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# The Christ of the Ignatian Exercises

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seen from the results of his second and third volumes is whether he can sustain the thesis of continuity with the first generation of the Reformation and relevance for the present.

Timothy R. Cooke  
St. Peter's Anglican Church

## The Christ of the Ignatian Exercises

Juan Luis Segundo

Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1987

*The Christ of the Ignatian Exercises* is Juan Luis Segundo's fourth volume in his series "Jesus of Nazareth Yesterday and Today". Previous volumes have included: Volume One *Faith and Ideologies*; Volume Two, *The Historical Jesus of the Synoptics*; and Volume Three, *The Humanist Christology of Paul*.

Edited and translated from the Spanish by John Drury, the present volume finds its place in what will no doubt be, when it is complete, a major theological *opus* by one of the century's most articulate "liberation" theologians.

It is not easy going; the pages are theologically and syntactically dense and closely-reasoned; you will find yourself re-reading many a paragraph—or even page!—to follow and comprehend. But it is worth the struggle; Segundo makes a convincing case that Jesus of Nazareth belongs to the ages, in the words of Pelikan's recent argument. More than that, he makes a convincing case that Jesus of Nazareth belongs to the revolution-impassioned atheist as much as to the committed baptized.

And that is the accumulated force of the material Segundo presents here; he is a kind of evangelist—he might not select that term for himself, but that is how he must be read—eager to present a winsome portrait of the Center of our faith in terms that are attractive and also credible to the century's "cultured despisers". Among these, not surprisingly, the thoughtful and committed revolutionary laboring for justice for the oppressed finds a special place in Segundo's affections; one harbors the impression, in reading these pages, that their author feels a special sense of urgency in making Jesus both credible and attractive to a non-Christian audience thoughtfully and passionately committed to social justice. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness..."

Segundo organizes his material into seven chapters, with an introduction and an appendix, and fully twenty pages of endnotes. The Introduction sketches out the parameters of his project: "Christologies in Christian Spiritualities". Chapter One is entitled "Jesus and God: Approach to

the Council of Chalcedon". Chapter Two takes up "Christological Vacuum? Praising, Reverencing and Serving God". Chapter Three continues the thrust of Chapter Two: "Christological Vacuum? Making Ourselves Indifferent"; Chapter Four "The Christology Underlying the Imitation of Christ"; Chapter Five: "Demythologization and Discernment of Spirits"; Chapter Six: "King—Kingdom—Reign"; Chapter Seven: "Conclusions: The Tensions of a Christology"; and finally the Appendix: "A Christology Enters History".

In his Introduction, Segundo makes it clear that "it is impossible for us to establish a science or discipline whose product would be one, single 'christology': i.e., a tract bringing together all our knowledge-data about Jesus..." (1). His aim, rather, is "to rescue the question of Jesus' significance for human existence from the discipline that has expropriated the task of interpreting Jesus for many centuries" (11), namely, theology. In other words, here is a christology without a theology; the Second Article of the creed, so to speak, de-mythologized and stripped of associations with First Article and Third Article.

One finds oneself fascinated by what Segundo does not take up, namely, the relationship between christology and theology, on the one hand, and pneumatology on the other. But the author is quite steadfast in his determination to present only a christology, in the conviction that to ask—and answer—questions about God first, and only then to turn to questions about Jesus, is to work backwards: "I want to show that this way of his [Jesus], in translated form, can even today interest and humanize people who... claim they do not believe in God..." (12). Since Segundo has already published a comprehensive theology in the five volume *A Theology for Artisans of a New Humanity* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1973-1974), it would be interesting to see how his current thinking on the "order" of the three articles might change his presentation of a theological system.

In pursuing his argument, Jesuit Segundo is throughout respectful, but at the same time deeply critical, of Ignatius. Segundo finds all theologians and "christologists", himself included, to be prisoners of their own times, captive to the thought-forms and the presuppositions of the era in which they live; so also he finds Ignatius a captive to his age. Ignatius' concept of "indifference", not surprisingly, is perceived to be at odds with Segundo's own passionate commitment to his world; Ignatius' thought is "from the top down", rather than "from the bottom up", and Segundo finds this less than helpful in his own assignment of making Jesus and "the Jesus project" credible and attractive to the "cultured despisers".

In sum, the volume is a helpful overview of some of the major themes of "liberation theology", as they impinge on the area of spirituality, seen from the perspective of one of its most articulate partisans. One looks forward

to the translation of the fifth volume of the series, *The Evolutionary Approach to Jesus of Nazareth*.

Until then, this book will give you plenty to chew on!

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## **Through The Loneliness: A Woman's Spiritual Journal**

Antonia J. van den Beld  
New York: Paulist Press, 1987  
140 pp.

This is a captivating and challenging journal which records the human and spiritual dynamics and dimensions of a "second" journey thrust upon a woman in her middle years. The diary, covering a span of time from 1980 through into 1983, is deeply experiential and profoundly reflective in substance and in style. The author raises searching questions like: "Why, for heaven's sake, did God complicate people's life the way it seems to have done?... the reality that we can be 'touched', that we can 'respond', and that, when we do, we live a life which is not our own... What does it mean to believe in God's grace?... How can it be that I experience myself as a religious person and at the same time have such little faith?... Are we capable of truly caring for other people?"

God, God's grace, the tension between God's unconditional love and the drama of our human possibilities for love form the centrepiece of this story. The author is constantly wrestling with a myriad of emotions and feelings stirred up by many relationships. There's wonderment, guilt, anger, fear, frustration—and above all a deep feeling of loneliness as she feels her life taken in new directions. As these new directions unfold, she wants very much to believe that God's love is unconditional and yet she is in a deep inner battle with all that. She is really wondering whether it is possible to experience God's unconditional love within the human condition and within human relationships. Her experience seems to suggest to her the very opposite. Hence, deep-seated feelings of loneliness. She is repeatedly questioning herself about sin, personal responsibility and the values which might guide her on life's journey.

This is a profoundly personal testimony and a deeply spiritual witness. In reading the entries, I was vividly reminded of some of the struggles which Martin Luther went through in searching for a gracious God. It is a provocatively devotional piece of literature. Being written both in a narrative style and in a reflective mode, the material draws the reader into