



One Direction, Two Standards

Frances Murphy

In an eventful afternoon, One Direction lost one of their members and the BBC bid farewell to a controversial presenter. Frances Murphy wonders whether Zayn Malik and Jeremy Clarkson would choose the way of Christ or the way of Lucifer if they engaged in Ignatius's Meditation on the Two Standards.

Entertainment news editors must feel as if Christmas came early this year – nine months early, to be precise, as two big stories broke on the Feast of the Annunciation. On the same afternoon, Zayn Malik resigned from internationally-adored boy band One Direction, and the BBC announced that they would not be renewing their contract with presenter Jeremy Clarkson after a recent incident in which he attacked a *Top Gear* producer.



Social media were awash with commentary about both events. Indeed, these are both cases about which fans – and detractors – of the celebrities in question have plenty to say. Many people will be happy to see the back of the controversial Clarkson: accusations of racism and bigotry in recent years have added to the concerns of those who find his demeanour and views objectionable, and this latest incident has been one step too far. Yet more than one million people signed a petition to get Clarkson's initial suspension lifted.

However, even the staunchest of Clarkson's fans is unlikely to feel as strongly about the presenter's demise as any one of the legion of One Direction fans worldwide who are grieving over the resignation of one of their idols – top trending topics on Twitter as I write this include #ZaynPain and #AlwaysInOurHeartsZaynMalik. The circumstances of Malik's case are less well known – he was signed off the band's world tour last week with stress, and rumours have been circulating about problems in his high-profile relationship – and it is not for us to speculate further. What we do know is this: a young man has decided that the fame and success that have characterised his entire adult life, and have been 'more than [he] could ever have imagined', are not right for him. He wants to be 'a normal 22-year-old who is able to relax and have some private time out of the spotlight.'

In the '[Meditation on the Two Standards](#)', St Ignatius sets up a scene to help the exercitant understand that Lucifer is trying to convert the whole world to his cause, and that he does so by tempting us with more than we could ever have imagined – wealth, status and glory – and then leading us 'to all other vices' through our attachment to these. Christ, on the other hand, wants to lead us to the virtues: he asks us to recognise that possessions have no value in themselves, and to be sufficiently humble to see ourselves as we truly

are, centred on God, rather than via any filter through which the world tries to distort our self-perception. Which standard do we choose: Lucifer or Christ?

Malik is not a Christian – his occasional references to his Muslim faith have led to him being criticised from all sides for promoting Islam or for bad practice of the faith – but we can read his decision through such an Ignatian lens. That he has chosen to step out of the limelight might indicate a realisation that the vision of glory that he had imagined, achieved and surpassed, is not one of true glory at all; as Jesus says in today's gospel, 'If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me'. (John 8:54)

Perhaps this is the result of some real discernment on Zayn Malik's part: a recognition that his lifestyle was leading him away from his true self and a conscious decision to renounce the trappings of success – even if it is unlikely that he will do so to the extent that he will give away his amassed millions. Clarkson's behaviour, if reports are to be believed, displays a very disordered attachment to his own status and is setting no kind of example at all; but maybe by doing 'what feels right in [his] heart', Malik is giving those in the midst of their 'Zayn Pain' more to think about than they realise.

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