especially in the Psalms (ch. 12). Even in the face of despair, music brings meaning and hope.

At times, these paradoxes of Christianity could be more carefully navigated. In revealing ‘blurred lines’ of various dichotomies (especially sacred/secular), contributors occasionally risk collapsing one side into the other. One could contest certain moves: wondering whether God could ask for forgiveness (p. 52), reinterpreting original sin through process theology (p. 77), and equating ‘the erotic life force pervading the natural cosmos’ with the ‘divine Spirit’ (p. 142). But Christian orthodoxy should not be a bar to this dialogue between theology and culture, not least for musicians who reject ‘official’ religion.

Finally, while good musicking is intrinsically virtuous, of course music can coexist with, and contribute to, injustice. The book does not explicitly acknowledge the virtue of ‘religion’ as part of justice, yet our ‘vertical’ relationship to God is inseparable from ‘horizontal’ care for humanity and our common home. Justice cannot be fulfilled by sacramentalism without the sacraments, activism without grace, protest without prayer; nor by doxology without lament, liturgy without hospitality, or theology without a listening ear. Zilphia Horton insisted on the Christianity underpinning her songs. Would she regret the secularised trajectory of ‘I/We Shall Not Be Moved’, from Christian spiritual to labour song, civil rights anthem and, finally, Premier League football chant? Either way, this timely book is an essential contribution to a renewed dialogue of theology and culture.

MATTHEW JARVIS OP

CONFESSION: THE HEALING OF THE SOUL by Peter Tyler, *Bloomsbury*, London, 2017, pp. 219, £14.99, pbk

It might be helpful to begin by noting what this book is not. It is not a history of the sacramental practice of confession as it has developed in the Roman Catholic Church, nor is it a comparative study of the place of confession as a pastoral ministry across the Christian churches. It is not an examination of the practice of confession as it is found within the different world faiths, nor is it an exploration of the apparently similar experiences and practices found in psychotherapy and in popular media. But elements of each of these contribute to this wise and challenging book, and our understanding of each is itself deepened by the comprehensive reach of the discussion.

What fascinates Peter Tyler, who is both an academic theologian and a practising psychotherapist, is how confession can function in enabling and fostering integral human growth, and how confession might be *the* necessary experience and practice to heal the gap that has opened up between the psychological and transcendent axes of our human living and experience. We divide the ‘psychological’ questions (Who am I? Where am I from? What have I done?) from the ‘transcendental’ questions (Where am I going? What is the meaning of life? How do I find the spiritual?), as if the former can somehow be answered with no recourse to the latter. In doing so we open ourselves to the false and ultimately futile attempt to rely for our completeness on romantic love rather than on transcendental love.

One consequence of this is that when we *do* encounter the transcendental we have no way of handling the experience in an integrating way. ‘*Over again I feel Thy finger and find Thee*’ sings Gerard Manley Hopkins, but for many in our Western culture that touch of God which is part of the warp and woof of our living is *sensu stricto* incomprehensible. Without the transcendental we are split between two reductionisms, the psychological and the pietistic, neither of which enables radical human development.

Hungering and thirsting for what takes us beyond ourselves, we settle for the romantic: this moves us beyond egoism and solipsism, but leaves unhealed – and indeed deepened – that division between the psychological and the transcendent. Entranced and apparently sated by the romantic, we are incapable of recognising the presence of the transcendent: only the transcendent can satisfy that hunger and that thirst, and enable the division to be overcome and the split to be restored. Tyler sees the Tristan myth as literally *embodying* a less-than-conscious awareness of this split in its central image of the wound that will not heal, and this myth provides an overarching scaffolding for the book as a whole.

At the heart of the book are three chapters exploring the confessional writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein, Abhishiktananda (Henri le Saux), and St John of the Cross. The order in which each is approached might seem confusing until it becomes clear that they represent three steps in the healing of the ‘Tristan wound’ in increasing openness to the transcendent.

Wittgenstein transforms Western philosophy by reintroducing the transcendent into serious philosophical discourse, and by bringing back the notion of philosophy as working on oneself; in his confessional writings, he recognises in action the transformative power of confession in opening us to the transcendent; but in his own life and growth he hesitates on the threshold of the transcendent. The debate about whether he stepped across that threshold at the close of his life continues: what is clear is that in his confessional writings, the hesitation remains.

The journey of the Breton monk Henri le Saux, who became Abhishiktananda, was one which led him from an orthodox and relational spirituality to an encounter – or perhaps we should say an experience of oneness or non-duality which went beyond ‘encounter’ – which he struggled to put into words but which he experienced as finally finding the Grail for which his whole life had been a quest, and finding it in the midst of the everyday even as the everyday was utterly stripped away. Abhishiktananda's journey from Western monasticism, via a profound engagement with Advaitic Hinduism, to 'a 'scorching fire' that burnt away all religious forms, ideas and duties' is illuminated by Tyler with material from his letters and diaries, in which we can see the physical and social and religious renunciations echoed and re-expressed in the renunciations of confession, in which all obstacles to the encounter with God are progressively removed.

Peter Tyler's expertise in the writings of John of the Cross is well-known: here he focusses on the last of John's poems, *The Living Flame of Love*, and the commentary on it which he wrote, not for any sort of ecclesiastic or professionally religious person, notes Tyler, but for an 'unlettered woman'. John spells out the impossibility of speaking or writing about the encounter with God at its deepest – 'But now the Lord has appeared to grant me a little knowledge and given me a little fire'. Tyler comments 'as we regard the unknown depths of the soul we must often resort to the companions of unknowing – the poetic, the imaginative and the mythic – to give voice to what we find there. This will be John's path'.

For this reader at least, this chapter is the high point of the book. Recognising with John the limits of what can be said even in mythic or poetic form, 'for . . . it would appear less than it is if I spoke about it', as John explains, Peter Tyler nonetheless provides a way for the reader to grasp something of what it is with which John is grappling, and how central is his 'confessing' of his experience. And it is in John's experience and in his struggling that we find the healing of the 'Tristan wound' in the acknowledged and accepted erotic dimension of the encounter with God. The psychological (who am I? Where am I from? What have I done?) and the transcendent (Where am I going? What is the meaning of life? How do I find the spiritual?) are not 'brought together' but recognised as always having been inseparable. It is the same recognition that is there in Wittgenstein's writings, and is perhaps the element of them which led Elizabeth Anscombe to express the wish that nothing be known of his personal life but only of his 'academic' contributions to philosophy. It is the same recognition that (if I have understood correctly) came to Abhishiktananda at the close of his life.

Two selections from Peter Tyler's 'Epilogue' may serve to sum up:

> '[T]he Catholic liturgical sacrament of confession - a hybrid creature of transcendental and psychological structure – gives the possibility, through its liturgical symbolism, to effect in the one who confesses the reality it represents'.
>
> 'Confession is the means by which we are returned to our birthright – the abyss of love from which we were created'.

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