

Insights from the *Revelations of Divine Love* and the *Contemplation to Attain Love*

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Abstract: Religious conversion, following Bernard Lonergan, is deeply mystical: “other worldly falling in love,” “total, [unconditional] and permanent self-surrender.” Julian of Norwich and Ignatius of Loyola both give, albeit in quite different language, an experiential and imagination rich accounts of religious conversion. For Julian, this is the “oneing” of the soul to God; for Ignatius, the contemplation which makes “beings in love.”

Key Words: Julian of Norwich; *Revelations of Divine Love*; Ignatian exercises; Bernard Lonergan; religious conversion; *oneing*; contemplation

Lord Jesus, I give you my hands to do your work;
I give you my feet to go your way;
I give you my eyes to see as you do;
I give you my tongue to speak your words;
I give you my mind, Lord, that you may think in me;
I give you my spirit that you may pray in me,
That you may pray in me.
Above all, Lord, I give you my heart...¹

This Grail prayer flows from the heart of one deeply grounded in God. It is the song of one who is in love and longs to be in union with the source of all being. The author gives voice to a passionate desire to be emptied and filled with God, to become one with God. The litany of giving expresses a reciprocal movement of receiving from God and giving to God that evokes an endless series of conversions of body, mind, soul and heart. The poet describes what Bernard Lonergan identifies as *religious conversion: an other worldly falling in love* that is *total and permanent self-surrender without conditions, qualifications, or reservations*.² This way of conversion facilitates a transformation that enables human beings to become *beings in love*.³ Recently set in a contemplative melody by Margaret Rizza, this publication of the Grail Prayer reminds us, that today there is a growing number of people, both within and outside formal religious structures, seeking to live a spiritual life, to be contemplatives and live in harmony with God, self, all people and all creation.⁴ The popularity of this hymn suggests that the *Spirit of Love* is still very much alive and active,⁵ enkindling the desire of human hearts to fall in love and to seek a way of life that is in union with divine love.

¹ Margaret Rizza, *Fire of Love: Music for Contemplative Worship* (Kevin Mayhew, 1998), 6.

² Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 1.10.2.240.

³ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 1.4.2-4, 104-109.

⁴ See Sandra M. Schneiders, “Religion vs. Spirituality: A Contemporary Conundrum,” *Spiritus* 3 (2003): 163-185, where she describes this growth, especially in the United States.

⁵ Rizza, *Fire of Love*, 3.

In response to those who seek encouragement in their longing to yield to the gentle but insistent desire to be grounded in their source, to give of what they have received, and to live a transforming way of conversion, I will explore Bernard Lonergan's theology of religious conversion and present insights into the nature of conversion from two classic voices from the tradition, Julian of Norwich and Ignatius of Loyola. Though Julian and Ignatius wrote in very different times and in very different genres, the *Revelation of Divine Love* by Julian of Norwich and the *Contemplation to Attain Love* by Ignatius of Loyola complement each other and inspire us, as we seek to cultivate a way of being that enables us to experience religious conversion. After examining Lonergan's theology of religious conversion, I will show how this way of conversion is in essence an experience of *oneing*, as described in the *Revelations of Divine Love*. I will then demonstrate how the experience of religious conversion, of becoming more and more completely one with God, occurs in the dynamic of the paschal mystery evoked by the *Spiritual Exercises* that reaches a climax in the *Contemplation to Attain Love*. Finally, I will draw conclusions for what this has to say to those who desire to live a contemplative life today.

Before focusing on religious conversion, some brief reminders concerning Bernard Lonergan, Julian of Norwich and Ignatius of Loyola will help situate them in context. Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984), a Canadian Jesuit, is one of the great twentieth century theologians, who gives us valuable insights into the content and process of conversion. His perceptive writings provide a systematic method for achieving spiritual growth, centering on conversion. In his major work, *Method in Theology* (1972), he describes an experiential pattern in human development that begins in experience, evolves into reflection on the experience, insights into the experience, judgments about these insights and action on these judgments. His clear and systematic analysis of human experience assists us in understanding how we can nurture growth towards union with God. Centuries earlier in England, Julian of Norwich (1342-1420) wrote the *Revelations of Divine Love*, a classic of Middle English literature that vividly describes the experience of ongoing conversion as *oneing*. In the short text, written shortly after a visionary experience in prayer in 1373, and the more theological long text, composed after fifteen years reflection of the meaning of the showings or visions, Julian describes how we are gifted in origin in the love of the Trinity, and immersed and enfolded in love throughout our lives, until we return to the Trinity in graced fulfilment. The revelations tell of the journey of human beings from God to God, a journey of deeper and deeper conversion. Julian's colourful, visual descriptions of the experience of divine love, give us a mystical way of expressing the theological and spiritual dimensions of the process of conversion and assist us in recognizing our own personal invitation to become one with God. The Spaniard, Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) is also deeply concerned about conversion. Influenced by a profound conversion experience in 1521, that occurred as he recovered from a severe leg wound suffered at war, and a visionary experience at La Storta, in 1537 he developed the *Spiritual Exercises* that blend his personal mysticism with pastoral experience.⁶ In the concise genre of a rule with notes, Ignatius provides a reliable guide for a director, who assists a directee to seek and identify God's will and desire for his or her life. The exercises give a series of four weeks of meditation and contemplation on Christ's life, death and resurrection, that invite the exercitant to live the paschal mystery. This paschal pattern of the exercises draws the pray-er to conversion of mind, body, soul and heart. In the words of Avery Dulles, the

⁶ See Harvey D. Egan, in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, 522-529.

Exercises “have been the instrument of countless conversions.”⁷ They are a manual of conversion *par excellence*.

Though Lonergan, Julian and Ignatius write in a very different genre, time and culture, they each have a classic perception of the experience of conversion. They complement each other and create rich and inclusive insights for those who seek conversion today.

LONERGAN’S THEOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS CONVERSION

Lonergan’s way of conversion describes the experience of de-centering that enables us to re-centre in our centre that is God. He presents conversion as a complex process of transformation involving various judgments, decisions and actions that move us from an established horizon, usually formed through the desires and addictions of the false self, into a new horizon of knowing, valuing and acting, informed by our true self that has its ground in the being of God.⁸ In *Method in Theology*, Lonergan distinguishes three phases in this process of transformation - *intellectual*, *moral* and *religious conversion* - that create a dialectic. Other theologians expand this triad to include affective, socio-political⁹ and somatic conversion.¹⁰ In summary, *intellectual conversion* clarifies the horizon of our knowing. It questions and eliminates deeply held, distorted myths about reality, to enable divine wisdom to be the only source of our knowing. *Moral conversion* shifts our criteria for decision making from the satisfaction of the *self* as the basis of choice, to the discovery and pursuit of truth and value. *Religious conversion* integrates the history of our conversions and establishes us firmly in our centre in God. Inclusive of intellectual and moral conversion, it frees us to surrender all so that we may love in a way that engenders self-transcendence. In the words of Lonergan the capacity for religious conversion:

becomes an actuality when one falls in love. Then one’s being becomes being in love. Such being in love has its antecedents, its causes, its conditions, its occasions. But once it has blossomed forth and as long as it lasts it takes over. It is the first principle. From it flow one’s desires and fears, one’s joys and sorrows, one’s discernment of values, one’s decisions and deeds....¹¹

Once we have fallen in love, love takes over. Love becomes the centre of being, the source of our decisions, the goal of our longing. When we fall in love with God, the illusionary, superficial grounds of our being, created through our fearful responses to pain, gradually, piece by piece fall away. This makes space for God to be the only ground of our being, the only source and informing principle. The experience of falling draws us back to our origin in God, to our original union, to the centre of our being where God makes a home in us and we have a home in God. Now from the ground of being, one in the being of God, our desires

⁷ Avery Dulles, “Introduction,” *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: Based on the Studies of the Language of the Autograph*, trans. Louis J. Puhl, Vintage Spiritual Classics (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), xviii.

⁸ Lonergan refers to this as a transcendental method which involves being attentive, being intelligent, being reasonable and being responsible: *Method in Theology*, 1.1.3.13-20.

⁹ See Donald L. Gelpi, *The Conversion Experience: A Reflective Process for RCIA Participants and Others* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998).

¹⁰ See Len Sperry. *Transforming Self and Community: Revisioning Pastoral Counseling and Spiritual Direction* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002). These conversions create an important holistic understanding of conversion, but because the focus of this paper is on religious conversion I will stay with Lonergan’s original distinctions.

¹¹ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 1.4.2.105.

and fears, our joys and sorrows, our discernment and value, our decisions and deeds have their source in God who is love. We become *beings in love*.

The experience of becoming *beings in love* is holy. It is filled with awe. Lonergan describes the mysterious nature of the experience:

Because the dynamic state is conscious without being known, it is an experience of mystery. Because it is being in love, the mystery is not merely attractive but fascinating; to it one belongs; by it one is possessed. Because it is unmeasured love the mystery evokes awe. Of itself then in as much as it is conscious without being known, the gift of God's love is an experience of the holy, of Rudolf Otto's *mysterium fascinans et tremendum*. It is what Paul Tillich named being grasped by ultimate concern. It corresponds to Ignatius of Loyola's consolation that has no previous cause....¹²

This sense of *being in love*, of belonging to God and being possessed by God, experienced consciously without being fully known, is experienced in contemplation. It is what the mystics describe as transforming union or *oneing*. It is a movement into deeper and deeper identification with God who is love, or *oneing* in God. It is the same experience Ignatius cultivates through the *Spiritual Exercises*. Lonergan elucidates: *When someone transcendent is my beloved, he is in my heart, real to me from within me*.¹³ The sense of being possessed by love is experienced deep within. It is real. This presence of the beloved in the human heart inciting our love has an authenticity that can never be doubted.

This being in love is a gift that is ours because *God is love...* and *... Love has been perfected among us* (1 John 4:16b-17b). It is mystery, *mysterium fascinans et tremendum*, beyond the limitations of our imagining. It wounds us and incites us to long for union with the beloved. William Johnston's words capture the wonder of the experience:

It is existential love at the level of being. It is love of the finite for the infinite, love of the limited for the unlimited, love of the contingent for the necessary, love of the creature for the creator. This is a spiritual passion that consumes one's whole person. It is the wound of separate being longing for completion, a wound that will only be healed when one's being is united with God who is love.¹⁴

Religious conversion creates in us an unquenchable passion that consumes our whole being. It initiates an insatiable desire to be true to our origins, to fulfil God's desire for us to be one. It enflames finite love to seek the infinite, limited conditional love to love unconditionally, dependent love to become free. It creates a wound that can never be healed until we are one with God, until we love with the gift of God's own love.

Let us now see how this experience of existential love at the level of being, that draws us to seek union with God, is an experience of *oneing*.

CONVERSION AS *ONEING*

If we consider conversion to be growth towards self-transcendence, towards becoming *beings in love without restrictions*, it can be helpful to envisage conversion as a dynamic of *oneing*. The theology of Julian of Norwich gives an example where conversion is understood as the experience of *oneing*, of becoming one with God.¹⁵ In Julian's theology,

¹² Method in Theology, 1.4.3.106

¹³ Method in Theology, 1.4.4.109

¹⁴ William Johnston, *Mystical Theology: The Science of Love* (New York: Orbis Books, 2000), 185.

¹⁵ There has been a marked re-discovery of the value of Julian's insights for contemporary theology and spirituality in the past twenty years. See for example, Grace Jantzen, *Julian of Norwich: Mystic and Theologian* (London: SPCK, 1987); Joan Nuth, *Wisdom's Daughter: The Theology of Julian of Norwich* (New York: Crossroad, 1991); and Denise Nowakowski Baker, *Julian of Norwich's Showings: From Vision to Book* (Princeton: Princeton

we have the potential to become one with God because of our original *oneing* in Christ where we are *knit in a knot that is so subtle and mighty it is all oned into God* (14:54.60-61).¹⁶ Julian describes this as a *rightful knitting and an endless oneing* (14:53.23-24). It is right, it belongs to us, it is ours, and it is endless, eternal. The image of a Celtic knot comes to mind where threads knit together and intertwine in an enfolding circular motion centering on the point of inter-section. The threads are so closely interconnected that any movement or action will affect the whole. A knitted garment gives the same sense of threads being interlocked to create a whole. The image conveys a profound sense of intimacy, of union and communion in Christ, in the Trinity. And yet, it preserves the distinction between the divine and the human. *Knitting and oneing* evocatively describes how human beings are one with God, and are in a relationship of continually being made more fully one, *knit in this knot, and oned in this oneing, and made holy in this holiness* (14:54.63-64). Human beings are one, and yet in a dynamic, transforming, mutually self-giving relationship of *oneing*, until we become, fully whole, fully one in the Trinity.

Julian's concept of *oneing* is virtually untranslatable. *Oned* in Middle English means to be one, united, joined, blended or fused.¹⁷ Yet none of these words express the sense of this primordial inter-penetration of the divine and the human that preserves difference in identity. There is something mystical and indefinable about the union that *oneing* conveys. *Oneing* occurs through the presence of the Holy Spirit, through *sweet touchings of grace* (14:52.62). The Spirit touches us, creating a desire in us to seek to be one with Christ. Julian explains: *Seeking is a true and gracious lasting will of the soul that ones and fastens us to the will of our Lord by the sweet silent working of the Holy Spirit* (14:41.30-32). The Holy Spirit incites our desire for God, inspiring us to seek in prayer. This seeking *ones and fastens* us to the will of Christ. Thus *oneing* involves seeking, fastening, conforming our will to the will of Christ. *Oneing* continues the process of creation and recreation until the union we share with Christ in our *original knot* is complete. Although uniting is the usual translation for *oneing*, this seems ineffectual in comparison to *oneing*. Uniting does not adequately convey the indissolubility of our original *oneing* through Christ in the Trinity, or the dynamism of the love that is shared in the continuation of this *oneing*. Uniting does not convey the dynamic and all-encompassing nature of the intellectual, moral and religious conversion that draws the whole of our being into becoming *beings in love* in Christ.

THE PRAYER OF ONEING

Julian's revelations explore how *prayer ones the soul to God* (14:43.2). Prayer creates a growing, deepening, maturing capacity to become *beings in love*, one in the being of God who is love. Prayer enables us to grow in awareness of our foundational experience of *oneing* and to co-operate with the working of the Holy Spirit in bringing this to completion. Prayer *ones* the soul to God in the sense of bringing together and joining us with what we already are. Prayer brings about the experience of *oneing* of *being knit in this knot, and*

University Press, 1994), who argues that Julian's thought represents an important strand in the tradition and should hold a central place in Catholic theology.

¹⁶ All translations are my own, taken from the long text of *A Book of Showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich*, 2 vols., ed. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978), hereafter, BSAJN. Vision number, chapter number followed by line numbers are referenced.

¹⁷ *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*. Vol. 1 and 2, ed. Lesley Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, 1998). See Kerrie Hide, *Gifted Origins to Graced Fulfillment: The Soteriology of Julian of Norwich* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), ch. 3.

oned in this oneing, and made holy in this holiness. Two of Julian's descriptions of prayer, give us further insight into the conversion that *oneing* evokes.

The first passage we will consider describes *oneing* as an experience of diminishment, of being purged, of being detached. It evokes a sense of our frailty as human beings and of the ongoing struggle to yield into the hands of the beloved. This is an example of the purgative stage in the process of conversion. Julian writes:

I saw two shades in our Lord's meaning. One is desire for genuine prayer, another is the trust to seek wholeheartedly. Frequently our trust is not full, we are not sure that God hears us. We think of our unworthiness and we feel our nothingness; often ending up as barren and dry after our prayer as we were before. Folly is the cause of this feeling of failure that engenders weakness. Habitually, in prayer, I have felt so alone. And after all this our Lord suddenly brought to my mind, showing these words and saying: I am the ground of your seeking (14:41.3-11).

We can see in this revelation, that prayer is not always an easy, peaceful experience for Julian. Often she feels the loneliness of her aloneness. The passage conveys the tension between her desire for God, her desire for genuine prayer, her desire to be one with God, and her struggle to trust that this deepest desire for God is grounded in God's desire for her. She reminds us of the importance of gently being present to resistance until we feel our nothingness, taste our aloneness, become empty so that we can be filled with God. She reminds us that to be dry and barren is a holy space. She wisely counsels us of the folly of judging ourselves with labels of failure. She advises that we trust our desire for God, follow its promptings and remain faithful in seeking God.

There is a marked turning point in the passage as, suddenly in the midst of what could end up in despair, Julian sees and hears the words of Jesus: *I am the ground of your seeking*. The purgative effects of dryness and barrenness lead Julian to an accurate knowledge of herself and a true understanding of God's desire for her to be one with Christ. Julian repeats Christ's words to her:

...pray interly¹⁸ though you feel nothing, though you see nothing, yes and though you think you may never for in dryness and in barrenness, in sickness and in feebleness then is your prayer great pleasure to me, though it gives you little delight. And so all your living is prayer in my sight (14:41.43-47).

This depiction of feeling dry and barren, sick and feeble, captures the sense of the hiddenness of God, who actively works, *oneing* us to God's self even when we do not realize it. The passage describes how the experience of desolation teaches us to trust solely in God's continual work of *oneing* in us. Julian teaches us how to see reality as God sees it, to know that we are *knit* and *oned* to God. She counsels us to patiently wait, and, in the folly of our inability to see divine love for what it is, not to do violence to ourselves in the fragility of our waiting. Subsequently, Julian comes to know at deeper and deeper levels that: *God teaches us to pray and to firmly trust that we shall have the gift of prayer* (12:43.6-7). She gives us confidence that no matter what our experience of prayer is, God is faithful in *knitting us in this knot, and oneing us in this oneing, and making us holy in the holiness of divine love*. The prayer of *oneing* is inherent to our nature.

¹⁸ The Sloane1 manuscript records *inderly* while the Paris records *pray interly inwardly*. There is a discrepancy amongst scholars as to where this means *always* or *interiorly*. See Rita Mary Bradley, *Julian's Way: A Practical Commentary on Julian of Norwich* (London: Harper Collins, 1992), 40, who argues for the translation 'from the heart.' Colledge and Walsh, BSAJN, n.42, 464, dismiss the Paris record as the scribe's caution in copying both the word in the text and a possible correction in the margin. I have left the Middle English word to capture the nuance of both, always and from the heart.

Julian gives no instruction on a way of prayer, or formal steps or movements in contemplative prayer. She simply encourages us to fall in love through *beholding*, gazing lovingly, and holding in the heart the fruit of our gazing. *Beholding* is in essence an experience of *oneing*. Julian shares her experience of *beholding*:

But when our courteous Lord shows himself by grace, to our soul, we have all that we desire, and in that time we leave aside the activity of prayer (experience contemplation) as all our intent and all our might is set wholly in the beholding of God. And this is a high, unknowable prayer, as I see it. For the reason why we pray is to be oned into the sight and beholding of God, marvelously enjoying with reverent fear, and such great sweetness and delight that we can only pray as God stirs us at the time (14:43.18-26).

Ultimately we exist within a relationship of *oneing*. As we become more and more aware and sensitive to the experience of *oneing* that grounds us, we feel the urge to leave aside active prayer, to become more empty and passive, and focus all our intent and might on God. *Intent* from Old French *entent*, and the Latin, *intentus* is a much stronger word in Middle English than the translation conveys. There is a sense of stretching out, being concentrated, engrossed, firmly resolved with an act of the will moved by the desire of love and directed by reason.¹⁹ *Might* is equally powerful suggesting that we engage our active powers of thinking and feeling and utilizing all our bodily strength to give nothing less than all that we are.²⁰ This does not mean human effort, however, but rather the single mindedness that desire for God incites. *All our intent and all our might* speaks of total surrender, complete emptiness, an emptiness that prepares us for the gift of the prayer of unknowing. Julian reminds us of being prepared to let go of *ways* of prayer and to allow God to teach us to pray by listening to God's stirring, and simply *beholding*. Julian describes the fruit of our conversion through *oneing*:

And then, when we can do no more but behold God, and enjoy, with the mightiest desire to be all oned into God, and intend to God's motion, and enjoy in God's loving and delight in God's goodness. And thus shall we with God's sweet grace and our own meek continual prayer come into God now in this life by many inner touchings of sweet spiritual sight and feelings, measured to us as our simplicity may bear it. And this occurs and will occur by the grace of the Holy Spirit until we die still longing for love. And then we shall all come into our Lord, our self clearly knowing and God fulsomely having and will be endlessly all hidden in God, truly seeing and fully feeling, and spiritually hearing, delectably smelling, sweetly swallowing, and there we shall see God face to face homely and fully (14:43.41-54).

Julian's words inspire in us hope that we can, with God's sweet grace and our own continual prayer come into God now in this life by many inner touchings of sweet spiritual sight and feelings, measured to us as our simplicity may bear it. We can experience religious conversion, falling in love in a way that is total and permanent self-surrender without conditions, qualifications, or reservations. We can co-operate with the presence of divine love in our lives and become beings I love.

CONTEMPLATION TO ATTAIN LOVE

I now invite you to see how the movement of the *Spiritual Exercises* has the same sense of drawing us to fall in love and become *beings in love*, who experience deeper and more complete *oneing*. Beginning with the *Principle and Foundation* (Ex 23) that focuses on our

¹⁹ *New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 1389.

²⁰ *New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 1771.

grounding love in God, through to the purgative week one (Ex 24-99), the illuminative weeks two (Ex 101-189) and three (Ex 190-209), and the unitive week four (Ex 218-229) the *Exercises* reach a climax in the *Contemplation to Attain Love* (Ex 230-237). The movement engenders deeper and deeper silence and engagement with the life of Christ that evolves into intensify union or *oneing*. In summary, the conversion experience of the first week is to *meditate* on the scriptures, to initiate an examination of conscience and discover a way of conversation (a colloquy) with the Beloved that can evolve during the retreat, and thus during our lives.²¹ Prayer in the second and third weeks flows into *contemplation*, in the sense of actively, and then more passively, engaging our senses and affectivity to unite us more and more deeply with the experience of Christ. In the fourth week there is a deepening ability to dwell in a concentrated silence and stillness in union with the Crucified and risen Christ. Mental activity subsides and we come to hold and be held, to rest in the one who is absolute love. During this week, or at the end of the week,²² the exercises reach a climax and prepare us for living our future lives as *beings in love* in the *contemplation to attain love (Contemplatio ad Amorem Obtinendum)* (Ex 230-237). The *contemplation* grounds us in the being of God who is love and reinforces our choice to make love the centre of our lives so that we may become *beings in love*. It heightens our sensitivity to and awareness of *God in all things and all things in God*.²³ It is, as Ivens says, a pedagogy of love.²⁴ It gathers up all our experiences of the paschal mystery that the exercises create room for, bringing to a climax our experience of dwelling in love, continuously being permeated in love and living in love.

Though the identification of the exercise as a *Contemplation to Attain Love* can convey a sense of *obtaining* or *attaining* love, or achieving through effort, there is nothing further from the spirit of Ignatius. A closer examination of the Spanish of the autograph *Contemplación Par Alcanzar Amor* and the Latin translation *Contemplatio ad Amorem Obtinendum* reveals the intention of the exercise. While Peters emphasizes that the verb *alcanzar* means to *obtain* or *attain* in the sense that the love of God is not contemplated as given or infused but as a great good that human beings can attain when we have a deep understanding of the favours received,²⁵ we cannot come to a deep understanding of love unless we know in the depths of our being that we are intimately involved in an ongoing love relationship with God both as an individual and as part of humankind.²⁶ When we are mindful that we participate in the love of the Trinity the *Contemplation to Attain Love* is *contemplatio* in the classic sense of the word, of a loving encounter where we surrender to God, are held in God and rest in God. It is out of this deep interior knowledge of love that we express this love in action. We become so permeated in love that our only response is to love with Love. The Latin translation of *alcanzar, obtinendum* gives a heightened sense

²¹ Meditation has an active sense of the use of the mind. In the first week Ignatius generally uses the word meditation in the exercises and encourages a very active engagement with the texts. The intellect is encouraged to *diligently think over and recall the matters contemplated in the exercises*. See Ex 64.

²² There is some evidence that shows evidence that the contemplation was added at a later date. In the autograph text it appears outside the fourth week. See William A. Peters, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Exposition and Interpretation* 4th ed. (Rome: Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis, 1980), 153. There are a variety of opinions as to when the *Contemplation* should be given. Some directors leave it to the very end of the Exercises. Some place it within the fourth week. Cf. Marian Cowan and John Carroll Futrell, *Companions in Grace: A Handbook for Directors of the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, 3rd ed., Studies on Jesuit Topics IV.22 (Saint Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2000), 136.

²³ See Anthony Mottola (trans.), *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (New York: Image Books, 1964), 5.

²⁴ Michael Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998), 172.

²⁵ Peters, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 154.

²⁶ See Cowan and Futrell, *Companions in Grace*, 136.

of the union *or oneing* that Love draws us to participate in. *Obtinendum* expresses a desire to hold, to possess, to preserve, to keep.²⁷ Thus, in the contemplation to *attain* love, we place ourselves in the presence of love so that we may be possessed by this presence, hold and keep this presence. We become one in love, *beings in love*, who act in love. Furthermore, the Latin translation of *contemplación* as *contemplatio* suggests being attentive, considering, viewing, looking.²⁸ Contemplation for Ignatius certainly has this active sense. We see this especially at the beginning of the second week where Ignatius invites us *to see* (Ex 106) *to listen* (Ex 107) and *to consider* (Ex 108). The stress is on coming to a bodily awareness of all the details of Christ's life, seeking, searching, examining, watching the colours, shapes, facial expressions and visual emotions, listening to conversation. Looking, listening and considering evokes a maturing sense of mutual recognition and engagement. Critically though, *considering* is not so much an analytical considering of the facts of Jesus life, but meditating, remembering, pondering, dwelling on, staying with the experience of Jesus. Towards the end of the second week, the use of the physical senses further awakens the inner or spiritual senses of *seeing in imagination, hearing, smelling, touching*, (Ex 121-126),²⁹ until we engage the whole of our sensual being, physically and spiritually in contemplation. We then settle into a contemplative phase of silence, stillness and deep interior knowing that intensifies throughout the retreat and continues throughout our lives, so that we become contemplatives in action or *beings in love*.

The *Contemplation to Attain Love*, given when we are deeply at home in the contemplative phase, gives further expression to our desire for an *intimate knowledge of love* (Ex 233). *Intimate knowledge* is not head knowledge, but knowledge acquired through the intimacy of the heart. It is a way of knowing that we experience when we *fall completely in love* with our God. The contemplation incites our desire. It becomes an icon of desire, uniting us with the divine desire. It gives us an intimate knowledge of God's desire for us and makes us one in desire. This sense of intimacy is evoked from the opening lines where Ignatius invites us to *call attention to* two points (Ex 230). *Call attention to*, does not merely mean *look at*, but *tend to*, engage with, be moved by, and take to the heart of the meaning of these points to inform our actions. Each point engages us in conversion. The first point, that *love ought to manifest itself in deeds rather than words* (Ex 230), describes a conversion of heart that evolves from words into deeds. The fruit of falling in love is to allow this love to express itself in actions. Our consolations must be incarnated.³⁰ In the second point, Ignatius reminds us that *love consists in the mutual sharing of goods.... The lover gives and shares with the beloved what he possesses...and the beloved shares with the lover* (Ex 231). Notice the maturing sense of mutuality. We could describe this mutual giving and receiving of love as *oneing*, of giving unconditionally to the other in a way that unites and makes one. Prayer, Ignatius says, is as usual (Ex 231). In other words, Ignatius is no longer giving more material for prayer. Rather, he invites us to contemplate God's very presence with us. Two preludes follow. In the first prelude Ignatius instructs us to *behold ourselves standing in the presence of God* (Ex 232). Recall

²⁷ Charlton T. A. Lewis (ed.), *Latin Dictionary: Lewis and Short: Founded on Andrew's Edition of Freund's Latin Dictionary*, rev. exp. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 1246.

²⁸ Lewis, *Latin Dictionary*, 448. See Franz Jalics, "The Contemplative Phase of the Ignatian Exercises," *The Way Supplement* 103 (2002): 25, who emphasises contemplation as looking. Jalics distinguishes looking with the outer senses, looking with the inner senses and mental looking.

²⁹ See especially, *to apply these senses to the soul and its virtues...Ex124*.

³⁰ This is a helpful expression I heard from Fr Michael Smith SJ.

Julian's preference for the prayer of *beholding*. The word *behold* awakens our sense of seeing, in a way that unites. When we behold ourselves in the presence of God, gazing and holding in our hearts the fruit of our gazing, we experience ourselves immersed in Presence. Subsequently we express our desire for *intimate knowledge for all the blessings we have received so that we can give thanks and love and serve in all things that filled with gratitude for all we may in all things love...* (Ex 233). This intimate knowledge, is the knowledge Lonergan identifies in religious conversion. It is knowledge that is mysterious and hidden, and yet absolutely real. It transforms our way of being and doing. Four points then encourage us to live from total and permanent surrender. *In the first point we remember creation, redemption and all the gift we have been given* (Ex 234). *We ponder with deep affection*. Again this sense of re-remembering, pondering and reflecting has a sense of *meditatio*, of savouring, chewing over, opening our being to feel what it is we have to give as lover to the beloved. This enables us to be present to, to stay with our experience in a way that unites us with God's presence in our experience. We then *reflect and consider what we ought to offer* (Ex 234). Again this reflection involves the whole of who we are. Consequently, moved by great feeling, we offer ourselves (Ex 234) and express from deep within our being the great prayer of abandonment:

Take Lord and Receive my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my will , all that I have and possess. Thou hast given all to me. To thee, O Lord, I return it. All of it is thine, dispose of it wholly according to Thy will. Give me thy love of thy grace for that is sufficient for me (Ex 234).

This song of abandonment is a prayer of one who has fallen completely in love and who is creating an environment where this *love can blossom forth*. It describes *love that has taken over* and become *the first principle* where *all desires and fears, joys and sorrows, discernment of values, decisions and deeds* have their source, without *conditions, qualifications, or reservations*. In this prayer of giving what we have received, we are utterly transparent. We entrust all that we are, our memory, understanding and will, our consolations and desolations, our desire for control. Subsequently, the following exercises almost seems an anti-climax, but they draw us to *seeing God in all things and all things in God*. They invite us to participate in *oneingas* we *reflect on how divine life indwells creatures* (Ex 235) and *consider how God works and labours on our behalf giving being to all* (Ex236). Finally, we consider how *every blessing is a gift of the graciousness of God* (Ex237). We conclude by reflecting on ourselves conversing with the Beloved and reciting the Our Father.

Ignatius reminds us how natural the union of love and the action of love is within us. He emphasizes the absolutely unconditional nature of love through which God loved us into being and longs for us to become *beings in love*. He reminds us that God's love for us and ours for God is our immediate reality. He teaches us how to love. The grace of the exercises is to grow in loving the way God loves, to become *being in love*. The contemplation reflects Lonergan's description of religious conversion. It creates a dynamic process of deeper and deeper *oneing*. In this experience of attaining love, of being immersed in love, *oned* in love, God's love for us and ours for God includes all things, the totality of the self, every element of God's world. The world becomes the *divine milieu* in which the love of God is so sensed in everything that nothing can come between God and us. Everything is a means of union or *oneing*. The image of being *knit in a knot and oned in oneing and made holy in holiness* again comes to mind. And we are reminded that this is not a definitive experience, it broadens and deepens to the length and the breadth the height and the depth all the days of our lives until we are one in the face to face vision.

IMPLICATIONS

Bernard Lonergan's theology of religious conversion has an important message to impart to those seeking to live a life in harmony with God, all human beings and creation today. He gives a foundational model for reflecting on our experience and choosing what will be the ground and informing principle of all that we are and do.

We have examined the Lonergan's idea of religious conversion from two very different perspectives, the contemplative vision of Julian of Norwich in the *Revelation of Divine Love* and Ignatius of Loyola in the *Contemplation to Obtain Love*. Julian writes long before Ignatius. Ignatius probably never knew of Julian, and yet both were inspired by their passion and love for God, to share the fruit of their experience of the lavishness of God's love, so that others may experience union with God. Both are classic examples from the Church tradition that, when engaged with, draw us to awareness of the mystery of being created in love, to live in love and return to Love. Julian does not give a method or instructions in prayer, and yet her perceptive descriptions of prayer in desolation and consolation, and insights into the dynamic of *oneing* draw us to a place of deep surrender. Ignatius gives us a systematic method and instruction in prayer that gently leads us from active contemplation to deeper and deeper silence, stillness and *oneing*. Both show us a way of echoing the Grail prayer: *I give you my heart that you may pray in me*. Depending on our personality, our time and stage in life, and the history of our life of prayer, one voice may speak more loudly and clearly than the other. But when we listen to the voice of each, and allow each one's wisdom to inform our way of prayer, opposites begin to unite, we cease to desire to control and surrender more freely to depthless, breathless, endless *oneing*. We dance and sing with all our being: *Your love and your grace are enough for me*.

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