

Vinayasādhana

Dharmaram Journal of Psycho-Spiritual Formation

VOL. VII, No. 1, JANUARY 2016

Seeing God in All Things: Some Catholic and Hindu Insights¹

Francis X. Clooney

Harvard University, Massachusetts, USA

Abstract

The invitation of Saint Ignatius *to see, to seek, to find God in all things* is multidimensional. The quest to see God in all things can be naturally extended also to seeing God in the religious traditions around us. In a climate of true interreligious exchange, we can learn from saints and mystics in other traditions methods to see God in all things, and can also evaluate us in the light of their experience of God everywhere. *Shrivaishnava* Hindu tradition of South India and its visionary texts from the medieval era demonstrate us something of the Hindu version of “seeing, seeking, and finding God in all things”. This facilitates us to move to a new, deeper and more intense moment in interreligious encounter. The mutual gaze and mutual recognition of God’s presence will affirm the best insights of our traditions, and also open us into an entirely new interreligious moment.

Introduction

The wisdom of the Ignatian tradition is beautifully enshrined in the insight of St. Ignatius Loyola that we seek God in all things and see God everywhere. In that way we learn how to serve God and our neighbor everywhere and at all times. From St. Ignatius on, mystics and poets and scholars, inspired by this ideal, have lived out the Ignatian ideal

¹ This essay was presented first as a lecture at Loyola University of Chicago on September 18, 2014.

in service to others. In our times, the quest to see God in all things can be naturally extended to seeing God in the religious traditions around us. As Vatican II says, we can revere and welcome those other ways of conduct and of life, even when different from our own, that “by no means rarely reflect the radiance of that Truth enlightening all people.” Yet we can do even more: in a climate of true interreligious exchange, we can also learn from how saints and mystics in other traditions see God in all things, and can see us in light of their experience of God everywhere. In today’s world, God is offering us the grace to be seen by others in light of their vision of God in the world. In this paper, I give the example of a Hindu tradition of south India, wherein the devotee is invited to see the divine - Krishna, Rama, Sita - everywhere and in all things. At a Jesuit university, we have nothing to fear when we find ourselves in the light of other faiths, other people’s vision of the world in God.

I. On the Ignatian Tradition of “Seeing God in All Things”

The wisdom of the Jesuit tradition is enshrined beautifully in the insight and appeal of St. Ignatius Loyola that we seek God in all things, discerning in all situations the will of God, and thus find the opportunity to serve God. (Seek - See - Find: I do not distinguish strongly here between the three.) Mystics and poets, in part inspired by the ideal of seeking and finding God in all things, have testified experientially to the same truth.

The Exercises chart a path toward the contemplation of divine love, a love radiant of a God present in all things. The Constitutions say that novices “should be exhorted to seek God our Lord in all things, distancing from themselves love from all creatures to the extent that this is possible, in order to place it in their creator, loving him in them all and them all in him, in conformity with his most holy and divine will.” Avery Dulles summarized the beginnings of this tradition aptly in a 1996 lecture that speaks to Ignatius’ deep insight:

In the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus, Saint Ignatius prescribes that Jesuits “should often be exhorted to seek God our Lord in all things.” In the “First Principle and Foundation,” at the opening of the Exercises, he teaches that sickness and health, poverty and riches, dishonor and honor, a short life and a long life, can all serve as means to that union with God that makes for our eternal salvation (Sp. Ex. 23). In the “Examination of Conscience” he writes that those advanced in the spiritual life constantly contemplate God our Lord “in every creature by His essence, power, and presence” (Sp. Ex. 39). In the “Contemplation to Obtain Divine Love,” at the

end of the Exercises, Ignatius reflects on how God dwells in all creatures and especially in human beings, who are created “in the likeness and image of the Divine Majesty” (Sp. Ex. 235). Indeed, says Ignatius, God works and labors not only in human persons but also in the elements, the plants, and the animals (Sp. Ex. 236; cf. 39). From this and similar passages it seems evident that God can be found in all things. (236)

Of course, the community of early Jesuits quickly noticed Ignatius’ great gift. Geronimo Nadal was a leading first-generation Jesuit who was for a time Ignatius’ secretary, and also an important administrator and formulator of the distinctive charism of the Society of Jesus in its first years. He described Ignatius’ insight as an appeal to “see and contemplate in all things, actions, and conversations the presence of God and the love of spiritual things, to remain a contemplative even in the midst of action” (Guibert, 1972). In turn, Avery Dulles paraphrased Nadal this way: “Ignatius was endowed with a special grace ‘to see and contemplate in all things, actions, and conversations the presence of God and the love of spiritual things, to remain a contemplative even in the midst of action.’ Nadal believed that to be a contemplative in action and to find God in all things were graces or charisms especially proper to the Society of Jesus.” (237)

In a 1970s essay, “Ignatian Prayer: Seeking God In All Things,” Josef Stierli succinctly reaches into the depth of the principle: “The inner, indissoluble connection in the case of Ignatius between Trinitarian mystical prayer and the formula ‘*finding God in all things*’ is based on his unique mystical picture of God. The triune God whom he met in grace and prayer, and consequently in all his work, is the creator of the world and the lord of history” (140). Stierli then develops the theme under four useful headings which, though an elaboration of them is beyond the scope of this presentation, are worth hearing: “*regarding creation from the viewpoint of faith;*” “*the continual search for the divine will;*” “*pure intention;*” “*pure love that serves.*” Stierli concludes by saying that for Ignatius and Nadal, “holiness is equivalent to meeting God in all things in a spirit of faith. This is equivalent to seeking and fulfilling his most holy will in every situation of life. This is equivalent to a pure intention in every act. This is equivalent to a love which serves in the entire breadth and depth of human existence. Ignatius considered contemplation not only as familiarity with God in prayer but in every activity of life” (159).

Of course, seeking and seeing God in all things has been a theme of broader popularity too. In the 19th century Gerard Manley Hopkins

expressed the ideal most simply in his famous poem, “*As Kingfishers Catch Fire:*” “Christ – for Christ plays in ten thousand places, Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his To the Father through the features of men’s faces.” About 50 years ago, in his *Divine Milieu*, Teilhard de Chardin pointed to the goal of his inquiry when he said that he “sought to teach how to see God everywhere, to see Him in all that is most hidden, most solid and most ultimate in the world... Without immixture, without confusion, the true God, the Christian God, will, under your gaze, invade the universe, our universe of today...”

Karl Rahner was one of the leading theologians who undergirded the ideal of seeking God in all things with a philosophical foundation for how God is present in the world, and a close reading of the New Testament basis for our dynamism toward God. Philip Endean summarizes Rahner’s thought, “If creatures can find God in all things, then the structures of human knowing and willing must be reflected in the ontology of the Godhead.” And if so, “From this vision flows a radical Christian humanism. If a person acts following God’s ‘inclination and descent into the finite’, they, “can no longer be the person whose innermost torment and desire at once it is to lay bare the relativity and meaninglessness of everything and anything; they can no longer be the person who either idolizes or (ultimately) makes a nothing of a distinct finite reality.... The love of God, which seems to let the world sink away, is a love for the world. It loves the world with God. Thus in fact it is what enables the world to rise, eternally.” (My emphasis) Endean summarizes Rahner’s position this way, as again stressing service: “Our responsive love takes the form of service, following Christ’s action in the world. It is not, however, that we have to prove our inner attitude through deeds. Rather, our love takes up the movement of God’s love, moving outwards into the world. Our love simply is ‘a service with God in descent to what lies outside, to what is lost, to what is sinful in this world.’”

To see, to seek, to find God in all things: in the past decades this key phrase, though varied in its formulations - we seek, find, see God, everywhere - is used regularly, along with “contemplation in action,” in characterizing the Ignatian way of proceeding. It may seem timely now also to say that this hope and wisdom - grounded in scripture, tradition, and experience, in Ignatian spirituality - may in our times be extended to finding God in other religious traditions - in that way also echoing the appeal of Vatican II’s *Nostra Aetate*, where the Church “regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless by no means rarely reflect the radiance of that Truth which enlightens all people.” The Church expects to see

the light of Christ shining from other traditions, and rejoices at the prospect. What could be a better starting point for encounter with our religious neighbors than this hope that we can seek God everywhere, with a great hope of finding God in all things, and very much so in our brothers' and sisters' religions? (Clooney, 1996).

But we must also be careful. If we are convinced that we will find God as we know God, in other people's religions, we should also be aware that this expectation, particularly if announced as an auspicious aspect of how we are as hosts and who they are as guests, might also be an intrusion: finding in other people's faith what they do not themselves see there, naming in Christ what they call by other names. It might also seem a kind of Christian "know-it-all" attitude, the confirming of our faith in every circumstance. We may see what we want to see, regardless of what is actually there to be seen.

So what to do? Those of us who are Catholics (and Jesuits too) cannot avert our eyes from our own faith vision, particularly on so central and beautiful and hopeful a seeing, but we need another perspectives too. We need also to see ourselves as others see us in light of their own religious vision of the world, as they too see the world, and us too, in God as they know God.

A requirement, in our era, is not only to gaze upon other traditions with a confidence that we will find God there, but also to learn how people in those traditions see God in all things, from their own perspective, and thus find God in us too. To proclaim the virtue of finding God in all things need no longer be only about us (who are Christian, Catholic, Ignatian, Jesuit), about how we see the world; it can also be about how we are seen, how others see God in us.

II. On a Hindu Tradition of Seeing God in All Things

Every religion, I venture to say, has resources for a positive religious insight into other traditions - even for this deeper recognition of God, being seen in that other tradition. By way of an example, out of the many that might be chosen, I will now draw our attention to the perspective of believers in the Shrivaiṣṇava Hindu tradition of South India, and to one example in that tradition. Visionary texts from medieval south India will show us something of the Hindu version of "seeking - and seeing - God in all things," a vision that in Hindu prayer leads to deeper devotion and a community more deeply united in worship. Narayana is the God who is incarnate as Ram and Krishna and in other ways, and who is powerfully and concretely present in his temples. Drawing on the mystical poetry of their medieval saints, Shrivaiṣṇavas have the

gift of a deep recognition of God, and thus a way of seeing that God is everywhere and in everything in the world.

The sixth song of the third book of *Tiruvaymoli*, the 9th century mystical classic by the poet Satakopan, is about the paradox of the transcendent great God who is yet nearby, lovely, and accessible. Here are the first three of the eleven verses:

He is red lotus eyed Krsna, he ate the seven worlds: see him!
He is earth, sky, humans, divinity and everything else,
He puts forth radiant, encompassing knowledge,
he created all created things, and yet too
He is one with the most lustrous light,
he is the original form of the three deities.
He is the original form of the three deities and their source;
he ends their curses,
He rests on the wide sea, this God of gods;
He bears the victorious bow which set all of Lanka afire;
He destroys sin; his eyes are wide lotus: praise him. (III.6.1-2)

The Shrivaiṣṇava commentators in the 12th-14th centuries (and thus in the school of the well-known teacher Ramanuja) take verses such as these to be a teaching on a Lord who is transcendent, yet visible and accessible. Nampillai, the greatest of these commentators, thinks about this song in relation to the scolding tone of the previous song, which had challenged those who do not prize the Lord's presence. Nampillai is fascinated by the mix of rebuke and invitation, and thinks whether there are other such scenes in familiar religious literature. To highlight the dynamic, Nampillai turns, as the commentators often do, to the drama of Rama and Sita in the Ramayana. Here he focuses on one of the scenes when Sita, kidnapped by the evil king Ravana, suffers separation from Rama during her captivity in Lanka. Ravana ceaselessly tries to cajole her into becoming his queen. Standing her ground, though, she engages in a stubbornly adversarial conversation with Ravana. Like Satakopan in his songs III.5 and then III.6, Sita both rebukes and instructs Ravana, warning him that doom awaits him, but also wanting to help him as well as herself: Rama will destroy you; so go to him now. But another matter intervenes: Sita speaks as if absent Rama is right there with her.

If you desire to retain your station, and if you wish to avoid a terrible death, it would be appropriate for you to make a friend of *Rama here*, this bull among men (Goldman, 2006).

What most fascinates Nampillai is that she says, "*Rama here*," as if her husband, though absent, is actually with her. Given the intense longing of Sita and Rama for one another, paradoxically in the depth of their

absence from one another, and unable to think of another, they seem more present to one another. Sita is so intent upon Rama that in a sense she is conjuring his presence even, visualizing him intensely, right there.

Periyavacchanpillai, Nampillai's student, composed the *Tanislokam* (*Single Verses*) as a commentary on select and often quoted single verses from the Ramayana. In it, the words of Sita we have been considering are glossed in part by linking them to a series of other quotations which amplify how intense reflection on God makes it impossible *not* to see God everywhere, and right *here*. I will give the list and contexts as briefly as possible.

First, he cites a scene in which Hanuman, the monkey prince who has flown to Lanka to visit Sita in her captivity, first sees her. He is dismayed that she is in the disheveled state of a captive. But then, remembering Rama's bountiful words to praise about her, he suddenly sees her true beauty and ornament, as if she is perfectly dressed and adorned. He looks upon her and praises her, realizing that her beauty is ever present because she always thinks of Rama:

The beauty of *this* black-eyed lady and the perfection of her every limb are just like Rama's. She must therefore belong to him.

This lady's thoughts are firmly fixed on him and his on her. It is for this reason that she and that righteous man have been able to survive even for a moment. (*Sundara Kanda*, 13.49-50)

It is as if Rama is right there with her and thus her beauty in full glory; it is as if the kidnapping and separation had never taken place. But how can they be together when they are separated? Periyavacchanpillai cites an old verse where the mystic poet, Periyalvar, addresses the Lord regarding how the Lord is in him and he in the Lord:

Just as when a golden color shines and you try it out on a touchstone,
I take you and place you on my tongue without erring, and try
out my word.
I place you in myself and myself in you.
And so, my father, govern me, be protector of my soul
(*Periyalvar Tirumoli* 5.4.5).

Periyavacchanpillai applies these words to Rama and Sita in separation, explaining how their minds are entirely one. In love, even in absence, where one is, there is the other. Rama and Sita are inside one another, and cannot fail to see one another at every moment: "In the same way, they overturn things, and so the two have one mind, and a single

experience, and so nothing is lacking to her."² They are so inside one another that he cannot but be present to her. Another text, again Hanuman's observation, testifies to her single-minded intent upon Rama:

She does not even notice these rakshasa women nor these trees full of fruit and blossoms. For her heart is fixed on just one thing, and she can see only Rama (*Sundara Kanda* 14.25).

Similarly, earlier in the Ramayana, she expressed her single-mindedness in her own words:

Ever pondering him alone in my mind, I keep saying, "Rama, Rama," and in conformity with that, I am imagining a story about him (*Sundara Kanda* 32.11).

Her beloved is everywhere, filling her mind, and so she is afraid she is just imagining herself in some story about him. But she really does see him in all things.

The final two quotations are more surprising, since in each case it is an enemy of Rama who speaks. During the battlefield scene that occupies the long final book of the Ramayana, and even during a break in the fighting, Ravana cannot stop thinking of Rama's arrows:

Remembering Raghava's arrows that, like the staff of Brahma,

2 Periyavacchanpillai adds, "She refers here to him (this one, *ivar*) as nearby in place and present in time, because he is near to her mind; even times and spaces that are far, are not far, and so she does not even use '*uvar*' for what is somewhat distant. Thus *asya* devya [Sundara Kanda 15:50: "*This* lady's thoughts are firmly fixed on him and his on her. It is for this reason that she and that righteous man have been able to survive even for a moment." ... The two have changed their minds in relation to one another, and so there is no fault in the lady seeing lord Rama and herself as experiencing as single pleasure." Periyavacchanpillai goes on to conjecture Sita's words, "If I want to see him, is it not necessary to be nearby? Ah, he is here! As it says, 'She is not seeing demonesses, not flowers, fruits or trees. With a single heart she is meditating only on Sri Rama - this is sure,' (Sundara Kanda 16.25,) and, 'Ever pondering him alone in my mind, I keep saying, "Rama, Rama," and in conformity with that, I am imagining a story about him.' (Sundara Kanda 32.11) Because she meditates on Rama continually, by excess of feeling (*bhavana*), there is an externalization of the form (*uruvelippatu*) and he is always near to her. She indicates 'this one' (*ivar*) with her hand. Even though Ravana has no intimacy with him up to now, and lacks *bhakti* such as 'meditation preceded by affection, such as is *bhakti*', and even though he is immersed in other things, does [Rama] not appear to him? Because Maricha, enemy of Rama, has familiarity with him, Rama appears to him everywhere he looks, 'But now behind every tree I seem to see Rama clad in bark-cloth and black hides, wielding his bow like Death himself with noose in hand.'" (Sundara Kanda 39.15). Pollack translation of Sundara Kanda verses; my translation of Periyavacchanpillai.

blazed with the brilliance of lightning, that lord of the raksasas shuddered (*Yuddha Kanda* 48.3).

It is as if the arrows are everywhere falling upon him, *right now*. Similarly, the demon Maricha, Ravana's captain, sees Rama everywhere because he is intensely afraid of him:

But now behind every tree I seem to see Rama clad in bark-cloth and black hides, wielding his bow like Death himself with noose in hand.

And, in the vivid continuation, he spells out for Ravana how he is seeing Rama everywhere:

Or rather, thousands of Ramas do I see in my fear; this whole wilderness, Ravana, has become nothing but Rama to me. It is Rama I see, lord of rakshasas, even when no one is near; I see him in my dreams and start up, half out of my mind. I am so terrified of Rama that even a word beginning with an R – riches, for instance, or roads – fills me with terror, Ravana (*Aranya Kanda* 37.15, 16-18).

The dynamic underlying of such scenes then has to do with how Rama (or Sita), though not present to ordinary eyes in ordinary time and space, is vividly seen with spiritual eyes as if “really” present. It is a dynamic captured by the Tamil term *uruvelippatu* – literally, “the externalization of the form;” that upon which one meditates constantly, becomes everywhere visible. I explained this in an essay some years ago:

When Attanjiyar glosses Nampillai's words, explaining *uruvelippatu* as “perceptibility in form due to clarity of knowledge,” he is explaining the same phenomenon [of deep vision here and now], but only on a cognitive level. At the words, “he puts forth radiant, encompassing knowledge, he created all created things” (III.6.1, as above), Nampillai notices what amounts to the divine counterpart to the externalization of the form: the Lord creates by making himself appear, intending creation. Though the analogy is not developed, the point seems to be that the human act of the externalization of the form, mentioned in the introduction to *Tiruvaymoli* III.6, is correlated with the primordial divine act of self-externalization, true realization and true creation: what human imagination creates for a time, the Lord creates “really” (Clooney, 2010).

Is this externalization of the divine form merely a (poor) substitute for actually seeing God everywhere? Periyavaccanpillai (326) says that Sita experiences Rama all the time, and for that reason the externalization

occurs. In other words, externalization is the effect, not the cause, of the experience of intense proximity.

The commentator Krsnasamidasa elaborates Periyavaccanpillai's citation of a Ramayana verse we have already seen – “Ever pondering him alone in my mind, I keep saying, ‘Rama, Rama,’ and in conformity with that, I am imagining a story about him” – by stressing the particular effectiveness of this meditation practice: “Because she meditates on Rama at all times, there is an overabundance of experience, and because of that, externalization of the form, and because of that, she can point and say, ‘Rama *here*.’” (326) Since Rama is, in this and most other Vaishnava traditions, God come down to the earth, there is only a small step to be taken from seeing Rama everywhere and in all things, and here, and seeing God everywhere and in all things, and here.

Even if the Ramayana story is new to you, the spiritual dynamic will not be unfamiliar to anyone who knows the tradition of “seeing God in all things.” We should be able to agree that the immediacy of the divine presence relies on purity and intensity of meditation, and that the “seeing of God everywhere” may not be available to those who, though in the very same place, do not have their spiritual eyes open. Any explicator of the Ignatian charism of seeing God in all things can appreciate more intimately what the Shrivaisnava tradition is telling us.

Related Matters

At this point we also explore the philosophical and theological grounding of this Shrivaisnava vision of Rama – God – in all things. Ramanuja, the great 11th century teacher of the tradition, asserted that all things and persons are essentially, by their own proper nature, in God, dependent on God and belonging to God. The Lord is that which one encounters in any discovering of a thing or a person, because the Lord is that upon which, most deeply, all things depend for their continuing existence. In the same way, God is the ultimate, proper meaning of every word; whatever words humans use, are ultimately words speaking of God. But while this line of thinking invites comparison with Rahner's philosophical and theological grounding of the Ignatian insight, I cannot detour in that direction in this presentation.

We could also profitably return to the Ignatian tradition, to seek out a similar strand of discourse in which narratives, interpreted and visualized, open into an inclusive vision of God everywhere. The most apt source for this is Nadal's teaching on visualization, a teaching on vision was so brilliantly expounded by Walter S. Melion, in his “The Art of Vision in Jerome Nadal's *Adnotationes et Meditationes in Evangelia*.”

As Melion puts it, “Nadal continually stresses the importance of sight as a spur to affective devotion: we must see ourselves participating in every aspect of the events described; indeed, rather than merely seeing them, we must bear witness to our visual experience of them” (11). Melion offers a lengthy analysis of Nadal’s treatment of Jesus’ final communication with his disciples on Mount Tabor before the Ascension. He says, regarding Jesus’ self-presentation and gestures, that these are “prompts” to “meditation on the further meaning of this theophany. In turn, the annotations and meditation invite the viewer to elaborate upon the image, making it more various and precise *ex omnibus locorum, personarum, rerum, actionum circumstantis* (with respect to all the circumstances of places, persons, things, and actions).” We see the scenes, become part of them, and by grace feel and act in accord with them. All of this, with due deference to the inevitable differences and distinctions, resonates well with the Shrivaiishnava practice I have introduced above, and might also be taken as a useful elaboration of the Shrivaiishnava teaching.

Another issue meriting special attention cannot be taken up here: namely, today we expect that every understanding of the spiritual path and spiritual vision has, or should have, social and communal implications. The Ignatian “seeking God in all things” emphasizes finding God’s will and serving God in every situation, and this lends both an individual and a corporate energy to the work of Jesuits. So it is fair to ask what the communal implications are of this mysticism of coming to seek Narayana everywhere. The song in *Tiruvaymoli* which occasions these quotations, III.6, is about divine accessibility; elsewhere in the commentaries on it, they speak of the accessibility of the Lord in temples. It ends this way:

These ten verses are from the thousand melodious ones sung
by Satakopan
Lord from Kuruhai with its songs and gardens in the royal
Varuthi lands,
About the lord of the heaven-dwellers gracious to every being
in the world,
Easy to think but hard to see – by them you will join his
devotees. (11)

It is around and for this devotion that this inward-looking, Johannine-like “beloved community” forms itself. The community cannot look out, more widely, until it is a community. We have also seen that a tension perceived by the commentators is between the positive appeal of song III.6 and the rebuke in the previous III.5. This suggests, at least, a sense in which the community builds itself by being both

corrective and supportive, skeptical about outsiders and yet ready to advise and educate those same outsiders. That Rama and Sita see each other everywhere, present always, is a challenge, to be sure, to every Shrivaiishnava: this love intensely and in depth, never failing to envision Rama and Sita within you, does not easily blend with an undue fear of the world or skepticism toward outsiders. If in fact one sees God everywhere, right where we are, then a Shrivaiishnava too will be enabled to see the Lord even in the Christian.

But we can close this section more concretely: we, who are Christian and Catholic, particularly if guided by the Ignatian charism, see all things in Christ, Christ in all things. In the Ignatian way, we see this recognition as an opportunity for insight and action, in accord with which we come to understand what it is that God is calling us to do, with and for the Shrivaiishnava.

And if I may anticipate, though of course unauthorized, what a Shrivaiishnava *might* find here: the Shrivaiishnava who has cultivated her or his desire for the Lord at every moment to such an extent that the Lord becomes unforgettable and everywhere present cannot but find the Lord present, even and precisely in the guise of the Christian and Catholic piety and person: “When I see the Christian, I see Rama, I see Sita.” On campus: Rama is here.

III. Were Shrivaiishnavas and Catholics to See God in One Another

In the *first section* of this paper, I touched lightly on some key ways of speaking of the Ignatian ideal of seeing God in all things. These are well known to most of us. In the *second section*, I suggested, by way of single example - out of the many that could be chosen - that not only the Ignatian and Catholic and Christian traditions have deep resources, intellectual and spiritual and practical, for showing how it is that God can be seen everywhere and in everything.

I realize that in all of this I have generated more questions than can possibly be answered here. The astute reader will have observed many differences; some may even come to the conclusion that Shrivaiishnava Hindus and Christians in the Ignatian tradition do not mean the same thing by “seeing God in all things.” Such differences are important, and should be examined, but they do not, I think, make impossible the constructive reflections with which I wish to conclude. My thinking is as follows.

By way of implication, I have opened the way to allow ourselves to become the object of a vision of God in all things, God seen even in

Christians. We can now go beyond any single-directioned gaze *at them*, for we will no longer be the only viewers, confident in the truth of our own seeing but then also running the risk of making the 'Other' appear to be just what *we* want to see because of who *we* are. Instead, in that Other's seeing us as well, in the intersection of our gaze and theirs, there will be a validation of two in-sights seeing one another.

In this mutual recognition, we benefit from letting go of the franchise, so to speak, and recognizing how this seeing and seeking is an intellectual and mystical practice evident beyond the Christian, Catholic, and Jesuit tradition. And so, in this third part of my presentation, and out of all that might be said after parts I and II of this paper, I close with a different kind of insight, about the mutual, interreligious dynamic of seeing God in all things.

When we - from our different traditions' perspectives, and now together - encounter each other face to face, we become interpersonal subjects to and for one another. We see and are seen, in God. This is an important and largely new interreligious moment.

If I, a Catholic Christian, learn to see God in the world, in human faces, and in the features and shapes and colors and practices of the Hindu, but if I also recognize how the Shrivaisnava Hindu learns to see God (named as the Hindu names God) in the world, in its many religions, and even in me, we will be moving to a new, deeper and more intense moment in interreligious encounter. The mutual gaze and mutual recognition of God's presence will affirm the best insights of our traditions, and also open us into an entirely new interreligious moment.

Since in both cases this vision is a gift and not a deduction or induction, claiming the possibility of a mutual seeing of God in all of us does not render superfluous whatever else we might need to think and say when learning from one another, studying each other's traditions, finding grounds for partial agreements and disagreements. Mutual recognition does not translate directly into any particular theology of the other's religion - just as *Nostra Aetate's* insight that Hinduism and Buddhism reflect "the radiance of that Truth which enlightens all people" is a comprehensive judgment on those religions or nor ground for just one theology of religions other than my own. But it is certain that mutual vision of God, seeing and being seen, enriches our encounters, and can change radically the context in which all the rest of our thinking takes place.

What is new is that we can be aware of the double seeing, and thus see thrice: we *see* God in the other, we *see* the other seeing God in us, and

we *see* one another *seeing* God everywhere in this way. This would be, is, a particularly intense and advanced form of interreligious recognition. All of the encounters are of God, the gift (and not private property) of seeing God in all things and persons and mystical paths. As John Paul II said in Chennai in 1986, "By dialogue we let God be present in our midst, for as we open ourselves to one another, we open ourselves to God."

Conclusion

Now I admit that all of this is something of an "advanced course" that goes well beyond the general and benign affirmation of the other often intended by Catholic and Jesuit appeals to "seeking God in all things," it is certainly something to think about. It presents a possibility and a challenge suitable to a Jesuit university that wishes to cultivate a Christian and Catholic *and interfaith* sensibility (insofar as such can be cultivated by the intellectual work done on campus), and in a way that does not merely privilege the Ignatian perspective. It challenges us to move forward guided by the intense energy of Ignatius' vision of the world and the other, yet without making "seeing God in all things" a slogan for our brand alone. It is fitting for a Jesuit university not only to foster a deep faith confidence that we can see God everywhere and in the other, but also that we have nothing to be afraid of when we are seen-through in the light of other faith traditions founded in and energized by other stories of God. If we see Jesus everywhere, including in our neighbors, we should not be afraid to welcome to campus someone who sees Rama and Sita everywhere, including in us. We see God everywhere on campus, and we ourselves are seen in God.

References

Clooney, Francis (1996) "In Ten Thousand Places, In Every Blade of Grass: Uneventful but True Confessions about Finding God in India, and Here Too," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 28.3 (May)

Clooney, Francis (2010) "Uruvelippatu: A Tamil Practice of Visualization and Its Significance in Srivaisnavism," *The Journal of Oriental Research (Madras)* p. 81-82, Dr. V. Raghavan Birth Centenary Commemoration Volume, pp. 209-224.

de Guibert, Joseph (1972) *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*, Chicago: Institute of Jesuit Sources, p. 45.

Documents of the 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (1995), "Our Mission and Interreligious Dialogue," paragraph 5, in turn

citing, John Paul II, "Address to the Leaders of non-Christian Religions," Madras, February 5, 1986 (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 78 [1986], pp. 769 f.)

Goldman, Robert P. and Sally J Sutherland (2006) *Ramayana* Volume V, New York: Princeton University Press, p. 175, 206.

Goldman, Robert P., Sally Sutherland, and Barend van Nooten, (2009) *Ramayana* Volume VI, New York: Princeton University Press, P. 262.

Homann, Frederick (tr) (2003-2007) *Annotations and Meditations on the Gospels*, Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press.

Pollock, Sheldon (2006) *Ramayana*, Volume III, New York: Princeton University Press.

Vinayasādhana

Dharmaram Journal of Psycho-Spiritual Formation

VOL. VII, No. 1, JANUARY 2016

Maria Petyt: Mystic and Searcher

Helen Rolfson

Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota, USA

Abstract

Maria Petyt, though not widely known, deserves the attention and admiration of those who pursue the spiritual path. Her naive upbringing and the ordinary and orderly life she led are not in fact, deterrents but credits or merits that make her an excellent role model for spiritual aspirants. Her spiritual biography *The Life of Maria Petyt* published by her spiritual director exposes her gradual evolution from naivety to mystic life. Maria was extraordinarily open to the work of God in her soul, no matter the source. She benefited from all circumstances of life. Even when she had no immediate access to spiritual counsel, she continued to be led interiorly by God. She gradually moved from "the active life" to "inner life" and eventually to "unitive life."

Introduction

The Franco-Flemish mystic, Maria Petyt, several years before her death in 1667, in Mechelen (now in Belgium) wrote her spiritual autobiography at the behest of her spiritual director, Carmelite Father Michael of St Augustine. He eventually published this work, known in short as *The Life of Maria Petyt*. The lengthier title was *The Life of the Reverend Mother Maria of Saint Teresa (née Petyt) of the Third Rule of the Order of the Brothers of Our Blessed Lady of Mount Carmel*. Her life astounded Father Michael, who edited not only this Life, but also several spiritual treatises culled and edited from writings his spiritual directee had shared with him.