

- 5 In the sense of the taking-over of an alien cultural element by a people, so that it becomes part of the core of their own identity.
- 6 *The Indian Christ, the Indian King; the Historical Substrate of Maya Myth and Ritual* by Victoria Reifler Bricker, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1981 pp xiv + 368. \$ 45.
- 7 If we are to use (as the ARCIC proposed) the concept of *anamnesis* to bridge differing positions on the Eucharist, then a purely linear time is not the only "sacred" time available to the Christian.
- 8 Bricker, op cit p 7.
- 9 Bricker, *ibid*.
- 10 Bricker, op cit pp 40-41.
- 11 An *alcalde mayor* was a provincial governor.
- 12 Herbert S Klein, quoted in Bricker, pp 61-62.
- 13 Bricker quotes Ximenez as saying that Alvarez de Toledo "introduced new church levies and increased old ones. His first tour, shortly after taking office, was very costly for the Indians". p 66.
- 14 Ladinos and Indians were regarded as separate *castas*.
- 15 Bricker, op cit p 93. "Contribution" referred to the church tax paid only by Indians. The liberals had reduced it in 1840; this did not satisfy the Indians, particularly as parish priests had raised fees for the sacraments in order to make up for the reduction in tax.
- 16 Bricker, op cit p 98.
- 17 Catholicism had been imposed on top of, rather than replacing, the old Maya polytheism. Hence, the different aspects of Christ were perceived as *santos*, which in this context means "spiritual powers" rather than "saints" in the normal Catholic sense.
- 18 Bricker, op cit p 194.
- 19 *Indios sublevados pacíficos*.
- 20 Other scholars who have worked in the area seem to accept the crucifixion as fact.
- 21 Bricker, op cit p 150.

## Ignatian Spirituality Today

### Margaret Hebblethwaite

In September of this year the Dominicans are holding their General Chapter in Rome at the same time as the Jesuits are holding their General Congregation. The occasion marks the opportunity for renewed dialogue and friendliness between these two great orders. As someone who has drawn from both spiritual traditions with great profit, I offer this article on Jesuit spirituality for those of a Dominican background, in the hope of contributing to mutual understanding and respect.

The last twenty years have seen a major upsurge in Ignatian spirituality and in the practice of the Spiritual Exercises – the form of retreat devised by St Ignatius and now given by Jesuits and many others all over the world. Inspired by the movement towards *le ressourcement* (or getting back to the sources) and by the Conciliar drive to rediscover the true spirit of each religious order, Jesuits began to research the early history of the Exercises.

They found that the Ignatian retreat had departed drastically from Ignatius' original intention and practice in many ways, centring round one absolutely crucial respect: whereas the Exercises had come in modern history to be preached to groups of people, the true Exercises of Ignatius can only be given individually. There was consequently a movement from the 'preached' retreat to the 'directed' retreat, stressing the point that although a greater or lesser proportion of preaching may be suitable in some other kinds of retreat, the Spiritual Exercises as such can only be made in the process of private prayer under the individual guidance of a retreat-giver. Following on this rediscovery of the true Ignatian method several things have happened: Jesuits and many others, both religious and lay, have developed a great upsurge of enthusiasm both for the Exercises in particular and for Ignatian spirituality in general; new retreat houses have opened, existing ones have found themselves heavily booked up, and the practice of making a retreat at home (begun by St Ignatius, with his famous '19th Annotation') has been rediscovered and developed.

Amidst all this renewed enthusiasm, however, some anxieties about the Ignatian approach have remained in certain circles (though not in my experience in circles of those who have actually made the Exercises). This article will take three of these reservations, and examine what truth and falsity is to be found in them. The objections are, firstly that the Exercises are negative, secondly that they are voluntarist, and thirdly that they are against freedom.

*Are the Exercises negative?*

Some people feel that the Exercises seem to propound a dangerously negative and gloomy view of Christian faith. Of the four 'weeks' (or sections), the First is devoted to sin, and the Third to the Passion. The cycle of personal response in the course of the retreat will very likely involve some – maybe a lot – of pain, fear, doubt, dryness, or inner disturbance. Finally, and worst of all, certain phrases from the book of the Exercises sound extremely alarming to twentieth-century ears ('How is it that the earth did not open to swallow me up, and create new hells in which I should be tormented forever!' 'The enemy [the devil] conducts himself as a woman. He is a weakling before a show of strength, and a tyrant if he has his will.' 'The third kind of penance is to chastise the body, that is, to inflict sensible pain on it. This is done by wearing hairshirts, cords, or iron chains on the body, or by scourging or wounding oneself, and by other kinds of austerities.')

Is all this dangerously negative? Let us begin with the first two points, concerning the amount of time devoted to apparently negative areas, and the inner pain and disturbance that may follow.

We can point out that there can be no authentic Christian faith without an acceptance of pain. Christianity is built on the cornerstone of the crucifixion, but we find in it the new life that God brings to those who give themselves up to him. We are enabled, as Christians, to face up to painful facts that we naturally try to push away from our consciousness: the hurt, oppression and death of the world, and the fact that we too share in that sin and face that death. But through the resurrection of Christ we can look these painful facts in the face and not be destroyed by them. Conversion is painful but it brings peace. It is therefore part of a fruitful honesty that the Exercises require the retreatant to meditate on sin and on the Passion. If there is pain it is fruitful in the long run: the retreatant finds a joy and peace and freedom that reaches down into areas he or she had previously been closing off.

It would be a mistake to take the apparently 'negative' areas in isolation from the positive thrust of the retreat as a whole. The Exercises begin with a meditation on the God-centred nature of creation: the move to pray on sin flows naturally out of this as we observe how far our use of the world falls short of what God intends for us. The Second Week is spent in following the mysteries of the life of Christ: the fruit it brings is a greater desire to know, love and serve Jesus, and a renewed perspective on living out our lives for and with him in our own actual situation. From this following of Jesus' ministry we move naturally into following his Passion, and – in the Fourth Week – sharing with him in the Resurrection and Ascension. Finally, there is the *Contemplatio ad Amorem*, as we turn again to finding God in creation, and recognising and responding to the signs of his love as we meet them in our own lives. Seen in this overall perspective the First and Third Weeks are not negative, nor are the troubled feelings that may arise the norm: rather they are the reverse side of the great joys that face us as we face God.

Let us now turn to the alarming passages I quoted from the book of the Exercises. I deliberately chose the most off-putting bits I could find, and it would be a great mistake to think it all reads like that. But even so, we must be very careful about the damage that can be done by letting people with little historical background read the book with no guidance. Fortunately the book is not designed to be read by retreatants, but is rather a retreat-giver's handbook, to be used with discretion and applied carefully to individual cases. Ignatius, like everyone else, was a child of his age, and sometimes spoke in a way that is quite unacceptable to the modern understanding. We no longer share the same firm belief in hell, in the devil, in 'female' faults, and in severe physical mortification that was taken for granted in the six-

teenth century. But even if we take the passages I have picked out, and read them back into their context, we find the basic point of what he is saying quite acceptable. The phrase about the earth opening 'to swallow me up' comes in the course of a 'cry of wonder', as Ignatius rejoices in the life that surrounds him, and the world that is at his service – hardly a 'negative' view of sin (60-1). The passage comparing the devil to a woman is making the point that one who places his trust in God has nothing to fear in times of struggle, for 'let him find his strength in his Creator and Lord' (324-5). Lastly, the quotation concerning physical mortification comes in a section advising caution in these practices: Ignatius points out that exterior penance is the fruit of an inner sorrow for our sins, that it should not cause us bodily harm, and a good way of finding the right degree of penance is by experimenting until we find from experience what works best for us (82-9). There is no doubt that the present age is very suspicious of physical penances (with the exception of fasting, which is beginning to enjoy a comeback), and it would be unusual for any retreat-giver today to recommend them unless the initiative came from the retreatant. Many people today would find it a stumbling block to know that St Dominic used to beat himself with an iron chain for three nights running, but if we are able to understand the spiritual dispositions that give meaning to these physical penances they should cause us no worry and not appear as negative.

#### *Are the Exercises voluntarist?*

Some people feel that the Exercises seem to place a lot of emphasis on will-power, so as to give the impression that the more difficult we make prayer the closer we will draw to God. The full Exercises, for example, take thirty days in a closed retreat house. These thirty days may be preceded by further 'disposition days', and followed by more days of assessment. The retreat requires five hours of private prayer a day, each preceded by a further period of preparation and followed by a period of recollection. Silence – apart from speaking to the retreat-giver – is maintained throughout. Sometimes retreatants rise in the night for their first period of meditation. This all sounds rather frighteningly hard, and has sometimes given the impression that human effort is being substituted for the free grace of God. Even aside from the Exercises themselves, Ignatian spirituality stresses the value of persistence in prayer. Some other traditions favour what they see as a more relaxed approach.

There can be no doubt that the Exercises are demanding, not only in external requirements but far more importantly in terms of the shake-up of values and priorities that we must expect in our

own hearts. The full thirty days are a major upheaval to be undertaken not more than two or three times a lifetime. Even an eight-day directed retreat is too demanding to be an annual event. The point of a retreat is to change us, to strengthen our faith and love and conform our values more closely to those of the gospel. The Spiritual Exercises do this in a particularly intense way and there can be no doubt that change of this nature is disturbing and exhausting. These demands – the real, internal demands – are the crucial ones, rather than the achievement of external observances in terms of hours of prayer. The discipline needed to put in the required hours is not so very different from the discipline needed to work for an examination. It does require commitment and planning, but there is nothing intrinsically frightening about it. If there is fear, it is fear of what will happen to us during those hours.

No one would wish or would be allowed to make the full thirty days unless they had some knowledge of what they were undertaking and had the desire to seek God in prayer in such an intense way over so long a time. What is far more realistic for most people is the eight-day retreat. Because of the individual way in which the Ignatian retreat is conducted, no one need feel insufficiently spiritually practised to take on the eight-day commitment. Although the norm is still four or five prayer periods a day, the retreat-giver will allow plenty of flexibility to those unused to praying for long stretches. A third way of doing the Exercises, that combines an extremely flexible and gradual approach with the possibility of going as far as God wants to lead us at this particular time, is the 19th Annotation, or home retreat. This could involve a commitment of anything upwards of half an hour a day, and could spread out over as long as a year, or as little as a month. In short, Ignatian spirituality has nothing to do with binding heavy burdens on backs, but rather with providing support and guidance to those who would like to expose themselves to God in prayer rather more than they would dare to do on their own.

As a matter of experience most people find that far from making prayer hard, the Spiritual Exercises make prayer easier. There are times for all of us when prayer is a drag, but we become much less discouraged in these bleak periods if we have someone giving us individual support – knowing and sharing the difficulties and praying for us. Conversely at times when prayer is immediately fruitful and happy it is a joy to be able to share this happiness unselfconsciously with someone else who understands. Moreover, once we have adjusted to the new rhythm of life in which we have no daily commitments other than prayer, the silence becomes balm and not at all an exercise in austerity, and the prospect of another hour's prayer more of a comfort than a hurdle. If the idea

of five hours' prayer a day fills us with dread; what does that say of our expectations of prayer? But if prayer is a pleasure, a month or a week in which we are allowed to do nothing but pray is a great privilege. At the end, it may be the re-insertion into the world that feels difficult and burdensome, as our time available for prayer is drastically cut down and a profusion of daily concerns distracts us from our solitary enjoyment of God.

As for the suggestion that the Exercises stress human effort to the detriment of grace, Ignatius could hardly be clearer that we achieve nothing as a result of our own efforts, but are wholly dependent on God's grace from start to finish: one of the reasons for 'desolation', he says, is that 'God wishes to give us a true knowledge and understanding of ourselves, so that we may have an intimate perception of the fact that it is not within our power to acquire and attain great consolations; but that all this is the gift and grace of God our Lord.' (322) Not only is this an over-riding general principle, but it is brought before our minds again every time we stop to pray, for each hour's prayer begins with a petition for grace (46, 48, 49). The effort we make is in the persistence of our asking, that is, in the disposing of ourselves for God's gift, which always comes in his own way, in his own time, and according to his own terms.

Persistence in times of dryness, far from being an over-valuing of human effort, is actually an indication of the opposite. To give up prayer at moments when it does not live up to our expectations is to over-rate immediate sensible achievement and impose our own ideas on what God should be doing to us in prayer. But if we let him love us in his own way, however puzzling, our trust is always rewarded, often in ways we have not anticipated. Dryness in prayer is never sought after – often there are fairly simple causes that can be eliminated by discussion with the retreat-giver – but sometimes it is a necessary stage in our on-going relationship with God. Persistence in such times enables us to get through it and on to the good bit all the sooner.

We may also remember that some other traditions of spirituality are founded on the basis of a disciplined life of community prayer, that provides regular nourishment to private meditation. Where the community prayer forms a disciplined pattern it makes more sense to allow the private prayer to look after itself. Few priors or abbots would be likely to give the advice to 'only come to office if you feel like it', or to 'feel free to leave if you get bored'. While the Exercises are suitable for everyone – priests, religious or laity – they will be of special value to those whose life is not already guided by a rule of community prayer. Very many people, especially among the laity, know that if they were only to



pray when they felt like it they would never start praying at all. Furthermore, the tradition of Ignatian spirituality does not call for long hours of prayer in everyday life, but only in the specially intense period of the retreat. In the overall pattern of a life it probably calls for less discipline than, say, the monastic tradition.

*Are the Exercises against freedom?*

Since the last objection was that the Exercises over-stressed free will, it may seem puzzling to raise the apparently opposite charge that they are against freedom. But what lies under suspicion here is the entire notion of spiritual direction. Some people feel that they could never in honesty submit themselves to the direction of another, because they want to be free to follow the way God is leading them without the constraints of someone else's advice. They value the maturity they have reached by learning to listen for themselves to the babble of outside voices and finding a clear path of tranquillity through them – a path that does not run away from the suggestions of others, nor does it accept them uncritically. They see spiritual direction as an attempt to maintain a person in a state of immaturity that should have been left behind. They feel that if they were to accept the authority of another over the personal life of their soul they would be setting up a barrier to the free and unforced intimacy they enjoy with God.

There is no aspect of Ignatian spirituality that is more misunderstood than this question of direction. The term 'direction' itself is a misleading one in English (particularly since the advent of the term 'non-directive therapy') because it suggests to many people that it involves a loss of personal freedom, when in fact what it should do is to release personal freedom. Ignatius usually speaks simply of 'the one who gives the Exercises', and I have referred so far in this article to the 'retreat-giver' rather than the 'director'. Some others have experimented with the term 'guide' (which I think sounds even more presumptuous than 'director'), while the French have taken to speaking of the *accompagnateur*.

What, then, does the retreat-giver/director/guide/*accompagnateur* do, that cannot be taken as an inroad into personal freedom? It is really not possible to understand how Ignatian 'spiritual direction' or 'retreat-giving' works without having experienced it, but the essential characteristic is one of attentive receptivity to the action of the Holy Spirit. The retreat-giver does not tell the retreatant what to think, what to feel or what to do, but provides the minimum of external structure and the maximum of moral and spiritual support to enable the retreatant and God to sort out their relationship on their own. 'The director of the Exercises, as a balance at equilibrium, without leaning to one side or the other,

should permit the Creator to deal directly with the creature, and the creature directly with his Creator and Lord' (15).

Within this overall understanding, the retreat-giver has several specific tasks. He, or she, sees the retreatant on a regular basis (once a day, in the closed retreat) to listen to what has been happening in the periods of private prayer. The very process of recounting this to another person helps to reinforce and clarify the movements of the Spirit for the retreatant. Pains and joys are shared, while areas of confusion take a step towards solution. The retreatant shares as much or as little as he or she wishes; there is no prying into personal areas, and for this reason many retreat-givers prefer not to be the retreatant's confessor. The real action, however, is emphatically not in the direction sessions, but in the periods of prayer. The direction is wholly subordinate to and in the service of the prayer.

Having listened and responded to the retreatant's account of how the prayer has been going, hour by hour, the retreat-giver proposes new material for the next day. He, or she, gives a small selection of texts from scripture, and also determines, in the briefest possible way, the basic direction for the prayer (hence the term 'direction'). For example, the retreat-giver will confirm when the retreatant is ready to move from a consideration of the purpose of creation to a meditation on sin, when to move on to contemplating the mysteries of the life of Christ, and which ones to choose, and so on. However, these shifts of attention may occur in the natural progression of the prayer, and in this case the retreat-giver will merely have to point out that this has happened.

But where we see most clearly that the retreat-giver's task is to release personal freedom rather than circumscribe it, is in what is known in both Ignatian terminology and the long tradition of the church as 'discernment'. We are all subject to self-deception and to inner resistance when we pray. A good retreat-giver will help us to notice when this is happening. We are also subject to doubt in the very moments when God is giving us his grace. Again, a good retreat-giver will give confirmation and encouragement to enjoy the gifts of God without scruple. How do we know what is of God and what not of God? How can we distinguish justified suspicion from doubt and resistance? The action of God always brings the fruits of the Spirit. Where there is peace, joy, reconciliation, charity, there is God, and when we have recognised that we are released to enjoy him in full personal freedom.

This is where we realise why it is that the Exercises can only be made on an individual basis. Once we lay down general rules for what God is saying to us or what God is asking of us, we are severely restricting God's hand. There must always be a gap between



what can be preached to a group and what God is saying to the individual soul. This is what Ignatian spirituality is concerned with – the gap across which the sparks fly. On the one hand, we have the word of scripture, the inspiration of preaching, the example of others, and the teaching of the church. On the other, there is me, and the way I feel about it. The role of the retreat-giver is to watch over the interaction between the two, and enable us to hear the individual, surprising and multivarious ways in which God invites us to follow him. His guidance is always there, indicated by the fruits of the Spirit, but we must be both brave enough and honest enough to become aware of it. 'Spiritual direction' confirms our courage and tests our honesty. It can only work on an individual basis, because it is concerned with the way God speaks to us as individuals. And because it enables us to listen and respond in a fully individual way, it is the servant of true personal freedom. The only freedom it attacks is the freedom to be blind.

Once we have understood this we see that good direction is not a matter of advice or suggestions or authority. Bad direction, on the other hand, may well be, and there has been much bad direction in the church, not least among Jesuits. Bad direction can be extremely damaging, as it ignores the individual variety of God's call, and reinforces rules that can never at best be more than approximate generalisations. But that kind of bad direction is now almost a thing of the past, as individual discernment is rediscovered and restored to its rightful place.

The Ignatian emphasis on finding the individual nature of God's call to us should not be taken as navel-gazing or cramped self-concern. The method of the Exercises is to fix our eyes on Christ and the mysteries of his life, and so to uncover our own response to it. Even the decisions we make in retreat concerning our own life-style and commitments are really made for us as we meditate on the life of Christ, not worked out by a process of self-analysis. The focus is not on me taken as an object of contemplation, but on finding out what the Christian faith means to me; it is not a matter of introspection, but of personal response.

It is a characteristic of articles about the Exercises – like any theological writing about God – to sound considerably more boring than the reality they are talking about, and this piece is no exception. To understand why it is that so many people today are excited by the Exercises, it is necessary to move away from the dull generalisations of an article, that can achieve little more than an answering of intellectual objections, and into the living experience of an individually directed retreat. Then we gain a knowledge of the Exercises that is truly our own, and an experience of God

that – whether tranquil or troubled, steady or elusive – is something no one else could have transmitted to us.

*Further information about the Spiritual Exercises can be obtained from St Beuno's Retreat House, St Asaph, Clwyd, LL17 OAS – or from the author of this article.*

## **William Warburton: An 18th Century Anglican Bishop Fallen Among Post-Structuralists – II John Milbank**

Warburton's theological opponent, Robert Lowth, later Bishop of London, published (in Latin) in 1758 his seminal *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*.<sup>9</sup> It is evidence of the staggering lack of interest of English theology today in historical enquiry that there exists no study of this work, described by Meinecke as one of the prime sources for later historicism, and by E. S. Shaffer as vital for the development of biblical criticism.<sup>10</sup> After its reprinting a few years later at Gottingen it exercised a great influence in Germany, but it is interesting to note that while Herder praised Lowth for attempting to isolate the cultural peculiarities of the Hebrews, he thought that his enquiry was too *technical*, failing to penetrate the *spirit* of an age. It is Lowth's strictly *formal* attempt to position Hebrew poetry vis-a-vis the categories of classical rhetoric and poetics rather than a romantic trust in empathy or pure subjectivity which leads him to a new depth of cultural analysis. The *Lectures* thus represent a moment in the history of ideas that was quickly forgotten.

For another reason also, it is hard to categorize Lowth. His formal, aesthetic treatment of the Old Testament opened up the possibility of accounting for it (without recourse to the wilder absurdities of deist slander) in purely human terms. However Hans W. Frei is, I think, wrong to conclude that because Lowth is not concerned to expound the *truth* of the scriptures, nor to establish their factual veracity, the work is theologically neutral.<sup>11</sup> Rather it is clear that Lowth regards the formal, cultural aspects as in some measure *internal* to theology because so often he relates