



I find this account fundamentally lacking, though I am thoroughly inclined to develop the atonement in relationship to a theological account of God's friendship with us. The problem with Ryliškytė's approach, as I see it, is that she takes as her starting point a particular understanding of secularity as decisive for contemporary dogmatic reflection and develops Christian doctrine within that constraint. Such an approach, I think, results in an atrophied appropriation of Augustine and Thomas, but, far more importantly, it simply doesn't do justice to the range of the biblical witness to the necessity of Jesus' crucifixion. Does it take crucifixion to enable solidarity, sorrow and vicarious repentance? Does it take death? Ryliškytė's argument would be little changed were it to revolve around an empathetic account of the incarnation alone.

As it stands, the book offers one of the most developed accounts of exemplarism I have found, resourced by Lonergan's distinctive theological approach. But exemplarism has always thrived within a far more comprehensive account of the atoning work of Jesus (as in the work of Augustine, Abelard and Thomas) and has failed when offered as a sufficient account of the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection. We do in fact need a rich account of the cross as the triune God's work of friendship – but I do not believe the path charted by Lonergan and Ryliškytė to be the way forward.

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Tomáš Halík, *Touch the Wounds: On Suffering, Trust, and Transformation*

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Touch the Wounds is a welcome addition to the growing English corpus of Czech theologian and Catholic priest Tomáš Halík. Like earlier works from Halík, it is masterfully translated – conveying both the insights and personality of Halík – by the distinguished Gerald Turner. It is a translation (to echo a commendation from James Martin SJ) that now graces the anglosphere with a most profound Christian meditation on suffering.

For the uninitiated, Halík was an underground priest and dissident during the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia. He collaborated closely with Václav Havel and others during the Velvet Revolution in 1989 and to this day presides over the Academic Parish of Prague whilst remaining an integral figure in Czech public life, a legacy that has been acknowledged in his having been awarded the Templeton Prize in 2014. Hence *Touch the Wounds*, a set of spiritual meditations that orbit and cohere around the dominant theme of suffering, approaches its subject from a unique and personal vantage point on suffering.

The title, *Touch the Wounds*, is inspired by the account of Thomas before the risen Jesus in the Gospel of John. Halík recalls reinterpreting this story upon a visit to an orphanage in India. For though he had witnessed all sorts of forms of 'moral wretchedness' in his lifetime, he would 'never forget that orphanage in Madras' (p. 7). It was a

particularly visceral encounter with suffering, and it brought surprising words to Halík that echoed that morning's Bible reading from John 20. Halík concluded (in what serves as a succinct summary of the book) that 'the painful wounds of our world are Christ's wounds' (p. xi). Not to 'touch' these wounds, to remain indifferent to suffering in our midst, is to strip of power Thomas' declaration: 'My Lord and my God' (Jn 20:28).

The rest of the book is a pastoral–theological exegesis of this insight so wide-ranging and rich in scope that it is impossible to summarise. Early chapters consider with nuance the appropriateness of describing God as 'wounded' in dialogue with 'death of God' theology. Later, themes of divine hiddenness are explored in relation to atheism and its essential role to religion as a critical interlocutor. There is a chapter devoted to the idea of God dancing (in conversation with the doctrine of *perichoresis* and Nietzsche) and the joy that subsists at the heart of Christian faith alongside suffering. There are scattered throughout the text (although especially in the chapter devoted to the grotesque art exhibition *Bodies*) illuminating insights about post-Christian culture, especially its engagement with suffering and mortality. There is some political theology squeezed in – fittingly for a theologian so integrally involved in the *polis* of his country – that considers the role Christians have in bearing witness to the truth in political life rather than using the blunt instrument of power. And the penultimate chapter provides one of the most pastorally helpful chapters I have encountered on how to handle with grace our own griefs and interpersonal wounds (here Halík's training as priest and former psychotherapist shines through).

If this seems a strikingly diverse set of topics, then I have left the right impression: Halík covers significant ground in this little 147-page book. This makes the text difficult to navigate at points. How the different thoughts welling up from Halík relate and connect – both within and between chapters – is sometimes opaque. But there nevertheless remains a consistent thread that binds these varied reflections together: sensitive and erudite treatment of how to navigate our wounded world and selves as people of faith. The predominant impression left on the reader is that God comes to us in the wounds of the risen Lord Jesus, and that this can transfigure our relationship to other *stigmata* around and within us, for it is Halík's contention that because Christ's wounds are at the heart of Christian belief, we need not conceal their own wounds – even our wounded faith.

A critical question that lingers for this reader is whether the central injunction of *Touch the Wounds* – not to be indifferent to suffering – goes quite far enough. How much should we *heal* wounds? Halík rightly attempts to traverse a tight rope between two extremes: a 'messianism and megalomania' that attempts to fix the world on the one hand and an unmoved indifference to suffering on the other (p. 104). But Halík is often much clearer about the dangers of the former than the latter, so that his (entirely proper) desire to avoid falling into messianism risks leaving somewhat underdeveloped practical imagination about how Christians should concretely provide first-aid in a wounded cosmos.

Despite these minor critical questions, this book warrants a wide readership both within and outside the academy. It promises to be a balm to the soul for those who are battered by this world and find their own faith wounded. It is a text that will equally help those accompanying others through suffering – whether that be in some form of pastoral vocation like Halík's or merely as a friend. I highly commend *Touch the Wounds*. One hopes it will be one of several more instalments from Tomáš Halík (and Gerald Turner) to grace the anglosphere.