THE WAY

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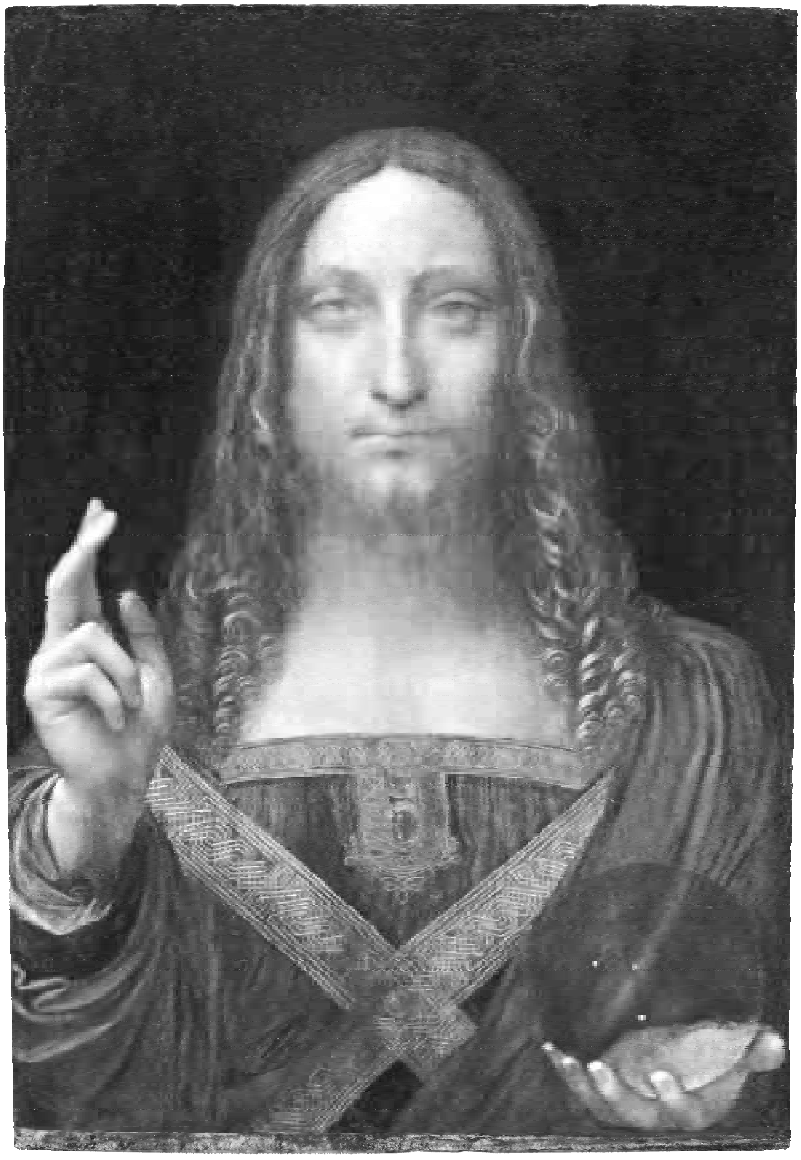
SEEKING THE FACE OF JESUS



Book Reviews

Paul Nicholson on silent prayer
Matthew Power on the theology of vocation
Trileigh Tucker on ecotheology
John Moffatt on why to be a Catholic
John Swinton on autism and the theology of disability
Makrina Finlay on secular monasticism
Gavin McCormick on the theology of Henri de Lubac
Louise Nelstrop on mysticism and Wittgenstein
Christopher Wojtulewicz on a new study of Meister Eckhart
Peter Hackett on insights into God's authentic presence

FOR AUTHORS

The Way warmly invites readers to submit articles with a view to publication. They should normally be about 4,000 words long, and be in keeping with the journal's aims. The Editor is always ready to discuss possible ideas. The 2012 Special Issue will focus on the life and spirituality of Mary Ward, so articles in this area will be particularly welcome.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Peter Brook SJ for illustrations. The scripture quotations herein are generally from the New Revised Standard Version Bible © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, and are used by permission. All rights reserved.

FOREWORD

WHAT DID JESUS OF NAZARETH look like? We have neither contemporary pictorial representations of him, nor even a description in words by any of those who knew him. Yet you can probably conjure up an image in your mind's eye: of a long-haired, bearded man, looking rather older than someone in his early thirties might be expected to, somewhat unkempt, and stern or smiling according to your taste. Eastern icons, Renaissance artists and twentieth-century film-makers have all contributed to and reinforced this impression. Even when you know it has little basis in fact, it can be hard to shake off. Of course, Christian faith does not require a believer to hold any particular view about the appearance of Jesus. It seems, though, that the process of arriving at an image of one's own can itself help us to deepen this faith, as Earl McKenzie describes here in 'Painting Jesus'.

Theology recognises that the situation of those who suffer is a privileged place to come face to face with Christ in our world today. In chapter 25 of Matthew's Gospel, bad and good alike are surprised to be told that the ways in which they have treated those in need accurately reflect their response to Jesus. The Ecuadorean volunteer programme Rostro de Cristo suggests that the best way to see the face of Christ is in the faces of the poor, in whom he promised that he would always be available to be discovered. James Menkhaus, who has helped young volunteers to encounter Christ in this way, describes the experience that they have undergone.

Toufic Makhoul turns to the suffering face of Christ 'crucified and forsaken' in his attempt to overcome the spiritual exhaustion of much of contemporary Western society. And Richard Boileau similarly concludes that it is above all by encountering a Christ who experiences himself as abandoned by his Father that we can best come to terms with our own bereavements and help others to come to terms with theirs. In the ministry of spiritual accompaniment or direction one Christian helps another to discover and remain turned towards the face of Jesus. Gerry O'Neill uses the Enneagram as a way of removing the psychological obstacles that might prevent someone from encountering God in this way.

It can rarely have been more difficult to encounter God than in the Nazi concentration camps. Yet, as Ruth Evans shows, even here it was possible for one man to live out his faith in a way that led to him being recognised as a modern-day saint. At the heart of the Christian faith is the conviction that, as St Paul expresses it, 'nothing … can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Romans 8:39, Jerusalem Bible). It was the resurrection of Christ that initially convinced his closest associates of this, and here Ignatius Jesudasan takes a close look at those gospel texts that describe the first announcement of this news. Paul used his insight to strengthen his hearers, enabling them to face the seemingly insuperable challenges of their day, and Stephen McCarthy hopes that a similarly rooted faith-perspective will enable us to face one of the greatest of our own contemporary challenges, that of climate change.

The chorus of a modern hymn by Carey Landry begins 'We behold the splendour of God / Shining on the face of Jesus'. Spirituality invites us to that same experience, motivated not by a curiosity to see what his face looks like, but so that we might receive the strength to confront the sometimes daunting task of continuing to live lives of discipleship in an unbelieving world. The articles in this edition of *The Way* illustrate a range of ways in which this strength may be granted. Taken together, they build up a composite picture of what it means to see the face of Jesus in the world around us.

Paul Nicholson SJ
Editor

CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Stephen McCarthy

EARLY IN 2011 I WAS INVITED to give a talk on climate change to the environmental group at our local parish. It followed on from a previous meeting when the speaker had argued that the issue was essentially one of social justice and that the problem is not just one of greenhouse gas emissions but concerns a whole range of the earth's resources. We in the West, with our materialist and consumerist lifestyles, do not merely contribute to climate change but devour a totally disproportionate share of the earth's natural wealth, short-changing the rest of mankind and generations to come. This is a moral issue, one of social justice:

> Human damage to the environment is one of the main moral issues of our age. As such, Christians must be concerned about it. Environmental problems are in one sense just a symptom (albeit a very important one) of injustice in the world—the injustice of a small part of the population consuming the great bulk of the resources, leaving the majority to share out the relatively little that remains, and sometimes literally to starve to death as a result. It is business as usual in the human race—the powerful using their power for their own benefit, with limited concern for the well-being of those who do not share in that power.[1]

It is important to grasp the magnitude of this problem. To achieve 'contraction and convergence'—that is, to consume only our fair share—we need to cut our consumption of non-renewable resources by more than 80 per cent. On the specific question of greenhouse gases the UK

[1] Simon Norcross, 'The Environment, the Bible and Christian Morality', at http://www.anglican.lu/forms/335.pdf.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needs to reduce its emissions from about 11 tonnes of carbon dioxide per capita per year to about 1 tonne per capita per year; that is a reduction of around 90 per cent.[2] At first sight this is an enormously depressing conclusion. The task before us is utterly daunting. How can we possibly respond to a problem of this magnitude?

However, while in no way disagreeing with the earlier speaker, the purpose of my talk was somewhat different. First, I wanted to counter some of the prevailing misconceptions. We need to be much more clear-sighted that the actions and initiatives taken so far to respond to the problem are utterly inadequate. It is too easy to get the impression that if we change our light bulbs, put our electrical apparatus on standby, or even welcome a few wind turbines we are making a significant difference. All this is what David Mackay calls 'a flood of crazy innumerate codswallop'. His more realistic attitude is: 'If everyone does only a little, we'll achieve only a little'.[3]

In short, the technical fixes currently being promoted are insufficient to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions over a reasonable time frame, and would have negligible impact on the excessive consumption of other natural resources. Certainly technological and economic adjustments are necessary and have a role to play. But they are not the solution. Rather we are faced with the need to make a deliberate choice to change our lifestyles and live in a different manner.

Most of us, I believe, feel stuck in a pattern of living that inevitably guzzles such resources. It will not be easy to abandon this pattern—at

[2] See David MacKay, *Sustainable Energy: Without the Hot Air* (Cambridge: UIT 2008), 15. To my mind this stands out as by far the best book on this topic—if only because it cuts through journalistic waffle and is numerate. MacKay dedicates his book 'to those who will not have the benefit of two billion years of accumulated energy resources'. It can be downloaded for free from http://www.withouthotair.com/download.html.

[3] MacKay, *Sustainable Energy*, 3.

least not acting on our own as isolated individuals. I cannot really see myself doing so—except perhaps in small ways and at the margins. Moreover, even if we in the 'enlightened' West did change our lifestyles, what difference would it make elsewhere? This is no longer a world in which the West imposes its views on the rest. What about the two billion people living in China and India who appear to aspire to the same consumerist lifestyle that we have, and who are ever closer to achieving it? Are we proposing to deny the rest of mankind the material well-being to which we have become accustomed and now simply take for granted—even supposing that we could do so, which of course we cannot.

Responding to the Problem

Two common responses are despair and denial. Despair says 'the problem is so intractable there is nothing we can do'. Denial says 'global warming is a myth; there is nothing we need to do; OK, maybe the climate is getting warmer but that is part of a natural cycle which has been going on for tens of thousands of years and has nothing to do with the activity of mankind'. Without going into this discussion further, let us merely note that no serious scientific opinion supports the stance of denial, notwithstanding the irresponsible statements of a number of senior churchmen who take this position. Sadly, denial is, I believe, a disguised form of despair.

So what is a comfortably well-off Christian called to do? Where do we find Christian hope in all this? This was the second theme of my talk, and one which I have continued to pursue ever since.

We have to dig deeper. What are we afraid of? Is there some inevitability here? Is everyone in the world, and for future generations, predestined to aspire to the same materialist, consumerist lifestyle that we now supposedly 'enjoy'? Does humanity really need all this stuff in order to lead a fulfilled life? Indeed, what does it mean to flourish as a human being? What are we here for?

These questions are philosophical and theological. 'What are we here for?' has occupied the attention of serious thinkers throughout most of history. But in the secular West during the twentieth century it became a question that was seldom explicitly asked. We saw ourselves as individuals, 'free' in the narrow sense of the word, with individual choice being the touchstone of social issues. We had more rights than duties. As such we were entitled to pursue our personal needs and

satisfactions, only limited by the constraint of not offending the liberties of others. Where exactly that constraint lay became the subject of narrow political debate between the 'left' and the 'right', who actually held more common assumptions than they were prepared to admit.[4]

Readers of *The Way* will readily assent to the idea that pursuing increased consumption and individual satisfaction is not at all the purpose of human life, and that to flourish as a human being involves a great many other things—loving human relations, some worthwhile work, a belief in the Transcendent and so on. Yet, while assenting to this at an intellectual level, we can nevertheless remain trapped in the very different mindset of the culture in which we live.

In an interesting collection of papers Mary Hirschfeld contrasts the mindset of the world of Thomas Aquinas with that of today. Aquinas took it for granted that the ultimate purpose of human existence is to share in the Divine life and that our deepest desires are directed towards this purpose, so much so that the matter of individual income and wealth scarcely gets considered:

> External goods are necessary only insofar as they provide a platform from which we can pursue virtue. Moreover, as Thomas argues in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, beyond what is necessary for basic survival, further wealth is a matter of indifference with respect to worship.[5]

Importantly, Aquinas' premise here would have seemed perfectly logical to the people of his time. He did not particularly have to argue the point; it was a premise not a conclusion. People had different stations in life and a certain level of material prosperity was appropriate to these different stations, but more than that was neither necessary nor desirable. This mindset seems to carry through right to the beginning of 'modern' times. One does not need much familiarity with the novels of Jane Austen, writing at the beginning of the nineteenth century, to notice how sensitive she is to the particular station that people have in society. She acknowledges, of course, that people may aspire to move up in society—this is an important motive force in her fiction. But income and material wealth, while being necessary to maintain a

[4] Michael Sandel's book *Justice* (London: Penguin, 2010) in effect lays bare the contradictions and sterility of much twentieth-century political discourse.

[5] Mary Hirschfeld, 'From a Theological Frame to a Secular Frame', in *The True Wealth of Nations: Catholic Social Thought and Economic Life*, edited by Daniel K. Finn (New York: Oxford UP, 2010), 181.

particular status, seem of secondary concern. All this is not so far from the world of Aquinas. In short the station in society comes first; personal wealth is only important to the extent that it is necessary to sustain that position. Even more recently we find Keynes, in the 1930s, worrying over the looming problem of leisure: with increasing technological progress, how would everyone occupy their time once people had worked enough hours to earn a sufficient income?[6]

All of this suggests that the secularist, materialist values of the culture we inhabit in the West are of relatively recent origin and by no means immutable. Cultural values have changed in the past and will do so in the future.

Hirschfeld goes on to contrast the mindset of Aquinas' world with that of the secular world in which we now live. A characteristic of the current Western mindset is that questions about why we are here and our relationship with the Transcendent are relegated to the private sphere of life. It is all right to believe in God, so long as that does not get in the way of anyone else's belief. To illustrate her point she draws on Charles Taylor's 'most salient' definition of secularism:

> We function within various spheres of activity—economic, political, cultural, educational, professional, recreational—the norms and principles we follow, the deliberations we engage in, generally don't refer us to God or to any religious beliefs; the considerations we act on are internal to the 'rationality' of each sphere—maximum gain within the economy, the greatest benefit to the greatest number in the political area, and so on.[7]

One consequence of this shift to secularism, at least in Western societies, is that our insatiable desire—which Aquinas (along with countless other theologians) argues is a God-given desire for God—is still there, but its focus has radically shifted away from the transcendent Divine towards material goods and possessions. The decline of religion and 'faith' in the West is actually a rather superficial phenomenon; people are as hungry as ever for meaning and salvation and this hunger is (briefly) satisfied by the monosodium glutamate of consumption. But

[6] See Robert Skidelsky and Edward Skidelsky, *How Much Is Enough: The Economics of the Good Life* (New York: Other Press, 2012).

[7] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard UP, 2007), 2, quoted in Hirschfeld, 'From a Theological Frame to a Secular Frame', 167.

it is still insatiable. As the Tim Jackson comments, 'consumer culture perpetuates itself precisely because it succeeds so well at failure'.[8]

Personally I believe that secularism is in decline. Sadly the mainstream Christian Churches have so far been unable to fill the resulting vacuum in people's lives. Time and again opportunities to spread the Good News and feed people's hunger are missed—the protest camp at St Paul's Cathedral in London being an obvious recent example, when the defence of the institution of the Church of England and its buildings was allowed to override people's thirst for social justice.

Evidence for the decline of secularism can be found in the increasingly visible non-religious debate on human 'flourishing', or what makes for a 'good life'. The growing body of social and psychological studies broadly suggests the following elements to human flourishing: sufficiency (but not more) of material goods; rewarding social relationships; freedom;[9] some degree of physical and material security; worthwhile work; and, finally, some spiritual or religious belief.[10]

According to these studies, once the basic needs of food and shelter have been satisfied, high material consumption is not necessary to live a fulfilled life. Indeed high levels of average income, when they are associated with increasing inequality of income, as has been the case in the UK and the USA over the last generation, actually lead to greater unhappiness.[11] The 2011 riots in many British cities illustrate the point. The rioters were not for or against anything in particular; all they seemed to want was to make off with more consumer goods. They live in a society that does everything possible to create desire for more material possessions while denying a vast underclass any possibility of satisfying that desire.

'Of course', we believers will say, 'all this is what we have known all along!' Numerous biblical stories and parables, not to mention Catholic

[8] Tim Jackson, *Prosperity without Growth: Economics for a Finite Planet* (London: Earthscan, 2009), 100. Jackson attributes this idea to Grant McCracken; see *Culture and Consumption* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1990), chapter 7.

[9] 'Freedom' is meant here in the sense developed by Amartya Sen and linked to 'capabilities', see Sen, *Development as Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999).

[10] See for example Richard Layard, *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science* (London: Penguin, 2006) which addresses the topic from a purely secular perspective.

[11] In their book *The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone* (London: Penguin, 2009), Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett produce correlation after correlation between income inequality and different aspects of social breakdown.

A looter at Clapham Junction, London, August 2011

Social Teaching, make the point. But we should nevertheless notice and celebrate that psychology and theology begin to coalesce here, while also not being surprised that they do so.

This discussion points towards more hopeful conclusions concerning climate change. First, social and cultural values may appear immutable, but can and do change. In our interconnected world they can change very quickly and encompass all of humankind, not just the prosperous West. Secondly, the radical change in lifestyle, the overcoming of our consumerist addictions, the *metanoia* that we and the people around us need to undergo, is nothing to fear. The materialist god we have been worshipping is no more than an idol. And idols can be overthrown—even though the process may be painful in the short term.

The Gift of the Spiritual Exercises

The first step in overthrowing idols has to be a deep awareness of the extent to which we have become their slaves without really noticing. We need to inculcate a habit of repeatedly asking ourselves: does this material good that I propose to acquire promote the end for which we are created, or not? Is God's purpose better served by throwing away and replacing this broken widget, often the cheapest solution, or repairing it? Is the journey I propose to make sufficiently urgent to justify making

it, say, by car rather than by train? Or necessary at all? Mary Hirschfeld uses the prosaic example of the decision to buy a family dishwasher. She suggests that what might need to be discerned in this case is whether the purchase of a dishwasher undermines family cohesion, as family members no longer gather and commune around the dirty dishes in the sink, or does it rather promote hospitality and conviviality by making it easier to bring family and friends together around a communal table more frequently? Different circumstances will lead to different decisions. A dishwasher in itself is morally neutral.

There is no point in pretending that the task is an easy one—either the discernment or the practice. But only by noticing how deeply and unconsciously we are drawn into the secular culture will we begin to perceive an alternative way forward. The *metanoia* that is called for here may take time and patience. Hirschfeld comments:

> My own experience of transitioning from a secular view to a Catholic/Thomistic worldview is that the changes involved reach very, very deep and that the task of translating from one worldview to the other is actually quite daunting.[12]

Indeed so, and there will be few better occasions to offer the opportunity for such a transition than that given to those, albeit few, who undertake the Spiritual Exercises.

So let us now turn to Ignatius and the Spiritual Exercises. His Principle and Foundation, right at the very beginning of the First Week, echoes Aquinas and hits our nail on the head:

> Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul. And the other things on the face of the earth are created for man and that they may help him in prosecuting the end for which he is created. (Exx 23)

Intellectually this is an argument that Christians take for granted; countless sermons and texts make the point. But the experience of the Exercises is generally a sacred moment in the lives of those making them. It is a moment when what is known in the head begins to become known in the heart. And it offers an opportunity, not necessarily unique but certainly precious, for the *metanoia* that we need to undergo. It can

[12] Hirschfeld, 'From a Theological Frame to a Secular Frame', 181.

and should be a gift: the chance to change our mindset in a deeply fundamental way.

Ignatius offers the tools to do this with his diverse meditations during the Second Week. Of these the Two Standards is the most explicit and serves our purpose best. We are invited, on the one side, to consider the values represented by Christ's standard (or flag), in particular being open to poverty, rejection or humility if these serve God's purpose. Nothing is to be found under this standard about living an affluent, consumerist life! One the other side we are asked to consider the standard of 'the leader of all the enemy powers' and the values that it represents: riches, honour and pride. Importantly it will not always be obvious to those living according to the values of this standard that these are in fact their core values—as water may not be obvious to a fish.

It can be easy enough to focus principally on 'personal' sin,[13] even if, as a good guide will encourage the directee to do, some attention is subsequently given to those political, economic and social injustices of the world that together make up 'social' sin. But this latter can easily become something to bemoan while thinking that there is not much one can do about it. The deeper question is how far we bring to the Two Standards exercise such matters as the choices we make about our material possessions and consumer goods, the values promoted by the newspapers we buy, the importance we attach to mitigating personal risk in various ways, our choices about how and where we travel, how we use our time and so on. The sin of materialism or consumerism, however we describe it, may be less obtrusive than either personal sin or social sin. But, as the Two Standards meditation shows, it is certainly an evil in which we are very easily caught up and which we can actually combat in our personal lives.

The choices we make about our material possessions

Here we face two intellectual obstacles to the necessary change of heart. First, it cannot be denied that humanity's increasing scientific understanding of the material world and technical mastery over it has brought great benefits—at least to those of us who have access to them—less starvation, less suffering through illness and disease, the opportunity to travel easily and to communicate with others in different parts of

[13] In William Barry's guide to the Exercises, *Finding God in All Things: A Companion to the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria, 1991) he refers to this phenomenon as a 'kind of "me and Jesus" spirituality' (55).

the world. Surely these are all good things; how can we say that they belong to the 'mortal enemy of our human nature' (Exx 136)? Indeed God's instruction to humanity in Genesis to have dominion over the earth (Genesis 1:28–30) can legitimately be interpreted as a blessing that includes scientific and technical progress. So, the more we reject the surrounding materialist culture the more we find ourselves open to the charge that, being prosperous ourselves, we now want to deny prosperity to the rest of humankind who are less fortunate; that we are slipping into a kind of romantic, utopian Luddism. Here again careful discernment is called for. Who are these undoubted good things really benefiting? For example, how much scientific research goes into combating the tropical diseases of the poor, compared with the obesity of the wealthy?

The second obstacle is that, we are told, the modern world needs ever-increasing economic growth and consumption in order just to sustain employment and thereby give people a livelihood and the necessary income to survive. 'How would the world go on without commerce?', someone rhetorically asked me recently. It may well be true that our current economic system is constructed as a treadmill of ever-increasing output and consumption. But there is nothing inevitable about that, and it is perfectly feasible to imagine other economic systems that would distribute prosperity in a different way—as Keynes was doing when he mused on the looming problem of excess leisure.[14]

At this point a second Ignatian insight, one that is little noticed outside the world of Ignatian spirituality, is relevant. This is that evil presents itself as good:

> It is proper to the evil angel, who forms himself under the appearance of an angel of light, to enter with the devout soul and go out with himself: that is to say, to bring good and holy thoughts, conformable to such just soul, and then little by little he aims at coming out drawing the soul to his covert deceits and perverse intentions (Exx 332).

Has our culture and society not been collectively drawn into these 'covert deceits' and 'perverse intentions'?

[14] This is not the place to go into these matters in detail. It suffices to say that, although very little economic research has been done on the matter, it need not be the case that an economy has to keep growing to survive. Indeed the need for continued economic growth was scarcely on the policy agenda until around the 1950s. Keynes was much more concerned with maintaining full employment.

My argument, in short, is that the West has massively aligned itself with the Standard of 'Lucifer, mortal enemy of human nature', and that even those of us with the best intentions find ourselves caught up in this and largely unaware of it—rather like Truman Burbank in the film *The Truman Show*. These are strong words; Ignatius is not content to say that Lucifer is wrong, but that he is the mortal enemy of human nature. The fleeting satisfaction offered by consumerism and the desire for ever more material things are a powerful drug which dulls our deeper desires. And our deepest desire, if only we could unearth it, is what God also wants of us: to live more fully in our God-given human nature.

Overthrowing the Idols

Reaching this point in my reflection restored my hope in the face of a seemingly intractable problem. Climate change and the broader question of the depletion of the Earth's resources demand of all of us not simply technical fixes but a more fundamental change to a much less materialistic lifestyle. We are called to do something about this by careful step-by-step discernment of our choices.

The consumerism and materialism of the society in which we live is a reflection of the prevailing secularist values. These values amount to the worship of a deceptive false god, which has pushed God aside into the 'private sphere'. Yet, from this two more hopeful conclusions follow:

- First, if our lifestyle is based on the worship of a false god there is absolutely nothing to fear about changing it.
- Secondly, we have no reason (perhaps despite appearances to the contrary) to believe that people in other parts of the world are inevitably doomed to worship the same false god and walk the same materialist path as the West.

Bringing simple prosperity to all and meeting the basic needs of the people of the world must be a good thing, but it does not have to lead to the current excesses of the West. False gods crumble; their characteristic is precisely that they are false; they do not bring life. Moreover, we do not need much sense of history to understand that the values that people live by, the matters they consider to be important, are constantly changing—just compare our mindset with that of Aquinas' world. Nor do we need much theology to know that the Holy Spirit works in mysterious ways.

The experience of the Spiritual Exercises offers to those who make them a grace-filled opportunity to turn away from the false standards

that encourage us to waste the resources of God's creation. Of course for them to receive this gift it may first be necessary for those who give the Exercises themselves to become more aware of the snares in which we, as society and culture, have been caught. That is another agenda.

But those who undertake the Exercises will always be few; what difference can they really make? Yet, they will not be alone; there are many others, of all religious affiliations and none, walking the same path. Indeed, the final thrust of the Exercises is to go out and co-operate with others in God's saving work, trusting that all will be well in the end. In this case this includes not worrying too much about the Indians and the Chinese and how their values may evolve, but rather being confident that idols can be overthrown.

In his book *Counterfeit Gods* (which, incidentally, nowhere mentions Ignatius), Timothy Keller reminds us how in Ephesus,

> Paul challenged the gods of the city of Ephesus (Acts 19:26) which led to such an alteration in the spending patterns of the new converts that it changed the local economy. That in turn touched off a riot by the local merchants.

Could something similar happen one day in our society? Keller goes on to challenge us:

> Contemporary observers have often noted that modern Christians are just as materialistic as everyone else in our culture. Could this be because our preaching of the Gospel does not, like St Paul's, include the exposure of our culture's counterfeit gods?[15]

Stephen McCarthy trained as a physicist but worked as a development economist, first in Botswana and then in Luxembourg with the EU's overseas aid programme. In retirement he now gives the Spiritual Exercises in Luxembourg, is currently chairman of the Spiritual Exercises Network and serves on a strategic advisory committee for Cafod. An occasional author and editor, he hopes one day to turn the ideas in this paper into a more substantial publication, including a consideration of the economic consequences that would flow from the change in values that the paper advocates.

[15] Timothy Keller, *Counterfeit Gods* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2010), 167.

WHO ARE YOU, IMMACULATA?

The Sinlessness of the Virgin and Human Dignity in the Thought and Life of Maximilian Kolbe

Ruth Agnes Evans

IN 1979 LEONARD COHEN recorded a song with the evocative title 'Our Lady of Solitude'.[1] As a Jewish song-writer and poet, Cohen is not writing from within the mainstream of Roman Catholic devotion to Mary, although the theological orthodoxy of his poem suggests that he is aware of it. The piece succeeds in communicating a vivid sense of Mary as a living person, something that the formalities of traditional devotion do not necessarily convey. In this song-poem Cohen seems to be looking to Mary for contact, for intimate knowledge of who she is, and for personal help. These are things we hope to receive from a real human being, not an image on which we pile up our devotions. All of the facts that Cohen mentions about Mary are traditional, but he presents them with an artlessness that makes listeners feel almost as if they are hearing a description of Mary for the first time. The refrain of the song echoes what it means to the singer to have been touched by, and to have known, this mysterious woman. The repetition of the words 'touched' and 'knew' immediately situates the poem in the world of interpersonal connections and relationships that Cohen is so practised at expressing, and makes the woman being evoked seem real and tangible. Through embodying Mary in this way, Cohen suggests her relevance to the world with its struggles, she is reaching him in his lonely human situation. At the same time, the nature of his engagement with her remains mysterious, suggesting, rather than defining, Mary's role in the life of the believer and the Church.

[1] Leonard Cohen, 'Our Lady of Solitude', *Recent Songs* (1979), available at http://www.leonardcohen.com/us/music/recent-songs/our-lady-solitude.

The Way, 51/2 (April 2012), 19–34

Maximilian Kolbe

I start from this poem because its original strength reminds me of the far-reaching and unique preoccupation with Mary heroically enacted in the life of the Polish martyr Maximilian Kolbe. Unlike Cohen, Kolbe was a devout Roman Catholic and he wrote from within the traditions of the Church, rather than from outside them. But the intensity and intimacy of his devotion to Mary also presents the onlooker with a disconcerting perspective. Kolbe took love of Mary to an extreme of constancy and courage. The heroism of Kolbe's life, and particularly of his death at Auschwitz, powerfully demonstrates the authenticity of Kolbe's relationship with Mary and the sanctifying reality of his preoccupation with her and with her privileges.

I wish here to look at the way Kolbe's devotion to the Immaculate Conception, a doctrine that for many believers is difficult and remote, points to implications of that doctrine that are relevant to the life of the believer. I wish to look at the impact of the doctrine on Kolbe's sense of personal identity and his behaviour. Kolbe died in order to prevent a criminal act, the murder of a fellow prisoner at Auschwitz. Reflection upon the implications of Kolbe's Marian devotion clearly, therefore, includes the field of justice and the rights of human beings.

Kolbe's final, mysterious self-mastery continues to move and inspire people today. He was a Franciscan friar who laid down his life for another man by taking the man's death sentence upon himself. A guard was assigning a quota of prisoners to die of thirst and starvation in retaliation for another prisoner's escape, and Kolbe offered to take the place of one of the condemned. The intellectual and spiritual resource behind this extraordinary resolution was Kolbe's tireless preoccupation

with the privilege of Mary's Immaculate Conception. One might assume that a man who could behave as Kolbe did at the end of his life knew little of the mundane anguish of self-doubt and self-suspicion. But the story of his life indicates that this was not the case. Kolbe's relationship with Mary seems to have been linked with a human need for reassurance about himself and the nature of reality.

Kolbe's Preoccupation with the Immaculata

Maximilian Kolbe's writings show that he engaged in a recognisable process of struggle and reflection and that his doctrinal concerns were intimately related to his personal aspirations. The constant theme of Kolbe's devotional life was the immaculate nature of Mary. He was troubled by the ignorance of Mary that he saw in the lives of others. He writes,

> How little known is the Immaculata, both theoretically and still less in practical life! How many prejudices, misunderstandings and difficulties wander about in the minds of men![2]

Kolbe regarded Mary with intense devotion in view of her exceptional privileges and his experience of her love. His preoccupation with the mystery of her person and his longing for knowledge of her appear in his hauntingly repeated question: 'Who then are you, O Immaculate Conception?'[3] As Kolbe saw it, the perfection of this one human being sheds light on the human condition as a whole and upon our interactions with one another. 'Let us live by the love of the Immaculata', he writes, 'let us labour for her love and so radiate love to others'.[4] His love for Mary taught him how to love Christ and how to show love to others. 'We must strive to love Jesus as Mary loved him, so that our love reach such perfection as to become the very love of the Immaculata.'[5]

Passages like this make it clear that Kolbe did not merely aspire to love Mary but to realise and exercise her own love. Having devoted himself to Mary, Kolbe seems to have become deeply aware of Mary's

[2] *Aim Higher! Spiritual and Marian Reflections of Saint Maximilian Kolbe,* translated by Dominic Wisz (Libertyville: Franciscan Marytown Press, 2007), 76.
[3] Kolbe's final written reflection, 17 February 1941, available at http://www.piercedhearts.org/hearts_jesus_mary/heart_mary/max_kolbe_immaculate_conception.htm.
[4] Kolbe, *Aim Higher!*, 71.
[5] Kolbe, *Aim Higher!*, 58.

love for everyone. He writes, 'Her law is love, and her power is motherly love'.[6]

Mary in her Relationships

Kolbe constantly reflected on Mary as a person in relationship with others.[7] He understood and developed himself in a relationship with her. Some of his superiors thought this devotion to be obsessional,[8] understandably since Kolbe does appear in his writings to focus on the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception to an excessive and disproportionate degree. Kolbe does not, however, isolate the doctrine; rather he contemplates its meaning in relation to the other mysteries of salvation.

Unlike most of us, Kolbe seems to have meditated on Mary's sinlessness long enough to derive encouragement from it, and to find therein a personal resource. The implications of the doctrine fascinated Kolbe, the way that Mary is available to God and to ourselves.

> The height of a creature's love returning to God is the Immaculata—a being without stain of sin, wholly beautiful, wholly belonging to God.[9]

He saw that, in her sinlessness, Mary is completely responsive to the interests of the other person. He understood that in this way, through her, we could draw closer to God. She offers us her help in our development and in our relationship with the members of the Trinity.

> The more we belong to the Immaculata, the more perfectly will we understand and love Jesus, God the Father and the whole Blessed Trinity.[10]

Passages like this emphasize Kolbe's awareness that Mary is to be venerated in the context of her interaction with the Trinity and in the context of salvation history, not in a supposed solitary splendour. John Paul II, reflecting on Kolbe's life in the year of his canonization, said,

[6] Kolbe, *Aim Higher!*, 5.
[7] This is a very Franciscan stance. In his writings about Mary, Francis of Assisi frequently meditates upon the significance of Mary's relationships with the Trinity and with ourselves.
[8] See Andre Frossard, *Forget Not Love: The Passion of Maximilian Kolbe*, translated by Cendrine Fontan (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1991), 53.
[9] Kolbe, *Aim Higher!*, 10.
[10] Kolbe, *Aim Higher!*, 30.

> The mystery of Mary's holiness must be contemplated in the context of the divine economy of salvation in order to be venerated in balanced fashion and not appear as a kind of privilege which divorces her from the Church which is the Body of Christ.[11]

Kolbe's Relationship with Mary's Sinlessness

Kolbe understood Mary's motherhood in relation to his own interior struggle.

> Mary always was to us a most tender Mother and is now, and always will be, in life and in death and in eternity. Let us recall this truth to ourselves often in external difficulties, but especially in those more grievous internal ones.[12]

He saw our painful inward struggles occurring in a loving relationship with her perfection, her love casting light upon our loneliness. This was a source of invincible strength and courage. 'There is nothing a man cannot bear through the Immaculata.'[13] Such reflections draw attention to Kolbe's awareness that the sinlessness of Mary is not a remote truth without relevance to the rest of the human race. In her holiness she is accessible to us.

Mysteriously, Mary's sinlessness became the source of Kolbe's own activity and identity:

> The mystery, this hard mystery of the Immaculate Conception … was for Kolbe a formidable source of energy. It fortified him; it ordered his thought; it liberated him.[14]

As the quotation implies, there is nothing instantly consoling about the dogma of Mary's Immaculate Conception, emphasizing as it does the sinful condition into which the rest of us are born. As Kolbe writes, 'We here admit that we are not as she, immaculate, but sinful'.[15] It is characteristic of Kolbe's intellectual consistency and courage that this 'hard' doctrine should become the centre of his own thought and action.

[11] 'Homily of Pope John Paul II during the Holy Mass in the Basilica of St Mary Major' (8 December 1982), in *Kolbe: Saint of the Immaculata*, edited Francis M. Kalvelage (New Bedford: Franciscans of the Immaculate, 2001), 223.
[12] Kolbe, *Aim Higher!*, 12.
[13] Kolbe, *Aim Higher!*, 12.
[14] Frossard, *Forget Not Love*, 57.
[15] Kolbe, *Aim Higher!*, 135.

One can sense through the momentum of his writings about Mary the way that her sinlessness motivated and uplifted him.[16]

The resonances with the life of Mary in Kolbe's final sacrifice are obvious. Mary's son was executed as a prisoner who freely laid down his life for the sake of others. Kolbe emphasizes Mary's responsible maternity: 'The most important work entrusted to humanity, that is, the bearing and upbringing of Jesus, God entrusted to the most Blessed Mother'.[17] And he emphasizes her obedient suffering, her participation in the love that was the reason for her son's final sacrifice. 'Love her generously as a mother. She loves you even to the sacrifice of the Son of God.'[18] From childhood, Kolbe took his responsibility to behave as the son of Mary extremely literally and seriously:

> This is a mother without stain, immaculate, and therefore any reservation on the part of the child would cause her unspeakable displeasure and wrong, for it would contain the supposition that even a shadow of stain is not impossible in her. Quite the contrary, the child dedicated to her desires that she use him and wear him out; he desires to be consumed for her.[19]

It is clear that Kolbe identified Mary's love and her sinlessness as the standard of the response that she merits. Consequently, he interpreted his own behaviour always in relation to that standard. Any failure on his part would be a wrong to her in her immaculate nature. Far from seeing himself as isolated from Mary by her perfection, he sees himself as responsible to her in her sinlessness. In the quotation, with its not uncharacteristic passion, he suggests that any failure on his part to hand himself over to her would wrong her, seeming to doubt her immaculate nature. While not many believers would place their own behaviour under this kind of scrutiny, there is a rigorous uniformity at the root of his thought.

[16] In this preoccupation with Mary's unique identity Kolbe followed the founder of his order, St Francis of Assisi. The dogma of Mary's sinlessness was not explicitly defined at the time of St Francis. Nonetheless, in the Marian antiphon to his *Office of the Passion*, reiterating a much older prayer, Francis states: 'Holy Virgin Mary, There is no one like you born in the world among women', clearly affirming Mary's uniquely privileged state. Francis' borrowed phrase encapsulates both the apartness of Mary and the fact that she is one of us, her distinction and yet her humanity. Following Francis, Kolbe understood Mary to comprise in her person a sublime distinction. Yet he constantly meditated on her as one in close proximity with himself.

[17] Kolbe, *Aim Higher!*, 10.

[18] Kolbe, *Aim Higher!*, 62.

[19] Kolbe, *Aim Higher!*, 4–5.

The Child's Fear about His Identity

A key to the mystery of Kolbe's life seems to lie in an incident from his childhood, recollected by his mother after his death. Interestingly, since Kolbe is revered for an act of heroic certitude, the story begins with a ten-year-old child's uncertainty about himself. Maria Winowska, herself a concentration camp survivor, tells the story.

> His greatest fault on record arose, characteristically, from a longing to own a little chicken. He bought an egg with his own money, and put it under a hen to hatch the chicken for him. Unfortunately, his mother took a dim view of his not having asked permission to do all this, and Raymond received a sound thrashing … he often tried his mother's patience till he tired her into saying: 'My poor child, what will you come to, at all?' … the reprimand caused a real crisis of soul in the boy. From that time, his mother says, 'he changed completely', and became very good and very obedient. Amazed at this sudden improvement, she began to watch the boy more closely, and she noticed how, more and more frequently, he would disappear behind the cupboard, where there was a little altar of Our Lady of Czestochowa, with an old oil-lamp burning before it every Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday. Crouched in the corner, the child would pray for a long time, and when he emerged his eyes were red from weeping. Fascinated by all this, his mother questioned him closely one day.
>
> 'Come here Raymond, what's wrong with you? Why are you crying like a girl?'
>
> She thought he was sick …
>
> Weeping and trembling, he said:
>
> 'Mother when you said to me: "Raymond what will you come to, at all?" I was very hurt and I went to the Blessed Virgin and asked her what I should come to. Afterwards, in the church, I asked her again. Then the Blessed Virgin appeared to me, and she was holding two crowns, and asked me to choose which one I desired; the white meant that I would be always pure, the red that I would die a martyr's death. Then I said to her: "I choose them both!" She smiled and disappeared.'

Kolbe's mother continued:

> From that day he was no longer the same. Often, his face shining, he would speak to me of martyrdom, his great dream.[20]

[20] Maria Winowska, *Our Lady's Fool,* translated by Malachy Gerald Carroll (Cork: Mercier, 1955), 2–3. Kolbe's given name was Raymond.

Notwithstanding its supernatural aspect, this is a very human story about a child's susceptibility to anxiety about himself and his future, and about his inability to defend his identity against his mother's apparent doubt. His fear could also point to a fear about life itself. Kolbe seems to have experienced such fears with an unusual intensity and seriousness. There is a psychological truth about this description of a breakdown in communication between a child and his mother. The child is pained by the gulf between his need for certainty and his inability to secure it. Disturbed by his mother's apparent anxiety, he turns to Mary, finding in her another mother. He then seems to have completely embraced the identity Mary offers him, finding in her the gift of a reassurance that his own mother had not given. He receives through Mary a promise about who he is and who he will be that is affirming. The joy of receiving Mary's reassurance precedes the prophecy about his death and the joy is so great that it surpasses any dread. The received joy is accompanied by her intimation of the demands life will make upon him. But the child is not dominated or overwhelmed; it is his own choice to accept the identity that is revealed and to die as Mary has intimated.

As an adult Kolbe wrote, 'Even though I had a strong inclination to pride, the Immaculata attracted me even more'.[21] We can see here the way that Kolbe found in Mary a source of reassurance when he experienced uncertainty about his own character, a spiritual and psychological discovery that surely derived from this childhood experience. This early encounter casts light on the passages where Kolbe speaks of his desire for the Virgin to possess and occupy his identity, and of his repeatedly voiced desire to know her. It is as if, following this early experience of anxiety, Kolbe is happy to dispossess himself of the burden of himself and entrust himself to Mary. 'We have surrendered all to the Immaculata.'[22]

He goes on to say that, through this surrender, he is also surrendered to Jesus and the Father, illustrating the doctrinal completeness of his thought. The role of Mary in the childhood story prefigures the way that Kolbe as an adult found in his belief in the Immaculata a certainty that enabled him to confront the evil of the Nazi regime.

[21] *Forget Not Love*, 48.
[22] Kolbe, *Aim Higher!*, 24.

As a child he had found a way of coping with fear through his response to Mary, anchoring himself through the truth that he saw in her and that she held out to him. This deep assurance received from Mary casts light upon the appalling scenes of Kolbe's sacrifice and death.

Kolbe does not ever mention experiencing consolation directly about himself. 'The Immaculata can turn even our weaknesses to greater good. This is my only consolation.'[23] If the encouragement that Mary imparted to Kolbe as a child is to be interpreted in the light of his later writings, his consolation was linked to a confidence in the relationship that she was offering him and in her assistance. By giving him the name of martyr she had named him and owned him as a mother owns her child. The frightened child's sudden assurance, his daring ability to claim both crowns for himself, is made possible by Mary's invitation. It is clear from this story how Kolbe learnt to understand his own capacity for response in relation to her.[24]

Our Lady of Czestochowa

Nonetheless, Kolbe frequently appeared to his contemporaries to experience strains on his personal resources. He did not always display exceptional calm and strength. Those who knew him testify to the fact that he was a man of naturally nervous disposition.[25] 'External pressures',

[23] Kolbe, *Aim Higher!*, 112.

[24] This desire to surrender his identity to Mary does not mean that Kolbe never again experienced ordinary human desires or conflict about what to do with himself. As a young man he was severely tempted to become a soldier rather than a friar, a fact that helps explain the frequently military character of his language when he speaks about his commitment to Mary. The fact that the imagery of warfare permeated his thought possibly suggests how deeply Kolbe was affected by the oppression of his country. See Frossard, *Forget Not Love,* 31–33.

[25] Patricia Treece, *A Man for Others: Maximilian Kolbe: The 'Saint of Auschwitz' in the Words of Those Who Knew Him* (Libertyville: Marytown Press, 1999), 133.

a brother remembered, sometimes 'got him all agitated'.[26] Kolbe, who suffered from tuberculosis from a young age and who anticipated constant health problems, admitted to his companions that he was afraid to suffer and that he was comforted by the thought that Jesus in Gethsemane had known fear.[27]

The Europe within which Kolbe searched for his insights about the nature of reality was unstable. The Kolbe family were poor and working-class, and it was only owing to a stroke of good fortune that Maximilian received an education worthy of his potential.[28] The family was stricken when Maximilian's father, Julius Kolbe, fought for the liberation of Poland in World War I and was hanged by the Russians in 1914. Kolbe completed his training for the priesthood and his study in Rome at the end of the war in 1919. This was shortly after Poland achieved independence, and he returned home. But in 1939 Poland was invaded by Nazi Germany, and on 17 February 1941, at the age of 47, Maximilian was arrested by the Gestapo for his activities as the editor of a Polish periodical and for the protection he offered to refugees, many of them Jewish.

The Identity of Mary

Kolbe meditated particularly upon Mary's relationship with her own identity, leading to a profound understanding of the dignity of her person. Reflecting on the Marian apparitions to Bernadette at Lourdes, he writes, 'we place a special stress on the word *Immaculata*, if only for the reason that she thus named herself'.[29] And:

> The privilege must be dear to her, since she says of herself at Lourdes, 'I am the Immaculate Conception'. She does not say, 'I am immaculately conceived', but 'the Immaculate Conception'. Hence it follows that she is immaculateness itself.[30]
>
> She indicates that the Immaculate Conception belongs to her in essence. This name must be dear to her, because it signifies the first grace she received in the first moment of her existence …. This name is ratified by her life, because she was always unspotted.[31]

[26] Treece, *Man for Others*, 48.
[27] Frossard, *Forget Not Love*, 108.
[28] Winowska, *Our Lady's Fool*, 6–7.
[29] Kolbe, *Aim Higher!*, 50.
[30] Kolbe, *Aim Higher!*, 6.
[31] Kolbe, *Aim Higher!*, 131–132.

Characteristically, Kolbe lays himself open to Mary's priorities. He makes the point that Mary is totally available to possess the name that God has chosen for her. This is the name that she chooses for herself and that she embraces. Kolbe saw invincible and liberating truth in what God had done for Mary and in her ratification of her own essence as she had received it from God. He understood her self-definition to be the truth about herself. She knows her own truth and is faithful to it.

Kolbe, searching for truth in his stricken and unstable world, was absorbed by Mary's ability to own herself and to lay claim to her own identity, given to her by God. This is something that, as Kolbe had discovered as a child, is impossible for us to have the strength or clarity to do unaided. Notably, Kolbe draws attention to the manner in which the privilege of sinlessness belongs to Mary. In her ability truthfully to lay claim to her own essence, Kolbe recognises a key to the mystery of her person. He is surely right to draw attention to the greatness of Mary's self-definition at Lourdes, to the fact that she speaks of her sinlessness, not merely as something that she possesses, but as who she is. We may happen to possess an attribute simply because it has been given to us, but this is not the way in which Mary owns her sinlessness. Her sinlessness is the self of which she takes possession. She incarnates it and ratifies it completely.

'The Immaculata did not bend away from the will of God in anything.'[32] Kolbe's words imply the agony implicit in Mary's self-ownership because 'anything' can include that which we most love. In her freely owned sinlessness, Mary opposes all of the sinful brutality that human beings inflict on one another in this world. As the one who is sinless, she, by her own definition, stands in a relation of opposition to all that is sinful. This pure stance of opposition towards the sin of the world is informed by the truth of her sinless nature. Kolbe recognised the profoundly challenging and practical implications of such a stance. He understood Mary to be exposed to the sin that took her son's life and yet merciful from this perspective. She is:

> The stewardess of the infinite value of the Precious Blood of Jesus that washes away sin. The Immaculata is the personification of God's mercy. Therefore she is rightly called the refuge of sinners, of all sinners ….[33]

[32] Kolbe, *Aim Higher!*, 132.
[33] Kolbe, *Aim Higher!*, 133.

Kolbe at Auschwitz

It is interesting that, in the early story about wanting to own a chick and in his desire to love as Mary loved, we can see in Kolbe an endearingly maternal way of relating to the world. The survivors who remembered him from Auschwitz affectionately recalled this maternal attitude. Sigmund Gorson recollects,

> I was from a beautiful home where love was the key word. My parents were well-off and well-educated. But my three beautiful sisters, my mother—an attorney educated at the University of Paris—my father, grandparents—all perished. I am the sole survivor. To be a child from such a wonderful home and then suddenly find oneself utterly alone, as I did at age thirteen, in this hell, Auschwitz, has an effect on one others can hardly comprehend.
>
> And this is how Kolbe found me wandering around, so to speak, looking for someone to connect with. He was like an angel to me. Like a mother hen, he took me in his arms.[34]

Another survivor said, 'I owe a great deal to his motherly heart'.[35] Many survivors of the camp made similar statements.

Kolbe was like this despite the fact that, as a priest, he was mercilessly singled out for abuse by the camp guards.[36] His forgiving attitude even extended to the Nazis.[37] The extent of Kolbe's achievement can only be really understood in the context of how Auschwitz annihilated the dignity, the identity and integrity of others. In *If This Is a Man*, the camp survivor Primo Levi describes the way that people were destroyed by Auschwitz. Even people with strongly formed adult identities, who had lived meaningful and fulfilling lives, were left at the mercy of their lower instincts or were simply ruined in their ability to function in any way at all.

> Imagine now a man who is deprived of everyone he loves, and at the same time of his house, his habits, his clothes, in short, of everything he possesses: he will be a hollow man, reduced to suffering and needs, forgetful of dignity and restraint, for he who loses all often easily loses himself. [38]

[34] Treece, *Man for Others*, 199–200.
[35] Treece, *Man for Others*, 182.
[36] Treece, *Man for Others*, 174–182.
[37] Treece, *Man for Others*, 204.
[38] Primo Levi, *If This Is a Man and the Truce,* translated by Stuart Woolf (London: Sphere Groups, 1988 [1958]), 33.

The law of the Lager said: 'Eat your own bread, and if you can, that of your neighbour'.[39]

Kolbe Offers Himself as Martyr

The pitiless, random selection of prisoners for execution at Auschwitz in early August 1941 could not have been more distant from the unique, highly personal and significant privileges granted to the Mother of God. Kolbe, with other prisoners, had already endured the punishment of waiting for hours standing in the hot sun. This ordeal was designed to destroy their resources as they waited to know who would be picked to starve. Survivors from the scene recalled the frantic, instinctive need to avoid the executioner's attention and to survive. 'Let him pass me, let him pass me, oh pass, pass.'[40]

© Jim Forest @ Flickr

The cell where Kolbe died

Kolbe was one of those who escaped selection. His martyrdom was prompted by his compassion for Franciszek Gajowniczek who, when he was selected, cried out in panic: 'Oh, my poor wife and my children! I shall never see them again!'[41] On hearing this, Kolbe drew the executioner's attention back to himself and argued, according to the mentality of the guard and the 'unwritten law of Nazism'[42] that his life had less value than that of Gajowniczek because he was older. Also, Gajowniczek had a wife and

[39] Levi, *If This Is a Man*, 166.
[40] Treece, *Man for Others*, 221.
[41] Winowska, *Our Lady's Fool*, 123.
[42] Winowska, *Our Lady's Fool*, 125.

children. Kolbe's offer of himself was the only gesture that could possibly have had a result within the terms and language of the prison camp, but it was a tremendous risk. According to the witnesses Kolbe could easily have been condemned without saving the life of his fellow prisoner. Such a reaction was not beyond the sadistic nature of the guard.[43] But this frail priest pulled off a triumph of pragmatism and of sanctity.

'You will wither like tulips.'[44] These were the words that the prisoners heard as they were pushed into the starvation cell. As the punishment progressed, Bruno Borgowiec, another Polish prisoner who was forced to work on the penal block, recalled, 'One heard the recitation of prayers, the rosary, and hymns. Father Kolbe led while the others responded as a group.'[45] Despite the exceptional cruelty of death by starvation, Kolbe looked at the guards as they came into the cell to check on who had died with 'deep serenity'.[46] After surviving the deaths of most of his companions and enduring two weeks' starvation and dehydration, Kolbe was the last of the four remaining prisoners to retain consciousness. He died by lethal injection on the Eve of the Feast of the Assumption, offering his arm to the man who held the needle. After Kolbe received the lethal injection, Borgowiec recalled, he was 'still seated, with his head slightly inclined to one side and leaning on the wall, his eyes wide open and fixed as in ecstasy, his face clear and shining'.[47]

Gajowniczek Accepts Kolbe's Sacrifice

Kolbe had no way of knowing whether the man he saved would live a good life—or if he would survive. The relationship between the two men was wordless; they had no time to speak to one another. But this relationship motivated Gajowniczek for the rest of his life. Just as Kolbe himself learnt to live out his response to Mary's sinlessness, Gajowniczek learnt to live out his response to Kolbe's martyrdom, accepting the life that Kolbe had offered him. Returning to the prison barracks, Gajowniczek was understandably in despair at the thought of Kolbe's death and fell into depression.[48] It took another prisoner to

[43] Treece, *Man for Others*, 223.
[44] Winowska, *Our Lady's Fool*, 127.
[45] Treece, *Man for Others*, 227.
[46] Winowska, *Our Lady's Fool*, 129.
[47] Winowska, *Our Lady's Fool*, 130.
[48] Diana Dewar, *Saint of Auschwitz: The Story of Maksymilian Kolbe* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1982), 119 and 136.

caution him against self-neglect. 'Take hold of yourself! Is that priest to die for nothing?'[49] Eventually Gajowniczek learnt to respond to what had happened, placing a value on his own life as Kolbe had valued it and accepting his identity as it emerged in the light of Kolbe's sacrifice. 'What I do now is my mission for him and his message.'[50] He lived to attend Kolbe's canonization and it was only then that his anguish about his inadvertent part in Kolbe's death lifted. He said, 'Today is the happiest day of my life'.[51]

Implications of Kolbe's Martyrdom

It is not difficult to see the relevance of Kolbe's sacrifice in our world today, where so many human beings are confined, damaged and destroyed at prisons and internment camps, where prisoners continue to be tortured and their human rights are ignored in the name of political beliefs. It is only necessary to follow the news or the work of charities such as Amnesty International and Reprieve[52] to see that executions and torture continue to be a tragic reality.

Kolbe ratified the name that Mary offered to him as a child by giving himself up to a sacrificial death. In this manner he fulfilled the response of the child who embraced his own identity in a martyr's crown.[53] Kolbe's self-offering was a public act with immediate implications for the lives of others. At the same time as Kolbe chose to die, he offered Gajowniczek back his life and he reached out to the condemned men whose fate he had chosen to share, supporting one of them as they walked to the execution chamber.[54] He continued to give this support

[49] *Kolbe: Saint of the Immaculata*, 127.
[50] *Kolbe: Saint of the Immaculata*, 129.
[51] *Kolbe: Saint of the Immaculata*, 129.
[52] Founded in the United Kingdom in 1999 by Clive Stafford Smith to defend prisoners in the most desperate situations. See www.reprieve.org.uk.
[53] At Kolbe's canonization John Paul explicitly granted Kolbe the status of martyr in resolution of a theological dispute about whether he actually qualified as one. Problematically, the issue for which Kolbe died was not a point of faith, as traditionally required, but the life of another human being. In allowing Kolbe the status of martyr, the Pope pointed to the theological implications of Kolbe's sacrifice in laying down his life for another man. He declared, 'Father Maximilian Kolbe, himself a prisoner of the concentration camp, defended in that place of death an innocent man's right to life. Father Kolbe defended his right to life, declaring that he was ready to go to death in the man's place, because he was the father of a family and his life was necessary for his dear ones. Father Maximilian Maria Kolbe thus affirmed the Creator's exclusive right over innocent human life. He bore witness to Christ and to love.' John Paul II, 'Homily at the Canonization of St Maximilian Mary Kolbe' (10 October 1982), at http://www.theworkofgod.org/Saints/Lives/MaxKolbe.htm.
[54] Treece, *Man for Others*, 224.

until the end. Kolbe laid down his life to spare Gajowniczek's family the kind of agony that Mary went through, and out of love for Gajowniczek and respect for his relationships.[55]

Kolbe's lifelong preoccupation had been the perfection of Mary's humanity, her immaculate identity and her unconditional opposition to sin expressed through her selfless relationships. His martyrdom was inspired and sustained by the Marian devotion that had so radically informed Kolbe's thought and formation. Kolbe's profound awareness of Mary's dignity as a person appears to have informed his sensitivity to the dignity of every person. It is consistent, therefore, that Kolbe's martyrdom was in defence of the sanctity of a human life. This act, unprecedented at Auschwitz, inspired the camp and gave hope to many who had fallen into despair.[56] Kolbe's own mother received the news of her son's martyrdom in October 1941.[57]

Ruth Agnes Evans OSC is a Poor Clare Sister. She is currently studying on sabbatical following the closure of the Poor Clare Convent at Woodchester.

[55] Gajowniczek was reunited with his wife, but not his two young sons who were killed by Russian shells in 1945 before their father returned. See Dewar, *Saint of Auschwitz,* 16 and 135–136.
[56] Treece, *Man for Others*, 233.
[57] Dewar, *Saint of Auschwitz*, 115.

PAINTING JESUS

An Essay on Philosophy, Art and Religion

Earl McKenzie

Painting and Philosophy

THERE IS NO QUESTION about the possibility of philosophizing about painting, for this activity has a rich tradition. But the question of whether or not painting itself can be a mode of philosophizing seems to be controversial. Consider the following claim by Mary Warnock:

> There is no real possibility of argument with the deliverances of the concrete imagination. If I see significance in some feature of the world around me, I am at liberty to say so. If I am a poet or a painter or film maker, then my vision of the world can be understood, perhaps shared, and may even be analysed, but argument need not come into the matter. But philosophy without arguments is not possible in the long run.[1]

I agree that a painting can present some vision of the world in creative, imaginative ways, and that it may be apprehended intuitively. But it seems to me that in the case of a painting, arguments are possible, in at least two ways.

First, like an axiom in logic or mathematics, a painting can be a starting point in a chain of reasoning. 'Mathematics and natural science must begin with an assumption', claims Javier Leach, 'and it is an assumption they choose'.[2] He points out that reasoning from chosen assumptions is not very different from what obtains in metaphysics and religion. So I suggest that a painting can present assumptions about the world in ways consistent with Warnock's characterization, which can then lead to philosophical argument.

[1] Mary Warnock, *Existentialism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 1970), 139.
[2] Javier Leach, *Mathematics and Religion: Our Languages of Sign and Symbol* (West Conshohocken: Templeton Press, 2010), 126.

Secondly, I think a painting may contain an argument. According to Paul Herrick,

> … within logic, an *argument* is nothing more than reasons offered in support of a claim or belief. The reasons offered in support are the *premises* of the argument, and the belief they are intended to support is the *conclusion* of the argument.[3]

I believe it is possible for a painting to present images which are the reasons (premises) intended to support the conclusion—or what the artist is saying in his or her picture. I shall discuss some examples from my own work later.

It is true that the nature of logic and its role in philosophy are disputed questions. Bertrand Russell regards logic as the essence of philosophy.[4] I do not go that far. But I believe that a painting, like logic, is a mode of symbolization and therefore a language object. It may contribute something to the 'abstract imagination' that Russell sees as the central contribution of logic to modern philosophy. Warnock's prioritising of argument in philosophy suggests that she leans in Russell's direction, although it is not clear if she would go as far as he does.

Iris Murdoch seems to share Warnock's doubt about painters as philosophers. 'Painters', she writes, 'that unphilosophical tribe who make pictures of the world, dissolve the solid object into planes and colours and space'.[5] Are painters really an 'unphilosophical tribe'? Now it may be true that that not all painters are philosophers, but some philosophers (including this writer) are painters, and it would be astonishing if they never philosophized with their paintings. (The World Congress of Philosophy has mounted exhibitions of visual art by philosophers at its meetings.) So philosophers are not an unpainterly tribe. And at least one, Spinoza—my favourite philosopher—carried a sketchbook, which was unfortunately lost after his death. I would give a lot to see what kind of artist he was.

[3] Paul Herrick, *The Many Worlds of Logic* (Philadelphia, New York and Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 2000), l.

[4] Bertrand Russell, 'Logic as the Essence of Philosophy', in *Logic as Philosophy: An Introductory Anthology*, edited by Peter T. Manicas (New York, Toronto and London: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1971), 25–36.

[5] Iris Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), 37.

Murdoch's scepticism concerning the people who dissolve the solid objects of the world into colours, planes and space suggests, to me, that she sees these forms of representation as having a certain flimsiness. Is the image of less cognitive significance than the word? She seems to be suggesting that the word is a more important philosophical tool than the image. I am not going to argue for an egalitarianism of word and image in matters philosophical. But I do wish to suggest that the philosophical importance of the image has probably been underrated. More specifically, I wish to show that some of my own images have had philosophical importance to me.

Painting and Spirituality

I have spent some time examining the question of whether a painting can be philosophical, not because I want to explore the matter in detail here, but because I believe that the philosophical dimension of a painting can contribute importantly to its role in spirituality.

If there is some scepticism about painting as a mode of philosophizing, there is little reservation about its importance for spirituality. It is well known that it was and remains an aid to religious instruction and devotion. It is also a form of spiritual practice in its own right. I am mainly interested in the second of these functions. But, before proceeding further, it may be helpful to say a few things about the historical, psychological and philosophical contexts in which this connection has been explored.

Religion and Iconophobia

Historically, painting has had to wrestle with iconophobia. The Second Commandment prohibits the use of graven images (Exodus 20:4). Suspicion of the visual image was apparently also a feature of early Buddhism, and persists in much of Islam and Judaism. James Hillman, who regards imagery as a very important part of our psychic life, reminds us that the followers of Cromwell smashed images of Jesus, Mary and the saints, and that there is a history of church authorities exercising strict control over religious imagery. He points out that pro-imagery movements such as Gnosticism, Neo-Platonism and Rosicrucianism were branded as heretical and occult.[6]

[6] James Hillman, *Re-Visioning Psychology* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1975), 10–11.

Christianity has avoided this iconophobia by regarding Jesus himself as an icon of God.[7] Murdoch observes:

> Western art, so solid and so clear, has helped us to believe, not only in Christ and the Trinity, but in the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, innumerable saints and a whole cast of famous and well-loved scenes and persons.[8]

In her view there is religiosity in all great art, and visual art has therefore contributed to our understanding of religion.

The instructional and devotional uses of visual art are probably best known to most people. They see and respond to the stained-glass windows in their churches, and to the paintings and illustrations in religious literature or in museums. I once heard a bishop say that the paintings on the ceiling of his cathedral made him feel the presence of God. One may think of the icons of the Eastern Orthodox Church and their role in worship. I am also reminded of the intricate and amazing Thanka paintings of Tibetan Buddhism, intended to give religious instruction as well as to aid enlightenment.

Thanka of Milarepa

The fear of imagery, Hillman suggests, is the fear of the imagination. He points out that the depth psychologists Freud and Jung emphasize the importance of imagery in our lives, and especially in our dreams. I recall Nietzsche's view that when we dream we are all

[7] Ninian Smart, *The Long Search* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown, 1971), 172.
[8] Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, 82.

artists. Far from seeing dreams as mere fantasies, there are some thinkers, including Hillman, who see them as perhaps our deepest reality.

Spirit, Soul, Mind and Self

The word 'spiritual' is in need of analysis. I do not regard it as synonymous with 'religious'. I regard a religious person as someone who has embraced a body of (usually organized) doctrines, and who participates in rituals and observances connected with them. The spiritual may occur within religion, but I believe it may also be pursued outside religion. A spiritual person need not be religious in the sense just given.

John Dewey, following the poet John Keats, uses the expression 'Ethereal Things' to denote the domain many consider the spiritual.[9] It is usually contrasted with materiality, body and flesh. The cognates of 'spirit' include 'soul', 'mind' and 'self'. But although earlier philosophers, including Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant and Locke, wrote about the 'soul', this word has virtually disappeared from contemporary analytic philosophy. Nowadays it seems to be used mainly by theologians, poets and African American musicians. When Descartes wrote about the 'soul' he was clearly thinking of what we would call 'mind' today, and this is the word which now dominates contemporary philosophy. Few people doubt that minds exist, and, partly for this reason, I believe, philosophy of mind is at present one of the core areas of philosophy.

I was a psychology student in the 1970s, during the heyday of behaviourism, and we were encouraged to study observable and measurable behaviour, not the workings of some inner, invisible and mysterious 'mind'. Some joked that psychology had lost its mind! At around the same time Hillman was urging that psychology should return to its origins in the word 'psyche', which has a meaning similar to 'soul'.

The perplexing concept of the 'self' is a central part of contemporary philosophical discussion. It is also a key concept in psychology, which historically emerged out of philosophy. Educators speak of the importance of self-esteem in personal development. Many social theorists regard self-respect as one of the goods of social life. The size of the self-help industry suggests that the concept plays a very important role in modern life.

Yet I have chosen the word 'spiritual', a word rooted in 'spirit', which is virtually absent from contemporary analytic philosophy. None

[9] John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Berkeley, 1934), 20.

of the derivatives of 'soul', 'mind' or 'self' seems appropriate—although a case could probably be made for 'soulful' and 'mindful' (in the Buddhist sense). Some may prefer to use 'spirit' to denote phenomena such as visions, miracles, prophecy, speaking in tongues and so on. While I am not a disbeliever in the possibility of numinous phenomena, I do not intend anything miraculous by my use of the word.

In my view 'spirit' is basically about the notion of nonmateriality. Thus Kandinsky suggests that a work of art has material and nonmaterial properties.[10] The canvas and paint constitute the material aspects of a painting. But it also has what he calls a 'spiritual atmosphere', and what Walter Benjamin would probably call an 'aura'.[11] Although Kandinsky does not make his ontological assumptions explicit, he seems to be a body/mind dualist, and the spiritual aspect of a painting for him is what I would call its mental aspect. This spiritual atmosphere, for him, is a nonmaterial entity which can cause vibrations in the corresponding spirit of the viewer. He goes further by linking the spirit of the individual work of art with the spirit or mind of its time and, through this link, he advances a theory about how art functions in historical development of the human spirit. For Benjamin the aura is the work's presence, uniqueness, authenticity and location in tradition.

'Spirit' is basically about the notion of nonmateriality

My use of the word 'spiritual' seems to be part of what Douglas Burton-Christie calls the anthropological or hermeneutical tradition, which is one of a number of ways of conceptualising the term. This approach, he claims, regards spirituality as a fundamental part of human experience. He quotes Sandra Schneider's definition:

> It is the experience of consciously striving to integrate one's life in terms not of isolation and self-absorption, but of self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives.[12]

Like Schneider I locate spirituality in the philosophical concept of the self. I am aware that my approach is similar to what Keatsians call

[10] Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, translated by M. T. H. Sadler (New York: Dover, 1977), 55.
[11] Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Aesthetics: A Reader in Philosophy of the Arts*, edited by David Goldblatt and Lee B. Brown (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1971), 85–89.
[12] Sandra M. Schneiders, 'Spirituality in the Academy', *Theological Studies*, 50 (1989), 684, cited in Douglas Burton-Christie, 'The Literature of Nature and the Quest for the Sacred', *The Way Supplement*, 81 (Autumn 1994), 7.

'soul-making', but I prefer not to use the word 'soul'. It is also similar to what some call the cultivation of the self, but I think this view can legitimately exclude Kandinsky's spirit and Benjamin's aura, although these are notions for which I have considerable respect.

So, like Schneider, I regard self-transcendence as the core of what spirituality is about. In its earth-bound sense, transcendence may simply mean going beyond one experience to another that is qualitatively better. But on a deeper level, transcendence means going beyond human experience. Now it may be the privilege of artists to imagine things beyond human experience, but I am enough of an empiricist to prefer to remain within the bounds of experience. I suspect that when people try to transcend their humanity they will probably only end up rediscovering how human they are.

I also agree with Schneider that striving towards a goal of ultimate value is at the heart of any kind of spiritual exercise. This ultimate value may be *love*, and the spirituality may take the form of a strong desire to identify with and care for one's fellow human beings (or animals, plants and the natural environment). The ultimate value may be *truth*, if one is a scholar; *beauty*, if one is an artist; *excellence*, if one is an athlete or manufacturer; or *goodness*, a value which, as Plato recognised, is common to virtually all striving. I can imagine many values and states of being which may be regarded as the goals of spiritual striving. But the most popular candidate, I believe, would be some conception of the *sacred*.

Most probably think of the sacred as some kind of deity, God or gods, and things connected with their relationship with, and their wish to identify with, this being or beings. But there are non-theistic religions, especially in the Orient, which conceive of the sacred in other ways. The sacred may also be a mountain or river, a building, a piece of music, words in a language—or a work of art.

Jesus

I was socialised into belief in the personal God of Christianity. My mother was a deeply spiritual, Christian woman; but my father, for good reasons which he revealed to me late in his life, was sceptical of preachers and churches. I think I may have inherited something of both my mother's spiritual disposition and my father's scepticism. But the Christian God, ingrained through church-going and schooling, is so much a part of my

personal psychology and social life (prayer, rituals and observances) that He has become part of my psyche, and will probably always be there.

As far as I can recall, Jesus of Nazareth came into my consciousness in the form of a small painting on glass my mother had hanging on the bedroom wall in the house in which I was born. It showed him standing in a river, wearing only a white loincloth. His hands were clasped in front of his chest, and he was gazing into the sky with ecstatic eyes. A white dove was descending towards his head. I do not remember if John the Baptist was in the picture. But this portrayal of the baptism of Jesus was the only object of visual art in our house, and it was also my earliest encounter with painting.

At Sunday school and church I was told that Jesus was a God-man capable of working miracles. The legends and music concerning his birth, and the gory details of his trial and brutal murder on a cross—which, I was told, he abetted and willingly submitted to in spite of having the power to destroy his killers—were parts of the cycle of my childhood years. I embraced all of this uncritically, so much so that in my teens I decided that I wanted to be on his side, and I considered a career as a preacher spreading his word.

In my late teens I began to question all of this. As a student-teacher I began exploring other religious possibilities. But the person portrayed in the glass painting had a powerful grip on my imagination. I began trying to make sense of him in naturalistic terms. As a young teacher I read books on him written by Jews and Muslims. To my surprise I found their portrayals of him more plausible than the Christian ones to which I had become accustomed. I found it easier to empathize with their view of a mortal man who did extraordinary things, than with the Christian God who was only half-pretending to be a man. For a similar reason I found it easier to relate to the Buddha, who was presented, not as a god but as an extraordinarily brilliant man who was capable of very profound philosophical analysis which led to deep insights into human psychology. My very human imagination could not grasp the lofty Christian supernatural heights.

I began searching for the historical Jesus. I am now resigned to the view that unless historians and archaeologists stumble on extraordinary records, we are unlikely ever to know very much about the person behind the myth and the theology. My fiction-writer's intuitions tell me that much of what is written in the Gospels probably actually happened. There are some kinds of detail that not even the best novelists can imagine,

for real life is always a few levels above the reach of the imagination. I sense a certain realism in some of the Bible narratives.

Not all the surviving stories about Jesus are flattering. So the editors of the Bible probably selected the ones that they believed would cast him in the best possible light. These early and very partisan writers no doubt also felt that in order to promote him they had to stress what they thought was most attractive about him. So the Jesus of the Gospels is probably a very idealized figure, and one who has been mythologized over the centuries. This does not diminish his importance. Even if he is mythologized, this can tell us a good deal about human psychological needs. I often feel that the Bible tells us more about the Jewish people's thirst for God than about what such a being might be actually be like. The Bible, too, can be seen as poetry about God, in Dante's sense.

It is safe to say that no person in the West has had more hopes placed on him than Jesus. So, not surprisingly, he has inspired some of its greatest art. My favourite sculpture is Michelangelo's *Pietà*, which shows the body of the crucified Christ lying across the lap of his mother, Mary. I find it a moving work. My favourite music inspired by him is Handel's *Messiah*. My favourite painting of him was done by a fifteenth-century Flemish artist Rogier van der Weyden and is titled *Christ the Redeemer with the Virgin and St John the Evangelist*. I first saw it on the cover of a CD of Bach's *Mass in B Minor* (another favourite),

Christ the Redeemer with the Virgin and St John the Evangelist, *by Rogier van der Weyden*

and, for some reason, this face of Christ seems very familiar to me, as if it is that of someone I have known very well all my life.

Painting Jesus

Pareidolia

There are no certain records of what Jesus looked like. I have never seen the slightest suggestion in the Gospels. Yet attempts at portraying him go very far back. I became interested in this question when, in 1966, I saw what I would later learn was an isomorph or pareidolia in a newspaper. According to the story that went with the picture, a spiritually troubled Chinese photographer took a picture of melting snow and, when it was developed, he was stunned to see a picture of Jesus in it. The article challenged viewers to look closely to see if they could recognise the image. I saw the very traditional picture of Jesus at once. I cut out the article and, after nearly fifty years, I still keep it among my treasured possessions.

Shortly after, I did a painting of it, in black on yellow, thinking this would make it easier for other people to recognise the figure. Some viewers did, and others could not recognise it no matter how hard they tried. One of my student teachers, a devout Christian and artistically gifted, was very disturbed that she was unable to see it and kept coming to my flat to study the picture. I cannot recall that she ever saw it. When I resumed painting some forty years later, I revisited this theme, and incorporated the pareidolia into a painting I titled *Christ among the Rocks*. A few years later a powerful dream about a red and white cross inspired my painting *Red Jesus, White Cross: A Dream and a Pareidolia* (2005).

I am using the term 'isomorph' to mean a form which may be identical with at least two referents. Thus the photograph by the Chinese photographer may be identical with both the melting snow and the traditional image of Jesus. After a long search I came across the word 'pareidolia' in an article on astronomy. Seeing canals on Mars is an example of this phenomenon. As a child I became aware that people saw things in egg-white that they put in glasses of water before sunrise on Good Friday. As the day progressed some people (mostly women, I now realise) saw wedding cakes, and others (mostly men) saw ships that would take them to England.[13] I think

[13] This is a familiar Caribbean custom.

most of us are familiar with seeing things in clouds. Psychologists have made use of this tendency with their ink-blot tests. Apparently the phenomenon has been little studied. But it has a long and distinguished artistic pedigree. Leonardo encouraged his students to look at the stains and smudges on walls in order to get ideas for paintings. I realise now that since childhood I have had this tendency to see isomorphs or pareidolia in the images around me.

Seeing images of religious significance has resulted in some of these images becoming sacred shrines. Sceptics point out that only Roman Catholics tend to see images of the Virgin Mary, Muslims to see verses from the Qur'ān. Seeing Jesus in things is by now a well-established tradition. I have had a long interest in the Shroud of Turin. It is widely believed that it once wrapped the crucified body of Jesus, and that the image of a man imprinted on it is that of Jesus. But scientific studies suggest that it was produced sometime around the thirteenth century. However there is no generally accepted explanation of how the image was produced, so something of a mystery still remains. It seems to me that the image is not unlike some of the conventional images of Jesus. So one may wonder if the conventional pictures played a role in its production. Perhaps scholarship will solve its mystery.

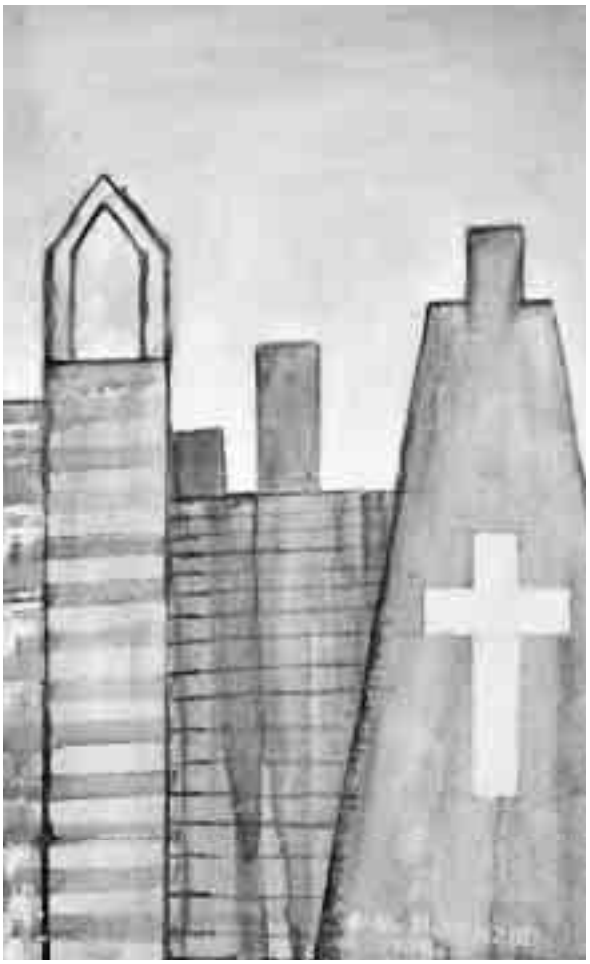
New Creation

In another dream I saw an image of a sleeping (or dead) Jesus in a brown rock beside a river. It looked as if it could have been a sculpture by Rodin, and it inspired my painting *After the Jesus Dream* (2008). The painting is not an attempt at copying the dream: I never try to make my paintings mimetic in the deprecatory Platonic sense, or even in the more positive Aristotelian one of imitation as a way of learning. I think a painting

should be a new creation, even if it is inspired by the ordinary phenomenal world of our experience, or by the world of dreams. I intend some equivocation in my use of the word 'After' in the title: it could be a slight nod in the direction of imitation, or coming later in time. Viewers have seen many religious associations, from the stone rolled away from the sepulchre of Jesus, to the name of the apostle Peter (which means 'rock'), to the river scene of the baptism of Christ. I am aware that stones have had sacred meanings in many world cultures, and have appeared as such elsewhere in my work.

The Cross

I have already mentioned my unease with the Christian celebration of the brutal murder of Jesus on a cross. (My opposition to capital punishment may have something to do with this.) But the image of the cross seems to haunt my imagination, Actually, I read somewhere that this symbol did not originate with Christianity but existed in ancient Egypt. Perhaps it is a Jungian archetype. But one night I dreamt that I saw a white cross painted on the wall of a building in a grey city. There



were no people in the dream; only the buildings and the cross suggested their existence. The dream inspired my painting *The White Cross* (2008).

It is perhaps significant that this cross, like the others in my paintings, is an example of what is called the Latin cross. Aniela Jaffé explains that the transition from the mandala-like, equilateral Greek cross to this form 'symbolized the tendency to remove the center of man and his faith from the earth and to "elevate" it into the spiritual sphere'.[14] In other words it represents what I earlier called the desire to transcend human nature. This painting is clearly about urbanisation and spirituality. Like some of my other pieces, it reminds some viewers of the works of Giorgio de Chirico, the founder of metaphysical art. The urban theme is perhaps understandable. I have rural origins and seldom feel at home in big cities. This painting was done in Kingston, a city in need of spiritual transcendence if ever there was one!

Painting as Spiritual Exercise

My thinking about painting as a spiritual exercise began after reading Pierre Hadot's claim that the ancients regarded philosophy as a spiritual exercise, and that this view of it has had considerable influence on the history of the subject.[15] At the same time I was also wrestling with the question of whether a painting can be philosophical. Having answered

[14] Aniela Jaffé, 'Symbolism in the Visual Arts', in *Man and his Symbols*, edited by Carl Gustav Jung and M.–L. von Franz (New York: Dell, 1964), 273.
[15] Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (Malden, Oxford and Victoria: Blackwell, 1995), 79.

this question in the affirmative, and concluded that a philosopher can reason with and from images, my next question was whether painting can be a spiritual exercise as philosophy was with the ancients. A review of my own life as a painter revealed that the activity of painting has been one of my main ways of dealing with my spiritual struggles.

Although I have tried to put some of this into words, I agree with Dewey that paintings exist because they can say things that words cannot.[16] So this essay is not intended as a substitute for my paintings, all of which can be regarded as spiritual exercises, for they all spring from a spiritual disposition. The philosophy, the art and the religion are all aspects of the same quest.

Earl McKenzie taught philosophy for many years at the University of the West Indies, Mona. His publications include *Philosophy in the West Indian Novel*, three collections of poetry—*Against Linearity*, *A Poet's House* and *The Almond Leaf*—two collections of short stories—*A Boy Named Ossie: A Jamaican Childhood* and *Two Roads to Mount Joyful*—and one multi-genre volume, *A Bluebird Named Poetry: Linked Poems, Stories and Paintings*. He has had a number of solo art exhibitions, and his work is featured in Jacqueline Bishop's *Writers Who Paint / Painters Who Write*.

[16] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 77.

SLEEPING WITH THE ENEMY

The Enneagram as a Tool for Reclaiming Wholeness, Health and Freedom

Gerry O'Neill

THE ENNEAGRAM IS AN ANCIENT spiritual tool that has been taken up and further developed by modern psychology as a way to understand human motivation and behaviour better. It has also found favour in various religious traditions as a means to enter more deeply into what lies behind the cognitive veils of doctrine that simultaneously reveal and hide ultimate reality.

At its most fundamental level, the Enneagram invites people to wake up to the possibility that they are sleeping with the enemy. The enemy is the self or, to be more precise, the personality that distorts and fails to reveal our essence. The Enneagram points to an unconscious relationship that may exist between the personality and the true self. In bringing this relationship into the light of awareness it can assist with the greater integration and proper functioning of different parts of the psyche. Of course the personality is not simply the enemy: its role is vital in human development. It reaches maturity and serves its highest calling when it reveals more fully our deepest self. The relationship between the personality and the true self is called to be one of love in which each helps the other to grow into its fullest potential. The biblical command to love your enemy takes on new meaning and insight when viewed through this lens. The question addressed in this article is simply this: *how do I love my enemy so that it is faithful to my truest self?*

The Enneagram system posits that each person is born with three native intelligences—head/right thinking, gut/right action and heart/right relationships. When the three intelligences are serving their proper functions and working together in an integrated fashion they become the means by which the true self is revealed. However, in the processes of birthing and engagement with the world, distortions occur within the

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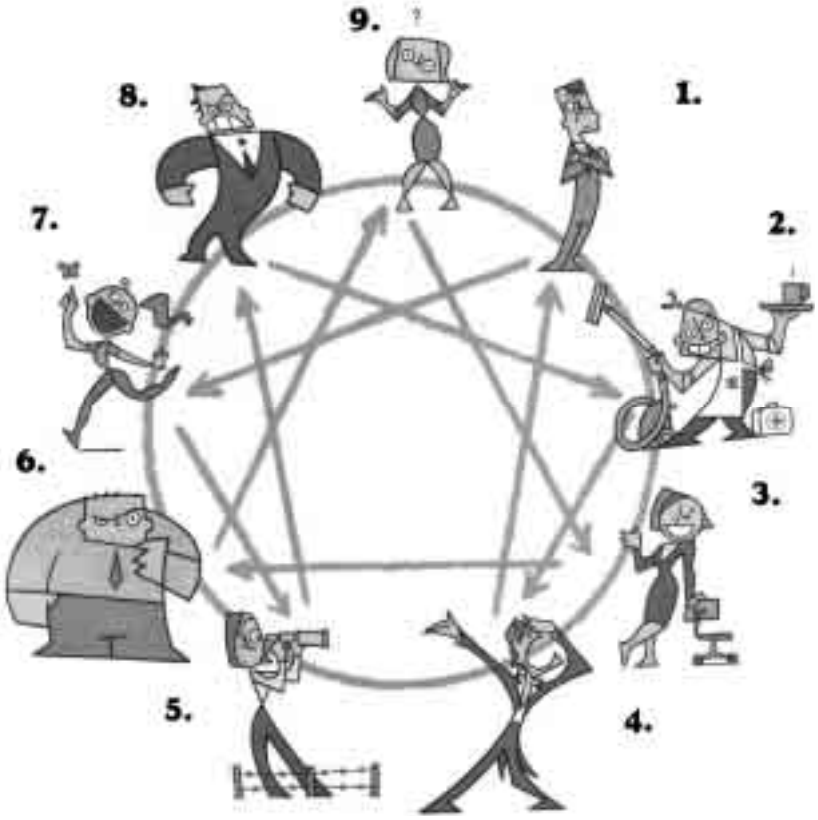

patterns of intelligence. These distortions initially help a child to feel safe, but ultimately lead to compulsive ways of being and acting in the world. Each of the nine types or energies represents a particular pattern of distortion in native intelligences. They are:

1. the perfectionist
2. the helper
3. the achiever
4. the tragic romantic
5. the observer
6. the loyalist
7. the adventurer
8. the boss
9. the mediator

You will find that I use the terms 'type' and 'energy' interchangeably here. While the reader may find this distracting, I do it for a number of reasons. 'Type' is a helpful descriptive term and is often used by Enneagram theorists. It has, nonetheless, negative connotations. Many people doing the Enneagram feel that it may result in 'pigeon-holing' and consequently is not conducive to growth. Also, in the emerging

ecological consciousness of today, I find the term 'energy' more consistent with our understanding of the human person. Many current writers on spirituality have drawn attention to the unfolding revelation of God in the story of creation itself.[1] It seems to me that the Enneagram captures this notion well in its account of the unfolding revelation of persons as they tap into the energy of their native intelligences. It is intriguing to think of human evolution as the continuing story of God first announced in the Big Bang of creation.

One way of expressing the basic insight of the Enneagram is that much of human suffering, brokenness and lack of freedom emanate from childhood emotional wounding. Every person is affected by the environment into which he or she is born. Part of that affect is to feel vulnerable. In order to protect itself the human organism suppresses certain needs so that a more urgent need is met. In other words, the organism sacrifices part of itself in order to survive. For example, the Nine energy in the Enneagram represses its desire to express its needs so that it maintains maternal love.

The feelings that are repressed in early childhood so that other needs may be secured do not vanish. They are forced out of conscious awareness to inhabit a deeper, darker place. This emotional drama is buried in our psyche and leaks out in ugly forms: the buried feelings emerge as passions that control our behaviours in unconscious but powerful ways. In this context passions are affective distortions leading to compulsive and reactive ways of responding to stimuli. Passions are also referred to as the 'root sins' of the types. This language gives a clear insight into the powerful negative influence that they exert on human behaviour. Each Enneagram energy is manipulated to some degree by its corresponding passion: One/anger, Two/pride, Three/deceit, Four/envy, Five/greed, Six/fear, Seven/gluttony, Eight/lust, Nine/sloth. For example, the suppressed anger of the One energy is often manifest in passive-aggressive behaviour. The fear inherent in the Six energy may express itself in excessive compliance or, in the case of the counter-phobic Six, in rebelliousness. And the gluttony of the Seven energy may show itself in starting many projects but in finishing few. Passions have the capacity to restrict our freedom to choose our responses in a way that leads to mechanistic behaviours and a diminishment of our humanity.

[1] See for example the writings of Diarmuid O'Murchu, Brian Swimme, Margaret J. Wheatley, Lee Smolin and Aileen O'Donoghue.

Despite these effects, it is vital to see childhood wounding as a normal part of human growth and development, and to ensure that it is not used as an excuse to blame parents who do and give their very best in the complex and demanding task of rearing children. Don Riso puts it well when he writes:

> No matter how fortunate we have been in childhood, each of us has been damaged. One of the facts of human existence is that no one escapes childhood without having been deformed in some way. The necessity of finding a way of 'fitting' into the circumstances of our lives means that some parts of us must be sacrificed.[2]

Understanding the process of childhood wounding and how the various defence mechanisms employed to protect ourselves become factors that limit our potential is vital to self-understanding and growth. In order to embrace change and sustainable healing it is necessary to address the root issues rather than just their symptoms.

Understanding Passions

Each personality type or Enneagram energy is an unconscious attempt to escape our childhood wounding in different ways. Healing will only occur when we journey towards our woundedness and face it squarely instead of fleeing from it. The story of the disciples on the Road to Emmaus illustrates the point. After they encounter the risen Christ and recognise him in the breaking of the bread, they turn around and go towards the place they were fleeing—Jerusalem. We too need to confront the frightening places within ourselves if we want to live life more fully and freely.

Since our passions control our behaviours to a greater degree than cognitive distortions do, it is sensible for healing to starts with them. The key is love. It is essential for growth that love touches the core of our being and is not deflected by our personality. God sees and loves us in the full reality of who we are, but it is difficult to experience and accept that love if we reject part of ourselves in a litany of: I am not good enough; I am not worthy; I am flawed; I am weak; I am unimportant; and a hundred other deprecations.

[2] Don Riso, *Enneagram Transformations: Releases and Affirmations for Healing Your Personality Type* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1993), 125.

The Prodigal Son*, by Rembrandt*

Rembrandt's painting of the *Prodigal Son* is a wonderful illustration of this truth. The younger son kneels in utter vulnerability towards his father and is touched by a love that sees and accepts all of him. It is through his woundedness that he discovers love, and the new life emerging from this encounter is beautifully evoked in the way his face recalls that of a new-born child. His gluttony may have brought him to his knees in a pig-sty but it also brought him home to experience unconditional love.

All of the Enneagram energies or types can make a similar journey. It is a journey home to ourselves. Its goal is not to 'fix' ourselves but to accept the richness as well as the limitations of who we truly are. This journey may also be expressed in more practical terms. It is the journey from reactivity to proactivity. Once a passion is named, accepted and embraced it becomes more benign. A person who is aware of his or her passion will not be controlled by it but can decide freely how to respond to a stimulus. The exhortation expressed in Deuteronomy, 'See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity …. Choose life' (30: 15, 19), only makes sense when we are truly free to make that choice.

Cognitive Distortions

One way to love the 'enemy' is to challenge negative beliefs and thoughts and replace them, over time, with more life-giving ones. People's deepest negative beliefs about themselves are a reaction to childhood wounding, and are not the truth. It may be helpful to give some examples of typical negative messages and suggest mantras to repeat that may assist in rescripting them into more life-giving beliefs.

Energy	Negative Message	Mantra
1	It is not acceptable to make mistakes.	There is life in the mess.
2	It is not acceptable to have your own needs.	I am lovable.
3	It is not acceptable to have your own feeling and identity.	I am not my successes.
4	It is not acceptable to be too functional or happy.	I am grateful for what I have.
5	It is not acceptable to be comfortable in the world.	The world is a safe place.
6	It is not acceptable to trust yourself.	It is better to act.
7	It is not acceptable to depend on anyone.	I have enough.
8	It is not acceptable to be vulnerable or to trust.	I acknowledge my gentle side.
9	It is not acceptable to assert yourself.	I am important.

Given that negative beliefs are attached to childhood wounding and reinforced by life experiences, it is reasonable to assume that they will be resistant to change. It is therefore important to give one's mantra time and the discipline of regular practice to allow it to take root.

The False Core

Stephen Wolinsky discusses cognitive distortion using the concept of the *false core*. He explains:

> How I see the Enneagram is that each one of the fixations has one primary belief, one belief that forms the false core, and every movement, every thought, every emotion, everything that you do or say, or think or feel, is either in resistance to the false core, re-enactment of the false core, re-creation of the false core, or reinforcement of the false core.[3]

The false core represents the primary motivating belief that anchors each energy's fixation (or cognitive distortion). In Wolinsky's thinking each Enneagram energy creates a characteristic distraction in order to divert attention away from the disturbing and self-limiting message anchoring the false core. The real difficulty is that the false core distractions are merely symptoms of its functioning: true freedom may only be reclaimed when the false core itself is confronted. Once it is exposed to awareness its symptoms will disappear, opening up new and more appropriate ways of being in the world. As the article puts it:

> You stay in the false core, work with it, dismantle it, until it dissolves. When it dissolves, your psychology has little or no impact on your subjective experience.[4]

Stephen Wolinsky

[3] Andrea Isaacs and Jack Labanauskas, 'A Conversation with Stephen Wolinsky', *Enneagram Monthly*, 3/3 (March 1997), 19.

[4] Isaacs and Labanauskas, 'A Conversation with Stephen Wolinsky', 19.

In order to encourage greater awareness of one's false core and its associated distractions it may be helpful to tabulate how they typically play out.[5]

Energy	False Core	Distractions
1	There is something wrong with me.	trying to be perfect and/or trying to perfect the world. Often leads to exhaustion and feelings of resentment.
2	I am worthless.	seeking flattery, false pride and wanting to create dependence. May lead to burn-out and feelings of resentment.
3	I have an inability to do.	doing too much, self-deceit and vanity. May lead to getting out of touch with the inner life and having difficulty with intimacy.
4	I am inadequate.	melancholy, depression, a sense of betrayal or envy. May result in failure to act on insight and creativity.
5	I am nothing.	hoarding ideas, thinking and observing too much. May lead to isolation from the outer world.
6	I am alone.	fear, ambivalence and feelings of physical weakness. May lead to getting out of touch with thinking and personal agenda.
7	I am incomplete.	seeking lots of experiences and filling time with planning and anticipation. May cause exhaustion and confusion.
8	I am powerless.	acting too powerfully and suppressing vulnerability. May produce an impression of being domineering and callous.
9	I am not important or lovable.	compensating for inner emptiness by seeking affection and avoiding any kind of conflict. Often leads to living vicariously through others.

The same irony is apparent in Wolinsky's framework of the false core that exists with the passions. The flight from ourselves in the form of specific

[5] The table is based on material from Isaacs and Labanauskas, 'A Conversation with Stephen Wolinsky', 19.

distractions is a coping strategy to avoid the distress produced by the false core, and yet it prolongs suffering and prevents us from experiencing our essence, which can only be accessed by self-confrontation.

Repressed Intelligences

Once the native intelligences of head, gut and heart are in balance and are working interdependently, they allow the true self to emerge. However, in the process of childhood wounding one of the native intelligences gets repressed so it is unable to develop properly. The two other intelligence therefore have to do the work of three, becoming overworked and co-dependent on one another. One assumes the dominant role and the other acts to support it.

An important key to healing and wholeness is to work on the repressed centre so it can do its fair share of work and, in so doing, allow the other centres of intelligence to disengage from one another and play their proper roles.

Dependent types (Two, Six and One) have a repressed head or *thinking* function. The Two energy responds automatically to the needs of the other and immediately 'helps'. The One energy sees something 'wrong' and immediately jumps in to fix the situation or person. The Six's dependence takes a different form. Instead of reacting automatically to the person or situation right in front of it, the Six energy looks to an external authority or rules and regulations to guide it. Balance and wholeness can be reclaimed in this triad by slowing down and allowing time for the thinking function to have its say. In this new-found space boundaries may be recognised, motivation clarified and freedom of response exercised.

Withdrawn types (Four, Five and Nine) have a repressed gut or *doing* function, which distorts their way of being in the world. The Four energy withdraws into feelings and uses thinking to amplify the intensity of those feelings. The Five energy withdraws into thinking and uses feeling to identify powerfully with ideas and concepts. The Nine energy withdraws into self-forgetfulness by literally going to sleep or pursuing trivial activities. Balance and wholeness can be reclaimed for these energies by discerning what a situation is asking of them and acting in the most appropriate way, so as to become more involved with people and the outer world.

Aggressive types (Three, Seven and Eight) have a repressed *feeling* function. The Three energy aggressively pursues excellence and success

in the outer sphere and tends to sacrifice the feeling function. The Seven energy aggressively pursues happiness and avoids pain to the detriment of the feeling function, especially in relation to others. The Eight energy aggressively pursues control and the exercise of power and often rides rough-shod over the feelings of self and others. Wholeness and health depend on expanding the feeling function so that power, success and hedonism are balanced with healthy relationships and intimacy.

Loving the Enemy

I began by suggesting that we may be 'sleeping with the enemy'. But we can be transformed if we stop identifying with our false selves and instead give allegiance and psychological air to our deepest selves. Real victory in human growth and development is the private victory whereby the personality claims its rightful purpose as the faithful servant to the true self and not its mask. Saint Cyprian suggested in the third century that the best way of getting to know God is to know oneself. And Saint Augustine noted some one hundred years later that these two knowings are indivisible. There is a risk of betraying our deepest aspirations as human beings and setting in motion the process of our own disintegration if we do not stay awake to the dangers posed by an inflated ego.

Gerry O'Neill taught for thirteen years in the North of Ireland before emigrating to Australia at the age of 37 with his wife, Gay, and their three children—Natalie, Mark and Megan. In Australia he lectured at the Centre for Aboriginal Studies at Curtin University, was a consultant for Catholic Education in Perth in professional development and formation, and was director of mission at Aquinas College before moving to St John of God Health Care as group director of mission. He is currently is regional manager of formation for SSJG Ministries Inc. He has studied the Enneagram for over twenty years and has facilitated the programme in the past five years. He has a masters degree in Education from the University of Ulster and a masters in Theology from Notre Dame University in Fremantle, Western Australia.

WHO WERE THE RESURRECTION-ANNOUNCING ANGELS?

Ignatius Jesudasan

ROMAN CATHOLIC WRITERS often pretend to too much direct knowledge about angels. They do so by treating every mention of the word in the Old and the New Testaments as if it were literally authentic divine revelation about angelic essences, rather than the literarily intuitive and imaginative projection of human authors and societies. Therefore they implicitly impose on us the obligation to believe the biblical descriptions literally, and a corresponding sense of guilt or discomfort if we find ourselves unable to do so. Popular understanding tends to act, and to build its religious piety, on the literal meaning of the scriptural texts. Conventional priestcraft and medieval scholastic theology have reinforced these misconceptions, rather than correcting them and admitting limits to what we can know about angels, if such essences or genus and species exist as a distinct part of God's creation.

St Augustine was a little more down-to-earth when he distinguished between the nature and function of so-called angels, although he still conceived of them as spiritual essences. He writes,

> The angels are spirits. When they are simply spirits, they are not angels, but when they are sent, they become angels; for 'angel' is the name of a function, not of a nature. If you inquire about the nature of such beings, you find that they are spirits; if you ask what their office is, the answer is that they are angels.[1]

The benefit that Augustine's distinction confers is the assurance that to function as an angel, or messenger, one need not necessarily be spiritual

[1] Augustine, 'Exposition 1 of Psalm 103', n. 15, in *Expositions of the Psalms 99–120*, translated by Maria Boulding (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2004), 125.

in essence or nature, and that embodied historical human beings could also be seen and represented as angels.

The Resurrection Angels as Metaphors for Biblical Prophets

I wish to submit that the figures who are described in the Gospels as angels at the empty tomb of Jesus are not pure spiritual essences, but concrete, flesh-and-blood biblical-historical prophetic personalities, whom the evangelists have metaphorically transformed into angels.

The Gospels as Midrash

My first reason for interpreting angels as prophets is that the Gospels are Christian midrash on the Old Testament.[2] This word may be translated as the exegesis, interpretation or translation of one text in terms or light of another by means of comparison or contrast. The Rabbinic scholar Jacob Neusner explains midrash in terms of three different forms of interpretation: paraphrase, prophecy and parable.[3]

Midrash as paraphrase is the imposition of a fresh meaning on an old biblical text through additional words, phrases or sentences that obliterate the old with a new translation or sense. In this process, the commentator composes a new text altogether, by blurring and bypassing the distinction between text and commentary. Though the paraphrase imports new elements, it introduces them as though they were there in the original already.

Midrash as prophecy is the use of a scriptural text to interpret a contemporary happening. This interpretation takes place within a particular social and literary tradition. Its assumption is that history remains the same and repetitive, with no essential or qualitative changes, so that the old prefigures the new as the past does the present. Far from being a mere prediction about a unique individual, prophecy is a pointer to a universal pattern or cycle that repeats itself in history, leading to the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan. This is how the New Testament used the Old Testament as a midrashic means of interpreting the life of Jesus and his Church. Matthew's Gospel, for example, reads and interprets Jesus' life in the light of the Jewish scriptures and says that Jesus is their fulfilment. Reading one thing in terms of something else, the evangelists,

Prophecy is a pointer to a universal pattern

[2] Jacob Neusner, *What is Midrash?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 39.
[3] Neusner, *What is Midrash?*, 7.

> … transformed history from a sequence of one-time events into an ever-present mythic world. No longer was there one Moses, one David, one set of happenings of a distinctive and never-to-be-repeated character. Now whatever happened of which the thinkers propose to take account must enter and be absorbed into that established and ubiquitous pattern and structure founded in scripture. It is not that biblical history repeats itself. Rather the Bible no longer constitutes history, as a story of things that happened once, long ago, and pointed to some one moment in the future. Rather biblical history becomes an account of things that happened every day.[4]

Midrash as parable is the giving of a parallel meaning or reading so that the text is seen and interpreted as having two layers of meaning, one literal and the other non-literal (symbolic or allegorical)—a process by which the past is extended into the now as current history.[5]

But neither the exegesis by implicit rereading nor the exegesis by implicit rewriting of a story exhausts the range of scripture's own midrash. They are only instances of what was done, without denying other possibilities.[6] The different ways of seeing and translating correspond to the different interests of the groups engaged in the exercise.

The Gospels as Apocalypse

My second reason for interpreting angels as prophets is the literary genre of the resurrection narratives. They are apocalyptic in projecting the resurrection of all humanity into that of Jesus, rather than seeing it as an event in the biography of a unique individual in history.

> Both vision and symbol are central to the genre of apocalyptic. Along with the other features of apocalyptic literature, they contribute to a style of writing which does not intend to be understood in terms of wooden literalism; but rather, the author is appealing to the disciplined or sanctified imagination in order to cause the reader to think, to wonder, to imagine, and to contemplate that which is unfathomable.[7]

In this same way the prophets may be figured as angels.

[4] Neusner, *What is Midrash?*, 49.
[5] Neusner, *What Is Midrash?*, 7–9.
[6] Neusner, *What is Midrash?*, 19.
[7] William J. Tsamis, 'The Apocalyptic Literary Genre: Vision and Symbol', at http://fidei-defensor.blogspot.com/2006/10/apocalyptic-literary-genre-vision-and.html.

According to the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, apocalypse is a genre of writing dealing with:

> … revelation of mysteries, things which lie beyond the ordinary range of human knowledge. The Most High gives to His saints definite instruction in regard to hidden matters, whether things altogether foreign to human experience, or merely events in human history which have not yet come to pass.[8]

The resurrection can be seen as one of these events. The primary example of apocalyptic literature in the Hebrew Bible is the book of Daniel. 'As Daniel after long fasting stands by the river, a heavenly being appears to him, and the revelation follows.' The angel or angels at Jesus' tomb in the Gospels are introduced in the same way. This is how hidden reality is disclosed, through a vision:

> Because of the peculiar nature of the subject-matter, this is evidently the most natural literary form. Moreover, the manner of the revelation, and the experience of the one who receives it, are generally made more or less prominent.

As the *Encyclopedia* continues, 'The introduction of Angels or messengers as the bearers of the revelation is also a standing feature': since God in the biblical tradition does not speak directly to people by reason of their mortal fear. Instead, God gives instruction,

> … through the medium of His heavenly messengers, who act as the seer's guides …. There is hardly an example of a true Apocalypse in which the instrumentality of angels in giving the message is not made prominent.[9]

The Resurrection Narratives

Matthew 28 speaks of two women, both named Mary, going to Jesus' tomb after the Sabbath and seeing an angel, like an earthquake, rolling away the tombstone. Sitting on the stone, the angel announces to them that Jesus has risen from the dead, and instructs them to tell his disciples to go to Galilee, where they will see him.

[8] 'Apocalypse', in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, edited by Cyrus Adler and others (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1912), volume 1, 669.
[9] 'Apocalypse', 669.

The Resurrection and the Women at the Tomb*, by Fra Angelico*

Mark 16 speaks of three women going with spices to anoint the body of Jesus in his tomb. They find the tomb already opened, and, going in, they are alarmed to see a young man in white robes, who announces Jesus' resurrection to them. Again they are to declare it to the disciples, who are to meet Jesus in Galilee. But this time the women are so shaken and frightened that they told no one anything about it!

Luke 24 speaks of an unspecified number of women, intent on anointing Jesus' body, finding the tomb open and empty, except for two men in shining garments who declare to them that Jesus is risen and alive again. Later in his narrative (24:23), Luke redescribes these two men as angels.

John 20:1–2 names Mary Magdalene as going alone to the tomb early on the first day of the week and, on finding it open, running to tell Peter and John, 'They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him'. But when she returns

to the tomb with the two disciples, and lingers there after they have left the place, she sees two angels in the empty tomb who ask her why she is weeping (20:11–13).

The disciples' surprise at the angelic announcement and at Jesus' own apparitions reveals that the resurrection faith or hypothesis is an afterthought. It is in the nature of a midrashic hermeneutic of those Jewish scriptures that, according to the early Church, maintained that the Christ must suffer, die and be raised again for the forgiveness of the sins and offences of his people. In chapter 24 of his Gospel, we read Luke reminding the women disciples, through the two mysterious messengers at Jesus' empty tomb, of what Jesus had foretold in Galilee about his forthcoming death and resurrection in Judaea.[10] Later in the same chapter, Luke reports Jesus appearing and addressing his assembled disciples:

> 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.' Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. (24:44–45)

The Prophets of the Resurrection

Finally we come to the question of whether we can identify the resurrection-witnessing angels with any Old Testament prophets or personalities in particular. Since the common features of the resurrection narratives are the angels and the empty tomb, the angels of the resurrection must be those prophets who had spoken of, and effectively brought about, that empty tomb.

In Acts 2:25–32, Luke shows Peter citing Psalm 16:8–11 in referring to Jesus:

> For David says concerning him, 'I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover my flesh will live in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One experience corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.' Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this

[10] '"Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest.' (Luke 24:6–9)

> day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, 'He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption'.

Here we have a clue that David may be identified with the first of Luke's two resurrection-announcing angels. Who, then, is the second?

We must keep in mind the narratives' affirmation of the resurrection as the inevitable implication of the empty tomb. Any reference or allusion to an empty tomb in relation to any other biblical figure or prophet can potentially be linked to the second resurrection angel. And we do, in fact, come across mention of open graves in Ezekiel 37:11–14, which follows the vision of the valley of dry bones:

> Then he said to me, 'Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely".[11] Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord.'

It was Israel's national restoration, through the return from its exile brought about by the Persian conquest of Babylon, which Ezekiel metaphorically described as the opening and emptying of Judah's graves. Thus Cyrus, the conqueror of Babylon, was the metaphorical angel who opened the metaphorical grave of the Judaeans' Babylonian captivity. Cyrus was a particularly important figure for them since belief in one God, as well as in angels, demons, resurrection and judgment, were a part of the Zoroastrian religion, which Cyrus had adopted as the state religion of his empire. Many scholars argue for Zoroaster's enormous influence on Judaeo-Christianity—and on all of Western civilisation.[12]

[11] These words would seem to echo and reflect the emotive state of despair and disappointment of the disciples at the death of Jesus on the cross. It would have been as hard for them to believe that God would raise the dead Jesus alive from his tomb, as it had been for the Israelites in Babylon to foresee that the Persian king, Cyrus, would conquer Babylon and let the Jewish exiles return to their homeland.

[12] See, for example, Peter Clark, *Zoroastrianism: An Introduction to an Ancient Faith* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1998), appendix 1, which discusses this issue.

The three days that Jesus spent in the grave can also be linked to the Zoroastrian belief that the soul remains in the body for three days before departing.[13] Three days would establish that he was dead, yet leave his soul in a position to reanimate his body.

The Shift from Metaphorical to Bodily Resurrection

A profound shift is taking place here between the national metaphorical resurrection of Ezekiel and the literal bodily resurrection of the Gospels. And we may note a parallel shift from the metaphorical understanding of angels as particular human beings to a literal understanding of them as an entirely distinct species or order of metaphysical beings.[14] Such a transition from metaphorical to literalised understanding is an index to changes taking place within the society that produces these discourses. It suggests that the influence of Zoroaster, with his overwhelmingly ethical concern for Aryan ethno-political law and order, may have contributed to the birth and growth of a deuteronomistic or legalistic society with its dualistic dialectic between essentialised angels and demons and, spatially, between heaven and hell. The Semitic religions and societies found this Zoroastrian dualism convenient and silently absorbed it as if it were part of their essence, and not borrowed from an older ethno-religious tradition. And whenever they accepted an older tradition in this way, they justified it by metaphorically redescribing it as inspired prophecy or divine revelation—a psychic process wholly reconcilable with biblical midrash.

Ignatius Jesudasan SJ is from India and studied interdisciplinary theology at Marquette University, Milwaukee, USA. Involved for years in rural social work, he resides now at Arul Kadal, the Jesuit Regional Theology Centre in Chennai, and publishes on biblical reflections. His most recent books are *Through the Prism: Literary-Critical Scripture-Reading* (2008), *Cult and Spirituality* (2008), *A Rumour of Biblical Angels* (2008), *Gospels of Deconstructed Adamic Myth* (2009) and *Religion as Metaphor for Ethno-Ethical Identity* (2012).

[13] See Donald K. Sharpes, *Lords of the Scrolls: Literary Traditions in the Bible and Gospels* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 68.

[14] This was the ideological contribution of medieval Scholastic theologians in general and of St Thomas Aquinas in particular within Christianity. See also my book, *A Rumour of Biblical Angels: The Metaphorical Key to the Scriptures* (Delhi: Media House, 2008).

DEALING WITH LOSS

Balthasar's Three Forms of Abandonment

Richard Boileau

Follow my ways and I will lead you
To golden-haired suns,
Logos and music, blameless joys,
Innocent of questions
And beyond answers.

(Thomas Merton, 'Song: If You Seek …') [1]

IN *HOMO CREATUS EST*, Han Urs von Balthasar highlights three forms of abandonment in Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises:

> The essay speaks of 'three forms' because it first deals with the abandonment of the Christian who is making the Exercises, then with the abandonment (readiness) of Mary, who is again and again called upon in the Exercises as the mediatrix of prayers, and finally with the abandonment of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of the Father.[2]

I would like to examine the value of these three forms of abandonment in accompanying the bereaved in order to deal with their grief and lead them to new life in the resurrection of Christ.

My purpose, however, is not to advocate the use of the Exercises explicitly, although this may be warranted in certain circumstances, but to suggest that the Ignatian method contains the ingredients necessary for the effective resolution of spiritual, intellectual or emotional issues raised by any significant loss, whether the result of death, separation or a life-altering decision.[3]

[1] *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1977), 340.
[2] Werner Löser, 'The Ignatian Exercises in the Work of Hans Urs von Balthasar', in *Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Work*, edited by David L. Schindler (San Francisco: Communio/Ignatius, 1991), 108.
[3] In my article 'Consolation of Mind and Heart: The Search for Meaning and Happiness', *The Way*, 49/4 (October 2010), I proposed the broader use of the Ignatian approach without necessarily referring to the Exercises or their terminology.

Abandonment and Indiferencia

Balthasar's use of the word 'abandonment' in fact aligns well with a wider tradition or spirituality of abandonment.[4] Suzanne Noffke OP writes in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*.

> Abandonment was more than mere obedience to God's already perceived will and more than patience or resignation, which still bore elements of fear or coercion. It was for some authors beyond even indifference in the Ignatian sense (Exx 23), for when one has fully embraced God's will in all things, indifference loses its reason for being.[5]

Even though Balthasar's sense of the word is in continuity with ancient monasticism and German mysticism, Werner Löser indicates that this movement is neither ascetical nor mystical, but *dramatic*:

> A dramatic theology understands the whole of reality as a great and serious drama that, thanks to God's action, culminates in the heavenly Jerusalem.[6]

Löser credits Ignatius for this perspective in Balthasar's extensive work, in particular in his landmark trilogy of *The Glory of the Lord*, *Theo-Drama* and *Theo-Logic*. Henri de Lubac once described Balthasar as 'a fervent disciple' of Ignatius.[7] In Balthasar's usage 'abandonment' corresponds to a deep understanding of 'indifference in the Ignatian sense'—*indiferencia*. It is not a matter of intellectual indifference; nor does it arise from ambivalence or inauthenticity; nor is it passive detachment. It is the result of a decision based on obedience, to 'choose God's choice' for our life: 'Balthasar sees the core event of the Exercises in self-abandonment to God's call'.[8]

[4] The spirituality of abandonment is a current from many streams. In 'Treatise on Abandonment to Divine Providence', *The Way*, 46/2 (April 2007), Dominique Salin refers to Balthasar's admiration for the anonymous *L'abandon à la providence divine*. Among the spiritual writers in the tradition, he cites 'the *Gelassenheit* of the Rhineland mystics, Ignatian "indifference" [and] Francis of Sales' "abandonment"' (25).

[5] *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality,* edited by Michael Downey (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1993), 1.

[6] Werner Löser, 'Hans Urs von Balthasar and Ignatius Loyola', *The Way*, 44/4 (October 2005), 117.

[7] Henri de Lubac, 'Un témoin du Christ dans l'Église: Hans Urs von Balthasar', quoted in Löser, 'The Ignatian Exercises in the Work of Hans Urs von Balthasar', 103. Löser had personal knowledge of the influence of Ignatius on Balthasar: 'Balthasar told me that he always used to let Ignatius lead him' ('Hans Urs von Balthasar and Ignatius Loyola', 115).

[8] Löser, 'The Ignatian Exercises in the Work of Hans Urs von Balthasar', 107.

Blessing Christ and Praying Virgin, ***by the Master of Flémalle***

Abandonment in the Exercises

This abandonment to God is a vital part of the very foundation of the Spiritual Exercises (Exx 23), which also serves to launch the First Week:

> For this it is necessary to make ourselves indifferent to all created things in all that is allowed to the choice of our free will and is not prohibited to it (Exx 26).

In the Second Week, two important references to spiritual poverty serve to remind us of abandonment to God as a quality of discipleship. Our calling, the calling of Christ's 'servants and friends', is patterned after Christ's own mission:

> [Christ] sends them on this expedition, recommending them to want to help all, by bringing them first to the highest spiritual poverty, and—if His Divine Majesty would be served and would want to chose them—no less to actual poverty (Exx 146).
>
> One Colloquy to Our Lady, that she may get me grace from Her Son and Lord that I may be received under his Standard, and first in the highest spiritual poverty, and—if His Divine Majesty would be served and would want to choose and receive me—not less in actual poverty (Exx 147).

Christ and his mother, who exemplify abandonment to God, are constant companions throughout the Exercises. In fact, Christ serves as guide for our spiritual journey: 'One has to imagine as to the supreme and true Captain, who is Christ our Lord' (Exx 143). His help is sought in frequent colloquies (ongoing conversations with the ever-present Spirit of Jesus). The role of the Blessed Virgin his Mother is no less engaging: she serves as intermediary between her Son and the pilgrim. Her name always appears first in the colloquies:

> … that she may get me grace from Her Son and Lord for three things: first, that I may feel an interior knowledge of my sins, and hatred of them; second, that I may feel the disorder of my actions, so that, hating them, I may direct myself and put myself in order; third, to ask knowledge of the world, in order that, hating it, I may put away from me worldly and vain things (Exx 63).
>
> We are invited to imitate Mary as a means of imitating her Son (Exx 248).

Frequent invocations to Christ and the Blessed Virgin serve as reminders that abandonment to God is indispensible to the advancement of spiritual progress.

Balthasar's second form of abandonment is that of the Virgin Mary herself. Mary's courageous 'yes' to the will of God was key to her mission. Nothing short of the abandonment of her own will would have enabled her to endure the perilous journey that was to follow. By it, she consented to insecurity, and to being made fruitful in ways that she could not imagine, prepare for or control. Ultimately, Jesus would withdraw from his mother just as his father had withdrawn from him.

> The foremost example of creaturely participation in the Trinitarian life of self-giving love through Christ is the Blessed Virgin Mary …. [Her] participation in Christ's God-forsakenness manifests the perfection of the mystical 'dark night' …. Her union with God is essentially directed to self-abandonment and to abandonment by God.[9]

Finally, in Christ, self-abandonment takes two forms. The first is his repeated submission of his will to that of the Father to the point

[9] Alyssa Lyra Pitstick, *Light in Darkness: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Catholic Doctrine of Christ's Descent into Hell* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 274.

where the two are as one, most notably on the Mount of Olives. Nothing short of that total commitment would have given him the fortitude to endure the cruel passion, the betrayal of his friends, the silence of God and his agonizing death. The second is his total self-emptying or *kenosis*, as expressed by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Philippians.[10]

Holy Saturday

Perhaps Balthasar's most striking account of abandonment in his wider body of work is the 'hiatus' in *Mysterium Paschale*—the mystery of Holy Saturday, which bridges the anguish of aloneness on the Mount of Olives and on the cross, via the silence of the tomb to the triumph of the resurrection. So significant is this mystery to Balthasar that he writes of Holy Saturday, 'It is for the sake of this day that the Son became man'.[11]

Christ on the Mount of Olives, *by Dürer*

[10] Philippians 2:6–11.
[11] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, translated by Aidan Nichols (San Franciscio: Ignatius, 1990), 49.

> If without the Son no one can see the Father, nor anyone come to the Father, and if, without him, the Father is revealed to nobody, then when the Son, the Word of the Father is dead, then no one can see God, hear of him or attain him … he came … to triumph over principalities and powers: but this triumph is realised in the cry of God-forsakenness in the darkness.[12]

Christ's abandonment *to* God at Gethsemane collides with the experience of abandonment *by* God on the cross. Solidarity with humanity's own visceral experience of darkness could not be more dramatic and eternally binding. That is precisely what makes it liberating for us. The incarnation presents to us a Light that is not diminished by the darkness, even in the abyss; but its glory is fully revealed only in the resurrection.

In *The Christian and Anxiety*, Balthasar again places abandonment on the cross at the centre of the human experience.

> It is … the anguish that God (in human form) suffers on account of his world, which is in danger of being lost to him … so as to be able to suffer this anxiety and therein to demonstrate humanly and how concerned he is for the world's sake …. It is, in the proper and strict sense of the word, the absolute anxiety, which undergirds and surpasses every other anxiety.[13]

Despite the abysmal horror, however, hope survives. Balthasar reminds us of the words of the prophet Isaiah: 'They will be in anguish like a woman in labour' (Isaiah 13:8). Ultimately, this suffering is generative precisely because it is filled with meaning, albeit in the service of a purpose that overarches our finite understanding. The anguish of labour pains is consecrated to give life. This fruitfulness in abandonment to God is well illustrated in Balthasar's *Engagement with God*, which encapsulates his landmark *Theo-Drama* collection, pointing to the counter-intuitive relationship between darkness and joy.

So central is the theme of abandonment in Balthasar's work that Rowan Williams asks,

> What does it mean to identify, as the definitive embodiment of God in human history, someone who declares himself abandoned by God?

[12] von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 49.
[13] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Christian and Anxiety* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1994), 75.

> This is the question that motivates Hans Urs von Balthasar's entire theological vision.[14]

In effect what this means is that when John the Evangelist declares that God is love, he is making a statement about the ontological nature of love as a self-bestowing so total that it not only gives freely and is equally available to be loved, but does so without preconditions. God loves unconditionally because he *is* the truth and fullness of love. He desires to make it possible for us to receive and give love. Self-emptying becomes, therefore, key to the fulfilment of Creation and of Jesus' mission on earth.

Dealing with Loss

Abandonment to God creates the space necessary for receiving love that is healing, and in this truth the foundation is well established for its application to the experience of loss.

When my wife died, 23 years ago, I found myself seeking to exercise control over my life, certainly not to abandon myself to God. Yet, that instinct was countered by an intuition that 'if faith has any value, it must give meaning to this bitter experience'. Shortly afterwards, I completed the Spiritual Exercises and began to work on a system for grappling with the huge existential questions that arose in the aftermath of my wife's untimely death. It took years to synthesize all that I read and heard. It would take even longer to integrate these insights into all aspects of my life—a process that is still going on.

After attending a Lenten retreat that provided a Christian understanding of loss, I was invited to co-animate the session one year later. Since then, I have made many adjustments to my material and added modules from theological, spiritual and psychological domains.

I have accompanied people dealing with loss for almost twenty years now, using the paschal mystery as the paradigm for understanding and transcending their grief. The beginning of this practice also coincided with my study of christology in a reading course focused

[14] Rowan Williams, 'Balthasar and the Trinity', in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, edited by Edward T. Oakes and David Moss (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), 37.

Man of Sorrows, *by Memling*

on the work of Balthasar. In accompanying the bereaved, I have developed a framework that interprets theories from the field of thanatology (the study of death and dying) in the light of Christian principles, values and virtues. This is particularly helpful for people who tend to compartmentalise religious and secular life.

In dealing with different types of situations, I make a distinction between active loss and passive loss. I call active loss anything that is the necessary consequence of a decision chosen freely. There may be more hope here than in the case of passive loss, but the anguish may at times be as intense. For example, a decision to enter a religious community may be enveloped in joy, but still be marked by periods of restlessness with regard to celibacy. Passive loss is involuntary, for example separation from someone cherished because of death or divorce, or a significant change such as the loss of health or employment.

When I began to accompany the bereaved, therapists were uncomfortable with the subject of spirituality and tended to set it aside as idiosyncratic. Nevertheless well-established discoveries have been made about the role of religion and spirituality in such situations. There are known tasks in facing loss, including 'reaffirming sources of spiritual energy that can encourage faith and hope'.[15] Marcia Lattanzi-Licht points to a broad set of related spiritual needs: re-examining beliefs, reconciling life choices, exploring one's lifetime contribution, examining loving relationships, exploring beliefs about an

[15] Marcia Lattanzi-Licht, 'Religion, Spirituality, and Dying', in *Handbook of Thanatology*, edited by David Balk (New York and London: Routledge, 2007), 11.

afterlife and discovering meaning.[16] The latter provides the greatest opportunity for spiritual development:

> The search for meaning, connection, or hope does not involve an end or completion point, but rather is a continuing process, a process that engages one's spirit.[17]

The Christian belief is that meaning comes from the Creator as expressed in Christ, and that the most meaningful connection is friendship with God. This is the source of our hope and, ultimately, our joy. It is precisely the possibility of helping others to discover this reality that draws me to accompany the bereaved. When a relationship of spiritual accompaniment is entered with a contemplative mind and compassionate heart, it is wonderful to behold the working of the Holy Spirit in a constant renewal of the Paschal Mystery.

The Stages of Grief

In addition to knowing something about types of grief, of which there are many,[18] it is helpful to gain further insight into its various stages. The systems proposed in psychology literature typically include *shock*, *disorganization* and *reorganization*. I would like to offer a synthesis that is based on pastoral observation and consideration of the Paschal Mystery, central to Christian faith.

When we meditate on the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus, we note four clearly discernible periods—the anguish that he suffered in the garden of Gethsemane during the night before he died; the agony of torture and death at Golgotha; the silent emptiness of time in the tomb; and his return to new life in the resurrection.

I suggest that Jesus' experiences at Gethsemane and Golgotha are part of a destructive phase that psychotherapists divide into two parts, shock and disorganization. I further suggest that the resurrection is a reconstruction that calls to mind the reorganization stage. Between the two, however, there is a mysterious hiatus.

[16] Lattanzi-Licht, 'Religion, Spirituality, and Dying', 12.
[17] Lattanzi-Licht, 'Religion, Spirituality, and Dying', 17.
[18] Authors vary in their use of categories, each with their particular symptoms and dynamic. Those proposed in the *Handbook of Thanatology* include acute grief, anticipatory grief, community grief, complicated grief, disenfranchised grief, normal grief, paternal grief, problematic grief, traumatic grief, uncomplicated grief.

This time of transition between the passivity of loss and active reconstruction is populated by lingering signs of decline mixed with emerging indications of progress. This passage serves two distinct purposes. First, it accords meaning to the long loneliness often observed by grievers between the periods in which they feel distressed and throw out beliefs and practices that no longer satisfy their needs, and the time when they can safely say that they have entered a new and stable period of life with the resumption of joyful activities. Second, it allows us to enter into the grace-filled mystery of Holy Saturday.

When we portray the stages of grief as an Easter triad, we are better able to apply the antidotes that can alleviate pain and facilitate healing. Against the initial devastation, Christianity proposes simple but mature faith; against the loneliness that follows, true hope; and to enable reconstruction, authentic love. Also, we are reminded of the mystical stages: purgation, which alludes to the active effort of eliminating inordinate attachments and distractions in order to be free to love and serve God with our entire being and to love our neighbour as ourselves; illumination, in which God uses this new availability to provide insights into God's nature and wisdom; and union, which is a mutual embrace of intimate friendship with God. These stages do not occur for once and for all. We have moments or periods of purgation, flashes of illumination and grace-filled times when God feels close enough to touch.

The antidotes that can alleviate pain and facilitate healing

These categories resonate well with the stages in the grieving process proposed by Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, and particularly by Catherine Sanders. Sanders identifies *shock*, *awareness of loss*, *conservation/withdrawal*, *healing* and *renewal*.[19] Kenneth Doka subsequently added *fulfilment*.[20]

The paradigm that guides my work is summarised in the table below. It is informed by a number of psychological and spiritual influences.

[19] Catherine Sanders, *Surviving Grief ... and Learning to Live Again* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1992), 39.

[20] See Kenneth Doka, 'Fulfillment as Sanders' Sixth Phase of Bereavement: The Unfinished Work of Catherine Sanders', *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying*, 52/2 (2006), 143–151.

	Destruction	**Transition**	**Reconstruction**
	Anguish	Loneliness	New Life
Prend[21]	Shock Disorganization	Reconstruction	Synthesis Transcendence
Kübler-Ross[22]	Denial/Bargaining Anger	Depression	Acceptance
Sanders/Doka	Shock Awareness of loss	Conservation/withdrawal Healing	Renewal Fulfilment
Relational phases	Abandonment	Isolation or solitude	Re-engagement
Christ as model	Gethsemane Golgotha	Holy Saturday	Resurrection
Spiritual growth model	Purgation	Illumination	Union
Theological virtues	Faith	Hope	Love
Ignatian Exercises	First Week	Second and Third Weeks	Fourth Week

Here, I would like to explore abandonment, isolation and solitude as a progressive movement from learning to know our self to becoming comfortable with our self, which is a necessary condition for new, life-giving relationships. In this process the feeling of abandonment by God is transformed into, and by, the experience of self-abandonment to God. This is made possible only by focusing on the concrete reality of God as love and source of all beatific blessing. The necessary insight is to understand God's sheer goodness as being the true object of our existential yearning. Whereas nothing that we achieve on our own can alleviate the pain of our separation from what we have lost, God's grace is sufficient.

Abandonment

A key factor in dealing with passive loss is the need to grapple with the feeling of being abandoned—including being abandoned by God—so that a transformation can occur from the first shock of loss to the vitality

[21] Ashley Davis Prend, *Transcending Loss: Understanding the Lifelong Impact of Grief and How to Make It Meaningful* (New York: Berkley, 1997).
[22] Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York, Oxford, Singapore and Sydney: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1969).

that is restored once we experience the grace to reinvest in what we value most. Feelings of having been abandoned are often linked to issues of self-esteem. People with low self-esteem almost inevitably suffer more from loss that those with high self-esteem. They have more difficulty in accepting their feelings, giving themselves time to process those that are frightening, and separating themselves from loved ones and situations that provided in the past at least the illusion of security and acceptance. People in this situation need help to face an often terrifying future, filled with uncertainty, sadness and doubt.

In the case of passive loss, abandonment is something that we suffer. We feel victimized by it. Eventually, we construct a defence against the pain of feeling abandoned by isolating ourselves. No one can hurt us now because we feel that we have regained control over our lives. This pre-emptive expression of aloneness feels good for a time because it seems constructive. Most often, however, it is a confused escape from unbearable realities, a continuation of disorganization. To a degree, this is a healthy response. We need time to regroup. Isolation provides space for an important transition to occur. But it cannot be permanent. Isolation that is induced by fear eventually leads to despair.

Isolation

Progressing through stages is a journey, and the four weeks of the Ignatian Exercises serve to remind us that development takes time. Though I have never used the Exercises literally to accompany the bereaved, as I explicitly draw on Christian references in group and individual work, my method is always faithful to the progressive steps that underpin them.

The spiritual journey includes the challenge of taming empty spaces, especially through the transitional phase in which loneliness is often present. There is to be found the ultimate encounter between the frightened ego and the hopeful self. There we stand alone with the Spirit as Jesus did in the desert after his baptism.[23] The temptations will be deeply personal and intense; our vulnerability acute. To come to the self-knowledge that is necessary to assume our true spiritual identity and experience the consolation that only our true mission can give, we need to be courageously authentic and transcend the limitations of our current experience.

[23] Matthew 4: 1–11; Mark 1: 12–13; Luke 4: 1–13.

The movement from transition to reconstruction is a matter of choice. It requires both wisdom and courage. Without a deliberate election in favour of God's vital call one can remain paralyzed or—worse yet—sink into despair. Hence the pivotal importance of hope, and the value of a spiritual director who enables sound choice via the pedagogy of the Exercises. Here the Ignatian approach can be particularly beneficial because of its focus on an appreciation of God's prior and unconditional love. The integrated self is then free to act authentically.

For the Exercises also remind us that progress is only possible in freedom: freedom from fear; freedom that is expressed as simplicity (self-abandonment) and gratitude (awareness of God's generosity). Our consolation, according to Balthasar, comes from knowing 'God's fullness in his intra-divine self-giving, manifested in Jesus Christ, in his Eucharist and in his Church'.[24]

> I should ponder God's deed for me. God's benefits for me personally are also his invitation and calling to a task in and with his world …. I should consider how much God our Lord had done for me, and how much he wants to give me out of what he possesses, and consequently how much the same Lord desires to give himself to me, and then think back on myself …. Here we hand ourselves over to God in indifference, and then receive our identity back again, in renewed form, as people whom God has 'disposed' and is continuing to dispose in ever new ways.[25]
>
> … to look how all the good things and gifts descend from above, as my poor power from the supreme and infinite power from above; and so justice, goodness, pity, mercy, etc.; as from the sun descend the rays, from the fountain the waters, etc. Then to finish reflecting on myself. (Exx 237)

Freedom that is steeped in God's love restores trust, which is a necessary ingredient in reconstruction. Beginning with trust in God's benevolence, we can learn again to trust in others and in ourselves.

Solitude

As a result, abandonment to God can be expressed as serenity and experienced in periods, not of isolation or loneliness but of pregnant

[24] 'Hans Urs Von Balthasar and Ignatius Loyola', 122.
[25] 'Hans Urs Von Balthasar and Ignatius Loyola', 123.

solitude in which one hears spiritual music and sees poetry in ordinary things. For Thomas Merton, solitude was a unique environment in which to incubate perspective and unity, confidence and compassion—all necessary to emotional and spiritual growth. It is the place where we can let go of fantasies and come to understand the joy of drawing wisdom and courage from God, the inexhaustible source. In solitude, he prayed. This has become Thomas Merton's prayer for discernment of God's will:

> My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me, I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.[26]

In solitude we must confront the aloneness that is a part of the human condition. Much of our energy over the years has been used to divert our attention from that fact. Much of our pursuit of prestige, power and property has been unconsciously driven by a need to mask this reality. Many of our activities have been motivated by our fear of being alone. Yet, recognition and acceptance of the self standing separately from others—including God—is a necessary part of growth. Without a clear sense of our separation from others, we cannot live freely and fully. Without mature differentiation, we remain emotionally infantilised, bound by self-doubt and buffeted by the whims of others.

Solitude is especially necessary as the din of busy lives overwhelms us and distractions shift our attention away from the rich spiritual dynamic operating within us. It is not, and can never be, self-absorbing. Unlike isolation, it is open to the world but not controlled by it. The need for true solitude is complex and presents certain risks, but it is a basic human requirement. Solitude is fertile ground. Hope is its sunshine. Yet it is not a destination, but a place of healing on the way to our destination. Its purpose is to develop a renewed and healthier understanding of community.

[26] Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude* (Boston, Ma: Shambhala, 1993), 89.

Solitude is not a withdrawal from ordinary life. It is not apart from, above or 'better than' ordinary life; on the contrary, solitude is the very ground of ordinary life. It is the ground of that simple, unpretentious, fully human activity by which we quietly earn our living and share our experiences with a few intimate friends. But we must learn to know and accept this ground of our being. To many people, although it is always there, it is unthinkable and unknown. Consequently, their life has no centre and no foundation. It is dispersed in pretence of 'togetherness' in which there is no real meaning. Only when our activity proceeds out of the ground in which we have consented to be dissolved does it have the divine fruitfulness of love and grace.[27]

Solitude is key to a healthy experience of abandonment to God. Healthy solitude is marked by a degree of peace. Restlessness in solitude, on the other hand, shows when action is needed. Solitude that is filled with God's love and truth is nourishing. It is essential but not sufficient. Ultimately love and truth must be incarnated. Spiritual energy, depleted by grief, must be drawn from its source in God and spread across a garden of fresh possibilities. Abandonment to God ultimately thrusts us forward into new and deeper relationships patterned after those in the Holy Trinity.

Ultimately love and truth must be incarnated

New Life

Whether in solitude or engagement with others, abandonment to God must be experienced as readiness. Self-awareness must be encouraged to increase, and resistance to God's life-giving call to diminish. The mission to which we are all called to abandon ourselves is in reality a path of deep inner healing, even as it fixes our eyes on others. It is precisely when they lifted their eyes from their own woes to the sight of Jesus' love and opened their ears to the meaning of revealed truth that the Emmaus disciples could feel how their hearts burned with new-found joy.[28]

Kübler-Ross reminds us that the work of bereavement is not complete until we have achieved acceptance. Rarely is this the fruit of theoretical understanding. Loss is almost always a mystery. 'Why' becomes a toxic question as the answers are never adequate. The renewal process assumes

[27] Thomas Merton, *Love and Living* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985).
[28] See Luke 24: 13–32; also see the response of the apostles in Luke 24: 36 following.

that our old systems for finding meaning are incapable of carrying the grief of a loss that refuses to be placated by reason alone. Rather, a new system must encompass 'blameless joys, innocent of questions and beyond answers'.[29]

The most efficient path to acceptance and reconstruction through self-transcendence is Ignatian *indiferencia*, understood as abandonment in the sense that Balthasar elaborates. Again, this is not an attitude of resignation to forces too brutal to control but a courageous and confident decision to opt for freedom from fear and compulsive responses. It leads to God's gift of mature and true joy: 'Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you' (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18).

Richard Boileau is a permanent deacon in the archdiocese of Montreal, Canada and executive vice-president of Health Partners International of Canada (www.hpicanada.ca). He is the founder of Crib and Cross Franciscan Ministries (www.cribandcross.com), dedicated to the application of gospel teaching to daily life. His activities include grief counselling and spiritual direction, online reflections on Franciscan and gospel themes, missions and retreats, and humanitarian outreach.

[29] Merton, 'Song: If You Seek', 340.

AN IGNATIAN RETREAT AMID THE POVERTY OF ECUADOR

James Menkhaus

IN 1973, PEDRO ARRUPE, then Superior General of the Society of Jesus, spoke in Spain to the alumni of Jesuit schools from throughout Europe. This speech, one of Arrupe's most well-known addresses, challenged his audience to reflect on how their Jesuit education influenced their identity and whether it educated them to work for justice. Arrupe asserted, 'Just as we are never sure that we love God unless we love others, so we are never sure that we have love at all unless our love issues in works of justice'.[1] Opening a student's eyes to injustices around the world remains one of the primary missions of Jesuit education. In some cases, graduates decide to do a year or more of service as a way to live out this teaching. The largest Roman Catholic service programme is the Jesuit Volunteers, but another organization with similar goals and mission that attracts a number of Jesuit-educated women and men is Rostro de Cristo.[2]

Rostro de Cristo,

> … is a Catholic program whose mission is to provide spiritual and educational opportunities for young people from the United States to live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ together with the people of Ecuador.[3]

During their year in Ecuador, the volunteers teach in after-school programmes, work in parishes and visit the dying in hospitals. As members of a faith-based Roman Catholic organization, they attend Mass with

[1] Pedro Arrupe, 'Men and Women for Others', in *Pedro Arrupe: Essential Writings,* edited by Kevin Burke (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004), 179.

[2] *Rostro de Cristo* is Spanish for 'Face of Christ'. The international wing of the Jesuit Volunteers and Rostro de Cristo combine for a two-week orientation, which currently takes place the last two weeks of July at Boston College in the USA.

[3] 'Mission and Vision', at http://www.rostrodecristo.org/about-us/mission.

St James Society Retreat House, Ayangue

their Ecuadorian community and focus on building ties through faith and service. Additionally, the volunteers are responsible for leading brief immersion experiences for approximately 25 high school and college groups from the United States. These experiences immerse students in the lives of Ecuadorians for ten days, educate them about structural injustices, and invite them to examine their own lives.

The volunteers themselves undergo four weekend retreats during the year to help them reflect on their time in Ecuador. These experiences occur every few months along the volunteers' journey and are designed to help them process their experience. At the beginning of their service commitment, such a retreat can help volunteers adapt to being away from home and living in a new environment. The retreat at the end of the experience allows them to reflect as they prepare to return home, having been changed by a year in Ecuador. While the format of the retreats varies, the length is usually three days and the location is away from the communities, offering the volunteers a chance to remove themselves from their work environment and focus on their relationships with each other and with God.

In spring 2011 I was offered the opportunity to design and lead the third retreat for the volunteers, from 29 April to 1 May 2011. The retreat location was the St James Society Retreat House in Ayangue, Ecuador. Ayangue is located on the west coast of Ecuador, approximately a three-hour car ride from Duran, the city where two of the three Rostro

de Cristo houses are located. The retreat centre overlooks the Pacific Ocean and a small secluded village, making for a beautiful, quiet place for reflection surrounded by God's creation.

The structure of the retreat was based on St Ignatius' comments in the *Constitutions*, III.1.4[250]. Here, St Ignatius discusses the way in which young novices come to intuit God's presence in the world. The novices are taught to use their senses, to show respect and reverence to each one's state and thereby to grow in devotion to God. Fr Howard Gray's description of this process is synthesized as 'attention, reverence and devotion'.[4] I broke down the retreat into these three concepts, trusting that the volunteers would benefit from paying attention to their reality, reverencing the encounter and discerning God's presence in the world through devotion.

This Ignatian prism for reflection aimed at allowing them to take time to see God's presence in the previous months, as well as to consider what would come after their year of service. What follows are adaptations of the three talks I gave to help unpack these themes.[5] As an additional part of the retreat, the volunteers had daily exercises to help them explore the themes, some of which are alluded to in what follows. In conclusion, I will offer my own reflections on preparing and offering the retreat. I remain grateful to Dr Patrick and Mrs Helen Rombalski, who are on the Rostro de Cristo board of directors, for the opportunity to lead this retreat, and to the sixteen volunteers who thoughtfully and prayerfully underwent the experience, allowing me to see the *rostro de Cristo* in my short time in Ecuador.

Talk 1: Attention

Although our theme is attention, I would like to begin by discussing memory. My first point is that memory is crucial in creating our identity. In his novel *The Tree House Confessions*, James McConkey discusses the power of memory. Peter, a fifty-year-old man, has retreated to his son's tree house. As the narrative unfolds, the reader realises that it is not

[4] For a discussion of Howard Gray's interpretation of attention, reverence and devotion see Howard Gray, 'Ignatian Spirituality', in *As Leaven in the World,* edited by Thomas M. Landy (Franklin: Sheed and Ward, 2001), 324–326. I am especially thankful to Fr Gray for his guidance over many years which led to the development of this retreat.

[5] The actual talks were not recorded and I was working from notes. However, what is written highlights the essential ideas that I invited them to reflect upon during the three main sessions.

the death of his son nor arguments with his wife that have caused his flight from reality, but rather his mother's dying words.

On her deathbed his mother announced that she no longer held sacred those memories of his youth that the middle-aged man treasured. She no longer wished to be buried with her family, no longer reflected fondly upon those summers that Peter felt had formed the core of his being. For her, these memories were worthless as she approached death. Peter reflects, 'My mother renounced the past, she renounced place, she renounced her dead husband and her living son'.[6] As Peter discovers, one of the most devastating acts one can commit is to deny the authenticity of happy times that someone else remembers. While the present always changes as people age and die, memory allows us to hold on to those pieces of the past in the only way we can, and an assault on our joyful memories may have disastrous consequences.

Just as, negatively, the destruction or uprooting of memory can be destructive of our identities, memory also forms us in positive ways. In the film *Cinema Paradiso*, the protagonist Toto looks back on his life and sees how working with Alfredo, the movie projectionist, helped to create his identity. From a young age he would gather films together and

***Alfredo's funeral, from* Cinema Paradiso**

[6] James McConkey, *The Tree House Confessions* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1979), 213.

help Alfredo show them to the town. As the film comes to a close, Toto arrives home for Alfredo's funeral to find the town transformed, no longer the place of his birth and adolescence. Even though shops had closed and people had aged, his memory of the past remained. In the final scene of the movie, Toto sits alone in the cinema and weeps as he watches film clips that the old man had prepared and left in a box for his eventual return home.

From these two examples, and from our own lives, we can appreciate how memory helps to create an identity. Who we are is, in part, a product of the impact of our memory and the way memory affects our present. Thus, my second point is that at the heart of our identity are our 'non-negotiables'. I would define non-negotiables as these elements of our personhood that lie at the core of our being. These are the aspects of our lives that we would not allow to be taken away because they contribute to our identity at the deepest level. That does not mean that they cannot change over time. Perhaps before you came to Ecuador you thought something was important, such as the way you dress or certain objects that you possess, but having spent nine months here, those things may no longer matter. Now what matters may be getting enough to eat or ensuring that a young child is able to have an education. This experience has probably altered or formed your non-negotiables in ways that were unforeseen nine months ago, and may last for the rest of your lives.

My third point is that one way to form your non-negotiables is to be attentive to the reality around you. As Howard Gray has said, 'For Ignatius God could be found in all things, but only if one first found "all things"'.[7] An example of this would be that you cannot find God in the people of Ecuador until you find the people of Ecuador where they are at this moment. To do this, you must be attentive to who they are and to their struggles, sharing in their difficult experiences and taking part in their triumphs. This is really what you have been doing these past nine months, so I hope you can now spend time taking stock of the attention you have paid to these men and women with whom you work.

Finally, please take some time to reflect on the ways you have formed your identity and your non-negotiables. Reaching back into your memory, both before your arrival here and in the past months, what has helped

[7] Howard Gray, 'Soul Education: An Ignatian Priority', in *A Jesuit Education Reader*, edited by George W. Traub (Chicago: Loyola, 2008), 205.

you decide who you want to be? Be attentive to those details, small encounters and moments of revelation. We will go on to give these experiences new words as invitations to relationship; for now allow these experiences to be just what they are: encounters to which you should be attentive as they help form your identity.

Talk 2: Reverence

We have just focused on ourselves, our identities. Now, as we discuss the theme of reverence, I would like to focus on relationship. We began with an Emmaus walk,[8] spending time in conversation with a partner. Just as Jesus walked with the disciples after his death and brought consolation, so you too offered consolation to each other through conversation. Ignatius placed a heavy emphasis on communication, because God's will can be revealed through conversation. One of the first levels to relationship is conversation, the acknowledgement of another through speech or other communication, but this is only the beginning.

Following the walk, I asked you to write down the names of those people you encountered during your time in Ecuador and something about their struggle. Then we read those names, prayerfully asking God to help those individuals and to be with them through their troubles. We read nearly one hundred names, and it was a difficult and moving exercise. However, it is important to name your pain, because the power to name is a power to control. In Genesis, God offers the man and woman the chance to name the animals of the world, thus symbolically giving them a stewardship over these creatures. However, in Exodus, Moses approaches the burning bush and asks God for God's name. God is beyond name and replies that 'I am who am' should be God's reference. Thus, Moses has no power over God to give God a name.

You named these feelings as we prayed, asking God for strength and asserting your own power over your pain through your presence here in Ecuador. The women and men who will not have a chance to attend school, who are homeless, who have lost a spouse or who are suffering from abuse have all entered your lives in a profound way. You are there for them, present to them. Sometimes this seems ineffective

[8] This exercise is based on the passage from Luke 24:13–35. The volunteers are divided into pairs and given questions to discuss on an hour-long walk. The goal is for them to intuit the Spirit 'burning within them' during their conversation and to find Christ in the consolation of their partners.

because you want to go beyond 'simply' being present, hoping to create structural change. However, Stanley Hauerwas, an ethicist at Duke University, describes in his book *Suffering Presence* how sometimes this is all we can do.[9] And, after naming the pain, just knowing that someone else is present may be enough to provide help. By naming the pain that you have encountered and experienced among the Ecuadorians, you can see the power your presence has already had and the strength you gain by naming this pain as you move forward.

I experienced this about five years ago when a friend's father had a stroke. I arrived at his home about the same time as he had returned from overseas. The prognosis for his father was not good: he was in a coma which the doctors feared was irreversible. I walked to my friend and hugged him, but there was nothing I could say. I sat next to him on his bed, and we exchanged only a few sentences in the hour or so that we sat there, contemplating our lives and the fragility of existence. We then stood up, hugged again, and shared dinner. Although there were few words that could offer consolation, he knew that my presence indicated my care for him and his family. I had been a 'suffering presence'.

So, too, have all of you been a suffering presence. You have given yourselves to the people of Ecuador, and in many cases, they have given themselves back to you. Being there during a difficult time is one way to reverence these encounters. To reverence something, in an Ignatian sense, is to appreciate its uniqueness. You have taken the time to accept what is there in the other, without moving to judgment first. You have sat with people and listened to their stories instead of immediately telling them how to fix their problems or suggesting ways to do things that will yield better results. That is what it means to reverence your encounters.

These encounters are ideally mutual donations, as all strong relationships should be. Marriage ought to be an example of 'mutual donation'. Many sociologists and theologians are asking why there is such a high divorce rate. I think one of the issues is that people focus too much on the 'do' of 'I do' within the marriage vows. The 'do' is what the couple will do—where they will live, will they have enough money, are they in love? Few people focus on the 'I'. Who am I, independent

[9] See Stanley Hauerwas, *Suffering Presence* (Notre Dame: U. of Notre Dame P, 1986).

of this other person? What are my gifts and talents? What are my non-negotiables? This is why we started with the self. We need to be comfortable with ourselves, at least to some extent, before we can give ourselves away in mutual donation. Of course this is a process that continues throughout our lives. However, these questions must be asked. Who am 'I' that I can give myself to this person, this reality, this experience? Ignatian reflection invites us to ask these questions.

And so, once we have reflected on these issues, we ask ourselves *how* we can reverence the encounter with the other. Thomas Merton's notion of the true self and the false self helps with this question. So often we hide our true selves and put up a façade, not wanting to let people beyond the walls we build for protection. But we need to tear down these walls, Merton instructs, to allow our true self to break out into the world for the sake of our relationships.[10]

During your personal reflection time, ask yourself how you can bring your true self before those in your community, those in Ecuador and, finally, God. We will focus next on that last relationship, with the God who called you here to spend a year of your life among the poor of Ecuador.

Talk 3: Devotion

I would like to begin by reflecting on the story of Luke 15, the Prodigal Son. Up to this point, we have focused on the past and ourselves, and on the present and our relationships with others. Now we will look to the future and our relationship with God. The story of the Prodigal Son reveals an insight into the love and care that God has for all people. In Luke 15, before the parable, Jesus is found eating with sinners and tax collectors. The Pharisees scoff at Jesus' behaviour, but his response is a series of parables that challenge their notion of God's love. Instead of being earned, the love is an unmerited gift, offered to the lost coin, the lost sheep and the lost son. According to the text, the father runs to the son, embraces him, puts a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. These responses would have been more foreign to Jesus' audience than they are to us. Why is the lost son being treated with such compassion? It makes no sense in this world, but in the

[10] See Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (Boston, Ms: Shambhala, 2003).

The Retreat House chapel at Ayangue

world of God's love there is no outcast; no one is turned away; all can be forgiven.

In an excellent essay, Lavina Byrne states that prayer should be an encounter and not a performance.[11] The father in Luke 15 treats his reunion with his younger son as an encounter, an authentic interaction based on love. Byrne challenges readers to move beyond doing something for the sake of repetition or going through the motions simply because it is what people are taught. You are here, in Ecuador, because you believe that God has called you to something more: an encounter with the people of Ecuador rather than a performance, doing something that you did not feel called to do. This past year is likely to have been one of encounter that has revealed the face of Christ to you in the people of Duran.

As a graduate student at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, I was a teaching assistant for a course on marriage. The instructor told his class the following true story. A man in his early thirties had been married to his wife for a few years and began to see that the marriage was failing. In order to rekindle the relationship, he decided to take her on a second honeymoon to Hawaii, the location of their original

[11] 'Prayer—An Encounter and not a Performance', in *Traditions of Spiritual Guidance,* edited by Lavina Byrne (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1991).

honeymoon, a time of love and happiness. On the first evening, he began to embrace her, hoping for a mutual and loving sexual response. However, instead of responding with love she said bluntly, 'take what you want, and when you are done, we can go to sleep'. At that moment, the man knew his marriage was over. Love was no longer a mutual gift, but a mechanical action. Using Byrne's terms, marriage and making love were no longer an encounter, but a performance. The meaning of the act—the experience—did not go beyond the surface—the performance. In a true relationship of encounter, whether between two persons or a person and God, there must be a mutual offer of the true self, not the false self of performance.

The idea of devotion in our Ignatian framework is that once you are attentive to the reality around you, and once you reverence this encounter, you will come to see the way in which God is working in a situation. Devotion reveals the presence of God and the direction of God. This notion of devotion is tightly linked to encounter, but also to Ignatian discernment. How has God revealed God's self to you during these past nine months? Where is God calling you after this year of service? Ignatius asked questions just like yours as he recovered at his castle following his wound at Pamplona. Undergoing what he would later term a discernment of spirits, Ignatius came to see how God was calling him—to a life dedicated to spiritual matters instead of romance novels. You discerned over a year ago that God was calling you to go to Ecuador when you accepted this position, and now you need to discern again. What is next? And how has this year transformed your relationship with God?

I invite you to spend some time in prayer asking for an open heart to allow God to nudge you towards your next goal. At the same time, realise that you need to continue being present to this reality for the next three months. Do not look past your final months in Ecuador, but invite God's presence into your life during this time. We will end by praying out loud for each other. Please take some time to decide what you most need to bring before God in this final stage of your volunteer experience.

Who We Become

I only spent five days in Ecuador, staying in Duran the day before and the day after the retreat in the community at Antonio Jose de Sucre. The experience of being in Duran for that short time gave me a glimpse

into the daily reality of where the Rostro de Cristo volunteers live and work. Through many of their reflections, the volunteers shared feelings of powerlessness before the injustices and poverty that they faced. They also continually reaffirmed the love that they experienced from many in the community. I left this retreat experience, and the country of Ecuador, inspired by my time among the volunteers. Their energy, passion and desire to serve the poor demonstrate a concrete way to put the gospel into action. Given that many of them were educated at Jesuit schools this further affirms the Jesuit mission of educating students to work for justice. I was reminded of the former Jesuit Superior General Fr Peter-Hans Kolvenbach's statement at Santa Clara in 2000, 'The real measure of our Jesuit universities lies in who our students become'.[12] The Jesuit-educated volunteers who choose to spend a year in Ecuador with Rostro de Cristo have applied their Jesuit education well and can be sure that 'our love issues in works of justice'.[13]

James Menkhaus is currently writing his dissertation, 'Solidarity According to the Thought of Fr Pedro Arrupe SJ and its Application to Jesuit Higher Education Today', for a doctorate in systematic theology at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA. He teaches part-time at John Carroll University in Cleveland, Ohio and has taught courses, directed retreats and given lectures on Ignatian spirituality and Jesuit education.

[12] Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, 'The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice', in *A Jesuit Education Reader*, 155.

[13] Aside from Patrick and Helen Rombalski, I would also like to thank Megan Radek, the director of RDC in Duran, for her help implementing the retreat and the 2010–2011 volunteers who work for justice and inspire those they encounter: Caitlin Long, Tasha Davis, Becky Davies, Jeff Wallace, Christina Mellace, Brendan Bradford, Mark Perlite, Celso Perez, Tierney Monahan, Jessie Eiseman, Jon Cali, Jenn Zocco, Aaron Pierre, Marita Vievering, Beth Awalt and Kipp Gallagher.

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ON JESUS CRUCIFIED AND FORSAKEN

Toufic Makhoul

IN DECEMBER 1944, Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare Movement, and her first companions were in Italy, the movement was in its infancy, and the Second World War raged on, with its incalculable toll of human suffering, destruction, toil and pain. At a certain point, they asked themselves when in his life Jesus Christ had suffered the most, and 'a priest said to us that Jesus' greatest suffering was in the moment he cried out on the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"'[1] From that moment on, they decided to choose Jesus crucified and forsaken as the ideal of their lives.

But who and what is Jesus crucified and forsaken, and what does it mean to choose him as our ideal, for everyday people who struggle to make sense of and cope with all of the suffering in the world: the disasters—natural or artificial—struggles, famines and injustices? What can this concept do for us?

Who and What Is Jesus Forsaken?

On the cross Jesus felt himself abandoned by his Father, whom he loved so much and about whom he had said: 'The Father and I are one' (John 10:30). Just before he died, Jesus cried: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Matthew 27:46) How do we make sense of this contradiction?

Writing about Jesus crucified and forsaken is essentially writing a love story between the Son of God and humanity, about the Word of God who incarnated himself, became a fellow human being, took upon himself all of our sins and iniquities, and then ended up, through his abandonment, death and resurrection, by giving his life for all of us,

[1] Chiara Lubich, *The Cry* (New York: New City, 2001), 38. (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.)

past, present and future. It is a never-ending love story, a divine love which calls for our human love in return.

The Church teaches us that within his cry of abandonment, the abandonment of the Son of God by his Father, are contained all of the sufferings of humanity, present, past and future. Pasquale Foresi, a co-founder of Focolare, writes:

> There is one moment in the passion in which all the profound meaning of the suffering of Jesus becomes apparent. It is precisely when he cries: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' This is sorrow which gives a particular bitterness to all the sufferings of Jesus on the cross.
>
> St Augustine comments: 'Christ speaks thus, because Christ is in the members of Christ'. On the cross Jesus 'was our voice, because together with him our old self was crucified'.
>
> St Thomas Aquinas remarks that Jesus in that cry spoke 'in the person of sinners who sometimes are forsaken because of their sins'.
>
> For St John of the Cross this cry of abandonment is the supreme moment of the passion, the revelation of the meeting between humanity, united to Jesus, and God. The great mystic explains: 'As for His spirit, it is certain that in His last moments Jesus suffered also the annihilation of the soul, the Father leaving Him without any consolation or comfort, in the deepest aridity of the soul's interior region; so much so that on the cross He bursts into that grief-stricken cry: my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? This was the greatest pain He sensibly experienced in His mortal life. So it was at that very moment He completed the greatest of all His works He ever did in his life, greater than all the miracles and sensational prodigies He performed on earth or in heaven: the work through which He reconciled and united man to God by means of grace.'[2]

Through his redemptive suffering, Jesus took upon himself everything that separates man from God—all of the evil, suffering and destruction—once and for all. Consequently, in whatever suffering, lack or deprivation, injustice or betrayal we face, we encounter again and again the countenance of Jesus crucified and forsaken, Jesus who is continuously coming towards us and inviting us to recognise him, embrace and love him as our best companion and friend.

[2] Pasquale Foresi, *Theology of Social Man* (New York and London: New City, 1967), 84–86.

I know all of this is easily written and said, but it reminds me of something that is not at all easy, an evil that has touched me personally: the incalculable human suffering and destruction that took place during the civil war in Lebanon, where I lived until I was thirty years old. So many people were kidnapped, died, lost relatives, friends, houses, limbs, had to flee their burning homes. And the same question came back to haunt us all: why, why, why is all of this happening? If God were really compassionate, if God were love, how could God allow this to happen without intervening? How can God allow the recurrent famines in Africa; torture and dictatorship in Central and South America and in Africa; all that has happened in the ex-USSR; the Vietnam War and the Boat People—the list is endless. How do we make sense of the deaths of young children with leukaemia, of the sexual abuse of children? How do we understand the present economic crisis that has ruined so many?

Jesus crucified and forsaken is all of this. Jesus has taken upon himself all of the sufferings of humanity, and is present in every difficulty and pain we experience, and in each suffering person we meet in our everyday lives.

What to Do?

What is to be done? Should we stop at a morbid, ineffectual resignation, shrugging our shoulders and saying to ourselves that nothing or very little can be done to alleviate the sufferings of humanity? Or should we rather take advantage of the opportunity that Jesus has chosen to come and meet us with a countenance of forsakenness and suffering, asking us: 'do you recognise me, do you love me, are you willing to let me into your life, embrace me, and then walk along together with me?'

Here again, we really can make our lives into a love story between Jesus and each one of us. What do we do when Jesus comes to meet us in suffering, whether our own or another's? We can do our best to accept him, however he chooses to present himself to us: to embrace him without reasoning with pain or rationalising it. Once this initial, important step is made, we must take the next one straight away: to stop focusing only on ourselves, and start loving the next person we meet; to cry with the one who is crying and laugh with the one who is laughing, emptying ourselves to make ourselves one with the other person; or simply to try to do what we perceive to be God's will in the next moment, which could be caring for someone, preparing a meal, writing a letter, driving a car, listening to someone, finishing a task we have started, and so on.

A love story between Jesus and each one of us

What are the results of embracing Jesus crucified and forsaken in this fashion and then getting on with our lives out of love for him? While physical suffering (illness, pain) might not necessarily disappear, spiritual pain is very much alleviated and often disappears altogether, when we stop focusing on ourselves and start loving the people around us. 'We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers. Whoever does not love remains in death.' (1 John 3:14)

Seeing life from this perspective, if the suffering we meet in our daily life has already been borne by Jesus Christ on the cross, and if we are ready and willing (as much as our human nature allows and enables us) to embrace and accept him under whatever countenance he presents himself, we could end up by having a preferential love for whatever reminds us of Jesus crucified and forsaken in our everyday life. We could prefer to go towards the needy and weak—physically and spiritually—towards anyone who needs and asks for help, comfort and assistance, because in that particular person or group, it is Jesus crucified and forsaken who is presenting himself to us, telling us: 'This is me. Do you recognise me, are you willing to embrace me, love me, help me, and give up your life for me?'

Jesus crucified and forsaken presents himself also in the difficulties we encounter in everyday life, and in the disappointed person, the betrayed, the lonely, the fearful, the unsure, the dismayed, the heart-broken. Are we able to recognise him, call him by name, and then embrace him and love him? To quote Chiara Lubich:

> Jesus said: 'To those who love me, I shall manifest myself' (cf. John 14:21). Jesus crucified and forsaken reveals himself in the

> concreteness and universality of every face bearing the mark of pain. He presents himself to be loved and embraced in the sufferings of humankind, in every possible situation, even perhaps in the denial of God within large strata of modern society. Sufferings no more cause alarm but become a motive and an invitation to love more intensely, to embrace with prayer and witness each of these faces of Jesus forsaken, in order to make the presence of God felt with love.[3]

However, accepting and embracing Jesus crucified and forsaken in our lives is not an exercise that just aims at making us feel good about ourselves, at mastering our reactions and behaving like stoics. Love for Jesus forsaken is meant to enable us to reach unity with him, and to work towards unity among men and women, the unity that Jesus prayed for: 'That they may all be one' (John 17:21). Jesus forsaken, and our preferential love for him, are not to be understood only as being the key to our unity with God. Such an interpretation could lead us to live with a self-sufficient and individualistic attitude. Jesus forsaken is the way to unity with our neighbours—whatever their origin, race, colour, nationality, etc. He shows us the way to love them, the way to love one another.

In an earlier article, I wrote about the process of inculturation, as understood through the thought and life of Chiara Lubich.[4] As my friends and I try to live this concept and put it in practice, we are led, little by little, to understand and experience the fact that no one has gone as far as Jesus forsaken in making himself one with the people he encountered. He made himself one to the extent of giving his life for all of humankind. In other words, as Lubich put it:

> We cannot enter the hearts of other persons to comprehend them, to understand them, to share their suffering, if our spirit is rich with a worry, a judgment, a thought … with anything at all. 'Making ourselves one' demands spirits that are poor, persons who are poor in spirit. Only with people like this is unity possible.[5]

We believe that loving and embracing Jesus forsaken within the all-too-frequent difficulties we experience in human relationships is

[3] Chiara Lubich, *Unity and Jesus Forsaken* (New York: New City, 1997), 15.
[4] Toufic Makhoul, 'Making Ourselves One in the Thought and Spirituality of Chiara Lubich', *The Way*, 50/1 (January 2011), 85–94.
[5] Lubich, *Unity and Jesus Forsaken*, 94.

Christ on the Cross, *by Zurbarán*

the way to unity with our neighbour. The process of recognising Jesus forsaken in the difficulty, embracing him, and then going ahead and putting in the effort needed to build or rebuild a broken relationship, whenever and each time it has been shattered: this is our response of love to Jesus' love for us—to Jesus who loved us first, when he incarnated himself, lived among us and gave his life for us. Otherwise why would anyone make the effort to rebuild and maintain a relationship at all, be it marital, friendly, brotherly or sisterly?

Consequently, we can see Jesus forsaken as the way to union with God, to unity among men and women, and to a better world. However, in order for our work towards a better and fairer world not to be an impossible dream, we need to go one more step, like Chiara Lubich, who,

> …needed to make an additional discovery in order for unity not be a utopia. This was Jesus crucified and forsaken, who is the author and model of this unity between God and people, and between people.[6]

Christianity in its Essence

However, does all this still make sense and carry some meaning in rich, spiritually exhausted Western societies? We believe it does, more so because the spiritually empty lives that most of us live remind us of Jesus

[6] Lubich, *Unity and Jesus Forsaken*, 13.

forsaken, who, on the cross, felt himself empty, void, abandoned by heaven and earth. Presenting Jesus under his forsakenness is presenting Christianity in its essence, poor and devoid of material means and riches, without all of the pomp that comes along with cathedrals, works of art and vestments.

Choosing to love and embrace Jesus forsaken in our daily lives takes away our excuse for wanting to avoid difficulties, especially those related to our witness as disciples of Jesus Christ. I have heard many Christians who claim that they love the Church and Jesus Christ very much, but would avoid taking a public stand in favour of the poor, the needy and the afflicted against social injustice, exploitation and so on. Why so? Because these people just do not want to get into trouble. Let us, for a moment, imagine what would have happened if Jesus had chosen to play it safe and avoid trouble during his life on earth ….

Trying to recognise and embrace Jesus forsaken in the difficult circumstances of our lives is akin to trying to find God in all things, in every single difficulty, suffering and pain in our lives. As Karl Rahner put it so well:

> Finding God in all things and experiencing the transparency of things towards God is accomplished only by the person who meets this God at the point where He descended into utter darkness and abandonment: on the cross of Jesus Christ![7]

We want to love and embrace Jesus forsaken, in order to contribute to a more united world. As Chiara Lubich says:

> To love Jesus forsaken in the problems and difficulties of the world, where we discover his face in our own life and in the lives of others, is to contribute to a more united world. To extend his love to all by taking on the burden of their suffering is to establish them in the truth and love of God. To open our hearts to all is to share with them a love that is stronger than death, that offers to all the revelation of a God who is love.[8]

Love Conquers Peacefully

A friend of mine, a family physician, had this experience.

> *I work as a physician in a government-funded health care centre. In this environment, despite the fact that everyone professes values such as equity,*

[7] Karl Rahner, *Spiritual Exercises* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1966), 271–272.
[8] Lubich, *Unity and Jesus Forsaken*, 17.

justice, respect etc., there are often conflicts between management and employees.

Early in September 2010 a social worker, who had been a member of our multi-disciplinary team for ten years, was dismissed in what most staff considered to be a disrespectful and unfair way. We met with management and faced a wall of secrecy as to why this colleague had been dismissed.

I saw the dismissed social worker immediately afterwards to comfort her—she called me from a public phone right after being fired. I informed my colleagues of what had happened, and tried to work out with them what could be done to make sure she was treated more fairly.

This is one of a number of similar incidents I have encountered during my work in this clinic over fourteen years. I believe in a united world. I have found at work that if I, like Jesus, keep on loving while facing my apparent adversity in any conflict, I can find special graces and pain is transformed into growth. Unity appears as the fruit of love in painful, stressful situations.

I remembered that, years ago, in a similar case, there had been much dissension among our team members about who would get involved, and about how a particular person would get involved in a particular action. One physician, in particular, had formally dissociated himself from the group out of fear of the repercussions for himself of any action for more justice in our workplace.

However, over the years, the effort at striving for justice, sustained by truly loving behaviour, had transformed our group. Each conflict—even among ourselves—that was resolved with love brought us closer to one another over time. This time I found that our group had become united, much more than I had realised. The doctor who had formally dissociated himself in the past got actively involved in helping us. He wrote a jewel of a letter to the management on our behalf, sharing it and reviewing it with the group.

We have become one 'body', an entity that expresses itself collectively for the betterment of our working environment. New staff members are also welcomed in this body, because love keeps us from closing in on ourselves. This mentality is spreading by osmosis to others, confirming to me that love conquers peacefully.

The latest conflict with the management did not result in our colleague being taken back into her job, but we have been able to provide her with caring support. Our relationship with management is slowly healing, with efforts on both sides to understand one another better and to prevent similar situations from arising in the future.

I realise again how much every hardship embraced with love has made us grow as a group and as individuals up until now. We are far from being perfect, but the way we care for one another makes us stronger and more positive in adversity. We are certainly not actively looking for new trials. But I know that when they occur, I can be sure that something good, if not great, can come out of them. The more I experience the fruits of loving and embracing Jesus forsaken in me and around me, the less I am afraid of life's trials; the more I believe in God's immense love for me.

A Way Forward

Loving and embracing Jesus crucified and forsaken in our daily lives is not a sad story, on the contrary. Let us conclude with a few words of Chiara Lubich:

> … suffering has a mysterious task: it can become a way to happiness, to that true and enduring happiness which alone can fill our hearts. It is the same happiness that God enjoys and that we humans, destined to what is absolute, can share already in this life.
>
> Precisely through his suffering, Jesus has given joy to every person: joy here on earth and unending joy in the next life. In the same way, by accepting and offering to him our daily worries and concerns, we obtain happiness for ourselves and for others.[9]

Toufic Makhoul was born in Egypt and grew up in Lebanon, where he completed his education, including an MBA. He then spent two-and-a-half years in Italy, at a formation centre of the Focolare Movement, before moving to Canada, where he undertook postgraduate study. He has been involved with the Focolare Movement since he was nineteen years old, and lives in a lay Focolare community.

[9] Chiara Lubich, *Only at Night We See the Stars* (New York: New City, 2002), 81–82.

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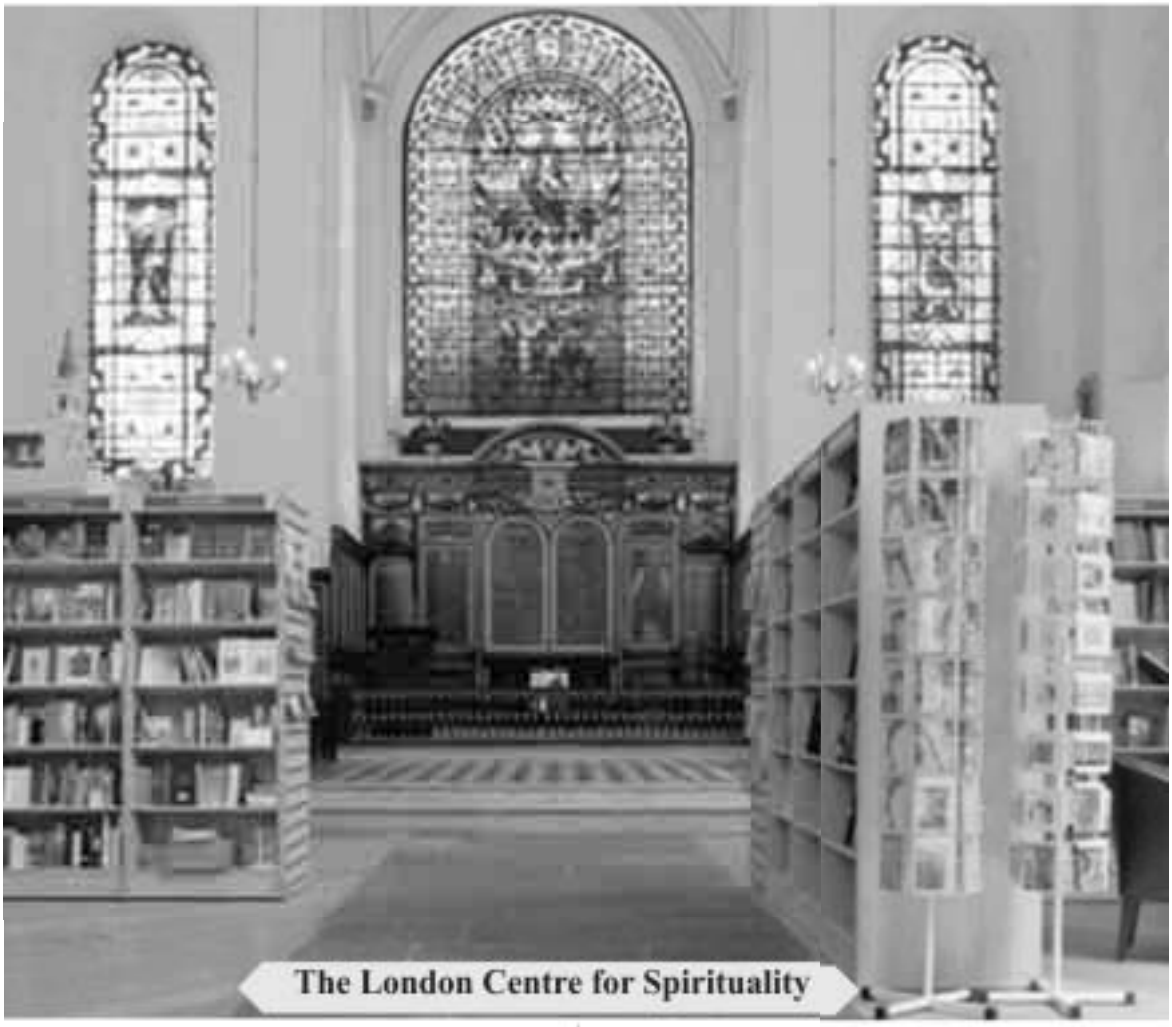

RECENT BOOKS

Benignus O'Rourke, *Finding Your Hidden Treasure: The Way of Silent Prayer* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2010). 978 0 2325 2807 7, pp. 164, £9.95.

If there is one rival in recent years to the torrent of books written on aspects of Ignatian spirituality, it is those promoting silent prayer. Most of these are inspired more or less directly by the work of John Main, and so ultimately find their roots in the Benedictine tradition. The work under consideration here is unusual in that its author belongs to the Augustinian order, and so approaches the topic from this subtly different perspective.

Nevertheless, the task that he has set himself is one that is by now surely familiar. It is to convince ordinary people leading busy lives to incorporate into their packed schedules a regular time of stillness, of silent meditation, and to offer some pointers as to how this might be done. That there is a certain irony in devoting 164 pages to calling people to a wordless silence is not lost on O'Rourke. It seems likely that a distinctive feature of the work—its division into very short chapters of only a page or two in what is already a small-format book—is a strategy designed to prompt periodic reflection on its contents, rather than an anxious straining to follow his argument through to its conclusion.

Finding Your Hidden Treasure quotes Augustine frequently. Although it is not clear that Augustine would have been a proponent of this kind of imageless contemplation in quite the same way as the early monastic authors who led Main to his rediscovery of it, O'Rourke can find plenty in his writings to support the move from busyness to calm and from distraction to focus on God. There is also plentiful evidence of wide reading here, with authors ranging from Meister Eckhart to Iris Murdoch brought in to illustrate the points being made.

All of this adds up to a presentation ideally adapted to spiritual reading, in which short passages are slowly appropriated in the kind of stillness the book itself proposes. This fact itself, though, points to an aspect of O'Rourke's presentation that takes it beyond the simple purity of the typical mantra-fuelled method of silent prayer. Here, chapter 31 quotes with approval a period of prayer that begins with the appropriation of a passage of scripture. Chapter 41 deals with a 'healing of memories' exercise that involves active imagining, and is certainly not entirely passive. At one

point O'Rourke quotes the Benedictine abbot Dom John Chapman. His most famous piece of spiritual advice was to 'pray as you can, and not as you can't', and this book allows for a rather more pragmatic and eclectic approach to what is useful in the attempt to be in touch with God than some of the more doctrinaire proponents of silent prayer do.

It is perhaps in its descriptions of the fruits of regularly practising this kind of prayer, in the second part of the book, that the work is most original. It speaks eloquently of the healing of brokenness that results from being able to face the wounds each of us carries as God does, with loving acceptance rather than judgment. The results of this healing are both a more joyful life for those healed, and an increased ability on their part to reach out to other wounded individuals. What might seem at first sight, then, as no more than a selfish luxury for those seeking out silent stillness for themselves, becomes instead a powerful force for promoting the work of God in the world.

If you have little experience of silent prayer or of the literature that has grown up to promote it, this book could serve as a useful introduction. If you wish to introduce others to the practice, you will find here a resource that lends itself to supporting you in this work. The last words of the book itself, taken directly from chapter 5 of St Augustine's *Confessions*, can perhaps sum up something of what it would hope to offer. Addressing God, Augustine writes:

> So our soul rises from its weariness,
> leans on the things you have made,
> and through them soars up to you,
> who made all these amazing things.
> And in you the soul finds strength and is restored.

Paul Nicholson SJ

Edward P. Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation: A Theology of Christian Call* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2010). 978 0 8146 5389 0, pp. 304, £23.99.

To say that I could not have run a short course entitled 'The Practice of Vocational Accompaniment' without this book is, I hope, to give some sense of its value. Hahnenberg provides a thorough and readable account of how the notion of vocation has been understood by many of the major theologians since the Reformation. Those of us involved in vocation ministry today find ourselves grappling with the question, 'How do I recognise an authentic vocation in an enquirer into religious life?', and it is hugely helpful to have someone map out the historical terrain that is the hinterland of our work.

This book is a boon, too, to someone like myself, a few years removed from study of theology, as an intellectually invigorating but not overtaxing foray into some central theological issues as they are played out around the question of vocation: 'the relationship of the divine will to human freedom, the nature of providence and predestination, the workings of grace and the limits of spiritual experience' (pp. xi–xii). As the author himself says, 'The question of vocation taps into our deepest assumptions about God, ourselves, church, and moral commitment' (p. xi).

Awakening Vocation unfolds in two parts. In the first Hahnenberg traces the broadening of the notion of vocation in the Reformation from its medieval sense of a call to priestly and religious life to the understanding present in the writings of Luther and Calvin, where vocation is more about faithfulness to a station in life and to a virtuous living out of worldly responsibilities than it is about giving up the world for the cloister. He shows, too, how in the writings of St Francis de Sales there is a comparable broadening of the idea of vocation, one manifestation of a range of currents in Roman Catholic thought and practice that would, not without influence of Protestant theologians, issue in the declaration on the universal call to holiness at Vatican II.

Part 1 also sees Hahnenberg explore the theologically involved question of the interior experience of vocation. The move towards a more dualistic understanding of nature and grace had a profound influence on the Catholic understanding of what a vocation was and how it was experienced. Hahnenberg tracks the transition from the insights of St Ignatius Loyola, in which the signs of God's action were to be recognised in the interior life of individuals as well as in the external events of their lives, to the stage in Catholic thought where vocation became 'something *in* an individual that was separate *from* that individual' (p. 89), a view that came to the fore in the nineteenth-century seminary manuals.

It is the lack of resolution of some of these theological tensions that gives Hahnenberg his project for part 2. We have not, he believes, sufficiently thought through the 'revolution in the theology of grace' (p. 90) in respect to vocation. As in part 1, he continues to draw very fruitfully on the Protestant tradition, most notably on Barth, whose critique of Luther offered to reformed Christianity a more dynamic understanding of vocation. But it is above all to Karl Rahner that Hahnenberg turns for a theological framework of a revitalised theology of grace in which there is 'a vision of vocation that takes seriously the concrete particularity and freedom of the human subject' (p. 156). As Hahnenberg expresses it, Rahner helps provide a way of seeing 'my vocation in the harmony between the path that is before me and the mystery that is me'(p. 156).

Any sense that this is a narrowly individualistic exposition of the theme is strongly countered by what, in my mind, proves to be some of the most interesting material that Hahnenberg presents. After stressing the importance of conversion in Rahner's thinking about Ignatian election, he goes on to confront us with the conviction that he draws from the theology of Ignacio Ellacuría (one of the Jesuits martyred in El Salvador in 1989) and others that discerning our own vocation requires a spirituality of solidarity.

> A spirituality of solidarity … is the beginning. It is the start of a journey of how to listen, a practice of presence and openness to others that trains us, over time, in openness to God's special and particular call in our lives. (p. 233)

To read this book is to be enriched theologically, such is the breadth of material covered and the clarity of the exposition, but it is also to be drawn into a reflection on one's own vocation which brings with it its own enrichment.

Matthew Power SJ

Steven Chase, *Nature as Spiritual Practice* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011). 978 080284 0 10, pp. 296, £11.99.

Steven Chase, *A Field Guide to Nature as Spiritual Practice* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011). 978 080286 6 52, pp. 160, £5.99.

In *Nature as Spiritual Practice*, Steven Chase presents a deeply thought and remarkably articulated call to encounter Creation as sacred presence, with consideration of a wealth of implications of this stance. Chase writes ecologically, by bringing together wisdom from scripture, science, theology, psychology, literature and other realms into a fully integrated whole whose character grows organically from its intricately interwoven parts. He writes engagingly and clearly, in prose peppered with well-chosen quotations from sources as disparate as Cormac McCarthy, Hildegard of Bingen and Chief Sealth, among many others, and includes an extensive bibliography for readers who wish to pursue topics in even greater depth.

Chase's understanding of contemporary ecopsychology, along with his groundedness in Christian texts, allows him to explore the diversity of human dimensions of interaction with the natural world, uniting them in the theme of sacred presence. Although he does not mention Ignatius by name, his approach to the encounter with Creation is Ignatian in character, emphasizing an ongoing respectful and deep openness to what is,

and to how God reveals Godself through nature. *Nature as Spiritual Practice* is equally Ignatian in its emphasis on imaginative approaches to engagement with nature. Also evocative of Ignatian spirituality is Chase's repeated emphasis on using all the senses to explore one's relationship with nature, remembering to breathe attentively, encountering both sound and silence.

In brief highlights in the primary text, and more extensively in the book's accompanying *Field Guide to Nature as Spiritual Practice*, Chase offers numerous meditations and contemplative practices to help the reader experience a meaningful relationship with nature. These exercises provide valuable ways to find new meanings in the natural world and to deepen one's understanding of spirituality in nature. Various exercises are focused, for example, on developing powerful metaphors; understanding the world of individual natural creatures; and experiencing the beatitudes as they apply to the natural world.

After an initial introduction to the book's approach, Chase lays out his overall attitude of 'sacramental ecology'. In this perspective, as represented by the chapter title 'The Sacred Matters', Chase sees the natural world as the becoming-matter of the sacred; increased intimacy with nature leads to deeper spirituality, and the reverse is true as well. He then turns to exploring the different dimensions of sacramental ecology, addressing the reading of nature itself as a book about God. This is a helpful instruction in the language of nature that opens the way for subsequent consideration of this potent form of *lectio divina*—contemplative presence to the natural world.

With this preparation, having developed a newly intimate, covenantal relationship with Creation, Chase brings us to reflection on its 'dark night': the contemporary tragedy of fundamental, global threats to natural processes and creatures. How is it possible to be authentically present to such disaster? For those of us who embrace nature as spiritual partner, this is the crisis of our time. Again, Chase calls us back to listening—listening with the courage to hear the 'sighs and groans' of Creation suffering.

As we now walk in companionship with the natural world in its time of crisis—that is, our mutual crisis—we can begin to move forward into a new relationship: that of healing and solace. Our innate belonging as members of the earth community means that as we work towards healing the earth, we begin our own healing in the process, anchoring ourselves in the beauty and reassurance of the natural rhythms that have been a source of solace to humans for millennia.

Finally, we are asked to consider what is our appropriate moral response to our contemporary environmental situation, inextricably one of inner conflict and ambiguity. Chase outlines several helpful ethical frameworks for assessing these very difficult questions, drawing on the work of Thomas

Berry, Max Oelschlaeger and Teresa of Avila, among others. *Nature as Spiritual Practice* closes with nine 'Green Beatitudes'; for each of the corresponding beatitudes from Matthew 5: 3–11, Chase offers reflections both on 'Nature's Wisdom' and wisdom derived from human care for creation in light of these guiding words of Jesus.

Nature as Spiritual Practice and its well-developed companion volume, *A Field Guide to Nature as Spiritual Practice* would be very effective texts for use by church study groups or prayer circles. Through their extensive background research, rich familiarity with relevant literature and clear explanatory prose, they engage the mind; and the author's clear passion for the earth and deeply heard Christian calling speak powerfully to heart, body and soul.

Trileigh Tucker

Mark Dooley, *Why be a Catholic?* (London: Continuum, 2011). 978 144111 0 42, pp. 136, £10.99.

The author of this book is a professor of philosophy, who has taught at the National University of Ireland in Maynooth and at University College Dublin. It is a response to the crisis of Roman Catholicism as currently experienced in Ireland and is distilled from a series of articles that have appeared in the *Irish Daily Mail*. Specifically it sets out to answer the question: why be (or remain) Catholic in the face of child-abuse scandals and a crisis of authority?

The book is very much shaped by the personal faith journey of the author, a journey in which a life of critical enquiry had called into question the childhood faith in which he had once been immersed, until a day of conversion from critical alienation back to the simplicity of his old faith. He describes this in the following terms:

> When … I took my first steps inside an old and musty chapel, I instantly understood why Catholics exude joy, while those who opt for alienation are absorbed by anger. As I approached the altar, I was moved to genuflect before the tabernacle. I had done so a million times in my youth, but now I did so with tears and tenderness. (p. 25)

It is also shaped by the thought of Roger Scruton (two of the author's academic works focus on Scruton's writings) and carries accordingly an intellectual acceptance of the transcendent Other that lies beyond argument and definition, and a profound dislike of attempts to politicize or

modernise the living language of religious tradition. A third and most significant influence is to be found in the writings of Pope Benedict on liturgy (which he produced as Joseph Ratzinger) and the movement towards the recovery of older liturgical traditions which he has encouraged, implicitly and explicitly, since taking office as Pope. These latter two strands of influence are unified around the notion of beauty, as that which takes us beyond the mundane into the transcendent, and is an abiding concern both of Scruton and of Ratzinger.

Dooley calls on the example of an older generation of church-goers who continue to attend as an indication of the underlying strength of the Catholic tradition. It is precisely those who are rooted in those older traditions, he argues, who are able to cling on in spite of the scandals, recognising that there is more to the faith than the failure, however gross, of particular priests and bishops. Given the fragility of the relationship between clergy and people, what holds the enterprise together is the liturgy and its bridging of time and eternity in the Eucharist.

> The Mass lies at the heart of Catholicism …. Everything else in Catholicism is secondary to the Mass. Hence if it is not celebrated in sacredness, or if it is used to peddle a political agenda, or indeed if it is emptied of its aesthetic splendour, then it risks becoming a source of apathy and boredom …. Conversely, if the Mass bears witness to the eternal reality of Christ's presence here on earth, it cannot fail to captivate and enthrall, notwithstanding the crises which periodically engulfed the Church. (pp. 6–7)

The first chapters spell out the framework for recovery, against the background of the author's own faith journey and the essential transcendence and counter-cultural quality of Catholic belief. We are called to encounter Christ in the sacraments, to be transformed by that encounter and thus to live holy lives. Political theology is a betrayal of what is at the heart of faith:

> At their best, Catholics are not political. This, of course, is not to say that Catholicism should desist from contributing to public or political debate. But if such interventions are at the expense of seeking personal salvation, then they count for nothing. (p. 30)

There is a crisis in the Church, Dooley holds, and by implication it underlies some of the responses to the abuse scandal. This crisis is the loss of personal faith. The blame for this he lays squarely at the feet of the 'pestilence of pulpit politics', a phrase borrowed from his mentor Scruton and repeatedly returned to throughout the book. It is this diversion of attention away from the more important concern for the beauty of

sacramentality that has undermined the Church's ability to engage hearts and minds. We have allowed ourselves to focus our attention on things of the moment instead of looking to eternal verities. In particular, we need to recover the sacramental vision of reality, nourished by liturgy, which allows us to recognise the presence of God in the created order and Christ at the heart of the narrative of salvation present in our midst and engaging with us in the Eucharist.

For this reason we must get back to basics, recover the timeless traditions that nourished the spiritual lives of our ancestors and so renew the Church. Chapter 3 itemises the accidents and betrayals that, in the author's judgment, have characterized liturgical and institutional reform since Vatican II, in particular the weakening of eucharistic faith and reverence for the Eucharist. Here we see the author hinting at a causal connection between his reading of this time of turbulence and the loss of priestly identity:

> When seen as merely human, sacred things no longer exercise authority over those who worship them. It then becomes easy to play with the idea of breaking one's sacred vows or defying official Church teaching. (p. 48)

Priests have become managers rather than men who desire to be saints. This is at the root of the crisis of priestly vocation.

> Where once they stood apart from the people in a spirit of sanctity, or as living symbols of the Incarnation, today they look and sound like administrators. (p. 51)

But, above all, the key for the author is the recovery of beauty, in liturgy, music, language, art and architecture. Chapter 4 is entitled 'From Boredom to Beauty', and here the author discusses what he regards as the liturgical failures of the last forty years, contrasting this with the beauty and power of traditional devotions, with their appeal to the senses. A key testimony here is that of his young son, who fidgets and is bored by the normal parish Mass but, presented with the atmosphere and beauty of traditional eucharistic adoration, says, 'Can we please come here every week?'

Chapters 5 and 6 look at the demands of being a priest and being a parishioner. The former is critical of seminary formation that places too much emphasis on secular psychology and shows too little respect for those young men who are deeply devotional in their attitude to the Eucharist. The ideal priest is not political, but holy. That is what parishioners, generally far better educated than most priests in matters of the world,

actually want of their clergy (p. 85). The latter chapter is critical of parishioners who know too little about their tradition and have a desire to busy themselves about things that are not deeply their concern rather than entering with simplicity and humility into the life of the sacraments. Here an important personal testimony for the author is the example of his grandfather, a man of deep faith and piety.

The final chapter looks at the life of the sacraments and the way in which these touch on the deepest moments in a human journey, taking up the theme of joy, which the author regards as the hallmark of all truly devoted Catholics. A summary chapter meditates on a television debate about the crisis in the Irish Catholic Church and underlines some of the theses that have been advanced throughout the book, concluding with an appreciation of the power of the sacramental Church to answer a basic human need which is met nowhere else, as well as of the enormous educational and welfare activity that the Church undertakes around the world.

Many people will find this book a consoling read and feel that its analysis matches their own intuitions. Others may ask whether that analysis, whatever its insights, has sufficient depth to tell the full story of a complex body of people in a complex world.

John Moffatt SJ

John Gillibrand, *Disabled Church—Disabled Society: The Implications of Autism for Philosophy, Theology and Politics* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2010). 978 1 8431 0968 6, pp. 224, £22.50.

This book is an extended theological reflection on John Gillibrand's experience with his son Adam, who has severe autism. The book is an exercise in disability theology: the attempt by disabled and non-disabled Christians to understand and interpret the gospel of Jesus Christ, God and humanity against the backdrop of the historical and contemporary experiences of people with disabilities. Gillibrand is an Anglican priest and a good deal of his thinking and reflection emerges from his desire to explore what autism looks like from the perspective of the Anglican tradition. Whereas a good deal of the literature on disability theology pushes against the suggestion that disability is a problem or a source of suffering, Gillibrand's book is quite distinctive in that he is clear throughout that his experience of his son's disability is perceived as a problem and a source of suffering as well as a source of hope and revelation.

The book opens with a description of what autism is. Autism is a developmental disorder that manifests itself in impairments of social interaction and communication, and in restricted, repetitive and stereotyped behaviour. It is a spectrum condition, and Gillibrand's son Adam is at the severe end. Adam has no language, a fact that has central importance for the book.

With this medical definition as a backdrop, Gillibrand moves on to offer a powerful autobiography of his experiences of living with Adam, an experience offering a narrative perspective on caring for someone with autism which deepens and thickens standard accounts. Gillibrand's experience was so intense and difficult that it ended with his entering into a period of deep depression. Caring is costly. As he tells his story, there is no attempt to suggest that disability is a good thing or just another form of human difference. For the Gillibrands, at least, the presence of severe autism in their family was a locus of deep suffering. While there may be theological revelation to be encountered in life with Adam, that revelation needs to be understood in the context of the fact that that Adam's autism has made life very difficult for the family.

Gillibrand explores the nature of suffering in some detail and, in particular, the way in which his experiences with Adam have raised the problem of theodicy. He pushes us to reflect on the mystery of suffering in the mystical traditions, especially the apophatic tradition. Suffering is a mystery, but so is God. There is a sense in which the suffering, wordlessness and mystery of the Gillibrands' experience with Adam reflect something of the apophatic mystery of God.

Gillibrand feels, at times, that his experiences with Adam are deeply meaningless and empty: filled with nothingness. However, in an odd way, this meaningless is meaningful. Drawing on the doctrine of creation, he reflects on the idea of creation out of nothing.

> I would suggest that when God made things out of nothing, some of the nothingness inhered within creation. There is therefore nothing wrong with nothingness—it is very good. (p. 57)

In this way he is able to draw his own experience of meaninglessness and nothingness into a theological framework that provides a space for his family's experiences, and that places Adam within creation in a quite particular way.

Drawing, *inter alia,* on the contemplative tradition, he suggests that the experience of the contemplatives who try to get away from any form of 'wanting', reflects, in an odd way, the ambiguity of caring for someone with profound autism, a place where 'meaning and meaninglessness, what we

want, and what we do not want, become fused' (p.66). Caring for Adam can be a deeply meaningless experience. Yet somehow it sits in a meaningful way within the nothingness that is a fundamental aspect of creation. Adam *belongs* to creation. More than that, God remains with us in the midst of our experiences of nothingness and perhaps even because of them. Perhaps Adam in his withdrawn, wordless world can tell us more about God than we think. Adam cannot name God or say anything about God at all. And yet, if we take apophaticism seriously, this is precisely the condition that he shares with all of humanity. Adam's situation is the locus for pain and suffering, but it also reveals something crucial about human beings before God: we know much less about God than we might assume.

The following chapters provide a complex bringing together of theology and philosophy as Gillibrand explores issues of identity, language, reason and intellect, using the experience of severe autism as a new hermeneutic to re-examine and reframe some central assumptions of modernity, theology and Church. In particular Gillibrand focuses on issues of language. Western cultures are deeply focused on language; likewise theology has a history of requiring particular forms of language to retain its orthodoxy and boundaries. Language games are the way that we have come to create our worlds. But Adam has no language. And yet, although Adam cannot engage in or understand language games, he nonetheless participates through his silence. 'By his silence he is playing a key part within them [language games], greater often than those who have "speaking roles"' (p.91).

It may be that Adam's silence reflects more of who God is than the plethora of words we use in our attempts to capture God. In a world that is filled with words, Gillibrand argues that it is the voice of the voiceless, the silence of the linguistically challenged, that force us to rethink the role of reason and the power of language, both in theology and culture. If our anthropology is to be truly inclusive, not only nothingness but also silence need to be brought to the fore. Adam and others with his experience do just that.

The book moves on to develop a scriptural hermeneutic based on the insights that are developed in the earlier chapters, before exploring the role of liturgy and how the experience of autism challenges and throws new light on accepted ecclesial practices. It concludes with a passionate call for the Church to engage in political action to overcome the types of prejudice and injustice that people with disabilities experience inside and outside the Church.

It is quite difficult to tie down exactly what the genre of this book is. Is it a personal reflection? Is it an academic textbook? Is it an exercise in

disability theology? Towards the end of the book Gillibrand writes an imaginary letter to his son Adam. In it he begins by saying that 'this is a book about you'. Then a few lines later he says 'this is not a book about you, it is a book for you' (p. 192). Gillibrand's uncertainty as to what the book is and to whom the book is written perhaps sums up the issue. Suffering has no fixed genre. At heart this book is a powerful personal testimony that reveals something of the nature of the brokenness that comes with suffering and at the same time the possibility of new hope. The book is also a deep lament, both personal and corporate. Lament is prayer and expresses the psalmist's confusion over what God has done and his trust in God's heed: God's unending and trustworthy love. If nothing else, this book teaches us much about hopeful suffering and honest lament.

The beauty of the book is that it runs across intellectual boundaries. Parents looking for the beginning of a language to express their pain, suffering, disappointment and joy will find something useful in this book. Academics and philosophers who, through reflection on the experience of autism, want to begin to rethink who God is and what the Church should be, will also find much sustenance. This book is an important contribution to the theology of disability.

John Swinton

Anthony Grimley and Jonathan Wooding, *Living the Hours: Monastic Spirituality in Everyday Life* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2010). 978 1 8531 1971 2, pp. 192, £14.99.

Living the Hours considers the monastic tradition in its diversity, and looks at ways in which monastic principles can inform and be applied to the daily lives of those who desire to live in the secular world as monastics or, as the authors call it, as 'secular monastics'. The book is a collaborative effort with two distinct parts. Although the authors work closely together, Jonathan Wooding, the author of the first two chapters, approaches the subject as a historian who has substantial contact with present day monasticism. Anthony Grimley, the author of chapters 3 to 7, writes as a practitioner of secular monasticism who has a firm grasp of monastic history. Both end each of their chapters with reflection questions and suggestions for further reading.

The first chapter poses the question, 'Why Monasticism?', and in this way introduces the reader to the idea of new secular monasticism, noting the importance of the Vatican II document *Perfectae caritatis*, as well as the

influential roles played by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Alisdair MacIntyre and John Main. Wooding sets out in concise but thorough terms the vocabulary of monasticism as well as the most essential characters within monastic history, demonstrating from the outset that there is no one single type of monasticism. He concludes the first chapter by considering three aspects which he holds to be basic to all forms of monastic life: the desire to seek God, the need for balance and structure, and the importance of living the pattern of the liturgy.

Wooding begins the next chapter, 'Varieties of Secular Monasticism', by recognising the tension and overlap between the worlds inside and outside the monastery. He points out that, from the earliest days of monasticism, monks and nuns have lived a life set apart, but have also cultivated the tradition of receiving visitors and showing hospitality. He maintains, correctly, that owing to their shared vocation as Christians, both those inside and outside the monastery have much to learn from one another. After offering a short historical context for secular monasticism, he turns to modern forms of it, considering groups such as Taizé and Christians inspired by John Main.

In chapter 3 Anthony Grimley begins his contribution to the book by looking at ways of implementing monastic values and practices in daily life. He distances himself, and secular monasticism, from 'self-help' techniques, acknowledging that although such methods certainly have their use, the point of monasticism is transformation. It is not a quick fix and it is not something that a person can simply will into being.

Grimley explains that when he takes a group to a monastery he asks them to remember that they are entering not just a place of work or worship but someone's home. It is this recognition of a monastery as homely that Grimley holds to be the key to understanding both the inner workings of a monastic community and the inner workings of monastic vocation in all its possible forms. Some people come to a monastery for refreshment, for a sort of spiritual holiday. Others, however, come and discover that they are truly at home, that they have found their true vocation. Although some of these may be in a position to enter a monastery, this is not true of everyone. For those others exist forms of secular monasticism.

In chapter 4 Grimley considers what he holds to be five pillars of monastic life: prayer, silence, balance, study and work. He recognises the difficulties that exist in giving large and regular blocks of time to these, especially for those secular monastics who do not live in some form of community, and he insists on the importance of setting reasonable goals. There is nothing new in this advice, but it is sane, practical and well-timed counsel from a man who has had to employ this principle himself, and who

knows well enough that the only way of advancing in the spiritual life is through small, consistent steps.

In chapters 5 to 7 Grimley considers different types of relationships: between secular monastics and their families and friends; between secular monastics and the Church; and, finally, the relationships that take shape in community living. As part of this last point he asks the reader to reflect on possible motives for living in a form of monastic community and considers the question, posed often by the secular monastics in the Northumbria Community: 'How then shall we live?'

The book ends with no formal conclusion. Instead, the reader is asked to write a simple biography, outlining personal experiences made in the search for God and Christian community. This open-ended 'conclusion' is indicative of the authors' intention of getting the reader to move from a historical understanding, to a practical understanding, to an actual application of the ideas about secular monasticism presented in the book.

What I appreciate most, and I say this as a Benedictine nun, is that although the authors display great respect for monasticism and intimate knowledge of it, they do not try to convey monasticism as it is lived within a monastery. They convey what they themselves have experienced in their contact with monasteries but also, and more importantly, what they themselves live; in the one case, as a monastic historian and in the other as a secular monastic. In doing so they create, alongside the more traditional vocabulary and structure of monastic life, a means of talking about and living monasticism in a secular context.

Makrina Finlay OSB

Bryan C. Hollon, *Everything is Sacred: Spiritual Exegesis in the Political Theology of Henri de Lubac* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2010). 978 0 2271 7315 2, pp. 224, £20.50.

The French Jesuit scholar Henri de Lubac, one of the key contributors to the intellectual environment in twentieth-century Roman Catholicism which made Vatican II possible, lived to a venerable age and wrote prolifically and expertly throughout his life across a staggering variety of areas. His studies, a proportion of which remain to be translated into English, survey and analyze in meticulous, but not myopic, detail vast territories in the history of western philosophy and theology.

De Lubac viewed the task of historical research as an essential one for Catholic theology. He was a leading figure among those who recognised

that knowledge of the complicated realities of church history would help to produce a different sort of theology from the purportedly ahistorical abstractions of the neoscholasticism which had been increasingly prominent since the time of Leo XIII. De Lubac's way of doing theology drew inspiration from the wellsprings of earlier Christianity, particularly the writings of the Church Fathers. To some it seemed that this was a 'new theology' (*nouvelle théologie*), although the label (and slur) de Lubac himself rejected. 'New' was an unfortunate choice of word for a movement seeking to retrace the footsteps of the past.

Among the outstanding results of de Lubac's immersion in patristic and medieval theology are his studies in the history of scriptural exegesis: a volume on Origen, followed less than a decade later, around the time of Vatican II, by three volumes on the practice of interpretation in the medieval Church. Bryan Hollon's generously written text describes and approves de Lubac's advocacy for the continuing vitality of 'spiritual exegesis', which is identified by these volumes as an integral feature of patristic and medieval interpretation that subsequent theology (particularly since the time of Leo) has been prone to neglect. Spiritual exegesis encourages readers and hearers of scripture to encounter God in biblical texts in ways which transcend the texts' literal sense. Later chapters of Hollon's study explore and contest some of the uses of de Lubac's hermeneutics in contemporary theological writing.

The most engaging chapters in this book describe in colourful detail the intellectual background of de Lubac's opposition to neoscholasticism, an opposition inextricable from the political animus which motivated his writing. Chapter 3, in particular, contains a brilliant précis of de Lubac's analysis of changing understandings of the Eucharist (in *Corpus Mysticum* he identifies a vital but not easily explicable turning point in the twelfth century) whereby the mystical becomes less real, and is cordoned off in time and space. The Eucharist begins then to take place not in 'time between the times', but in 'an increasingly autonomous space which is distinct from spiritual space' (p. 67). It is no longer a 'mystery that leads the faithful to a greater understanding of and hence participation in the body of Christ' but rather a 'miracle' which must quite simply be 'believed' by the faithful (p. 69). This transition entails a great loss and the possibility of spiritual exegesis begins to recede. 'After the twelfth century the only mystery concerns the miraculous transformation of the elements', so that 'in the new context, the only role for mystery is that it provides the opportunity for the exercise of faith' (p. 70). A result of this is the emergence of the climate in which scholastic theology can be done. Drawing attention to this loss is one of several important and

groundbreaking respects in which de Lubac used historical research to open the way for a renewed spiritual exegesis and to cut at the foundations on which scholastic theology and its modern instantiations were built.

The book is less thorough on de Lubac's politics than it is on the central arguments of his studies in the history of exegesis. No mention is made, for instance, of his monograph on Proudhon, the 'un-Marxian Socialist'—which presents a deeply sympathetic picture of its subject. And Marx, on whom de Lubac passes favourable comment in a number of his works, is afforded only brief—and negative—mention. The term 'political theology' as a descriptor of de Lubac's enterprise is problematic. Although it was standard taxonomy elsewhere—particularly among theologians of liberation—during his lifetime, de Lubac himself does not appear to have used the term (perhaps a conscious choice intended to preserve a distance between his outlook and the outlooks of those who did). More problematic still is the book's repeated use of '*nouvelle théologie*' to categorise the *ressourcement* movement.

The discussion of de Lubac's influence over contemporary theological writing (particularly Radical Orthodoxy) is combined with an argument for the continuing relevance of his work—both for Radical Orthodoxy and for other strands of post-liberal theology. Discussion is unfailingly charitable and makes some useful criticisms, but misses something important. Modern writing in the traditions mentioned tends not to contain in-depth discussion of early Christian writing of the sort de Lubac himself placed at the heart of his theological project. The argument that Radical Orthodoxy and post-liberal theology more generally could draw further enrichment from de Lubac would have been considerably strengthened had this point been made and its implications explored. As a contribution to the study of de Lubac's achievement and influence the book stands nonetheless as an important addition.

Gavin McCormick

Peter Tyler, *The Return to the Mystical: Mystical Writing from Dionysius to Ludwig Wittgenstein* (London: Continuum, 2011). 978 144110 4 44, pp. 296, £18.99.

Peter Tyler begins this book by seeking to outline a Wittgensteinian analysis of the 'mystical situation' as a way into the underlying rationale of the *theologia mystica*, particularly as represented by the writings of the Spanish mystic Teresa of Avila. What Tyler intends by the *theologia mystica* is carefully detailed in the course of the book.

Although Wittgenstein is himself a notoriously difficult writer, Tyler suggests that it is his very qualities of 'difficulty' and 'ambiguity' that qualify him as a surprising candidate to shed light on the 'mystical strategies' of writers such as Teresa. Tyler does not, of course, want to suggest that Wittgenstein and these medieval mystics were doing the same thing. They clearly were not, not least in terms of their respective metaphysical starting points and the genres in which they wrote. However, where he sees a methodological convergence is in the transformative quality that he finds in both, which he argues demonstrates a common intention—through writing to bring about a change in perspective that results in a change of action; an approach that he describes as 'performative discourse'. As such he suggests that neither Wittgenstein nor writers like Teresa set out to create some kind of systematic account of the nature of God or philosophy; rather they sought to open a window on a new understanding of the nature of things.

This approach to both Wittgenstein and the mystical involves Tyler in a series of complex debates, which he carefully navigates in part 1. He begins by noting the problems inherent in any definition of the 'mystical', and the various approaches that scholars have taken in reaction to the perennialist perspectives of William James: firstly, Stephen T. Katz's constructivist critique, and then a range of contemporary positions from the neo-perennialist ontological stance of Robert Forman to the totally deontological approach of Don Cupitt, in between which he situates the likes of Denys Turner, Mark McIntosh, Bernard McGinn, Rowan Williams and Jeffrey J. Kripal. He notes that in order to approach a medieval mystical text, one must necessarily take a stance within this debate.

Tyler's understanding of Wittgenstein also situates him within a debate concerning the extent to which there is a shift in Wittgenstein's thinking between the *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations*. Aligning himself most closely with Daniel Hutto, Tyler posits a general continuity, suggesting that rather than a shift from the 'theoretical' to the 'therapeutic', all Wittgenstein's writing shows a general therapeutic and transformative concern.

Examining a number of key ideas in Wittgenstein's thought, Tyler argues that what Wittgenstein most wanted to offer was not dry language games that needed be 'looked behind' but a new 'way of seeing' what is right before our eyes; making use of 'the *form* of [a] mystical language game' (p. 52) to therapeutic effect. As such, Tyler argues that formal Wittgensteinian categories can be fruitfully employed in the study of mystical texts.

> As in psychotherapy, both Wittgenstein and the mystical writers … do not provide clever interpretations and interventions but allow the clarity of insight

> (*übersichtliche Darstellung*) to be turned on the 'foundations of possible buildings' (p. 54).

Having set up this methodology, in part 2 Tyler carefully traces the development of the origins of the *theologia mystica*, in which he identifies a lineage of 'performative discourse' emerging from the fifth-century writings of Dionysius—as understood by the thirteenth-century Victorine Thomas Gallus and then further developed in the fifteenth century within the thought of Jean Gerson. This led to a highly affective form of mystical discourse entering sixteenth-century Spain, where he suggests it is brought to fruition in the writings of Bernardino de Laredo, Francisco de Osuna and, most especially, Teresa of Avila.

In particular, Tyler draws attention to the manner in which the affective response to God promoted by this lineage lends itself to 'performative discourse', downplaying the role of the intellect by stressing that it can never fully comprehend God. Instead, the suppliant is encouraged to love in a manner that discourages over-analysis of the divine. It is with this in mind that part 3 offers a consideration of Teresa of Avila in terms of the 'mystical strategies' initially identified within Wittgenstein's own thought and vice versa.

Tyler's book offers a fascinating discussion of both Wittgenstein and the tradition of 'performative discourse' that we see emerging throughout the later Middle Ages. It is a deeply insightful work, offering useful summaries of a number of difficult debates. His comparison of Teresa's thought to Wittgenstein's is not only enormously helpful, but manages to achieve the seemingly incongruous, that is, the drawing together of two writers who, Tyler notes, on so many counts appear initially incompatible. In so doing, Tyler's book offers us an exciting insight into the therapeutic nature of Teresa's writing.

In his final analysis of the various 'performative strategies of unknowing', that is, the methods of 'performative discourse' that he finds in both Teresa and Wittgenstein, one feels that there is still more to be heard from both writers on this score. In the small space available, Tyler is able to offer us little more than a summary of this facet of their thought and in so doing he perhaps gives the impression of systematizing what he stresses is for neither writer a systematic strategy. This, however, is perhaps a small point in what is undoubtedly a rich and thought-provoking work that opens up new avenues into the mystical both for serious students of mysticism and Wittgenstein, and for those whose interest is more therapeutic and/or devotional.

Louise Nelstrop

Richard Woods, *Meister Eckhart: Master of Mystics* (London: Continuum, 2011). 978 144113 442 4, pp. 224, £17.99.

As with any systematic thinker, it is often difficult to know where to begin in expounding the thought of Meister Eckhart. In a way, it does not really matter where one begins, for the same profile of thought will be uncovered wherever one slices the cake. As a result, many books published on Eckhart in the last thirty years have tended to cover a multitude of topics, usually as a collection of essays or similar, rather than focusing on one particular element. *Meister Eckhart: Master of Mystics* stands in that tradition.

Richard Woods has very effectively distilled much of Eckhart's thought on a variety of subjects, including women, Neoplatonism and environmental issues. This is no easy task. Eckhart is a complex and dense thinker, and it takes time to chew over his writings before one has the confidence to write about his thinking. For this reason alone, this book is well worth reading for anyone interested in Meister Eckhart or medieval Rhineland mysticism.

Those who are familiar with Eckhart's notion of *Abgeschiedenheit* (detachment) will find the analysis this book offers stimulating, and those who are not familiar with it will find a very suitable and challenging introduction. Detachment would naturally be the first topic to come to mind when thinking about Eckhart in his capacity as a 'mystic', but this book offers much more besides.

It benefits particularly from a comparative approach. In chapter 2, 'Meister Eckhart and the Women Mystics of the Middle Ages', Woods sets Eckhart's thought alongside that of the famous female mystics of the period such as Hildegard of Bingen, Hadewijch of Antwerp and Mechthild of Magdeburg. This provides the reader with a firm understanding of the varied (and not so varied) mystical interpretations of life around Eckhart's time. Readers will find such comparisons particularly helpful given the great number of spiritual writers who were working at the period.

Naturally this book considers the condemnation of certain propositions in Eckhart's works. While it may be true that certain parts of Eckhart's writings can be read in accord with received orthodox spirituality—and treasured for their style and daring—nonetheless it would appear that Eckhart's work also contains divergences from orthodoxy at a fundamental metaphysical level (consider, for example, Eckhart's understanding of the Trinity and the Godhead). Some of his propositions were condemned because Eckhart was essentially misunderstood. Study of the Latin works, however, uncovers a more radically divergent system of thought than the

trial at Avignon recognised and, therefore, those who wish to read Eckhart spiritually must do so with due caution.

One of the most interesting chapters focuses on Eckhart's understanding of Christology (chapter 5). This is an area that, Woods admits, has received little attention in scholarly works. Nevertheless, he can show that, despite significant divergences from Aquinas' position, Eckhart espouses a radically orthodox Christology which goes beyond Aquinas. This is essentially the way in which Woods explains Eckhart's divergence from Thomism, rather than attempting to show that it is somehow heterodox.

The analysis that Woods presents (p. 74 onwards) regarding the way we may be termed the 'Son of God' in Eckhart's thought focuses, rightly, on Sermon 47 (Walshe). But close analysis of this important text evinces a subtle difference between nature and personhood—a distinction that Woods states comes later in the medieval tradition (p. 78). While this is true, it is certainly also true that this distinction is present in Eckhart's texts. Being, as he was in so many ways, opposed to lengthy expositions of theological and philosophical matters, Eckhart wrote in a style as compressed as it was intellectually dense. He expected his intelligent audiences to work things out for themselves, to make connections between things and to find the essential thread of his thinking on their own. This is perfectly expressed in the passage from Sermon 47 where the mysterious nature of human and divine personhood is alluded to. Because, as we find elsewhere, the nature of personhood is inextricably linked to the notion of the *principium*, this technique of suggestive mystical concepts (and here I would consider 'personhood' to be a mystical concept) was Eckhart's way of conveying the clarity of his systematic thought. The apophatic and the cataphatic are united in Eckhart in this sense. While this is something that Aquinas himself also did (Aquinas' mystical element is found in what he does not say), one gets the impression that Eckhart made a very conscious decision to do this himself, and to work it into his inimitable style.

Meister Eckhart: Master of Mystics will be a significant publication for anyone who has an interest in the development of medieval mysticism. Woods analyzes Eckhart's mystical thought with reference to all the important elements: detachment (chapter 6); living without a 'why' (chapter 7); prayer (chapters 8 and 9); and the implications of his thinking for art, suffering and even the environment (chapters 4, 10 and 11).

In addition to the helpful bibliography at the end of the book, the endnotes at the conclusion of each chapter are well worth exploring for those who wish to take their interest in Eckhart further. But the reader must be prepared to engage with foreign language titles, especially German

and French, in order to fully appreciate contested areas and matters of ongoing debate. The contextualisation of Eckhart's thought that Woods provides will be welcomed both by those new to Eckhart and those who are familiar with him. It will be a challenging read for newcomers, but Woods' masterful style will ensure the challenge has a rewarding outcome.

Christopher Wojtulewicz

Daniel O'Leary, *Unmasking God: Recognising the Divine in the Ordinary* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2011). 978 1 8560 7726 2, pp. 144, £10.99.

Fr O'Leary is at once informed, lucid and perceptive: informed in his access to theology, literature and history; lucid in that he has a gift for clear expression; perceptive in that his insights have the ring of truth. *Unmasking God* contains a number of considerations under the groupings: Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter. There is, too, a CD. How to do justice to such richness? A somewhat random sampling of striking pieces suggests the following.

'Spring: The Grace of Emerging' includes consideration of the celebration of Lent and Easter. Lent is interpreted less in terms of penitential abstinence and more in terms of freeing the person from the clutter that masks the presence of the Lord. With Easter, O'Leary follows Timothy Radcliffe and Herbert McCabe in reading the Resurrection narratives as an authentic first encounter with the Jesus of faith by his followers.

'Summer: The Grace of Blossoming' celebrates the true relationship between human and divine knowledge. Thomas Merton wrote:

> Contemplation is a way of being really inside our own daily experiences. We are in contemplation when we perceive … that our lives are not little … but what's timeless, eternal, is in the ordinariness of things.

Our attention is drawn, too, to the sad fact that the language of doctrine and liturgy is not always the language of love.

An important theme in 'Autumn: The Grace of Fading' explores the grace of childhood in the context of ageing. O'Leary quotes Karl Rahner:

> We do not move away from childhood in any real sense. We move towards the eternity of this childhood to its definitive and enduring validity in God's sight.

The Benedictine monk Mark Patrick Hederman offers this striking reflection: Vincent van Gogh's paintings are 'liturgies which unfold the mysteries of God's presence in our day-to-day world'.

'Winter: The Grace of Believing' provides an important insight into trust: even Jesus, fearful of his impending death, had to unscramble his confusion, needing the clarity of the transfiguration before he set foot on the fateful road to a final Jerusalem. A tale that O'Leary quotes imagines Joseph offering the gifts of the Magi to three poor men, who refuse them because they see the gifts as threats to their integrity.

The CD included contains five reflections, partly in conversation with the author's sister. My own titles for them might be: the olympic training of Christian asceticism; the permanency of childhood wonder; the need to listen attentively so as to hear the music of our graced experience; a brush with death contrasts the language of true experience with clerical language; Joseph, who has Downs syndrome, lives in an immediate, real world.

Such is the author's fluency that he leads the reader on a breathless journey so that it is sometimes difficult to keep up. The reader is confronted with a sense of inadequacy, while at the same time being convinced that the truth has been expressed. This is an occasionally infuriating but therapeutic experience. Prosaically: should the hyperbole of title and subtitle be rather: unmasking the extraordinary to allow God to reveal an authentic presence?

Peter Hackett

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