JOSIAH ROYCE AND CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

"Religious experience" is an ambiguous theological term. American philosophers William James and John Dewey contribute to an understanding of religious experience as private and strictly affective, which reinforces belief in a denuminized communal sphere. Another American philosopher, Josiah Royce, accounts for religious experience in ways that resonate with Catholic experience and that counteract current American tendencies to privacy and insularity. Royce envisions an alternative to both William James' individualism and John Dewey's naturalism that illumines two typically Catholic experiences: encountering God sacramentally in the community called "church," and discovering God's gracious power within human knowledge and freedom. His description of the sources of religious insight affirm the intellectual and actional elements of religious experience as well as its affective dimensions. His description of the act of interpretation explains how many selves can take part in a single experience, and thereby create a shared life together.

"Religious experience" is one of the more slippery terms in current theological use. On the one hand, it designates a primary source for any vital Christian theology. In Catholic theology "experience" usually suggests personal contact with reality, a source of true and lively knowledge of God.[1] On the other hand, some Catholic theologians criticize

[1]Perhaps the most notable Catholic debate in the past half century regarding questions of religious experience, especially as they relate to revelation and faith, accompanied the publication of Edward Schillebeeckx's books, *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord,* trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1980), first published as *Gerechtigheid en liefde: Genade in bevrijding* (Bloemdall: Nelissen, 1977), and the *Interim Report on the Books "Jesus" and "Christ,"* trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1981), first published as *Tussentijds verhall over twee Jezusboeken* (Bloemendall: Nelissen, 1978). Critical questions were raised by theologians such as Werner Löser in a review published in *Theologie und Philosophie* 51 (1976): 257-66 and Louis Dupré, "Experience and Interpretation: A Philosophical Reflection on Schillebeeckx' *Jesus* and *Christ*," *Theological Studies* 43 (March 1982): 30-51.

A small sampling of diverse types of recent Catholic literature demonstrates the continuing emphasis on religious experience: Luke Timothy Johnson, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity: A Missing Dimension in New Testament Studies* (Minne-

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"religious experience" when it refers to emotionally charged states of consciousness that divert people from the self-giving love at the heart of the Christian mystery. It sometimes implies a pathological preoccupation with the self and a culpable neglect of both the human and the divine other.[2] Religious experience is ambiguous: it can ground human beings in the real source of life, or it can sap the strength out of Christian life.

This ambiguity arises in part from the different understandings of religious experience that influence North American culture. In particular, philosophies of religious experience advanced by two American pragmatists, William James and John Dewey, have contributed to the present confusion. In this article I propose that another American philosopher, Josiah Royce, accounts for religious experience in ways that resonate with Catholic experience and that counteract current American tendencies to privacy and insularity which threaten our spiritual and political life together.

This discussion presumes, with the support of recent sociological studies,[3] that a Catholic emphasis on community experience may distinguish it from other Christian churches in the United States. A brief autobiographical account illustrates this experience and how it distinguishes Catholic understandings of self and others from more dominant American perspectives.

I was born a few years after the close of the Second Vatican Coun-

apolis: Fortress, 1998); Jamie T. Phelps, *Black and Catholic: The Challenge and Gift of Black Folk: Contributions of African American Experience and Thought to Catholic Theology* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1997); Susan L. Secker, "Human Experience and Women's Experience: Resources for Catholic Ethics," in *Dialogue About Catholic Sexual Teaching*, ed. Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, Readings in Moral Theology, No. 8 (New York: Paulist, 1993), 577-99; Antonin Scalia, "To be Faithfully Catholic and Loyally American: The Experience of a Catholic Lay Person," in *The American Catholic Heritage: Reflections on the Growth and Influence of the Catholic Church in the United States*, ed. Pontifical North American College (Rome), (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1992), 27-36. Donald Gelpi outlines nine different meanings of "experience" in *The Turn to Experience in Contemporary Theology* (New York: Paulist, 1994), 3-4.

[2]For example, Philip Sheldrake notes the "privatization of spirituality and a concentration on interiority" in which "[s]piritual experience becomes separated from a social or public vision of ethics" (*Spirituality and Theology: Christian Living and the Doctrine of God* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999], 6). Mark McIntosh describes "the focus of later eras on the inner experiences aroused in this process of encounter [with God]," which led to "an understanding of spirituality that is less transparent to the other who engenders the transformational process . . ." (*Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology [Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998], 10).

[3]For a recent sociological discussion of the distinctively Catholic communal orientation, see Andrew M. Greeley, *The Catholic Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 111-35.

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cil, and through my family I received an intensely Catholic introduction to Christian faith and practice. The Church was a life in which my grandparents, parents, brothers, sisters and I participated in many ways: in games and fights and reconciliations; at school and at work; in the hospitality extended to both friends and strangers; in the economics of simplicity; and in the family's prayer at home. Sunday liturgy was a highlight of each week, a communal celebration that spilled over into all sorts of parish and town activities.

My identity was deeply informed by this domestic church. I remember a conversation I had with a friend at the age of eighteen. I had just been accepted into college and was looking forward to moving across the country and entering a new stage of life. My friend asked one of those big questions: "What do you want out of life?" My immediate answer was, "I want to make my family happy." Somewhat frustrated, he clarified, "But what do you want for *yourself*?" The question puzzled me, not because I had no ambitions or hopes, but because my individual goals found their sense and satisfaction within an extensive network of relationships. At moments like these, I began to recognize the communal ethos of the Catholic culture in which I was raised.

Years later during graduate school, when studying New Testament and early church texts on the Holy Spirit, I found pervasive evidence that, whatever else "experiencing the Spirit" might mean, it was fundamentally communal.[4] My own religious background helped me to recognize the biblical and early church emphasis on community life in the Spirit. But the philosophical theories of religious experience that currently dominate American discourse, derived from William James and John Dewey, inhibit the development of this enduring theme into a contemporary North American idiom.

[4]I discuss this in detail in "The Love of God Poured Into Our Hearts: Experience of the Holy Spirit in Christian Tradition" (Ph.D. diss., Boston College, 2003). There, I focus on the Paraclete Sayings in John 14–16 and on Romans 8. Specific communal interactions with the Holy Spirit were identified. In the Johannine tradition, the Holy Spirit teaches and reminds the community about Jesus (Jn 14:26; cf. 1 Jn 2:27). The Spirit witnesses on behalf of Jesus (Jn 15:26), and guides believers in the truth of Jesus (Jn 16:13). Romans 8 brings additional activities of the Spirit to light when Paul alludes to the "Abba" prayer, where the Spirit "bears witness with our spirit" that we are children of God (Rom 8:16). The Spirit also intercedes for Christians, disclosing human hearts to God and fitting human prayer to the will of God (Rom 8:26-27). These activities are founded in the fact that the Spirit frees Christians from the power of sin (Rom 8:2), and empowers Christians for obedience to God's will. Christians undergo these activities of the Spirit when they share in the sonship of Christ together, when they pray together, and when they lead transformed and renewed lives. All of these experiences are given to individuals embedded in the Christian community; in Paul's case he writes to the church at Rome with the presumption that because they are members of the church, they have received these experiences.

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I. Religious Experience after James and Dewey

The American fascination with religious experience reached popular expression in William James' Gifford Lectures of 1901 and 1902, published as *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. James conceived of religious experience primarily as internal, individual emotion. He called it a "sentiment," a "feeling," a "solemn emotion" felt by "individual men in their solitude."[5] James psychologized the radical individualism of Ralph Waldo Emerson, and this powerful convergence of psychological and philosophical thought has helped James' model remain the dominant way of thinking about religious experience for over a century. His understanding of religious experience has contributed both to the American quest for personal spiritual fulfillment and to the frustrating struggle between independence and belonging that characterizes that quest.[6]

John Dewey championed the cause of democratic community, but strove to "purify" community experience of any associations with a God. He proposed a "common faith" based on ethical exertion and human development. Like his anti-Calvinist forebears in the American Enlightenment, Dewey denied the reality of the supernatural. His denial sprang from a dialectical religious imagination that pitted God against humanity:[7] "Dependence upon an external [divine] power is the counterpart of surrender of human endeavor."[8] Human autonomy and advancement demanded that the religious quality of experience be freed from "historical encumbrances" such as dogmas and creeds imposed by specific religions.[9]

The "common faith" that Dewey proposed consisted of moral convictions that unify the self and put one in harmony with the universe.[10] Divine power and goodness were transferred to the realms of nature and culture. Dewey looked for salvation not in God but in human progress, and consequently he minimized the reality of human sin.[11] Secular culture in America followed Dewey's lead and chose the human over the divine. Ironically, Dewey's public religion may inhibit

[5]William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 31-34.

[6]The definitive description of this struggle is found in Robert Bellah, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

[7]Donald L. Gelpi, *Varieties of Transcendental Experience: A Study in Constructive Postmodernism* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), xi.

[8]John Dewey, *A Common Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934), 46.

[9]Ibid., 9.

[10]Ibid., 19.

[11]Ibid., 72, 77.

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social progress if it closes itself off from the critical and transforming power of the Holy.

North American culture learned from James that religious experience is private and exclusively affective; from Dewey it accepted a denuminized experience of community. Catholics enjoy no immunity from these influences, but other forces in American Catholicism seem to counteract both individualism and the perception that grace is absent from the common life. The Catholic tradition tends to be more community-minded than some Protestant traditions,[12] perhaps because the Catholic analogical imagination expects cooperation between human and divine power, and so public life can and should be a mediation of grace.[13]

Catholics, however, rarely articulate an account of religious experience to support their vision of an engraced communal sphere. When we fail to explain the daily life of the Church (in the liturgy, at home, on the street, in the classroom or office) as a religious experience no less important than one's private emotions, we lose an opportunity to integrate Catholic life with an adequate corresponding theory. This lack of integration may take the form of an innocuous theological schizophrenia, or it may deepen into a crisis of faith. At some point, the presumption that religious experience is a private affair of the heart begins to erode the commitment to religious community—especially if the community is less than satisfying emotionally. Why put up with the inconveniences and indignities of church membership? Does one need to go to church to find God? Why not "find Jesus on your own," as the song goes?

The problem of commitment extends beyond religion. The individualism that drives Americans away from church also impedes participation in political and social bodies. Americans at the beginning of the twenty-first century seem profoundly pessimistic about the possibility of any kind of genuine community, and recent world events only exacerbate the problem. Shortly after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, some of my students summed up their view of the world in the following manner: "The world is a scary and violent place; it is impossible to meet everyone's needs; we have a right to preserve ourselves, even if it means others will die. Love is not possible outside a close circle of family and friends." The unspoken corollary is inescapable: It is morally acceptable to kill those outside one's own circle.

[12]See Greeley's comments (note 3 above).

[13] "The Catholic attitude toward the role of government . . . may seem paradoxical — more supportive of government intervention and more faith that a government is a positive good, yet also more likely to take to the streets when the flaws of government become intolerable" (Greeley, *Catholic Imagination,* 129).

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This kind of hopelessness and fear comes from people who do not recognize models of love that reach beyond boundaries of race, class or clan, and who do not see public life as a mediation of grace. If American Catholics can explain the inclination to seek God in community, we can more effectively live out the kind of commitment that gives life to every healthy society and in the process offer hope to disheartened people. The remainder of this article argues for the social character of religious experience espoused in two of Josiah Royce's late works, *The Sources of Religious Insight* and *The Problem of Christianity*. Royce envisions an alternative to both James' individualism and Dewey's naturalism, one that illumines two typically Catholic experiences: encountering God in the community called church, and discovering God's gracious power within human knowledge and freedom.

II. Religious Insight

Josiah Royce was a colleague and friendly critic of William James "during a time which has been called the 'Golden Period' of American philosophy."[14] *The Sources of Religious Insight*, which Royce delivered as the 1912 Bross Lectures at Lake Forest College, Illinois, responded critically to James' understanding of religious experience. James emphasized the intuitive and affective character of religious experience to the exclusion of its intellectual and volitional elements. By using the word "insight" instead of "experience," Royce brought attention back to the conscious and deliberate activity of the human being who synthesizes particular facts, intuitions and emotions into a greater whole: "The three marks of insight are breadth of range, coherence and unity of view, and closeness of personal touch. A man may get some sort of *sight* of as many things as you please. But if we have insight, we view some connected whole of things . . ."[15]

Religious insight "must be distinguished from other sorts of insight by its object," which is "the problem of the Salvation of Man."[16] Royce names six sources of religious insight: individual experience, social experience, reason, will, loyalty and atoning sorrow, which together make possible the ultimate goal of "a life lived in the unity of the Spirit."[17] Religious insight recognizes some highest value or aim of human life, and sees that humans are in danger of missing this highest

[14]John E. Smith, "William James and Josiah Royce," in *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West, Vol. 2*, ed. Ninian Smart, John Clayton, Steven T. Katz and Patrick Sherry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 315.

[15]Josiah Royce, *The Sources of Religious Insight* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 6.

[16]Ibid., 7-8.

[17]Frank M. Oppenheim, Introduction to Royce, *Religious Insight*, xiii.

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aim and thus forfeiting any real meaning in life. It therefore demands some action to safeguard human happiness.[18] But how do people come to this realization? Royce initially identifies two elementary sources of insight: the experience of the self as an individual and as a social being.[19]

Individual experience contributes to religious insight: "Unless . . . there is within each of us something of [an] interior light by which the saving divine truth is to be discerned, religious insight is impossible, and then no merely external revelation can help us."[20] Alone, I can ascertain an ideal, recognize that I do not measure up to my ideal, and then begin to desire someone or something that will deliver me from my predicament. But the limited range of individual consciousness and experience, as well as the individual's changeability and capriciousness, render purely individual experience hopelessly inadequate to the task of salvation.[21]

Describing the individual's longing for a wider, integrated religious insight, Royce analyzes both the "natural" and the "supernatural" character of an individual's religious insights. The terms "supernatural" and "superhuman" (used interchangeably by Royce) do not signify something otherworldly; rather, they indicate a reality of this world produced through the cooperative efforts and wisdom of many people, and which therefore lies beyond the individual's direct grasp. The "plain man" is right to conceive the highest goal of his life as a superhuman reality.

> [we are] helpless either to hold before us this our personal vision of the triumphant life and of the unity of the spirit, or to turn the vision into a practical reality, unless we come into touch and keep in touch with an order of spiritual existence which is in a perfectly genuine sense superhuman, and in the same sense supernatural, and which certainly is not our natural selves.[22]

This supernatural reality need not be viewed as ". . . the result of an arbitrary intrusion from above—as if the gods loved to disturb us and trouble our peace. Nor need we, with James, speak of a marvelous and capricious uprush from below the level of natural consciousness. Yet just as little need we think of religion as having no concern with

[18]Royce, *Religious Insight*, 12-18.
[19]Frank M. Oppenheim, *Royce's Mature Philosophy of Religion* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 98.
[20]Royce, *Religious Insight,* 26.
[21]Ibid., 28-31.
[22]Ibid., 51-52.

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what is, indeed, superhuman."[23] Here Royce is at his most "Catholic," anticipating his later discussion of a real, spiritual and supernatural life in community. While he confirms the reality and importance of the individual, he cannot speak of the individual's ideals without alluding to the larger network of human relationships which sustain them precisely by transcending them.

The supernatural order emerges from the activities of many persons, but has a depth and power greater than the sum of its parts. We attain salvation only when "we can get into some sort of communion with a real life infinitely richer than our own."[24] The "superhuman" exceeds individual experience, but really exists in the social world, and so normal social exchanges broaden our individual insights.[25] "Human social life is the hint, the likeness, or the incarnation of a life that lies beyond and above our present human existence."[26]

Royce expresses a sacramental understanding of individual and social religious experience when he says that "human life is indeed a revelation of something that is also superhuman."[27] Supernatural reality does not crush human freedom, because the supernatural becomes present in and through free human actions. Nor do the finite, natural origins of the supernatural diminish its wonder and power. Human communities embody the divine, and the divine works in and through human societies, not in spite of them. One can detect in Royce's understanding of the supernatural an incipient theology of cooperation between nature and grace, which will only reach full articulation in human communities when the elementary sources of religious insight are developed and further purified.

Although social interaction expands and enhances individual insights, people correctly recognize the chaotic and limited character of social life. Religious insight therefore depends on a third source, reason, which seeks a wider and more integrating view than even human society can provide. Flashes of intuition have some value, but they require reason in order "to see widely and steadily and connectedly."[28] The inclusion of reason in religious experience corrects the narrow emotionalism of William James: "Reasoning processes are fruitful because they involve sorts of experience, forms of intuition, that you cannot reach without them. In brief, reason and experience are not opposed."[29]

[23]Ibid., 52.
[24]Ibid., 53.
[25]Ibid., 55.
[26]Ibid., 75.
[27]Ibid., 74-75.
[28]Ibid., 87.
[29]Ibid., 91.

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Social experience also needs the integrating power of reason to arbitrate between competing world views. Reason's drive toward a coherent vision of the whole appeals implicitly to a transcendent and absolute reality; even a denial of absolute truth constitutes an absolute statement.[30] While the movement of the mind toward an integrated vision of all reality may appear solipsistic, it is not, because the individual is forging real relationships with the world beyond his or her immediate experience.

Rational religious insights orient people to the goal of " liv[ing] worthy lives,"[31] and so reason leads to the fourth source of insight, the exercise of the will toward our greatest good. We accomplish our good when we take our proper place in the integrated vision of reality to which reason aspires and when we relate rightly to the rest of the world. Only when individuals come together socially in reasoned and ethical behavior do the fifth and sixth sources of religious insight, loyalty and sorrow, come into view.

The sources of religious insight must develop beyond mere ethical behavior, for there is a risk that such behavior will remain at the level of mere duty. If this happens, ethics estranges itself from religion, and religion diminishes into a passive receptiveness to the divine, with no moral vigor. How can such a bifurcation be avoided? "Is there any way of reconciling our need of a grace that shall save with the call of the moral life . . . ?"[32] Individual experience alone cannot answer the question of what to do, for it is too limited and unsteady. Social experience contributes various answers, but "has no single idea to furnish, no actual universal rules to lay down."[33] Since neither individual nor social experience is fully reliable, reason instructs that one should "so act so as never to have reason to regret the principle of your action."[34] This course of action marries the highest ideal one knows with the greatest moral rigor, even the willingness to brave death. Royce calls this marriage of religious receptivity and moral striving "loyalty".

Loyalty draws forth individual identity and ability—after all, there must exist an individual who is dedicated to the ideal. Loyalty obviously elicits a strong social commitment, but it goes further than the sociability of narrow group interests. Loyalty opens a person to appreciate the highest commitments—the loyalties—of all other people, and so transcends all kinds of boundaries.[35] My individual deeds relate to

[30]Ibid., 107-110.
[31]Ibid., 130.
[32]Ibid., 181.
[33]Ibid., 185.
[34]Ibid., 189.
[35]Ibid., 202.

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the deeds of all others who act loyally. Even if we name different objects of loyalty, we recognize and love the practical devotion of each one to his or her cause. In this way, the "true cause" emerges, namely "the spiritual unity of all the world of reasonable beings."[36] Loyalty implies an experience of *universal community*.

If loyalty is to be an enduring source of religious insight, it should not fall apart in the face of suffering. This presents a problem, for every person encounters tribulation in some form, and loyalty does not simply make the tragedy disappear. Suffering thus seems a "profound hindrance" to religious insight of any sort.[37] How should loyal people respond?

From this dilemma, sorrow emerges as the sixth source of religious insight. It is "an experience of ill which is not wholly an experience of that which as you then and there believe ought to be simply driven out of existence."[38] When disaster strikes, loyal people can sometimes resist the evil at hand; in such cases their moral striving makes them better people. One must always reject evil; nevertheless, when evil elicits loyal behavior from people, the evil becomes intertwined with good and generates new possibilities:

> [T]his annulling of one momentary or at least transient aspect of the ill is but part, in such cases, of a constructive process, which involves growth rather than destruction—a passage to a new life rather than a casting wholly out of life. Such ills we remove only in so far as we assimilate them, idealise them, take them up into the plan of our lives, give them meaning, set them in their place in the whole.[39]

Where such assimilation and growth occurs, the destruction of the evil would also mean the loss of a palpable good. Sorrow sublimates evil and does not allow it to have the last word in human experience. The suffering and striving of loyal persons draws good out of evil. "[A]dversity and loyalty are, indeed, simply inseparable companions."[40]

Loyal persons dedicate themselves to their particular causes, and in their own ways they all devote themselves to the one cause of loyalty. They recognize and nurture loyalty in others, and through the endurance and creativity of sorrow they can even turn the inevitable trials of life into opportunities for good. Against this background, a

[36]Ibid., 205.
[37]Ibid., 214.
[38]Ibid., 240.
[39]Ibid., 235.
[40]Ibid., 253.

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final source of religious insight emerges: the "real unity of the life of . . . fellow-servants of the Spirit."[41]

The unity of spirit created by loyalty generates *shared religious experience*. Through memory, abstraction and language, I can participate in a range of experiences far wider than my own. The single, world-embracing insight created through communication is a higher form of consciousness, as real as my individual consciousness. Because it transcends individual awareness and individual human nature, individuals cannot investigate it.[42] When transcendent consciousness serves the cause of loyalty, it becomes the fullest form of religious experience. It creates a unity of purpose and forges reconciling relationships between disparate individuals.

This joyful unity of consciousness and purpose is properly called supernatural. It emanates not from some source outside and alien to the world, but from within the workings of human life. The cumulative theories of the sciences and the common-sense wisdom of cultures are but two examples of higher-than-individual consciousness, which are "finally united in a single, world-embracing insight, which has the character of expressing a world-will."[43] Hence the supernatural has "no need of magic, or of miracle, or of mysterious promptings from the subconscious. . . ."[44]

There are many instances of communal consciousness in the service of loyalty; all are "essentially religious."[45] Such communities need not fall under the purview of any formal religious organization. Nevertheless "the cause of all the loyal, the real unity of the whole spiritual world, is not merely a moral ideal. It is a religious reality."[46] All those who seek salvation through loyalty comprise the Invisible Church.[47]

At first glance, one may rightly wonder whether Royce's final source of religious insight, this unity of life among all loyal people, has much in common with a Catholic understanding of the Church as the sacrament that reveals *God's* presence in the world. Royce's description of the Invisible Church seems akin to Dewey's denuminized social realm, where human striving replaces divine initiative. But Royce insists:

> I am not for a moment committing myself to any mere worship of humanity, so long as one conceives humanity as the mere collection

[41]Ibid., 272.
[42]Ibid., 269-270.
[43]Ibid., 271.
[44]Ibid., 271.
[45]Ibid., 273.
[46]Ibid., 279.
[47]Ibid., 280.

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> of those who are subject to the natural laws that govern our present physical and mental existence.[48]

"Natural" humanity—that is, humanity understood only in terms of empirically verifiable data—is not a fitting object of religious reverence. But loyalty transforms individuals into a genuine community which "is not merely a human reality. It *expresses itself in* the lives of the loyal." The highest form of religious insight comes through encounters with particular communities, which are instances or "*special embodiment[s]*" of the Invisible Church (emphasis added).[49] Royce thus anticipates by fifty years the sacramental ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council. *Lumen Gentium* describes the church in this way:

> [It is] a visible organization through which he [Christ] communicates truth and grace to all men. But the visible and the spiritual community, . . . are not to be thought of as two realities. On the contrary, they form one complex reality which comes together from a human and a divine element. . . . This Church, constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in the Catholic Church . . .[50]

Royce did not immediately apply his philosophy of the universal community to Christianity,[51] and even when he did work out the meaning of universal community for the Christian context, he was hesitant to speak about Christ as the divine foundation of the community's loyal life.[52] But the unmistakable pattern of his thought is sacramental: transcendent reality bodies forth in the particularities of human existence.

Royce's "sacramental vision" presupposes an analogical relationship between the natural power of individuals and the supernatural power which emerges in and through community life. The working of the spirit of universal loyalty within human freedom, not against it,

[48]Ibid., 280-281.

[49]Ibid., 281.

[50]*Lumen Gentium*, art. 8, in Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents,* rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 357. See John J. Markey, *Creating Communion: The Theology of the Constitutions of the Church* (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2003), 56-80.

[51]Royce, *Religious Insight,* 9-10.

[52]This reticence seems to have stemmed from a reluctance to enter the then-current controversy between "liberal" accounts of the historical Jesus and "orthodox" accounts of the divine Christ (Royce, *Problem,* 44-45). Royce's caution in the following statement is typical: "The individual [Jesus] who initiates this process [the new life of loyalty] will then plausibly appear to an onlooker, such as Paul was when he converted, to be at once an individual and the spirit—the very life—of a community. But his origin will be inexplicable in terms of the processes which he himself originates. His power will come from another level than our own. And of the workings of this grace, when it has appeared, we can chiefly say this: That such love is propagated by personal example, although how, we cannot explain" (Royce, *Problem,* 130-31).

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follows the same pattern as the Holy Spirit's gracious working for salvation, as taught by the Council of Trent:

> [T]hose who through their sins were turned away from God, awakened and assisted by His grace, are disposed to turn to their own justification by freely assenting to and cooperating with that grace. In this way, God touches the heart of man with the illumination of the Holy Spirit, but man himself is not inactive while receiving that inspiration, since he can reject it; and yet, without God's grace, he cannot by his own free will take one step towards justice in God's sight.[53]

The harmony that Royce sees between the natural and supernatural character of the community mirrors a Catholic experience of God's grace working in and through the loving acts of free creatures.

The sources of religious insight thus culminate in loyal communities which enact the unity of the Invisible Church through sympathetic communication and mutual comprehension.[54] To understand the dynamic of shared religious experience better, we turn to *The Problem of Christianity*.[55] In this work, which appeared less than a year after *The Sources of Religious Insight*, Royce identifies the Holy Spirit as the spirit of loyalty which animates the Christian community and enables each member to share in the common life.

III. The Problem of Christianity

The Problem of Christianity clarifies the religious experience proper to communities, and highlights a central human activity that forges communal experience: the act of interpretation.[56] The book's

[53]Josef Neuner and Jacques Dupuis, *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (New York, N.Y.: Alba House, 1982), no. 1929. See Heinrich Denzinger and Adolfus Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum, Definitionum, et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum*, 35th ed. (Barcelona: Herder, 1973), nos. 1525, 1548, 1554.

[54] Royce, *Religious Insight,* 292.

[55]Royce delivered *The Problem of Christianity* as a series of sixteen lectures in 1913 at Manchester College, Oxford. The overarching question of the series was, "In what sense can the modern man consistently be, in creed, a Christian?" The series divided into two parts, with the first eight lectures identifying the dynamics in Christianity that gave rise to such concepts as grace, love, sin and repentance. The second half of the series developed Royce's theories of interpretation and community. See John E. Smith, "Introduction" found in Josiah Royce, *The Problem of Christianity* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 4-7.

[56]"Interpretation" here refers not to the hermeneutical theories of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, but to the mediation of minds through signs, in accordance with the philosophy of Charles Sanders Peirce. See, e.g., the discussion in John E. Smith, *Experience and God*, American Philosophy Series, no. 3 (New York: Fordham University Press, 1995).

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opening words set the entire project in the context of the "new awakening of interest in religious experience, and in its bearing upon life."[57] Royce contributed to the discussion of the day by expressing philosophically the central ideas that animate the Christian religion, and aspired to help "modern" women and men accept Christian religion wholeheartedly.[58] The book develops a philosophy of community that corresponds to the third article of the creed, "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints."[59] It argues that the ecclesial and pneumatic character of Christian life forms the basis for Christian religious experience.[60]

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit distinguishes Christian teaching from others, and yet it is strangely neglected.[61] While philosophers of religion elaborately treat the doctrines of God and of the Logos (often quite apart from the Christian doctrine of the Trinity), "the traditional doctrine of the Holy Spirit . . . has remained until this day in the background of inquiry, both for the theologians and for the philosophers." The doctrine of the Holy Spirit "should be philosophically expounded and defended, if any distinctively Christian article of the Creed is to find a foundation in a rationally defensible metaphysical theory of the universe."[62] For a doctrine of God without the Spirit "is not distinctively Christian in its meaning," and a doctrine of the Logos, except when taken together with the doctrine of the Spirit,[63] "is indeed what some of its recent hostile critics (such as Harnack) have taken it to be,—a thesis of Greek philosophy, and not a characteristically Christian opinion."[64] Taking a cue from the Creed, Royce understands the Holy Spirit as the one who animates the Church. Thus the doctrine of the Spirit is also a doctrine about the Christian community. Community becomes the modern point of contact with the traditional Church doctrine about the Holy Spirit.

At first the very existence of any human community appears problematic, because the chasm separating individuals from each other

[57]Royce, *Problem*, 58.

[58]By "modern" women and men Royce meant "people who confront reality as intellectual heirs and stewards of contemporary western civilization." (Gelpi, *Transcendental Experience*, 318).

[59]Royce, *Problem*, 233.

[60]The work gives "a cogent account of the conditions for the possibility of shared communal awareness" (Gelpi, *Transcendental Experience*, 336).

[61]"The most characteristic feature by which the Christian doctrine of life stands contrasted with its greatest religious rival [Buddhism], we found to be summarized in the words of the creed, "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints" (Royce, *Problem*, 233).

[62]Ibid., 234.

[63]Hence Royce admires Johannine christology, which "identifies the Logos with the spirit of the community" (ibid., 235).

[64]Ibid., 234.

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seems unbridgeable. No one but I can feel my feelings, think my thoughts, do my actions. And yet "all these varieties of individual experience . . . do not tell us the whole truth about the actual constitution of the social realm."[65] Language, custom and religion are "product[s] possessing intelligent unity," and the creator of such a product "must be regarded as also, in some sense, a single intelligence." Hence a community "is itself some sort of mental unit with a mind of its own."[66] Not only does it have a mind, but it also has institutions, organization, coherent unity, history and traditions. It results from a time-process:

> A community has a past and will have a future. Its more or less conscious history, real or ideal, is a part of its very essence. A community requires for its existence a history and is greatly aided in its consciousness by a memory.[67]

Communal memory is an extension of individual memories. When two or more people agree that a remembered event belongs to both of them, they share a common past. Their shared history may be an event within their lifetimes if, for example, they attended school together. Their common history may also be an event that occurred in the distant or even legendary past, as when Americans identify with the national fable of young George Washington and the cherry tree. If two or more people find the event significant for their own lives, they have a common history.

A community also shares an expectation for the future, if its members identify an anticipated event as their own. For instance, a nation's anticipated victory in war can be viewed as a personal victory if one identifies one's own fate with the nation's. Thus, there exist communities of memory and communities of hope.[68]

Community therefore "stands in the closest relation to the whole nature of the time-process, and also involves recognizing to the full both the existence and the significance of individual selves."[69] Far from obliterating the individual, community presupposes in its definition "many individual selves," who are "able to look beyond their present chaos of fleeting ideas and warring desires," see far away into the past or into the future, and say, "I view that event as a part of my own life."[70] When a number of people extend the meanings of their

[65]Ibid., 238.
[66]Ibid., 239.
[67]Ibid., 243.
[68]Ibid., 248.
[69]Ibid., 249.
[70]Ibid., 252.

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lives to include a single event and acknowledge that it belongs to all of them, they constitute a community.

Communities engage in cooperative activity that seeks the good of all its members. If members see themselves as sharing a common history, a common future, and a present life, they will work with one another, secure in the knowledge that their efforts on behalf of the group also benefit themselves. They can say, "this activity which we perform together, this work of ours, its past, its future, its sequence, its order, its sense,—all these enter into my life, and are the life of my own self writ large."[71] When each person has—and *knows* that she has—a stake in the group's success, the community can win and keep the love of its members. Communal love requires not only the activities of a community, but also the awareness of community. Without communication of that awareness, communities could not survive.

Royce calls the communication of consciousness between persons that makes shared experience possible *interpretation*. The cognitive process of interpretation must occur in addition to the processes of perception and conception. Perception apprehends "a datum of some sort, a *thing* or perhaps . . . a *change,*" while conception thinks "a *universal* of some sort, a *general* or *abstract character*, a *type*, a *quality*."[72] But neither of these processes attends to *other minds* as its proper object. Interpretation is the cognitive process that relates one "neighbor's mind" to another:[73] "The proper object of an interpretation . . . is either something of the nature of a mind, or else is a process which goes on in a mind, or, finally, is a sign or expression whereby some mind manifests its existence and its processes."[74]

Interpretation is necessary not only for two different minds to communicate, but also for self-knowledge. Over the course of a lifetime, a person changes, often to the point where one's own customary ways of perceiving and knowing become foreign to oneself. In this event, the person must interpret herself to herself: reflection provides "an inner conversation, in which one discovers one's own mind through a process of inference analogous to the very modes of inference which guide us in a social effort to interpret our neighbors' minds."[75]

Interpretation explains one mind to another through a mediator, and thus "always involves a relation of three terms. In the technical phrase, interpretation is a triadic relation."[76] This can be represented in logical terms as "A interprets B to C." It differs from the dyadic con-

[71]Ibid., 263.
[72]Ibid., 281.
[73]Ibid.
[74]Ibid., 281-282.
[75]Ibid., 285.
[76]Ibid., 286.

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structs of both perception and conception (A perceives B; A conceives B). Interpretation is a non-symmetrical relationship; it establishes a specific order: "One of the terms is the interpreter; a second term is the object—the person or the meaning or the text—which is interpreted; the third is the person to whom the interpretation is addressed."[77] This relationship can exist between people, or within a single person, who mediates her own thoughts to herself. It also exists on the communal level, when a community mediates its history to its future via the present. Indeed, the shape of all historical reality is triadic:

> Wherever the world's processes are recorded, wherever the records are preserved, and wherever they influence in any way the future course of events, we may say that (at least in these parts of the world) the present potentially interprets the past to the future, and continues to do so *ad infinitum*.[78]

The triadic structure of interpretation exists in the individual psyche, in interpersonal and communal relations, and even in the metaphysical structure of the world of time.[79] The fact that it is triadic rather than dyadic has three important implications. First, it means that "interpretation is a conversation, and not a lonely enterprise. There is some one, in the realm of psychological happenings, who addresses some one. The one who addresses interprets some object to the one addressed." Second, "the interpreted sign is itself something which has the nature of a mental expression." Third, the interpretation is itself a sign which "calls for further interpretation." Interpretation carries within itself the tendency to continue the social process. "When once initiated, [it] can be terminated only by an external and arbitrary interruption, such as death or social separation."[80]

[77]Ibid., 287.

[78]Ibid., 288.

[79]Royce's theory of interpretation applies not only to human relations, but also to a whole metaphysics compatible with scientific modernity. For example, geologists interpret the physical structure of the Colorado Canyon: "Its walls record, in their stratification, a vast series of long-past changes. The geologist of the present may read these traces, and may interpret them for future geologists of our own age. But the present state of the Colorado Cañon . . . will leave traces that may be used at some future time to interpret these now present conditions of the earth's crust to some still more advanced future . . . In sum, if we view the world as everywhere and always recording its own history . . . we can simply define the time order, and its three regions,—past, present, future,—as an order of possible interpretation. That is, we can define the present as, potentially, the interpretation of the past to the future. The triadic structure of our interpretations is strictly analogous, both to the psychological and to the metaphysical structure of the world of time. And each of these structures can be stated in terms of each other" (ibid., 289).

[80]Ibid., 289-290.

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At the center of community formation is the interpreter. The interpreter must be able to understand both the mind being interpreted and the mind to whom the interpretation is given. But the ideal interpreter must also sincerely desire unity between the minds he or she communicates with. The other two minds must also desire to be interpreted and to understand the interpretation. The "Will to Interpret" "undertakes to make of these three selves a Community":[81]

> If, then, I am worthy to be an interpreter at all, we three,—you, my neighbor, whose mind I would fain interpret,—you, my kindly listener, to whom I am to address my interpretation,—we three constitute a Community. Let us give to this sort of community a technical name. Let us call it a Community of Interpretation.[82]

Different members of the community can serve as interpreter at different times. The interpreter is both leader and servant: he or she defines the character of the community, and yet also must be able to "conform to the mind which he interprets, and to . . . comprehen[d] . . . the mind to which he addresses his interpretation."[83] The interpreter must exercise humility and self-surrender in order for genuine community to come about. Royce describes the will to interpret as a kind of loyalty, which enters into all forms of true loyalty. It "is present wherever charity enters into life."[84] Under the best conditions, loyalty to a community of interpretation enables Christians to understand the ideal of the Church and of God, who is love:

> The mere form of interpretation may be indeed momentarily misused for whatever purpose of passing human folly you will. But if the ideal of interpretation is first grasped; and if then the Community of Interpretation is conceived as inclusive of all individuals; and as unified by the common hope of the far-off event of complete mutual understanding; and finally, if love for this community is awakened,—then indeed this love is able to grasp, in ideal, the meaning of the Church Universal, of the Communion of Saints, and of God the Interpreter.[85]

The understanding of community as the locus of loving communication between persons makes evident the conditions for communal consciousness: two or more selves share a history and a hope. They communicate their minds to one another, creating the ability to work together for the common good and to promote unity and love. Inter-

[81]Ibid., 314.
[82]Ibid., 315.
[83]Ibid., 317.
[84]Ibid., 318.
[85]Ibid., 319.

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pretation makes impossible any notion of an isolated subject: "we learn to acknowledge the being and inner life of our fellow-men."[86] Furthermore, interpretation accounts for the intrinsically historical nature of religious experience; "we learn . . . to understand the constitution of temporal experience, with its endlessly accumulating sequence of significant deeds."[87] In the philosophical explanation of mutual love and loyalty, individuals reach their fulfillment through devotion to a common cause. The will to interpret, as a form of love, can defuse potential conflict because interpretation mediates between opposed interests, creating community where none existed before.[88]

Royce's philosophy of interpretation challenges the modern myth that we cannot really know one another's minds. At the same time, he acknowledges the distinctness of the individuals engaged in interpretation. Interpretation creates a common life not by reducing all its members to sameness, but by mediating individuals to each other through interpretation. Again, a sacramental pattern works through Royce's thought: the sharing that occurs through interpreted signs is nevertheless the real presence of selves to each other.

IV. Conclusion

Several questions remain as Catholics learn from Royce's philosophy. One must continue to press Royce's naturalism to confirm its compatibility with a fully Catholic sense of a divine Other who acts within creation. One must also ask whether Royce presumes to explain religious experience in terms more adequate than those of religious communities themselves, effectively replacing Scripture and tradition. Further, if Catholicism does indeed have a communal ethos distinguishable from those of other Christian churches, is the thought of Josiah Royce perhaps more amenable to Protestant ecclesiology than to Catholic? How might Catholics incorporate Royce's ideas into a Catholic theology of religious experience?

Despite these ongoing questions, Royce can help resolve some of the ambivalence felt by Catholics over the meaning and value of "religious experience." In *The Sources of Religious Insight* and *The Problem of Christianity*, religious experience describes not a rarified kind of navel-gazing but an integral human response to a deeply felt need for salvation. It impels individuals out of a hazy world of intuitive feeling and into the light of social, reasoned, free, and loving commitment. If individuals follow this path to its end, they become receptive to the

[86]Ibid., 294.
[87]Ibid., 294.
[88]John E. Smith, "Introduction" in ibid., 32.

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truth and good that lies beyond one's immediate grasp, and recognize fellow women and men who are similarly open and committed to the good. They form local communities of memory and hope through the loyal act of interpretation, fueled by a desire to know and be known in their common history and future, and to work for the practical realization of a good life shared by all. The isolation of radical individualism has no place in this life.

Nor can religious experience, for all its humanness, be called anything less than supernatural. Loyal persons in community are transformed into the sacrament, the real embodiment, of salvation for each other. This transformation does not overcome human freedom; on the contrary, it both arises within individual freedom and furthers its growth. The community created in this way need not be stripped of its transcendent elements to be properly human. Catholics have reason to celebrate and cultivate the insights they find in the thought of Josiah Royce, for his philosophy evinces a profound sense of the sacramental, ecclesial character of religious experience.

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