

# Prayers at Anchor

Tad Dunne

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# *Preface*

God graces us with the ability to relish what is truly so and truly good, and to count on the love in our hearts to discern what is reasonable in our doubts and what to avoid what lacks goodness in our choices.

In our relishing, our spirits are at rest as they soberly contemplate what is true about reality, even though reality is sometimes good and sometimes bad.

These prayers "At Anchor" are prayer that rest in contemplating the reality of the world and of ourselves.

## **PRAYERS AT ANCHOR**

*Prayers while resting in contemplation*

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## **Fate**

Fate is not simply "what is bound to happen."

I freely lead this life of mine.

But the life I lead is not my own, not my true life.

The burdens of life I feel upon me  
are essential to being holy  
as God is holy

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# Taking Charge

Everybody is trying to develop.

But the paths of our development twist, turn, vanish, and sometimes return. Much of these changes are precipitated by what we learn from "experts."

There are self-world images that haunt our imagination and unnoticingly guide our everyday choices.

There are nine typical dysfunctional self-world images or assumptions about the direction of our lives: that we should be: perfect, a helper, a star, an artist, an intellectual, a watchguard, an explorer, a bully, a non-committal watcher.<sup>1</sup>

There are early successes that open a teenager to keep on developing their skills and interests along familiar paths that reached a welcomed success. These developments will exclude other paths that may be more rewarding.

There is also our suspicions that our development, guided by parents, teachers, heroes, leaders, along with a corresponding inner demand to make something of oneself all by oneself—demands that may move us to suddenly switch our life plans.

There is a myth we should set goals for ourselves and then guide our choices by intermediate "targets" that move us toward our goals.

There are looming fears of being on the wrong path.

There are choices forced on a person who sees no alternatives.

There is what St. Augustine named the "love to dominate."

Accidents happen. Illness happens.

Being in love liberates the lonesome wanderer into a walking partner.

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<sup>1</sup> For these nine compulsions I follow the views of writers on "Enneatypes."

There is the grace that God offers to anyone who is attentive to the Spirit of divine love at every step along the way.

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## Life Giver

God gives life to the unliving in two ways:

Calling into existence what did not exist:

to raise from the dead  
those who believe that God can,  
and deeply desires,  
to share eternal life with anyone  
who leads their lives by love.

(Rom 4:17-25).

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## Fathomless

Beyond what we ever expect to see,  
before anybody could fully hear,  
by your fathomless grace,  
we have come to know  
that it is by your grace  
that we came to be—  
  
a grace we can  
only point to,  
only speak of  
by our mystery-laden word:

Love.

1 Cor 2:9

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## Innermost

All you are you offer us.  
Innermost your Love you pour  
into our hearts to welcome  
innermost your Word:  
your Beauty-Word of creation,  
your Love-conceived Word among us,  
born of Mary, humbled unto death,  
raised by you to work through us  
your works of Love in our history,  
led not by our fears and hopes but his.  
By your Love led to ever cherish  
your every child.

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# Dying Practice

Morning prayer:

Offering up

Letting go

Dying practice

For life's sake today.

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## Holy Cunning

To be fully wholesome requires cunning. When we unconsciously avoid certain topics or questions, our minds are biased. To catch our biases in the act requires cunning inspection—a readiness to critically scrutinize the values we inherit and the values we confirmed in our personal experiences.

Cunning shows itself in our ability to identify, uproot, and rid ourselves of our biases:

Bias for what benefits our individual selves  
and disregards what burdens other individuals.

Bias for what benefits our community  
and disregards what burdens other communities.

Bias for commonsense insights into problems  
and disregards insights founded on a grasp of complexities  
found in theories and in the studies of history.

Bias for assuming the life is obvious  
and disregards hunches that God made us  
and graces us for loving purposes  
beyond how we imagine our futures.

Bias against suspecting that we may be biased.

Inspired by Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, Chap. 6, Sec.2.7

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## Whatever version A

Whatever the innermost life of God may be,  
it is welcomed by anyone in whom the Spirit of Jesus abides.

Whatever is the Father's love for the Son  
is the Son's love for those who love him. Jn 15:19

Whatever is truly good on earth  
is part of God's self-communication to humans.

Whatever may be the full significance of whatever hard work  
love prompts us to do for our children, the ailing, or the lost is  
to be found in God's loving work.

Whatever the reason for feeling abandoned by God,  
it lies in God's self-giving work to strengthen our love.

Whatever death is for ourselves, it is not the wretched end of us  
but an essential element of our full liveliness in God.

Whatever happens when someone who loves us dies,  
his or her love for us is never dead.

Whatever true human fulfillment may be, it is what truly  
becomes actualized wherever one welcomes God's self-gift in  
the historical Word and inner Spirit, no matter how one  
understands or names these experiences.

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## Whatever version B

Whatever one contemplates in the life of Christ on earth is an entry into the present of the eternal life of the Trinity.

Whatever the Father did in Jesus' life, death and resurrection is what the Father does in those who live in the Spirit, living out the self-giving life of Christ.

Whatever is a truly good time in one's life is enjoyed with Christ's own joy.

Whatever it feels like to be fully alive is what Jesus felt all the time and what his followers feel more often than not.

Whatever Jesus wanted his disciples to receive when he said, "Take and eat; this is my body," is received by those who, in faith, receive him in the Eucharist.

Whatever may be the full significance of what happens in a person who embraces the gospel is to be found in the historical life of a community.

Whatever may be the full scope of the passionateness of being is the full scope of God's Holy Spirit of Love at work, the way "the whole of creation has been groaning in labor pains until now."

*Rom 8:22*

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# Song of a Spouse

Intro - Instrumental Only



Song



For every day. For every night. For every meal. For all delight. For



all you are: in love with me. For all we've been, and all we'll be:



Our thanks to God, who in our hearts, is always there:



the Love we share.

- Tad Dunne

**Verse 1:** Use Intro Melody

You chose us, O Lord, | to make your love complete.  
Brimming in our hearts | toward every one we meet.

**Verse 2:** Use Intro Melody

All our freedom, Lord, | your gift we know is true  
to free us deep inside | to make a home for you.

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# Being Saved

In Christian spirituality, being "saved" is a "rescue" from exclusively worldly concerns.

The Father, whom Jesus of Nazareth loved, loves the world. Jesus himself loves the world with the Father's own love because the spirit of Jesus is God's own innermost Spirit.

However, Jesus recognizes how love of this world can be a lethal trap—"Lethal" in the sense that it blocks or diverts a person's love of God, which is not only a natural human capacity but also a natural need. Eric Voegelin identifies four such blocks or diversions, which he views as errors in human thinking; he subsumes them under the title "gnostic."

1. Uncritical acceptance of the wisdom of Solomon, Old Testament proverbs, or other publicly-honored sages.
2. "Worldly" mediators of Good News of Salvation, such as we find in the person of David and in fundamentalist interpretators of Scriptures.
3. Writers who publish expressions of the faith of Christians that omit the experience of being in love with God that moved the original believers.
4. "Leaders" who create overarching social theories that incorporate an uncritical trust in socio-economic plans. (The Leviathan of Hobbes. Any modern autocrats. And, in the U.S., most members in the National Socialist party —founded by members of the American Nazi Party.)

Each of these gnostic views diverts the attention of people away from their innate longing for God and for knowing and doing what God, their creator, desires.<sup>2</sup> They offer a knowledge (Greek: *gnosis*) about God and God's will regarding mundane human life based on human reasoning. Human reasoning, in turn, is vulnerable to several biases:

the bias of the psyche that represses questions related to the question of God;

the bias of common sense, which avoids questions that demand hard study, particularly of relevant theories and of relevant historical developments;

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<sup>2</sup> Source materials for this article: Eugene Webb, Eric Voegelin's Theory of Revelation," *Thomist* vol. 42 (Jan '78), 95-122. Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics* (University of Chicago Press, 1952), especially chapter 6, "The End of Modernity." I would add a misunderstanding of the meaning of "discernment" in the Christian tradition. It is not a factual discovery of the state of God's mind; it is an immediate experience of God's love moving one toward or away from certain options.

the bias of a group whose members avoid questions about the well-being of other groups and looming breakdowns in their own group;  
the bias of personal egotism that avoids wondering about the well-being of other persons.

Beyond human knowledge we live in between being just human and wonder-struck by the possibility that our creator would desire that we spend eternity with him and feeling actually drawn toward being beloved children in God's family

God made us not only free but also responsible.

We are confronted with a choice:

We can hate the ongoing tension of being fully of this world and being fully eager for life with God.

We can feel rootless and bewildered when we let the "in-between" tension in our daily lives confuse us during our prayer.

We can wholeheartedly accept this tension of life as an essential element of being children in God's family.

Source: Eric Voegelin's "Gospel and Culture"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Eric Voegelin, "The Gospel and Culture" in ed. D.G Miller and D.Y. Hadidian, *Jesus and Man's Hope*. Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 1971, vol.II, 59-101



# Discernment of Movements

12/29/22

We experience inner movements in all the time. Some of them are conscious and some are subconscious.

Examples of conscious movements are ideas and desires. We notice the movements in our psyches. Sometimes we consider ourselves 'inspired.' Unfortunately, not every bright idea is a right idea. Not every desire is to be trusted. Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556), founder of the Jesuits, wrote a short list of rules for understanding these desires so that people might better discern which to follow and which to ignore. Most commentaries on these rules refer to them as "Rules for Discernment of Spirits."<sup>4</sup>

Examples of subconscious movements are unnoticed impulses, sometimes arising from psychological compulsions. We spontaneously present versions of ourselves that mask our shortcomings and highlight our accomplishments. Even though these impulses motivate us, we often fail to notice that we are being motivated. They have become habits. We act without thinking. We lie without regard for truth. We show off. We brag. We claim something as our own that belongs to someone else. Few commentaries speak of such subconscious events "movements."<sup>5</sup> See "Part Three," below.

On the other hand, "spirits" that are scrutinized under Ignatius' "Rules for Discerning Spirits" are also named by Ignatius as "movements." Ignatius seems to have envisioned two types of movements as intitated by angelic "spirits": "Evil" spirits who fell away from God; and "Good" spirits who did not. Ignatius' "Rules" are aids to recognize the difference.

For this review I retain what Ignatius meant by "spirits," namely, movements within us that we are conscious of, which arise from an inner principle that affects our choices, which, after all, are

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<sup>4</sup> See Louis Puhl, ed., *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*. Chicago: Newman Press 1951, paragraphs 313-336. (The same paragraph numbers are use in most editions.)

<sup>5</sup> The "subconscious" was first proposed as a distinct mental function by Sigmund Freud in 1900—at least 350 years later than Ignatius' publication of "Rules for Discernment of Spirits.". See Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Subconscious*. Basic Books 1970, *passim*. Also, given the 16-century opposition of Inquisition officials to any spiritual claims based on movements from God's Holy Spirit, Ignatius may have judicially used "movements" and not "spirits."

sometimes good and sometimes bad. This meaning is close to what people ordinarily mean by speaking of certain singer as having a unique "spirit." It is also close to what people mean by the entire realm of "spirituality."

What follows is my own paraphrase of Ignatius' rules that appear in two places in his *Spiritual Exercises* -- "Rules for the Discernment of Spirits (para. 313-336) and "Rules for Scruples" (para. 345-351). I also incorporated own observations about subconscious movements.

*Part One:*

*Spiritual Consolations and Desolations*

1. Inspirations driven by our imagination and emotions normally reinforce our stance in life, while inspirations driven by reasoning and calculation tend to upset it.

In people leading a generally self-centered life, their *imagination* and *emotions* tend to draw them even further from God. Delights and pleasures fill their memories and hopes. Their *thoughts*, however, tend to sting their consciousness. So they avoid serious analysis of the long-term consequences of their actions, either for themselves or others.

In people leading a generally virtuous life, their imagination and emotions tend to draw them ever closer to God and to open them to attend to the good of fellow humans. They joyfully remember good deeds and courageously hope for the best for all concerned. Where they become confused or anxious, it is usually on account of *fallacious thinking* about what that best might actually be.

2. It is important to learn, through personal experience, the difference between of spiritual consolation and spiritual desolation. It is not enough to memorize a definition. Learning the difference is a matter of each person paying attention to his or her own unique, inner experiences and growing accustomed to which ones to trust and which to mistrust. The following descriptions can help us begin to learn about how our spiritual consciousness functions.

*Spiritual consolation* includes a range of different experiences. At its peak, it is an experience of love for God so direct that everything on earth, including intimate friends and relatives, are loved and appreciated as gifts of God. More ordinarily, spiritual consolation includes the acts of realization about our true selves. It also includes attitudes of engagement toward others, expressed via acts of appreciation, compassion, kindness, and hope that usually flow from being in love.

Spiritual consolation is not the same thing as feeling happy; it is an experience of "rightness" about inner movements. It is an experience of feeling centered, at peace within, full of confidence in God. It can include feeling grief over genuine tragedy, whether our own or others'. Spiritual consolation is any inner experience that enables us to make balanced judgments about reality and wise assessments of the value of persons, words, and deeds.

Because Jesus never mocked or belittled anyone, three practical rules based on discernment of spirits are:

Mock nobody

Never belittle

Always be grateful for the gifts of your life, your faith, your hope, your love.

*Spiritual desolation* is experience of loving neither God nor neighbor but rather acting out of fear or compulsion. We are "in a mood."

The mood may be a "downer": We feel dark inside, troubled, anxious, restless, lazy, or sad.

Or the mood may be an "upper": We feel giddy, scatterbrained, skittish, frivolous, or silly.

The mood may also be an impulsive desire for control, power<sup>6</sup>—. It shows in all parts of human affairs—from sexual pursuits to household management to governmental authority.

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<sup>6</sup> The Latin term "libido Dominandi"—the desire to dominate—was made popular by St. Augustine in his *City of God*. It finds its justification in the Genesis texts (1:26-31) that describe humans as being given a share in God's own dominion over all of creation. Examples may be found in anyone who is obsessed with control/domination.

Or the mood may be “adrift.” We may feel satisfied, but without any connection to heartfelt love beyond ourselves. It can include the sense that we’re running just for the sake of burning energy.

In any case, when we feel spiritual desolation, we feel out of touch with our center, separated from God, and alone. We find it difficult to appreciate people and things around us, to be kind, or to have hope in the future. Our thoughts spin wildly without giving us any help. It includes even feeling unrealistically high, optimistic, giddy, as if we were drunk.

The divine Jesus still suffers, especially from the compassion he feels for each of us.

Summarily, spiritual desolation is any inner experience that prevents us from seeing reality in its fullest context and from making balanced judgments.

3. In people who are progressing spiritually, the experiences of consolation and desolation are the opposite to these experiences in people who are regressing.

The reliable realizations, feelings, and proposals that occur to people making spiritual progress have the quality of water penetrating a damp sponge:

The movements begin without their notice, quickly and softly filling their consciousness and smoothly directing their attention to what is true and worthwhile.

In contrast, unreliable inner movements have the quality of water falling on a stone. They are violent, noisy, and disturbing; they seem to head off in many different directions at once.

In people going from bad to worse, the effects are just the opposite: The drift away from integrity feels natural and gentle. They savor their rationalizations, their self-absorption, and their distance from others. The tug toward integrity feels annoying, harsh and nagging. They avoid examining their consciousness for truth, for thinking about the good of others, and for risking commitments of love.

These affective experiences are especially helpful in people who are "in transition" toward or away from self-centeredness to being in love.

4. Art, architecture, and especially music can evoke either spiritual consolation or spiritual desolation or the tension between them. They can perform this function even when we do not realize it. Because they are related to our imagination and emotions, they tend to reinforce our attitudes rather than change them.
5. When we experience spiritual consolation, it is wise to remember that this consolation is a gift, that we cannot create it for ourselves, and that without it we are unable to do much of any worth. In particular, we should recall the times when we knew very well what we ought to do but could not bring ourselves to do it. We can recall how much we needed the gift of courage from God. It also helps at this time to consider how we will act later, when spiritual desolation comes.
6. In a time of spiritual desolation, we should not make any decision, but stay with the decision made when we were more at peace.
7. It takes great courage to stand up against the tug toward self-centeredness. If we lose courage and let go of the reins on our hearts, the tug can plunge us into behaviors that we ordinarily are ashamed of. On the other hand, if we do something entirely opposite to where that pull draws us, it soon loses its force.
8. There are several ways to act energetically against spiritual desolation.

If sad, do not withdraw from people. Make contact.

If silly, sober up.

Candor being the enemy of cunning, once we tell someone else our temptations, their grip on us usually relaxes. So, when tempted, it will help to talk about it with someone. Just as feeling love is no cause for pride, so being tempted is no cause for shame.

If badgered by complicated thoughts, pay close attention and try to see through their fallacies. Keep in mind that your entire psyche is present to God.

If upset by feelings that some good you have done is worthless, resist the feelings and rely on the truth that God alone knows the true worth of things: As Julian of Norwich often remarked, "All shall be well; and all manner of things shall be well."

Generally, take greater care than usual in choosing music and a place to dwell.

While the tide of spiritual desolation pulls us away from prayer, we should not slacken our prayer but intensify it. We should not indulge ourselves in excessive eating or excessive recreation or excessive work. In a storm, trim the sails.

9. In spiritual desolation, we can always rely on the truth. We can recall three truths our faith has taught us:

We are always on God's mind.

"When we cannot find words in order to pray properly, God's innermost Spirit expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words" (Romans 8:26).

We can recall the truth that desolation does not last forever, even though it may seem so. "I have faith, even when I say, 'I am completely crushed'" (Ps 116:10).

10. There are lessons to be learned from spiritual desolation. If the desolation is our own fault, because we have been listless in our love and have ignored God, we discover the high cost of living as though we were in total charge of our lives.

Another lesson is the poignant realization that we cannot create spiritual consolation for ourselves and yet we need it for living out a fully wholesome life.

We learn the lesson of humility, but also the lesson that gratitude should be like the air we breathe.

We may discover our secret treasures. When we face a difficult decision, explosions of fear, anger, or anxiety can erupt in us far out proportion to the issue. This is because we

may be secretly guarding something very precious, and its life is being threatened by our deliberation. With some reflection we may uncover what we love so much and whether that love is from God.

11. When God seems quiet, unresponsive, and absent, consider this period of time as part of God's gift of freedom. The best of parents sometimes withdraw from their children so that their children may find within themselves valuable resources from which to select to for making good choices—resources they recognize in their parents.

*Part Two:*

*The Angel of Light*

Like aging couples in love, what one wants is what both want. While these rules will be helpful to people who have drawn close to God, they may be strange to those that are far away.

1. It is high virtue to aim at discovering what is objectively the best rather than merely knowing what we feel strongly about. But even higher and more liberating is the desire to know what God desires at this time and place.
2. If we are generally going from good to better, we often experience a deep happiness and spiritual joy which God gives to reveal the divine desire and to energize us for effective love. We also experience deep sorrow and spiritual anguish over sufferings—our own and that of others. Our main struggle is with deceptive ideas, complex reasoning, an overly rational approach to evaluating people and making decisions, and a misdirected *libido dominandi* that assumes that being fully human means dedicating oneself to being in control.
3. The thoughts that strike us in desolation can never originate in love, even when their content is generally praiseworthy. The knowledge born of love never brings anxiety, discouragement, or fear. As the philosopher Pascal observed, "The heart has reasons unknown to reason."

Likewise, the feelings that occur in desolation cannot be trusted to reveal what is worthwhile, particularly when they make us skittish and superficially excited.

However, although we should mistrust all thoughts and feelings that come in spiritual desolation, we cannot necessarily trust all the thoughts and feelings we experience in spiritual consolation. This is a very important and yet easily forgotten lesson in the spiritual life.

For example, our divine creator may sometimes, without warning, flood our hearts with a sense of his Creator's presence in such a way that we have no doubt about the source of the experience.<sup>7</sup> Sometimes we experience an unshakable conviction about something specific. At other times, while the experience may not answer certain difficulties that have been on our mind, we still experience an assurance, a love, a deep-set affirmation that we are filled with God, and that we do not walk alone.

Other spiritual consolations illuminate the soul in response to something we have seen or thought. While many of these consolations may be reliable, some are designedly destructive of the soul. We experience being filled with light, but as we try to act on it, we discover that the original inspiration was a door to fear and worry. Like the angel Lucifer, "Bearer of Light," they lead only to darkness.

4. We should pay close attention to the entire course of any spiritual consolation we experience. If we put a good idea into effect and end up anxious and confused, this is a good sign that we have been misled. It helps immensely to reflect on these experiences. Because the feel of misleading consolations differs from person to person, it will help immensely to learn for ourselves the particular 'taste' of those spiritual consolations that tend to fool us.

Even a spiritual consolation that is undoubtedly from God may be followed by thoughts or proposals that are hardly distinguishable from the original consolation. These too should be scrutinized.

Tad Dunne Jan 19, 2033

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<sup>7</sup> I use the pronoun "his" to denote the unique and personal quality of God but not a gender of God, who, after all, created genders in "his" own image and likeness as lover and creator (Gen 1:27).



5. The objective worth of an inspiration to do something is not enough warrant for our commitment. Like the wind, the Spirit blows unexpectedly.

Even being anxious about the good we cannot do reduces the good we can do.

God's Spirit does not necessarily move us to do every good we are able to do. This is because the good that God wills is always and exclusively the good that God desires that we personally accomplish where we are able.

6. There are times when we want to do something whose merit is not clear, about which we feel neither consolation nor desolation, but which at least is not contrary to the spirit of legitimate authorities. So we often experience a hesitation, thinking that perhaps we are motivated by self-gain or some other less worthy motive. At such times, we should trust the Living Spirit within us and in our spiritual heritage. If our idea is consonant with the love of God, or even if it is simply not contrary to the love of God, then we should act on our inspiration. Good people are prone to ignore small inspirations today to think about greater deeds tomorrow. No sense stifling the Spirit because of anxieties about our own virtue and an excessive fear of mixed motives.

7. When God seems mysteriously silent, this too may be God's gift of the divine self to us. Call to mind when Jesus cried out, "Father, why have you forsaken me? And the Father says . . . nothing.

Consider God's silence as God sharing divine freedom with us. Follow the advice that St. Augustine gave during a homily on the First Epistle of John: "Love and do what you want." This gift of divine freedom is a gift of God's Holy Spirit in us as love. When we follow the movements of love in our hearts, we are following the desires of God, who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

*Part Three:*  
*Subconscious motivations*

Human consciousness is a self-awareness that is felt at different levels of our being conscious. It expresses itself

in our being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible, and/or in love. These modes of consciousness are corresponding elements in our inner movements to seek the beautiful: via the allure of the possible, the harmony of order, the unique and luminous truth of reality, the magnificence of goodness, the liberation of being in love.

In the opposite direction, we sometime feel movements and act upon them that lead us astray. This typically occurs when we are oblivious, stupid, silly, irresponsible, or self-absorbed. Worse, these movements may be subconscious: they move us, but we fail to notice them; we are being moved, but, being unaware of these movements, we will be prone to fail to make critical judgments about their reliability.

However, we can notice subconscious movements in our psyches. Since subconscious movements are habits, we can monitor where we typically go when we are "absent" from our surroundings—perhaps to painful memories; perhaps to opportunities to exercise control, perhaps to perhaps to certain hopes or fears. The relevant question here is simple: "Where do I usually go when I'm spontaneously "absent"?"

*Part Four:*  
*Discernment of Stories*

Stories have recently been recognized as playing major roles in how people understand themselves and their worlds. Since the 1960s historians and journalists increasingly employ stories in their writings.<sup>8</sup> Psychologists following the lead of Ira Progoff expanded their horizons beyond pathological analyses of dysfunctions to include stories that guide the

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<sup>8</sup> For an overview of the emergence of narratives among historians and journalists, see Jill Lapore, "Historical Writing and the Revival of Narrative," *Nieman Reports* 56/1 (2002), 51-52. Currently viewable at <http://niemanreports.org/articles/historical-writing-and-the-revival-of-narrative/>.]

unfolding drama of one's journey toward wholeness.<sup>9</sup> Postmodern views began to shape the imaginations of architects, playwrights, and fiction writers in ways that discount grand theories in favor of the lived stories of unique local cultures. Politicians and social activists speak of "changing the narrative" as a strategy for achieving peace and justice. Cultural anthropologists and theologians find radically different views on an afterlife that affect the entire drama of this life.<sup>10</sup> Johannes Metz proposed that theology must take seriously the various narratives of salvation.<sup>11</sup> Not that stories are anything new. Plato's Myth of the Cave is a story. John's Gospel is a story of God that invites readers to welcome God's saving work in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.<sup>12</sup> The acts in *Acts* are principally the acts of God in a continuing story of salvation.<sup>13</sup>

What is new is that stories are now recognized as distinct and influential media with characteristics all their own, and that Bernard Lonergan has contributed key insights into the role stories play in the human pursuit of wholeness. He includes stories we tell others and stories we tell only ourselves. Yet some stories reveal, and others distort what a fully wholesome life is all about. It seems timely then, even urgent, to recognize that a *discernment of stories* is a foundational category in any human studies. I mean

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<sup>9</sup> William Mathews, "Self-Appropriation in Ira Progoff and Bernard Lonergan," *Divyaddan Journal of Philosophy and Education* 25/1 (2014), 1-18.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Gerhard Lohfink, *Is This All There Is?* (Collegeville, MN, Liturgical Press, 1017), Part I, "The Question of Questions," 3-56.

<sup>11</sup> Johann Baptist Metz, "A Short Apology of Narrative," in *The Crisis of Religious Language*, eds. Johann Baptist Metz and Jean-Pierre Jossua (New York: Herder and Herder, 1973), 84-96. Cited by Robert Doran in *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations: Toward a Reorientation of the Human Sciences* (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1981), 169. Hereafter *Psychic Conversion*.

<sup>12</sup> Francis Maloney, "Johannine Theology," in *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. Raymond Brown, Joseph Fitzmyer, and Roland Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990), 1420-21 (chap. 83, secs. 18-21).

<sup>13</sup> See Richard Dillon, "Acts of the Apostles," *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 722-24 (chap. 44, sec. 2.5). Acts 13: 17-52 clearly presents the acts in *Acts* as acts of God.

*foundational* in Lonergan's sense, namely, categories based on personal conversions in one's psyche.<sup>14</sup>

Stories are a higher order of the symbols by which individuals and entire cultures envision their lives.

First, then, a few words about symbols. Lonergan defines a symbol as "an image of a real or imaginary object that evokes a feeling or is evoked by a feeling."<sup>15</sup> The "image" here is primarily an element in one's imagination by which one recalls certain memories, envisions future possibilities, and creates external symbols for others to see, hear, or touch.

Although the meanings of such images can shift and oppose one another, symbols also function to energize and direct one's pursuit of wholeness by maintaining an internal communication between one's body, mind, and heart.<sup>16</sup> While Lonergan frequently names experience, understanding, judging, and deciding as rising levels of horizontal finalities in an individual consciousness, he also describes how inner symbols integrate the levels into a functioning whole. He envisions their rise as part of an all-encompassing *passionateness of being*, which "underpins and accompanies and reaches beyond the subject as experientially, intelligently, rationally, morally conscious." It reaches fulfilment in the topmost level of vertical finality where individual consciousness is made more fully whole by being part of a shared consciousness that constitutes families, friendships, communities, human solidarity, and being in love with God and with everything and everyone God loves.<sup>17</sup> The topmost level of being in love, in turn, reaches down to make

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<sup>14</sup> For a comprehensive account of key categories in human studies as proposed by Bernard Lonergan, see Robert Doran, *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations*.

<sup>15</sup> *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), 64; [projected CWL 14, chap. 3, sec. 4]. Hereafter, citations of chapters and sections refer either to works projected for publication in *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press) or in editions of works previously published. References shown as CWL <vol> refer a volume of the *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*.

<sup>16</sup> *Method in Theology* (1972), 66-67 [projected CWL 14, chap. 3, sec. 4]

<sup>17</sup> Lonergan, "Mission and the Spirit," in *A Third Collection*, CWL 16 (2017), eds. Robert Doran and John Dadosky, 28-30 [chap. 3, sec. 4].

the potential vertical finality toward wholeness a reality. Being in love, Lonergan says, "...reveals values. At once it commands commitment and joyfully carries it out. . . .Where hatred reinforces bias, love dissolves it . . . love breaks the bonds of psychological and social determinisms with the conviction of faith and the power of hope."<sup>18</sup>

Lonergan further recognizes that symbols can engage a person in what remains an awesome mystery. Symbols "express the spirit of man, yet at the same time commonly they purport to refer to what is beyond man, what is beyond anything in this world that man can observe and thereby come to study and know."<sup>19</sup> In an intimate (and rare) revelation of Lonergan's own self-awareness, he describes being in love with God as an awe-evoking mystery:

Ordinarily the experience of the mystery of love and awe is not objectified. It remains within subjectivity as a vector, an undertow, a fateful call to a dreaded holiness. Perhaps after years of sustained prayerfulness and self-denial, immersion in the world mediated by meaning will become less total and experience of the mystery become clear and distinct enough to awaken attention, wonder, inquiry.<sup>20</sup>

Yet because symbols can also express a feeble faith or distorted views of human life, specialists in any human studies would rightly ask a prior, foundational question: How to assess the validity of the symbols in our lives? Lonergan credits Robert Doran for proposing a *psychic conversion* as foundational for a critical-minded understanding of symbols. Doran regards the psyche as the affective-imaginal realm of consciousness comprising "the flow of sensations, memories, images, affects, conations, spontaneous intersubjective responses, and so on, that accompany our intellectual and

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<sup>18</sup> *A Third Collection*, CWL 16, 101 [chap. 7].

<sup>19</sup> Lonergan, "First Lecture: Religious Experience" in *A Third Collection*, 111 [CWL 16, chap. 8, Introduction].

<sup>20</sup> *Method in Theology* (1972), 113 [projected CWL 14, chap. 4, sec. 6].

moral activities."<sup>21</sup> Under a psychic conversion, one recognizes how massively inner symbols dominate everyday consciousness, and how easily the psyche can misfire by repressing relevant questions that would arise from the images in one's psyche and by uncritically accepting views distorted by biases in the intelligence of others.<sup>22</sup> In human studies generally, experts wishing to explore connections among aesthetic, theoretical, philosophical, scholarly, or commonsense expressions of knowledge would attend also to the affective-imaginal events in their own consciousness. They would guide their investigations by a personal appropriation of what occurs, or fails to occur, when anyone not only experiences, understands, judges and decides but also imagines, feels, and loves.<sup>23</sup>

What, then, about stories? In Lonergan's view, stories are about people's destinies and freedom. Their destinies are determined by the decisions they make as they adapt to changes arising from natural causes and from the decisions of others. As Lonergan observed, "Through the drama, man can apprehend concretely his freedom, his capacity to decide, and the limitations upon his freedom."<sup>24</sup>

A few years before his 1972 publication of *Method in Theology* Lonergan set symbols within the fuller dramatic context of story.<sup>25</sup> He described how an *élan vital* "takes the

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<sup>21</sup> Robert Doran, "What Does Lonergan Mean by 'Conversion'?" See: <http://www.lonerganresource.com/pdf/lectures/What%20Does%20Bernard%20Lonergan%20Mean%20by%20Conversion.pdf> (2011), 5. For Lonergan on the dynamics of the psyche, see *Insight*, CWL 3 (1992), eds. Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran, 210–214 [chap. 6, secs 2.5 and 2.6].

<sup>22</sup> Doran, *What Does Lonergan Mean by Conversion*, 20. See also Doran, "Two Ways of Being Conscious: The Notion of Psychic Conversion," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* n.s. 3 (Spring 2012), 1–17 at 15.

<sup>23</sup> *Method in Theology* (1972), 93–96 [projected CWL 14, chap. 10, sec. 3].

<sup>24</sup> See *Topics in Education*, CWL 10 (1993), eds. Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran, 232 [chap. 9, sec. 5.2].

<sup>25</sup> In 1970 Lonergan noted how dreams of the night are "obscure, fragmentary, symbolic" while in dreams of the morning the dreamer "is beginning to adopt a stance in that world, . . . has got beyond himself; he is concerned with what is distinct from himself; he is anticipating his self-transcendence." (In this respect, morning dreams are commonly recognized as stories.) See "The Response of the Jesuit," in *A Second Collection*, CWL 13, 141, eds. Robert Doran and John Dadosky, 141 [chap. 12, sec. 1.]

lead in human development and expresses its intimations through the stories it inspires." He adds, "Symbols, finally, are a more elementary type of story: they are inner or outer events, or a combination of both, that intimate to us at once the kind of being that we are to be and the kind of world in which we become our true selves."<sup>26</sup> Stories, then, sublimate symbols. I mean *sublate* in Lonergan's sense of operations at a higher level of consciousness that preserve the lower levels while directing them to more wholesome goals.<sup>27</sup> In this manner, stories retain the vertical dynamism of the passionateness of being to integrate neural-bodily, cognitive, and moral-affective realms of consciousness, while transposing them from an abstract-operational context of symbols into a concrete-dramatic context of people who intimate the kind of persons they want to be and the kind of world in which they find their true selves.<sup>28</sup>

## World Dramas

Many adults envision the various stories in their personal lives as scenes within a certain kind of world—a single world drama of events in the many times of many lifetimes. In Morgan Llywelyn's *1916: A Novel of the Irish Rebellion*, the young rebel Ned Halloran becomes aware of such a world drama:

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<sup>26</sup> "Reality, Myth, Symbol," in *Philosophical and Theological Papers, 1965-1980, CWL 17*, eds. Robert Croken and Robert Doran, 384-390, at 387. On page 390 he clarifies how stories retain the function of symbols to communicate between body, mind, and heart. He remarks that the "spontaneity that has been observed in the hummingbird for the first time building a nest also has its counterpart in us. But in us that counterpart is complemented, transposed, extended by the symbols and stories that mediate between our vital energies and our intelligent, reasonable, and responsible lives."

<sup>27</sup> For example, Lonergan describes the stacked levels of spontaneity, reason, and grace as successive sublations in which, "as the higher perfects the lower, so the lower disposes to the higher." See "Finality, Love, Marriage," *Collection, CWL 4*, eds. Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran, 30, [chap. 2, sec. 3.2]. See also, *Method in Theology* (1972), 316 [projected *CWL* chap. 12, sec.7] and "The Subject," *A Second Collection*, 69-70 [chap. 6, sec. 4].

<sup>28</sup> "Reality, Myth, Symbol," 390. Also, Lonergan regards the familiar transcendental notions of intelligibility, truth, and goodness as horizontal finalities recognizable by their abstract nature. He regards vertical finality as recognizable in concrete experience of how higher levels give an order and a purpose to otherwise mere pluralities in lower levels. See "Finality, Love, Marriage" *CWL 4*, 19-23 [sec. 1].

War and death and babies being born. Ned tried to stretch the horizons of his mind to encompass them all in one world vision. It was the babies, he decided, who made the rest of it bearable, who redeemed the horror adults could perpetrate. A child . . . was created by the same species that manufactured guns and submarines—but with one added element: the Divine Spark, an immortal soul.<sup>29</sup>

Today, we are aware that different cultures view life differently. Eric Voegelin proposed that societies maintain their identities through symbols that represent the sort of work involved in living a self-transcending life in a certain kind of world.<sup>30</sup> In his account of the establishment of the Roman Empire, he identified three distinct "symbols by which political societies interpret themselves as representatives of a transcendent truth."<sup>31</sup> Each such truth represents life as an unfolding story. (1) A *cosmological* truth is represented in a story of life as completely governed by the workings of the cosmos, including the workings of whatever divine forces may govern it. (2) An *anthropological* truth is represented in a human story—a drama of human life as just human. Its workings rely on human intelligence, creativity, and good will. Despite the shadow of tragedy that falls on every human endeavor, humanity has no alternative but to be self-sufficient. (3) A *saving* truth is represented in a story of human life as insufficient in itself yet open to salvation by God.

There is more to say about Voegelin's anthropological truth. In *A Secular Age*, Charles Taylor speaks of two "social imaginaries"<sup>32</sup> that would fall within Voegelin's anthropological/humanist story: An *exclusive* humanism is the atheistic form of

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<sup>29</sup> Morgan Llywelyn, *1916: A Novel of the Irish Rebellion* (New York: Tom Doherty Associates/Forge, 2010), chap. 30.

<sup>30</sup> Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), 53, 76–77. Also, *Order and History*, vol. 1: *Israel and Revelation*, in *Collected Works of Eric Voegelin* 14, ed. Maurice P. Hogan (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2001), 95.

<sup>31</sup> Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, 1, 76–77.

<sup>32</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007). The category *social imaginary* appears throughout this work; the quotation appears on page 25.



secularism; it rejects beliefs in God's existence. An *inclusive* humanism accepts God's existence but replaces doctrines about God's rapturous involvement in human affairs with doctrines about God's stern expectations of humanity: God expects us to live morally upright lives and will dole out the appropriate rewards and punishments in a next life.

Besides the world dramas evident in history there is also a world drama evident in the social dynamics of groups. To be human is to feel connected to a group whose cohesion is secured by social structures, interpersonal relationships, and a symbolic vision of itself. Group members are prone to find other groups strange, unpredictable, threatening. To the degree that members dedicate themselves more to group cohesion and less to being personally responsible for their lives and critical-minded about the values that define their group, they are biased against recognizing what is disordered in their own group and well-ordered in other groups. Lonergan calls this phenomenon "group bias."<sup>33</sup> We may call the corresponding world drama "groupism"—a story of the world as islands of self-securing, mutually estranged groups.

Combining, then, the views of Voegelin, Taylor, and Lonergan, we can distinguish five highly influential world dramas: dramas of *fate*, *reason*, *groupism*, *morality*, and *grace*.

1. A drama of fate tells of a world dominated by mysterious divine forces, the stars, ghostly ancestors, the government, inevitable patterns of history, or dumb luck. It omits the scenes of people taking responsibility for their collective lives, for changing the course of history, and for living in love with a creator who remains passionately engaged in their daily lives.

2. A drama of *reason* regards the human mind as the highest achievement of evolution. Life has no mystery, only problems; and science has made unprecedented strides in solving them. Mathematical probability explains good and bad luck. Evolution explains the emergence of humans on earth. Movements in the psyche formerly attributed to angels and

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<sup>33</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 247-250 [chap. 7, sec. 7].

devils are attributed the subconscious. Reason regards religions as neither true nor false but as "belief systems" whose value depends on their outcomes for life on earth. Everyday hopes require reasonable controls. A healthy psyche requires control over one's environment and a type of reasonable self-management under the puzzling ideal of autonomy as self-help.

3. A drama of *groupism* envisions the world as a patchwork of self-interest groups. A self-interest bias is evident not only in small, self-contained communities; its appearance in large communities became evident in the 15th century with the rise of nation-states and theories of political self-determination. Groupism might appear to have been offset by the recent globalization of economies and by more readily available information about other cultures. Yet the offset is hardly conclusive. Global economies remain biased in favor of the well-being of the well-off. Despite cross-cultural education, group animosities continue as major factors in ethnic hatred and international terrorism.

4. A drama of *morality* imagines the world as not controllable by human reason alone. Although reason opens vast possibilities for what we can do, morality clarifies what we should do. While reason explains how technologies and economies actually function, morality proposes how they ought to function. Historically, the world drama of morality strongly influenced the faiths of major religions. Ancient Israelite faith has been named an "ethical monotheism,"<sup>34</sup> founded on a covenant in which God promised that Israel would thrive as a community provided that Israelites worshipped no other gods and treated one another with compassion and justice. Many modern Jews, Christians, and Muslims combine the theme of morality with a belief in an afterlife with God. Love Thy Neighbor is a moral requirement. The world drama is a morality play whose finale reveals who is rewarded and who is punished.

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<sup>34</sup> Valentin Nikiprowetzky, "Ethical Monotheism." *Daedalus* 104, no. 2 (1975), 69–89.

5. A drama of *grace* imagines the dramas of fate, reason, groupism, and morality as failing to present the full scope of human self-transcendence. Trust in fate displaces personal responsibility. Justifications of our misdeeds distort our reason. To confine our relationships to our group and to secure our confinement by a resolute suspicion of other groups, undermine our natural inclinations to widen our affective relationships. To regard "good" as just good for me or us nullifies the criterion of human conscience that "good" means something objectively worthwhile. On the other hand, a drama of grace evokes an acute awareness of human insufficiency and an abiding awe about the mystery of God's ongoing love. The drama is engaging not because of cognitive or moral credibility but because it touches the mind's intimations of mystery at the center of human living, the heart's deepest need for love, and unaided humanity's inability to permanently avoid wrongdoing. God does not leave us to work things out by ourselves. The drama of grace reveals ourselves as already in loving engagement with the giver of our selves, of our gifts, of the company of our friends in the struggles and heartaches of life, and of the final, mysterious destiny of all humankind. We see the world with the eyes of the one who created humanity with hearts made for love, who provides us with whatever is lacking for living life to the full, and whose love carries no exclusions for preexisting faults or offenses. Love of neighbor is not reduced to a moral requirement; it is elevated to a share in the very life of God—a life spent in a shared care for the marginalized and in shared labors to build communities on love. Religious ideals of heavenly reward and hellish punishment are standards of moral living that make sense to the young, whether in age or in religious maturity. But these standards are not fundamental. In good families and among good friends, as one matures, one tends to realize that it has always been the love of parents and friends that make sustained moral living not only possible but also preferable. Those who sink roots into the fertile ground of love reasonably expect that moral insight and courage will sprout naturally. This is preeminently true of the drama of God's unconditional

love. God's love germinates, energizes and directs moral living. Although many do not follow through on their intimations of God's love, Lonergan proposes that at least an openness to the question of God is within human yearning: "There lies within his horizon a region for the divine, a shrine for ultimate holiness. It cannot be ignored."<sup>35</sup>

Surely other world dramas have affected history, some in cultures long gone, others in various cultures today.<sup>36</sup> What they have in common is the expectation that there is an overarching drama to everything.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, it would be shortsighted to categorize any particular community by a particular world drama: communities can blossom or wither; their members may have achieved more or less complete conversions of their psychic, intellectual, moral, and religious horizons. Daily pressures from society, entertainment, family, and personal memories can convey now this, now that, world drama. But because one can abide in a certain world drama for long periods or short, there is an ongoing need to discern which world drama has been shaping how one imagines the part one has been playing that day and whether or not the drama is fully true to life. Moreover, being attentive to the world dramas that affect one's personal symbolic world provides parents with relevant questions about how well or poorly their children are maturing. It prompts teachers and preachers to wonder, "In what sort of world do I imagine myself helping others to live?" It enables psychologists to uncover dysfunctional world dramas in the imaginations of people with troubled psyches. It gives voters criteria for assessing the worldviews of candidates for public office. It

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<sup>35</sup> *Method in Theology* (1972), 101–103, at 103 [projected *CWL* 14, chap. 4, sec 1]. It should be noted that if the question of God is part of being human, it has a central place in all human studies, including those that seek to understand religion as a phenomenon or as their personal faith.

<sup>36</sup> David Korten, in his *Change the Story, Change the Future: A Living Economy for a Living Earth* (Oakland, CA, Barrett-Koehler Publishers, 2015) proposes that a "Sacred Money and Sacred Market" story is an influential but corrupt world drama today.

<sup>37</sup> Postmodern rejection of grand theories is itself a grand world drama of Compassion over Reason. Autocrats throughout history cast themselves in the role of Powerful Leader of the Powerless.

empowers all people of faith to call forth the world drama of grace in one another. It encourages Christians to invite others to discern whether, among many world dramas, the Christian world drama may be the full story of human history.

### **LONERGAN THE JESUIT**

As a Jesuit, Lonergan surely experienced the story element of Ignatian spirituality. He twice underwent 30-day retreats following St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises: first as a Jesuit novice and years later as a priest upon his completion of theological studies. Even though Ignatius did not explicitly make "story" a theme in his Spiritual Exercises, he directs those doing these exercises to focus mainly on the Gospel stories. He presents 56 contemplations of scenes in the life of Christ and often advises repetitions. One is to "be present to the words and deeds recorded as if you hear with your ears and see with your eyes"<sup>38</sup> and to enter into conversation with the persons in the scene as friend to friend.<sup>39</sup> The overall effort is not mainly to understand; but to enter affectively into the story with Christ, sharing his desires and his agonies as he brings God's Kingdom to where he is. This is why, among the many biblical passages, Ignatius includes none of the NT letters, only one teaching (Sermon on the Mount) and only five miracles. In 40 passages, one walks and talks with Jesus in actual events: before his birth, during his life, crucifixion, death, and after his resurrection.

Ignatius also drew up rules for "discerning the spirits" to ensure that any motivations for making life choices come from God. As it happened, Ignatius' wisdom on a discernment of

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<sup>38</sup> This passage appears in *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, a popular anonymous work published during Ignatius' youth. See Emmanuel von Severus and Aimé Solignac, "Méditation, §1. De l'écriture aux auteurs médiévaux" in M. Viller et al. *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, tome 10 (Paris: Bouche-sne, 1980), 913. Similar sensate engagements with biblical scenes appear in Ludolph of Saxony's *Life of Christ*, which Ignatius acknowledged as influencing him. See Michel Sauvage, "Méditation, §2. dans les écoles de spiritualité," in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, 920.

<sup>39</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, para. 54, 224, in *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, trans. George E. Ganss (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992).

spirits grew from reading stories. In his knight-errant days, while convalescing from a battle wound, he spent many hours reading books of worldly fiction and knightly escapades, and many other hours reading about the life of Christ and the lives of saints. Referring to himself in the third person, he recalls that "step by step, he came to recognize the difference between two spirits that moved him, the one being from the evil spirit, the other from God." Stories of worldly achievement left him sad, dry, and dissatisfied, while stories of Christ and the saints left him cheerful and fulfilled.<sup>40</sup> In this respect, the importance of discernment among motivations (spirits) would equally apply to stories about particular events in one's life. One would avoid replaying subconsciously sanitized versions of memories as if they were the full story and avoid rehearsing stories that could never happen. One would attend to what kind of world drama has represented the kind of person one wants to be and the kind of world in which one might become such a person. With Ignatius, one would pay special attention to the feelings a story evokes. Doran proposes that besides asking questions for understanding, for judgement, and for deliberation, to also ask "How do I feel?" is to pose an existential question arising from the realm of symbols and stories.<sup>41</sup>

Although Ignatius did not propose rules for discerning world dramas, he was clearly aware of how thoroughly they shape how one lives in faith. In his *Spiritual Exercises* he presents a contemplation of the "Call of a Temporal King as a Help to Contemplate the Life of the Eternal King." Both the Temporal King and the Eternal King muster forces to engage enemies in battle for supremacy over the entire world. But where the Temporal King envisions military battles over lands, the Eternal King envisions spiritual battles over loves: "Christ our Lord, the Eternal King, before whom the entire world is assembled" calls

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<sup>40</sup> *St. Ignatius' Own Story*, trans. William J. Young (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1998), 9–10.

<sup>41</sup> "Reality, Myth, Symbol," 390. While Ignatius first noticed a difference between spiritual desolation and a spiritual consolation, he later noticed that not all feelings of spiritual consolation come from God. See his *Spiritual Exercises*, para. 331-333.

everyone to join him in conquering all his enemies and to follow him into the glory of his Father. "Those who desire to demonstrate . . . their love for their Eternal King" will reject alien desires by battling against their "sensuality and carnal and worldly love."<sup>42</sup> Ignatius places this world drama as the setting for the dozens of contemplations of different scenes in Christ's life that follow.

### ***The Christian World Drama***

Anyone can grasp a certain plausibility in the world dramas of fate, reason, groupism, and morality. But in the Christian drama of grace one is grasped. God opens a person to the awesome mystery of divine love laboring to share divine life with individuals as part of a world community being redeemed. According to Paul and Pauline authors, the *mystery* of redemption is God's plan—a plan long kept secret and now revealed through Christ. It is not a collection of plans for many individuals. Nor is it a single plan for the ideal community. It is a history. It is a plan for the actual, unfolding story of individuals in communities. God's plan is to redeem humanity by uniting not only Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, male and female, but all people in Christ.<sup>43</sup> Gerhard Lohfink, in his *Jesus of Nazareth: What He Wanted and Who He Was*,<sup>44</sup> mounts convincing evidence that Jesus' own world drama envisioned God's redemptive work as an ever-maturing historical community. In heartfelt accord with God's promises in the Old Testament, Jesus wanted Israel to be a saving light to the entire world. To Jesus, God's kingdom is a world drama of God's ongoing redemption of humankind through human

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<sup>42</sup> *Spiritual Exercises*, para. 91–98.

<sup>43</sup> For scriptural evidence of the historical character of the redemption, Lonergan cites Eph, 1 Cor, 2 Cor, Rom 16; and 1 Tim 3:16. For references to the mysterious wisdom of God, he cites Eph 3:10 and Col 2:3. See "The Redemption," in *Philosophical and Theological Papers, 1958-1964, CWL 6* (1996), eds. Robert Croken, Frederick Crowe, and Robert Doran, 3–28, especially the section "Redemption as Mystery," at 24–28. For Lonergan's earlier anticipation that redemption must be a history, see *Insight*, 745 [chap. 20, sec. 5].

<sup>44</sup> Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus of Nazareth: What He Wanted, Who He Was* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), esp. chaps. 2–4.

self-giving love—a love in union with the self-giving life and Spirit of Jesus himself. Moved from within by the Father's life-giving love for all humans, and obedient to the Father's desires, Jesus gives his life for others. Bound to his followers, he missions them to carry forward his work of love in history. He gives them the very Spirit of Love that binds the Father and himself. Those who receive the Spirit are God's offspring and heirs with Christ, with whom they cry "Abba, Father." God's own Spirit abides with and in them.<sup>45</sup> They extend God's own forgiveness to others. They carry forward God's redemption by efforts that are arduous, liable to unintended consequences, wounded by bias and willfulness, yet healed by the forbearance, forgiveness, and creativity that are the fruits of God's self-communication in Jesus in history and the Spirit in hearts.

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<sup>45</sup> In the preceding sentences, biblical citations are included as evidence of the world views of the early Christians. The respective sources of are Rom 8: 15-16; Jn 20:22–23; and Jn 14: 17.



## Theological Tasks

In any religion that accepts that God moves in a person's consciousness and that there is a world drama that adequately expresses God's work in redeeming the world, the theme of discernment of stories would enrich every dimension of theological reflection. In Lonergan's account of functional specializations in theology, he proposes that theologians retrieve the past via the specializations of *research*, *interpretation*, and *history*. They move to the future via the specializations of *doctrines*, *systematics*, and *communications*. Between retrieving the past and moving to the future, he places the specializations of *dialectic* and *foundations*, in which the categories theologians use to express what they can learn or have learned are developed in accord with four conversions of their own horizons: psychic, intellectual, moral, and religious.<sup>46</sup> Under each conversion one repudiates partial views and opens oneself to views about the whole of reality—views whose modes of expression include symbols and stories.

Under a psychic conversion, one repudiates the assumption that humans are defined chiefly by intelligence. One discovers how symbols and stories enable anyone to remember and anticipate daily experiences, transcendent hopes, threats to their well-being, and how they energize and direct their pursuits of understanding, truth, goodness, and commitments of love.

Under an intellectual conversion, one repudiates the assumption that knowing is like sensory perceiving. One discovers that first-hand knowledge gained through stories is not a simple matter of looking at writings or hearing words. In a combination of psychic and intellectual conversions, one discovers how faith-prompted symbols and stories regarding the mystery of God and God's engagement with humanity can be accepted as revelations of reality, even though they are grasped principally through a surrender to being in love with

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<sup>46</sup> "Reality, Myth, Symbol," 384–390, at 389–90.

God.<sup>47</sup> In that surrender, the truths of the symbols and stories that express that love are affirmed to the degree that doubts about the full meaning of life are laid to rest.<sup>48</sup>

Under a moral conversion, one repudiates the assumption that "good" is mainly represented by stories about the benefits and burdens coming to oneself or one's community; one accepts that "good" refers to what is objectively valuable, regardless of who benefits and who is burdened. Those who are religiously converted repudiate claims of ultimacy in stories that omit God. Their self-stories star persons wholeheartedly in love with God and, with God's own love, love their neighbors as themselves.<sup>49</sup>

Christian theologians present the gospel message as the full story of the world—a story of God's intimate and personal engagement with humans. But because the message can be distorted or misunderstood. It falls to theologians to correct distortions and clarify the message. Lonergan envisions the specialty *foundations* as expressions of conversions.

"Conversion, as lived, affect all of a man's conscious and intentional operations. It directs his gaze, pervades his imagination, releases the symbols that penetrate to the depths of his psyche." In *foundations*, "conversion itself is made thematic and explicitly objectified."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> The 14<sup>th</sup> century author of the *The Cloud of Unknowing* wrote of an "unknowing" way to God: "By love he may be gotten and holden; by thought never." See *The Study of Spirituality*, eds. Cheslyn Jones et al. (New York: Oxford, 1986), 333.

<sup>48</sup> The criterion for affirming truths based in being in love is the same for affirming any expression as true, namely, that any questions that would set conditions on an affirmation have been resolved, rendering the affirmation virtually unconditioned.

<sup>49</sup> Presumably, Christian theologians who have undergone a psychic conversion would root the full significance of the Christian world drama in a deliberate choice to welcome Christ's own world drama of grace as their own: "Let the same mindset be among you that was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil 2:5).

<sup>50</sup> *Method in Theology* (1972), 131 [projected CWL 14, chap. 5, sec 2(5)]. Elsewhere, Lonergan asks "whether there are basic theological questions whose solution depends on the personal development of theologians." Following Paul Ricoeur, he supports a hermeneutic of suspicion "that diagnoses failures in personal development" and a hermeneutics of recovery "that generously recognizes a genuine personal development that did occur." See "Theology and Praxis" (1977), in *A Third Collection*, 177-193, at 177-79 [Introduction].

Especially relevant to a discernment of stories is a foundational understanding of what makes a story "true." Under an intellectual conversion, one repudiates the Manichaeian view that what is good has good causes and what is evil has evil causes. Augustine observed that any attempt to understand the causes of evil is "like trying to see darkness or hear silence."<sup>51</sup> In *Insight*, Lonergan explains why basic sin cannot be regarded as an event with a cause. Rather, it is a contraction of one's consciousness that fails to will what one ought to will.<sup>52</sup> Lonergan later categorized stories either as "true" when they reveal human lives as sometimes more and sometimes less authentic, and hence in need of grace, or as "cover stories" that gloss over failures in authenticity and the need for grace.<sup>53</sup>

The specialty *dialectic* brings shortfalls of conversions to light. Shortfalls would be found in persons who, being halfheartedly committed to living fully wholesome lives, are in part responsible for a decline of their cultures. Shortfalls would also be found in mistaken assumptions of theologians who speak or write about such persons and their cultures. Complete conversions account for the progress of cultures and for the reliability of clarifications of such progress by theologians.

Under a psychic conversion, one discovers how massively symbols and stories shaped not only what people actually said and did, but also the subsequent efforts of theologians to account for those words and deeds.

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<sup>51</sup> See Robert Solomon and Martin Clancy, *Morality and the Good Life: An Introduction to Ethics through Classical Sources*. 4th ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2004) , 148-78, at 175-76. They cite Augustine's *City of God*, 12.7.1.

<sup>52</sup> *Insight*, 690-91 [chap. 19, sec. 9].

<sup>53</sup> Lonergan states, ". . . there are true stories that reveal the life we are really living, and there are cover stories that make out our lives to be somewhat better than in reality they are." I take Lonergan's reference to "cover stories" as narrative expressions of ideology, where ideology is understood as justifications of unauthenticity, and where unauthenticity can affect personal memories, group memories, or entire world dramas. See "Reality, Myth, Symbol," 386 [sec.2]. For the dynamics of ideology and unauthenticity, see *Method in Theology* (1972), 54-55 [projected CWL 14, chap. 2, sec. 7].

Under a religious conversion, one is alert to stories that are dramas of grace. A Christian in any area of human studies engaged in the specialty *dialectic* would speak of a drama of grace, in part to invite conversions in those whose viewpoints are less wholesome, and in part to confirm equivalencies between Christian and non-Christian world dramas.<sup>54</sup>

Expressions of God's gift of redemption in Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit as the full story of humanity are presented in the specialty *doctrines*. Here, it is important to recognize that doctrinal expressions need not be propositional. As Lonergan observes, "doctrinal expressions may be figurative or symbolic." Formulations of a salvation history— such as we find in Luke-Acts, in documents of ecumenical councils, in pastoral letters, and in spiritual writings—belong to the specialty *doctrines*.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, because grace is a mystery, a single doctrinal expression cannot fully present God's redeeming graces. Lonergan also observes that one can affirm fundamental truths of faith by affirming connections between the mysteries.<sup>56</sup> By what we may call heuristic equations, Christians can affirm that whatever may be the reason for our unlikely conception and inevitable death is to be found in God's desire to share the innermost divine life with humans in history; that whatever happened at Jesus' Resurrection is what happens to anyone who lives out the drama of grace; that whatever happened at the first Pentecost is what God desires to be the story of every human; that when the full truth of our lives is finally revealed, we will know that we are like Christ.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> The "interdisciplinary relations" Lonergan envisions between theologians and experts in other human studies are not restricted to discussions of ideas. He noted that "besides the dialectic that is concerned with human subjects as objects, there the dialectic in which human subjects are concerned with themselves and with one another. In that case, dialectic becomes dialog." See "Third Lecture: The Ongoing Genesis of Methods," *A Third Collection*, CWL 16, 153 [chap. 10, sec. 4].

<sup>55</sup> Strangely, Lonergan does not mention salvation history in his *Method in Theology*.

<sup>56</sup> *Method in Theology* (1972), 321, 336 [projected CWL 14, chap. 12, sec.9; chap. 13, sec.1].

<sup>57</sup> "What we will be has not been revealed. What we know is this: When he [Christ] is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is" (1 Jn 3:1-2).

To the specialty *systematics* Lonergan assigns the tasks of clarifying the otherwise vague or incomplete expressions typical of stories. The system for clarifying doctrines is an internally coherent account of the dynamics of self-transcending operations expressed in categories based not only on the intellectual, moral, and religious conversions in theologians aiming to clarifying doctrines but also their psychic conversions that open their horizons to how symbols and stories put flesh on the famously bare bones of doctrines.

To the specialty *communications* Lonergan assigns the various tasks of communicating the gospel message to the world. Among them are the tasks of establishing “interdisciplinary relations with art, language, literature, and other religions, with the natural and human sciences, with philosophy and history.”<sup>58</sup> These tasks present particularly difficult existential challenges to a theology whose scope includes a Christian world drama of grace: How to draw nonbelievers to consider any sort of drama of grace? How might believers develop a personal habit of discerning which of the many stories that shape their personal lives and the lives of various cultures are dramas of grace? How might a religion take a stand against the ever-encroaching dramas of fate, reason, groupism, morality, and other alien world dramas? Underlying all such challenges is the religious question of how to stay awed about the mystery of ordinary living, particularly in light of the uncanny gospel news that the innermost Word of the divine Source of everything comes as a Founder who truly labors in human history and whose innermost Love truly loves in human hearts. A prior awe about life as an abiding mystery is essential in both those who would preach and those who would welcome the good news.

The arts can play the indispensable role of lifting one’s imagination to the level of mystery and awe in ordinary

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<sup>58</sup> *Method in Theology* (1972), 132 [projected *CWL* 14, chap. 5, sec.6]. See also p. 336 [chap. 15, sec. 4].

living.<sup>59</sup> By the arts I mean music, songs, paintings, photographs, poetry, fiction, dramas, dance, liturgies, architecture, landscaping, apparel, and any combinations of these. Not any arts will do. Artworks that mainly excite or calm our nerves are unequal to the challenge. So are artworks that compel us to buy something. So are artworks that mainly instill pride in our communities. Yet other artworks lift us up to the mystery of life itself. They arouse familiar but unnamable emotions. They symbolize the existential mystery of life by pointing beyond ourselves to something richer in reality. They lift our spirits toward the unknown—what we have yet to learn, yet to value, yet to love.

Ordinary experience is not always practical. It can also be aesthetic and existential.<sup>60</sup> Lonergan observes that experience in the aesthetic pattern "is a withdrawal from practical living to explore possibilities of fuller living in a richer world"<sup>61</sup> In this regard, artists whose works uplift will draw from their personal aesthetic experiences of covert riches in life to evoke overt recognition of these riches in the existential lives of their publics.<sup>62</sup> Their works instill hope. And because the drama of ordinary life includes pleasure and pain, exaltation and fear, tension and harmony, the range of the many artworks that symbolize the mystery of life will have the same range of the seasons of human hope. Together they manifest how human life is ever a dialectic of desires and dreads. A springtime hope is optimistic when our desires overshadow our dreads. A summertime hope is serene when fulfilled desires eclipse our dreads. An autumnal hope is apprehensive when our dreads overshadow our desires. A winter hope is

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<sup>59</sup> Here I aim to explore what Lonergan's statement, "Art is a fundamental element in the freedom of consciousness itself." See *Topics in Education*, in eds., Frederick Crowe, and Robert Doran, *CWL* 10, 232. For an in-depth analysis of the roles of aesthetics and a "recovery of story," see Robert Doran, *Psychic Conversion*, 155-204, especially "Toward a Transcendental Aesthetic," at 162-204.

<sup>60</sup> In 1957 Lonergan described an existential pattern of experience (not mentioned in *Insight*). "The significance within existentialism of the flow of consciousness orientated on choosing is enormous. That is the flow of consciousness relevant to being a man." See "On Being Oneself" in *Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism* in *CWL* 18, ed. Philip McShane, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 234-246, at 235. See also *Method on Theology* (1972), 62 [projected *CWL* 14, chap. 3, sec. 3].

<sup>61</sup> *Topics in Education*, 217 [chap. 9, sec. 2.6].

<sup>62</sup> Artists whose works uplift sometimes remove elements that distract or mask the elemental richness and sometimes by enhancing the richer elements. Photographers edit out distracting elements; composers influenced by Beethoven create rich variations on beguilingly simple melodies.

resolute when our dreads eclipse our desires.<sup>63</sup> Uplifting artworks need not be enjoyable; they need only be honest. They are honest when together they reveal the full mysterious dimensions of living, including the unprecedented lives of each person and of each community. Their images go beyond neurological, practical, and social ends. They evoke a confident hope to live a life fully alive no matter how our feelings are affected by our desires and dreads.

At the same time, people commonly sense certain fractures in their self-awareness but lack the insights for talking about becoming more wholesome. Lonergan's analysis of levels of consciousness reveals the fault lines: We can (a) fail to pay attention to events around and within us; (b) fail to seek understanding of what we notice; (c.) fail to check that our understanding is true to reality; (d) fail to decide to do something about what we discover to be true; (e) fail to consider our living relationships to others and to God when deciding what to do.

Still, Lonergan never speaks of human woundedness without speaking of healing. Besides the self-awareness of experiencing, understanding, judging, deliberating, and being in love, there is the aesthetic self-awareness when we experience the movements by which symbols keep our bodies, minds and hearts in communication.<sup>64</sup> If, as Lonergan proposed, symbols are elementary stories, then stories too maintain this consciousness-unifying function. Stories that express our aesthetic self-awareness can resonate with our existential need to mend our inner fractures and become more fully wholesome. Aesthetic self-awareness is not experienced at a single level of self-transcendence. Our openness to beauty<sup>65</sup> is a concrete experience of a vertical finality that energizes and maintains a focus of movements across each level: by the allure of the possible; the harmony of the ordered; the exquisite uniqueness of a particular tree, face, family, or meal; the splendor of goodness; and the liberating invitation to lead our lives by love.

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<sup>63</sup> I propose these four "seasons" of hope to align with the work of Northrup Frye, who identified four basic plots/seasons in myths. See his *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 158-239.

<sup>64</sup> Lonergan finds the proper meaning and context of symbols in the communication between body, mind, and heart. See *Method in Theology* (1972), 67 [projected *CWL 14*, chap. 3, sec. 4]

<sup>65</sup> John Dadosky notes that "Lonergan has not thought through the matter of transcendental beauty thoroughly." He also presents illuminating connections regarding beauty in the works of Lonergan and Hans Urs Von Balthasar. See *The Eclipse and Recovery of Beauty: A Lonergan Perspective* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 50-54 (at 53), 181-203.

The integrating wholeness of aesthetic-existential movements also symbolizes the entire universe as a beautiful whole.<sup>66</sup> In this respect, the uplifting aesthetic experiences that inspire artists and that artists hope to evoke in their publics nourish the hope that life—our personal lives, the lives of our communities, the lives of people everywhere, the life of our planet and of the entire universe—can be wholesome. The innermost therapeutic value of the arts, then, is to mend our fractured self-awareness and make of ourselves hoping selves. This hope does not guarantee that weakness and sin are permanently avoidable. Yet it sustains our confidence in season and out.

Finally, the self-awareness of people in love with God is also a we-awareness with God, with whom they share the divine confidence that all shall be well. Experiences of artworks that uplift say that there's more to *everything* than meets the eye. A world drama of grace—particularly how Jesus the Nazarene imagined the world—may well be the full story of everything.

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<sup>66</sup> Lonergan recognizes an isomorphism between the inner levels of self-transcendence and the dimensions of what is to be known. In a critical metaphysics, "For every term and relation there is a corresponding element in intentional consciousness. . . . The importance of such a critical control will be evident to anyone familiar with the vast arid wastes of theological controversy." *Method in Theology* (1972), 343 [projected *CWL* 14, chap. 13, sec. 2].



# History

There are the histories we read. They may focus on individual persons or on communities.

There is the history we read about: a reliable story that can affect how we imagine the inherited parts of our being alive.

There is the history we are making: The effects of our own words, initiatives, and accomplishments that become parts of the lives of our children, students, friends, and relatives. It often includes things we have completely forgotten—things we are still ashamed of and things we are proud of.

History itself is experimental. The legacy of some communities (families, neighborhoods, countries, religions) is subject to the scrutiny of other communities who, passing moral judgments on the historical evidence, will praise or its successes and condemn its failures.

These reflections are meant to plant relevant questions in those who wish to reflect on the paths of their lives.

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## Kin God

Kin God: Ourselves and everything ours are your gifts.

You give us all you can  
to bring your Kingdom of love to earth.

May your self-giving be welcomed  
and imitated by all:

<Here, mention by name those you often recall>

As nature always trembles in your praise,  
may history do as well.

May your whole family share bread today.

Give us your eyes to see our world,  
your confidence that all shall be well,  
and your love with which to love.

May I forgive bullshit and pride,  
as you help others forgive mine.

Come: Drive evil from our hearts,  
that the whole world may become your glory.

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# True

"True" may be the object of intellectual assent, as when we accept that our moon circles our earth.

Or it may mean something that demands a personal commitment as when a loving friend says to you, "I am a true friend."<sup>67</sup>

According to the first meaning, we accept that Jesus of Nazareth died on a cross. Like most factual assertions, our acceptance can feel distant and safe, like looking at words in a catechism.

According to the second meaning, our acceptance demands a full and wholesome commitment of our entire selves to trust and follow Jesus.

In John's Gospel, Chapter 5, some disciples of Jesus ask him "What must we do if we are to do the works that God wants?"

Jesus does not list certain works. He tells that they must believe in the person God has sent. He then says that he is the God-given bread of God, the bread of life,<sup>68</sup> that he will not turn away anyone who comes to him, that they will never be hungry or thirsty, they will live forever because he will personally raise them up on the last day.

To believe in Jesus involves trusting him to reveal what God wants. Sometimes this revelation is for taking a specific action; sometimes for avoiding a specific action. Sometimes to accept God's silence as an invitation to longingly and patiently wait.

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<sup>67</sup> My source: the entry under "truth" in John L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co. 1965).

<sup>68</sup> In John's Gospel, saying that Jesus is *true* is often combined with assertions the Jesus is *light* and *life*. These symbols displace inner falsehoods, inner darkness, and an abiding fear of our deaths. These symbols can penetrate our affective consciousness more deeply than an intellectual assent to concept-based expressions of "truths." Intellectual assents ordinarily remain as a deep-set confidence in God.

## God's Loveliness

"Is it true that the divine loveliness  
making the humanity of Christ  
beloved of the Father  
also is bestowed on us?"

Bernard Lonergan,  
"The Mystical Body of Christ,"  
in Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran, eds.,  
"Shorter Papers", Collected Works of  
Bernard Lonergan 20 (2007) 108.

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# The True Story

Shut my ears today to untrue stories—stories like these:

*Fate: Life is futile.*

Just good and bad luck.

*Autonomy: Humanity is self-sufficient.*

God is just a person's "belief system."

*Group Animosity: Our world is a patchwork of competition.*

World peace could never happen.

If it ever did happen, it couldn't last.

*Religious Morality: Religion is mainly about being "good."*

God made us mainly to do good and avoid evil. The love of neighbor is our duty. After we die we enter the eternal reward or punishment we deserve.

*Truth:*

A personal possession. You have yours. I have mine.

*Love:*

Essentially a subjective feeling: not a self-surrender to a shared and more fully wholesome life.

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## Like You

You know me from within me.

You will not force me about anything today.

You made me free.

Like you

And creative.

Like you.

Trying, ever trying, to make the new

of every now and every here

less dark, less fractured,

less shallow, less empty.

Less hollow.

More hallowed.

Like you.

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## Vita Mea

Life of my life, I shall always try to keep my body pure,  
knowing your touch is the life in all my limbs.

I shall ever try to keep untruth out of my thoughts,  
knowing you are the truth  
who kindles the light of reason in my mind.

I shall ever try to drive out gain from my desires,  
and keep my love in flower,  
knowing you make your home  
in the inmost shrine of my heart.

And as heir of the love in Jesus,  
it shall be my endeavor to be for others  
your loving body and mind and heart,  
knowing your love is  
all their daring and strength.

*Adapted from a prayer of Tagore*

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## Unfinished

I am incompetely made.

You made me out of love and for love.

Made me to bring your love to completion  
through the same self-emptying love for others  
that moved you to make them,  
and me.

*1 Jn 2:5 and 4:12*

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## Escapes

Gracious Lord,

you know us as we are.

For our escapes from love that still leave us meandering,

Lord have mercy.

Christ our model, you show us how to love one another.

For hording that love only for those who love me,

Christ have mercy.

Lord within, you flood our hearts with love.

For the many times we neglected you there,

Lord have mercy.

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## Nursing

Kind God, you draw us to yourself.

For preferring to keep to ourselves,

Lord have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you invite us to follow you.

For preferring the comfort of our shelters,

Christ have mercy.

Spirit of love, you nourish us with your consolations.

For all the times we nurse our resentments,

Lord have mercy.

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## Burdened

God of light, you show even popes their sins.

For fearing to be shown our own,

Lord have mercy.

Son of God, your yoke is easy, your burden light.

For forgetting that in your psyche and on your back

you bear the burden of our sins

Christ have mercy.

Spirit of Jesus, within us you groan

to free all creation from sin.

For assuming that we can free ourselves all by ourselves,

Lord have mercy.

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## The Banquet

Lord of joy, you draw all people to your banquet.

For disregarding those who would welcome our company,

Lord have mercy.

Son of God, you are like us, in body, soul, and spirit.

For failing to see you in the flesh,

Christ have mercy.

Comforting Spirit, from within us you reach out from us.

For holding back your reach of love to others,

Lord have mercy.

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# Healing

Kindly Father, you always labor to heal.

For fearing to let your love heal us,

Lord have mercy.

Jesus healer, you see wounds in everyone.

For being blind to our blindness to the wounds of others,

Christ have mercy.

Creator Spirit, you pour out many gifts among us.

For not fanning the fire of your love in others,

Lord have mercy.

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## Sacred Heart

God our Father,  
you created us to be perfect as you are perfect.  
For being oblivious of how your perfection  
is a self-giving love, Lord have mercy.

Jesus, you intimately know  
those handicaps we hide and those we cannot.  
For meandering in stupid bliss as if we had none,  
Christ have mercy.

Spirit of God,  
you are the Sacred Heart of Jesus.  
For the times he offered you to us  
and we just tightened our grip  
on that cold hard stone in our chests,  
Lord have mercy.

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## Bodies

Father of all,  
the bodies of all your children are formed in your image.  
For seeing only surface beauty  
in your every child.  
Lord have mercy.

Jesus our brother, your living touch  
healed the bodies of many.  
For treating our bodies badly,  
Christ have mercy.

Spirit on fire, you warm the hearts of all.  
For regarding my physical needs as love,  
Lord have mercy.

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## Housekeeping

Wise Father, you kindle the light of reason in our minds.  
For letting untruth infect our thoughts,  
Lord have mercy.

Jesus, you always desire what the Father desires.  
For allowing personal gain to dominate our desires,  
Christ have mercy.

Consoler Divine, you make your home  
in the inmost shrine of our hearts.  
For neglecting the housekeeping  
that might make you feel at home,  
Lord have mercy.

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## Passionate Spirit

All-seeing Father,  
For not seeing the world with your eyes,  
Lord have mercy.

Kingdom-bringing Son,  
For losing your confidence that all shall be well,  
Christ have mercy.

Passionate Spirit, who loves in us,  
For our many efforts to lead our lives without you,  
Lord have mercy.

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## Suckers

Gracious Lord, you know us as we are.

For the old sins that ever leave us sad,

Lord have mercy.

Christ our model,

For being suckers to the myth that self-love is all we need,

Christ have mercy.

Lord above, you flood our hearts with love.

For the many times we bailed you out.

Lord have mercy.

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## God Weeps

The bread of life,  
The light of the world,  
True God from true God,  
The one for whom and through whom  
everything was created,  
Full of grace and truth  
Born of God,  
God's only son,  
Who is nearest the Father's heart  
Who, according to the shortest verse in the Bible  
When his dear friend Lazarus died,  
Wept.

Jn 11:35

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## Jesus Groans

God of light, you show even popes their sins.

For being afraid of being shown our own,

Lord have mercy.

Son of God, your yoke is easy, your burden light.

For forgetting that our sins

truly weigh you down, Christ have mercy.

Spirit of Jesus, within us you groan

to free all creation from sin.

For assuming that we can free ourselves

all by ourselves,

Lord have mercy.

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## Reaching Out

Lord of joy, you draw all people to your table.

For disregarding those who would welcome our company,

Lord have mercy.

Son of God, you are still human in body, mind, and heart:

For failing to see you in the flesh,

Christ have mercy.

Comforting Spirit, you reach out from within us.

For holding back your reach of love to others at your table,

Lord have mercy.

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## Giver of Life

Giver of all life, you offer us your own life.

For neglecting the lives of those who seem least alive,

Lord have mercy.

Jesus our life, your greatest desire

is the Kingdom of your Father.

For our seeing earth with earthly eyes,

and our hoping with just earthly hearts,

Christ have mercy.

Lord and giver of life, you dwell in every heart.

For not seeing you alive there in others,

Lord have mercy.

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## Labors of Love

Kind Father, you always labor to heal.

For fearing to let your love and labors heal us,

Lord have mercy.

Jesus healer, you see wounds in everyone.

For being blind to our blindness to the wounds of others,

Christ have mercy.

Creator Spirit, you pour out many gifts among us.

For not fanning the fire of your love in others,

Lord have mercy.

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## Being Perfect

God, you created us to be perfect as you are perfect.

For being oblivious of how your perfection

is a self-giving love,

Lord have mercy.

Jesus, you intimately know

the handicaps we conceal

and those we cannot.

For carrying on as if we had none,

Christ have mercy.

Spirit of God,

you are the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

For the times he offered you to us

and we ignored his gift

Lord have mercy.

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## Images of God

Father, the bodies of all your children  
are formed in your image.

For seeing only surface beauty  
in the bodies of your every child.

Lord have mercy.

Jesus our brother, your living touch  
healed the bodies of many.

For treating our bodies badly,  
Christ have mercy.

Spirit on fire, you warm the hearts of all.

For letting our hearts cool to ice,

Lord have mercy.

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# Givens

Every given is a gift.

Every present is a present.

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# Negative Theology

God is stupid, mean, lazy and ugly.

Au Contraire

Au Contraire

Au Contraire

Au Contraire . . .

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# Assumptions

Nobody can list their unnoticed assumptions.

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## Clay Jars

Artist above,  
you are the potter.  
We are your clay.  
For trying to slip your grip,  
Lord have mercy.

Christ our brother,  
you are the living image  
of the unseen Father.  
For trying to fashion ourselves  
in some Hallmark image,  
Christ have mercy.

Spirit of love, you are  
poured into our hearts like wine.  
For diluting and polluting  
your wine in these cold clay jars  
Lord have mercy.

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## On Your Mind

Passionate God,  
we are always on your mind.

For the days you were not on ours,  
Lord have mercy.

Jesus our founder, you always know  
what each person really needs.

For averting our eyes  
from the persons behind people's masks,  
Christ have mercy.

Fire of love, you always burn in every heart.  
For insulating ourselves  
from the heat of your love in the heart of anyone,  
Lord have mercy.

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## Healthy Eyes & Heart

All-seeing Father,

For not seeing the world with your eyes,

Lord have mercy.

Kingdom-bringing Son,

For losing your confidence that all shall be well,

Christ have mercy.

Passionate Spirit, who loves from within our hearts,

For everyday failures to let your love lead our lives,

Lord have mercy.

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## Unknown Sins

There are basic sins of acting against my own clear-headed judgments.

There are sins of omission, when I could have —and should have— acted responsibly, but did not. —James 3:13

Life has made me more painfully aware of messes I made.

There are attitudes, assumptions, and expectations that blinded me about my own responsibilities.

I recall only a few times when this happened in me.

But you God, and only you, know the zillion other times.

What makes any sort of bias successful is that it first represses the question, "Am I biased?"

Same goes for the people who know me.

Which tells me that I must forgive them for their trespasses against me,

intentionally or not. — Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*. Chapter 7, section 6

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## The Lone Ranger

Nobody can be alive by themselves.

You made me weak  
to find my strength  
not in being a lone ranger  
but a ranger who smells  
the whiff of weakness  
in his brothers and sisters,  
and stretches out  
the work-wrinkled, aging hand,  
keeping company.

—2 Cor 12: 7-10a

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## God at Work

God conducts himself as one who labors. . . . in the heavens, the elements, the plants, the fruits, the cattle, etc.

*Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, para. 236*

When observant Jews accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath by curing a crippled man, Jesus replied, "My Father continues to work, and I must work too." *Jn 5: 17*

We never labor by ourselves. Whenever we create good things, whenever we create routines that put order and beauty into our lives. God labors in us, with us, and through us,

Each morning, we primp at the mirror:

Is not our first work of art ourselves?

Is not our creativity a share in God's creative labors?

*Bernard Lonergan, Insight, Chap. 6, sec 2.5*

Are not most of our labors  
efforts to make and keep beautiful  
how we act, how we look, where we live?

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## Web Weavers

Your plan of creation  
is a web of lovers  
in which each child of yours  
reaches beyond boundaries of age, race,  
gender, sexuality, language, authority,  
to become web-weaving spiders  
ever responsive to disturbing vibes  
nearby  
or far away.

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## ***Being Responsive***

*Being responsible is a demand in every soul.*

*So is being responsive to the voices of love:*

*Voices that direct and enlighten us*

*about being responsible;*

*the voices within us:*

*of those who love us,*

*the voice of God who made us out of love*

*and for love.*

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## *Being Beautiful*

Not a beauty to behold  
but a beauty to become:  
a beauty of selfless love  
most often a "we"  
with fellow believers  
a Beloved Choir singing . . .  
"Thy Kingdom come."

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## **World Splendor**

*A chair may be present in a room,  
but not to the room.*

*I am present to myself when I am conscious.*

*You may be present to me, and I may be present to you.*

*You and I may be present to the "we" that we are.*

*Bernard Lonergan on the arts:*

*the "splendor of the world is a cipher, a revelation,  
an unveiling, the presence of one who is not seen,  
yet is present."*

*Got it!*

*The arts can reveal God's  
loving presence to the world.*

*Yet while to God, each human is present,  
God is not present to every human.*

*Getting it . . .*

*Topics in Education, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 10  
(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), 222*

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## ***A Fall***

*He fell when he tried to vault.*

*They all had their laugh*

*At such a sissy.*

*Dag Hammarskjold, Markings*

Ballantine Press, 1985

This citation is for educational purposes only.  
It does not impair the marketability of the original,  
nor is it a critical portion of the book where it appears.

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## ***God's Wisdom***

Divine wisdom flows from God's love.

An ever-active, ever-engaged lover.

We are made in God's image and likeness.

Reason: Where is thy victory?

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## *Eternal Life*

God created everything.

God meant each one of us.

God offers each of us an intimate share in divine life during our lifetimes.

God meant us to share with each other  
the same love on earth that moved him to make us.

This share in God's own life of love on earth is a share in God's own "Spirit."

God meant us to share in that same Word God spoke into history, gracing us in the person of Jesus the Nazarene — that Word by which God created everything, ourselves included.

God created the time and space that condition our lives.

When we die, what God meant for every time and place  
in our lives will be revealed to us.

Each of us will be present to all those to whom we were present in our  
lifetimes.

We will each become present to every grace in our lives—  
everything we thought was unremarkable  
will become entirely forgiven,  
and awesomely remarkable

The joy God meant to share with us all  
will be revealed in our every time, every place,  
and without end.

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## *Here & Now*

The stuff of our share in God's eternal life is

Here

Now

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## ***Grace, Conscience, Beauty***

There is the intelligible into which we inquire in order to understand . . . .

the intelligence with which we formulate what we have grasped . . .

the reasonableness by which we reflect on our formulations, and, based on the evidence that has come to light, either confirm the truth reached for by our insights, or reconsider our insights for validity.

Such spontaneity, intelligence, reasonableness are themselves conscious.

But as we cannot be reasonable and not pass judgment beyond or against the evidence, so too we cannot be responsible with adverting to what is right or wrong.

We enjoy the peace of a good conscience to choose what is right or suffer the disquiet of a unhappy conscience when we choose what is wrong.

Bernard Lonergan, "Second Lecture" in R. M. Doran and J. A. Dadosky, eds, *A Third Collecton* (University of Toronto Press: Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan vol. 16, 124-139; at 138-39.

The 5-level ascent of being authentic corresponds to the 5-level ascent of a vertical finality that opens us to beauty:

Authenticity is gained through the vertical finality of being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible, and being actively engaged in a loving community.<sup>69</sup>

Our vertical finality toward beauty is driven at each level of our self-transcendence by an aesthetic desire:

the allure of the possible

the harmony of order

the startling uniqueness of each person, place, event

the splendor of goodness

the liberation of being engaged in a community of love.

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<sup>69</sup> For Lonergan's confirmation that his reference to "being in love" regards being an active agent in a community based on love, see "Being in Love," in *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 13/2 (Fall 1995) 161-175, at 167.