

IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY AND ANGLICAN ETHOS: A 'FAMILY RESEMBLANCE'

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Ignatian Spirituality has inspired through the centuries many individuals and religious communities on their way to conversion and apostolic mission within the Catholic Church and beyond her visible boundaries. The scope of this article is to show the resemblances between Ignatian Spirituality and an Anglican ethos, grounded on their common focus on a theology of Incarnation. The shared attention to this central truth of Christian faith activates some of the traits of an Anglican ethos and Ignatian Spirituality have in common: comprehensiveness and probabilism, indifference and an apophatic sense of mystery.

The ecumenical movement enhanced by the Second Vatican Council has brought churches and Christian traditions to a closer dialogue. The basic assumption is that we all share as Christians a common spirituality, though expressed in a variety of ways. Gifts from one tradition have been and are still given and shared by other Christian traditions.

Speaking of Ignatian Spirituality and Anglicanism, in particular, we may realize how vivid and concrete receptive ecumenism is alive and flourishing between these two major traditions. 'Receptive Ecumenism' is not simply a matter of structural adjustments or doctrinal refinement but is an encounter of people—a "conversation" between two horizons that inevitably changes both. The very process of

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engagement and conversation is revelatory in that we come to realize that God speaks not simply in my tradition but in the very conversation and interaction that we share.¹ One way to develop conversation among Christian denominations is through spiritual acquaintance: to know each other better in order to understand how much we share and participate in the same Christian heritage. By doing this churches may discover that they reflect the same image of the incarnate God.

In three steps I will highlight how we may find consonances, similarities and common traits between Ignatian Spirituality and Anglicanism. Foremost I will highlight the main traits of Ignatius' way of proceeding; in the second part I will point to the leading characteristics of an Anglican ethos; and in the third part I will show how these two traditions have similarities and consonances, because of their common approach to Christian faith through the lens of the mystery of Incarnation. From this common interest originate those distinctive traits that both traditions share: comprehensiveness, indifference, probabilism and an apophatic sense of mystery. Therefore I argue that both traditions have 'family resemblances,' according to the terminology of Ludwig Wittgenstein.

What is Ignatian Spirituality?

Ignatian Spirituality is rooted in the experiences of Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556), the founder of the Society of Jesus, and in his book of the Exercises. 'The world is charged with the grandeur of God.'² This line from a poem by the Jesuit Gerard Manley Hopkins captures a central theme of Ignatian Spirituality: the awareness that God is at work everywhere. Ignatian Spirituality places great emphasis on discerning God's presence in the everyday activities of ordinary life: work, relationships, culture, the arts, the intellectual life and creation itself. This kind of spirituality develops a spiritual 'radar,' since it enables us to find God in all things and attunes us to the presence of the Holy everywhere. It sees God as an active God, always at work, inviting us

¹ Philip Sheldrake, 'Becoming Catholic Persons and Learning to Be a Catholic People,' in P. D. Murray, ed., *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism* (London: Oxford University, 2010), 55.

² Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Poetical Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 139.

to an ever-deeper exploration. Its focus on God at work here and now fosters an active attentiveness to the ineffable and ever greater presence of God (*Deus semper maior*) in reality and history. 'The basic element of Ignatian Spirituality is its incarnational character [...] This prompts us to reflect on the relevance and importance of the Incarnation in Ignatian Spirituality as a means of living an authentic and incarnated faith in the world today.'³ Ignatian Spirituality is firmly based on the concrete incarnation of human history. Ignatius' conviction was that the Creator can act directly on the loved creature in the most intimate way dealing with his/her interior motions (consolation and desolation).⁴

The subject with his passions, personal characteristics and freedom is the key in order to initiate an experience with God. Ignatian Spirituality focuses more on the heart than the intellect. The use of imagination in prayer, discernment and interpretation of feelings, cultivation of fundamental desires, and generous service, are the major features of the book of the Spiritual Exercises.

Ignatian Spirituality focuses more on the heart than the intellect and leads to a prompt responsiveness to God which is the fruit of discernment and decision making. It emphasizes interior freedom and indifference. Usually, the word 'indifference' has two meanings: a negative one suggesting not caring for, not being interested in something. It has also a neutral one: having no inclination either for or against something. Ignatius uses the word indifference (*indiferencia*) in the neutral sense; namely, we have to bring ourselves as far as possible to the point of not having an inclination either for or against any created thing. Ignatian understanding of 'indifference' overlaps with 'equanimity.' This interior disposition is essential to understand Ignatian mysticism. Indifference is not an end in itself, but it leads to choosing what's better in the world and in reality.

It means recognizing that there is no disjunction between God and the world: God is fully present in the world and it is up to us to make sure that that the world is fully in God. We announce the incarnation of God by incarnating ourselves in the lives of other people, through our presence, service, listening and sharing. We announce the incarnation

³ Emmanuel da Silva e Araujo, 'Ignatian Spirituality as a Spirituality of Incarnation,' in *The Way*, 47 (2008): 67-80, at 67.

⁴ da Silva e Araujo, 'Ignatian Spirituality,' 73.

by incarnating ourselves in society, culture, politics, economics, in order to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 6:13–16).⁵

Ignatian mysticism leads a person to be enfleshed in the world and in reality. Instead of a flight from the world (*fuga mundi*) Ignatian Spirituality enhances a ‘kenotic movement of incarnation in the world and for the world’ and realizes a union with God which empowers every human being ‘in the act and art of choosing in each moment in terms of God’s will.’⁶

The character of being ‘incarnated’ describes Ignatian Spirituality not only in its ‘object’ (the incarnate Word of God) but in its ‘method.’ It is an outlook, not a program; a set of attitudes and insights, not rules or a scheme. Ignatius’ first advice to spiritual directors is to adapt the Spiritual Exercises to the needs of the person entering the retreat. At the heart of Ignatian Spirituality is a profound sense of humanity and respect for people’s lived experience and opinions.

The principle and foundation of this particular spirituality is a profound focus on the mystery of Incarnation. Contemplation and action, indifference and passionate responsiveness to the ‘now’ moment, attentiveness before the Lord and reverent service towards others, personal discernment and paying attention to guidance (the spiritual director and finally the Church), are the major features of the Spiritual Exercises.

Even during the time of the hostile confrontation between the Church of Rome and the Church of England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Ignatian method of prayer has been always appreciated among Anglicans.⁷ The Spiritual Exercises have been

⁵ da Silva e Araujo, ‘Ignatian Spirituality’, 78.

⁶ Javier Melloni, *The Exercises of St. Ignatius in the Western Tradition* (Gracewing: Leominster, 2000), 50.

⁷ M. Questier, ‘“Like Locusts over all the World’: Conversion, Indoctrination and the Society of Jesus in late Elizabethan and Jacobean England,’ in Thomas M. McCoog, ed., *The reckoned Expense: Edmund Campion and the early English Jesuits* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1996), 346. See Victor Houlston, *Catholic resistance in Elizabethan England. Robert Person’s Jesuit Polemic 1580–1610* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007); E. E. Reynolds, *Campion and Parsons. The Jesuit Mission of 1580–1* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1980); Francesca Bugliani Knox, *The Eye of the Eagle. John Donne and the Legacy of Ignatius Loyola* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011).

given and received by Protestants. Some specific Roman Catholic doctrinal elements were dropped off and changed into a much more Calvinist approach. The practice of addressing Mary in the meditation on the Two Standards was either put aside or substituted by mentioning the Holy Spirit (instead of Mary); the word ‘confession’ was interpreted in a broader sense and not merely ritual or sacramental; ‘doing penance’ became ‘being repentant’; words like ‘merit’ and ‘Purgatory’ were omitted. The rules of thinking with the Church (*sentire cum ecclesia*) were mitigated and adapted to an Anglican ethos.

W.H. Longridge, a member of the Anglican religious Society of Saint John, published in 1919 a translation of the Exercises from the Spanish Autograph with commentary which had many editions up to 1950.⁸ In 1931 he wrote *A month's retreat for religious* (Oxford, 1931), a popular publication used for the revival of spiritual life within the Church of England.⁹ In *The elements of the Spiritual Life. A Study in Ascetical Theology*, Frederick P. Harton gives a list of different ways of meditation, the first mentioned being the Ignatian method: ‘The most usual form of this exercise, indeed almost the only form which is at all widely known in the Anglican Communion, is the Ignatian.’¹⁰

What is Anglican Ethos?

An Anglican ethos bears witness—with the same emphasis as the Ignatian Spirituality—to the Incarnation as its central doctrine, ‘in particular its search for wholeness and balance, its desire at once to spread itself outwards in a concern for all human life, and at the same time to turn inwards to explore the heights and depths of God’s presence at the heart of human life.’¹¹ By ‘Anglican ethos’ is meant the

⁸ W.H. Longridge, *The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola*. Translated from the Spanish with a commentary and a translation of the Directorium in exercitia (Robert Scott: London, 1922). The quotations of the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius come from this Anglican edition.

⁹ W.H. Longridge, *Retreats for Priests: According to the method and plan of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (London: SPCK, 1962); *A month's retreat for religious* (Oxford: SSJE Mission House, 1931).

¹⁰ Frederick P. Harton, *The elements of the Spiritual Life. A Study in Ascetical Theology* (London: SPCK, 1950), 233.

¹¹ A. M. Allchin, ‘Anglican Spirituality’, in Stephen Sykes and John Booty, edd., *The Study of Anglicanism* (London: SPCK, 1988): 313-25, at 322. See Philip

whole of predominant conditions and assumptions expressed in feelings, beliefs and customs, that constitute a specific way of proceeding. John William Charles Wand in his study on Anglicanism identifies Anglican theology as incarnational.¹² Whereas Orthodox Christianity emphasized the Paschal mystery and Luther's Reformation the mystery of Good Friday, Anglican Christianity highlighted the Christmas event. Richard Hooker distanced himself from Calvinist concentration upon the Word spoken, since it missed the importance of the Word made flesh.

Edward Reynolds, bishop of Norwich 1660-1676, perceived in the unfolding mystery of Incarnation God's love in all things which inspires the human response to love God in all and above all. What is peculiar to Anglican way of prayer and faith is 'a longing to gather together the fullness of created order in all its diversity, into the unity of the Kingdom.'¹³

Many Anglican theologians and writers in the nineteenth century have focused as well on the mystery of Incarnation in order to mold Anglican Spirituality: Hugh Scot Holland (1847-1918), Charles Gore (1853-1932), William Temple (1881-1944), William Porcher DuBose (1836-1918).¹⁴ The Oxford Movement emphasized Incarnation as a reaction in part to the overly prominence of the doctrine of the Atonement and cross-centered imagery shown by Evangelicals.¹⁵

Since the time of the publication of *Lux Mundi* in 1889 edited by Charles Gore, at that time principal of Pusey House at Oxford, the theme of Incarnation has caught the interest of Anglican theology. Gore himself set out his theology of Incarnation at the Bampton Lectures of 1891 treating the theme: The Incarnation of the Son of God.

Sheldrake, *A Brief History of Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2013), 120-4.

¹² John W. C. Wand, *Anglicanism in History and Today* (London: Weidenfeld Nicholson, 1961), 227-237.

¹³ Allchin, 'Anglican Spirituality,' 324.

¹⁴ See Urban T. Homes III, *What is Anglicanism?* (Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 2004), 25.

¹⁵ See Paul F. M. Zahl, *The Protestant Face of Anglicanism* (Cambridge: Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 37.

In the theology of Richard Meux Benson, the founder of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist, Incarnation was absolutely central.

Fr Benson's theological vision has a markedly different character from those based on the standard theory that the Incarnation was contingent on the Fall; to put it crudely, a divine afterthought for remedying the catastrophe of man's alienation from God. He committed himself in the original creative act to the Incarnation, by which the 'law of the Eternal Generation' was to be introduced into creation to transform it from within.¹⁶

There is a particular inclination among many modern and contemporary Anglican theologians—Maurice, Westcott, Gore, Thornton, Holland, Temple, Creed, Quick, Mozley, Hodgson, Ramsey, Pittinger, Robinson, Wiles, Hick, Cupitt and Macquarrie—towards the mystery of Incarnation as the key doctrine of Christian faith. Anglicanism gives high priority to the doctrine of Incarnation, believing that God takes on human flesh not just once in Jesus, but chooses to dwell again in each of us if we are open to God's Spirit.¹⁷

The centrality of the theology of Incarnation has shaped four major traits in an Anglican ethos: comprehensiveness, indifference, probabilism and an apophatic sense of mystery.

'Comprehensiveness' had been a cultural and religious achievement at the time of the Reformation in England in order to blend and reconcile together Catholic elements of medieval Christianity and new insights from Reformed theology.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Anglicans defended their continuity with the pre-Reformation Church, refuted charges of schism and rebutted the claims of the papacy. They thus emphasized the 'Catholicity' of the Church of England. At the same time, however, they had to contend with the threat from the Puritans, who maintained that reform had not gone far enough and even that the Church of England was no true Church. In response, Anglican apologists such as Hooker and Whitgift upheld the fully Reformed and Protestant character of the Church of England, to which no essential aspect of a reformed Church was lacking.¹⁸

¹⁶ Martin Smith, *Benson of Cowley* (Oxford: Cowley Publications, 1983), 34.

¹⁷ See Brian Hebblethwaite, *The Incarnation. Collected essays in Christology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

¹⁸ Paul Avis, 'What is "Anglicanism"?' in *The Study of Anglicanism*: 405-429, at 408.

‘Comprehensiveness’ summarizes the Anglican historical synthesis of being a church which is both Catholic and Reformed. It is not a marker but defines a method in Anglicanism which may be characterized as ‘polarity or quality of living tension.’ It is not just a compromise or a way of escaping intellectual rigor but a quality, a paradoxical method of thinking imbued of a certain Christian form of *advaita* or Trinitarian logic. Thinking according to the both/and instead of either/or logic enhances a paradoxical understanding which is mutually illuminating and enriching.

Comprehensiveness is an attitude of mind which Anglicans have learned from the thought-provoking controversies of their history (. . .) Comprehensiveness demands agreement on fundamentals, while tolerating disagreement on matters in which Christians may differ without feeling the necessity of breaking communion. In the mind of an Anglican, comprehensiveness is not compromise. Nor is it to bargain one truth for another. It is not a sophisticated term for syncretism. Rather it implies that the apprehension of truth is a growing thing: We only gradually succeed in ‘knowing the truth.’ It has been the tradition of Anglicanism to contain within one body both Protestant and Catholic elements. But there is a continuing search for the whole truth in which these elements will find complete reconciliation. Comprehensiveness implies a willingness to allow liberty of interpretation, with a certain slowness in arresting or restraining exploratory thinking. We tend to applaud the wisdom of the rabbi Gamaliel's dictum that if a thing is not of God it will not last very long (Acts 5:38-39). Moreover we are alarmed by the sad experience of too hasty condemnation in the past (as in the case of Galileo). For we believe that in leading us into the truth the Holy Spirit may have some surprises in store for us in the future as he has had in the past.¹⁹

Comprehensiveness requires a consensus on fundamentals, ‘while tolerating disagreement on matters in which Christians may differ without feeling the necessity of breaking communion.’²⁰ As a result of this major trait of an Anglican ethos we find tolerance: a reasonable approach to Mystery, since God’s transcendent reality can never be definitively grasped or fixed by just one simple glance.

¹⁹ *The Lambeth Conference 1968* (London: SPCK, 1968), 140-1.

²⁰ Stephen Sykes, ‘The Fundamentals of Christianity’ in Sykes and Booty, edd., *The Study of Anglicanism*, 232.

In the summer of 2006 the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams identified three things that, when held together, make Anglicanism distinct from other Christian denominations and contribute to the essential character of Anglicanism:²¹ a Reformed commitment to the priority of the Bible for deciding doctrine; a Catholic loyalty to the sacraments and the threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons; and a habit of cultural sensitivity and intellectual flexibility that does not seek to close down unexpected questions too quickly. This kind of intellectual flexibility is different from the rigid and ‘abstract reason’ of the Enlightenment Age. It rather leads to deeper and richer understandings of God’s Holy Word and God’s will. What Anglicans hold by ‘reason,’ therefore, ‘can be characterized negatively as a counterpoise to unreasoning Biblicism or traditionalism.’²² A similar understanding of reason is present in the *Spiritual Exercises* in Annotation n°2: ‘for it is not the abundance of knowledge which fills and satisfies the soul, but to feel and taste the matters interiorly.’²³

Such savoring reason does match with Bible and Tradition, and all three (reason, scripture and tradition) are connected together in what may be called a ‘three-legged stool.’ Other denominations share one or two of these legs. What makes Anglicanism unique is the balanced presence of all three. In order to receive and rework doctrines in the changing of times, as happened in the opening of the threefold ministry to women, in the remarriage of divorced persons and finally in the issue of homosexuality, the Anglican communion has tried by reason to listen both to Bible and Tradition, and to realize what is ‘now’ the inspiration of the Spirit in the present Church. A deeper understanding of God’s unchanging Word requires such a change and requires discernment and flexibility as well. ‘Roman Catholics have much to learn from the Anglican capacity to engage in dialogue with contemporary culture on complex and controversial issues rather

²¹ Rowan Williams, ‘*One Church, One Hope*’: *Freiburg Lecture*, at <http://rowanwilliams.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/2115/one-church-one-hope-freiburg-lecture>.

²² A. S. McGrade, ‘Reason,’ in Sykes and Booty, edd., *The Study of Anglicanism*, 107.

²³ Longridge, *The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola*, 7.

than, as tends to be the case within Roman Catholicism, closing the door to any such discussion'.²⁴

Reformed, Catholic and intellectual heritage capture the core strength of the Anglican way of believing and living out the Christian Faith. Anglicanism is not dogmatic in its essence. An Anglican ethos lies in its comprehensive method. Henry Robert McAdoo in his study on the Spirit of Anglicanism declares that Anglicans do not believe anything because it is Anglican, but only because they think it is true. 'What is distinctively Anglican is then not a theology but a theological method.'²⁵

Such a 'comprehensive' method does not mean disintegration of the essential identity of Anglicanism. Anglican beliefs tolerate diversity relating to 'things which do not make a difference, matters regarded as nonessential, issues about which one can disagree without dividing the Church.'²⁶ Stephen Sykes has warned against a feeble and lazy understanding of 'comprehensiveness' as an all-embracing melting pot of contradictory theological positions without 'a standpoint on matters of doctrine which is firmer than seems to be the case on first sight, even if it stands in need of articulation and development.'²⁷ 'Comprehensiveness' and 'inclusiveness' must always seek agreement on fundamentals without which everything turns to be inessential and accidental in belief. The Revd Dr J.I. Packer has articulated two kinds of comprehensiveness: *Principled* and *Unprincipled* Comprehensiveness.²⁸ Classic Anglicanism is based on Principled Comprehensiveness, which insists on agreement with the biblical fundamentals of the faith and a continuity with classic English Protestant Reformation thought, while allowing liberty in issues of secondary doctrine, preference and practice. These secondary doctrines are what Post-Reformation

²⁴ Keith F. Pecklers, 'What Roman Catholics Have to Learn from Anglicans,' in Murray, *Receptive Ecumenism*, 107-21, at 109.

²⁵ Henry R. McAdoo, *Spirit of Anglicanism: A Survey of Anglican Theological Method in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Scribner, 1965), 1.

²⁶ *The Lambeth Commission on Communion, The Windsor Report 2004* (London: The Anglican Communion Office, 2004) § 87.

²⁷ Stephen W. Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism* (London, and Oxford: Mowbray: 1978), 35.

²⁸ James I. Packer, *A Kind of Noah's Ark?: The Anglican Commitment to Comprehensiveness* (Oxford: Oxford Latimer House, 1981), 19.

theologian Richard Hooker in forging a *via media* between Puritan and Catholic factions in England described as *adiaphora* (things indifferent). German Protestants initially used a similar term in order to describe those areas of doctrine on which a compromise could be found between Catholics and Protestants.

Ignatian and Anglican Spirituality: ‘family resemblances’

Such an unfolding process of truth, which is at the core of an understanding of ‘comprehensiveness’ in its true nature, may be compared with what the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius understand as a presupposition for any discernment: being open and respectful towards different positions. The *praesupponendum* describes how the director of the Exercises has to be attuned with what the Spirit is already communicating to the retreatant. ‘In order that he who gives as well as he who receives the spiritual Exercises, may the more help and profit one another, it should be presupposed that every good Christian ought to be more ready to give a good sense to the doubtful proposition of another than to condemn it.’²⁹

In a letter to Salmeron, Jay and Canisius, who were sent to teach at the University of Ingolstadt in a time when the Reformation was spreading more and more in Germany, Ignatius of Loyola suggests friendship as a way of approaching Protestants. ‘Make friends with the opponents, as well as with those who are most prominent among the heretics or suspected of heresy. If they seem quite stubborn, try little by little with skill and a lot of love to remove them from their mistakes.’³⁰ Ignatius showed love, desire for their salvation, and more than anything else he promoted understanding and conversation as the best way to engage with Protestants. Any form of dogmatic unilateralism undermines the spiritual presupposition. The principle of Incarnation is at work in the Ignatian *praesupponendum*. ‘Because circumstances constantly change and the gospel is a living gospel and not a dead letter, Christian love and truth have constantly to be embodied and expressed in different forms. There is continuity with

²⁹ Longridge, *The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola*, 24.

³⁰ Ignazio di Loyola, ‘Epistolario,’ in Mario Gioia, ed., *Gli Scritti di Ignazio di Loyola*, n. 47 (Torino: UTET, 1977), 846.

the past of course, but continuity does not mean simply repeating over and over again what has been done before.³¹

Much of this Ignatian way of proceeding may be found in Anglicanism whose identity is essentially a way of listening to local challenges and needs, and to unexpected questions. Anglicanism has never been afraid of critical examination of its core teachings in matters of faith and morals. Such a basic presupposition and comprehensiveness prevent defensive orthodoxy. It respects scholarship and enhances debate and discussion. The vocation of Anglicanism is not to determine and enunciate the truth, but rather 'to create the climate of spiritual liberty in which individuals may bear witness to the truth as they see it, submitting themselves to the criticism of their peers without fear of ecclesiastical censorship.'³² The Anglican ethos, therefore, is not contained in a specific belief-system like Calvinism or Lutheranism. The typical locus in which to experience such an ethos is not dogmatic or theological definition, but the liturgy: *lex orandi statuat legem credendi*.

Another characteristic of Ignatian Spirituality which we may find realized in Anglicanism is indifference. This core virtue exhibits a spiritual freedom which enables the faithful to choose what helps him/her best to fulfill God's greater glory. Anglicanism has long held the belief that *in necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas* (in essentials, uniformity; in nonessentials, liberty; and in all things, love). Indifference is the consequence of what Ignatius calls 'consolation without preceding cause.' 'It belongs to God our Lord alone to give consolation to the soul without preceding cause.'³³ Spiritual consolation is some interior movement in the soul caused by the love of its Creator and Lord: 'every increase of hope, faith and charity, and all interior joy which calls and attracts to heavenly things and to its own salvation, rendering it quiet and at peace in its Creator and Lord.'³⁴ Such increase is always mediated by objects, events and people, but it is distinguished from God's acting love which remains

³¹ David Lonsdale, *Eyes to see, ears to hear. An Introduction to Ignatian Spirituality* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 1991), 64.

³² Paul Avis, *The Identity of Anglicanism. Essentials of Anglican Ecclesiology* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 34.

³³ Longridge, *The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola*, 191.

³⁴ Ibid. 186.

transcendent and transcendental, informing and making possible any human responsiveness.

The Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner speaks of this consolation without preceding cause as an athematic experience, whose object is God alone. By 'God' is meant not a definition or a concept but the horizon which is beyond any concept and definition.³⁵ The consolation without preceding cause is a critical and transcendental presupposition which makes everything else relative. Ignatius instructs the retreatant to distinguish carefully with great vigilance and attention the actual consolation without any preceding cause, which has no deception in it, from the consequent reception of this consolation: 'for in this second period it often happens that by its own thought, in accordance with its habits, and in consequence of its own conceptions and judgments, or by the suggestion of the good or the evil spirit, it forms various resolutions and plans, which are not inspired immediately by God our Lord; and hence it is necessary that they be very carefully examined before they receive entire credit and are carried into effect.'³⁶ There are two levels or moments in the experience of consolation: 1) the transcendental moment, when God is active as first cause; 2) the categorical moment, when human responsiveness appropriates and translates God's direct action. Human subjectivity (memory, intellect, will and feelings) is active here as secondary cause, since God enables human understanding to realize and fulfill revelation, and decide what God's will is. At the first level God is nothing but a sheer openness, nameless and indefinite, within which any created reality may speak of Him, relate to Him, but always indirectly. This distinction makes any definition and dogmatic formulation relative, and therefore indifferent. It is an indifference, based upon a fundamental difference between God's transcendental inspiration and the categorical formulation of God's very action.

This distinction allows the right understanding of the dynamic transcendence of God, implied in the Ignatian notion of *magis*. This notion identifies both the 'object' that is the never unfolding mystery of God (*Deus semper maior* and *ad maiorem dei gloriam*), and the 'way,' that is the ongoing process of transcending any grasp of the

³⁵ See Karl Rahner, *The Dynamic Element in the Church* (New York: Herder, 1964).

³⁶ Longridge, *The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola*, 193.

mystery. Truth does not overtake us as a statement, but as someone we experience and who needs to be encountered over and over again. This very dynamic leads to the proper understanding of Ignatian indifference. In such a context Karl Rahner advocates for a sound and appropriate understanding of agnosticism. ‘The unconditional surrender of oneself to the incomprehensibility of God is radical agnosticism, and actually this is the only true agnosticism because every other view of agnosticism is **innocuous**.’³⁷

Such a connection between apophaticism and agnosticism is at the core of an Anglican ethos. The Anglican priest and theologian R.M. Benson, founder of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist, insisted on the *apophatic* nature of all formulations about God (*Deus semper maior*). He advocated a Christian ‘agnosticism’ linked with adoring love. Only love is able to transcend any knowledge and experience we have of God. ‘The very fact that he could speak of a Christian “agnosticism”, at a time when the word had only recently entered religious controversy, is itself significant.’³⁸ In the light of Fr Benson’s understanding, the divine mystery is ‘not the mere knowledge of a completed statement, but the continuous apprehension of a continuous reality, a living receptivity corresponding with a living object of contemplation.’³⁹

Agnosticism has been present in Anglicanism since the time of the Reformation. According to the most influential theologian of the Church of England, the divine Richard Hooker, truth and meaning are not matters of infallible certitude and of formal incontrovertibility. Between converging probabilities and certainty there is always a gap. Reason alone cannot produce certainty. Against Roman Catholic infallibility of the Church and of the pope, and the puritan appeal to biblical absolutism, Richard Hooker insisted that the highest form of certainty we enjoy is that of ‘probable persuasions’. Though the human mind craves ‘the most infallible certainty which the nature of things can yield,’ assent must always be proportionate to the

³⁷ Karl Rahner, ‘Justifying faith in an Agnostic world’, Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. XXI (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 130-136, at 136.

³⁸ Smith, *Benson of Cowley*, 23.

³⁹ Smith, *Benson of Cowley*, 31.

evidence.⁴⁰ Certain knowledge is not given to humanity in its earthly pilgrimage: ‘in defect of proof infallible, because the mind doth rather follow probable persuasions rather than approve the things that have in them no likelihood of truth at all.’⁴¹ John Henry Newman, the founder of the Oxford Movement, introduced his theory of the ‘illative sense’ which is the converging of antecedent probabilities, confirming each other. The illative sense leads to a judgment, not only to act as if a statement were true, but actually to accept and believe it.⁴²

Agnosticism and probabilism received full citizenship within Jesuit ethics, with its casuistry. At the center of casuistry was the ‘principle of accommodation to times, places, persons, and other circumstances’.⁴³ Jesuits were confessors for many persons of high standing and therefore needed some flexibility in moral questions. Jesuits were very active within the mission in the newly discovered territories. They had developed therefore a successful method of mission known as ‘accommodation’ which was based on tolerance and adaption, and could not be pursued on the basis of the strict European moral laws. Jesuit preference for probabilism, based on the principle of accommodation, is nothing but a further consequence of the emphasis Ignatian Spirituality places on the mystery of Incarnation. ‘It was Jesuit spirituality—with its anthropological and soteriological assumptions, and the rhetoric of accommodation to the circumstances of concrete situations that was central to the Jesuits’ ministerial style that sowed seeds for future adoption of the probabilistic mentality.’⁴⁴ The Jesuit College S. Hermenegildo in Sevilla became the leading place of research with respect to probabilism. Jesuits as Diego Ruiz de Montoya, Diego Granado, and Luis Molina were upholders of such theological trend.

Anglicanism understands ‘probabilism’ not only as the method by which the practical intellect formulates moral judgments, but as the

⁴⁰ Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, vol. I (London: W. Clarke, 1821), 225.

⁴¹ Hooker, *Of the Laws*, 226.

⁴² See John Henry Newmn, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 377.

⁴³ John O’Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Harvard: Harvard University, 1993), 145.

⁴⁴ Robert A. Maryks, *Saint Cicero and the Jesuits. The Influence of the Liberal Arts on the Adoption of Moral Probabilism* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2008), 79.

way by which the speculative intellect discerns and defines truth. Anglicanism applies, therefore, ‘probabilism’ to dogmatic as well as to moral theology. A particular Christian truth may not be asserted as ‘certain’ or ‘true,’ since it receives only ‘probable persuasion’. Is there a similar approach to dogmatics in Catholic tradition, or is it just here, in the distinction between moral and dogmatic probabilism, that the divide between Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism, and finally between Anglicanism and Ignatian Spirituality, is to be found?

The theology of Karl Rahner is an example that a true and radical agnosticism, an unconditional surrendering to the incomprehensible God, defines not only a true Christian spirituality, but also Catholic identity.⁴⁵ According to Rahner the divine self-communication can be expressed only in manifold mysteries: the personal assent given to these many formulations of the same mystery differs according to how each proposition is related to the ineffable mystery of God, and to the personal faith of a particular individual. In an essay on *The Faith of the Christian and the Doctrine of the Church*, Rahner refers to Vatican II’s concept of the hierarchy of truths and affirms that each single truth does not always live with the same certainty and infallibility in every single conscience or throughout the life of an individual. Truth is always perceived within an existential and historical hierarchical setting.

In this context we can discern not merely an objective structure in this Christian truth taken as a whole, but also (and this is just as important) a subjective ‘hierarchy of truth’ and, moreover, one that is perfectly justified. What we are seeking to convey is this: the various aspects and perspectives from which any Christian regards his personal life as it un-folds, or alternatively the totality of Christian doctrine from his own individual standpoint, vary very greatly.⁴⁶

A distinction is needed to be made between the official teaching of the Church and the personal acquisition by affective and rational assent.

We are not people who always and in every case have to uphold all that they actually state with the deep notes of ultimate interior

⁴⁵ See Karl Rahner, ‘The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology,’ in *Theological Investigations*, vol. IV (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), 36-73.

⁴⁶ See Karl Rahner, ‘The Faith of the Christian and the Doctrine of the Church,’ in *Theological Investigations*, vol. XIV (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1976), 24-46, at 36.

conviction and with an 'absolute assent' (as with the dogma of the Church) as though we were convinced of the fact that we are already in absolute and total possession of the truth in its fullness. Precisely so long as we are neither willing nor able to do this, precisely so long as we are, in this sense, humble individual Christians, subject to the influence of historical conditions there is a difference between the official teaching of the Church and that which concerns the concrete content of the personal faith of each particular individual.⁴⁷

What Rahner allows for each particular individual in relation to the official teaching of the Church, Anglicanism allows not only for the individual but for the Church as such. An Anglican cannot expect everyone to be Anglo-Catholic (High Church), evangelical (Low Church) or latitudinarian (Broad Church); and outside his/her Communion, an Anglican cannot expect the Anglican Communion to exhaust the spectrum of the whole catholicity. Anglicans understand themselves as particular church within the One Church of Christ.⁴⁸ Each church is just a fragment of the whole, acknowledging that all are victims of disunity, all share the responsibility for schism, and all are called to work for the healing of the wounds of the body of Christ.⁴⁹ Such ecclesiological understanding differs from the self-understanding of the Roman Catholic Church as the 'only' fulfilled realization of the Church of Christ. The final divide between Anglicanism and Ignatian Spirituality lies, therefore, in ecclesiological dogma and not in spirituality.⁵⁰

In his first Apostolic Exhortation Pope Francis reminds us that

there are times when the faithful, in listening to completely orthodox language, take away something alien to the authentic Gospel of Jesus Christ, because that language is alien to their own way of speaking to and understanding one another. With the holy intent of communicating the truth about God and humanity, we sometimes give them a false god or a human ideal which is not really Christian. In this way, we hold fast to a formulation while failing to convey its substance. This is the greatest danger. Let us never forget that 'the expression of

⁴⁷ Rahner, 'The Faith of the Christian,' 37.

⁴⁸ Avis, *The Identity of Anglicanism*, 4.

⁴⁹ See A.M. Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* (London: Longmans Green, 1936), 220.

⁵⁰ Ladislav Örsy, 'Authentic Learning and receiving A search for Criteria,' in Murray, ed., *Receptive Ecumenism*, 42.

truth can take different forms. The renewal of these forms of expression becomes necessary for the sake of transmitting to the people of today the Gospel message in its unchanging meaning'.⁵¹

In the interview on behalf of *La Civiltà Cattolica*, the magazine *America* and several other major Jesuit journals around the world, the 'Jesuit' Pope Francis stated that the Ignatian identity

is not shaped by discussion, but by discernment, which of course presupposes discussion as part of the process. The mystical dimension of discernment never defines its edges and does not complete the thought. The Jesuit must be a person whose thought is incomplete, in the sense of open-ended thinking.⁵²

Anglican ethos and Ignatian spirituality share a common interest in and emphasis on the theology of Incarnation, which calls for an ever deeper promptness in assuming humanity in all its complexities and paradoxes, in the contemplation of the ever greater glory of God (*Deus semper maior*). Both share as well many other common elements which derive from this main interest: comprehensiveness and probabilism, indifference and an apophatic sense of mystery, agnosticism and probabilism.

These two spiritual traditions look like members of a family. It is easy to see numerous overlapping similarities shared by them. They are not identical but they have many common features. The notion of 'family resemblances' is an important element of Ludwig Wittgenstein's later linguistic philosophy and may help in looking at our two traditions. This notion of logic argues that things which may be thought to be connected by one essential common feature may in fact be connected by a series of overlapping similarities, where no one feature is common to all. Wittgenstein states that 'I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than "family resemblances"; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, color of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and crisscross in the same way.'⁵³ There are many similarities between a father and son; usually, the boy will be somewhat like his

⁵¹ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation: *Evangelii Gaudium*, para. 41 in IV: A mission embodied within human limits.

⁵² See <http://www.americamagazine.org/pope-interview>

⁵³ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953), n° 67, 32.

sister and will also have some of his mother's characteristics, but it is possible that no one feature is shared by each individual within the family. This does not necessarily prevent there being a visible family resemblance. Wittgenstein uses such a notion of 'family resemblances' in order to show how 'a word' works and is understood and allows to connect 'words' beyond sharp boundaries. Wittgenstein asserts that there is a kind of family resemblance which runs through the meanings of words.

The notion of 'family resemblances' can be applied not only to words or languages but also to spiritual traditions. Between Ignatian Spirituality and an Anglican ethos there are resemblances which are not the result of a patchwork of common traits, but the disclosure of a shared major focus, the mystery of Incarnation, from which common traits descend and nourish each tradition, and make possible the exchange of gifts from one to the other, from one spirituality to the other. Looking at Anglicanism through the lenses of Ignatian Spirituality, we are reminded how God's loving Spirit is present far beyond one single spirituality or one denomination. Ignatian Spirituality is not synonymous with Jesuit spirituality. 'The Society of Jesus and its way of life are one particular embodiment of Ignatian Spirituality, but they are not the only form in which Ignatian Spirituality exists. Ignatian Spirituality is prior to Jesuit spirituality and in a sense more fundamental.'⁵⁴ Through the centuries Ignatian Spirituality has been a beacon for many Anglicans and adapted to their own tradition, inspiring those elements—comprehensiveness, indifference, probabilism and an apophatic sense of mystery—which both traditions share and emphasize because of their common focus on Incarnation as the mystery God's assumption of human reality.

Being aware of this 'chemistry' and 'family resemblance' between these two traditions, the former Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, the Rt. Revd Frank Griswold, supported the inclusion of Saint Ignatius of Loyola in the liturgical calendar of the Episcopal Church on July 31, moving the previous feast of Saint John of Arimathea to another day. Frank Griswold described himself as but one of many Anglicans nourished by Ignatian Spirituality. For many years he has made his annual retreats, following the Spiritual Exercises, and has

⁵⁴ David Lonsdale, *Eyes to see, ears to hear. An Introduction to Ignatian Spirituality* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 1991), 3.

trained other Anglican priests to give Exercises according to this method. The opening prayer for the feast of Saint Ignatius, written by the former Presiding Bishop who was also member of the Liturgical Commission of the Episcopal Church at that time, reads: 'Almighty God, from whom all good things come, you called Ignatius of Loyola to the service of your Divine Majesty and to find you in all things . . . ' Ignatius Loyola's feast is also found on the Liturgical Calendar of the Church of England (see *Common Worship* published in 2000).