Science et Esprit

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Patrick R. MANNING, *Converting the Imagination: Teaching to Recover Jesus' Vision for Fullness of Life* (Horizons in Religious Education). Eugene OR, Pickwick Publications, 2020, 15,2 × 22,8 cm, xiii-161 p., ISBN 978-1-7252-6053-5

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« de la mission reçue du Christ » (p. 208). Ses exhortations, instructions et recommandations visent à instaurer une vraie communion.

La conclusion de l'ouvrage, qui récapitule le parcours effectué, permet de prendre acte des acquis de l'étude. Les « femmes de Paul » sont libres et mobiles et ne peuvent être rattachées à un modèle unique. Elles sont insérées dans des réseaux, voire contribuent à en créer au profit des communautés chrétiennes. Elles sont énergiques et généreuses. En rupture avec la culture ambiante, Paul les traite sur un pied d'égalité avec les hommes. Il reconnaît le caractère majeur et irremplaçable de leur rôle, les tient en haute estime et leur voue un respect teinté d'affection. L'étude approfondie de l'exégète aura également permis, si c'était encore nécessaire, de laver Paul de tout soupçon de misogynie en jetant une lumière nouvelle sur les passages les plus souvent cités pour le discréditer. Enfin, elle aura donné à voir une fort impressionnante somme d'informations sur la vie des communautés chrétiennes des années quarante à soixante, sur la place qu'y occupaient les femmes, sur la culture et les us et coutumes des sociétés où Paul a évolué. L'ouvrage se révèle tout à la fois érudit, fort instructif et pertinent.

Avant de mettre le point final à son ouvrage, la professeure du Centre Sèvres se permet un commentaire éditorial sur la place des femmes dans l'Église (p. 220-224). Alors que, dans l'Église, « le pouvoir décisionnel est encore trop majoritairement aux mains des hommes du fait d'une confusion malheureuse entre sacerdoce ministériel et pouvoir au détriment du sacerdoce baptismal » (p. 221), ne serait-il pas temps de se risquer à une « lecture renouvelée des Écritures » (p. 215) ? Le corpus paulinien en particulier mériterait d'être lu dans son intégralité, plaide Chantal Reynier, pour enfin y voir celles qui sont trop souvent passées inaperçues. Qui sait quels « retentissements pour aujourd'hui » (p. 220) restent encore à y entendre ?

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Patrick R. Manning, **Converting the Imagination: Teaching to Recover Jesus' Vision for Fullness of Life** (Horizons in Religious Education). Eugene OR, Pickwick Publications, 2020, 15,2 × 22,8 cm, xiii-161 p., ISBN 978-1-7252-6053-5.

Patrick Manning, who holds a doctorate in Christian education from Boston College, is offering us here a solid reflection and useful pedagogical tools to engage both those who wonder about faith and those who have drifted away from it. The book is very well written, with a wide-ranging vocabulary and plenty of concrete illustrations.

Its Introduction provides data and a probing interpretation (a better one than other interpretations that are currently proposed) about meaninglessness and religious disaffiliation among the youth. It also states the principal aim of the volume: "*This lack of meaning and the existential distress it precipitates are the central issues I address in this book.*" (p. 7; the author's italics).

Chapter 1, "Jesus' Vision for Fullness of Life," grounds the whole volume by recalling Jesus' summons to a personal change of mind, namely to conversion. Such

a turnabout involves, in Palestine's first century as well as in our twenty-first century, "a radical transformation in our desiring, imagining, and living" (p. 11), whose reward is "fullness of life."

Chapter 2, "Post-modern Challenges to Fullness of Life," draws from cognitive science and cognitional theory, and shows how a relatively new mental situation, especially in the West, have ushered in "religious disaffiliation and existential disintegration" (p. 11). Those challenges require entering into a "post-critical" attitude that consists in "a form of meaning-making" that goes beyond the merely critical capacity.

Chapter 3, "Teaching for Conversion to a New Way of Imagining," connects the post-critical capacity to "earlier manifestations of Christian interiority" and expounds how the contemporary interiority of meaning-making can actually produce conversion and its satisfying results in terms of fulfillment.

Chapters 4 through 6 present a three-phase pedagogical process called SEE, which are the three initial letters of Movement 1 (Stimulating the Imagination), Movement 2 (Expanding the Imagination), and Movement 3 (Embracing a New Way of Imagining). I will explain a bit later what each of these three movements consists of.

Chapter 7, the last chapter, titled "SEE and Seeing Beyond," aptly sums up the book and offers sound conclusions, for example the need for learners to repeat the learning process, instead of doing it only once and then forgetting about it. Manning recognizes that the process cannot provide lasting results if there is no follow-up over a lifetime. He correctly asserts that the support of a sustaining community makes a difference. He also warns that the goal of his method is not to instill definitive answers to all questions, but to foster a continuing development among those who use that method. His remarks on post-critical meaning-makers' aptitude to understand the perspectives of others (see pp. 140-141) will be music to the ears of those who are active in interreligious dialogue.

Throughout his book, the author differentiates three basic attitudes or mental states: (1) a pre-critical horizon, which rests content with what one has received from a particular tradition; (2) a critical horizon, framed by an exposure to modern rationalism; and (3) a post-critical horizon, which encompasses the assets of both the pre-critical and the critical horizons. To clarify these three horizons, he takes advantage of Paul Ricœur's Conclusion in *The Symbolism of Evil*, of psychology and educational theories, and of his own experience as a teacher, in which he found instances of students engaged in each of the three horizons. Those instances help the readers to get acquainted with the diverse aspects of what is lived in each horizon. Common to all three horizons is the creative dynamism of "meaning-making," a concept that he adopted from developmental psychologist Robert Keagan and that Manning intimately associates with the function of the imagination. In general, the meaning-making of those in a post-critical horizon is more active than in a pre-critical or in a critical horizon.

Moreover, our author accents the necessity for students of acquiring at least a minimum of self-knowledge by becoming aware of their own practice of meaning-making. The exploration of their interiority is a condition for any critical self-examination and for any significant transition regarding the ways in which they look

for meaning, truth, and value. With a nod to philosopher of science Michael Polanyi, Manning writes: "Part and parcel of this deeper self-awareness is the recognition that the human mind employs intuition and tacit knowing as well as discursive and rational thinking to construct a world of meaning that is more complex than even that person can comprehend. Accordingly, the post-critical meaning-maker comes to recognize her need for ritual and symbolic modes of thought that facilitate psychological integration" (p. 44).

Consequently, Manning's pedagogy highlights the importance of being attentive to classical symbols, which are found in the Bible, in various religious traditions, in literature, the arts, architecture, etc., and which can trigger transcendent experiences. He offers concrete applications of Ricœur's phrase, "The symbol gives rise to thought." He strikes a fine balance between the "disruption" that Jesus' parables bring about (p. 24), and the educational requirement of honoring the students' need for security "by starting the learning event with something familiar to learners" (p. 68). As it responds to symbols, the human imagination launches an activity of questioning and inquiring, in a search for meaning. Following Bernard Lonergan's expositions on human knowledge, our author distinguishes between meaning (on the level of understanding), truth (on the level of verifying), and decision (on the level of valuing).

So far, so good. I nevertheless find an epistemological difficulty in the opposition, sometimes assumed by Manning, between the discoveries of the imagination and the affirmations of what he calls "theory," the latter of which implicitly include the affirmations of Christian belief as expressed in the seven ecumenical councils. Instructively, Lonergan, while accepting the role of theory in human thinking, made it clear that Scotus's conceptualism, still influential in twentieth-century scholasticism, overemphasized concepts as detached from concrete perceptions. So, in my opinion, what Manning correctly rejects is conceptualism, not the concept itself. After all, he declared, "my students have benefited from my pedagogical decision to privilege symbols over (but not in opposition to) *conceptual* formulations" (p. 130; italics added).

However, he seems at times to be reluctant to acknowledge the indispensable role of the conceptual, namely the function of analytically interrelated ideas. Consequently, on the one hand he praises the quest for coherence and stability (see pp. 41 and 141), and on the other hand he almost disparages systematization. He writes, "Symbol, story, ritual, and tacit ways of knowing enable us to hold meaning in contexts that defy the analytical mind's efforts *to master or systematize* the diverse images, messages, and experiences that constitute that context" (p. 51; italics added; see also p. 8). But is there not a beginning of systematization when people find connections between aspects of an experience? Is there not a difference between mastering (= knowing everything about a subject matter) and systematizing (= ordering our thoughts as we respond to a question)? About the usefulness of systematics, see Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, chapter 13. I would add that even in the functional specialty termed "Communications" (Lonergan's chapter 14), learners naturally tend towards a certain systematization.

Perhaps Manning's lack of clarity here derives from two factors. First, he is rightly concerned about people who have a hard time identifying meaning, purpose, and

hence some order in their messy life. Consequently, they cannot acquire, at least at the beginning of their potentially spiritual journey, an orderly apprehension of what their experiences are about. So my remark about "to master or systematize" concerns less the students and more the educators, since the latter may be misled by Manning's tendency to deprecate the role of "theory," which does not seem, in his view, to consist in systematically ordering one's insights.

The second factor may be the excessive importance he accords to the imagination, which, in his rendering, appears to operate on all levels of intentionality. Thus he states, "meaning is always fundamentally a matter of the imagination" (p. 10); elsewhere he speaks of "the primacy of the imagination" (p. 67); he also asserts, "Our sensing and imagining are even more foundational to our meaning-making than our concepts and reasonings" (p. 145). By contrast, for Lonergan the imagination operates mainly on the first level and becomes auxiliary on the other levels as it is then guided by the intellect. It is the latter, not the imagination, that raises relevant questions, while, of course, using images. Strangely enough, later on Manning apparently rallies to Lonergan's view as he seems to locate images on the first level of intentionality (see pp. 63 and 125).

I am mentioning this drawback in order to stress the role of church doctrines in phase 3 of Manning's SEE method. In my opinion – and I don't think he would diverge with me in this respect –, church doctrines can and should be better justified within his very method, although not yet in phases 1 and 2. For clarifications, see my book *The Three Dimensions of Faith: Searching for Meaning, Fulfillment & Truth*. I nonetheless agree with Manning that the *best* access to truth does not proceed from church declarations, but from the intriguing symbols that strike the imagination as worth pondering. Both he and I do not recommend, in our pluralistic world, a vain undertaking to impose the Catholic understanding of truth upon students' minds. Instead, by making that Catholic understanding intelligible, our efforts should amount to helping them at least respect it.

In sum, this lucid book, with its numerous pieces of practical advice, will be very helpful because it is based on teaching experience, great wisdom, sound theology, cognitive science, and current research on education.

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Jean-Guy Nadeau, **Une profonde blessure. Les abus sexuels dans l'Église catholique**. Montréal-Paris, Médiaspaul, 2020, 13,9 × 20,2 cm, 401 p., ISBN 978-2-89760-243-7.

Les livres abondent désormais, tant en anglais qu'en français, sur la question des « abus sexuels dans l'Église catholique ». Les tons diffèrent grandement. Les effets recherchés aussi : certains relèvent de la dénonciation ; certains promeuvent la réconciliation et le pardon ; d'autres proposent des réflexions anthropologiques,