

Studies in Spirituality 25/2015

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Latin-European Scholarship in Spiritual Theology (1954-2013)

SUMMARY – The relation between scholars from the Spanish and Italian speaking world (*Latin-Europe*) and those from the Anglophone context concerns Christian spirituality, presenting difficulties due both to linguistic differences and to methodological perspectives. This article seeks to reduce at least the first of these differences, by introducing to the Anglophone public the scholarly production of Latin-Europe from the close of Vatican II to 2013.

Dr. Joseph Grabau, Catholic University of Louvain (Belgium)

On Christian Asceticism – Spiritual Exercises in Saint Augustine’s *Confessions*

SUMMARY – The present article seeks to address an important point of contact between early Christian ascetic practice and the heritage of Platonism through the end of the fourth century AD. In short, I find marked similarities between Pierre Hadot’s reading of Plato’s *Phaedo*, for example, and that of St Augustine’s personal prayer book, the *Confessions*. After outlining essential characteristics of Hadot’s take on spiritual exercises and Augustinian anthropology, I subject the text of the *Confessions* to critical examination in order to determine whether an emphasis on ‘spiritual exercises’ is indeed present. I argue that similar spiritual practices may be clearly discerned. First, I discuss the distinct ‘Christian’ and Augustinian character of ‘spiritual exercises’ which incorporate biblical typology of Adam and Christ as paradigmatic for the spiritual life. Next, in terms of concrete practices, I then discern from the first four books of the *Confessions* a series of exercises through which such a path of spiritual progress (*i.e.* from ‘Adam’ to ‘Christ’) may occur. Of note, I consider the dialectic *praxis* of 1) contemplative reading, 2) prayer-writing and 3) prayer itself, or ‘pure’ prayer – distinct from Augustine’s written reflections; 4) the role of *lectio divina* or meditation on Scripture; and, finally, 5) meditation on death. In addition to developing these individual practices, it is the traditional Augustinian anthropology (rooted as it is in a theology of divine grace) that reveals the essential ‘Christian’ contribution of Augustine’s.

Dr. Anthony Dupont, Catholic University of Louvain (Belgium)

Dr. Pierre-Paul Walraet, osc, independent scholar

Augustine on the Heart as the Centre of Human Happiness

SUMMARY – The burning heart pierced with arrows is the iconographic symbol of the Church Father Augustine of Hippo (354-430) since the 15th century. The concept of the human heart does not only feature in Augustine’s account of his turbulent personal life, but plays a central role in his thinking as such. This contribution first explores Augustine’s more general anthropological understanding of the heart as the holistic identity centre of each person, as human interiority in general. Augustine does not oppose heart and head, but sees the heart as the seat both of human thinking and feeling. Second, his specific spiritual interpretation of the heart as the source of self knowledge and knowledge of God – the heart as the centre of human interiority/spirituality – is studied. Four interrelated contexts of Augustine’s ‘spirituality of the heart’ are discussed: the necessity to return to the heart, the appeal to rise up with the heart, the ideal of a society ‘one of heart’ and the invitation to pray with the heart.

Prof. Dr. Glenn E. Myers, Crown College Minnesota

Participation in Inner-Trinitarian Communion – The Golden Epistle’s Impact on Johannes Tauler’s Concept of the Unio Mystica

SUMMARY – In his eighty-some extant sermons, the fourteenth-century Dominican preacher, Johannes Tauler, depicts the possibility of the human soul’s participation in the Inner-Trinitarian communion of the Godhead. Building upon the thought of the twelfth-century Cistercian, William of Saint Thierry, Tauler locates such participation in the third or unitive stage of spiritual growth. William’s

concept of the *unio mystica*, and especially his depiction of God's knowing Godself in the human soul, stamps Tauler's theological synthesis in a profoundly Trinitarian way. Juxtaposing passages from William's *Golden Epistle* and Tauler's sermons, this article demonstrates the Cistercian Father's imprint on the German Dominican. Referred to as the 'unity of the Spirit' by both mystagogues, such oneness is effected by the Holy Spirit. This mystical union with the Divine is characterized by the spiritual sweetness found in the 'Father and Son's kiss and embrace', and the one who has experienced such union will never fall from faith. At times the human spirit is taken above itself into God in ecstasy where it participates in the Inner-Trinitarian intimacy. Here the human person is deified. Into such *unio mystica* Tauler's sermons relentlessly invite his listeners – then as now – that they might be divinized, becoming by grace what God is by nature.

Dr. Mary Frohlich, RSCJ, Catholic Theological Union Chicago

Pilgrimage and the Roots of Carmelite Spirituality

SUMMARY – The earliest Carmelites were devoted to solitary contemplation in the wilderness of Mount Carmel, but within only a few decades the Order transitioned to a mendicant way of life that combined contemplation with apostolic involvement in urban settings. A perennial debate is whether or not this was a movement away from an original, strictly contemplative charism. This essay proposes pilgrimage spirituality as a framework for understanding the Carmelites' early choices as an organic evolution rather than as a betrayal of origins. The first Carmelites were located on a pilgrimage route and lived on pilgrims' alms. Both eremitical and pilgrimage spirituality – each of which included a dynamic integration of solitary contemplation with freedom for apostolate – profoundly shaped this original context. Some recent commentators have interpreted the Carmelite *Rule* as transposing this original, geographic pilgrimage context to that of an ongoing pilgrimage to a 'mystical space'. In this view, Carmelites have always understood themselves not only as pilgrims, but as ministers to other pilgrims on their way to the 'everywhere and nowhere' mystical space of Carmel. Thus, attention to pilgrimage spirituality has potential to assist the project of reappropriating Carmelite spirituality in a postmodern context.

Prof. Dr. Albrecht Classen, University of Arizona, Tucson

Mystical Visions and Spiritual Health: Medieval Mysticism as a Platform for the Exploration of Human Spirituality and Happiness – The Transcendence of the Body in the Quest for the Godhead: A Message for Us Today?

SUMMARY – Medieval mysticism is often identified as a unique and most fascinating religious phenomenon of highest personal qualities prevalent in the late Middle Ages. But we still can derive many insights from the mystical authors for our own modern quest for happiness and physical well-being because they described in often startling and powerful language how they were graced with the inner power to overcome their own bodily limits and to gain access to a new level of inner fulfillment in a spiritual manner, forming a mystical union with the Godhead. This can be observed in light of many medieval writers, three of whom are the focus of the present study, Mechthild of Magdeburg, Marguerite Porète, and Birgitta of Sweden.

Em. Prof. Dr. Paul Mommaers, University of Antwerp/ Catholic University of Louvain (Belgium)

Pensée et parole *dans* l'union mystique – Hadewijch, Jean Ruusbroec, Jean de la Croix

SUMMARY – The aim of this essay is to explain how three great mystical authors can demonstrate, each in an individual way, how the human person thinks rationally and speaks intelligibly even in the most advanced union with God. It may come as a surprise that those who, as we rightly say, have gone 'beyond' the realm of common comprehension and are 'lost' in God, show enjoyable lucidity as well as the capacity for using language understandably.

The first is Hadewijch (13th c.), who epitomizes love mysticism, and knows how to speak 'with an inspired soul to an inspired soul'; while in the union she is celebrating in Letter 28, she actually speaks about 'feasts' that are 'holy words'. Next, two great mystical masters, Jan van Ruusbroec (14th c.) and

John of the Cross (16th c.), help to clarify the mystic's thinking and speaking: the former presents pertinent prose passages on which he comments; the latter explains how his love-poems are an integral part of his deepest experience of union with God.

Kevin M. DePrinzio, MA, Catholic University of America, Washington DC
On Naming Grace – From Self-Deception to Self-Authenticity in Discernment

SUMMARY – In the area of discernment, there is a certain art to listening that leads to an authentic discovery of the self within a person's life and particularly in the context of the spiritual direction relationship. This article explores this art through the voices and guidance of Augustine of Hippo and Teresa of Avila around their shared concern of self-deception and the emergence of the true self.

Prof. Dr. Macario Ofilada Mina, Instituto Cervantes Manilla (Philippines)
The True Truth (Book of Life 21,9) – Teresian Comprehension of Mystical Experience

SUMMARY – Saint Teresa of Jesus (1515-1582) is a classical representative of Western and Christian mysticism. Though her writings are clearly narrative, with doctrinal implications, she offers us an explicit understanding of Christian mystical experience, within the context of a Christian way of life or spirituality. Parting from important presuppositions, such as the fact that she views all mystical experiences as a gift from God, and conscious of her mystagogical task, this essay explores a key text from the *Book of Life*, in which Teresa gives a blueprint and coordinates for an understanding, from a Christian viewpoint, of what mystical experience is all about. Indeed, based on this exploration, we could say that for Teresa genuine Christian mystical experience denotes a spirituality of truth, beyond the mere theoretical constructs of philosophers (which affirm that truth is correspondence) by affirming that truth opens up a way, that it is an experiential history.

Prof. Dr. Frank van der Pol, University of Kampen (Netherlands)
'Time Sanctified' – A Weekly Meditation Routine for Mortals to Meditate on the *Quatuor Novissima* of Human Life

SUMMARY – This article discusses a rare 16th century manual that commends a daily routine by which mortals might meditate upon the *Quatuor Novissima* of human life. The weekly agenda for a Christian lifestyle, presented with a view to the here and the hereafter, was composed by the Franciscan Provincial Johannes Knijff, who later became Bishop of Groningen. For each day there is a special focus. The document is thus analysed in terms of its daily pattern, its religious background, its presentation of the image of God and its anthropological view. Written in the vernacular, the treatise about the *Vier Wtersten* is also linked to late Medieval dissemination processes in the Low Countries. Clearly, it is part of the story of the Franciscan editions of *Quatuor Novissima* texts printed in the Netherlands. Finally, the booklet is placed in the increasingly problematic religious context of the mid-1550s. By composing a vernacular treatise from the classical *Quatuor Novissima* genre, which was deeply rooted in the late medieval Dutch spirituality as well as the devotional tradition of the Franciscan monasteries, we read the work of a well-known Franciscan Friar who was trying to strengthen the threatened Roman Catholic identity by developing the spiritual engagement of the laity. This manual provides a valuable addition to our knowledge and understanding of religious and spiritual literature of the sixteenth century.

Dr. Neil Pembroke, University of Queensland, Brisbane (Australia)
Two Spiritualities of Self-Emptying – Weil's 'Decreation' and Merton's Emptying Out the False Self

SUMMARY – Simone Weil and Thomas Merton make unique contributions to our understanding of self-emptying. Weil uses the term 'decreation' to describe the process. It is argued that Weil's use of expressions such as 'the destruction of the "I"' should be read metaphorically rather than literally. Thomas Merton constructs his spirituality of self-emptying around the notions of the true and the false self. When the false self is emptied out, a person's ownmost self-in-God is allowed to assume its rightful place. It is contended, following Merton, that a proper self-love, a love of our 'nothingness', is essential if we are to know inner peace and freedom and to love God and others in a wholesome way.

Susan Gray, MA, St. Paul University Ottawa (Canada)

From Objective Discovery to Subjective Grace – Lonergan’s Transcendent Journey

SUMMARY – Hailed as one of the greatest theological and philosophical minds of the twentieth century, Bernard Lonergan, SJ, is not commonly referred to as a Christian mystic. Also, unlike many Christian mystics, he rarely wrote of his own personal transcendent experiences. Yet his writings on religious experience, conversions, and insight into the transcendent illustrate his highly developed grasp of the ontology of mystical experience, stemming from the Ignatian spiritual practice. This essay focuses on Lonergan’s understanding of the transcendent-mystical experience, highlighted by Louis Roy’s construct of the transcendent experience. I contend, however, that despite his lifelong work, including the publication of his opus *Insight* in 1957, Lonergan did not fully experience (and therefore understand) transcendent religious experience until the latter half of his life.

Dr. Claudia Venhorst, Radboud University Nijmegen (Netherlands)

Murid Spirituality – A Lived Eschatology

SUMMARY – Spiritual thought and practices of the West African Sufi order of the Muridiyya are strongly framed by eschatology. The belief in ‘the last things’ does not only shape attitudes towards death and afterlife but also provides leading guidelines for life and living. The article explores three interconnected domains that provide the eschatological backdrop against which Murid spirituality is brought together: *tradition* presented in the longstanding Sufi tradition in Islam, *teacher* the exemplary life and teachings of shaykh Amadu Bamba the founder of the order and a model to his followers, and *place* referring to the holy city of Touba the physical and spiritual centre of the Muridiyya. The reader is guided through Murid webs of significance and their common spiritual practices, providing insights in Muslim lived eschatology in general and Sufi eschatology in particular.

Prof. Dr. Thomas Quartier, osb, Radboud University Nijmegen (Netherlands)/ Catholic University Louvain (Belgium)

Monastisches Engagement in Kunst und Kloster – Lebensentwürfe im hermeneutischen Lehrgespräch mit dem Liedermacher Konstantin Wecker

SUMMARY – Monasticism and societal engagement are often not a happily married couple. At the same time, the social relevance of their life is major responsibility for monks. Within an apparently different form of life than monks, performance artists often seem to miss contemplative depth, due to a lack of time and rest. In this article, monastic and artistic views are described from a unique research setting: the author, monastic scholar, and Konstantin Wecker, a famous German singer-songwriter meet each other in a spiritual dialogue (*collatio*). In different steps, central topics of spiritual life are dialogically explored using monastic habits and virtues and poetic sources. This opens a new research method for spirituality studies: *collatio* as empirical and hermeneutical research instrument. The topics concentrate on the perspective of contemplative dialogue (1), form of life (2), content of life (3), contemplation (4) and action (5). Interestingly, monastic and artistic views often meet on a spiritual level and bring about new insights. This leads to what one can call monastic engagement. The dialogue the two contributors held, is a hermeneutical process of a deep desire that unifies contemplation and action in an authentic form of spiritual life.

Book notices

On the authors