

A World on Fire: Sharing the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises with Other Religions. By Erin M. Cline. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018. xii + 284 pages. \$29.95 (paper).
doi: 10.1017/hor.2021.22

Visiting Los Angeles in 2009, the late general superior of the Jesuits, Adolfo Nicolás, spoke of his conviction that the Ignatian Exercises “can be shared by non-Christians.” We needed to think more about how “the process of liberation” they outline could “benefit people who do not share our life of faith” (2). Erin Cline is a Protestant professor in the theology department at Georgetown, a Jesuit university, a specialist in comparative study of Confucian and Western approaches to justice and childhood development. In *A World on Fire*, she offers a response to Nicolás’ call that is at once stimulating, original, consistently well written, and philosophically acute.

Jesuits and others have often imagined the Exercises beyond Christianity by developing Ignatius’ sentences on “light exercises” for those lacking suitability or capacity for anything more (note 18). Cline’s main interest, by contrast, is in strategies for adapting the full process for committed believers in non-Christian traditions who wish to deepen their faith and who are open to an encounter with Jesus Christ. Although Roger Haight has written on the Spiritual Exercises for unaligned “seekers,” Cline focuses on committed believers in other traditions. Whereas it might seem more natural for Ignatian disciples to focus on Judaism and Islam, monotheistic religions of the book historically connected to Christianity, Cline focuses on Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism.

In her third chapter, on approaches for Hindus, and in her fourth, on approaches for Buddhists, Cline begins with a “brief overview” of each religion, and then offers three sections on how Ignatius’ exercises on sin (first week), the life and following of Christ (second week), and the Passion and Resurrection (third and fourth week) might be adapted. The chapter on Confucianism is less ambitious, proposing means whereby Confucian and Ignatian tradition might fruitfully interact. These discussions follow two substantial opening chapters on why and how the Exercises should be adapted.

Cline’s specific suggestions involve how motifs from the Exercises, presented in the ways currently conventional in the United States, might play out for the kind of retreatant she imagines. Take for example the second week contemplations on Christ’s incarnation and birth. There are real theological issues, not just for Hindus but also for Christians, regarding the Trinity and the Incarnation, but in a good process, retreatants set these to one side and use their imaginations to work with the story.

Hindus might complement Ignatius' vision of the three Divine Persons looking on the world and its peoples in different situations (note 102) with a text from the *Gita*, where Arjuna, in despair, evokes family ruin and overwhelming chaos. But whereas Christians will be concerned with the kingdom of God and the redemption of the world, Hindus may consider different questions: the service of others, how they might deepen their Hindu faith, and how this might be enriched by their contact with Christianity (137–38).

Cline's attractive, intelligent book touches central questions and uncertainties. If Christians think of the religious other in terms other than conquest and conversion, do they need to abandon or merely refine their convictions about the centrality of Jesus Christ? Are not the concepts of "faith" and "religion" freighted with Western and Christian presuppositions that are simply not operative in, say, Confucianism? How do we adjudicate between good and bad adaptations of a text that invites the retreat-giver to apply what it says to the retreatant's needs? There would be scope for a rich, perhaps rather critical, symposium on such questions as they appear in Cline's presentation of the Exercises.

For now, just two remarks. Firstly, one wonders if Cline's typical interreligious retreatant exists anywhere, except perhaps among certain students of comparative religion. These Buddhists and Confucians are marked not only by the human qualities Ignatius prescribes or implies, but also by a desire to deepen *their own* faith through engagement with the life of Jesus Christ and with the understanding of God this implies (82–83). Secondly, there is a tension between Cline's insistence on the deepening of faith and her professional commitment to a comparative, etic study of religion that marginalizes emic questions of ultimate truth and personal commitment. Her allusions to the Christian theology of religions are sketchy, presupposing the tired old triad of pluralism, exclusivism, and inclusivism. Not only Cline's project, but any responsible Christian engagement with the religious other, requires something richer: a carefully nuanced version of inclusivism that balances Christ's ultimacy with the promise of sanctity in the whole creation, and a recognition that doctrines, however necessary and canonical, remain only beginnings and pointers. Only thus can Christians talk of commitment to the *magis*, to the *greater* glory of God.

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