We can only imagine the sensitive material which was still passing through the office at that time. In February 1961, Teresa went to Broadstairs in Kent where she began her FCJ formation. At that time, novices followed a strict rule of silence. Sr Rita, a close friend of Teresa's who entered that same year, remembered Teresa and another novice, Carmel, deciding to sing as they walked, Teresa soprano and Carmel alto, a creative way of communicating when novices had a rule of silence! Teresa and Carmel

also have remained close friends throughout their lives. Other fellow novices also remember Teresa very warmly. Teresa invited Maria Grazia Spinato, a novice from Italy, to visit her family in London before going to the novitiate and gave her a whistle-stop tour of the sights.

Teresa made her first vows in 1963 and moved to Fribourg in Switzerland, where she did a licence-ès-lettres in Latin and French at the University of Fribourg. The years in Switzerland were difficult ones for the FCJ students, as they combined their studies with a heavy schedule of work in the boarding school. She returned to her Alma Mater in London in 1967 where she did her PGCE. Sr Gloria, who was her student, remembers Teresa as a very creative young teacher. Teresa taught for some years in Poles, Hertfordshire and then moved to The Hollies in Manchester.

During this time, Teresa studied for an MA in French, a language she loved all her life. Teresa then moved to Paisley in Scotland, her mother's birthplace and a country close to her heart. During her eight years in Scotland she forged strong relationships with students and staff and across the years she kept in contact with many of them. Sr Rita remembers her enthusiasm and creativity which she expressed in her involvement in the parish, where she was very active and appreciated. Teresa then moved south again, this time to Gumley House in Isleworth, West London.

In 1992, four FCJ sisters began a new community at Hythe in Hampshire. Teresa loved her time in Hythe as the community was involved in supporting the amalgamation of two parishes. Her ministry was chaplain in St Anne's convent school. On hearing of Teresa's death, a fellow teacher from Southampton wrote: 'Sr Teresa was wonderful in her sincere approach to the girls'. When the FCJs left Hythe, a parishioner wrote in one of the local newspapers: 'The 7.30 Hythe Ferry passengers will miss Sr Teresa's exclamations of wonder as nature's beauty shone on them'. Another member of staff said: 'We shall always remember her confidentiality, quiet strength, intelligence and common sense'.

After Hythe, Teresa once again returned to Scotland to the Jesuit Retreat Centre, Craighead, outside Glasgow, where she was a member of the spirituality team. Sr Ruth Casey remembers discovering sacred circle dancing with Teresa, something they both enjoyed and shared with many others. Teresa's gift with words became quite evident at this time as the sisters took turns in giving reflections at Mass. Teresa was

on the move again in 1999 when she took responsibility for a small spirituality centre in Salford. She developed good contacts with the local Jewish community in Prestwich, some of whom joined in the activities at the spirituality centre.

From a young age Teresa was a gifted wordsmith and as she moved back from full-time responsibility she began to write even more. She was asked to write a history of the Faithful Companions of Jesus in 2010. She also contributed to Catholic publications such as *The Tablet*, *The Ignatian Periodical* and *The Way*, as well as some Catholic newspapers and the Church of England weekly paper the *Church Times*. The present editor of *The Way*, Philip Harrison, wrote: 'We will miss her greatly. She leaves behind her a tremendous legacy in her writing.'

Teresa was very honoured to be asked to write the Bloomsbury Lent book for 2022. The theme of hope could not have been more apt during the challenging time of the pandemic. Titled *Hope and Nearness of God*, the book was much appreciated by many people. Her editor, Robin Baird Smith, on hearing of her death wrote: 'I loved Teresa very much and admired her deep spiritual sensitivity and common sense'. Many people writing to her community in recent weeks have commented on the inspiration they received in Teresa's writings.

When Teresa first came to live to Poplar in 2012, she did some voluntary work at Tower Hamlets College where she helped students who struggled with the English language. She offered particular support to young Muslim women. She also took Holy Communion to parishioners who were no longer mobile and became a much loved member of this parish. She left Poplar for three years in 2016 as she went to support the FCJ community in Paris. Teresa loved France and across the years she never lost her fluency in the language. A member of the school staff at Notre Dame de France wrote a very warm account of her relationship with Teresa on hearing of her death. She remembered her as 'smiling, welcoming, open, faithful and human'.

On returning to Poplar in 2019, she was diagnosed with cancer. However she continued to live quite a full life, dedicating time to reflection and writing and taking an active role in our FCJ formation community, sharing her favourite poems and writing with novices. As part of the preparation for the bicentenary of the Faithful Companions of Jesus in 2020, Teresa was asked to compile a booklet, *The Faithfulness of God*. This booklet is a treasure trove of FCJ spiritual wisdom taken

from our foundress and other FCJ writings. She also contributed to the recently established Heritage Centre at the convent in Paris. This demanded significant skill in the art of précis and Teresa rose to the challenge despite her illness.

Every Saturday, Teresa helped Fr Anthony from the Vietnamese community in Bow church with his English for his Sunday homily. Although she did not consider herself a great cook, Teresa never failed to produce a tasty meal for the community. Her roast potatoes were legendary, the recipe a well guarded secret worthy of War Office confidentiality! Teresa had a very deep love for this parish. Sharon, her great friend, said that she hoped Teresa would be welcomed into heaven with the love with which she welcomed everyone into our church. A visitor from Puerto Rico called Sr Teresa a blessing for her. Teresa had a wonderful gift of reaching out to young and old. Harriet, an FCJ Companion in Mission, wrote: 'Sr Teresa was a friend who always looked out for me and my family. It is fitting in many ways that Teresa's funeral takes place here in a parish where she loved and was loved.'

Teresa found great consolation in literature and poetry, and her writings were rich with references to some of her favourite literature. The afterword to her book *Hope and Nearness of God* contains the poem 'Beginners' by Denise Levertov. It surely captures a little of this gifted sister, sister-in-law, aunt, friend and companion:

> But we have only begun
> To love the earth.
>
> We have only begun
> To imagine the fullness of life.
>
> How could we tire of hope?
> — so much is in bud.[1]

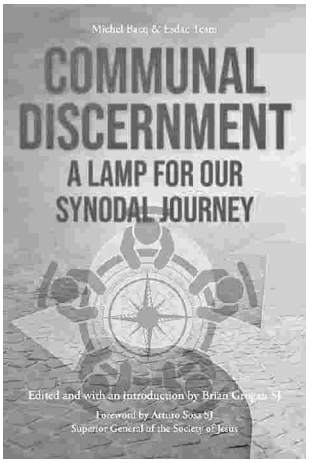
Katherine O'Flynn fcJ

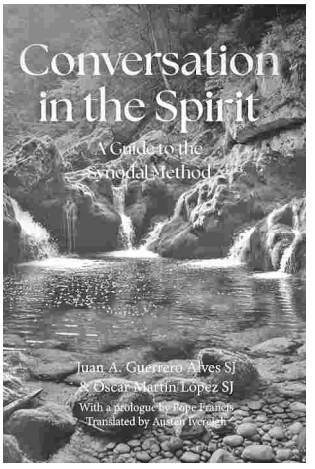
[1] Denise Levertov, 'Beginners', in *Candles in Babylon* (New York: New Directions, 1982), 82.

RECENT BOOKS

***Communal Discernment: A Lamp for Our Synodal Journey*, edited by Brian Grogan (Dublin: Messenger, 2024). 978 1 7881 2666 3, pp.240, €14.95.**

Juan A. Guerrero Alves and Oscar Martín López, *Conversation in the Spirit: A Guide to the Synodal Method*, translated by Austen Ivereigh (Dublin: Messenger, 2025) 978 1 7881 2728 8, pp.122, €14.95.





When Pope Francis died in 2024, one of the key questions many in the Church and beyond were asking themselves was whether his successor would continue with his promotion of synodality as a vital element in ecclesial decision-making. A great number hoped that he would, even feeling that here Francis had opened a window to the Spirit (to use John XXIII's image from the beginning of the Second Vatican Council) that could not easily be closed again. Nevertheless, others favoured a return to a more hierarchical system of addressing questions that arose in the Church. In the months since his election, it seems that Pope Leo leans towards the former position, so the two books under review here retain their relevance.

Both are translations, which may itself give an indication of where the pressure for a more synodal approach finds its roots. *Conversation in the Spirit* is a straightforward rendering into English by Austen Ivereigh of a work originally produced in Spanish. In *Communal Discernment*, Brian Grogan has, by contrast, both edited and adapted a 'manual for busy practitioners' first published in French in 2022 by a group of Belgian Jesuits. This group, known by the French acronym ESDAC (in English 'Spiritual Exercises for Communal Apostolic Discernment'), has been active for the last three decades in running

workshops introducing people across Europe and more recently beyond to the practicalities of discernment in common, and their book distils what they have learnt through this experience into an eminently practical guide.

After a few pages outlining their vision, the bulk of the volume moves through the stages that they employ, from how to lead people initially into Spirit-led conversations, to working towards achieving consensus on the decisions facing those involved. Appendices offer detailed answers to practical questions, such as listing prayer materials that best support the process at different stages, and timings for the sections of any given session. Although at first glance this can appear highly prescriptive, the authors are quick to point out that anything they lay down is simply a guide, to be adapted and applied to the needs of any particular situation. So it was the ESDAC group itself which suggested that an English edition of their work should not be a straightforward translation, but rather a new version recognising cultural differences. Having said that, Grogan doesn't feel the need to take centre stage. Apart from contributing an introduction and some footnotes, the extent to which he has modified the original work is never highlighted.

The briefer book by Guerrero Alves and López deals with a single aspect of the 'synodal method', that of conversations in the Spirit. The need for this is evident, since most church groups, when considering the issues they face, either become rapidly practical: 'Who is on the readers' rota for the next three months?', or adopt a quasi-parliamentary debating style, arguing, scoring points and taking votes: 'Which group gets to use the parish hall on Tuesday evenings?' Synodality, by contrast, requires everyone's voice to be heard, and works at the level of what is called in the Ignatian tradition 'movements of spirits'.

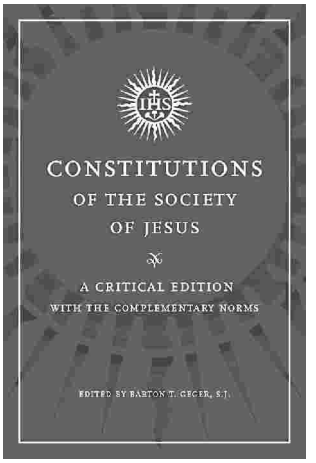
Most people are unused to speaking, and indeed of being listened to, in this way, and need to be led into it as a way of proceeding. Grogan's book offers concrete steps by which this can be accomplished. *Conversation in the Spirit,* by contrast, spends most of its time placing the whole process in context, drawing on insights from scripture, history (here the 'Deliberation of the First Fathers', by which the first companions of St Ignatius together decided to found the Society of Jesus, takes pride of place), psychology and theology. When it does move, in its last few pages, on to practical guidelines, its advice is similar to the earlier work here, which it acknowledges as a key source.

One of the key aims of *The Way*, almost since its inception, has been to make work in Ignatian spirituality published in other languages, and in particular in French and Spanish, available to an English-speaking readership

who might otherwise be unfamiliar with it. These two books complement each other to illustrate the importance of this aim. A process codified originally by a group of francophone Belgians (itself drawing heavily on practices drawn up in Canada and the United States in the 1970s and 1980s), is now presented in English by an Irish Jesuit, and in another form by a Spaniard and a Latin American. Pope Francis hoped that his synodal process would transform the Church across the world, a hope which is sustained by his successor Leo. Even its proponents concede that such transformation will take decades, if not centuries, to be fully achieved. The two books here, taken together, provide an excellent practical foundation for such a project.

Paul Nicholson SJ

***The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus: A Critical Edition with the Complementary Norms*, edited by Barton T. Geger (Chestnut Hill: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2024). 978 1 9476 1721 6, pp. 624, $49.95.**



The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus is a remarkable document. It is a unique creation; a complex mix of rules, guidelines and dynamic ways of ordering relationships and structures to serve the missionary character and purpose of the Society. Dismissing them as a 'confused labyrinth', Nicolás Bobadilla, one of the first companions, did not appreciate Ignatius' efforts. Many would agree with him. Pedro Arrupe captured their character well in an address at Loyola (1972) when he wrote:

> The book of the *Constitutions*, though it contains juridical elements, is not a code. Though it possesses many ascetical-spiritual elements, it is not a book of devotion nor an ascetical manual. Though it offers many directives that are apostolic on the human level, it is not a simple textbook for the apostolate or for pastoral ministry …[1]

[1] Pedro Arrupe, 'La mission apostolica, clave del carisma ignaciona', in *La Identidad del Jesuita en nuestros tiempos* (Santander: Sal Terrae, 1981), 106. For a fuller appreciation of Arrupe's role in recovering the centrality of the *Constitutions* in Jesuit life, see Urbano Valero, 'Men of the Constitutions', *Review of Ignatian Spirituality (CIS)*, 38/3 (2007), 19–43.

Up until Vatican II, most Jesuits would not have been familiar with the *Constitutions* except through 'The Summary': this may have served well enough, but it was also distorting, as Joe Veale observed in a masterful essay published in *The Way*, 'How the *Constitutions* Work'.[2]

Following Vatican II, and under the inspirational guidance of Pedro Arrupe, the Society became engaged in a 'recovery' of the *Constitutions* in their full, complex and remarkable character. Central to this was the realisation that the *Constitutions* cannot be separated from the Spiritual Exercises, whose experiences and dispositions they presume and embed. The movement from the Exercises to the *Constitutions* can be seen as conversion from the 'I' to the 'we', which the first companions recognised in their decision to be an apostolic body united in mission. Indeed, the *Constitutions* can be seen as a deeply spiritual as well as practical ordering of 'a body' to God, to the members gathered under the banner of the cross, and, ultimately, to the discernment of the mission directed to the salvation and 'progress of souls' (Formula of the Institute, n. 1).

The continuing *ressourcement* and its significance is well brought out in Barton Geger's introduction to his new updated edition of George Ganss's work, which was itself a significant scholarly translation of the *Constitutions* into English in 1970.[3] Geger's new edition has other features which will be helpful for the reader—especially, his decision to fill out references in Ganss' footnotes when they refer to primary sources which may not be available or easily accessible. Readers and students will also be grateful for the six appendices which cover a range of central topics including 'Juridical Texts in Catholic Religious Life', 'The Society of Jesus as a Mystical Body' and 'Grades in the Society of Jesus'. Although, understandably, these are not in-depth treatments, they do serve to provide information and context which allow for deeper exploration and discussion.

The appendix on the juridical texts will be especially helpful for understanding the different complex genres of 'rules', summaries, epitomes and so on used in the life and governance of the Society before the post-Vatican II publication of the text in vernacular languages, along with the Complementary Norms—a parallel series of texts drawn from the General Congregations. Likewise, the extensive bibliography will prove a useful tool for scholars and students alike.

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[2] *The Way Supplement*, 61 (Spring 1988), 3–18; recently reprinted in *The Way*, 65/1 (January 2026), 24–42.

[3] Ganss's introduction to his translation is still useful. It is also worthy of note that the first translation of the *Constitutions* into a vernacular language (French) was by François Courel (1967), published in La Collection Christus, no. 23.

For all these welcome helps to a deeper appropriation and appreciation of the *Constitutions* that Geger's edition affords, one should read his notes with a degree of critical attention. Occasionally, he goes beyond scholarly information and tends to let his own revisionary perspectives determine his observations and opinions. Footnotes become expanded mini-theses, interesting in themselves, but open to critical discussion. Is Ignatius' distinction between *charitad* (used 3 times in the *Spiritual Exercises*) and *amor* (used 26 times) as consciously Thomist as note 724 suggests, and does it really lead to the view that the *Contemplatio* is a synopsis of the graces desired in the retreat rather than a mystical climax (331)? Surely the sum is greater than the parts, for the *Contemplatio* entails a graced epistemological as well as moral and spiritual 'indwelling' in a world, having put on the 'mind of Christ' and now alive to God's salvific love. This with many other footnotes by Geger opens up interesting questions which invite examination and discussion.

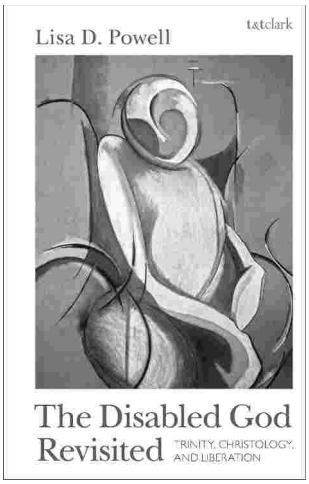
Useful though the first part of the introduction is, perhaps one of the most puzzling decisions of the editor is to end it by setting out the 'principles' that appear to govern his editorial exercise. The form is intended to give authority to the exposition. Yet does it actually help us to uncover the lasting charism of the Society? Or do the principles and conclusions present us with an agenda designed to command our agreement and correct any errors in our (or past) readings? It seems to me that the presuppositions of Fr Geger's own hermeneutics and his reasons for choosing this form could helpfully be explored at this point.

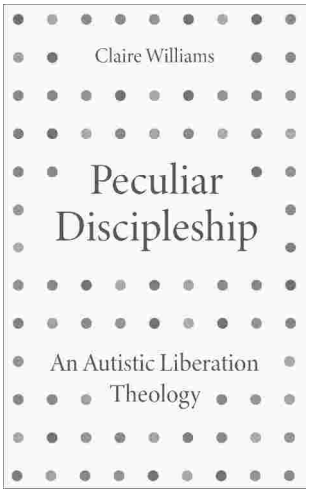
Students will nevertheless find much of value in this new edition. There is no doubt about the Herculean effort and commitment to the sources of the Society and its life which it represents. Such an outcome can only be a work of love. When studying this new edition the engaged reader will be informed, stimulated and maybe provoked, but, above all, he or she will always be grateful to Fr Geger for his work

James Hanvey SJ

Lisa D. Powell, *The Disabled God Revisited: Trinity, Christology, and Liberation* (London: T. and T. Clark, 2023). 978 0 5676 9433 1, pp.162, £15.29.

Claire Williams, *Peculiar Discipleship: An Autistic Liberation Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2023). 978 0 3340 6306 3, pp.272, £20.00.





In recent years there has been an increasing theological interest in neurodivergence and disability, and their place in God's Kingdom, both heavenly and in this world—with Nancy Eiesland's seminal work *The Disabled God* being perhaps the most well-known example. Eiesland is by no means the only contributor to this growing field of academic research, however. John Swinton, Leon van Ommen, Stewart Rapley, Brian Brock, the Centre for Autistic Theology (CAT) at Aberdeen University, Olga Bogdashina, Abe Isanon and John Gillibrand have all contributed research and publications that focuses on disability and neurodivergence within the Church.

While many of these authors do not have a disability and are not neurodivergent, a number of them have personal experience through being parents of disabled or neurodivergent children; and an increasing number of disabled and neurodivergent academics and theologians have contributed to this growing field of disability theology. I approached Powell and Williams from the perspective of my own experience of being autistic and being engaged in doctoral research at CAT.

To provide a context for Powell, it may be worth reading *The Disabled God* first, given that Powell explicitly bases her work on it and refers extensively to it. Powell situates *The Disabled God Revisited* within Trinitarian, christological and liberational contexts, and explores various facets of disability within them. She constructively and sympathetically extends Eiesland's liberation theology and shows why disability theology is an important area for theological study, reflection and action. Yet, Powell also suggests that a disability theology

worthy of the name is lacking from wider discussions around intersectionality and liberation theology.

Powell presents God as taking disabled and disability embodiment seriously and embracing creaturely life with a depth reaching into the very being of Godself. In this she echoes Eiesland, who beholds God as a disabled survivor, viewing the still visible marks of crucifixion after the resurrection as signifying that God still identifies as disabled and stands 'shoulder to shoulder' with all disabled people throughout history.

Powell's book is well structured, with a useful introduction that includes definitions of disability and disability theology. Such definitions, however, are written from a US perspective, and a British definition of disability, as provided by the *Equality Act 2010*, would be couched in different terms. Powell does not shrink away from critiques of Eiesland, namely that Eiesland focuses in her study on physical disabilities to the detriment of sensory disabilities, mental ill-health, learning disabilities and neurodivergence.

Chapters two and three focus on the study of Christ's 'disabled body', which is a recurring theme in disability theology. These chapters challenge Western normative assumptions around the disabled body and what it means to be disabled, assumptions suggesting that the 'normal' human is non-disabled and is the standard by which all humans are measured and valued. Here Powell denies the supremacy of such normative standards, and engages with and critiques much of Karl Barth's theology around such normativity, suggesting that Barth has become synonymous with sexism, anti-Jewish rhetoric and heteronormativity (43), and, by implication disability discrimination. Whether that is a fair assessment and critique of Barth within the context of disability theology I am not qualified to judge.

Disability theology is expanded in chapter four to explore the fields of feminism and 'queer crip' theology. Such an expansion and the intersectionality that results from it are relevant and valid, and disability theology and feminist theology have a lot to share with and learn from each other. However, I feel that Powell does not draw sufficient parallels with disability, and thus goes off topic a bit: feminist and queer theology become the overriding focus rather than disability theology.

Chapter five sees a welcome return to the central theme of disability theology, placing it in relation to the *imago Dei* within a post-resurrection context, and examining implications that such a context has for disabled people. The question is posed and discussed as to whether disabled people will be welcomed into God's Kingdom with their disabilities still visible, or whether disabilities will be nullified post-resurrection. This is by no means an abstract debate as it strikes at the heart of what it means to identify as 'disabled' within a faith context. Will I still be autistic post-resurrection, or

will I be either 'neurotypical' or 'neuro-normative', and what does that mean for me here and now?

It could be suggested that Claire Williams's book provides some answers to the above question, and fills some gaps in Powell's work, particularly around the lack of discussion of a neurodivergent theology. A distinction must be made here between an 'autism theology'—a theology of autism, which can be engaged in by both autistic people and those who are not neurodiverse—and 'autistic theology'—a theology *by* autistics in which we draw upon our own theological, spiritual and ecclesial experiences, hopes and voices.

Again, whether autism and other forms of neurodivergence are disabilities, or just a natural variance of the human condition, is open to debate. Such a debate is made even more difficult when one factors in the description of autism as a 'disorder' ('ASD') or a 'condition' ('ASC'). Williams is autistic and writes as an autistic Christian and, therefore, her book can be positioned within the 'autistic theology' camp and also as an aspect or example of 'liberation theology'.

The book begins with a methodological tour and sets out a broad definition of autism within both a generic and a theological context—a broad definition which is subjective and open to debate. Debate, however, is healthy! Ways of engaging with both an autistic theology and a theology of autism are also discussed. Chapter two dives into an exploration of 'autistic time' within the context of Pentecostal and Charismatic traditions (Williams herself comes from and worships within this tradition.) Autistic time, according to Williams, is a subjective phenomenon and is couched in 'overwhelmings', past traumas and future hopes. Chapter three explores the connections between autism, healing and eschatology, and raises, in my view, some rather interesting questions such as what heaven looks like for me as an autistic Christian. Will my autism still exist post-resurrection and, if so, how? Do I want to be a 'citizen' of a heaven that denies and/or rejects my autistic self? Is autism a form of suffering and, if so, what does that mean to me and my local Catholic parish?

The next chapter places much of this debate in relation to a theological and faith community dialogue with autism and autistic people, within the specific context of mothers of autistic people as an example of theological disruption and 'alongsiding'—living and loving alongside autistic people within a local church setting. Two or three of the mothers whom Williams invites us to meet (including herself) are also autistic which adds a particular legitimacy to their witness. Chapter five develops this idea of solidarity, and recognises and respects the dignity and equal worth of autistic people as well as valuing their contributions, actual or potential, to and within the

larger community. Finally, chapter six discusses what the church practises towards autistic people within that community.

The final pages of *Peculiar Discipleship* are in a form of a letter to the autistic people of God, in which autistic people are called to help dismantle barriers to full participation and belonging within local faith communities. However, Williams suggests that openness to the presence of autistic people in the Church is missing, a lack of openness compounded by there being very few church leaders at local (parish), diocesan or national levels who are autistic and are open about being autistic. This is something that I have noticed in my own doctoral research on neurodivergent clergy, certainly from within the Roman Catholic Church. A recent and almost throwaway comment by a catholic priest about autism being 'caused by an evil demon', reported in the *Irish Times*, will make it even harder for many people to find a home and a sense and acceptance and belonging within the Church.[4] Such sentiments and comments have and will continue to cause sadness and pain for many autistic people, myself included.

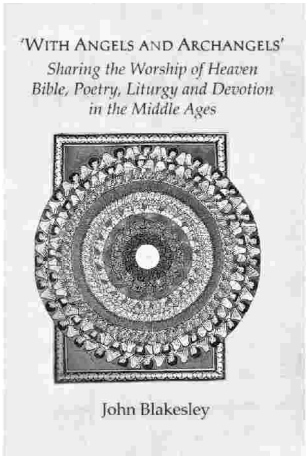
Peculiar Discipleship is not a theology *of* neurodiversity. It is a theology *from* neurodiversity and *by* neurodivergence; more specifically, by an autistic. In her ground-breaking and daring theological exploration, Claire Williams considers how the experience of God for an autistic person challenges, subverts and interrogates our normal theologies about knowing God and ourselves within 'God's tapestry'. Demonstrating how her autistic perspective offers a distinct and fresh hermeneutical, experiential and interpretive lens, Williams shows that a liberation theology of neurodiversity in general, and autism in particular, can give the Church a new way of understanding worship, practice, ethics and even the nature of Christian hope itself.

These two books on disability within the Church need to be read together and understood within the worlds of disability and neurodivergence and then reflected upon. Both ask troubling questions, some of which will be relevant to local parishes, those in ordained ministry, those who are engaged in lay ministries and those who are disabled or neurodivergent. There is a real need for disabled and neurodivergent Christians to proclaim that we are just as much a part of God's Kingdom as anyone else and that we have the right to a voice, to be heard and to be taken seriously. These two books will prove invaluable in giving such a voice to those on the disabled and neurodivergent margins, in humble sharing and listening and so read with care and be prepared to be challenged and changed.

Christopher Barber

[4] Barry Roche, 'Diocese Apologises over Priest's Sermon Claiming Autism Is Caused by "Evil Demons"', *Irish Times* (25 March 2026).

John Blakesley, *'With Angels and Archangels': Sharing the Worship of Heaven. Bible, Poetry, Liturgy and Devotion in the Middle Ages* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2024). 97 8 0852 4471 2, pp.192, £15.99.



This is a beautiful book which takes its time exploring its multifaceted subject and which invites readers to take their time as well. Not until the final chapter do we encounter again the book's overall title *'With Angels and Archangels'*, a quotation, of course, from the conclusion of the preface of the Roman Canon of the Mass leading directly into the *Sanctus*, one of the two parts of the Mass where those present echo the very songs of the angels (the other being the *Gloria in Excelsis*). By then, a vast field of spiritual creativity and reflection has been traversed!

Clearly, then, this evocation of the unity of Heaven and Earth in the liturgy becomes also a climactic point of great spiritual intensity in John Blakesley's study since, as he puts it 'every church is a "gate of heaven", because in it is celebrated the sacred banquet' (167). But the stages by which the reader is led towards this affirmation are many, varied and often surprising. Indeed, at first sight, the book might seem to wander at considerable length through elements of liturgical and spiritual reflection which, until fairly recently, were considered marginal, even by those scholars who studied them.

For example, it spends a great deal of time examining and quoting at length many of the Sequences, Tropes and Proses that were often viewed as ungainly additions to the supposed purity of the Roman Rite (and which both the Council of Trent and the Second Vatican Council consequently sought to prune back). Certainly, the sheer number of texts and melodies that make up this medieval repertoire can seem bewildering, even overwhelming. Blakesley, however, is undaunted either by the enormous extent of his subject matter or the theological qualms that some experience in encountering it. Instead, he invites us to enter deeply into the minds and hearts of the people who composed these precious adornments to the liturgy, and in so doing, he also reminds us of a profound and deeply rooted tradition of English scholarship and exegesis; I will return to this aspect of his work later.

First, though, it is worth surveying briefly the ground covered in his study, and it is, indeed, breathtaking. Very broadly, the focus is on the poetry and music composed in the Middle Ages (roughly from the ninth century through to the late fifteenth) to amplify and adorn the liturgy,

mainly that of the Mass, but also (although to a much lesser extent) the Divine Office. Hymns, Sequences, Tropes, Proses and wider symbolic and allegorical devotions all find their place and are cited and analysed at length, in beautiful translations. The generous quotation of many of these poems in itself makes this book a valuable resource for anyone seeking inspiration in his or her own prayer life. Perhaps even more importantly, though, we get to meet the men and women who composed them: two women in particular are highlighted, St Hildegard of Bingen and Elisabeth of Schönau, and through them (as well as through Notker, Peter Abelard, the Victorines and many others) Blakesley traces the far-reaching effects of mainly Benedictine spirituality and creativity throughout Europe, but especially in England.

The fact that this repertoire derives mainly from the Benedictine tradition (characterized by Blakesley as embodying 'sane and wise teaching') underlines how powerfully it is linked to the words, music and actions of the liturgy, the heart of the monastic life. The chapter on the Winchester Troper (a fascinating and very early collection of these 'additional mass-chants', including the sacred drama *Quem quaeritis*) is startlingly entitled 'English Exuberance' and the surprise and delight to be found in Blakesley's account of this one collection could be taken as emblematic of his whole approach.

For, underlying the entire book is a tradition of specifically English scholarship and writing, one which could aptly be summed up by the late Geoffrey Hill's appropriation of the term *Opus Anglicanum*. Hill wrenched this phrase out of its context (English medieval embroidery) in order to apply it with, as he himself says, 'considerable impropriety' to both English Romanesque sculpture and nineteenth-century metal work! Despite the rather laboured humour of Hill's description (in a footnote to his prose-poems *Mercian Hymns*), his appropriation was characteristically astute.

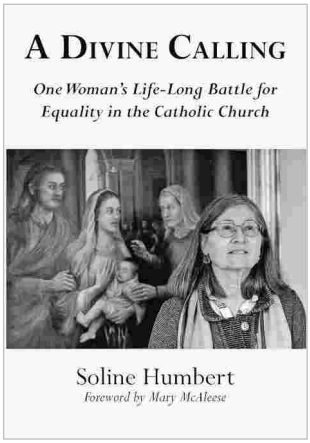
John Blakesley's own sort of *Opus Anglicanum* embraces figures such as the hymn-translator John Mason Neale (indispensable for many of the Sequences and Hymns quoted), the academics John Stevens and Peter Dronke and, above all, the spiritual author Austin Farrer. In addition, the shadow of the aims and accomplishments of the compilers of the *English Hymnal*, who included in their collection so many apparently 'irrelevant' Sequences and Proses, looms large. This fact highlights how, despite the complexity and intricacy of his account and scholarly analysis, John Blakesley's aim is fundamentally pastoral, born out of a desire to help all Christians to 'grow and flourish as members of Christ's body'. This same aim inspired the *English Hymnal*, whose perennial relevance forms such a painful contrast with most of the collections of hymns and spiritual songs compiled since. Moreover, there is, in this sort of 'English exuberance', none of the reticence or tribalism to be found at times in Roman Catholic authors;

instead, a spirit of intelligent generosity prevails, and this on its own would make the book worth reading, quite apart from the great detail and breadth of its intellectual accomplishments.

In brief, John Blakesley reminds us of the richness we have all inherited from the Middle Ages and the Benedictine order, a richness which arises directly from the celebration of the liturgy; it is fascinating and instructive, for instance, to see how directly the visions of Hildegard, Elisabeth of Schönau and even Margery Kempe relate to the actual words and actions of the Mass. By means of reminders such as these, this book also gently invites us to do likewise.

Ian Coleman

Soline Humbert, *A Divine Calling: One Woman's Life-Long Battle for Equality in the Catholic Church* (Barnsley: Liffey, 2025). 978 1 0686 6456 4, pp.280, £17.95.



On 1 October 2025, feast-day of St Thérèse de Lisieux, the Loyola Institute of Trinity College Dublin hosted an unusual book launch. Soline Humbert presented her book *A Divine Calling: One Woman's Life-Long Battle for Equality in the Catholic Church* to a packed hall. The enthusiasm and energy in the room during the speeches were palpable. Something significant was happening at this book launch.

The book traces the life-journey and vocation of Soline Humbert from a French Catholic childhood to study and marriage in Ireland. The steps on the initial part of this journey from baptism and holy communion to confirmation are simply outlined in the their traditional and formational power. The Irish bishops had lifted the ban on Catholics attending Trinity College in June 1970, so Soline became an active member of the Catholic chaplaincy group at the college during her years of study there.

It was during this period of her life that Soline received her divine calling. Even at almost fifty years distance, Soline describes this moment with a poignancy and sensitivity that resist simplistic formulation. She discovers this call slowly, like a rock appearing as the tide ebbs. As Soline says herself: 'It was full of paradox: It came from within me, but from beyond me not of me. It was a desire that I didn't choose or want. It was something I couldn't

understand or even imagine.' (42) Soline describes in dramatic detail the awful internal struggle that followed this calling. She could not doubt either the calling or her gender so, in a sense, nothing made sense any more. She experienced a nervous breakdown, attempted suicide and was cared for in a psychiatric institution, where she recovered from her depression.

Soline continued her studies at Trinity, but her Christian religious practice intensified both in Catholic and Anglican circles. As she recounts the steps on her vocation journey, the external historical events that impinge on this journey are brought into sharp focus: for example, the bombings in Dublin in 1974 and the visit of Pope John Paul II to Ireland in 1979. We reread these familiar events from Soline's unique perspective. The simple descriptive sentences mask a deep reflection on Irish Christian heritage. Soline's voice does not sound foreign to the Irish Church. It seems somehow to resonate with long forgotten traditions and practices.

Soline experienced the happiness of marriage to Colm and motherhood of two sons, Killian and Jonathan, while the vocation call to priesthood took a back seat for a while. But in 1990, Soline describes the re-emergence of her calling like the eruption of a rumbling volcano, almost like another childbirth. Her former university chaplain, Fr Eamonn McCarthy, remained a faithful companion as curate in her parish. During this period of her life, Soline describes two profound spiritual experiences: one of deep prayer and spiritual union with God and another of complete disorientation and dislocation similar to the experience of Brian Keenan, who had been held as a hostage for four years in Lebanon (68–69).

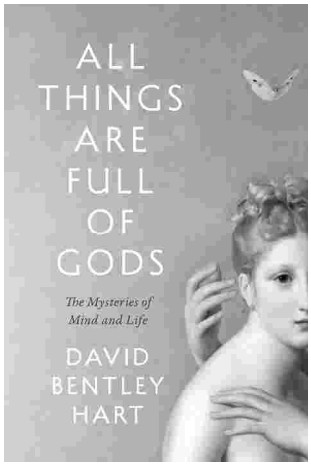
This renewal of her vocational call urged Soline to begin a long and often tortuous series of encounters with bishops. Each one seems to commence with a hope that mutual understanding could be reached at the end of the spiritual conversation. More often than not, however, an opposite outcome occurs. Soline experiences rejection and ridicule on many occasions. These encounters with respected church leaders, who are household names in Ireland, are described gently and carefully. There is no shrillness or bitterness against people who refuse to listen to her, only disappointment and sadness at lost opportunities for real Christian dialogue and growth.

On a few occasions, Soline pondered 'moving over' to the Anglican communion, where she would surely have been able to fulfil her vocation as a priest. While Soline respected the choice of several of her companions who did make this move, she concluded that this was not her calling. Soline describes the change in her relationship to St Thérèse that occurred once she discovered the saint's strong desire for priesthood. The detail that St Thérèse used to insist that her sisters cut her hair in tonsure style under her veil is moving testimony to her secret resistance to the Church's refusal

to consider the ordination of women. The date of the book launch was no coincidence. Soline's story shines a light back on to the Roman Catholic Church's structures and practice which seems to show both its beauty and ugliness in equal measure. For traditional Catholics, this book is a must-read.

Ashley Evans SJ

David Bentley Hart, *All Things Are Full of Gods: The Mysteries of Mind and Life* (New Haven: Yale U, 2025). 978 0 3002 8549 9, pp. 528, £12.99.



The longing for the eternal, the infinite, and the divine is a deep and universal theme in human experience, transcending cultures and religious traditions. In Christian spirituality, St Augustine spoke of the restless human heart seeking rest in God, and Julian of Norwich found peace in spiritual surrender to divine love, while C. S. Lewis reflected on an intense, inexpressible longing—or 'Joy'—for something that cannot be found on Earth. David Bentley Hart takes this pervasive human yearning as the starting point for his lively and provocative new book, asking what such desire reveals about the nature of mind, reality and transcendent being. For Hart, the human search for meaning is not merely psychological but metaphysical, pointing towards a reality in which all things, including the human mind, exist through their participation in the divine presence.

Hart, a renowned philosopher and theologian, contends that behind the reality of the material world there exists a spiritual, metaphysical realm that sustains all of existence. Drawing from a rich theological tradition, he argues that all life is grounded in the divine mind. Human thought and consciousness, then, are not products of random processes but emanate from God's own intelligence. The author's central thesis is encapsulated in the title of the book: *All Things Are Full of Gods*.

As Hart himself acknowledges, this metaphysical vision of reality was deeply disrupted by the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century. Thinkers such as Galileo, Bacon, Descartes and Newton helped establish a mechanistic and empirical approach to nature, emphasizing observation, experimentation and mathematical description. While this approach brought tremendous practical knowledge, it also contributed to a world-view in which both reality and humanity came to be understood increasingly in purely

material terms. For Hart, this turn towards physicalism—the belief that all things, including consciousness, can be fully explained by matter—leads to a profoundly impoverished perception of existence. By reducing the world to what can be measured, this perspective drains it of spiritual depth and meaning, relegating human beings to little more than biological machines and obscuring the intimate participation of all creation in the divine life.

In *All Things Are Full of Gods*, Hart sets out to challenge the materialist world-view and to recover the ancient metaphysical insight that mind cannot be reduced to purely material causes. To advance his argument, he employs a Platonic dialogue among four characters, each representing a distinct philosophical orientation: Psyche (mind), Hermes (nature and mediation through language), Eros (rational desire) and Hephaistos (materialism). Through this dramatic exchange, Hart explores competing accounts of consciousness and the cosmos with philosophical clarity and imaginative range.

Hart considers four main positions. The first is physicalism, a view he finds deeply unconvincing, as it fails to explain how rationality and intentionality could arise from purely physical processes. The second is Cartesian dualism, which separates mind and body into distinct substances and ultimately leaves consciousness as an unexplained appendage to an otherwise mechanistic picture of nature. The third option, panpsychism, holds that consciousness pervades matter; yet Hart argues that it remains insufficient, since it still treats matter as ontologically primary and cannot account for the unity and intelligibility of mind.

After considering the inadequacies of physicalism, Cartesian dualism, and panpsychism, Hart identifies the most coherent alternative as idealism, which holds that matter ultimately derives from mind—and that this mind is divine in nature, originating in God. On this view, mind and consciousness are ontologically prior to the material world, which exists only through its dependence on and participation in divine reason. In contrast to the materialist perspective, which sees matter as primary, Hart argues that human consciousness derives its intentionality, reason and free will from the divine mind. Idealism, he claims, not only makes more sense than physicalism or dualism—particularly in its account of consciousness and rational agency—but also aligns with ancient spiritual traditions in both East and West. For example, the Upanishads affirm the primacy of consciousness in all things, a notion that resonates with the Christian conception of the Logos—the divine Word, who, in the opening verses of John's Gospel, was with God from the very beginning.

In the book's final chapter, Hart argues that the materialist world-view—of a mechanistic, purposeless universe—has contributed to a modern sense of

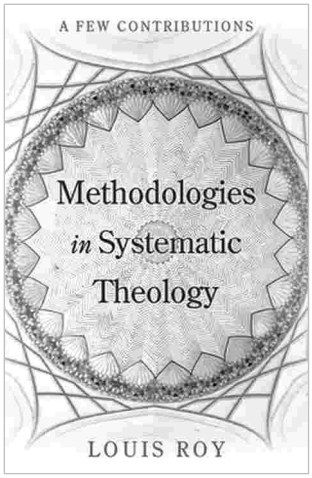
meaninglessness. By reducing reality to physical causes alone, it undermines any robust account of value or purpose. For Hart, this vision of the universe as a cold, indifferent machine is not only false but also dangerous, as it erodes human dignity and obscures the sense of wonder that comes from recognising the divine reality sustaining all things.

What is needed, he maintains, is a 're-enchantment' of the world—a recovery of the truth that all things are full of divine presence. In such a vision, life is endowed with meaning and purpose, and humans are understood as participants in the divine mind. This metaphysical framework, Hart argues, restores hope and dignity to the human condition, enabling us to transcend the despair fostered by a purely materialistic account of reality.

All Things Are Full of Gods is a compelling work of philosophy and theology, offering an ambitious and persuasive case for idealism as a coherent and spiritually enriching alternative to modern materialism. Hart's polemic is intellectually rigorous and rhetorically effective, challenging contemporary philosophical and theological discourses. While some critics may object that his arguments are brisk and his conclusions sometimes speculative, there is no doubt that Hart's book makes an important contribution to ongoing debates about the nature of reality, consciousness, and the human quest for meaning. By articulating a mind-first, divinely grounded metaphysics, he shows how philosophical inquiry and spiritual life can mutually illuminate one another.

Jonathan W. Chappell

Louis Roy, *Methodologies in Systematic Theology: A Few Contributions* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2024). 979 8 3852 2298 8, pp.134, £17.00.



Louis Roy masterfully brings together twenty years of teaching method in theology in a synthetic volume. Although aimed at teachers and advanced students, his treatment of the topic has clearly been honed by practical experience in the university lecture theatre. He begins in the introduction by placing systematic theology within the context of the human search for meaning and integration (x–xi). This approach holds back from setting church tradition in opposition to scholarship, holding rather that 'both distinct contributions must be appreciated' (3).

The first chapter gives a chronological overview of Christian thinking, starting with the scriptures before moving on to patristics, scholasticism, modernity and twentieth-century theology. Along the way it offers complementary insights drawn from philosophy. The second chapter deals with the principles of Roman Catholic theology, starting with the assumption that it should be ecumenical in character. He raises the question here about whether truth remains the same throughout the ages, while meaning changes 'since the objects of belief are understood differently according to various milieus'. However he goes on to say that meanings do not change 'insofar as they amount to Church judgements' (17–18). This nuance of his approach enables him to tackle thorny issues about tradition and revelation while maintaining objectivity. Lonergan is in the background here, helping him to steer away from cultural relativism towards cultural relativity (20–21).

Roy devotes his remaining six chapters to individual theologians, or complementary pairs. In chapter three he gives an outline of the methodology of St Augustine, grounded in scripture and the creed, which he says amounts to a multifaceted hermeneutic of scripture. This is explained objectively through the mechanics of interpretation, and then subjectively through the personal search for God provisioned by intellectual curiosity, keenness to attain the truth and the desire for personal wisdom (33). He consoles the emergent theologian with a quotation from St Augustine: 'Experience shows that when people of little moment apply themselves to great matters, these matters lend greatness to them' (38).

Chapter 4 turns to Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas, explaining how they introduced secular philosophy into Christian thought. As a Dominican, Roy's insights into the angelic doctor run rich and deep, even noting a correspondence between Aquinas' 'listening disposition' towards non-Christian sources, and the presupposition of good intention in the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola (42–43). There are hints for aspiring teachers of theology too; according to Aquinas, for example, the 'role of the teacher is to produce in the student that movement of mind by which he himself arrived at the truth' (45). In the fifth chapter, Friedrich Schleiermacher takes the stage to mark the transition from phenomenology to hermeneutics, 'which consists in correctly reading classical texts and/or correctly making sense of human actions and interactions, namely human experience' (60). According to this approach, theology is never quite finished: 'experience shapes the perspective and the expression of any concrete faith, while faith questions, rectifies, enriches and expands experience' (62).

The sixth chapter brings Bernard Lonergan to the fore, introducing him as 'the best Catholic philosopher-theologian of the twentieth century' (63).

His approach clearly influences the whole of the book, and Roy gives a sound exposition of his cognitional theory by explaining the roles of intentionality, functional specialities, interpretation, historical consciousness and dialogue in his thought. He also usefully compares Lonergan with Schleiermacher, discovering the interplay between the two and pointing out further similarities with Paul Ricoeur. An overview of Ricouer's work follows in the subsequent chapter, with reference to his theory of the symbol, textuality, and most significantly human action 'that brings back any reading to reality' (89).

Finally, Roy devotes a chapter to Yves Congar and Claude Geffré. Congar's attentiveness to historical reality profoundly enriched the thinking of the Second Vatican Council, and 'actualised a kind of dynamic historical thinking' (97). Roy differentiates Congar from Geffré by saying that the former was interested in the 'psychological conditions for fruitful research' while the latter was more interested in the 'intellectual conditions' (101). Geffré's work accommodated the already interpretative nature of revelation, and raised the question of mutuality between human experience and revelation (102).

In the closing section, Roy explains the variety of Christian thought by categorizing its varying strands as, '(1) mainly symbolic about one aspect of Christianity; (2) holistic and covering a few aspects of Christianity; and (3) mainly conceptual with rational control of meaning' (109). This useful typology provides a way of surveying the 'nuanced assessment of historicity' that lies behind each (110). He concludes by commending the study of Aquinas and Augustine to the reader as the forerunners of any sound theology, and reminds us that 'there is no serious theology without puzzlement and hard thinking; all other elaborations of doctrines are stale and fruitless' (111).

Philip Harrison SJ