

THE SPIRITUALITY OF PETER FABER

His Life

It is the year 1541. The great hopes pinned on the meeting of the Imperial Diet in Regensburg/Germany turned out to be disappointing. Reading the final report the Pope's attention rested with the final passage of the document: "As we know from experience, the spiritual exercises proved to be most efficacious for princes and lay persons. Those who were wavering are now strengthened, others who had already fallen away have regained their faith which is mainly the merit of Master Peter Faber, one of the priests who has been with Cardinal Filonardi in Parma. It would be advantageous to send two of his companions of the Society of Jesus, namely the Spaniard Diego (Layne) and one other companion. They certainly would do much good here."¹

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Who is Peter Faber?

1. CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH. Peter Faber was born 13 April 1506 in Le Villaret, Savoy not far from Geneva. There the lively and devout young boy grew up in a rural atmosphere. Soon he showed a lively zest for learning. He writes: "At the age of ten I was overcome by such great desire to go to school that I (a farmer's son destined for the laity by my parents) became so disquieted and full of yearning that I began to cry. So against their intention my parents were forced to send me to school."² Most probably and thanks to his two uncles who in succession were priors of the

Carthusians in Le Reposoir, he received an excellent education, first at the classical grammar school in La Roche. At the age of twelve, 1518 he had a deep religious experience. 'Inspired by the Holy Spirit' he felt that he had to consecrate his life "to the service of God" and, "one day (while looking after the cows during the holidays) overjoyed and with great desire for purity I promised Our Lord a life of perpetual chastity."³

2. PARIS. At the age of nineteen (1525) he arrived in Paris for the purpose of higher studies. There he came across people from all parts of Europe. There too, the latest ideas were discussed or opposed.⁴ After eleven years of study he received the degree of master of arts. "According to the trend of the time he received a thorough training and good knowledge in logic and philosophy. A certain scholastic mannerism and academic style would remain a characteristic all his life. His theological training was not of the same compact unity but shows definitely Ockham's way of thinking, and with its slightly agnostic scepticism towards the natural order he asserts to show more clearly the free and undeserved divine action of grace. Popular devotion, Christian humanism, late medieval scholasticism – these three tools were the influential forces in the development of Faber's spiritual world."⁵

But Faber's spiritual personality would most probably have less unfolded had he not shared the lodging in the college of Sainte-Barbe of a likewise nineteen years old student from Navarre, Francis Xavier, with whom he kept up a life-long friendship. At the university he also met the strange, about 15 years older Basque, Ignatius of Loyola. Ignatius had a very quieting, stabilising and strengthening influence on the questioning, depression- and scruple inclined, sensitive Savoyarde. Faber remarked about this friendship: "During the same year Inigo moved to the same Saint Barbe-College and shared with us the same accommodation in order to start on St Remigius' day [1. October 1530] the course in Fine Arts, ... Praise be forever for this good fortune, which divine providence had so ordained for my wellbeing and salvation, because I had to teach this holy man, to whom I had first a very ordinary association, but then, on a basis of trust we finally shared our life in common having only one room, one table and one purse. And since he also became my teacher in matters of the spirit, setting principles and giving me advice how to get to know

myself and discern God's will [Eb 1], we became of one mind and were united in the firm resolution to continue this our present life style together with the other members of this society, of whom I am quite unworthy."⁶ In 1534 Faber made the spiritual exercises under the guidance of St Ignatius. They deeply influenced and formed his whole person. At Montmartre, on 15 August 1534 the first seven companions received those vows which according to the words of Simon Rodrigues became the principle and foundation of the future society of Jesus.⁷ Being the only priest in the group, Faber celebrated the Mass. In 1535 Ignatius returned to Spain because of health reasons, also to settle some matters concerning his companions and, according to the somewhat cryptic remarks of P. Araoz and Polanco to amend some "follies of his youth."⁸ During his absence Peter Faber was the leader of the group. In November 1536 the whole group left for Italy and on 8 January 1537 rejoined Ignatius in Venice who had been awaiting his "friends in the Lord" there. It followed the memorable and eventful year during which they were waiting for a suitable passage to the Holy Land. Here, in 1537 they were ordained priests. Afterwards they went to various places in northern Italy where they made their spiritual exercises and in a humble way carried out their apostolate. It was also the year in which they gave their group the name "Society of Jesus". In autumn in La Storta Ignatius had the memorable mystical experience which he shared with his two companions Laynez and Peter Faber: that God the Father had joined him to the side of the cross-bearing Christ. After their arrival in Rome they started a very active apostolate of charity and preaching.

In 1538 the whole group of this new type of priests offered their services to Pope Paul III: to be sent to wherever he thought it best.[1539 Delib. prim. PP]

3. THE TRAVELLING APOSTLE. Very soon the Pope made good use of this offer. In spring 1539, shortly after the group had been constituted as an order, Diego Laynez and Peter Faber were sent to Parma in order to carry out mission work in this marginal region of the Papal territory. They were to revive the faith in the face of the protestant reformers. They preached, heard confession and founded the "Name of Jesus Confraternity" for which Peter Faber wrote a rule of life.⁹ Similar directives he wrote for the

confraternities of Regensburg and Cologne.¹⁰

This fruitful work of Peter Faber in Parma was suddenly ended when he was sent on a new mission by Paul III: He had to accompany the rather stout Dr Ortiz right across Europe, first to the discussions on religion in Worms, then to the Diet in Regensburg.¹¹ The purpose of these discussions was to bridge the gap between Protestants and Catholics and unite Europe against the Turks.

Those meetings in Worms and the Diet of Regensburg showed clearly how shaky the Roman position had become, how far the interests of the princes had drifted away from those of the Habsburgers and those of the Pope and how far the reformation had really progressed. Faber was forbidden to speak with the reformers. He would have liked to enter into a conversation with Melanchton.¹² Faber seemed to have cherished the hope for conversion of the Lutherans and Luther himself until the end of his life.¹³ Outside the political scene he was zealously engaged in the pastoral service for the Catholics. He used the method which the group of the companions had developed in northern Italy and Rome. He gave many retreats, gave spiritual talks, spiritual direction in and outside the confessional. In this way he gained a sound picture on the religious situation in Germany. In a letter to Ignatius, dated 10 January 1541 he sums up in a precise manner the situation: "Would be to God, there were one or two priests in every town, living neither in concubinage nor in any other sinful state known by everybody here, priests who would show pastoral zeal! I have no doubt, that with the help of the Lord the ordinary and simple people would soon come back to the Church."¹⁴ Obviously, the reformation was for him not a theological problem but foremost a pastoral one, actually a problem of the catholic Church. Faber was of the opinion that much more important than theological disputes and religious discussions was a solid catholic reform of the whole body, head and every member of the body.¹⁵ Although the religious discussions were futile, Faber's engagement with the participants showed surprising and unplanned results: Through his contacts in the pastoral service with the participants Faber and his companions enjoyed a good reputation in important political and ecclesial circles. With his quiet method and working in the background Faber had shown the way: No direct intervention in the negotiations. But he influenced and formed the

negotiators for interaction and their relation to Jesus and the Church. He did this with the means as described by the Formula Instituti No 1. All this was well observed as already stated in the introductory passage on the final report about the Diet in Regensburg.

Already 27. July 1541 Peter Faber had to leave with Dr. Ortiz for Spain. Passing through Switzerland he could pay a last short visit at his home in Le Villaret and from there he crossed Southern France on his way to Spain. While Dr Ortiz held talks with many renowned persons Faber was zealously engaged in pastoral work, preaching and giving retreats. At the imperial court of the Infantes in Ocana he made the acquaintance of the two court chaplains Don Juan Aragonés and Don Alvaro Alfonso. They became friends and the two chaplains uttered the wish to learn the "art of the spiritual exercises."¹⁶ But on the orders of Pope Paul III Faber had to leave again for Germany in 1542. He should be at the disposal of the papal nuncio Cardinal Morone at the Diet of Speyer.

Second Stay and Mission in Germany

In the greatest of haste Peter Faber travelled through France, then Switzerland, where he celebrated Holy week in Solothurn and arrived in mid April 1542 in Speyer. The Diet was already finished. It was only by correspondence that Giovanni Morone commissioned him to do as much as possible for the Rhenish Catholic population according to the "manner of the Society of Jesus". From this time onward, dated 15 June 1542 begin the records of the "Memoriales."

The day after his arrival he started to give retreats: to his two Spanish court chaplains, the vicar general of Speyer, Georg Musbach, the dome-choirmaster and subsequent Cardinal Otto Truchsess.¹⁷ But because he was called to the Council of Trent he had to break off the exercises.

Faber had quickly created a network of pastoral connections with people in public service, priests, even with the Augustinian prior Michael Diller¹⁸ who had turned to be a Lutheran preacher. At the beginning of October he had to leave for Mainz, once again before he could see the fruit of his labour.

In Mainz he should assist the very influential, worldly but also reform-

willing Elector and Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg. He was ordered to give lectures on the psalms at the faculty for theology.

In addition to this successful work Faber gave again retreats to many people, to some bishops and canons, also to his landlord, to the parish priest Konrad of St Christopher, being instrumental for his conversion from living in concubinage to become a Carthusian.¹⁹ At the beginning of April 1543 the first meeting with Peter Canisius took place in Mainz. Canisius had come on recommendation of Alvaro Alfonso, the former court chaplain of Spain. He met in Peter Faber a person of great spirituality. Canisius became convinced of the value of the spiritual exercises and started with them already at the end of April 1543. Concluding the exercises he decided to become a member of the Society of Jesus.²⁰

While directing Petrus Canisius in the spiritual exercises Peter Faber also entered a new phase in his life. Canisius had been sent to Faber by the prior of the Carthusians, Gerhard Kalkbrenner²¹ to ask him to come to Cologne in order to strengthen the Catholic resistance against the Lutherans, especially against the Archbishop Hermann of Wied.²² The archbishop openly favoured Lutheranism and wanted to speed up the church-reform according to his ideas and with the help of Butzer and other Lutheran preachers. But the Catholic people of Cologne put up resistance. Their spokesmen were Gerhard Kalkbrenner and the young Petrus Canisius. Faber did not go to Cologne at once, but procured from the emperor a delay in the reform-work and the dismissal of Butzer

His stay lasted only two months during which he devoted his whole work and attention to the local church. He worked with the Carthusians of Cologne, the Dome-(cathedral) chapter, the university, even with the city council. To many of them he gave retreats, gave sermons to the professors of the university and started again counselling and hearing confessions. For those young men who had joined him in order to become Jesuits or those who were already members he started the first Jesuit house on German ground in 1544. Hardly begun his work in Cologne and not seeing results as yet, Faber again had to leave on a new mission.

On request of King John III he was sent by Ignatius to Lisbon already at the end of September 1543. He was to accompany the princess Maria

of Portugal on the way to her future husband, Philipp II of Spain. During his stay in Portugal he kept in close contact with the Jesuits in Coimbra. From this period many beautiful letters to the young Jesuits of Coimbra college²³ have been preserved, containing short but important "directives for the apostolate among the Protestants."²⁴ In Spain he prepared new foundations for the work of his order and met Franz Borja.

A few months after his arrival at the court of Philipp II in Valladolid, the princess died four days after the birth of her first son, Don Carlos. Peter Faber never met the princess. Despite his zeal for his ministry and his order the mission on the Iberian peninsula turned out a failure. His writings from Valladolid in summer 1945 about perfect obedience to the young priests reflect most probably the problem with which he had to grapple himself: every time when he just began to notice a little result with regard to his apostolic activity, he had to break off his work and move to some other task: "Obedience must be blind, which means that the really obedient person may not expect fervent, loving response nor rational argument nor the fruit of his labour which may be the result of the given task. Should he, though he proceeded blindly with the given task, experience all the joy of some positive results, he must endeavour not to lose the good spirit which helped him to carry out the order – even when the order is reversed and he were told the opposite. At the same time he must remember, that a person living under obedience may never and in no circumstances make halt at a particular given task, even if he found the task stimulating and inspiring. By 'making halt' I understand that a person would lose his willingness to obey every newly given order." The concrete reason for this letter are the known difficulties at the Coimbra-college with the excessive penitential practices, which should soon be the concern of Ignatius and later on also of Nadal. Reading, however, Peter Faber's letter against the background of his biographical situation it gives one the key to his own inner problems: To live a life of continual breaking off some task and starting out anew without any certainty of success, not knowing whether he was doing the right thing, worrying about a new mission started by him and having to leave it again; it was a life of total and blind obedience, simply a life of obedient confidence and trust.

So only after a year's stay in Spain he left again, commissioned as

papal theologian to attend the council of Trent. During the years 1545 and 1546 Peter Faber was repeatedly ill, most probably because of physical exhaustion. On 17 July 1546 he arrived completely exhausted in Rome and

died 1 August, only just forty years of age, "a victim of his not always meaningful journeys which he had undertaken in exemplary obedience."²⁵

The Spirituality of Peter Faber

We have looked at the formal rather complex biography of Peter Faber, but he himself helps us to gain greater insight into his interior life. He did not write much, especially no academic treatises. He was pastor and a journeying apostle. His concerns were urgent and practical. He was not personally present at the discussions of the Diets in Worms and Regensburg, but counselling and taking care of spiritual matters he was quietly working behind the scene. He came late to the Diet of Speyer and he died before he could leave Rome for the Council of Trent. What is the secret of his success and its fruitfulness when on first sight we are struck by the failure and never-coming-to-rest of Faber's life?

On 15 June 1542 he started to write his 'Memoriale', a spiritual diary, at first in order to discern God's guidance in his own life. He also wanted to give his two Spanish companions more effective spiritual help by witnessing to this very guidance in his own life. This Memoriale is really a treasure though a rather difficult and dry one. On reading one comes to realise how different this 16th century person was concerning language and mentality, thinking and feeling. We also possess a number of letters, some instructions, assessments and rules of life for confraternities.²⁶

1. LIFE UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. Judging by the sensibility and decisive turning to the subject, his attentive noticing of feelings, inner movements and happenings Peter Faber is a modern person. Therefore it is not surprising, that the topoi (concepts) of "discernment"²⁷ "spiritual perception," the whole linguistic instrumentarium of describing feelings and inner movements play a central role, nor that the Holy Spirit

and the confidence in his guidance are such characteristic features in this matter.

"I was about twelve years of age when I felt the tender incentive of the Holy Spirit to consecrate my life to the Lord... O merciful God! You accompanied me and wanted to take possession of me" (No 4).²⁸

a. LIFE WITH LIMITATIONS. Faber felt within himself quite different and opposite movements. In Paris he was plagued by different and strong swaying emotions and scruples. He suffered from depression and anxiety. A person who reads attentively the Memoriales is surprised that Peter Canisius is supposed to have said about his revered Father Faber: "God preserve us from the bad spirit which has plagued Father Faber so much." Peter Faber writes on 29 November 1542: *"With the peculiar longing for a special insight into the 'crawling gear' (if I may say so) and my depressed spirit I begged for the grace of spiritual uplifting: that my soul would no longer remain in the depth of 'spiritual infirmity' and 'be bent down' by the lowest of things, but be freed by the grace of Jesus Christ and be able to look for ever heavenward (Lk 13:11)"* (No 184).²⁹ On 26 March 1542 the note in his diary describes anew this dismal frame of mind: *"On Eastermonday, after Matins, I fell back into my old habit – a depression which has three reasons: first, because I feel not the wished for signs of love of God within myself; second, I feel more than ever the old Adam at work within myself; third, I cannot produce the longed for fruit of the salvation for others. These three points sum about up all the troubles of my mind so that I am inclined to recognise in this my cross."* (No 277). Faber suffered greatly from inner discord, the inclination, "to observe the failures of others, to suspect and condemn them" (No 11), finally he was plagued by scruples of innumerable and unthought of imperfections. In all this one can detect an evident lability, perhaps exaggerated responsibility combined with a strong inferiority complex.

Ignatius had a very stabilising influence on Faber. He encouraged him to make a general confession with Dr Castro, he introduced him to weekly confession and communion, (a good overseeable religious practice), he taught him the examination of conscience (GE 24-43). In retrospect Faber describes these "lessons for life", which he had received from Ignatius:

"First of all, he taught me the right understanding concerning the motions of my conscience and the temptations of scruples from which I suffered already a long time without seeing or finding any means to be at peace. The scruple consisted of the anxiety of not having confessed my sins properly for quite some time, ...The temptations from which I suffered consisted of evil and repulsive pictures of a carnal nature, instilled by the spirit of concupiscence of which at that time I had no spiritual understanding but only book knowledge. (No 9)

He then noticed:

"I was never overtaken by affliction, anxiety, scruple, doubt, apprehension or any other evil spirit..., without having found, by the grace of God, immediately or only a few days later an effective means against it; ...To this chapter belong also the innumerable gifts of grace with regard to the cognition and experience of the different spirits... Day after day I learnt to know them better, because the Lord has left me with a few 'stings' (2 Cor 12 :7) which never allowed me to become lax. All these experiences with the evil spirits, which helped me to gain insight, clear judgement, alert consciousness about myself or the things pertaining to God, Our Lord or neighbour - the Lord never permitted, so it seems, that I was deceived or went wrong ; he rather freed me through inspiration and enlightenment by his holy angels and the Holy Spirit at the right time and whenever it seemed to him good to do so. (No 12)

Inigo admitted him to the spiritual exercises only after four years, just before the ordinations.³⁰ One thing is certain, Ignatius gave this young man with the tool of his own experience and, over a long period of patient and spiritual direction an effective means of self-help, teaching him the "rules for the discernment of Spirits" (GE 313-327: first week; GE 328-336: second week) and the rules concerning scruples (GE 345-351). Repeatedly there were situations of emotional break downs, phases of depression, situations of excessive demands, even plain hopelessness. But every time Faber managed to find his way to inner and outer clarity. His fine and attentive perception and his consequent turning to Christ, the believing consciousness to be surrounded by a whole cosmos of

protecting angels and spirits, his strong attachment to the order and the faith of being carried by the prayers of its members and the love by which he himself carried the burden of them, all this was a strong help.³¹

How did Faber to overcome the phases of depression? It seems there were two movements:

b. LIFE ACCORDING TO THE PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES. In the phases of depression he experienced his being totally thrown back upon himself, this "inner paralysis" "frailty and heaviness", "earthliness" and "decline" (all expressions used No in 88). He interpreted them completely against the background of the 7th rule of the first week [320]: "When one is in desolation, he should be mindful that God has left him to his natural powers to resist the different agitation and temptations of the enemy in order to try him. He can resist with the help of God, which always remains, though he may not clearly perceive it. For though God has taken from him the abundance of fervour and overflowing love and the intensity of His favours, nevertheless, he has sufficient grace for eternal salvation." In this sense Peter Faber writes on 15.August 1542: It seems "it is a great favour of Jesus, Our Lord, when a person finds himself completely left to himself and utterly dependent on the grace needed (*gratia essentialis*) to recognise his own spirit, which belongs to his very being, and most of all that he is able to distinguish between what comes from the outside from the good or evil spirit. Indeed it is of utmost importance to know the difference between the action of the good and evil spirit so as to understand and feel the heights and the depth of one's state of being, also that we can perceive its growth or diminution in ourselves" (No.88).

The longing after this deep strengthening and renewal was his constant companion: After the mass to Our Lady he writes: "I begged Our Lady to obtain for me the grace to become strengthened and renewed, so that, when (with right and necessity) the effective impulse and felt co-operation of the Holy Spirit is taken from me, I shall not become weak so quickly, fall and lose the power of perception for the gifts of God; ...May

it please God in his goodness, to strengthen my disposition in such a way, that each time I am stronger, maturer, and fit for good works, even when this additional grace is taken from me; that by the grace of God reliable basic attitudes are built up within me, which enable me to use them also at such times, when I am not just endowed with special spiritual fervour" (No 89).

During the period from 8-15 December 1542 we find a note which can be considered the fulfilment of this wish:

"On the days when I celebrated the feast Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, I felt a new support and stability in my heart and whole being which gave me the impression to be less receptive for the flood of temptations coming from outside. Because of this new insight which could have stirred my emotions and moved me to greater love, I did not feel a greater devotion; but I was also not, like usual visited by impure thoughts or those which come from the evil spirit. By the grace of God the foundation of my being was strengthened in an inexplicable way. It could be said that the foundation or the walls and pillars and all the other supporting elements of my house had been reinforced,... Formerly I found my inner room decorated with some godly furnishing of devout feelings and good inspirations; but at the same time I felt also a great weakness and unsteadiness in my foundation. May Jesus grant... that both elements are renewed daily: the foundation and the furnishing..." (No 191).

C. CONNECTION TO THE HISTORY OF SALVATION. The record of 25 December 1542 is most probably the most beautiful example:

"At the first mass, feeling cold and sad because my dwelling was poorly prepared, I was overcome by a very vivid spirit which moved me to tears and with deep interior devotion, I heard the following answer: 'It means that Jesus wants to come to a stable. If you were already aglow, you would at this moment not find the humanity of Our Lord, because spiritually there would be no stable resemblance.' So I found consolation in the Lord who

deigned to come to such a cold home. I wanted to see my house decorated in order to have some consolation; instead I saw the lot of Our Lord and because of this I was consoled" (No 197).

A similar note is dated 23 March 1542: "When the day of the suffering of Our Lord arrived and I began to think about it, it came to my mind, affirmed by the Holy Spirit that all this was for my own good. This day and this time is the time of the suffering of Our Lord: the time, when we remember the physical wounds of Jesus, his suffering, his death, humiliation, disdain and ill-treatment. Therefore it was good when my spiritual wounds and the scars of not yet healed weaknesses broke open again during these days – days on which also the suffering and the merits of Jesus break open anew." (No 269) So *Faber perceived clearly his inner situation. He then reflected his situation against the background of salvation history – the liturgical season helped him to do this. And so he was able to connect his own inner narrowness with the expanse of world history and the history of salvation. He sees his own situation embedded in the great christological context and also as a participation in the following of Christ.*³²

The Way of Inner Experience: Devotion-Withdrawal-Exaltation

a. DEVOTION AS SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION. In studying the *Memoriale* an inner development can be noticed during the period from late summer 1542 until May 1543. There are naturally also times of melancholy, but there are some outstanding periods which show a certain trend: at first he speaks oftener of a "spiritual perception,"³³ which he calls devotion. This spiritual perception or feeling consists of impulses of joy and agreement accompanied by cognition. He calls it "devotion":

"an immediate knowledge with the loving understanding of the divine – especially of God the Lord himself and the free gifts of his goodness, which make man pleasing to his creator..." (No 81), he wrote on 12 August 1542.

This inner spiritual feeling means for Faber the being touched by God at

the bottom of his soul, which causes a person to surrender to God and giving himself to others, and so leading us to love the things God loves. Perception and feeling (*affectus*) are the two components often called by Faber "devotion".

b. WITHDRAWAL: On 8 October Faber writes about an inner strength, which leads him from distraction to recollection: "One day... I received much light regarding genuine devotion and various answers which encouraged me to long for the continuous assistance of the good spirit, especially to be able to achieve greater withdrawal of my own spirit the more I advanced in my giving. By "withdrawal" I understand the being drawn into my inner self, a pull which comes from God and is given us because of our prayer and efforts, so that we comprehend better his holy word and, that they touch us at our very roots and sink into us their vitality." (No 135) Faber noticed again and again, especially when distracted and restless, the deep longing of interior recollection. On 5 December 1542 he wrote that, repeatedly "I had the desire and petition for this very grace, of which I felt I was just given a first beginning: would that my soul be re-centred from within every time I lose my inner peace, God's peace and, that the first recall arises from the very depth and centre of my heart." (*ex intimis fieret revocatio animae meae*) (No 188)³⁴ The return to his own self, the retreat to the recollection of his centre is for Faber the decisive turning to God. "Therefore, Jesus asks these two things of us: that we lift up our spirit more and more heavenward, go within the depth of ourselves until we find God within ourselves. Because nowhere else do we find the kingdom of God but within ourselves and in heaven" (No 105).

C. UPLIFTING OF THE SOUL. The wish of withdrawal and exaltation³⁵ found its fulfilment on 22 May 1543. He wrote:

"On Tuesday after the feast of the Blessed Trinity I felt ... a grace, which I had never felt so distinctly before, although I had often been granted this wish. It consisted of my spirit being surer and longer as usual being lifted up to the countenance of God who is in heaven. Although I have at other times felt greater devotion which revealed to me the meaning of the words or instilled me

with the spirit of contrition or filled me in some other way with devotion, this time it was the exaltation of the soul, which allowed me to understand the presence of God, the way he dwells in his heavenly temple... Although I found this reaching out of my spirit towards God rather strenuous, I was full of hope that grace would fortify me" (No 319).

It is remarkable that we find in Peter Faber such a high standard of mystic. The study of the Memoriales reminds us not only at every turn of the spiritual exercises and its sensitive relationship to Jesus, but also of the spiritual diary of Ignatius. There was in fact an enormous spiritual-mystical power in the beginnings of our order. How much influence did the Carthusians have on Peter Faber's mystic? The many contacts of the first companions and especially those of Peter Faber³⁶ were certainly not of a mere superficial nature. It is most probable that Peter Faber found in the devotional type of the Rhenish Devotio Moderna, also a distinct mark of the Carthusian prior Gerhard Kalkbrenner, a stimulating and strengthening spirituality. The correspondence between them belongs to one of the outstanding features of spiritual literature and is a wonderful witness to a deep Christ-centred friendship.³⁷

Apostolic Passion

The more Peter Faber was touched by the spirit of God, the more he gained inner freedom and clarity and therefore, could devote himself wholly to his apostolic work. It consisted of a fruitful change between work and prayer, action and contemplation. Prayer stimulated and sped up the work, work forced him back to prayer and led him deeper into trusting confidence in God. On 4 October 1542 he wrote into his diary:

"When, on the same day I reflected on how to pray and work well, and how a genuine desire for prayer leads to good works and vice versa good works lead to a genuine desire for prayer I noticed and felt quite clearly, that a spiritual person who seeks God in his work finds him afterwards in prayer much better than a person who, as happens frequently, seeks God in prayer in order to find him afterwards in good deeds. So he who seeks and finds the spirit of

God in good works makes more reliable progress than the one who only relies on prayer. To find God in the works compared to finding him in prayer is often like the actual execution compared to the mere desire" (No 126).³⁸

This fruitful interlocking of prayer and active service is often the subject of his meditations through which he experiences development in his very personal attitude. On Christmasday 1542 he wrote:

"May the almighty Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit grant me the grace, that knowingly I may and want to seek and beg for these two things: To be loved by God and his saints and to love God and his saints! From now on however, I must strive more for the better, the more generous and be more attentive to what has been neglected by me. I must seek more ardently to give signs of my love than seek the signs indicating that I am loved. And these signs will be the efforts I take for the sake of Jesus and my fellowmen" (No 198).³⁹

It certainly was not by chance that Faber never gave lectures in dogmatics or philosophy. He was not a person pursuing systematic discussions and drawing persuasive conclusions like Laynez. He was a person of details, exactitude and careful consideration in small things. He was exegete, he loved studying the psalms. This was the task given to him in Rome, Mainz, Cologne. His disposition was ideal for the accompaniment of the individual person and giving the spiritual exercises. According to the report of Gonçalves da Câmara Ignatius is supposed to have said that of all companions Peter Faber understood best to give the spiritual exercises.⁴⁰ After Nadal had been shown the cold shoulder with the election of Eberhard Mercurian as superior general, he wrote during his stay in the Tyrol about 1573-78 a very fine and short document about "The apostolic works of the Society according to the 'Formula Instituti'."⁴¹ There Nadal wrote about the "private spiritual discourse": Some companions have been gifted by God with extraordinary talents, also Fr Peter Faber, the first companion of Fr Ignatius. Especially in the spiritual conversation he exercised a deep and strong influence. Every person who came into contact with him, though he showed no interest in spiritual

things whatsoever, finally changed his attitude. Fr Ignatius used to say: „Peter can strike water off a rock’.”

His devotion to the humbler kind of service had a counterweight: the great apostolic longing and enormous concern for reform, the great desire to help everybody. In this way Peter Faber, so often inward-turned and caught in turning about his own weaknesses opened himself to interesting perspectives: He prayed for the needs of his fellowmen:

“for Christians, Jews, heretics and those living in mortal sin. I was struck by their many grievances, weaknesses, sins, their obduracy and despair, their tears, buffets of fate, famine, pestilence, tribulation, etc. which turned my attention to Christ, our redeemer, consoler, vivifier, illuminator, helper” (No 115).

On his first journey to Spain on the feast of St Elizabeth, queen of Hungary it suddenly struck him to pray in particular for eight men, disregarding their origin, their affiliation, their shortcomings: the pope, the emperor the king of France and the king of England, Luther, the Sultan, Butzer and Philip Melanchton (No 25).⁴² In June 1542 he remembered in his prayer seven cities: the capital of Sarmatien [Moscow], Geneva in the dukedom of Savoy, Constantinople and Antioch in Greece, Jerusalem and Alexandria in Africa. (No 33) Faber's intercessory prayer carried him to the very frontiers of Christendom: the capitals of the reformation and schism, to the three seats of the patriarchs occupied by Islam, Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria.

His main concern, Germany, came up repeatedly. The fear that the reformation should gain control over the whole country weighed heavily upon him. On 10 June 1543 he wrote:

“Grant God it never becomes reality which I have seen with my mind's eye (that the German people could fall away from the Catholic faith all together) – not suggested by a good spirit, but the spirit of despondency, which has plagued me so often with the aim to let me despair at the fruit of my labour” (No 329).

One can say that Faber is on the one hand a person of great hope and desires, not only concerning the human and spiritual progress but also

the great apostolic development; on the other hand he is a person with courageous humility and uncompromising self-giving for small beginnings and slow growth. We read in his extensive notes of 26 October 1542:

"Pray for the grace of the least and you will find the grace to work, believe and hope for the greatest! Direct your look towards the least, weigh it and assess it in order to put it into action and God will give you greater things still. Remember this, give your whole self with the little grace you are given and the Lord will give you such great grace so that you can do the impossible: There are many...who anxiously seek the grace for far reaching and good works but neglect single tasks for which they easily would have had the necessary grace; [154] many cling to the impossible things, impossible plans and neglect "the work of their hands" (Ps 89,17) (No153).⁴³

This prayerful thought is a reminder of the epitaph which sums up the type of ignatian thought and feeling: "Non coerceri maximo, contineri tamen minimo Divinum est."

Faber's devotion and devotions⁴⁴

When a person pages through the Memoriale he is surprised by the confusing diversity of devotions which he so often mentions (comp.143); the sometimes fantastic forms of prayer, the addressees of his prayer, i.e. the saints, angels and guardian angels, the holy souls, the Blessed Trinity, the incarnate Jesus⁴⁵.

This confusing diversity of devotions could lead to a completely wrong interpretation would a person not recognise the foundation on which it really rests, that which Faber himself calls the "superior Holy Spirit" (spiritus sanctus principalis) "the one who dwells within us, who directly inflames us to self-giving devotion" (143). The result is first of all a big and open heart for everything and for all people (No143). When he reflected on this and that his heart resisted love towards some people and was distrustful, he received interiorly the following answer:

"Rather do take care that the Lord, whom you see there in front of

you, does not deprive you of his joy and that your heart does not become too narrow for Him and His concerns. When you remain generous and open towards God and he towards you, you shall soon see how everything else is opening up towards you and you will remain open for all the other things. Therefore, seek the right devotion to God and to his saints and you will easily find the right relation to your neighbours, towards friend and foe!" (No 143).

This "spiritus principalis", the true Holy Spirit, this religious sensibility he received at home, the joy in his belief, his joyous being rooted in the different manifestations (No 322; 368; 404), all by which he had been formed through the spiritual exercises: the deep rootedness in Christ,⁴⁶ which is the foundation for the absolutely sure and fine discernment, for his feeling with the Church and his dealing with depression. This rootedness in God and Christ allowed him to find his way through the dark situations of narrowness and anxiety, to live in close connection with the interior life of his own soul and accept it with all its limitations and weaknesses and yet live and work towards the one great hope. One can only circumscribe what he meant with "spiritus principalis." It is a basic attitude of deep confidence supported and formed by the Spirit of God, an inner openness towards the world concretised in a multitude of expressions, in bidding prayer, in the preparedness of vicarious victim, in vicarious gratitude for all who are ungrateful towards God, his concern for various countries and those who hold responsibility, but also his concern for the least and poorest of the poor. This spirit was nourished by the almost uninterrupted contemplation of the mysteries of Christ as practised during the spiritual exercises. At every hour of the day he was conscious of his limitations and wretchedness and fought against his anxieties and doubts. Then again he took courage and gained openness and inner clarity by contemplating the Triune God who is the foundation of everything. Again and again he sought strength in the Spirit of God in order to become free for the greater divine service. On 20 May 1542, the feast of the Blessed Trinity he wrote the following reflection:

"Some petitions came to my mind desiring to be fortified in all my strengths and faculties by the Father; that all light, every order,

all forms and shapes and craftsmanship be directed by the Son so that no room is left for the opposite; finally that every emotion, wish, endeavour, inclination and uttering be purified by the Holy Spirit and all evil influences be driven out from body and soul. [318] When I considered this and in faith understood how God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are within and without everything, i.e. penetrate everything and dwell within us, I felt great devotion when asking for the grace that he grant me the grace to seek and find him in everything" (No 317f).

[The Memoriale ends with a summing up of what has been said, but which also points towards an open future. The record was written towards the end of January 1546 when he was still in Spain. Once again he was occupied with his failures and anxieties and struggle against his feelings of wretchedness and imperfection. Again he sought to be strengthened and fortified by the "spiritus principalis" in order to be free for the realisation of the greater glory of God and the greater welfare of man:

"During the first few days of the new year I felt my old failures rising up again and that I had to fight them with a new understanding. Most of all I felt that I had to adopt a different exterior attitude in order to remain more recollected so as to find and be able to hold on to the spirit of God which sanctifies, trims and anoints. Most of all I realised that I need more silence and solitude. I also felt, taught by temptations, that I need much grace to master the feelings of my wretchedness or the temptation to worry about and fear the lack of it" (No 443).]

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NOTES

1. O. Raynald, Annales Ecclesiastici. vol. 13, 1541. No 25.
2. Memoriale No 3.
3. Memoriale No 4. Savoyard Anselm of Canterbury had a similar experience in the Aosta valley (* 1033).
4. Comp. Schurhammer, Franz Xaver vol. 1.
5. Henrici, Memoriale p.8.
6. Memoriale No 8.
7. Commentarium de origine et progressu Societatis Jesu. No 14. In: Geistliche Texte SJ No. 9.
8. MI Scripta I, 730; MI FN II,568.
9. Memoriale p. 320. MF 39 – 42.

10. P. Henrici, The first Jesuit in Germany. Peter Faber (1506 - 1546) In: Falkner/Imhof, Ignatius of Loyola. 231.
11. There Peter Faber on 9 July 1541 „...made his final profession...before the Blessed Sacrament..., immediately before holy communion ..." ... in the church of Our Lady of the Old Chapel, at the main altar ..." Memoriale No.23. comp. Letter of profession 9. 7. 1541, MF 117 – 119. comp. Edgar Brenninkmeyer, The Diet in Regensburg 1541. In: A. Falkner and P. Imhof, Ignatius of Loyola and the Society of Jesus 1491 – 1556. Echter Würzburg 1990.
12. Henrici, The first Jesuit in Germany... 233; comp. MF 48 f.
13. Memoriale 51.
14. P. Henrici, The first Jesuit in Germany 234. MF 59 f.
15. comp. letter 7 March 1546. MF 399 – 402; in: Memoriale p. 373.
16. MF 142. Henrici, The first Jesuit in Germany. In: A. Falkner and P. Imhof, 237.
17. Letter of Faber to Ignatius 27. April 1542. Memoriale p. 335 - 338. Faber describes his disappointment, that he could not meet Cardinal Morone personally, then his retreat work (exactly spiritual exercises in everyday life), finally he refers to the rumour of how much people, particularly priests are afraid of them, because they were spying everywhere and would report the deplorable state of affairs to Rome, but that Otto Truchsess had a calming influence on their excited minds.
18. MF 178.
19. MF 189. 292. 484f. Henrici, The first Jesuit in Germany. In: A. Falkner and P. Imhof p. 283.
20. Beati Petri Canisii Societatis Jesu epistolae et acta. Collegit et adnotationibus illustravit. Otto Braunsberger. I – VIII. Freiburg 1896 - 1924 [CPE], 43. 75.
21. A. Batlogg, Misjudged alliance between Carthusians and Jesuits in Cologne. In: A. Falkner and P. Imhof (Ed.), Ignatius of Loyola. 285 – 295.
22. Memoriale 340 - 347, here 345. comp. MF 198, An. 10.
23. comp. MF 310 – 314, Evora, 2. March 1545, Memoriale 360 ff.
24. MF 310 - 314 and 399 - 402; Memoriale, 360 and 373.
25. Henrici, The first Jesuit in Germany. A. Falkner and P. Imhof p. 242.
26. MHSJ, MF Vol. 48.

27. In the Memoriale Faber shows us in a wonderful and differentiated way his method of discernment. No. 254.
28. The Memoriale is quoted as follows: (No 2).
29. comp. also: No. 53;63;89; 184;187; a.o.
30. 28 February, 4. April, 30. May 1534.
31. In many notes of the Memoriale he refers to the Society, prays for the Society, for the families of his companions and for their works, U. a.: 89; 118; 149; 168; 189;207; 285 a. o.
32. In this sense also: No. 241 (a particular beautiful example!).
33. Discernment cannot be treated here in detail, but is central in the apostolic work, in life and thought of Peter Faber. comp. 254 a.o.
34. comp. also: 355;104; 108; 109.
35. comp. Memoriale N0 107 (note of 29 August 1542).
36. Faber had contact with the Carthusians in Parma, Worms, Regensburg, Speyer Mainz and Cologne.
37. comp. A. Batlogg: Misunderstood alliance between Carthusians and Jesuits in Cologne. In A. Falkner and P. Imhoff. 285 ff.
38. This statement clarifies his opinion towards the reformation and the „sola-gratia-principle“. Comp. also his understanding of his work among the protestants, Memoriale p.373.
39. comp. also 361; 255.
40. G. da Câmara, Memoriale No 22.
41. MHSJ, Nadal V, 820-865. Geistliche Texte, München 1981 p. 23 No 23.
42. comp. 390.
43. comp. 421 f; 429.
44. comp. P.Henrici, "To find devotion in all you do."
45. Angels and saints play a big role in his prayer. They are his all-present protectors. No 282; 117; 112 a.o.
46. comp. The beautiful prayer No. 129; also the meditation No. 107 a.o.