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Spirituality: a Multifaceted Phenomenon – Interdisciplinary Explorations

This article reflects on the various ways spirituality is studied in academic setting. The author describes and analyses what happens in twelve disciplines: theology, religious studies, philosophy, literary sciences, history, anthropology, psychology, sociology, education, management studies, medicine, and natural sciences. The analysis follows an encyclopedic matrix: words, things, images, texts, histories, processes, relationships, professions, disciplines, and theories. On the basis of this description and analysis, the author discovered patterns of interdisciplinarity. This could be a first step for further interdisciplinary explorations in the field of spirituality.

Ludger Schwienhorst-Schönberger

Kontemplatives Schriftverständnis – Zur Wechselbeziehung von kontemplativer Übung und Schriftverständnis

The modern academic biblical scholarship is rarely connected to religious experience. New forms of spirituality neglect the Holy Scriptures and rather tend towards eastern forms of spiritual practice. The starting point of the considerations about a traditional Christian way of instruction to the Bible in this article is contemplation. Contemplation, following Bonaventura, is presented as a practice which focuses on the intrinsic self to transcend everyday experience. This can lead to a contemplative understanding of Scripture as a testimony of the divine revelation out of its interior source. The value of historical biblical scholarship is not denied thereby, but interpretation of Scripture must go beyond it towards a spiritual understanding. As an example of spiritual exegesis which at the same time does justice to the biblical text the interpretation of Job 30:20 by Gregory the Great is analysed. The spiritual understanding of Scripture is founded in the Bible itself. Thus the way can be taken from believing to seeing which is exemplarily shown in the Book of Job (42:2-16). To explain faith is not the ultimate aim of exegesis. Spiritual interpretation of the Bible can open a way beyond it towards a Christian spiritual practice.

Michael D. Spencer

Moses As Mystic

The gravity of Moses' mysticism is signaled by the countless commentators who have spoken about this matter since ancient times. In fact, these writers, finding in Moses' story the basis of a theology of mysticism, made him a fundamental source of the Christian mystical tradition. This study focuses on Exodus 33-34 and especially on Moses' great mystical experience of God in Exodus 34:5-7. Part I of this study looks into some important preliminary matters, matters which include the vision of God experienced by Moses and his companions in Exodus 24 and those singular symbols prominent in the story of Moses – fire, darkness, and cloud – which comprise the symbolic arena of his mystical experience upon Mount Sinai. Part II of this study, which concentrates on Exodus 33-34, speaks of such matters as Moses' prayer to see God's glory, God's presence in the soul of Moses, and the character and the personal impact of Moses' experience of God in Exodus 34:5-7. This study

draws especially on several of the very writers who are particularly important sources to the Christian mystical tradition, namely, Saint Gregory of Nyssa and Saint John of the Cross, though other writers, who include Jean Daniélou, Philo of Alexandria, Saint Augustine, and Pseudo-Dionysius, are seen here as well.

Thelagathoti J. Raja Rao

The Mystical Experience of St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort

This article is a synthesis of a doctoral thesis submitted by the author to the Gregorian University, Rome. In the catholic tradition world over, St. Louis-Marie de Montfort is known as the apostle of Mary and it is generally accepted that he is the last stalwart of the French School of Spirituality. As a missionary in Brittany, he not only preached the simple people the baptismal spirituality imbedded in the true devotion to Mary, but also lived it himself seriously and became a mystic in the ordinary sense of the word. This article is developed in four parts, namely, his childhood and adolescent experiences (an Ignatian orientation), his seminary itinerary (a Sulpician formation), early priestly ministry (in search of identity) and the final ascent. Retaining the characteristics of the French school of spirituality which are very evident in his life, the article also uses insights of the mystical itinerary suggested by St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross and attempts to bring out the true mystical identity of Montfort. His life was marked by a total renunciation which he learnt in his early days from the Jesuits, and continued to follow the Gospel to the letter. His efforts of active purification, coupled with a tender love for the poor and love of the Cross lead him to a comment made by his own sceptical and unfavourable spiritual director François Leschasier, that “Louis-Marie reached a high degree of union with God”. His passive purification consisted in surrendering his own will to the will of the Father just as Jesus did, which is evident in the fact of accepting the destruction of a huge project by his rivals and the powerful of the society, just on the eve of its inauguration. Finally he breathes his last placing himself in the midst of Jesus and his Mother saying that “he will never sin again”. Montfort advocated the ordinary mysticism, with an itinerary of “Consecration to Jesus through Mary” that is followed by people all over including John Paul II.

James Keating

Presiding at the Liturgy of Charity – Directing the Spiritual Formation of the Deacon

The director of the diaconate is called upon to organize, manage, and lead the office that coordinates deacon life and ministry. This position calls for its director to enter into the truths of the diaconal life as these inhere in the dispositions to listen, discern, and respond to the needs of the poor in charity. Beyond this, the director is invited to share his or her own love for the diaconal mystery – that life of interpenetration between the mysteries of the altar and the transformation of culture. From within knowledge of this mystery and love for its effects upon the Church and society, the director draws nourishment for his or her own soul. From this sustenance, the director guides his or her candidates into the deepest of all diaconal realities: the commitment to preside at the liturgy of charity for the welfare of the whole church.

Karl-Friedrich Wiggermann

Leidenschaft und Disziplin – Zur Spiritualität der Praktischen Theologie

Practical theology is open for spirituality. Temptation is important, it changes into tempted love. Thus spirituality of practical theology / spiritual practical theology develops. Times of sabbat and Sunday become important; there are spiritual places too. People live in passion and discipline; both unfold themselves in a prayer.

Leslie J. Francis, Andrew Village, Mandy Robbins & Keith Ineson

Mystical orientation and psychological type – An Empirical Study among Guests staying at a Benedictine Abbey

A sample of 318 individuals who have stayed at the Grange retreat house associated with Ampleforth Abbey completed the Francis-Louden Mystical Orientation Scale together with a measure of psychological type in order to examine the relationship between psychological type and mystical orientation. The data demonstrated a significant relationship between mystical orientation and the perceiving process (sensing or intuition), but no relationship between mystical orientation and psychological orientation (introversion or extraversion), the judging process (feeling or thinking) and attitudes toward the outer world (judging or perceiving). These findings are discussed in the light of psychological type theory.

Donald J. Moores

‘O happy living things’ – Healing Serpent Power in Coleridge’s ‘Rime’

Coleridge’s ‘Rime of the Ancient Mariner’ poses an interpretive dilemma: if we read the poem as an allegory of the Judeo-Christian Fall or of the Christian redemption, we cannot make sense of the complex psychology it illustrates, but if we appeal to some trauma in the poet’s childhood or to his Oedipal complex, we are at a loss to make sense of the religious sensibility that significantly informs the poem. An appeal to Jungian theory can reconcile such mutually exclusive elements. Specifically, Jung’s ideas on the personal and collective shadow – the unwanted, repressed aspects of the psyche that collectively amount to the values, beliefs, and behaviors society refuses to acknowledge or tolerate and thus subjugates – can help to reconcile the seemingly contradictory approaches to making sense of why the Mariner kills the albatross. In The ‘Rime’ Coleridge re-enacts the Judeo-Christian “killing” of nature and the subsequent estrangement from natural human instincts. Through the Mariner’s story the poet expresses his own psychological response to this religious value system while also exploring an aspect of his artistic development – his movement towards an organic conception of the cosmos.

Domenico Pezzini

The Ruthwell Cross and the Dream of the Rood – Signposts for Pilgrims

This essay deals with a monument, the Ruthwell Cross, and two connected poems, one short carved on the stone cross, and another much longer known as the Dream of the Rood extant in a codex presently at Vercelli (Italy). Through an analysis of the iconographic programme of the sculpture and the texts of the two poems, I try to describe their global interconnected meaning under the heading of a dynamic idea of Christian life conceived as a ‘pilgrimage of faith and desire’. In this journey the cross becomes a signpost indicating both doctrine and moral life, the ‘sacrament’ of God’s love and the ‘exemplum’ of how the believer should

respond to God's action. All this is illustrated through a reading of the figurative panels of the monument, the short stanzas of the poem carved on it, and the more diffused elaboration of the Dream of the Rood. In these three 'texts', created in a context of monastic mysticism and missionary fervour, words and images admirably combine to preach the gospel of the cross, in which death and life, sorrow and joy are but the two sides of the Paschal Mystery which every Christian is invited to re-enact in his/her daily life.

Rachel Elior

Joseph Karo and Israel Ba'al Shem Tov – Mystical Metamorphosis, Kabbalistic Inspiration, Spiritual Internalization

The autobiographical-mystical notes of R. Joseph Karo (1488-1575), a leading Halakhic authority in the Jewish world of the 16th century and an inspired mystic who had experienced profound spiritual revival in a form of direct angelic revelation, printed in the book *Maggid Meisharim* (1646) were a major source of inspiration to the founder of Hasidism, R. Israel Baal Shem Tov (the Besht 1700-1760). Karo's private extraordinary mystical experience, written by him between 1535-1575 and printed posthumously in 1646, was internalized by the Besht and re-lived in his mind. The spiritual world that was consolidated in *Maggid Meisharim* in the wake of Karo's mystical experience was adopted by the Besht and re-shaped as binding directives/instructions of the followers of the Hasidic movements. The major Hasidic themes of *deveikut* (communion with God), *hishtavut* (indifference), *mashavah* (ongoing contemplative thought on the divine being), and *avodah begashmiut* (worship through corporeality or through physicality) were inspired by Karo's mystical records, that were perceived by the Besht as resuming of divine revelation. The present article studies the complex nature of the mystical transformation: the extraordinary individual angelic experience of Karo in the 16th century – committed into the printing press in the 17th century, became the foundation of the communal Hasidic mysticism through Israel Baal Shem Tov renewed experience in the 18th century.