

# THE UNIVERSITY AS AN INSTRUMENT OF CONSOLATION IN THE MODERN WORLD

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IN DECEMBER 1969, Ignacio Ellacuría gave a talk to the Jesuits of what was then the Vice Province of Central America. At this meeting the Jesuits were attempting to come to consensus over how they should respond to the dramatic changes of the tumultuous 1960s. He posed the following question:

Apparently, at least, we think we know what it means for an individual to follow the spirit of the Spiritual Exercises, when we make them, by entering into the meditation on the Call of the King, the Two Standards, three classes of person, or the three ways of being humble. Following St Ignatius' formulations we appear to know what we are seeking, and we ask to endure real poverty, insults and humiliations. So then, the question is this: the works of the Vice Province—and here think of those that are most well known and take up the energies of the greatest number of people, as is the case for our high schools and universities: can they be configured in the same way or not? It is a decisive question.<sup>1</sup>

Ellacuría's answer was an emphatic 'yes': 'The Vice Province', he asserted, 'should be an efficacious sign of the Christ experienced in the Exercises .... Of which Christ? Of the Christ experienced in the Exercises in the historical situation in which we are living.'<sup>2</sup>

A penetrating interpreter of Ignatian spirituality and a seasoned university administrator, Ellacuría was convinced that the Spiritual

<sup>1</sup> Ignacio Ellacuría, 'El problema del traslado del espíritu de los *Ejercicios* a la Viceprovincia', in *Escritos Teológicos*, volume 4 (San Salvador: UCA, 2000), 197f. All translations are my own.

<sup>2</sup> Ellacuría, 'El problema del traslado del espíritu', 204.



*Entrance to the University of Central America campus*

Exercises were an indispensable means to put the University of Central America San Simeon Canas (UCA), of which he was rector from 1979 until his death in 1989, at the service of the poor majorities of El Salvador. Equally he believed that responding to those poor majorities offered everyone who worked at the university an indispensable way to embody and to experience the charism of Ignatius in and through their labour in the university, and not simply as people with vibrant spiritual lives who just happened also to work in a university.

I would like to make some remarks here on what we might learn from Ellacuría about Ignatian spirituality and the university, grouped under four headings: the university as a place for the search for God; the Trinitarian configuration of the university's search for God; the university and the following of Jesus; and the university as instrument of consolation in the world.

### ***The University as a Place for the Search for God***

In 1986 Ellacuría published an essay on Pedro Arrupe: 'Pedro Arrupe: Renewer of Religious Life'.<sup>3</sup> Ellacuría had great admiration for this

<sup>3</sup> Ignacio Ellacuría, 'Pedro Arrupe: renovador de la vida religiosa'. Originally published in *Pedro Arrupe: así lo vieron* (Santander: Sal Terrae, 1986), 141–172. I quote here from the republished essay in *Revista Latinoamericana de Teología*, 22 (1991), 5–23.

Superior General of the Jesuits; indeed, I contend that he saw in Arrupe the epitome of a contemporary living out, or ‘historicization’, as Ellacuría would say, of the spirit of Ignatius. Thus, Ellacuría’s description of the characteristics that made Arrupe an ‘exemplary Ignatian’ provides a reliable sketch of what Ellacuría thought was essential to Ignatian spirituality.

Arrupe was, above all, a man of God, and he wanted Jesuits also really to be men of God; this ‘really’ meant that it was God that he sought, and not anything else that might be passed off as God, even in religious and ecclesial milieux. He never substituted anything for God: a God greater than human beings; a God greater than the *Constitutions* and the historical structure of the Society of Jesus; a God greater than the Church and all of its hierarchies; a *Deus semper maior et semper novus*, who is always the same, but never repeats Godself; who has to be set forth in dogmatic formulas but who is never exhausted by them; a God, in short, who cannot be predicted in advance or manipulated. It was in the everyday experience of this God—to the search for whom he devoted many hours—that Arrupe’s great freedom of spirit was aroused, his great love for everyone, his constant disponibility and humility, and also his remarkable instincts as a religious. This experience of God was, on the one hand, a strictly Trinitarian one, just as St Ignatius’ was; but without ever ceasing to be this, it was also, on the other hand, always a strictly Christological experience, connected to what the historical Jesus of the Gospels is, and to the historicized Jesus of the Spiritual Exercises.<sup>4</sup>

If we focus on this description of Arrupe, our starting point must be that an Ignatian person is a person for whom the search for the God who is ‘*semper maior et semper novus*’ is everything. So, an Ignatian university would be a place structured in such a way that the search for God and the experience of God are paramount. This is a good start, but by itself it gives us everything in general and nothing in particular. Any Christian life or Christian work should be grounded in an experience of God and the search for God—there is nothing specifically Ignatian here. Indeed, all human life and all human institutions can and should be a reaching out towards that infinite horizon of truth, beauty and goodness that we call God, whether they

<sup>4</sup> Ellacuría, ‘Pedro Arrupe: renovador de la vida religiosa’, 12.

do so from a specifically Christian perspective or not. So, the dictum needs further specifications.

Before moving on to some of these specifications—drawing on the Trinitarian and Christological shaping of the experience of God—one important observation can already be made. Ellacuría tells us that for Arrupe this experience happened in the ‘everyday’, albeit the complex ‘everyday’ of governing a global organization that was grappling with complex social and historical realities. God is not found outside or above the concrete details of one’s life. This is, of course, the point of the well-know Ignatian phrases ‘finding God in all things’ and being a ‘contemplative in action’—to which I shall return. Here I simply insist that, as Ellacuría articulated it, God is found in the working out of one’s individual history in all its everyday details. Thus, *mutatis mutandis*, the proper place where a university ‘experiences God’ or ‘finds God in all things’ will be in its engagement, precisely as a university (*universitariamente*, as Ellacuría would say), with the broader history that shapes it, and which it can, at least in a modest way, shape in turn.

This already provides an important specification of the task a university must take on if it is to be an ‘efficacious sign of the Ignatian charism’. This task can be further defined by returning to what Ellacuría says about Arrupe immediately following the quotation given above:

From this solidest of bases—one that is not gained once and for all, but by its nature has to be renewed day by day—Arrupe *lived open to history, and lived in history open to the signs of the times*. To a great extent Arrupe perceived the novelty of God in the novelty of history.<sup>5</sup>

From this perspective, then, to find the reality of a God who is ever greater and always new requires careful attention to the history in which we live: its novelty, its surprises and excesses which continually challenge our limited notions and, in particular, our tendency to make our history appear the way we would like it to appear. This careful and self-critical attention to history, in all its complexity, is surely a task to which the modern university can and should devote itself. It means,

<sup>5</sup> Ellacuría, ‘Pedro Arrupe: renovador de la vida religiosa’, 12.

however, not just disclosing new truths but uncovering biases and unmasking lies.

If the *Deus semper maior et novus* cannot be predicted in advance or manipulated, then to find this God in history one must give up and overcome the hubris that would predict everything that history can bring to us, and the will to power that would manipulate history to force it to appear as we would like it to be rather than as it is. This is, if you will, an institutional rendering of the first major goal of the Spiritual Exercises for the individual: 'preparing and disposing our soul to rid itself of all its disordered affections' (Exx 1). The depth and impact of these disordered affections is brought home to the retreatant by detailed contemplations on sin in the world with which Ignatius begins the First Week. An Ignatian university, in similar fashion, has to attend carefully to the potential for ideologies and lies that justify, exonerate or cover over distortions in history.

This is an exacting task to which every part of the modern university can contribute; and Ignatian spirituality can provide support for the asceticism that it demands. To give a concrete example from the UCA, I would suggest that this Ignatian logic underlies the founding there in 1985 of a human rights institute, followed a year later by an institute of public opinion which pioneered new methods for accurately surveying refugee populations. The two institutes were headed by Jesuits, Segundo Montes and Ignacio Martín Baró, who, like Ignacio Ellacuría himself, were to die among the martyrs of the UCA in 1989. The high standard of objectivity that its surveys maintained is perhaps indicated by the fact that UCA was alternately accused of being a tool of the right and of the left, while both the right and the left relied on its data!

### ***The Trinitarian Configuration of the University's Search for God***

When Ellacuría specifies what was particular, and particularly Ignatian, about Arrupe's experience of God he notes, somewhat cryptically, that Arrupe's experience was 'a strictly Trinitarian one, just as St Ignatius' was'. Much can and should be said on this matter; but I think we can move quickly to the heart of it by considering a point that Ellacuría made just prior to the 33<sup>rd</sup> General Congregation of the Society of Jesus. He argued that what the Society needs to do in order to understand the way forward is to enter into the first prelude of Ignatius'

Contemplation on the Incarnation: ‘to observe how the three divine persons see today’s world’.<sup>6</sup> Seeing the world with ‘Trinitarian eyes’,<sup>7</sup> as he calls this elsewhere, means seeing individuals and their histories in all their particularity, but also seeing them from a global perspective, powerfully shaped by,

... historical and social processes that as a whole make up a genuine social sin because they are the result of behaviours that are objectively sinful, because they constitute a fundamental basis for injustice, and because, above all, they negate the will and presence of God among men and women.<sup>8</sup>

The Contemplation on the Incarnation takes place at the beginning of the Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises, after the one making the exercises has had an initial confrontation with the power of sin and the possibility of liberation from that power in the First Week. The person is now beginning the process of discerning his or her path forward in the face of some important decision or change in circumstances. As with the other meditations on the life of Jesus, this one structures the context in which the person asks for the grace of ‘an interior knowledge of our Lord, who became human for me, that I may love him more intensely and follow him more closely’ (Exx 104). The contemplation is finally crafted by Ignatius to bring together a global perspective—the essential and unrepeatable events of salvation history as recorded in scripture—and the particular circumstances of the individual making the contemplation. There is an alternation between these three elements: ‘the great extent and circuit of the world, with peoples so many and diverse’; Mary’s acceptance of God’s call in her very precisely named location, ‘the house and rooms of Our Lady, in the city of Nazareth in the province of Galilee’; and my own situation, implicit in the frequent exhortation to ‘draw profit from what I see’ and, in the final colloquy, to put myself, in all my particularity, in conversation with the different actors I have been imagining.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Ignacio Ellacuría, ‘Misión actual de la Compañía de Jesús’, *Revista Latinoamericana de Teología*, 24 (1993), 115–126, here 116.

<sup>7</sup> Ellacuría, ‘Misión actual de la Compañía de Jesús’, 116.

<sup>8</sup> Ellacuría, ‘Misión actual de la Compañía de Jesús’, 116.

<sup>9</sup> See Exx 103–109.



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*St Ignatius' Church and the campus of San Francisco University*

The world as a whole is, seen with Trinitarian eyes, rife with deception, hatred and violence. Men and women pervert the use of language, swearing and blaspheming, and they actively reject the fundamental gift of a God of life: they wound and kill. The world is, in short, 'dying and going down to hell' (Exx 106). The Trinitarian response is to enter into the labour of redeeming the human race. The angel Gabriel and Mary each participate in their own ways, Mary responding humbly and joyfully—even though the very next contemplation, on the nativity, will make clear what that response entails for Mary and Joseph, as well as for Jesus:

... journeying and labouring, in order that the Lord may be born in greatest poverty, and that, after so many labours, hunger, thirst, heat, cold, injuries and insults, he may die on the cross! And all this for me.<sup>10</sup>

One consequence that Ellacuría draws from this way of viewing our world 'with Trinitarian eyes' is to propose an alternative theological framework to think about the relationship between so-called secular tasks and institutions (such as a university) and 'religious' ones. Rather than the oft-employed framework of nature–grace, and its cognate

<sup>10</sup> Exx 116—translation slightly emended to bring out the usage of '*trabajar*' and '*trabajos*', which I have translated as 'labouring' and 'labours'.

dimension of reason–faith, he proposes the framework of sin–grace. With frequent (but often unsophisticated) references back to Thomas Aquinas, the nature–grace framework proposes that God’s grace builds on ‘nature’ (including human nature, and by extension, the culture and institutions that humans create). This nature is treated as neutral with respect to God’s saving plan and grace, but can serve as a basis for it. Thus, in doing those things that are ‘merely’ natural to us, we are nonetheless providing a basis on which grace can build. For a university this would mean that to the extent that its scholars pursue the urgings and exigencies of reason they provide a basis on which faith can ‘build’, even if their actions cannot themselves be thought of as an expression of faith or a response to grace.<sup>11</sup> Without denying that there is something to be learnt from this framework, Ellacuría insists that an Ignatian, Trinitarian vision suggests an equally comprehensive framework that is more apt:

The divine response [to the world seen in the Contemplation on the Incarnation] is not to repent of having created a world in which such a situation has become possible, but an immense desire to save the human race, especially those who have been so harshly punished by history and by the sin that has been gaining more and more power over the world. The Society of Jesus also must see the world from this Trinitarian perspective, a perspective that does not make distinctions between the religious and the profane, because the whole world and everything in it is God’s creation, and the whole world and everything in it ought to be saved in accordance with each reality’s particular nature and the divine will. The fundamental distinction is between good and evil, grace and sin, life and death.<sup>12</sup>

On this account, the university still has an essential role to play. Ignatius’ Contemplation on the Incarnation is an immense and

<sup>11</sup> There was a lively and controversial debate over the proper understanding of the relationship between nature and grace in the 1940s and 1950s, during which time Ellacuría was in studies in philosophy, the humanities and theology. For one account of this debate, set against the background of the rise of nineteenth-century Neo-Scholasticism, see Gerald McCool, *From Unity to Pluralism: The Internal Evolution of Thomism* (New York: Fordham UP, 1992), especially 200–233.

<sup>12</sup> Ellacuría, ‘Misión actual de la Compañía de Jesús’, 117–118—emphasis added. One essential benefit of adopting what Ellacuría called a ‘historical logos’ is that it could resolve a false conflict between these two schemes, ‘nature–grace’ and ‘sin–grace’, a conflict that, he argued, is irresolvable within a Greek ‘cosmocentric’ framework or with the modern focus on individual subjectivity.



demanding act of imagination or, perhaps, reimagination, and it gains power to the degree that we are able to imagine, in all its concrete detail, complexity and interrelationships, ‘the whole surface or circuit of the globe, full of people’. What better place is there to take up this First Prelude than a university, with its science faculties—including the natural sciences, political science and economics—but also its faculties of the humanities and fine arts, which have their indispensable means for plumbing the many symbolic ways that human beings have expressed and interpreted their situation? And how better may we participate in God’s ‘immense desire to save the human race’, especially those most victimized by the present sinful order, than through the tight integration into the university of its professional schools—law, medicine, architecture, engineering and business?

Ignatius’ vision is a global one, but the context, the ‘glue’ that holds the pieces together, is the Trinitarian vision, defined by the immense compassion with which the divine persons see and respond to this world. For this reason an understanding of the university that locates its rigour in its ‘objectivity’, in standing outside the fray as a ‘detached observer’, is not adequate to this fundamental, global context.<sup>13</sup> To see the world in such a way that one is not moved to ‘an immense desire to save’ is not to see it truly. To see that world without being moved to an effective compassion that brings us to enter into the world in a salvific way (‘let us work the salvation of the human race’) is not to see it in its objective reality—understanding ‘objectivity’ to lie in the world’s relationship to the Triune God.

**‘Let us work  
the salvation  
of the human  
race’**

This, I suggest, is the Ignatian insight behind Ellacuría’s insistence that the UCA’s projection of its resources and energies into the reality outside the university walls (*proyección social*) was not a distraction or even an addition to the university’s proper role, but integral to its academic-intellectual mission. This insight should, of course, be distinguished from the growing demand that universities prove their ‘utility’, usually measured by short-term economic benefits or by the immediate production of new technology—a phenomenon recently decried by Harvard president Drew Gilpin Faust in her essay ‘The

<sup>13</sup> What Ellacuría sometimes names its ‘theological dimension’.

University's Crisis of Purpose'.<sup>14</sup> Making this distinction on the university level is not easy; it requires discernment (and here I use the term in its technical, Ignatian sense). Opening one to the work of discernment and framing it adequately is the purpose of the Spiritual Exercises, and of the Second Week in particular. We turn now to the second important feature of the Second Week, on which Ellacuría draws to explore such discernments more fully.

### ***The University and the Following of Jesus***

The second specification that Ellacuría gave of Arrupe's Ignatian way of experiencing and searching for God is that it is 'always a strictly Christological experience, connected to what the historical Jesus of the Gospels is, and the historicized Jesus of the Spiritual Exercises'. In his 1969 address Ellacuría specified what this experience was:

The experience of the Exercises shows us a very precisely defined Christ as saviour of the world. It is the Christ of the Second Standard and of the third degree of humility.<sup>15</sup>

The 'Second Standard' refers us to another of the central exercises of the Second Week: 'A Meditation on Two Standards'. In this meditation we imagine Lucifer, whom Ignatius often denotes as 'the enemy of our human nature', and Christ, both of whom seek followers and who propose diametrically opposed strategies. For Ellacuría, 'the meditation on the Two Standards presents these strategies as 'two interpretations of human existence, both of which want to put themselves forward as religious interpretations of what human history is and what its salvific fullness is'.<sup>16</sup> They provide a depth-logic, two different orientations by which decisions are made that accumulate to form historical processes and institutions that shape history in different ways. The one logic tends to produce sinful structures, and the other institutions and structures that are efficacious signs of salvation, sacraments to the extent that they effect what they symbolize.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *New York Times Book Review* (1 September 2009), 19.

<sup>15</sup> Ellacuría, 'El problema del traslado del espíritu de los *Ejercicios* a la Viceprovincia', 207.

<sup>16</sup> Ignacio Ellacuría, 'Lectura latinoamericana de los *Ejercicios Espirituales* de san Ignacio', *Revista Latinoamericana de Teología*, 23 (1991), 129.

<sup>17</sup> This does not classify Ellacuría's vision as a crudely apocalyptic one, in the sense that one can unambiguously identify certain historical realities as purely 'graced' and others as absolutely evil. The

Those who follow the standard of the enemy are admonished ‘to set up snares and chains; they should tempt people to covet riches, so that they may more easily come to vain honour from the world and finally to surging pride’ (Exx 142). Christ recommends to his followers ‘that they aid all persons, by attracting them to the most perfect spiritual poverty, and also, if the Divine Majesty should be served and should wish to choose them for it, even to no less a degree of actual poverty; and second, by attracting them to a desire of reproaches and contempt, since from these results humility’ (Exx 139). In his 1969 address Ellacuría wondered if, whatever the holiness of the individuals in them, the institutions of the Vice Province were not organized and run according to the standard of the enemy of our human nature.<sup>18</sup> He asserted that this is ‘an extremely grave problem’, and who can deny that it is. Modern Christian universities are centres of great wealth and power, and they often deploy a rhetoric of ‘academic excellence’ and show an obsessive concern to be seen as prestigious and highly ranked in media ‘league tables’, glossing over or simply failing to ask the question of how this can be made to cohere with their Christian character.

The point is not that universities should not have resources, nor be wealthy and powerful, nor have an esteem appropriate to their accomplishments. But if these are sought in isolation from the broader vision,



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whole point of discernment, for which Ignatius formulated his famous rules, is that these matters are immensely complex, and judgments must be made with great care and constantly scrutinised and rescrutinised. On the other hand, Ignatius does not think that matters are so complex that we can never make a reliable decision on which to act. The Two Standards provide orientations to help us make such decisions, always praying for the divine grace of ‘insight into the deceits of the evil leader, and for help to guard myself against them; and further, for insight into the genuine life which the supreme and truthful commander sets forth, and grace to imitate him’ (Exx 139).

<sup>18</sup> Ignacio Ellacuría, ‘El problema del traslado del espíritu de los *Ejercicios* a la Viceprovincia’, 198.

the one seen with Trinitarian eyes, universities become captive to a powerful, destructive, and, in Ignatian terms, demonic logic. It is a logic that, when carried over into political economy, translates into what John Paul II named a ‘radical capitalist ideology’. This blindly entrusts the solution of the problems posed by the great material and moral poverty in which vast multitudes still live to the ‘free development of market forces’.<sup>19</sup> The moral theologian Maureen O’Connell argues that, while the cultural values associated with this ideology—individualism, self-sufficiency and autonomy, consumerism—do not necessarily rule out the immense desire to save that comes from true compassion, they do tend to trivialise that compassion. They reduce it to a kind of ‘cathartic giving’, a detached, therapeutic compassion, which is more about making me feel better than it is about entering into history and attempting to change deep cultural biases and socio-economic structures. These, as she puts it (referring to the parable of the Good Samaritan), allow a few of us to walk the road to Jericho safely, while the vast majority of the earth’s children end up violated and suffering in the ditch on the way.<sup>20</sup>

Conversely, universities can be institutions in which men and women are (as Ignatius puts it) aided ‘by attracting them’ to another set of values, values that structure a different way of living together. Ellacuría associates this set of values with the Sermon on the Mount, and the society that they structure with a civilisation of poverty. Again, the language is precise. The enemy of our human nature, and those people and social structures that operate according to the logic of his standard, ‘set up snares and chains’ that bind people, tempt them, deceive them. Those under the second standard proceed by persuasion and attraction.

The Jesuit historian John O’Malley argues that this emphasis on persuasion and attraction, which aligned the first Jesuits with the powerful currents of Renaissance humanism, led them to engage every facet of culture, founding universities, peering through telescopes, writing operas, designing buildings and so on, since it was through the creative deployment of human culture that people were to be persuaded and

<sup>19</sup> John Paul II, *Centesimus annus*, n. 42.

<sup>20</sup> See Maureen O’Connell, *Compassion: Loving our Neighbor in an Age of Globalization* (Markyknoll: Orbis, 2009).

attracted to the standard of Christ, rather than deceived or bullied. In polarised, media-saturated societies, like many today, where there is less and less space for the slow, patient work of persuasion and attraction, who can deny the important role that the modern university can play in presenting the values of the Second Standard, and in this sense making possible an experience of God in the world that is configured to reflect the Jesus of the Second Week?<sup>21</sup>

### ***The University as Instrument of Consolation in the Modern World***

Having provided the requisite specifications, I return now to the experience of God and, in particular, to the way of experiencing God that is intended by the Ignatian ideal of being ‘a contemplative in action’. This ideal is traditionally associated with the Fourth Week of the Exercises, which takes up the reality of the risen Jesus, and with the concluding Contemplation to Attain Love in particular. Ellacuría asserts that what is at stake in this exercise is ‘the real possibility of encountering God in creation and the possibility of retrieving creation as the presence of God’.<sup>22</sup> Because creation is a ‘giving shape *ad extra* of the very Triune life of God,’ in a freely desired act of self-gift by God, there is no doubt that God is more present to creatures than they are to themselves.<sup>23</sup> The reason why there has to be a *retrieval* is that the power of sin has occluded God’s presence in creation. That is why the Contemplation to Attain Love, and the prospect of ‘finding God in all things’ that is associated with it, come only at the end of the Exercises. They follow a First Week in which the depth and power of sin is experienced, as well as a Second and a Third Week in which the one making the Exercises enters deeply into the fact, the precise character, and the cost of the compassionate divine response. Nonetheless, despite the distorting power of sin, the resurrection indicates that God is still to be found, through the active love that was enfleshed in the life of Jesus and is recommended by the Contemplation to Attain

<sup>21</sup> This insight is magisterially elaborated in Michael Buckley, *The Catholic University as Promise and Project: Reflections in a Jesuit Idiom* (Washington: Georgetown UP, 1998).

<sup>22</sup> Ellacuría, ‘Lectura latinoamericana de los Ejercicios Espirituales’, 143.

<sup>23</sup> See Ignacio Ellacuría, ‘The Historicity of Christian Salvation’, in *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts in Liberation Theology*, edited by Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 276–277, translation slightly emended. This is another way in which Ellacuría works out and applies the ‘Trinitarian’ form of the Ignatian experience of God.



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Love: ‘a love that ought to show itself more in acts than in words’ (Exx 230). Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus’ followers, gathered into a Church or people of God, continue his work of making creation once again a ‘home for God’ and ‘home for human beings’, in ever-changing historical circumstances.<sup>24</sup>

This is the action that is at the same time a contemplation—an event of deep union with God, even though it is not articulated through the visual metaphors typical of the Christian tradition (‘beatific *vision*’). Using dense, and typically Ellacurían, phrasing, he puts it this way: ‘God becomes present to the person acting and the person makes God present and makes him- or herself present to the God who is acting’. The three intertwined elements are linked even more tightly in the Spanish original by forms of the same verb, *hacer*: first, God becomes present (*se hace*) to the person who is acting (*haciendo*); secondly, the person makes God present (*hace presente a Dios*)—the God, recall, who passionately desires the redemption of the world—and third, the person makes him- or herself present (*se hace presente*) to the God acting (*haciendo*)—acting in the manner indicated by the Contemplation on the Incarnation.<sup>25</sup> These are three dimensions of one event or process that defines the life of a ‘contemplative in action’.

<sup>24</sup> Ellacuría, ‘Lectura latinoamericana de los *Ejercicios Espirituales*’, 143.

<sup>25</sup> ‘*Dios se hace presente al hombre haciendo y el hombre hace presente a Dios y se hace presente a Dios haciendo*’ (Exx 146). Perhaps the following, more awkward, English translation is appropriate, not only for the way it captures the interrelations, but also for the way it emphasizes that ‘acting’ for Ellacuría is always an historical action that ‘makes’, that gives rise to a concrete result: ‘God makes Godself present to the person making and the person makes God present and makes him or herself present to the God making’.

All of this, finally, is captured in the Ignatian notion of consolation. Consolation is an event, according to Ignatius, in which ‘some interior motion is caused within the soul through which it comes to be inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord’ (and remember that for Ignatius this is always an active love). ‘As a result it can love no created thing on the face of the earth in itself, but only in the Creator of them all.’ Consolation includes,

... every increase in hope, faith, and charity, and every interior joy which calls and attracts one towards heavenly things and to the salvation of one’s soul, by bringing it tranquillity and peace in its Creator and Lord (Exx 316).

Desolation is the contrary to all of this, an event or state that brings turmoil, confusion and impulsive motions towards low or base things. It afflicts one with tepidity, unhappiness, a sense of alienation from oneself and from God (Exx 317). It brings an increase in despair or apathy rather than hope; doubt and irresolution as opposed to faith; selfishness and deadening indifference as opposed to active charity. This notion is so pervasive to Ignatius’ spirituality that John O’Malley has suggested that we call the spirituality of Ignatius and his first companions ‘a spirituality of consolation’ and their ministry a ‘ministry of consolation’.<sup>26</sup>

It is in that light that I propose that Ignatian universities must be ‘ministries of consolation’, not just for those within them but, more importantly, for those outside—although, I trust that it is now clear that in being the latter they will also become the former. To ‘make God present in the world’ is to make the world a place where others find it more natural to hope and to act, rather than surrendering to cynicism or indifference. And this must happen at that point where the power of desolation is most devastating, which is to say, among the poor and the victims. In this very technical sense of the term, one question we might ask ourselves of our universities then is this: who is consoled by the university work that we do?

<sup>26</sup> John O’Malley, ‘Some Distinctive Characteristics of Jesuit Spirituality in the Sixteenth Century’, in John O’Malley, John Padberg and Vincent O’Keefe, *Jesuit Spirituality: A Now and Future Resource* (Chicago: Loyola UP, 1990), 19.

If our universities are not instruments of consolation then, whatever other worthy tasks they fulfil, they will not be places in which God becomes present to the ones acting (at least acting as contributors to the university). If they can, in whatever small measure, give others—the poor above all—cause for consolation, cause to hope and to act in the conviction that sin and death do not have the final word in history, then they become instruments of consolation, which means they become places where God is experienced. I hope I have already indicated in some small measure *how* universities—with their unique ability to unmask deception and to imagine the world differently, with their resources for attracting people to act on a different economic and political logic from that presented in the standard of the enemy of our human nature—can be such instruments of consolation. Because of that (and not without it), they are places where the experience of God becomes available in the everyday—the everyday of library desks, computer screens, laboratories and faculty meetings—to those who work in them. I probably have not said enough about the cost that this involves, and I realise I have been terribly abstract about what this might mean in a context such as that of North America.

I close with the observation that, whatever its shortcomings and flaws, the University of Central America, which was shaped so much by the Ignatian vision of its Jesuit martyrs, has been such an instrument of consolation in the world, which is one reason we remember the men and women who were murdered there, and thank God for them.<sup>27</sup> Let us turn to the task of making our universities such instruments.

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<sup>27</sup> See *The Way* 48/4 (October 2009), which commemorates the 1989 UCA martyrs.