

Towards a spirituality of solidarity with Johann Baptist Metz and Edith Stein

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Introduction

The Christian tradition provides manifold witness to the truth that theology and prayer are not entirely separate activities. Such towering figures in the history of Christian thought as Augustine and Aquinas, to name but two, have underpinned their intellectual endeavours with a life-long commitment to prayer; while medieval theologians such as Eckhart and Hildegard of Bingen regarded prayer and mystical experience as a rich resource for theological enquiry. Despite this well proven synergy, modernity placed the relationship under considerable threat. As theology struggled for intellectual legitimacy in the academy, the role of prayer as an essential part of its *modus operandi* became more of a liability than an advantage, and prayer and the insights derived from it became increasingly marginalised, if not jettisoned altogether¹. As something of a corrective, theological thinkers of the twentieth century have argued once again for an essential integrity between prayer and theology; Rahner, for example, situating everyday mysticism at the heart of his theological anthropology², and Balthasar insisting that theology should be done «on one's knees»³.

The shift from modernity to a post-modern era offers some further potential for the rehabilitation of prayer within theology, as commentators note an increasing dissatisfaction with the hegemony of critical reason and a concomitant turn to the spiritual⁴. While this shift might initially hold out

¹ For a discussion of this history see M. A. MCINTOSH, *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology*, Oxford, 1998.

² K. RAHNER, *The Spirit in the Church*, Trans. by J. G. CUMMING, London, 1979 [orig. German: 1977].

³ H. U. VON BALTHASAR, «Theology and Sanctity», *Explorations in Theology I: The Word Made Flesh*, Trans. by A. V. LITTLEDALE and A. DRU, San Francisco, 1989, p. 181-209, (p. 206), [orig. German: 1960].

⁴ P. TYLER and R. WOODS (eds), *The Bloomsbury Guide to Christian Spirituality*, London, 2012, p. 2.

the promise of a new willingness to resource theology with the truths embedded in the many and varied spiritual traditions of the church, the post-modern turn to the spiritual in fact turns out to be a predilection for a free-floating, amorphous, something-ist spirituality, which shares much of modernity's blindness to (if not principled rejection of) the truths embedded in pre-Enlightenment Christian tradition.

It is in this context that the following paper will explore the potential for Carmelite spirituality – and specifically the spiritual teaching offered by Edith Stein – to enter into a creative dialogue with contemporary theological thinking. Indeed, the paper will argue that Stein's mysticism cannot only engage with the political theology offered by the German theologian Johann Baptist Metz, but that it can moreover act as something of a corrective to it, thereby enabling it to respond to some of the theological criticisms levelled at it. Finally, it will be suggested that together Metz's theology and Stein's mysticism go some way to developing a spirituality of solidarity which speaks with particular pertinence to the contemporary era, both responding to some of the impulses found in postmodernity and providing them with a theological content rooted in the Christian tradition.

1. Political theology

There are a number of reasons why political theology offers a potentially rewarding arena in which to renegotiate the mutuality between prayer and theological endeavour. First, political theology has a long-held sensitivity to prayer and the role it can play, for example in correcting the emphasis on praxis in the liberation theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez⁵. This relationship between prayer and theology is, however, brought to special prominence in the work of Metz, political theology's founder and foremost proponent. Metz asserts that «all talk about God stems from talking with God»⁶ and, moreover, ultimately collapses into discourse with God⁷. For Metz, then, political theology both arises out of prayer and culminates in it. Secondly, Metz's theological project is developed in the context of a critical engagement with the Enlightenment which aims to critique not only some of modernity's key assumptions, but also theology's unthinking adoption of them. Not least among these is modernity's claim for an absolute truth accessible through the exertion of critical reason alone, and

⁵ A. PREVOT, «Reversed Thunder: The Significance of Prayer for Political Theology», *The Other Journal*, <http://theotherjournal.com/2012/09/17/reversed-thunder-the-significance-of-prayer-for-political-theology> [accessed 11 June 2013].

⁶ J. B. METZ and E. WIESEL, *Hope Against Hope: Johann Baptist Metz and Elie Wiesel Speak Out on the Holocaust*, Trans. by J. M. ASHLEY, New York, 1999, p. 31, [orig. German: 1993].

⁷ J. B. METZ, «The New Political Theology: The Status Questionis», in: *A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity*, Trans. by J. M. ASHLEY, New York, 1998, p. 23-29, (p. 28), [orig. German: 1992].

Christianity's concomitant decline (as Metz sees it) into a system of neatly packaged and humanly constructed answers⁸. As such, Metz seeks to delineate a "negative theology" which consciously omits to tie up all the loose ends, and in which prayer can offer a "dramatic and rebellious voice" to supplement the reasoned language of post-Enlightenment theological enquiry⁹.

Given this willingness on the part of Metz to take seriously the reciprocity between prayer and theology it is perhaps not surprising that his theological project culminates in the proposal of a specifically political mysticism which he regards as the appropriate response to the theological concerns with which he has grappled throughout his career. The following discussion will thus explore how Metz's mystical stance of *Leiden an Gott* arises from his endeavour to provide an adequate theological response, first to the context of the Enlightenment and, secondly, to the event of Auschwitz.

1.1 *Theology in modernity*

From the outset, Metz is acutely aware that the new locus of theology is the context of modernity. Unlike other theological responses, Metz wishes to take modernity seriously, to engage with its concerns and to recognize it as a valid, even necessary, *locus theologicus*¹⁰. On the other hand, Metz is not willing to adopt an unthinking or indiscriminate appropriation of all modern thought. He is looking for a critical engagement with the Enlightenment, what he calls a «theological enlightenment of the Enlightenment» using the resources which the Christian tradition can provide¹¹.

Consistent with his willingness to accept what is positive in modernity, Metz applauds the modern turn to the subject. Indeed, one of his earliest works, *Christliche Anthropozentrik*, argues that modernity's engagement with the subject is a legacy of Thomistic thinking and therefore an essentially Christian manoeuvre¹². With such a Christian underpinning to the anthropological turn, Metz agrees that any theological response to modernity must take this turn seriously, accepting the human as the legitimate subject for theology.

⁸ J. B. METZ und K. RAHNER, *Ermutigung zum Gebet*, Freiburg, 1977, p. 21.

⁹ J. B. METZ, *Hope Against Hope*, p. 43.

¹⁰ J. B. METZ, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology*, Trans. by J. M. ASHLEY, New York, 2007, p. 42, [orig. German: 1977, 1992].

¹¹ J. B. METZ, *Faith in History*, p. 48.

¹² Although published in 1962, *Christliche Anthropozentrik* remains unavailable in English translation. For a discussion of Metz's interpretation of Aquinas on this point see J. M. ASHLEY, *Interruptions: Mysticism, Politics and Theology in the Work of Johann Baptist Metz*, Notre Dame, 1998, p. 88-94.

On the other hand, one of Metz's primary concerns with the Enlightenment project focuses on this self-same turn to the subject. Metz laments that the subject to whom modernity has turned emerges as nothing more than the bourgeois individual; the middle-class European subject. The subject of modernity is thus the propertied individual, focused primarily on their personal concerns, living in a society governed by the principles of exchange, and practising a bourgeois religion which functions as little more than a means for celebrating the events and achievements of middle-class life¹³.

While this bourgeois subject and their religion clearly represent a betrayal of the true nature of both humanity and the Christian faith, Metz's real concern is that in attempting to negotiate its own anthropological turn, modern theology has likewise adopted the bourgeois individual. For Metz this creates a number of problems. First, by focusing on the needs of the European subject, theology is rendered incapable of attending to the needs of the whole church; the polycentric, global nature of the universal church is forgotten. Second, modernity's insistence on success makes any theology focused on the bourgeois individual deaf to the experiences of the suffering, the vanquished, and the forgotten victims of human history.

Perhaps Metz's greatest concern with the turn to the modern subject is, however, that the new subject of theology is not only middle-class, successful and European but is, critically, a highly privatised individual. As such, a core Christian insight is lost, that of the inherently social or "political" nature of humanity. Adopting this essentially privatised modern subject, theology too becomes tainted by individualism. Christian doctrines such as salvation and grace are no longer seen in the context of the whole Christian community, but are regarded as essentially private affairs; we become overly focussed on *my* salvation, *my* relationship with God, and fail to recognise that each of these concerns can only be truly understood in the context of the whole community – what salvation means for *all* humanity, how the *whole* human race stands in relation to God. Similarly, even eschatology becomes less and less universal, so that the end times are increasingly regarded in terms of the death and ultimate fate of the individual, rather than their impact on human history and society as a whole¹⁴.

Metz's second concern with the Enlightenment project centres on modernity's myth of progress. For Metz the myth of modernity is the illusion of a relentless evolution towards a better state of affairs; an «evolutionary or evolutionistic logic»¹⁵. This is a problem, not because Metz doesn't wish for progress, but because evolutionary logic suggests that this progress is necessarily and relentlessly underway, that society and the world are embarked on an inexorable upward trajectory. For Metz, moder-

¹³ For Metz's critique of the bourgeois subject see J. B. METZ, *Faith in History*, p. 46-59.

¹⁴ J. B. METZ, *Faith in History*, p. 72.

¹⁵ J. B. METZ, *Faith in History*, p. 24.

nity and bourgeois society thus operate under the soothing assumption «that everything will be alright in the end anyway»¹⁶.

Again, theology in modernity risks falling under this same spell of timelessness, a situation which is problematic because it lulls the Christian into what Metz calls a state of «evolutionistically tinged apathy»¹⁷. The need for Christian action, for labouring to build the kingdom in the here and now, is lost because that kingdom, like everything else, will evolve into being of its own accord, just as eager expectation of the Messiah's imminent arrival is dulled. In Metz's understanding, modern theology thus risks reducing the end things to nothing more than a refinement of the status quo. With this misconception, the Christian ability to be moved by events in time necessarily becomes blunted. As Metz describes it: «The radio announcer gives a brief, matter-of-fact report about some shattering catastrophe, and the music begins again. It is as though the music were an acoustic metaphor for the course of time, halted by nothing, submerging everything mercilessly and endlessly»¹⁸.

Metz's critique of the Enlightenment project has thus left him with two pressing concerns: the issue of the privatised subject and the myth of evolutionary progress. Any adequate theological response to modernity must, in Metz's view, not simply take over these characteristically modern ways of thinking, but provide a sufficiently critical response to them. Individualism and apathy must be the twin targets of a political theology, and Metz suggests two theological concepts with which to engage battle: solidarity and apocalyptic eschatology.

Metz's theological response to the privatisation of the modern subject is his insistence on humanity as essentially political or social. The appropriate subject of theology must not be the privatised, individual subject of bourgeois society, or indeed any specific subject at all¹⁹. Rather, theology must envisage a new way of being subjects, in solidarity or relationship with all other subjects. In fact, Metz will argue for an essential correlation between the capacity to become a subject oneself, and the coming to be subjects of all human persons. The religious subject thus understands that she has a practical interest in others becoming subjects too; that this is a necessary condition of her own becoming a subject. As such, Christian praxis becomes less concerned with one's own being a subject before God, and more focused on the ability of all persons to be subjects, a capacity which Metz sees as particularly hindered by situations of misery, oppression and hatred.

In order to promote a theological awareness of the other and the concern with their becoming subjects before God, Metz proposes the con-

¹⁶ J. B. METZ, *The Emergent Church: The Future of Christianity in a Postbourgeois World*, Trans. by P. MANN, London, 1981, p. 4, [orig. German: 1980].

¹⁷ J. B. METZ, *Faith in History*, p. 80.

¹⁸ J. B. METZ and K. RAHNER, *The Courage to Pray*, Trans. by S. O'BRIEN TWOHIG, London, 1980, p. 27, [orig. German: 1977].

¹⁹ J. B. METZ, *Faith in History*, p. 75.

cept of solidarity, which he proposes as one of the fundamental categories of political theology. «Solidarity is a category of assistance, of supporting and encouraging the subject in the face of that which threatens them»²⁰; it requires an active engagement with the needs and concerns of the other.

Here, however, Metz argues that solidarity must not be restricted to the concerns and needs of the immediate other, but must extend to all human subjects. Solidarity which is restricted solely to the interpersonal encounter with one's direct neighbour is little more than a «naturally arising connection of sympathy», which «cuts the idea of Christian solidarity in half from the very outset»²¹. True Christian solidarity must exist on a universal scale, extending both to the distant other and to the dead, to all those who's sufferings and victimisation have as yet gone unanswered. As such, Metz can argue that being a Christian must involve «the solidaristic hope in the God of the living and the dead who calls all persons to be subjects in God's presence»²².

At the same time, evolutionary apathy must be combatted by the reclaiming in Christian theology of an apocalyptic eschatology. Informed by the work of Walter Benjamin, Metz argues that we must live in the imminent expectation of the Messiah's arrival. This sense of anticipation is designed to drive a sense of urgency; rather than living in apathy, Christians should be motivated by the question: "how much time do we have left?"

On the other hand, Metz demands a certain "reserve" or silence about the nature of the eschaton which is to be so eagerly anticipated. Christian eschatology must consciously avoid any confident certainty about what this event will entail or the precise shape of the future to come. The surprising, unpredictable and unimaginable character of God's definitive and final interruption must be allowed to stand:

Christian eschatology is not an omniscient ideology about the future, but a *theologia negativa* of the future [...] what distinguishes the Christian and the secular ideologies of the future from one another is not that the Christians know *more*, but that they know *less* about the sought-after future of humanity and that they face up to this poverty of knowledge²³.

For Metz, solidarity and apocalyptic eschatology thus form the two primary means by which contemporary theology can provide a critical response to the Enlightenment project, providing a critical irritant to its twin tendencies to individualism and complacency. To further this cause Metz additionally calls for a greater use of the categories of memory and narrative, which he understands as standing in close inner relationship with sol-

²⁰ J. B. METZ, *Faith in History*, p. 208.

²¹ J. B. METZ, *Faith in History*, p. 209.

²² J. B. METZ, *Faith in History*, p. 23.

²³ J. B. METZ, *Theology of the World*, Trans. by W. GLEN-DOEPEL, London, 1969, p. 97, [orig. German: 1968]. Italics in the original.

idity.²⁴ Thus Metz argues that Christians must recall the dangerous memories of the suffering of others, memories of suffering which problematize the past and remind the Christian of all that is to be resolved in the future. Such dangerous memories are typically conveyed via narratives or stories, stories which should contain a practical-critical intent, transforming the subjects who hear them and prompting them to greater solidarity with the suffering.

1.2 *Theology after Auschwitz*

With the discussion of the role of memory and narrative it becomes apparent that suffering, both remembering the suffering of others and suffering in solidarity, is a critical informant of Metz's theology and an essential component of the mystical-political praxis of Christianity. As Metz's thinking develops further, suffering moves to the centre of his theological project, becoming the question with which he feels theology must grapple: the God-question «in its strangest, most ancient and most controversial form»²⁵. True to his insistence on the primacy of solidarity, however, Metz argues that the question of suffering must be considered in its "political garb" with attention focused not on my suffering, but on the suffering of the other.

Metz's intensified focus on suffering arises from his growing consciousness that the context of his theology is not only post-Enlightenment but, even more crucially, post-Auschwitz. For Metz, Auschwitz represents both the end of modernity and a new and significant crisis which demands theology be written in a new paradigm²⁶. Theology can no longer be done with one's back turned to Auschwitz, and Auschwitz requires «revising Christian theology altogether»²⁷. As such, Metz argues for a new authority in theology, the voice of the suffering subject.

Recognising that the suffering subject is theologically informative, Metz desires to bring suffering to the centre of his theological enterprise. As with his previous endeavours, Metz acknowledges that this manoeuvre is counter to the concerns of modernity. With its emphasis on success and well-being, the Enlightenment relegates suffering to the margins, refusing to tolerate its presence or engage with its meaning. At the same time,

²⁴ For the role of memory and narrative in Metz's thinking see especially J. B. METZ, *Faith in History*, p. 169-207.

²⁵ J. B. METZ, «Theology as Theodicy?», in: *A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity*, Trans. by J. M. ASHLEY, New York, 1998, p. 54-71, (p. 55), [orig. German: 1990].

²⁶ J. B. METZ, «Theology in the New Paradigm», in: *Love's Strategy: The Political Theology of Johann Baptist Metz*, Trans. by M. KÖHL, Harrisburg, 1999, p. 123-132, (p. 128), [orig. German: 1989].

²⁷ J. B. METZ, «Facing the Jews: Christian Theology after Auschwitz», in: *Faith and the Future: Essays on Theology, Solidarity and Modernity*, London, 1995, p. 38-48, (p. 44).

Metz considers this also to be one of the «constitutional temptations of Christianity»²⁸. At the heart of the Christian faith, Metz identifies Jesus' cry of abandonment from the cross, yet he argues that Christianity has, from the outset, struggled not to attenuate it to the point of inaudibility. Metz questions whether there is not «too much singing and not enough crying out in our Christianity»²⁹ and argues that that the cry of the crucified is essential to the gospel message. It is this cry which will henceforth sit at the centre of Metz's response to the situation of Auschwitz in his theo-political mysticism of *Leiden an Gott*.

That Metz's theological enterprise should culminate in a mysticism rather than a theological system, is consistent with his already identified resistance to a theology of answers, to his insistence on the integrity between prayer and theology and to his long-held conceptualisation of Christianity as both mystical and political³⁰. At the same time, a mystical response to the problem of suffering conforms to Metz's understanding that one of the indispensable ways solidarity is expressed is through prayer³¹. The following discussion will outline what Metz means by *Leiden an Gott*, demonstrating how it both encompasses and brings to heightened focus his central concerns of suffering, solidarity and apocalyptic eschatology.

1.3 *Leiden an Gott*

Metz's term, *Leiden an Gott*, presents English translators with some difficulty. Ashley suggests it is best rendered as «suffering unto God»³², while Martinez proposes the more problematic «suffering because of God»³³. In fact, the term incorporates a plurality of meanings and, recognising that no single English phrase can do it justice, the original German expression will here be retained.

If *Leiden an Gott* is ultimately untranslatable, its meaning is best exposed in its practical form. For Metz, Jesus' cry from the cross is the exemplar of *Leiden an Gott*; «My God, my God, why have you forsaken

²⁸ J. B. METZ, «The Church After Auschwitz», in: *A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity*, Trans. by J. M. ASHLEY, New York, 1998, p. 121-132, (p. 126), [orig. German: 1993].

²⁹ J. B. METZ, «The Church After Auschwitz», p. 125.

³⁰ In describing *Leiden an Gott* as a Christian mysticism Metz is probably influenced by Rahner's concept of everyday mysticism; he is singularly unconcerned with the presence of mystical phenomena in prayer.

³¹ J. B. METZ, *Faith in History*, p. 80.

³² For Ashley's discussion on this point see J. B. METZ, «Suffering Unto God», *Critical Inquiry* 20 (1994) 611-622, (p. 611; translator's note), Trans. by J. M. ASHLEY, [orig. German: 1994].

³³ G. MARTINEZ, *Confronting the Mystery of God: Political, Liberation and Public Theologies*, London, 2001, p. 86.

me?»³⁴. In this anguished cry, Jesus both receives his suffering from God and returns it back to him in the urgent expectation of a response. *Leiden an Gott* is thus a dynamic interchange between sufferer and cause, which is more than the passive endurance of an afflictive state. It is also what Metz terms a *Rückfragen an Gott*, an impassioned questioning of God which refuses to accept consolation or solace by appealing to myths or ideology: in the language of *Leiden an Gott*, the sufferer demands the response to the question of suffering that only God can give.

Locating *Leiden an Gott* at the place of the cross, Metz regards it as an essentially biblical mysticism. He finds it throughout the prayer traditions of Israel; in the psalms, in Job, and in the laments of the prophets. It is, for Metz, essentially a language of prayer:

This language of prayer is itself a language of suffering, a language of crisis, a language of affliction and of radical danger, a language of complaint and grievance, a language of crying out and, literally, of the grumbling of the children of Israel. The language of this God-mysticism is not first and foremost one of consoling answers for the suffering one is experiencing, but rather much more a language of passionate questions from the midst of suffering, questions turned toward God, full of highly charged expectation [...] What occurs in this language is not the repression but rather the acceptance of fear, mourning and pain; it is deeply rooted in the figure of night, in the experience of the soul's demise. It is less a song of the soul, more a loud crying out from the depths – and not a vague, undirected wailing, but a focused crying-out-to³⁵.

As the critical culmination of Metz's theological project, *Leiden an Gott* holds as central to its core meaning his key concerns of suffering, solidarity and eschatological expectation. First, Metz's dissatisfaction with other contemporary attempts to reconcile the theodicy question (as proposed by figures such as Barth, Moltmann and Balthasar) is that they do just that: reconcile the issue of suffering. Thus suffering is too quickly eternalised in the Godhead, mythologised and "aestheticised", or even converted into a «sturdy, solidaristic sharing of suffering»³⁶. In these responses, contemporary theologies capitulate too readily to the modern demand that religion make itself acceptable by being concerned only with «the attainment of happiness through avoidance of pain and mourning»³⁷. For Metz there is «too much singing and not enough crying out»³⁸ in contemporary Christianity.

³⁴ J. B. METZ, «Theodicy», p. 67.

³⁵ J. B. METZ, «Theodicy», p. 66-67.

³⁶ J. B. METZ, «Theodicy», p. 70.

³⁷ J. B. METZ, «A Passion for God: Religious Orders Today», in: *A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity*, Trans. by J. M. ASHLEY, New York, 1998, p. 150-174, (p. 156), [orig. German: 1991].

³⁸ J. B. METZ, «Passion», p. 159.

Metz's mysticism of *Leiden an Gott* provides both a theological and a mystical response to this. First, it allows the question of suffering to stand as an unreconciled but ever-present question at the heart of Christian thinking about God. Second, the language of prayer in *Leiden an Gott* actually amplifies the cry of the suffering subject. «Prayer does not restrain or constrain the language of suffering; rather it extends it immeasurably»³⁹. Metz's resolute positioning of suffering at the heart of his mystical-political theology thus offers a conscious riposte to both modernity's blindness to suffering and post-Auschwitz theology's refusal to engage with the historical reality of suffering.

Prayer for Metz has always been the activity which brings the human family into solidarity. In his early writing on prayer, Metz regards it as promoting a historical-solidarity with all those who have prayed through the history of humankind. «Those who pray are not alone; they form part of a great historical company; prayer is a matter of historical solidarity»⁴⁰. *Leiden an Gott* continues to be a deeply political project; Metz describes it as «an open-eyed mysticism that obliges us to perceive more acutely the suffering of others»⁴¹. At the same time, *Leiden an Gott* also promotes this solidarity; crying out to God on behalf of the other increases the capacity to perceive their suffering. It is a form of prayer «which sees more and not less. It is a mysticism that especially makes visible all invisible and inconvenient suffering, and – convenient or not – pays attention to it and takes responsibility for it»⁴². It is thus a political mysticism concerned with the essential solidarity of all human subjects.

Finally, *Leiden an Gott* exhibits an eschatological orientation. Suffering is returned to God in the eager anticipation of his response. This is a “temporally-charged expectation” which awaits the vindication of suffering, but with the understanding that God's response may belong to the final things. Thus Metz can describe *Rückfragen an Gott* as «an incessant eschatological turning of our questions back unto God»⁴³. At the same time, in an echo of his “eschatological reserve”, Metz suggests that the divine response may prove to be more than we imagine, that God may reveal himself as «greater and other than the answers to our questions, however hard and passionate they may be»⁴⁴. Finally, Metz sees a critical role for prayer as an act of resistance to the evolutionary apathy which modernity's myth of progress induces. «Prayer is an assault on the prevailing apathy» of our times.⁴⁵ The mysticism of *Leiden an Gott* thus re-

³⁹ J. B. METZ, *Courage*, p. 13.

⁴⁰ J. B. METZ, *Courage*, p. 9.

⁴¹ J. B. METZ, «Theodicy», p. 69.

⁴² J. B. METZ, «Passion», p. 163.

⁴³ J. B. METZ, «Theodicy», p. 67.

⁴⁴ J. B. METZ, *Followers of Christ: The Religious Life and the Church*, Trans. by T. LINTON, London, 1978, p. 64, [orig. German: 1977].

⁴⁵ J. B. METZ, *Courage*, p. 26.

tains all the central aspects of Metz's eschatology: that we should live in imminent expectation for God's definitive and unimaginable irruption into history, and that this expectation should guard us against the apathy of evolutionary timelessness.

1.4 Missing the resurrection

The foregoing discussion has argued that *Leiden an Gott* is the mystical stance in which the concerns of Metz's theological project culminate. With its emphasis on the suffering of others and its expectation of the eschatological resolution of the theodicy question, *Leiden an Gott* successfully brings solidarity, suffering and eschatology into sharp focus, thereby enabling Metz to complete his theological response to the post-Enlightenment and post-Auschwitz contexts. Despite this coherence between Metz's mystical understanding and his theological intentions, there are indications that the project is far from complete. Metz's mystical project indeed contains a conspicuous absence. In his description of Christian prayer there is no note of joy, no shout of thanksgiving or praise: while *Leiden an Gott* is firmly rooted at the cross, the resurrection is strikingly absent. With its emphasis on the cry of abandonment and the delay of any divine response until the moment of the eschaton, there seems no place in Metz's mystical thinking for the experience of the empty tomb, the exaltation of the Son, and the sending of the Spirit into the community.

Other commentators too have considered this absence of the resurrection in Metz's thinking. Reno, for example, agrees that the narrative memory of Jesus Christ «never progresses beyond the first moment; *memoria passionis* dominates [...] the memory of redemption is never explicated or narrated»⁴⁶. Reno argues that it is problematic from a Christological point of view. By remaining exclusively at the moment of the cross Metz «absolutizes the logic of only one aspect of Christology»⁴⁷. The full narrative of the memory of Jesus Christ is thus seriously impoverished; the Gospel story not retold in all its surprising completeness. Morrill also highlights Metz's emphasis on catastrophe and argues that, while this exists in Metz's thinking as a corrective to modern theology, it requires its own correction. By emphasising the *memoria passionis* in his theology and locating his mysticism exclusively at the cross, Metz risks making God appear wholly as *Deus absconditus*, the absent God whose response to suffering remains outstanding⁴⁸.

Bringing the insights of feminist theology and the experience of working with abuse victims to Metz's political theology, Vento applauds

⁴⁶ R. R. RENO, «Christology in Political and Liberation Theology», *The Thomist* 56 (1992) 291-322, (p. 303).

⁴⁷ R. R. RENO, «Christology», p. 315.

⁴⁸ B. T. MORRILL, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory: Political and Liturgical Theology in Dialogue*, Collegeville, 2000, p. 72.

the mysticism of *Leiden an Gott* for allowing the abused to mourn, resisting the glorification of suffering and retaining a sense of the unacceptability of victimisation. At the same time, the absence of the resurrection renders it an insufficient tool, with *Leiden an Gott* unable to provide victims with any of the sense of the regained agency which is so essential to their healing⁴⁹. In a later paper, Vento adds that the emphasis on the cross prevents *Leiden an Gott* from accommodating human well-being, even where this well-being is thoroughly political, experienced in solidarity with others, and ordered to their benefit⁵⁰.

Of course, what Metz is attempting to do with his emphasis on the cross is to allow suffering the fullest possible power as an irritant to individualised complacency. Introducing a resurrection component to *Leiden an Gott* would risk soothing or anaesthetising suffering by a too ready application of salvation as already present. The full experience of negation, alienation and abandonment, the unanswered question of suffering, must be allowed to stand in all its critical negativity. Martinez further highlights the danger that an appeal to the resurrection would pose to Metz's eschatology. If salvation is already present, then the apocalyptic nature of God's eschatological response is diminished⁵¹. Metz must therefore leave space for God's final and definitive response, an answer to our *Rückfragen* which will exceed all expectation. Seen in this light, Metz's reluctance to speak of the *memoria resurrectionis* in relation to *Leiden an Gott* appears fully understandable. The problem is that while proving true to some of the deepest concerns of Metz's thought, it both betrays others while damaging the overall intentions of the entire project.

First, the betrayals. Metz explicitly regards *Leiden an Gott* as a return to a biblical mode of prayer, identifying its roots in the laments of the psalmist, the prophets and Job. Yet to be truly rooted in these biblical origins, Metz's mysticism must also give voice to the shout of joy heard in the psalms, to the prophets' confident expression of God's closeness to his people, to Job's certainty of God's justice and unerring goodness. Relentless negativity cannot be a truly biblical mode of prayer, and thus to be entirely faithful to its origins *Leiden an Gott* must give voice to these other dimensions of Israel's prayer. Moreover, as biblical exegetes highlight there is some debate as to whether Christ's cry from the cross is as univocally negative as Metz assumes. In the Jewish tradition reciting the opening line of a psalm denotes citation of the whole psalm. Since Psalm 22 also recalls previous experience of God's saving action and expresses confidence in his continuing power to rescue the innocent, Jesus' cry may in-

⁴⁹ J. M. VENTO, «Violence, Trauma, and Resistance: A Feminist Appraisal of Metz's Mysticism of Suffering Unto God», *Horizons* 29 (2002) 7-22.

⁵⁰ J. M. VENTO, «Feminism and Inter-religious Dialogue in the New Political Theology», *Horizons* 34 (2007) 321-328.

⁵¹ G. MARTINEZ, *Confronting*, p. 239.

deed already contain the salvific element that Metz so resolutely resists⁵². By refusing to incorporate a resurrection component into *Leiden an Gott*, Metz thus potentially betrays the meaning of the very prayer which he understands to be paradigmatic of this mysticism.

In addition to these betrayals, there is a sense in which the absence of the resurrection in Metz's mysticism hampers the ability of his theological project to fulfil its aims. As already discussed, solidarity forms one of the basic categories of political theology and in *Leiden an Gott* is articulated as the crying out to God on behalf of the other. Metz's emphasis on solidarity with the victim thus successfully politicises suffering. Yet, as Reno highlights, his inability to incorporate the resurrection into this same mysticism runs the risk of simultaneously privatising joy⁵³. At the very least, the solidaristic experiencing of joy and the experience of shared salvation fail to find any kind of expression in Metz's mysticism as it currently stands. While the solidarity of the cross is apparent, the solidarity of the resurrection remains entirely hidden, problematically suggesting that joy, resurrection and salvation are all private enterprises.

A further problem concerns the ability of *Leiden an Gott* to act as an ideological critique of the Enlightenment. As Reno points out, Metz desires a critical engagement with modernity which is capable of recognising that within it which serves humanity well. By absolutising negativity Metz casts doubt in his ability to accept what is positive in the post-Enlightenment context⁵⁴. Moreover, his negativity prevents him from critiquing that which is positive in modernity as being merely a dulled reflection of Christian reality. For example, by incorporating a positive element into *Leiden an Gott* Metz might demonstrate that bourgeois joy in possessions or achievement is only a poor imitation of the Christian joy to be experienced at the eschaton.

Given these criticisms it seems important to explore how a resurrection component might be incorporated into Metz's mysticism of *Leiden an Gott*, without thereby doing damage to the intentions of his project. This is likely to be no easy task. The interruptive nature of the memory of suffering must not be lost; while space for God's definitive and unimaginable eschatological response must be reserved. Any attempt which soothes suffering or dulls apocalyptic expectation will necessarily end in failure. At the same time, the resurrection element must serve to bring to new focus the solidaristic and eschatological concerns which enable Metz to challenge the individualism and complacency of the modern subject. The resurrection, in other words, must prove to be as irritantly interruptive as the memory of suffering has already proved to be.

⁵² For further discussion of Jesus' use of this psalm see J. R. DONAHUE and D. J. HARRINGTON, *The Gospel of Mark*, «Sacra Pagina, 2», Collegeville, 2002, p. 450-452.

⁵³ R. R. RENO, *Christology*, p. 316.

⁵⁴ R. R. RENO, *Christology*, p. 301.

2. Carmelite Spirituality

Recent commentators have appealed to various spiritual traditions as a resource for both interpreting and supplementing Metz's thinking. For example, Downey adeptly surveys the parallels between Metz's concerns and those of Franciscan spirituality⁵⁵, while Ashley has attempted to respond directly to Metz's mysticism from within Ignatian spirituality⁵⁶. These studies represent promising initial attempts to bring the riches of Christian spirituality to Metz's project, although neither ultimately resolves the issue of how a resurrection component might be legitimately incorporated into *Leiden an Gott*. While there is no reason, *prima facie*, why this should not be accomplished within these traditions, it seems that Carmelite spirituality might offer particular resources to this end.

First, with her strong understanding of contemplative prayer as an ecclesial task carried out for the benefit of the other, Teresa of Avila establishes within the Carmelite tradition a strong sense of the solidaristic nature of prayer, a solidarity which extends beyond the immediate neighbour to include the entire people of God. Secondly, John of the Cross' spiritual teaching on the dark night instils within the same tradition a creative tolerance for negativity in prayer. Simultaneously, his ultimate vision of the soul's union with God and the living flame of divine love, together with Teresa's image of the divine indwelling at the centre of the interior castle prevent Carmelite mysticism from deteriorating into relentless misery. A strongly salvific element is retained; resurrection joy exists alongside the night of purgation. This capacity to hold in tension the complementary components of cross and resurrection, together with a strongly solidaristic understanding of prayer suggest that the Carmelite tradition may well be the locus where these elements can be reconciled in Metz's mysticism of *Leiden an Gott*. For a number of reasons, however, it is Stein who presents as the Carmelite interlocutor with special potential for the dialogue with political theology. While Stein inherits a strong understanding of the contemplative apostolate as part of her Teresian legacy, her philosophical thinking allows her to underpin this with a carefully thought out anthropology of the human person as essentially social. Like Metz, Stein regards the privatised individual as a damaging underestimation of what it means to be human.

Moreover, similarities in their circumstances mean that, like Metz, Stein articulates this social understanding of the person into a context profoundly marked by the experience of suffering. Both authors write into a post-war society, and both are strongly influenced by what they have witnessed of conflict; Metz as a young army conscript, and Stein in the death

⁵⁵ J. K. DOWNEY, *Eyes Wide Open: Political Theology and the Spirituality of Francis of Assisi*, unpublished manuscript.

⁵⁶ J. M. ASHLEY, *Interruptions*, p. 189-191.

of her colleagues and while nursing in a World War I field hospital. Given this personal contact with suffering, both assign to Christian prayer a key role in registering the suffering of the other. A particular sensitivity is demanded of the Christian that goes beyond the simple awareness of suffering to a solidaristic co-participation in *Leiden an Gott*.

Finally, Auschwitz forms the concrete reality which links these two thinkers. While Metz regards Auschwitz as the only legitimate test-case for prayer⁵⁷, Stein forges her theology against its looming presence and lives out her mysticism within its crucible. Stein's spirituality thus speaks with special authority to Metz's mysticism of *Leiden an Gott*.

2.1 An anthropological underpinning for solidarity and engagement

Stein describes her interest in the constitution of the human person as a life-long preoccupation⁵⁸. As both a philosopher and a theologian, Stein's constant concern is to construct an understanding of the human person, their nature, development and final end, and she sees no fundamental discontinuity between her philosophical and theological attempts to do this. Writing of the successful completion of a course of lectures on philosophical anthropology, she immediately proposes to start again from the theological perspective⁵⁹. Indeed, Stein never really distinguishes her writings as either wholly philosophical or entirely theological. Her doctoral dissertation, a philosophical study of empathy, considers whether God is capable of empathising, while *Finite and Eternal Being* is both a phenomenological exploration of Thomistic philosophy and the culmination of Stein's theological thought.

Other commentators concur that to separate Stein's philosophical thinking from her theological writings is to make a false distinction in what is a coherent and integrated project. MacIntyre, for example, sees her early writings as a "prologue" to her later thinking⁶⁰, and Calcagno insists that her thought «ought not to be read as two distinct periods, namely phenomenological and Christian»⁶¹. Consequently Stein's understanding of the human person and how this influences her mystical thinking will be explored through the content of both her philosophical and theological texts⁶².

⁵⁷ J. B. METZ, *Courage*, p. 9.

⁵⁸ E. STEIN, *Life in a Jewish Family*, Trans. by J. KOEPEL, «The Collected Works of Edith Stein, 1», Washington DC, 1986, p. 397, [orig. German: 1985].

⁵⁹ E. STEIN, *Self-Portrait in Letters, 1916-1942*, Trans. by J. KOEPEL, «The Collected Works of Edith Stein, 5», Washington DC, 1993, p. 134, [orig. German: 1987].

⁶⁰ A. MACINTYRE, *Edith Stein: A Philosophical Prologue*, London, 2006, p. 186.

⁶¹ A. CALCAGNO, *The Philosophy of Edith Stein*, Duquesne, 2007, p. xv.

⁶² A number of Edith's philosophical treatises remain untranslated into English. Where the secondary literature has highlighted sections in these texts I have supplied my own translations and this is indicated in the footnotes.

If Stein's philosophical and theological thinking is consistently focused on the nature of the human individual, then her understanding of that nature again shows a core insight. As Stein herself describes it, throughout her life she maintained a strong sense of the solidarity of humanity⁶³. While the person is both unique and individual, they are also essentially social, so that discussion of the human subject must always be developed through the perspective of their communal nature. «The constitution of the individual person is not grasped when it is not also investigated how far they are also determined by their social being»⁶⁴. In fact, Stein will go so far as to say that the term "person" cannot in the true sense of the word refer to a single person, «only a plurality of persons in community»⁶⁵. Any attempt by the individual to isolate themselves from their social relatedness is an artifice: «the individual's essence is just as originally social as individual»⁶⁶. Indeed Stein will later criticise her great spiritual mentor, John of the Cross, for failing to consider sufficiently the interaction of human souls.⁶⁷ Just as for Metz then, the subject for Stein is always the social subject: there is no such thing as a solitary human being.

Stein's understanding of the human person as fundamentally social arises from her earliest philosophical investigations into empathy, sentient causality and human community. For example, Stein determines that empathy both provides access to the interior experience of another, as well as being a powerful means to self-knowledge and self-development. Likewise, rather than being sealed within the individual, the internal operations of motivation are open to the influence of those outside ourselves⁶⁸.

Stein's early philosophical studies culminate in both a philosophical anthropology of the individual and a detailed ontology of human community. Within these texts, two core concepts enable Stein to elaborate in detail the relationship between the individual and the social. These concepts of the "personality core" (*Persönlichkeitskern*) and "life-power" (*Lebenskraft*) are initially developed as philosophical constructs. However, since Stein continues to develop them through her theological thinking, and since they significantly influence her understanding of prayer,

⁶³ E. STEIN, *Life*, p. 190.

⁶⁴ E. STEIN, *Der Aufbau der menschlichen Person: Vorlesung zur philosophischen Anthropologie*, bearbeitet von B. BECKMANN-ZÖLLER, «Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe, 14», Freiburg, 2010, p. 134, my translation.

⁶⁵ E. STEIN, «Martin Heidegger's Existentialphilosophie: Sein und Zeit», *Welt und Person: Beitrag zum Christlichen Wahrheitsstreben*, bearbeitet von L. GELBER und R. LEUVEN, «Edith Steins Werke, VI», Freiburg, 1962, pp. 69-116, p. 97, my translation.

⁶⁶ E. STEIN, «Individual and Community», *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, Trans. by M. C. BASEHEART and M. SAWICKI, «The Collected Works of Edith Stein, 7», Washington DC, 2000, p. 129-314, (p. 296), [orig. German: 1922].

⁶⁷ E. STEIN, *The Science of the Cross*, Trans. by J. KOEPEL, «The Collected Works of Edith Stein, 6», Washington DC, 2002, p. 155, [orig. German: 1983].

⁶⁸ E. STEIN, «Sentient Causality», in: *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, Trans. by M. C. BASEHEART and M. SAWICKI, «The Collected Works of Edith Stein, 7», Washington DC, 2000, p. 1-128, [orig. German: 1922].

Stein's conceptualisation of the social nature of the human person will be explored with special reference to them.

Stein delineates four phenomenal layers to the human person, of which the personality core, or personal level, is the most central. The personality core represents the locus of the individual's unique personality, their «unrepeatable individual particularity» as Stein terms it⁶⁹. This unique collection of personal characteristics and capacities is both unrepeatable and unchangeable. It is also, initially, under-developed, so that the task of the individual is both to live from their core and to develop their full individuality by allowing their unique personality to unfold. «Our first task is to cultivate our being, our individuality»⁷⁰. Here the personal interactions and communal relations in which the individual engages significantly influence this process. Indeed, Stein argues that there are some attributes that can only develop through participation in community. «There are properties that can only develop in unions of human persons»⁷¹.

The development of personality is however, not only socially mediated, but also oriented to a social end. Only by becoming fully individual is the person able to take up their unique vocation and make their specific contribution to the human community. «There is a correspondence between the uniqueness of the individuality and the suitable activity to which [the person] is called»⁷². Individuality is thus always at the service of human community. Consequently, Stein's texts on the education of women repeatedly emphasise that this must prioritise the full development of their humanity, their womanhood and their individuality.

In Stein's more explicitly theological writings she adopts Teresa's imagery of the interior castle, with the innermost region now the abode or dwelling place of God. Once again, the person's task is to penetrate most deeply to this centre, now to achieve union with God⁷³. Only in the surrender of the self in union with God at the heart of their being does the individual attain to the fullness of their being. Again, however, this move inwards is at the service of the social. Indeed, Stein regards it as a dual surrender both to God and «to the entire created world, and in particular to all spiritual beings united with God»⁷⁴. Spiritual union with God is simultaneously union with all. Accordingly, Stein refuses to equate the turn inwards with a rejection of the world. Living from one's centre actually creates right relationship with the world. «Human beings are called upon to live in their inmost region [...] only from there can they rightly come

⁶⁹ E. STEIN, *Finite and Eternal Being: An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being*, Trans. by K. F. REINHARDT, «The Collected Works of Edith Stein, 9», Washington DC, 2002, p. 506, [orig. German: 1949].

⁷⁰ E. STEIN, *Essays on Woman*, Trans. by F. M. OBEN, «The Collected Works of Edith Stein, 2», Washington DC, 1987, p. 261, [orig. German: 1959].

⁷¹ E. STEIN, «Individual and Community», p. 266.

⁷² E. STEIN, *Woman*, p. 193.

⁷³ E. STEIN, *Science*, p. 165.

⁷⁴ E. STEIN, *Being*, p. 457.

to terms with the world»⁷⁵. Moreover, right engagement with the world is not only a product of the move inwards but a necessary prerequisite for it. Stein argues that no one can penetrate the depths of the soul so much as those «who have, with a hot heart, embraced the world»⁷⁶.

Stein's second significant anthropological concept is that of life-power, which she adopts and adapts from the phenomenology of Theodor Lipps⁷⁷. Although she would have been unaware of the parallels, life-power shows strong similarities with Freud's concept of the libido⁷⁸. Stein's preferred imagery, however, is more reminiscent of electricity, with life-power flowing between the phenomenal layers of the person. The individual draws on life-power to complete some activities, while other tasks serve to replenish it⁷⁹.

Life-power is, however, another means by which individuals are fundamentally social. Life-power flows between persons, enthusing and energising the recipients. It is also a communal resource, with each community having its own supply⁸⁰. The level of life-power within the community determines its vitality and the activities it can complete. Individuals both contribute to the community's reservoir of life-power, and may draw from it. Thus a demanding task, beyond the capacity of the individual, may be successfully completed from within the community.

Finally, life-power is closely related to the task of living from one's centre. When situated at the centre of one's being, maximal levels of life-power are available to the individual. Conversely, «if the individual isn't living out of the depths, out of his soul, then these powers for his life get lost»⁸¹. Likewise, the more the person lives from their centre, the more life-power they radiate to others. «This radiation, which issues from the person and captivates others, is the stronger the more collectedly a human being lives in the innermost centre of the soul»⁸².

Just as the need to live from the personality core relates readily to the Teresian image of journeying to the soul's centre, so Stein's understanding of life-power paves the way for her appropriation of the doctrine of grace. Stein is, however, careful not simply to equate life-power with grace. «The life which pulsates in [...] the church is not the natural life of the individuals and groups that constitute its membership [...] grace is imparted or participated *divine* life»⁸³ which flows only from Christ, the head

⁷⁵ E. STEIN, *Science*, p. 160.

⁷⁶ E. STEIN, «Die Seelenburg», in: *Welt und Person: Beitrag zum christlichen Wahrheitsstreben*, bearbeitet von L. GELBER und R. LEUVEN, "Edith Steins Werke, VI", Freiburg, 1962, p. 39-68, (p. 66), my translation.

⁷⁷ E. STEIN, «Sentient Causality», p. 22.

⁷⁸ For a discussion of this issue see S. BORDEN, *Edith Stein*, "Outstanding Christian Thinkers", London, 2003, p. 34.

⁷⁹ E. STEIN, «Sentient Causality», pp. 22-38; 79-87.

⁸⁰ E. STEIN, «Individual and Community», pp. 196-222.

⁸¹ E. STEIN, «Individual and Community», p. 235.

⁸² E. STEIN, *Being*, p. 441.

⁸³ E. STEIN, *Being*, p. 413. Italics in the original.

of the church. Yet the flow of grace through the church shows some similarity with the flow of life-power. "Finite persons" are «free recipients, guardians and mediators of the life of grace»⁸⁴. As with life-power, grace is mediated from one person to another, and thereby flows among all the members of the mystical body of the church.

As this discussion hints, the church as the mystical body of Christ is the theological culmination of Stein's understanding of the connectedness of all human persons. While Stein regards all humanity as united by its common nature, she understands Christ as bringing that unity to a new, mystical reality. «Christ the head, we the members of the *corpus mysticum*: then we are to one another as member to member, and among ourselves we are *unum esse in Deo*, a divine life»⁸⁵.

Before going on to explore how Stein's anthropology influences her mysticism and understanding of prayer, one further aspect of her thought, her teleology, requires consideration. Stein's view of the human person is of a much more gradual progression towards the fullness of being than is found in Metz's apocalyptic eschatology; she even talks of the «entire evolution of the human race»⁸⁶.

Metz's objection to such a progressive teleology is that it smacks of modernity's mythology of evolution, thereby lulling us into a false sense of complacency. In fact, Stein's understanding of a more gradual progression towards a final end state allows her no space either for apathy or for privatised concern with one's own personal development. First, the progress towards our end state is once again a deeply communal affair:

It is of the very essence of humankind that every individual as well as the entire human family are to become what, according to their nature, they are destined to be in a process of temporal unfolding, and that this unfolding depends on the cooperation of each individual as well as on the common effort of all⁸⁷.

In fact, Stein goes so far as to say that without community and social life the final goal of humanity cannot be attained⁸⁸. Secondly, the process is a self-reinforcing dynamic. The more the individual grows towards their fullness of being, the more conscious they become of the communal nature of that being and their responsibility toward the whole. While persons may initially recognise only their membership of immediate com-

⁸⁴ E. STEIN, *Being*, p. 414.

⁸⁵ E. STEIN, «Das Weihnachtsgeheimnis: Menschenwerdung und Menschheit», in: *Geistliche Texte I*, bearbeitet von U. DOBHAN, *Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe*, Freiburg, 1985, p. 2-14, (p. 8), my translation.

⁸⁶ E. STEIN, *Being*, p. 510.

⁸⁷ E. STEIN, *Being*, p. 526.

⁸⁸ E. STEIN, «Die Theoretischen Grundlagen der sozialen Bildungsarbeit», in: *Bildung und Entfaltung der Individualität: Beiträge zum christlichen Erziehungsauftrag*, bearbeitet von M. A. NEYER und B. BECKMANN, «Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe, 16», Freiburg, 2001, p. 15-34, (p.16).

munities such as family or school, as their development advances they are able «to embrace humanity as a whole and to know of their obligations to this whole»⁸⁹. Further, the more the person is united to others, the more the reception of the other nourishes and forms their soul⁹⁰.

In such a situation of mutual interdependence, where teleological fulfilment both requires and facilitates the cooperation of the whole, there can be no room for apathy. Our responsibility for the other urges an ever deeper engagement with society. As such, Stein speaks of her own passionate participation in political events and deep sense of social responsibility⁹¹.

Not content with simply combatting apathy, Stein also desires to account for it. In a striking parallel with Metz she describes contrasting responses to a news story:

It may happen that two human beings listen jointly to the same news and that both have an intellectually clear grasp of its contents, such as, for example, the news of the Serbian regicide in the summer of 1914. However, one “thinks no more about it,” goes calmly on his way and a few minutes later is again busy with his plans for a summer vacation. The other is shaken in his innermost being⁹².

Stein attributes the indifference or apathy of the first listener to “superficial thinking” and links the ability to perceive the significance of events with how closely the person is living from their centre. «In this interiority the I is also closest to the meaning of every event, most open to the demands with which it is confronted, and in the best possible position to evaluate the significance and the import of these demands»⁹³. Here, Stein demonstrates once again how our individual centredness serves communal solidarity, this time in preventing apathy and moving us to action on behalf of the other. In her final theological work, Stein will also attribute a divine component to this ability to be touched by events, especially by the events of salvation history and the truths of faith. Contrasting «holy realism» (*heilige Sachlichkeit*) with rigid insensitivity or numbness of feeling, she argues that the capacity to perceive the significance of events and be moved by them occurs when the soul’s inner receptivity is reborn in the Holy Spirit⁹⁴. Although she doesn’t develop this point further, Stein’s comments suggest that she regards this sensitivity as determined by the soul’s depth of union with God. Once again, personal union with God is at the service of the social.

Stein’s philosophical and theological anthropology thus demonstrates her understanding of the human person as both individual and

⁸⁹ E. STEIN, *Being*, p. 510.

⁹⁰ E. STEIN, *Being*, p. 514.

⁹¹ E. STEIN, *Life*, pp. 190-191.

⁹² E. STEIN, *Being*, p. 437.

⁹³ E. STEIN, *Being*, p. 439.

⁹⁴ E. STEIN, *Science*, p. 10.

unique, but as also essentially social, and in solidarity with all humanity. The task of the individual is to unfold their unique particularity, yet this can only be done in relationship with others and benefits all. While fullness of being requires an inward movement, this is only achieved in relation to the world and has as its end purpose the solidaristic fulfilment of all. There is an ongoing positive interaction between individuality and solidarity, person and community, interiority and worldly engagement. In Metz's thinking, these anthropological concerns led him to develop the concept of *Leiden an Gott*, a mysticism which has been criticised for its neglect of the resurrection. We turn now to the mysticism to which Stein's anthropology points, enquiring whether it can both complement and supplement Metz's understanding of the nature of prayer.

2.2 Cross and resurrection in Stein's mysticism

Stein's anthropology brings two key themes to her understanding of prayer. First, prayer must involve a turn inwards, a journey to the centre of the soul and to union with God. Second, whatever occurs in the individual soul necessarily radiates to others and draws them into closer union with each other and with God. Prayer for Stein is, like all human activity, inherently political.

As with Metz's understanding of mysticism, prayer is for Stein essentially a very mundane activity. Although contemporaries marvelled at the long hours she spent in silent prayer, Stein herself describes it as «not great flights of the spirit, but mostly very humble and simple»⁹⁵. Moreover, while she is deeply conscious of the privilege of her contemplative vocation, she does not regard prayer as the exclusive preserve of cloistered religious. «More and more intensely we are developing an *army of Christ* clothed in the garments of the world»⁹⁶.

Stein's understanding of prayer as an ordinary activity is important when using her mystagogy to formulate a response to political theology. A mysticism which reconciles cross and resurrection in *Leiden an Gott* only by appealing to esoteric mystical experiences would have little to offer the concerns of everyday Christian prayer. Conversely, if the two elements can be reconciled within very ordinary prayer, then this highlights the absence of resurrection in *Leiden an Gott* as a real deficiency which potentially impoverishes the prayer of all Christians as they seek greater solidarity with the human community.

Like Metz, Stein sees Christ's prayer as paradigmatic of all Christian prayer; all prayer is the prayer of Christ⁹⁷. Similarly, Stein regards this

⁹⁵ E. STEIN, *Self-portrait*, p. 187.

⁹⁶ E. STEIN, *Woman*, p. 143. Italics in the original.

⁹⁷ E. STEIN, «The Prayer of the Church», in: *The Hidden Life: Hagiographic Essays, Meditations and Spiritual Texts*, Trans. by W. STEIN, «The Collected Works of Edith Stein, 4», Washington DC, 1992, p. 7-17, (p. 7), [orig. German: 1987].

prayer as being essentially the prayer of Christ from the cross, and sees our prayer as a participation in this suffering. At her Clothing, Stein chose the name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, later explaining:

by the Cross I understood the destiny of God's people which, even at that time, began to announce itself. I thought that those who recognised it as the cross of Christ had to take it upon themselves in the name of all. Certainly I know more today of what it means to be wedded to the Lord in the sign of the Cross⁹⁸.

Stein will even argue that there can be «a *vocation* to suffer with Christ»⁹⁹ and awaits the time when she will be allowed to feel more of her vocation to the cross than she does at present¹⁰⁰.

Lest her thinking be misunderstood, Stein adds some important qualifiers. The desire to participate in Christ's suffering can be no «mania for suffering caused by a perverse lust for pain». To be meaningful, however, it must be real suffering and not simply some pious exercise, a mere «loving remembrance of the Lord's suffering»¹⁰¹. Yet while the participation must be real and may take the form of serious anguish, it can also be accomplished, in Thérésian style, in the sacrifice of fidelity to little things or even in a «silent, life-long martyrdom that no one suspects»¹⁰².

Most importantly, sharing Christ's suffering on the cross is not empty suffering, for here Stein differs from Metz in an important respect. While Metz's perspective is of Christ's unanswered *Rückfragen an Gott*, Stein envisions Christ's suffering from the dual perspective of both cross and resurrection. Acknowledging the full meaning of the psalm with which Christ cries to the Father, and knowing the Father's response in the resurrection, Stein is able to view Christ's *Leiden an Gott* as salvific. Our participation in it is thus a sharing in his saving work:

When we are united with the Lord, we are members of the mystical body of Christ: Christ lives on in his members and continues to suffer in them. And the suffering borne in union with the Lord is his suffering, incorporated in the great work of salvation and fruitful therein¹⁰³.

Although Stein does not specifically use the term herself, this human share in Christ's suffering might be characterised as more of a suf-

⁹⁸ E. STEIN, *Self-portrait*, p. 295.

⁹⁹ E. STEIN, *Self-portrait*, p. 128. My italics.

¹⁰⁰ E. STEIN, *Self-portrait*, p. 197.

¹⁰¹ E. STEIN, «Love of the Cross: Some Thoughts for the Feast of St John of the Cross», in: *The Hidden Life: Hagiographic Essays, Meditations and Spiritual Texts*, Trans. by W. STEIN, «The Collected Works of Edith Stein, 4», Washington DC, 1992), p. 91-93, (p. 92), [orig. German: 1987].

¹⁰² E. STEIN, «On the History and Spirit of Carmel», in: *The Hidden Life: Hagiographic Essays, Meditations and Spiritual Texts*, Trans. by W. STEIN, «The Collected Works of Edith Stein, 4», Washington DC, 1992), p. 1-6, (p. 6), [orig. German: 1987].

¹⁰³ E. STEIN, *Self-portrait*, p. 128.

fering *with* God; a “*Leiden mit Gott*”, rather than a *Leiden an Gott*. Stein repeatedly emphasises that such suffering is only effective as part of Christ’s suffering. It is his work of salvation carried out within us and must originate from our relationship with Christ; «only in union with the divine Head does human suffering take on expiatory power»¹⁰⁴. Stein’s understanding of suffering with Christ thus necessarily contains a political element; it serves not primarily our individual salvation, but that of all humanity. Stein, however, develops this political dimension further. Prayer not only unites the soul with God, it also orientates us to the human other.

Stein argues that as well as furthering final salvation, the task of prayer is to make the mercy of God felt in the here and now. Thus the task of contemplation is to «draw down God’s grace and mercy on a humanity submerged in sin and need»¹⁰⁵. Those who pray «can be at all fronts, wherever there is grief», their compassionate love takes them there, a love which is both healing and soothing¹⁰⁶. This orientation allows a further supplementing of Metz’s mysticism, this time with what might be termed a “*Leiden am Menschen*”, a suffering unto the person¹⁰⁷. There is a deliberate going out of oneself in prayer into the world and towards the other, carrying God’s consolation to them in the midst of their suffering. «Bound to [Christ] you are as omnipresent as he is»¹⁰⁸. «One may not sever the connection with the world. I even believe that the deeper one is drawn into God, the more one must “go out of oneself”; that is, one must go to the world in order to carry the divine life into it»¹⁰⁹.

Consistent with her previous thinking, this political element of *Leiden am Menschen* drives the urgency of Stein’s prayer. While Metz laments banal intercessions which evade real involvement with the suffering of others,¹¹⁰ Stein’s model of intercessory prayer is that of Queen Esther, a passionate, urgent, danger-filled pleading for the other which puts one’s own life at risk.¹¹¹ Likewise, Stein understands that contemporary events require her to take her vocation to prayer ever more seriously; she «must now fight in the front line»¹¹². Stein thus urges her sisters to enhance the efficacy of their prayer by uniting themselves ever more deeply to Christ.¹¹³

¹⁰⁴ E. STEIN, «Love of the Cross», p. 93.

¹⁰⁵ E. STEIN, «Love for Love: The Life and Works of St Teresa of Jesus», in: *The Hidden Life: Hagiographic Essays, Meditations and Spiritual Texts*, Trans. by W. STEIN, «The Collected Works of Edith Stein, 4», Washington DC, 1992, p. 29-66, (p. 29), [orig. German: 1987].

¹⁰⁶ E. STEIN, «Elevation of the Cross, September 14, 1939: Ave Crux, Spes Unica!», in: *The Hidden Life: Hagiographic Essays, Meditations and Spiritual Texts*, Trans. by W. STEIN, «The Collected Works of Edith Stein, 4», Washington DC, 1992, p. 94-96, (p. 96), [orig. German: 1987].

¹⁰⁷ Again, Stein does not use this terminology herself.

¹⁰⁸ E. STEIN, «Ave Crux», p. 96.

¹⁰⁹ E. STEIN, *Self-portrait*, p. 54.

¹¹⁰ J. B. METZ, *Courage*, p. 20.

¹¹¹ E. STEIN, *Self-portrait*, p. 291.

¹¹² E. STEIN, *Self-portrait*, p. 324.

¹¹³ E. STEIN, «Ave Crux», p. 95.

Discussion of Stein's mysticism has demonstrated that, like Metz, her understanding of prayer contains a significant component of the *memoria passionis*. However, Stein's remembering of the cross is undertaken from the perspective of the resurrection. Suffering does not go unanswered. As such, Stein can understand participation in the cross as a share in Christ's salvific work which is effective both ultimately and in the present moment. While this identifies a resurrection component even within her *memoria passionis*, there is also a more central role for the resurrection in Stein's mystagogy for, as Stein claims, prayer must comprise both cross and resurrection.¹¹⁴

For Stein, union with God is not only union with God in suffering, but also union with him in love. In fact, Stein's definitive understanding of prayer is that it comprises "great lovers giving themselves to God who is love" so that the highest level of prayer attainable by the human soul is «the unbounded loving surrender to God and God's return gift, full and enduring union»¹¹⁵. Here the resurrection element in Stein's mysticism moves to the fore. Prayer is «grace upon grace»¹¹⁶. True to her anthropology, Stein immediately recognises this as having a political dimension: souls who have attained this unbounded union «can do nothing but radiate to other hearts the divine love that fills them and so participate in the perfection of all into unity with God»¹¹⁷.

The political element of prayer is thus not simply about labouring for the salvation of all and bringing consolation to the other, it is also about diffusing the fruits of the resurrection throughout humanity. From the souls united to God «the flood of divine love [...] overflows and becomes fruitful to all the ends of the earth»¹¹⁸. Prayer itself is «a fountain of grace that bubbles over everything»¹¹⁹. As such prayer becomes a hidden force for good in the world, significantly influencing human events: «Certainly the decisive turning points in world history are substantially co-determined by souls whom no history book ever mentions [...] we may live in confident certainty that what the Spirit of God secretly effects in us bears its fruits in the kingdom of God. We shall see them in eternity»¹²⁰.

For Stein there is no inconsistency between the *memoria passionis* and the *memoria resurrectionis*:

The love of the Cross in no way contradicts being a joyful child of God [...] to suffer and be happy although suffering, [...] to laugh and cry with

¹¹⁴ E. STEIN, *Science*, p. 185.

¹¹⁵ E. STEIN, «Prayer of the Church», p. 15.

¹¹⁶ E. STEIN, «Carmel», p. 6.

¹¹⁷ E. STEIN, «Prayer of the Church», p. 16.

¹¹⁸ E. STEIN, «Ave Crux», p. 95.

¹¹⁹ E. STEIN, «Carmel», p. 6.

¹²⁰ E. STEIN, «The Hidden Life and Epiphany», in: *The Hidden Life: Hagiographic Essays, Meditations and Spiritual Texts*, Trans. by W. STEIN, "The Collected Works of Edith Stein, 4", Washington DC, 1992, pp. 109-112, (pp. 110-111), [orig. German: 1987].

the children of this world and ceaselessly sing the praises of God with the choirs of angels – this is the life of the Christian until the morning of eternity breaks forth¹²¹.

Indeed for Stein, passion and resurrection are not only integral to one another, but held in a dynamic relationship. As already established, Stein regards the locus of union with God as being deep within the soul itself. In times of exterior hardship the soul's task is to withdraw to this place as often as possible. This unites the soul more closely with God, thereby increasing the salvific efficacy of its prayer. The heightened union with God, however, simultaneously increases the soul's capacity to diffuse this experience of divine love throughout humanity. The experience of cross and resurrection are thus not mutually exclusive, but rather mutually reinforcing. Observing the suffering of others, Stein comments that «for those who grasp this it becomes a time of great grace»¹²². She describes her own internment in Westerbork as «a chance to experience a little how to live purely from within»¹²³ so that her final letter reports, «so far I have been able to pray gloriously!»¹²⁴.

3. Towards a spirituality of solidarity

The foregoing discussion has suggested that, by analogy with Metz's mysticism, Stein's mystagogy contains both a *Leiden mit Gott* and a *Leiden am Menschen*. There is also a central role for the resurrection. Prayer is union both with God and the other in the joy of the resurrection, a union which serves to diffuse the fruits of that resurrection throughout the body of Christ. These findings suggest that Stein's mysticism allows her to supplement Metz's mystical-political prayer in three important ways.

First, Stein provides an account of the mystical-political value of suffering itself. For Metz, suffering is a political issue demanding a political response, but this is suffering as observed in the other. Using Stein's spirituality, it is possible to argue that prayerful engagement with one's own experience of suffering is also a political act, capable of being used for the benefit of others. The direct experience of suffering becomes both salvific and political, a move which provides the suffering subject with some sense of political agency in the midst of their suffering.

Secondly, the concept of *Leiden am Menschen* provides a means for the effects of prayer to be experienced in the here and now. Without negating the expectation of a definitive divine response at the eschaton, some

¹²¹ E. STEIN, «Love of the Cross», p. 93.

¹²² E. STEIN, *Self-portrait*, p. 288.

¹²³ E. STEIN, *Self-portrait*, p. 351.

¹²⁴ E. STEIN, *Self-portrait*, p. 353.

soothing of the other's suffering can be accomplished in the present moment. While this clearly benefits the subjects who suffer, it also provides those engaged in prayer with some sense of mystical-political agency, a factor which can only serve to encourage further prayer.

Finally, Stein's mysticism allows her to politicise the resurrection. Personal experience of union in prayer, of the joy of encounter with God, is not solely for the individual concerned. Rather, its benefits flow out to all through the connectedness of all human persons. Joy becomes a solidaristic event; the resurrection is politicised.

These developments do not attempt to deny or eradicate Metz's original stance of *Leiden an Gott*. The Christian mystic continues to stand in solidarity with the suffering other, crying out to God on their behalf and demanding the justice of a definitive eschatological response from the Father. At the same time, the utilisation of Stein's thought allows an additional resurrection component to be incorporated into the mysticism of *Leiden an Gott*. Joy and negation are thus allowed to stand in creative tension with one another. As the tradition of Christian prayer witnesses, a mysticism which neglects either remains incomplete. A final discussion must, however, consider whether this is achieved at the expense of Metz's original concerns; those of suffering, solidarity and eschatology.

Stein's mysticism certainly allows no anaesthetising or marginalising of suffering. Rather, suffering becomes central to mystical-political prayer and lies at the heart of what should occupy Christian attention. The prayerful engagement with suffering becomes a Christian imperative. Suffering is no longer alleviated so that the Christian can pray; rather it is incorporated into the heart of what it means to pray. As such, this form of mysticism continues to be a critical interruption to modernity's reluctance to engage with suffering.

The augmented understanding of *Leiden an Gott* continues to be a deeply political project, concerned with the ultimate solidarity of all human subjects. While previously this solidarity was restricted to the experience of suffering, the resurrection component allows solidarity also to be expressed in the encounter with joy and the experience of salvation. Privatised individuality continues to be critiqued as an impoverished understanding of human reality. Moreover, Stein's teleological vision of the fulfilment of human nature in union with God and with one another not only draws attention to our present solidarity, but holds before us the vision of solidaristic union as our ultimate goal. Christian eschatology continues to critique modernity's obsession with the privatised individual.

Finally, effective participation in realising the effects of salvation in the present time in no way encourages apathetic complacency or diminishes expectation of the Father's ultimate interruption in the eschaton. As Stein's use of the biblical figure Esther demonstrates, attaching a sense of political agency to Christian mystical-political prayer enhances the urgency with which it must be carried out. At the same time, some foretaste of the eschatological experience of resurrection surely only increases ex-

pectation of an event which nonetheless remains beyond our capacity to imagine.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion has demonstrated the potential for a creative dialogue between theology and Christian spirituality using the political theology of Johann Baptist Metz and the Carmelite mysticism of Edith Stein. The exploration has demonstrated that the two interlocutors come to the discussion as equal conversation partners. While Metz's theological concerns underpin the development of his political mysticism, it is the insights from Stein's teaching on prayer which are able to correct its shortcomings. It might be argued that these two conversation partners are particularly well disposed to a renewed dialogue between theology and prayer; Metz specifically seeks the additional voice which prayer brings to theology, while Stein's spirituality is grounded in a carefully reasoned theology of the human person. Nevertheless, the success demonstrated in the current conversation opens the way for further utilisation of the fruits of traditional spirituality in the realm of theological enquiry, and suggests this may be a valuable route for contemporary theology as it faces increased criticism for its reliance on critical reason in the postmodern era.

A final consideration concerns the relevance of a spirituality of solidarity for this contemporary context. Like Stein and Metz, other commentators identify the ability to register suffering as a key concern for contemporary society. For example, Soelle's slogan «better in agony than in numbness»¹²⁵ highlights modernity's inability to engage with suffering and suggests that any contemporary mysticism must recognise suffering as a potential locus for prayer.

While thus counteracting modernity's blindness to suffering, the proposed spirituality of solidarity likewise resists postmodernity's predilection for the negative. Informed by both Christ's passion and his resurrection, the new spirituality refuses to allow engagement with suffering to decline into hopeless nihilism, insisting on the solidarity of Christian joy and hope. Again, this insistence of human solidarity, accords well with postmodernity's new sensitivity to human connectedness, resisting some of the aggressive individualism which so characterised modern thinking. It likewise responds to the new appreciation of the spiritual found in postmodernity, although by presenting a spirituality grounded in the biblical and Christian tradition it simultaneously counteracts the eclectic, unstructured and unrooted spirituality so favoured by the contemporary era. In the dynamism between prayer and theology, then, we get something more, a contextual spirituality which shows a proper integrity be-

¹²⁵ D. SOELLE, *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance*, Trans. by B. and M. RUMSCHEIDT, Minneapolis, 2001, p. 146, [orig. German: 1997].

tween context and tradition; a creative response to the needs of the present time which both draws on and retains the rich treasures found in the long traditions of both Christian prayer and theological enquiry.

Abstract: The reclaiming of the essential integrity between prayer and theology has been identified as a key corrective to the over-rationalised theology of the modern era. This paper explores the potential for Carmelite spirituality to contribute significantly to this debate, providing a worked example of how Edith Stein's mysticism can supplement the political theology of Johann Baptist Metz. The dialogue culminates in the proposal of a new spirituality of solidarity which, being both theologically grounded and rooted in the Christian tradition, goes some way to responding to the eclectic and amorphous spirituality of postmodernity.

Key words: political theology; Carmelite spirituality; prayer; solidarity; suffering.

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