Pope Francis as Interpreter of Ignatius’s Spiritual Exercises

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In September of 2015 Pope Francis recorded a message for a meeting of the International Congress of Theology, held in Buenos Aires on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the theology faculty at the Catholic University of Argentina. In his address, he communicated his understanding of theology, beginning with a reflection on the relationship between what I call “academic theology” and pastoral theology:

Not infrequently an opposition is generated between theology and pastoral thinking and action, as if they were two opposing, separated realities that didn’t have anything to do with one another. Not infrequently we identify the doctrinal mindset with being conservative and retrograde, and, conversely, we think about the pastoral mindset from the perspective of adaptation, reduction, accommodation. As if they had nothing to do with one another. What gets generated in this way is a false opposition between the so-called “pastorally minded” and the “academics,” between those on the side of the people and those on the side of doctrine. What gets generated is a false opposition between theology and thinking pastorally, between believing reflection and believing life. And then life has no room for reflection and reflection finds no room in life. The great fathers of the church, Irenaeus, Augustine, Basil, Ambrose, just to name a few, were great theologians because they were great pastors.¹

Francis states that one of the main contributions of Vatican II was overcoming this opposition, and, because of this, one of the principal tasks of theology is “the arduous work of distinguishing the message of Life from its forms of transmission, from its cultural elements that have a time encoded within.” He continues, “not to do this exercise in discernment leads in one way or another to a betrayal of the message.” He concludes, “This meeting of doctrine and the pastoral mindset is not optional, it is constitutive of a theology that aims to be ecclesial.”²

While this understanding of theology can be taken as a brief for the centrality of pastoral or practical theology to the work of academic theology, I follow two hints for arguing that it can also be understood as pressing the centrality of the discourse of spirituality. First, “believing life” (vida creyente) strikes me
as an apt synonym for spirituality, which is often described as “lived faith.” Both namings intend to point to the way that life is actually lived out in the ambient of belief. Francis’s point here, I believe, is that vida creyente, “believing life,” has its own integrity and structures that should be taken more seriously by theology. Homologously, as recent scholarship has stressed, Christian spirituality, or “lived faith,” incorporates in its own way the conceptual parameters, the doctrines that belong to Christian faith at one particular moment in history, which academic theology, for its part, labors to understand and interrelate more conceptually and abstractly. Second, he names this work of integrating the doctrinal element of Christian faith (lo doctrinal) and the pastoral element (lo pastoral) as a work of discernment, a term of art from Christian spirituality in general, and from his own spiritual tradition, founded by Ignatius of Loyola, in particular. He elsewhere names discernment as the element of Ignatian spirituality that is most important for his exercise of the Petrine ministry, and describes it in strikingly similar terms to those he used when addressing the theologians gathered in Buenos Aires. For him, discernment exemplifies the attitude of John XXIII, the architect of the Second Vatican Council, and takes place “in the presence of the Lord, looking at the signs, listening to the things that happen, the feeling of the people, especially the poor.”

We may add to these hints the fact that Francis has made it clear on more than one occasion that his Jesuit formation and his experience as a Jesuit, including as provincial of the Jesuits of Argentina in the 1970s, have decisively shaped his thought and papal practices, much more so than particular theological figures or schools. Unlike his two predecessors, the Argentinian pope was never an academic, and does not turn readily and spontaneously to the parameters of academic philosophy or theology. His difference in style is amply evident from the encyclicals and apostolic exhortations that have emerged during the first four years of his pontificate. Striking too is his frequent deployment of the language and traditions of Christian spirituality as shown in Laudato si. Both this encyclical and the apostolic exhortation, Amoris Laetitia, conclude with lengthy sections devoted to spirituality. He explains this feature, novel for this genre of magisterial statement, in these terms:

More than in ideas or concepts as such, I am interested in how such a spirituality can motivate us to a more passionate concern for the protection of our world. A commitment this lofty cannot be sustained by doctrine alone, without a spirituality capable of inspiring us, without an “interior impulse which encourages, motivates, nourishes and gives meaning to our individual and communal activity.”

While Francis of Assisi has pride of place in Laudato si, it seems abundantly clear that the spirituality that has been most formative of the pope’s thought and practice is that of Ignatius. With this in mind, I explore here the hypothesis that Christian spirituality (including Ignatian spirituality in particular) is a constitutive element and source of theology for Pope Francis, rather than an ancillary “frosting” on the doctrinal cake, or a merely subjective application of universal, self-sufficient principles worked out elsewhere. That is, not only is Francis an interpreter of the Spiritual Exercises, as the title of this essay suggests, but the Exercises interpret him, as it were. The spirituality laid out in such detail in Ignatius’s masterwork provides a hermeneutical lens for deepening our understanding of Francis’s theological assertions.

As a test case for this hypothesis, I take up the theme of mercy and its relationship to justice, a theme with a long and complex career in the history of theology. I draw from The Name of God is Mercy, a book that includes the bull Misericordiae Vultus, which proclaimed the year of mercy, as well as an interview with Francis on his thoughts and hopes about this jubilee year. I argue that his working out of the relationship between mercy and justice is best illuminated against the backdrop of his understanding of Ignatian spirituality. Outlining the pope’s understanding of Ignatian spirituality in a comprehensive way exceeds the limits of this essay. As it seems to me, a plausible shortcut is to use a preached retreat, “in the manner of St. Ignatius of Loyola,” that he gave to Spanish bishops in 2006, for which we have the text of his talks.

My argument proceeds in three stages. First, I argue that Francis’s overt statements on the relationship between justice and mercy are theoretically underdetermined and thus open to a variety of interpretations. Second, I argue that the most satisfying way of resolving this polysemia is to read these statements using the pattern established by the relationships of the first and the second week of the Spiritual Exercises, and the graces that they open up to those making the Exercises. These are, from the first week, an experience of one’s weakness and sinfulness together with a deep sense of being forgiven; and from the second week, an experience of being called to a deeper intimacy with Christ and to following him. Together, these graces inform the choices we make in life and enable us to experience union with God in and through these choices. For Francis, this is how people fulfill the demands of justice. Francis’s innovation as a reader of the Exercises is to place these “moments” of the Christian spiritual itinerary in the tightest possible relationship. This close interweaving on the level of the Christian’s spiritual itinerary provides the proper backdrop for interpreting the set of claims he makes about justice and mercy, which are not otherwise easily systematized. Third, as a contrastive case, I conclude with a brief comparison with John Paul II’s approach to this issue in his encyclical, Divus in Misericordia.
This cryptic set of statements is difficult to systematize, although the biblical background against which it is drawn, both from the Old and New Testaments, is clear. What does it mean for justice to be enveloped and surpassed? How precisely is justice “more just” where there is mercy? If justice and mercy are two parts of a single, unfolding reality, what are the stages of that unfolding, and how are the two parts related as this single reality unfolds? Two hints in The Name of God Is Mercy lead me to turn to the Spiritual Exercises to provide a framework in which to place and interpret these statements. First, when asked about the meaning and place of mercy in his own personal history, Francis refers to Gaston Fessard’s classic early theological commentary on the Exercises, La dialectique des exercices spirituels de saint Ignace de Loyola. He is interested in Fessard’s account of the dialectic interplay of shame, mercy, and hope that Ignatius expects to occur when placing oneself before the cross of Christ. This associates the experience of mercy with the so-called first week in the Spiritual Exercises.

The second clue, to which I already alluded, is Francis’s claim “that in Sacred Scripture, justice is conceived essentially as the faithful abandonment of oneself to God’s will.” This statement expresses the second of two purposes that Ignatius names for the Spiritual Exercises: “the name of spiritual exercises [is] given to any means of preparing and disposing our soul to rid itself of all its disordered affections and then, after removal, of seeking and finding God’s will in the ordering of our life for the salvation of our soul.” This suggests that for Francis, the full achievement of “justice” goes beyond conformity to a particular codification of God’s will, and also includes “faithful abandonment” to that will. What is faithful abandonment and how is it achieved? It is the fruit and goal of the spiritual life as a whole, and the Spiritual Exercises propose a set of practices to move progressively closer to it. Moreover, to the extent that the grace of experiencing mercy is central to the first stage or “week” of the Exercises, and to the extent that Ignatius insisted that if one did not find and embrace that grace he or she should not continue on, we already have a rendering in this spiritual classic of the theological claim that mercy is fundamental to justice. Or, as Francis states, “where there is mercy, justice is more just and fulfills its essence.” Hence, we have an initial framing of the relationship between mercy and justice.

FRANCIS’S READING OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES AS INTERPRETIVE LENS

Next, I follow these clues and explore this correlation suggested in the pope’s remarks on mercy and justice, drawing from the text of the retreat given to the bishops of Spain. Before doing so, a few brief words on the structure of Ignatius’s exercises are perhaps in order. Ignatius structures the retreat into four stages which he names “weeks.” They are distinguished by the materi-
als for prayer proper to each, but more fundamentally, by the type of grace Ignatius has the retreatant seek during each week. During the first week, one contemplates the death-dealing presence of sin in the world, one’s own complicity in that sin, and its ultimate outcome: death and hell. The grace one prays for is shame and confusion over how many times one has deserved damnation because of her or his sins, and intense sorrow and tears for those sins. However, the first week is not just about self-accusation, shame and confusion, or self-loathing; for Ignatius, it involves equally the experience that, my sins notwithstanding, God is still faithful to me. Ignatius expects that I will utter “an exclamation of wonder” that I am still held in existence and given the gifts of creation; the created world continues to sustain my life; and the angels and saints still intercede for me. In other words, my sinfullness is met by God’s mercy, reaching out to me and sustaining me in existence, indeed precisely, in my sinfullness. In a colloquy, intimate conversation, Ignatius has me “extoll the mercy of God our Lord, pouring out my thoughts to Him, and giving thanks to Him that up to this very moment he has granted me life. I will resolve with His grace to amend for the future.” Encountering both the depth and power of sin and also the deeper and more efficacious mercy of God, will elicit, Ignatius believes, a powerful and energizing disposition of gratitude and hope essential to an authentic choice, or election, of how to live my life.

It is only on the basis of the profound and personal appropriation of this realization, this grace, that Ignatius advises one to proceed to the “second week,” made up of a series of imaginative exercises that frame the process of discernment of the choice that will enable me more fully to seek and find God’s will in ordering my life. Some exercises of that week are meant to continue the work of detecting and confronting the continuing presence of sin in my life, “inordinate attachments,” in order to achieve a state of indifference in which my affective responses to the world are supple enough to be reoriented by a choice for a particular good that gradually emerges in the process of discernment of God’s will for my life. Other exercises place me imaginatively with Jesus, walking with him from nativity and hidden life through the conclusion of his public ministry as portrayed in the Gospels. Generally, one asks for the grace of “an intimate knowledge of our Lord, who has become human for me, so that I may love him more and follow him more closely.” Finally, in the third week one meditates on the passion and death of the Lord, noting how “the divinity hides itself,” and asking for the grace of “sorrow, compassion and shame because the Lord is going to his suffering because of my sin,” and “sorrow with Christ in sorrow, anguish with Christ in anguish, tears and deep grief because of the great affliction that Christ endures for me.” The fourth week takes up the resurrection, in which one prays for the grace “to be glad and rejoice intensely because of the great joy and the glory of Christ our Lord.”

Francis’s presentation of the Spiritual Exercises follows Ignatius’s advice that the exercises be accommodated to the needs and capacities of the one making them. He spends the greatest part of his time on the exercises of the second week. With the materials of that week, he spends little time with the contemplations on episodes from Jesus’s life, devoting most of his attention to the week’s less scripturally grounded exercises: the Contemplation on the Call of the King; the Meditation on the Two Standards, the Meditation on Three Classes of Person, and the reflection on Three Ways of Being Humble. Furthermore, his presentation is in the style of a “preached retreat,” rather than the individually directed retreat that was originally envisioned by Ignatius, and which was only widely recovered and practiced in the last century. In the preached retreat the different parts of the Exercises are the subject of lengthy talks, which the retreatants then take away for their private reflections. In his talks, Francis evinces a clear awareness of the challenges, perils and pitfalls that face a bishop (unsurprisingly, as he too faced similar issues for more than 15 years prior to writing his talks). He also shows an awareness of the dispiriting prospect that a rapidly secularizing Spanish society and culture presented its hierarchy. Many themes for which the future pope would come to be known show up here: the dangers of corruption, clericalism and spiritual worldliness; the need to pray for and cultivate a combative hope in the face of challenges facing the church; and the importance of discernment. And central to our theme, mercy appears frequently and prominently.

That Francis associates the first week with the experience of mercy is clear from the very outset of the retreat, as he chooses to frame the entire retreat with a reference to the Magnificat, “his mercy is from age to age”; “As with Mary [he tells them] our acts of thanksgiving, adoration and praise found our memory in the mercy of God that sustains us. With hope that is firmly rooted in him, we are thus prepared to fight the good fight of the faith and of love, on behalf of all those entrusted to our care.” The itinerary of the Spiritual Exercises, as the pope interprets and presents it here, is a remembering of God’s mercy [first week] giving rise to a hope that will enable the bishops to make the difficult pastoral discernments required of them to fulfill their calling and vocation [second week]. The activist character of his approach is indicated by the kind of hope that he has in mind, which he marks as the outcome of the retreat: “the grace of a combative hope.” The influence of Fessard’s articulation of the dialectic of mercy, shame, and hope is also clearly evident.

There are many interesting features of the way that Francis interprets and presents the complex weave of Ignatius’s Spiritual Exercises following this itinerary. For our purposes, I want to call attention to the way that he very tightly connects the first week of the Exercises with the second. That is, instead of seeing the first week as a stage through which we pass and then leave behind in
order to advance to the second, he presents them as dialectically interrelated. This, as I will suggest, patterns how he understands the relationship between mercy (first week) and justice (second week). They are not separate stages, but are internal to one another, each entailing the other.

The intercalation of the two weeks is most prominent in the chapter in which he treats the first week contemplations on sin. He proposes what he calls a “paradoxical pattern” emerging from the Gospels:

As we read the Gospels, a paradoxical pattern emerges: the Lord is more inclined to warn, correct, and reprimand those who are closest to him—his disciples and Peter in particular—than those who are distant. The Lord acts in this way to make it clear that ministry is a pure grace . . . In this context of the Lord’s gratuitous choice and his absolute fidelity, to be reprimanded by him means that one is receiving a sign of God’s immense mercy.”

To illustrate this paradox, he uses what he calls “the first confession of Simon Peter” in the story of the miraculous catch of fish (Luke 5:1–11 New Revised Standard Version). The context, Francis notes, is evangelization. The well-known story of the Lord teaching the crowds from Peter’s boat is presented. Having completed his teaching, Jesus has the disciples put out into deep water and, their night of fruitless toil notwithstanding, has them throw their nets over one more time, only to have their nets filled to the bursting point. His commentary on what follows is worth quoting in full:

At the sight of this prodigy, Simon Peter confesses himself a sinner. And in this very act, the Lord converts him into a Fisher of men. Conversion and mission are thus intimately united in the heart of Simon Peter. The Lord accepts his “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man” (Lk 5:8), but he reorients it with his “Do not be afraid, from now on you will be catching men” (Lk 5:10) . . . From that moment on, Simon Peter never separates these two dimensions of his life: he will always confess that he is a sinful man and a fisher of men. His sins will not prevent him from accomplishing the mission he has received (and he will never become an isolated sinner enclosed within his own sinfulness). His mission will not allow him to hide his sin, concealed behind a pharisaical mask.

This is for Francis the fruit of a genuine, graced experience of the first week: “The Lord is the ever greater One: when he calls us to conversion, far from diminishing us, he is giving us stature in his Kingdom. From the hand of the Lord who corrects us also comes his abundant mercy.” This is, I think, Francis’s way of taking into account the “Colloquy before the Cross” of the first week, in which, fresh from the experience of God’s faithful love and mercy even in the face of one’s sin, one places oneself before the cross and asks “what have I done for Christ?” “What am I doing for Christ?” “What will I do for Christ?” The experience of mercy is not just the experience of being pardoned but the experience of being “given stature in the Kingdom of God,” being given the dignity of being not just the object of God’s saving mercy and love, but its subject, making it a reality for oneself and for others. Thus, for the pope, experience of mercy without an experience of being given a mission is incomplete. On this reading of the Spiritual Exercises, the movement to the second week—with the so-called “Call of the King,” in which one imagines oneself along the model of a generous knight called into battle by a just King, and the “Two Standards,” in which one contemplates the “logic” of Christ in contrast to the “logic” of Satan, the enemy of our human nature—is not something totally new, but simply an elaboration of a dynamic already unleashed in and by the first week meditations on sin, mercy and the call to conversion. They are bridges that allow that dynamic to flow into the precise articulation of how I will respond to God’s mercy, which is the subject for discernment and choice during the second week.

There are other ways in which Francis’s presentation of the Exercises keep the first and second weeks tightly connected. For example, Chapter Four “The Spirit of the world or the ‘Anti-Kingdom’” looks ahead to the Meditation on the Two Standards in week two, yet the chapter also keeps the focus on sin, and turns to the Colloquy before the Cross of the first week. When he begins his discussion of the Meditation on the Call of the King proper to the second week, he keeps the focus (rightly enough) on the way this meditation “frames the contemplations on the life of Jesus within the context of a great vocation,” which refers back to his presentation of “the first call of Peter” in the reflections he drew from the first week.

Let us consider this close interrelating of the first and second weeks and the mutually implicated experiences of mercy and of mission, to unpack and interpret Francis’s statements about mercy and justice. He has said, “Justice and mercy are two dimensions of a single reality that unfolds progressively until it culminates in love.” The Spiritual Exercises map such an unfolding process, which begins with the transformative experience of mercy in the first week, passes through the conforming of oneself with the will of God in the discernment and choice of life in the second week, and culminates in the Contemplation to Attain Love at the end of the Exercises, which is an active love of the “contemplative in action.” Satisfying the demands of justice is the ever-renewed work of conforming one’s life with God’s will for oneself and for the world. This certainly requires attention to specific norms. Francis expounds, “The Church remembers the mercies of God and therefore tries to be faithful to the Law. The Ten Commandments are the juridical aspect that provides a human framework for God’s mercy.” A graced response, as Ignatius envisions it in the Spiritual Exercises, and which Francis takes up in his retreat talks, also
elicits and nourishes a discernment that is not only about applying those norms in and to the particularities of one’s own situation, but of revising and extending them in response to an “ever greater God.” This “ever greater God’s” call to act justly is heard more clearly and more radically (in the second week) the deeper our experience is of the depths of God’s mercy in coming to terms more radically with the power of sin in the world and in our own lives (in the first week). The process is not one driven by guilt or by demonizing oneself or others, but by the logic of gratitude and hope (as the Contemplation to Attain Love makes clear). It is also a commitment to justice that never gives up on others because it comes from the experience of mercy in which I realize that God has not given up on me. In short, as laid out by the dynamism of the Spiritual Exercises, “When there is mercy, justice is more just, and it fulfills its true essence.”

Finally, if we use this map for thinking about mercy and justice, we avoid the problem that mercy becomes a patronizing act of condescension on the part of someone in power over the weak and powerless, which often ends up simply confirming the powerless in that state and viewing mercy as a kind of divine noblesse oblige. The action of mercy, as Francis describes it by tying the first and second week closely together, is not just the forgiveness of a debt that the debtor cannot otherwise repay, but also, and indissolubly, an invitation to participate in God’s own agency in the world. Mercy’s pardon is found precisely in a call to agency that confers a unique dignity on the one pardoned by calling her or him to join in the process of bringing others into this unfolding process. I think that this is an important framing of what the pope means by mercy when he states that “Jesus Christ is the face of the Father’s mercy. These words might well sum up the mystery of the Christian faith.”

MERCY AND JUSTICE IN DIVES IN MISERICORDIA

To highlight the difference made by the background of Ignatian spirituality for Francis’s understanding of mercy and justice, I venture a brief comparison to another powerful expression of the centrality of mercy, this time from the magisterium of Pope John Paul II. In his 1980 encyclical, Dives in Misericordia, John Paul also emphasizes that “in Christ and through Christ God also becomes especially visible in His mercy.” Francis’s predecessor agrees as well that “true mercy is, so to speak, the most profound source of justice.” Yet, John Paul’s mode of argumentation is quite different from Francis’s. There was, in fact, a profound spiritual life that nourished the pope’s interest in mercy. John Paul canonized the Polish nun, Faustina Kowalska, an Apostle of Divine Mercy, and in her memory, declared the Sunday after Easter “Divine Mercy Sunday.” However, her life and reflections do not appear in Dives in Misericordia. Besides noting this difference from Francis, who readily cites saints and spiritual authors, the principal point I would make here is that locating the differences between the two on the relationship of mercy and justice requires us to pay attention to the role that Ignatian spirituality plays for Francis. In his explanation of the relationship between justice and mercy, John Paul is guided by 2 Cor. 5:21, “for our sake God made him who knew no sin to be sin,” from which he elaborates very densely presented atonement soteriology: “In the passion and death of Christ—in the fact that the Father did not spare His own Son, but ‘for our sake made him sin’—absolute justice is expressed, for Christ undergoes the passion and cross because of the sins of humanity.”

For Francis, on the other hand, I have argued that he sets the relationship in terms of the dialectic of shame, mercy, and combative hope as the driving force of being a follower of Christ. His is a discipleship soteriology. One is saved in and by becoming a disciple, one’s sinfulness and frailty notwithstanding.

This is not the place for a full-fledged comparison of these two soteriologies and the understandings of mercy and justice that arise from them. The approaches diverge but are not, at least in their main features, opposed. My point in sketching the contrast, however briefly, is that it can only be done securely by allowing the Spiritual Exercises to provide an interpretive grid for locating their differences when it comes to Francis’s articulation of the theme. For example, attention to the cross is not absent from his approach, evidenced by the crucial place that the first week Colloquy before the Cross has in his understanding of the experience of mercy. That being said, it is very clear that Francis does not deploy the mystery of the cross to construct an atonement soteriology to figure the relationship between justice and mercy, as does John Paul. It is also true that, while Francis is far clearer on the insistence that the grace of mercy has an inherent and dignifying call to discipleship, John Paul insists in his own way (by means of an interpretation of the parable of the prodigal son) that integral to mercy is a restoration of dignity to the one who is the object of mercy. Francis’s approach shows a far greater attention to the synoptic Gospels in comparison to John Paul’s approach, which relies on Paul, at least for working out the relationship of mercy and justice. This is just what one would expect given the centrality of the Gospels to the Spiritual Exercises. Moreover, he aligns himself more closely to those who argue that theological claims drawn from reflection on the cross and resurrection have to be far more closely integrated with those drawn from attention to the life and ministry of Jesus prior to his death than they often have been in atonement soteriologies. Lastly, knowledge born of discipleship is crucial for the current pope. He has what Johann Baptist Metz has called a “discipleship Christology,” that is one that stresses that knowledge of who Christ is has to arise from the experience of following him.
NOTES


2. Francis, Video Message.

3. Antonio Spadaro, S.J., A Big Heart Open to God: A Conversation with Pope Francis (New York: HarperOne, 2013), 12–14. Here and elsewhere, Francis associates discernment with a motto coined a century after Ignatius to encapsulate his spirituality: “Non coerceri maximo, continei tamen a minimo, divinum est.” He says the motto “offers parameters to assume a correct position for discernment, in order to hear the things of God from God’s ‘point of view.’ According to St. Ignatius great principles must be embodied in the circumstances of place, time, and people” (13). Discernment is precisely the arduous and time-consuming task of deciding how great and timeless principles (or dogmas, or theological assertions) can be detected and applied to particular contexts. For further reflection on this issue, see Peter Schinelle, S.J., “Pope Francis—Deeply Ignatian and Deeply Jesuit” (Toronto: Salt and Light Media Foundation, 2017), accessed March 17, 2017, http://saltandlighttv.org/blogfeed/getpost.php?did=68151&language=en.

4. Francis, A Big Heart Open to God, 14.

5. Laudato si, §§216–245; Amoris Laetitia, §§313–325.

6. Laudato si, §216. The quotation he gives is from his first apostolic exhortation, Evangelii Gaudium, §261.

7. I use “Ignatian spirituality” as a shorthand for the spirituality which, as recent scholarship has emphasized, was not created and shaped only by the nobleman-turned-ascetic from Loyola, even though he was the pathbreaker, but also by others among the first Jesuits, including the original companions and subsequent members of the Society of Jesus. Figures such as Peter Faber, Diego Lainez, and Jeronimo Nadal, each made important contributions. Indeed, Francis himself names Peter Faber as one of his models. A Big Heart Open to God, 19–21.


13. The Name of God is Mercy, 138. Francis's remarks concerning legalism here should not be directed at a caricatured Old Testament Judaism. But rather, in the context of his remarks, he is clearly addressing contemporary Catholicism in particular.

14. The Name of God is Mercy, 139.
15. The Name of God is Mercy, 140.
16. Misericordiae Vultus, §21, in The Name of God is Mercy, 141.
17. The Name of God is Mercy, 143.
18. The Name of God is Mercy, 143.
19. The Name of God is Mercy, 80.
21. Francis, The Name of God is Mercy, 10; emphasis added here.
23. Francis, The Name of God is Mercy, 80.

25. Ignatius, Sp. Ex., §60, 44. In a telling echo of our theme, I should wonder that the angels, “although they are the swords of God’s justice… have borne with me, protected me, and prayed for me?”
27. Sp. Ex., §104.
31. Sp. Ex., §221. Anthony DeMello notes that the graces of each week mark a gradual decentering of the one making the Exercises. The focus turns more and more from my sinfulness, my shame and confusion, my choice, to identification with Christ’s suffering and then joy. The first person pronoun gradually withdraws from the graces to be desired, which DeMello explains as the Spiritual Exercises’ way of modeling and effecting the Pauline assertion that “it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:20). See Anthony DeMello, S.J., Seek God Everywhere, 141–143.
33. After a brief introduction, a chapter is devoted to the Principle and Foundation (14 pages), two chapters to the first week (20 pages), and six chapters to the second week (56 pages). One chapter treats death and resurrection (third and fourth weeks totaling 12 pages), and a final chapter covers the famous Contemplation to Attain Love which concludes the fourth week and the Exercises (16 pages). About 40 percent of the text is devoted to the second week.
34. This practice began or was foreseen during Ignatius’s own lifetime and became more the rule as time went on. See Joseph de Guibert, The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1994), 301–304; John O’Malley, S.J., Th First Jesuits (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 127–133.
35. It figures prominently in the opening lines of his talks: Francis, In Him Alone is Our Hope, 9; and also 29, 33, 88, 116 (quoting Jas. 3:17), 122, 124.
36. In Him Alone is Our Hope, 9. He also chooses this because of a document that the Spanish bishops penned. The quote from Lk 1:50 is in a passage from a document approved by the Spanish Bishops Conference in November 1999: La fidelidad de Dios dura siempre. Mirada de fe al siglo XX.
37. In Him Alone is Our Hope, 10.
38. In Him Alone is Our Hope, 29.
39. In Him Alone is Our Hope, 30.
40. In Him Alone is Our Hope, 29.
41. In Him Alone is Our Hope, 48–49.
42. Francis, Misericordiae Vultus, §20.
43. Misericordiae Vultus, 124.
44. Francis begins his reflection on this famous contemplation: “When Saint Ignatius asks us to renew our memory of ‘the blessings of creation and redemption, and the special favors I have received’ (Sp. Ex., 234) he wants us to go much further than merely giving thanks for all that we have received. He wants to teach us to have more love” (119).
45. Misericordiae Vultus, 80.
46. Although Francis does not draw attention to this, what is remarkable in the story of Peter’s “first call” is that Jesus does not deny Peter’s confession of sinfulness in Lk 5:8; but neither does he respond with explicit words of forgiveness. The act of forgiving is implicit to the call to follow him.
47. Misericordiae Vultus, §1.
49. Francis, Dives in Misericordia, §14.
52. Francis alludes to the cross in saying that “God’s justice is his mercy given to everyone as a grace that flows from the death and resurrection of Jesus. The cross of Christ is God’s judgment on all of us and on the whole world, because through it he offers us the certitude of love and new life” (Misericordiae Vultus, §21). He does not elaborate these points into an atonement soteriology.
53. On the latter, see Dives in Misericordia, §6: “Nevertheless, the causes of this emotion [of the father at the end of the parable] are to be sought at a deeper level. Notice, the father is aware that a fundamental good has been saved: the good of his son’s humanity… Going on, one can therefore say that the love for the son, the love that springs from the very essence of fatherhood, in a way obliges the father to be concerned about his son’s dignity.”
54. “The contemporary Church is profoundly conscious that only on the basis of the mercy of God will she be able to carry out the tasks that derive from the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, and, in the first place, the ecumenical task which aims at uniting all those who confess Christ,” Dives in Misericordia, §13. In Misericordiae Vultus, Francis highlights the fact that he opened “the year of mercy” on the 50th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council, adding, “The Church feels a great need to
keep this event alive." He then quotes the words of John XXIII in opening the council:
"Now the Bride of Christ wishes to use the medicine of mercy rather than taking up the
arms of severity" (Misericordiae Vultus, §4).

55. It would be ridiculous to deny that John Paul had a deep and deeply motivating spiri-
tuality, and it may well be the case that a more fully adequate account of John Paul's
understanding of mercy would equally require identifying and surfacing resources in
Christian spirituality integral to his own practice of theology. Minimally, though, it
seems clear that he keeps the discourses of academic theology and spirituality more
distinct than Francis, and this difference in style is significant when it comes to content,
as I have just argued.

Anton Bruckner's Eighth Symphony:
An Interplay of Darkness and Light

DAVID GREENE

Those who love Anton Bruckner's last completed symphony love it greatly,
and put it on a par with Beethoven's and Mahler's final masterpieces. Many of
them say they hear things like "sublime darkeneses" and "equally transcendent
light" when they listen."(Stanislaw Skrowaczewski's presentation of Bruckner's
Eighth Symphony is accessible online and recommended for this reflection.)
Yet, they do not hear light driving darkness away. Rather, darkness and light
"come together," mysteriously continuous from one to the other, distinct and
still somehow identical. They say that darkness is both "vindicated" and "van-
quished," and light is also both "vindicated" and "vanquished."

Although I would not have come to these descriptions on my own, they
ring true to what happens when I hear the piece. Words like "sublime," "trans-
scendent," and "mysterious continuity" help me realize that something in the
music points me to the Transcendent. Or maybe it is the other way around:
relating to the Transcendent empowers me to connect to the music and to hear
something I might otherwise not perceive.

Two distinctions may help me explain what these "somethings" might
be. The first is the well-known difference between mere sounds and musical
sounds: to hear music is not to hear just sounds, but to hear sounds interrelated
with one another—repeating, contrasting, building to a climax, summoning
and answering one another, coming to an end. To hear music is to hear sounds-in-relation.2 The second is the difference, less well agreed upon, between pas-

sive and active listening. One is what Buber might call an I-It experience: I hear
the interrelated sounds, but they remain something external to me. The other
is what Buber calls an I-Thou relationship:3 I relate myself to the interrelating
sounds, and as with my relationships with other persons, sunsets, and storms,
relating to music defines me for the time of listening and beyond; hearing the
music is woven into who I am. If the sounds-in-relation somehow point me to
the Transcendent, then relating myself to them is also a relationship with the
Transcendent.4

Those who do not love Bruckner's Eighth dislike it greatly. They complain
that the sounds do not relate themselves convincingly to one another, and that
the piece is flawed by so many meaningless discontinuities that it is impossible,