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Religious experience and sacred text

ABSTRACT

As Kees Waaijman has shown, biblical spirituality engages Holy Scripture in relation to human experience, always with a view toward personal transformation. This article considers various ways in which the relationship between religious experience and sacred text has been construed in the Christian tradition. Beginning with biblical theophanies that represent religious experience in the sacred text, the article moves to early Christian reading practices that foster experience of the text, and then to medieval accounts of mystical revelations that treat experience as a text. Finally, the article turns to the problematic issue of religious experience beyond the sacred text. In some historical instances, experience was supposed to render the text unnecessary, or to sit in judgement over it. But the Book of Revelation implies that the sacred text will no longer be needed, only because its promises have been fulfilled by direct experience of the divine presence.

1. INTRODUCTION

Among Waaijman's many contributions to the field of biblical spirituality, one of the most valuable is the chapter on "Hermeneutic research" in his *magnum opus*, *Spirituality: Forms, foundations, methods* (2002:689-773). Employing the methods of phenomenology and comparative analysis, Waaijman draws on examples from Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism to outline the structure of what he calls "the praxis of spiritual reading". Throughout the exposition, Waaijman (2002:708) continually reminds us that all these religions understand the encounter with a sacred text as a path to personal transformation: "Reading the text is a



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spiritual process which leaves its tracks in the reader". In this article, which is offered in gratitude for Prof. Waaijman's ground-breaking work, I want to revisit some ways in which the Christian tradition has construed the relationship between the sacred text and the experience of faith. To do that, I first need to explain what I mean by "religious experience". Then I want to consider religious experience *in* the sacred text and religious experience *of* the sacred text before dealing with religious experience as a sacred text. In conclusion, I will venture to say something about religious experience *beyond* the sacred text.

2. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE"?

Many books have been written about religious experience, but none of them prior to the 17th century when the term was first invented. Apparently, the earliest use of "religious experience" in the title of an English book did not come until 1809, with the publication of the diary of an English Quaker named Mary Waring (Hay 2005:419). It was William James who really popularised the expression with his Gifford Lectures, published in 1902 as *Varieties of religious experience: A study in human nature* (Hay 2005:420-421). Probably the most influential part of James' work was his identification of the four marks of mystical consciousness, which he recognised as the "root and centre" of personal religious experience. In his view, mystical states are always distinguished by their ineffability and noetic quality (that is, they convey some special insight or knowledge), and usually also by their transiency and passivity (James 1958:292-293). James' categories have had enormous influence on both popular and academic understandings of mysticism and spirituality. Perhaps most importantly, he has persuaded many researchers to focus on the generic qualities of the experience rather than on the particularities of its content or context, so that it has been readily assumed that there must be some "common core", at which all religious experiences are fundamentally the same.

For this study, however, I want to follow instead the lead of Prof. Taves of the University of California, Santa Barbara, who has argued for what she calls an ascriptive approach to religious experience, in which we simply seek experiences that people deem special in that peculiar way we call "religious" (Taves 2009). In her view, what makes an experience religious is not some inherent aspect of the experience itself, but rather its categorisation, whether by the experiencer or the observer. Rather than trying to investigate the well-known philosophical issues with these

terms, I will stipulate some common dictionary definitions of “religious” as “relating to or manifesting faithful devotion to an acknowledged ultimate reality or deity” and “experience” as “the conscious events that make up an individual life” (Merriam-Webster.com). Putting it all together, we can say that religious experience refers to those conscious events of a person’s life that are considered by that person or someone else as prompting or expressing faithful devotion to ultimate reality, which monotheistic believers will identify as God.

3. RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE *IN* THE SACRED TEXT

Perhaps it hardly needs to be mentioned that the pages of the Bible (both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament) are filled with accounts of religious experience. To be sure, there are also other things in the Bible such as law codes, genealogies, historical narratives of battles and journeys, practical advice for daily living, and so forth. But the significance and authority of all these other things depend on religious experience, most especially the numerous accounts of theophanies in which God (or God’s angelic representative) appears to human beings. Beginning with Adam and Eve, who heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden of Eden, we go on to read of Abraham and Sarah entertaining a trio of heavenly visitors by the oaks of Mamre; Jacob wrestling with the angel; Moses and the burning bush; Samuel hearing his name called in the temple at night; Isaiah’s vision of the Lord sitting on a throne high and lifted up; Jeremiah being commissioned as a prophet by the touch of the Lord’s hand upon his mouth; Ezekiel’s vision of the four living creatures on a chariot of fire; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace, and Daniel in the lions’ den. In the New Testament, we read of the angel Gabriel’s annunciation to the Virgin Mary; the transfiguration of Jesus in the sight of three disciples; appearances of the Risen Christ to Mary Magdalene, to the other disciples, and eventually to Paul on the road to Damascus, and finally the revelation to St. John the Divine of “one like the Son of Man” with hair white as wool, eyes like flames of fire, and a voice like the sound of many waters.

The human recipients of these theophanies typically declare their utter amazement and often require divine assurance that they need not be afraid. In every instance, there is clearly an encounter with what Otto (1923) identified as the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, the mystery that provokes both awe and fascination. Although I mentioned that I prefer not to define religious experience with reference to its alleged characteristic manifestations, we cannot deny the emotional charge commonly associated

with such experiences. These are not purely emotional states, as though religious experience had nothing to do with the intellect or the will. But emotions figure powerfully in most of these narratives. As will be noted, the emotional depth of the religious experiences recorded in the Bible has made it possible for many generations of readers and listeners to claim those paradigmatic experiences as models for their own encounters with the divine. This happens when there is a shift in the reader's focus from an objective analysis of the text to a subjective engagement. Waaijman (2011:1) describes this process as one of

dialogical non-indifference in which the reader moves from meditation on the content of the scriptural text to an 'orative' or prayerful way of reading, which is concerned with the God-human process of transformation.

In a felicitous turn of phrase, Waaijman (2020:440) also describes this form of non-indifference (the term comes from Emmanuel Levinas) as "compassion with the text".

4. RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE OF THE SACRED TEXT

The biblical examples cited earlier were all narrative accounts of the religious experience of well-known figures with whom many generations of Christian preachers and spiritual guides have invited believers to identify for the sake of their own instruction and edification. The term for this in ancient literary theory was *mimesis*, the figural representation of types for the purpose of imitation (Young 1997). We see this kind of mimetic exegesis at work in a 6th-century homily preached by Pope Gregory the Great, in which each listener is invited to connect his/her life experience with the appropriate biblical model of repentance:

Perhaps someone has fallen away from the faith: let him look on Peter, who wept bitterly for his fainthearted denial. Perhaps someone has been enflamed with malice and cruelty against his neighbor: let him look on the thief, who even at the moment of death attained the reward of life by repenting. Perhaps another, enflamed by avarice, has plundered another's goods: let him look at Zaccheus, who if he had stolen anything from anyone restored it fourfold. Perhaps another yet, being enkindled with the fire of lust, has lost the purity of his body: let him look on Mary [Magdalene], who purged away the love of her body by the fire of divine love. See how almighty God puts before our eyes at every turn those whom we ought to imitate; he provides at every turn examples of his mercy (*Homilia* 25.10).

Early Christian experience of the sacred text was not limited to identification with characters in the narrative sections of the Bible. In monastic communities, especially, meditative reading of the Psalms served as the primary instrument for fashioning the self and nurturing religious experience (Daley 2003). A comparison of the two most famous patristic expositions of this practice reveals interesting similarities and an important difference. The first text is an early 4th-century letter of Athanasius to Marcellinus on the interpretation of the Psalms. The Psalter, he says,

is like a picture, in which you see yourself portrayed and, seeing, may understand and consequently form yourself upon the pattern given. Elsewhere in the Bible you read only that the Law commands this or that to be done, you listen to the Prophets to learn about the Saviour's coming or you turn to the historical books to learn the doings of the kings and holy men; but in the Psalter, besides all these things, you learn about *yourself*. You find depicted in it all the movements of your soul, all its changes, its ups and downs, its failures and recoveries (*Ad Marcellinum de Psalmos* 10).

Athanasius goes on to recommend specific psalms (cited by number) as appropriate for different moods and occasions. Whether you are repentant or triumphant, whether sad or joyful, says Athanasius,

each of these things the Divine Psalms show you how to do, and in every case the words you want are written down for you, and you can say them as your own (*Ad Marcellinum de Psalmos* 30).

Early in the next century, in roughly the year 426, Cassian wrote about the recitation of the psalter in his famous *Conferences* that purported to record the teachings of Egyptian monks for the benefit of a Western Christian audience. In the tenth conference, "On Prayer", Cassian has Abba Isaac explain how the monk is to read a psalm in such a way that the words become his own:

For divine Scripture is clearer and its inmost organs, so to speak, are revealed to us when our experience not only perceives but even anticipates its thought, and the meanings of the words are disclosed to us not by exegesis but by proof. When we have the same disposition in our heart with which each psalm was sung or written down, then we shall become like its author, grasping the significance beforehand rather than afterward (*Collationes* 10.11.5).

Note how Cassian, like Athanasius before him, focuses attention on the basic human dispositions or emotions that provide a link between the psalmist's words and the experience of the monk:

With our dispositions as our teachers, we shall grasp this as something seen rather than heard, and from the inner disposition of the heart we shall bring forth not what has been committed to memory but what is inborn in the very nature of things. Thus we shall penetrate its meaning not through the written text but with experience leading the way (*Collationes* 10.11.5).

Unlike Athanasius, however, Cassian does not recommend specific psalms suitable for diverse occasions. Instead, Abba Isaac advises his students to repeat simply a single verse of Psalm 70: “O God, come to my assistance; O Lord, make haste to help me”. This cry to God for help encompasses all human emotions and is appropriate in every circumstance of life (*Collationes* 10.10.5). In effect, Cassian has boiled all human experience down to its irreducible element – constant dependence on God.

For both Athanasius and Cassian, the Psalms function as a mirror or a portrait, in which we can recognise ourselves as we now are, and also imagine ourselves as we might become in the future with the help of divine grace. Both writers call attention to the central role played by the emotions in the process of transformative reading. Both of them remind us that reading is an experience in itself, because we get caught up in the stories and images that provoke genuine emotions and can produce deep and lasting changes in our character. Interestingly enough, modern neuroscience confirms that this is true. When we read a scary story, what we feel is real fear; when we read words such as “coffee” or “cinnamon” or “lavender,” the olfactory cortex of the brain is stimulated (Paul 2012). We all know that we are what we eat; apparently, we also experience what we read. Now it is time to consider how the converse can be true, so that we can read what we experience.

5. RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AS SACRED TEXT

Simply consider how often we talk about our lives – our experience – as though it were some kind of text: “I can read you like a book”; “My life is an open book”; “Maybe it is time for us to start a new chapter”; “I promise that I’m going to turn over a new leaf”; “I just hope we are all on the same page”. But when, if ever, does our experience become a *sacred* text?

Jager’s *The book of the heart* (2000) traces that generative metaphor from the classical and biblical sources through the ancient and medieval periods into the Renaissance and beyond. It is fascinating to learn how these representations of life experience have changed over time, depending on the dominant form of written text at that time, from stone tablet to papyrus scroll, to the manuscript codex with its pages enclosed between

covers, to the printed book, and now to digitised images on a computer screen. As Jager shows, three biblical references have been fundamental for Christian authors: Jeremiah's image of the law of God being written on human hearts (31:33); St. Paul's description of the Corinthians as

a letter from Christ ..., written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts (2 Cor. 3:2-3),

and the vision of the Last Judgement in the Book of Revelation to St. John the Divine in which the "book of life" is opened "and the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done" (20:12). Jager devotes an entire chapter to Augustine, who inaugurated what Jager calls "a specifically *textual* consciousness", in which the reading of books provides a model for understanding the passage of time, the progress of history, the structure of the physical universe, and Augustine's own life.

All of this prepares the way for what is usually taken as the touchstone for a medieval Christian depiction of religious experience as sacred text, which comes in the 12th century with Bernard of Clairvaux's famous declaration in a sermon on the first verse of the Song of Songs: "Today the text we are to study is the book of our own experience" (*Sermones super cantica canticorum* 3.1). After noting that Bernard would have been familiar with the common medieval metaphor of two books of divine revelation, namely the book of nature and the book of Scripture, the contemporary historian of Christian mysticism McGinn (1994) goes on to suggest that Bernard's real contribution was to add a third revelatory book – the book of experience. But it would be wrong to suppose that Bernard saw the book of experience as a rival to the book of Scripture, as though it possessed some independent authority.

What Bernard is doing is asking his hearers/readers to place themselves in a new intertextual situation in which the book of Scripture and the book of experience are meant to illuminate each other (McGinn 2005:141).

Instead of calling the book of experience a third book of divine revelation, it would perhaps be better for us to follow Rudy (2002:47) who mentions that Bernard's book of experience is the Song of Songs *and also* the book written on the human heart. In Bernard's view, for the monk to read experience as a sacred text is really the same thing that experiencing the sacred text while reading was for Athanasius and Cassian. Experience is, in fact, the only truly reliable commentary on Scripture, as Guigo II the Carthusian would write later in the 12th century:

Those who have not known such things do not understand them, for they could learn more clearly of them only from the book of experience where God's grace itself is the teacher. Otherwise it is of no use for the reader to search in earthly books: there is little sweetness in the study of the literal sense, unless there be a commentary (*glossa*), which is found in the heart, to reveal the inward sense (*Scala claustralium* 8).

For authors such as Bernard and Guigo, the monastic book of experience is deeply personal for each individual, but it is never individualistic or idiosyncratic. In their writings, the Latin word *experientia* connotes the knowledge gained by repeated practice – in this case, the practices of *lectio divina* or spiritual reading, liturgical singing in choir, sharing in the sacraments, and communal life in the cloister (McDonnell 2003:183). Attentive and active participation in the monastic daily round is the essential plot line of Bernard's book of experience. He can occasionally write appreciatively of visions and raptures, but he is not interested in compiling an account of any one individual's mystical experiences. It would not be long, however, before such books of experiences (plural) would proliferate all over Europe in all kinds of contexts as part of what McGinn (1998) has termed "the new mysticism" of the 13th and early 14th centuries. The texts associated with this new form of mysticism were often in the vernacular (although Latin was by no means abandoned) and were frequently written, dictated, or inspired by women. What is most important for our focus on religious experience as sacred text is that these mystical writings commonly took the form of first-person accounts of visions, revelations, or miraculous encounters with God, angels, or saints. I can cite only a few examples from among many, and I will confine myself to instances in which the book itself becomes virtually personified as a record of the person's experience.

Mechthild of Magdeburg was the 13th-century author of *The flowing light of the Godhead*, a text written in German, but later translated into Latin. She belonged to the group known as beguines, women who lived together in communal houses, devoting themselves to prayer and good works without belonging to an established religious order. *The flowing light* contains Mechthild's prayers, reflections, and intimate dialogues with God. At one point, the Lord Jesus himself declares that her text is a new kind of inspired scripture:

I hereby send this book as a messenger to all religious people, both the bad and the good. ... Truly I say to you ... in this book my heart's blood is written, which I shall shed again in the last times (*Das fließende Licht der Gottheit* 5.34).

The book is not so much written by Mechthild – much less about her – as it is written by God through her.

When Mechthild told the Lord of her fear that the book would be burned (presumably on account of some alleged heresy contained therein), God assured her that “No one can burn the truth” (*Das fließende Licht der Gottheit* 2.26). No such assurance was given to the French beguine Porete, whose *Mirror of simple souls* was consigned to flames by the Inquisition in 1310. Following a public trial, Porete herself was burned at the stake shortly thereafter. Her work takes the form of a complex dialogue, in which allegorical figures representing Reason and the Soul converse with a feminine divine being whose name is Love. In this instance, the Soul is explaining to Reason how Love has revealed herself to the Soul:

For this book is of such a kind, that as soon as Love opened it, the Soul knew all things, and so possesses all things, and so every work of perfection is fulfilled in her through the opening of this book (*Le Miroir des âmes simples* 101).

Here and elsewhere, it is not clear whether the Soul is referring to a heavenly book of secret revelation or the physical book that is Porete’s *Mirror*. Apparently, we are to understand that it is both at once. If Porete’s book is a record of her own religious experience, then she and God are co-authors of this sacred text.

Another 14th-century text belonging to the “book of experiences” category is Suso’s four-part composite work *The exemplar*. One of the parts is *The life of the servant*, which has been heralded as the first autobiography written in German, but which Kieckhefer (1984:6) has suggested should really be classified as autohagiography, that is, a saint’s life written by the putative saint himself. A Dominican disciple of Meister Eckhart, Suso presents us with a highly speculative mysticism of detachment and radical interiority. The title he gave to his collected works is multivalent. Who or what is the exemplar? It is the servant, that is, the ideal Christian disciple. It is Suso himself in so far as he is such a disciple. It is the contents of the book, and it is the original authoritative manuscript that scribes are supposed to copy. The prologue to *The exemplar* explains that the story of Suso’s life is of special value, “since good actions are, without a doubt, more instructive and uplift one’s heart somehow more than words alone” (Suso 1989:57). The peculiar virtues of narrative had long been recognised in the writing of history and of hagiography, but in the late Middle Ages, narratives presenting the intimate religious experiences of visionaries and mystics became for many a preferred genre of theological expression.

A last example is the *Book of Margery Kempe*, from the first part of the 15th century. Recognised as the first autobiography written in English, the work has a complex history of composition. Although she clearly knows a good deal of theology, Kempe is adamant that, as a merchant's daughter, businesswoman in her own right, and mother of fourteen children, she is an illiterate woman who must depend on educated men both to read to her and to write her story. There were at least two different scribes to whom, over the course of several years, she dictated an account of her visions, her ecstatic prayer with copious tears, her pilgrimages, and her interrogations before ecclesiastical authorities who suspected her of being a Lollard heretic. In the middle of a key passage describing her weeping and moaning at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the text refers to devout Christians such as Kempe as "our Lord's own secretaries" (1.28). The dominant sense, in this instance, refers to God's trusted confidantes who are privy to divine secrets, but there is perhaps also a suggestion that Kempe serves as the Lord's scribe, just as her priestly companion does for her. When Kempe began to feel guilty that the demands of dictating her book were keeping her away from church and distracting her from her accustomed devotions, she heard the voice of the Lord assuring her that he would accept the literary labours performed by her and her scribe as a form of prayer:

For, though you were in the church and wept both together as sorely as ever you did, yet should you not please me more than you do with your writing, for daughter, by this book many a man shall be turned to me and believe therein (Kempe 1.88).

As many scholars have observed, the transcription of religious experience into written form served to authorise and legitimise the status of these late medieval mystics (Larrington 1995:224-233). It was one thing to have a vision, to converse with Christ and the saints, or to feel oneself especially favoured by God and chosen for a mission here on earth. But having those experiences recorded in a book translated the personal experience into a public record, which carried considerable weight in a period when writing was the preserve of an educated elite and books were costly treasures requiring much painstaking labour to produce and a great deal of money to possess. For female mystics, collaboration with male scribes presented both what we may perceive as advantages such as approbation by a cleric or other person in authority and disadvantages such as the risk of having her message distorted or censored.¹ The stakes were higher when religious experience took the shape of a sacred text.

¹ See the essays in Mooney (1999).

6. RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE *BEYOND* THE SACRED TEXT

If experience as sacred text has sometimes been controversial in the history of Christian spirituality, even more so has that been true of experience beyond the text. The fear, of course, has been that religious experience will lead people into beliefs and practices contrary to Scripture, or to the denial of the authority of Scripture itself. I can think of four different ways in which experience might be said to go beyond the text.

The first goes right back to Cassian in the 5th century, who reported that the same Abba Isaac who recommended the constant recitation of a verse from the psalms also spoke of a higher stage of “fiery” or “wordless” prayer that transcends human understanding. In this stage, which is attained only by a select few, the one praying is aware only of an “infusion of heavenly light” that enables the mind to pour forth pure prayer in an ecstasy beyond all language or thought (*Collationes* 9.25.1, 10.11.6). Despite recurrent accusations of quietism, proponents of wordless prayer have generally described this experience as coming only after scriptural meditation and vocal prayer, of which it is the fruit rather than any kind of rival or substitute.

The second kind of experience beyond the sacred text comes when untutored persons are afforded mystical visions or revelations, giving them insight into the things of God even without the benefit of Holy Scripture. At first glance, this might seem to have been the case with Juliana of Cornillon, a 13th-century French beguine best known as the originator of the Feast of Corpus Christi. According to the Latin hagiography, which is a reworking of a lost French version by her friend Eve of Liège, Juliana had rapturous visions of Christ and the Trinity, in which she understood “all the articles pertaining to the Catholic faith [but] had no need to consult masters or books about them” (Newman 1988:54). But the same hagiographer also tells us that Juliana had studied the Bible in both French and Latin, and that she was familiar with the writings of Augustine and Bernard. Many supposedly untutored recipients of divine revelation, both women and men, likewise turn out to have had varying degrees of instruction in the sacred text.

Of course, almost all Christians in any period of history would have had some exposure to Scripture at least indirectly through the liturgy, public festivals, and the common parlance of communal discourse. Still, it has been claimed that, for some chosen souls, experience alone has been their teacher. This was the case with the young baker’s son that Jean-Joseph Surin met on a train in Normandy early in the 17th century. As the story

appears in a letter edited by Michel de Certeau, the boy claimed to have had revelations concerning the nature of God and God's communications with perfect and imperfect souls, the orders of saints and angels, and even the fascinating information that, in the home of the Holy Family in Nazareth, St. Joseph said very little, the Virgin Mary less, and the young Lord Jesus even less than either of his parents. When Surin pressed the boy to admit that he had been instructed by some human agent, the boy insisted that he had not, adding, "Even if the Gospel were to perish, God had taught him enough of it for his salvation" (De Certeau 1992:209). In cases such as these, the claim is that religious experience offers a parallel path to knowledge of things divine; again, not contrary to Scripture, but in a sense independent thereof.

There is a third way in which religious experience has sometimes been thought to go beyond Scripture, which is to see it as the arbiter and judge of any supposedly sacred text. An influential modern American example is that of Emerson who declared in his 1838 "Divinity School Address" at Harvard University:

Whilst the doors of the temple stand open, night and day, before every man, and the oracles of this truth cease never, it is guarded by one stern condition; this, namely; it is an intuition. [The truth] cannot be received at second hand. Truly speaking, it is not instruction, but provocation, that I can receive from another soul. What he announces, I must find true in me, or wholly reject; and on his word, or as his second, be he who he may, I can accept nothing (Emerson 1929:39)

For Emerson, and now for many (if not the vast majority of) people in the secularised societies of the West, there is no such thing as a truly sacred text. Only experience – my individual personal experience – can be sacred for me. A text may assist me in recognising or naming my experience, but with that it has discharged its mission. As Emerson (1929:27-28) declared in his address on "The American Scholar", whenever authority is attributed to the written text,

instead of Man Thinking, we have the bookworm ... Hence, the restorers of readings, the emendators, the bibliomaniacs of all degrees.

In such a view, there is no text worthy of our reverence and devotion. Experience is all.

But let us not end with the alleged disappearance of the sacred text from this world. Instead, I want to conclude with a fourth and final sense in which experience goes beyond the text, namely the disappearance of

the sacred text in the world to come. Those of us who admit to being bibliophiles – if not bibliomaniacs, as Emerson would have it – must find it sobering to discover in the Book of Revelation that there are only three books in heaven, and none of them is meant for us to read. There is the scroll with seven seals containing the dread events of the Apocalypse, which can only be opened by Christ the Lamb the God (Rev. 5-6). There is the little scroll of prophecy that an angel commands St. John the Divine to eat, and it is bitter in his mouth (Rev. 10). There is the book of life (Rev. 20:12) that records all the deeds of every person who ever lived and contains the names of those who are worthy of eternal bliss. Those heavenly texts are sacred, but they are not meant for human consumption, and they do not require interpretation. There will be no Bible study groups in heaven, no libraries, no lectures, no sermons, no commentaries, or glosses. In that city where there is no temple (Rev. 21:22) and no light of lamp or sun (Rev. 22:5), the living Word will be the only text we need. As members of the heavenly chorus, we will not even need a prayer book or a hymnal, for every heart will know both text and tune.

When that great day comes, experience will indeed be all. But until we undergo the transformation in glory that Waaijman (2010:7) has called “the ultimate transition in God’s redemptive love”, there will be books enough to read and to write. As practitioners of Christian spirituality and as students of its history, we still have some work to do!

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