THE WAY

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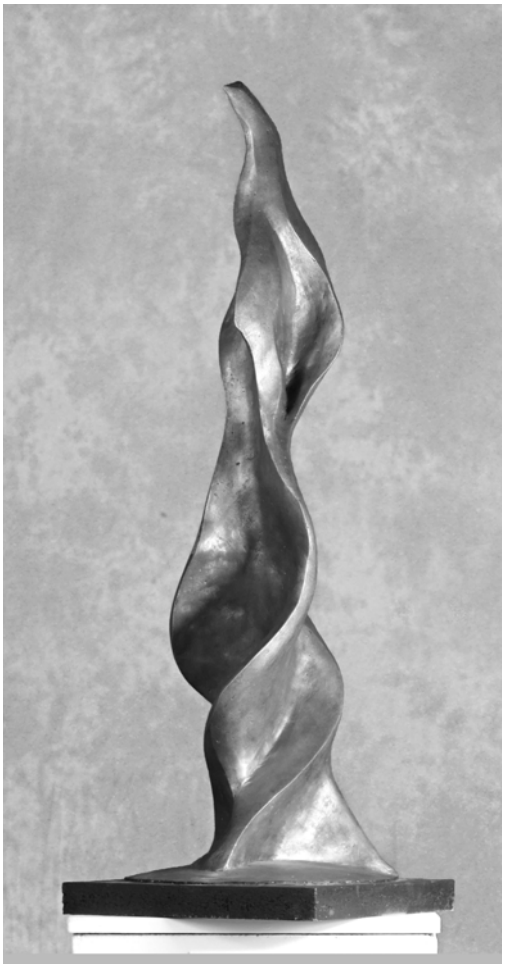
SPIRITUALITY WITH A NEW LOOK



Let My Prayer Come into Your Presence as Incense, *by Rory Geoghegan SJ, 2017*

FOR AUTHORS

The Way warmly invites readers to submit articles with a view to publication. They should normally be about 4,000 words long, and be in keeping with the journal's aims. The Editor is always ready to discuss possible ideas. A Special Issue is planned on conversion, so articles in this area will be particularly welcome.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The scripture quotations herein are generally from the New Revised Standard Version Bible © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, and are used by permission. All rights reserved.

ABBREVIATIONS

Autobiography	'Reminiscences (Autobiography)', in *Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, translated by Philip Endean and Joseph A. Munitiz (London: Penguin, 1996)
Constitutions	in *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996)
Diary	'The Spiritual Diary', in *Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, translated by Philip Endean and Joseph A. Munitiz (London: Penguin, 1996)
Dir	*On Giving the Spiritual Exercises: The Early Manuscript Directories and the Official Directory of 1599*, translated and edited by Martin E. Palmer (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996)
Exx	*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, translated by George E. Ganss (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992)
GC	General Congregation, in *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 31st–35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009) and *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (Boston: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2017)
MHSJ	Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu, 157 volumes (Madrid and Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1898–)

Papal documents may be found at www.vatican.va

FOREWORD

THE VERY FIRST ARTICLE in the first issue of *The Way*, published in January 1961, was entitled 'Modern Spirituality'. This was before any of the changes associated with the Second Vatican Council, and before the burgeoning of Ignatian spirituality that got under way in the following decade. Yet the author of that article, Martin D'Arcy, was sure even then that a 'spirituality with a new look' was in the air. And the Jesuits of what was then the English Province founded a new journal to make this modern spirituality more available and accessible.

For more than six decades now the journal has focused especially on those areas where spirituality and the concerns of contemporary culture intersect. It has taken a broad approach. Teresa of Ávila, saints Francis and Dominic, Bernard of Clairvaux, Simone Weil and, in more recent years, other faith traditions, have all found a place in these pages. In this issue alone you will encounter the twelfth-century Richard of St Victor, the Alcoholics Anonymous Twelve-Step Programme and Greta Thunberg's ecological activism. But Ignatius of Loyola and the spirituality derived from his *Spiritual Exercises* have always been closest to the journal's heart. As we commemorate the five hundredth year since Ignatius' conversion and the fourth centenary of his canonization, it is Ignatian spirituality that takes centre stage here.

The scene is set immediately by Michael Smith, who asks whether discernment (a practice currently in widespread use in a variety of contexts) can be undertaken in groups made up of those with different faith practices and none. Kevin Leidich considers one of the key elements of discernment—consolation—and whether it is best understood as having distinct spiritual and more everyday forms. Meanwhile Matthew B. Pinson analyzes how prejudice against outsiders can easily distort the discernment process if it is insufficiently acknowledged.

Several writers examine the connections between Ignatian spirituality and what Martin D'Arcy would undoubtedly have regarded as 'modern' concerns. Elizabeth Liebert relates the election process in the Exercises to the work of those seeking social justice through social discernment. Gail Paxman attempts to move beyond the limits of modern cultures 'which often do not foster interiority'. She shows how attention to the inner movements that are frequently ignored or undervalued today is

central to the dynamic of the kind of prayer developed by the Exercises. In a letter addressed to Greta Thunberg, Niall Leahy explores the relevance of Ignatius' thinking to those who would commit themselves to the protection of the global environment. Action research, a tool ultimately derived from the social sciences, is shown by Deborah Ross to benefit training programmes for lay ministry in the Ignatian tradition.

Even so, the Spiritual Exercises do not simply function as a discrete tool waiting to be wielded in a variety of conditions. They are embedded in the culture of Ignatius' own time, as Jean-Marc Laporte shows in his comparison of the four Weeks of the Exercises with Richard of St Victor's *Four Degrees of Violent Love*. Among contemporary dialogue partners, conversation between the Exercises and Twelve-Step programmes can, as an anonymous author suggests here, be particularly fruitful. In any case the Exercises, properly given, are always in dialogue with an individual's own experience, so take on a particular character when made, for example, by a lay Filipina single woman, as the personal account by Gem Yecla here demonstrates.

St Augustine famously prayed to a God 'ever ancient and ever new', and Jesus himself commended the wise householder who brought out of his storehouse things old and new. Almost five centuries after they were composed, the *Spiritual Exercises* continue to show a remarkable capacity to provoke new spiritual insight. Within these pages you will find writers reflecting on and analyzing that process, as Ignatian spirituality confronts a range of contemporary concerns. An Ignatian anniversary year will always offer an opportunity to look back on a rich past. More importantly, it should, as here, present a firm foundation from which to face an uncertain future.

Paul Nicholson SJ
Editor

DISCERNMENT FOR ALL

Michael Smith

CHRISTIAN ORGANIZATIONS AND GROUPS have increasingly begun to use the techniques of discernment to find how the Spirit is leading them in their day-to-day or long-term decision-making. These techniques are often based on one or other of two sections in the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius. But, more and more, such groups, though perhaps originally run by religious orders, are staffed and often led by laypeople, who may have had only little training or experience in discernment. It may easily be that few staff are Christians. Can such an organization still be a discerning one in the Ignatian sense?

It would not be ideal if a few—a sort of elite—were to be the anointed people who discern, and the rest merely followers. My purpose here is to show that Ignatian discernment can be used in non-Christian groups, not being left to an elite few but involving most of the staff and volunteers. In what follows I am referring to the experience of an organization which is non-religious—which welcomes and works with people who are religious in outlook (of any faith, Christian or not), or agnostic, or atheist.

There are two points to make at the start. It is surely the case that the Spirit will be there to guide any organization which serves the people of God and seeks to help them to have a more fully human existence. In the recent encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, Pope Francis bases his teaching on a detailed analysis of the parable of the Good Samaritan and the law of love that it clarifies. But, having established this as a basis, he devotes much of the document—on what it means for the people who live in the common home (as described in *Laudato si'*) to share universal fraternity and social friendship with all who need friendship and help—without referring directly to any religious foundations.

The second point is that if you are running a hedge fund and seeking for the best way to make your next billion, then this article may not be for you. The Spirit, after all, discerns where guidance and inspiration should be applied.

Two Ways of Understanding Discernment

The concept of discernment seems to be used in two contexts, both ultimately deriving from the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius.

The first context of discernment arises in the making of the Spiritual Exercises themselves—specifically the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits and the three moments of Election. Here the intention is to approach an important decision in the light of God's action in the world, and specifically in ourselves, and to make this decision as far as possible in a state of indifference (that is, balance or lack of personal bias), against the background of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, which surrounds this time in the Spiritual Exercises. Such a decision is made in one of what St Ignatius describes as 'times' or 'moments', and it is useful to recall these.

- The first moment is 'when God our Lord moves and attracts the will in such a way that a devout person, without doubting or being able to doubt, carries out what was proposed' (Exx 175).
- The second moment is 'when sufficient clarity and knowledge are received from the experience of consolation and desolation, and from the experience in the discernment of various spirits' (Exx 176).
- The third is based on a consideration of the pros and cons of a particular course of action, as seen from a perspective without bias (Exx 178–183).

Any or all of these moments can occur in any discernment. But it is the context within which the decision is taken that makes discernment different from ordinary decision-making.

The second approach to discernment, much more common, is based on St Ignatius' writing on the Examen (Exx 24 and 26 following). As presented in the Exercises it is a process designed to rid oneself of a particular sin or fault (it appears from Exx 31 that this would have been occurring many times each day). Holiness, of course, is not achieved by simply removing lots of little faults (or even big ones), but by trying to follow God's call. So the Examen nowadays is seen as a review of the past day or so with a view to seeing if there is anything that strikes us (that is, anything accompanied by consolation or desolation) as leading towards a closer following of God's will. It is guidance as much drawing us towards an action as avoiding one.

The Background to Discernment

When engaged in any discernment, it is crucial to examine two things: first, the value system within which the discernment is being made, and secondly the commitment that participants have to this value system. It is the harmony or disharmony of the decision with the value systems that we hold, and our commitment to those values, which are the basis of discernment. If, for example, I am committed to a life of self-indulgence, then the thought of going and buying a nice expensive meal for myself will bring consolation—a point brought out by St Ignatius in the first week Rules for the Discernment of Spirits (especially Exx 314 and Exx 315).

First, to clarify the value system or vision: in making the Exercises we devote the Second Week to contemplating Jesus Christ as he goes about his work. We get to know him, and so we learn the values that underpin what he does and the decisions he makes—values which we hope to understand and hold. Secondly, as we move towards the Election in the Second Week of the Exercises, St Ignatius asks us to consider the Call of the King—how a loyal follower would respond to a committed and inspiring leader—and the Two Standards—considering where our commitment should lie.

The Call of the King presents some problems nowadays, because the king's call is 'to conquer the whole land of the infidels', to put up with all the hardships of the enterprise, 'so that they may have a part with me in the victory' (Exx 93). To avoid the implication of disrespectful and sectarian warfare this is often now presented rather as the call of an inspirational leader, perhaps someone devoted to working to relieve poverty or provide medical care where it is needed, who asks us to join him or her in the rigours of such work.

So, in any work where we are making a decision, the Call of the King can simply be presented as a restatement of the charism and insight of the leader who is inviting us or of the work in which we are called to participate. One thinks, for example, of the people who work with Médecins Sans Frontières—who travel to war-torn and disease-ridden parts of the world, facing suffering and danger. Many who work with charities stress the importance of accompanying those whom we serve—standing with them in facing injustice, abuse, even if that is only being with them in their pain. This is the kind of inspiration and dedication that we admire in the King in Exx 93.

It is the position of the Election—the making of a decision—in the Exercises that is crucial. It is preceded by a contemplation of God's

intention to send Jesus Christ to save the human race (Exx 102); an invitation to follow Jesus Christ as a charismatic leader (the Call of the King, Exx 91–100); a consideration of the characteristics of this leadership (the Two Standards, Exx 136–148); and an extended examination of Jesus Christ's work for the people of his time, always accompanied by a prayer that we may follow him more closely (Exx 104). It is within this context that decisions are made—a vision of Jesus' enterprise in the world and a commitment to put it into practice.

Consolation and Desolation

We need to think carefully about the terms *consolation* and *desolation*.[1] Part of the problem is that each guide will have a different take on what the terms mean or, more precisely, what they feel like or how to recognise them. Being definite about what consolation and desolation are is not simple—a glance through the 300-odd pages of Jules Toner's book *A Commentary on Saint Ignatius' Rules for the Discernment of Spirits* will show a wide range of viewpoints, from St Ignatius' insistence that consolation is the work of the good spirit, to 'stir up courage and strength, consolation, tears, inspirations and tranquillity' (Exx 115), to definitions that reject all elements of feeling.

People often define consolation as a sense of peace and, by contrast, desolation as either darkness in prayer or depression (none of these is correct). Many of us will have been to retreats and talks where we are invited to ask the Holy Spirit to guide us and then to see if we have a feeling of peace about something. Such a process is not likely to be a valid discernment.

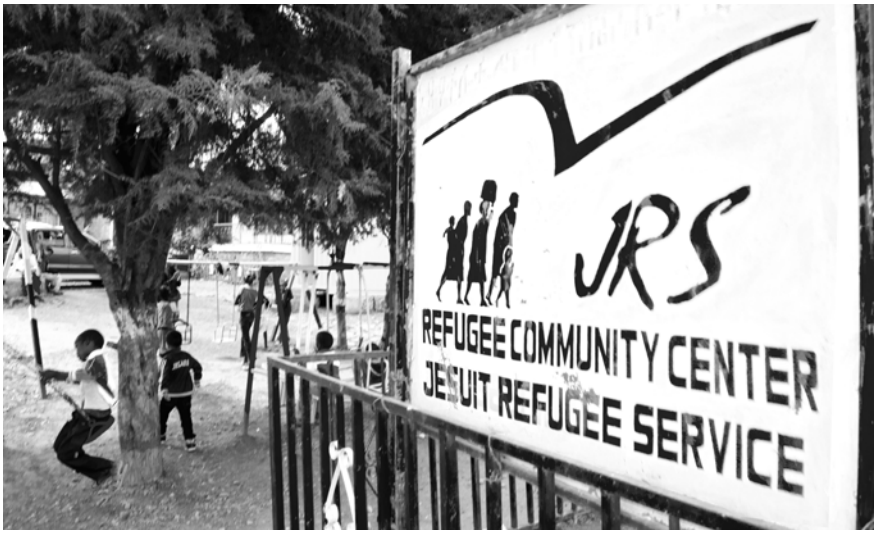
What is key to understanding consolation and desolation, both in the Christian context and in non-religious ones, is the background or situation in which we find ourselves: the values that we are coming to hold and our commitment to them. The nice or positive feeling that we tend to call consolation is only valid in people who are both familiar with and committed to a particular view of the world and the values that they hold, according to the depth of response with which they adhere to the ideals of the organization they represent or the faith they profess. Thus, in the Exercises, consolation and desolation are defined only for the person who has been following the Exercises so far, and has committed

[1] St Ignatius refers to spiritual consolation and spiritual desolation, but in common parlance these are usually abbreviated to consolation and desolation, and we shall follow that practice here.

him- or herself to service under the standard of Christ (Exx 145). It is only against the background of the values and vision that we hold and, within that, our commitment, that discernment of spirits is possible.

Making discernment possible in a non-religious situation is therefore mainly a question of defining and fostering commitment to the values, vision and ideals relevant in that situation. Without this background and commitment any kind of discernment is impossible. For example, the Jesuit Refugee Service is a non-religious group, a mixed bunch of committed people, though their core values are derived from a following of Jesus Christ. One ideal of their work is *accompaniment*. There is quite a lot of training in the meaning of this ideal and what it represents in our relations with the refugee-friends whom Jesuit Refugee Service welcomes and supports. This plays out throughout the organization, in practical decisions such as how to organize the giving out of winter coats, for example: choices will be made against the background of a shared understanding of accompaniment and commitment to it. When a decision is reached, people will say 'that feels right', which is the sign of consolation—the way to organize the coat distribution 'feels right' against the background of a shared commitment to a right understanding of accompaniment.

So the process of discernment involves making a decision following a vision and a set of values that we hold, within a commitment to put them into practice as far as we possibly can. The process of facilitating a discernment in a person or a group is first to work through the value



A JRS centre in Addis Ababa

system that we shall accept, and then establish whether there is a commitment to putting it into practice. Only then, in the interplay of consolation and desolation, will we see the right way ahead. And, whether we ask or not, the Spirit will be there to guide us into all that is good. It is the task of the leadership of the organization to spell out the values that the organization holds and foster commitment to them in its the members.

Karl Rahner makes much the same point:

> It may be said too that nearly everyone in grave decisions makes a choice more or less exactly in the way Ignatius conceives it, just as the man in the street uses logic without ever having studied it, and yet it remains useful to draw inferences by means of logic that one has studied. In such decisions a man thinks things over for a long time. Consequently in every case he will probably make his decisions through a fundamental global awareness of himself actually present and making itself felt in him during this space of time, and through a feeling of the harmony or disharmony of the object of choice with this fundamental feeling he has about himself. He will not only nor ultimately make his decision by a rational analysis but by whether he feels that something 'suits him' or not. And this feeling will be judged by whether the matter pleases, delights, brings peace and satisfaction. There is much significance in this use of the word peace to describe what is found in a right decision.
>
> The difference between Ignatius' logic of concrete particulars and that of daily life does not, then, lie in the formal structure of each, bur in their application to a particular range of objects. With Ignatius it is a question of recognizing the harmony between the object of choice and a person's precise individual mode of religious life … if, nevertheless, someone wanted to and had to indicate more precisely what this certainty was like and how it arises, could they say anything very different from what St Ignatius says? Is his teaching, worked out into its essentials, of what the faithful do by and large every day … ?[2]

The Background in Contemporary Catholic Christianity

To illustrate why this is so important, I would like to recall two scenes from my own life.

The first is when I was about seventeen, in a good Roman Catholic school; I was (I think) seen as a good Catholic boy. As a devout member

[2] Karl Rahner, 'The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge in Ignatius Loyola', in *The Dynamic Element in the Church* (Freiburg: Herder and Herder, 1964), 166–167.

of the sodality, I said the rosary regularly and, on Friday afternoons, wore my broad blue sash and stood with the other members before the Blessed Sacrament, in front of the rest of the school at Friday benediction. As a good sodalist, I read the scriptures each week at our meeting and we did our 'see, judge, act' routine. I cannot remember ever having actually done anything, and I cannot now conceive how I could have kept reading the Gospels without seeing the strong call to social action which now seems to me to be so obvious. I was growing up in a context of praying and avoiding sin; I was committed to that; and against that background and with that commitment I was blind to the very real needs of the world, and to how I might help.

Just over fifty years later I was working as a chaplain in a Catholic school where, on Wednesday afternoons, a large group of pupils from the sixth form went to local schools and charities to help and support those in need. On their return, they would fill in their logs and discuss what they were learning from this experience of Christian charity and of the world in which they found themselves. They were growing up in what seemed to be a different Catholic Church from the one I had known. Their background was a call to be involved in the world, to make it a better place, and their commitment was to that ideal.

Since Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church is different. We know now that God comes to save everyone, and that we are all called to work together in the common endeavour to care for everyone in our common home—and that call is regardless of our faith and beliefs. Perhaps we who follow St Ignatius' teaching can bring to the table a way of finding the good—the very best—in the light of the revelation that God is offering to everyone in the world. Humans can, and perhaps are coming to, share a common set of values; increasingly there is a commitment that, 'in the face of present-day attempts to eliminate or ignore others, we may prove capable of responding with a new vision of fraternity and social friendship that will not remain at the level of words'.[3] 'The level of words' is the background of values, and we rise above it to commitment.

Fratelli tutti

It is interesting to see how Pope Francis deals with discernment and decision-making in the light of the Spirit in *Fratelli tutti*: 'an invitation to dialogue among all people of good will' (Exx 6). The inspiration and

[3] Pope Francis, *Fratelli tutti*, n. 6.

the vision are derived from the scriptures, but the bulk of the document is addressed to everyone, of any or no religion.

Chapter 1 of *Fratelli tutti* has a close affiliation with the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises—a gloomy chapter surveying all the problems we have created for ourselves as we live in our common home. Chapter 2 is based on scripture, especially on the parable of the Good Samaritan, which is discussed at length. From this Pope Francis derives several key principles which will form the background or vision for the subsequent reflection (or discernment). Chapter 3 and the subsequent chapters guide the reader in the working out of this vision in the daily life of the world—outlining the vision of fraternity (the relationship that should exist between members of our common home), social friendship (practical action for those who need our help), the common good (the basis for good decision-making) and solidarity (standing with others in their need and their difficulties). All of these constitute a vision to guide and inspire governments, politicians, bankers, multinationals, international relationships—a vision of universal fraternity, social friendship and solidarity towards everyone. It is a remarkable working out of a vision among the great and small structures of the non-religious world.

The Good of God's People and God's World

Discernment is a process which can be followed by any group or organization which works for the betterment of God's world. The leaders of the group will consider its values and vision (which may well be strongly Christian), express those values and vision to others, and encourage everyone to commit themselves to putting them into practice. In their decision-making at every level all members will be able to experience the presence of (or absence of) the peace that says 'that feels right'. We could label that 'consolation' (or maybe 'desolation') but there is no need to. And the Holy Spirit, who guides every process that seeks the good of God's people and God's world, will be active to guide the process.

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OUTGROUP PREJUDICE AND THE MINISTRY OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Matthew B. Pinson

LOVE OF NEIGHBOUR lies at the heart of Jesus' teaching. In particular, in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30–37) he invites us to define our *neighbours* as including those outside our own community as well as those inside it. Modern psychological insights have shown how revolutionary this invitation is, as they demonstrate that humans have a very strong tendency to divide people into *ingroup* and *outgroup* individuals, and to view the people in these categories very differently. Responding fully to Jesus' call requires me to overcome this tendency, to the extent that it hinders my freedom to love and serve the one who is different from me.

Since Ignatius defines spiritual exercises as 'any means of preparing and disposing our soul to rid itself of all its disordered affections and then … of seeking and finding God's will' (Exx 1), one who practises or guides others in the Spiritual Exercises should be aware of how they might be used to help exercitants overcome the particular disordered tendency of outgroup prejudice. I propose that the Spiritual Exercises are highly suitable for this task, and that a director can guide others more effectively if he or she is aware of some key psychological findings relating to outgroup prejudice.

The Distinction between Ingroup and Outgroup

Humans have a strong tendency to make rapid judgments about others based on characteristics that can be assessed very easily, such as physical appearance. Such judgments produce a deep-seated disposition towards others, which influences the course of any future interactions with them. Since it would be impossible to keep track, consciously or unconsciously, of every detail of each person they meet, they make the simplification

of categorizing people into groups.[1] Humans actually use this strategy of categorization in many other contexts beside social interactions, but social groups are distinctive because one of the groups will always contain the person doing the categorizing.[2]

A person may see someone else as ingroup with respect to one characteristic and outgroup with respect to another, so it is important to recognise which characteristics have most influence on that person's fundamental disposition towards the other. The study of this question is most frequently carried out within an evolutionary model of psychology. Evolutionary psychology holds that human behaviours can be understood in terms of how they contributed to the survival and reproduction of humans in the environment in which we evolved.[3] Within this framework, evolutionary psychologists identify the tendency to categorize other people into groups as resulting from the need to assess quickly whether a person is a friend, enemy or potential mate.[4]

[1] Mark Schaller, Justin H. Park and Douglas T. Kenrick, 'Human Evolution and Social Cognition', in *The Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, edited by Robin Dunbar and Louise Barrett (Oxford: OUP, 2007), 491.

[2] See Robert S. Baron, Norbert L. Kerr and Norman Miller, *Group Process, Group Decision, Group Action* (Pacific Grove: Brooks/Cole, 1992), 137. Throughout this article, I refer to members of the same group as the particular subject as *ingroup members*, while members of a different group are *outgroup members*.

[3] Robin Dunbar and Louise Barrett, 'Evolutionary Psychology in the Round', in *Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, 4.

[4] Wayne Weiten, *Psychology: Themes and Variations*, 10th edn (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2017), 422.

Thus the group distinctions that are psychologically most significant will be those that help sort people into these categories.

Three basic group distinctions that seem to be prevalent across a wide range of cultures are race, gender and age.[5] Gender and age determine whether another person might be a potential mate or rival for a mate. Race is more difficult to explain. One possibility is that for most of evolutionary history, humans did not encounter people of other races. What is encoded by race is thus actually 'coalitional alliance': status as friend or enemy. This is supported by the observation that young basketball players were more likely to remember another player's team than his race.[6]

Six Aspects of Outgroup Prejudice

Humans Prefer Ingroup Members over Outgroup Members

People's perceptions of others are heavily influenced by first impressions.[7] This applies even when the particular impression has no apparent relationship with the trait being perceived, such as when better-looking people are perceived to be more competent.[8] Since group membership makes a strong impression on people, they typically judge ingroup members more favourably with regard to characteristics such as intelligence, and feel more favourably disposed towards them.[9] People also give preference to ingroup members in the distribution of resources, even when the group distinction is trivial—such as, in one experiment, whether group members overestimated or underestimated the number of dots in a pattern.[10] One effect of this ingroup preference is that those responsible for employing people unconsciously favour those who resemble them, decreasing the diversity of workplaces.[11]

[5] Justin H. Park, 'Evolutionary Perspectives on Intergroup Prejudice: Implications for Promoting Tolerance', in *Applied Evolutionary Psychology*, edited by S. Craig Roberts (Oxford: OUP, 2012), 190.
[6] Robert Kurzban, John Tooby and Leda Cosmides, 'Can Race Be Erased? Coalitional Computation and Social Categorization', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 98/26 (2001), 15387–15392.
[7] Weiten, *Psychology*, 420.
[8] Judith H. Langlois and others, 'Maxims or Myths of Beauty? A Meta-Analytic and Theoretical Review', *Psychological Bulletin*, 126/3 (2000), 390–423.
[9] Nathalie Scaillet and Jacques-Philippe Leyens, 'From Incorrect Deductive Reasoning to Ingroup Favouritism', in *Social Identity Processes: Trends in Theory and Research*, edited by Dora Capozza and Rupert Brown (London: SAGE, 2000), 57.
[10] Henri Tajfel and others, 'Social Categorization and Intergroup Behaviour', *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 1/2 (1971), 149–178.
[11] Sana Qadar, 'Hiring Mini-Mes? How to Spot Similarity Bias and Encourage Diversity at Work', *ABC Life* (1 May 2019), at https://www.abc.net.au/life/hiring-mini-mes-what-bosses-need-to-know-about-similarity-bias/10883076.

Ignatian discernment prioritises paying attention to one's emotions about options being considered.[12] This does not mean automatically following one's emotional inclination.[13] The ultimate purpose of paying attention to one's emotions is greater openness to God's call.[14] It is highly likely that someone discerning an important choice regarding his or her way of life might experience a psychological bias towards serving people he or she sees as ingroup rather than outgroup. Since ingroup and outgroup members are equally loved by God, service to either group should, in principle, be considered an equally suitable means of responding to Christ's call to follow him (Exx 95–98). A bias towards ingroup members would thus be considered a 'disordered affection', of the kind that the Spiritual Exercises are designed to overcome (Exx 1).

Ingroup and outgroup members are equally loved by God

One of the Ignatian tools that could be used to overcome such a bias is the Principle and Foundation. Its position at the very start of the Exercises demonstrates that their emphasis on emotion is directed towards the purpose of coming to 'know God more easily and make a return of love more readily'.[15] To achieve this, a person should seek to come to his or her discernment without an inclination to one choice rather than another. Ignatius gives the examples of being equally open to health or sickness, riches or poverty, honour or dishonour and long or short life (Exx 23). One could easily add service to ingroup or outgroup members to this list. In each case, one of the alternatives is naturally more appealing than the other, which may make it difficult to achieve an orientation of openness to either alternative. Ignatius suggests actively praying to be chosen for the less appealing situation in life, as this acting against one's natural imbalance will help to achieve balance (Exx 157).

This strategy, known as *agere contra*, could be used by a person finding it difficult to consider service to a particular outgroup owing to fear of that outgroup or a preference for the familiar. This person would be invited to pray to experience a call to serve the outgroup. Such a call might be manifested in the emotions, or in external circumstances

[12] Mark E. Thibodeaux, *God's Voice Within* (Chicago: Loyola, 2010), 167–168.
[13] Michael Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises: Textv and Commentary. A Handbook for Retreat Directors* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998), 2.
[14] Marian Cowan and John Carroll Futrell, *The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola: A Handbook for Directors* (New York: Le Jacq, 1982), 5.
[15] David L. Fleming, *Draw Me into Your Friendship: The Spiritual Exercises. A Literal Translation and a Contemporary Reading* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 26–27.

such as a work opportunity or a mission from a religious superior. It might well turn out that the person does not experience such a call, but is indeed called to serve his or her own ingroup. But praying for the grace of a more difficult call will increase his or her freedom to accept whatever call is ultimately received.

Humans More Readily Accept Undesirable Behaviour from Ingroup Members

The central role of social interactions in human life means that all of us will frequently encounter unpleasant behaviour from others. People have a wide range of ways to respond to such behaviour, from deeming it unimportant and quickly forgetting about it, to reacting with violence. The first step towards choosing a response is a judgment as to what kind of action the putative offender performed, and his or her reason for performing it. Experimental studies have shown that an observer is likely to view an action as more serious if it is performed by an outgroup member. For example, white observers were found to be more likely to describe a shove as violent if the person who performed the shove was black than if the person was white. The white observers were also more likely to attribute the motivation for the shove to the individual if the shover was black, but to the circumstances if the shover was white.[16] Even if a person does judge that another's behaviour is improper, he or she is more likely to forgive or excuse such an action if performed by an ingroup member.[17]

Since the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises is about forgiveness, this insight into the psychology of forgiveness could be of great use. Although the First Week focuses on God's forgiveness of those undertaking the Exercises, meditating on their forgiveness of, and forgiveness by, others can help to concretise the experience of forgiveness (compare Matthew 6:12).[18] The insight that ingroup and outgroup forgiveness are psychologically quite different experiences means that there are four distinct experiences of forgiveness that can be considered: forgiving an ingroup member, forgiving an outgroup member, being forgiven by an ingroup member and being forgiven by an outgroup member. This suggests a broadening of the different kinds of forgiveness exercitants might

[16] Birt L. Duncan, 'Differential Social Perception and Attribution of Intergroup Violence: Testing the Lower Limits of Stereotyping of Blacks', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 34/4 (1976), 590–598.
[17] Miles Hewstone, 'The Ultimate Attribution Error: A Review of the Literature on Intergroup Causal Attribution', *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 20/4 (1990), 311–355.
[18] George A. Aschenbrenner, *Stretched for Great Glory* (Chicago: Loyola, 2004), 55–56.

fruitfully contemplate. Some exercitants might find it difficult to believe that God is willing to forgive them, perhaps feeling unworthy of that forgiveness. Such persons might remember times when they had forgiven someone very close to them, noting how natural it felt. In this way, they would be encouraged to envisage God like a very close friend or, even better, family member: like an ingroup member.

Another exercitant might be able to state that he or she is forgiven by God, but not experience a sense of the depth of that forgiveness—how unexpectedly gracious God has been.[19] In this case, exercitants might remember an experience of being forgiven by an outgroup member. Since forgiveness between members of different groups is rarer than between members of the same group, such an act of forgiveness would resemble God's forgiveness in its unexpectedness. In fact, the act need not be precisely the forgiveness of a specific wrong: any act of restoring a damaged relationship between people who are apparently distant could be an image of God's desire for relationship with every sinful person.

Humans Underestimate Diversity among Outgroup Members

As a general rule, people are willing to see members of their own group as individuals. They recognise diversity among ingroup members, and account for such diversity in their beliefs and actions.[20] In contrast, they tend to view outgroup members as far more homogeneous. They focus mostly on the characteristic that defines another person as outgroup, and associate that person with negative stereotypes of the outgroup.[21] This has led to problems in areas such as policing, where stereotypical assumptions about particular groups, especially racial groups, have prevented some incidents from being properly investigated.[22] A focus on the separating characteristic also leads to a greater willingness to identify someone as outgroup than ingroup.[23] This tendency seems to result from the greater potential for harm from misidentifying a foe as a friend than from misidentifying a friend as a foe.[24]

[19] George J. Schemel and Judith A. Roemer, *Beyond Individuation to Discipleship: A Directory for Those Who Give the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius* (Scranton: Institute for Contemporary Spirituality, 2000), 152–153.
[20] Weiten, *Psychology*, 451.
[21] Jennifer G. Boldry, Lowell Gaertner and Jeff Quinn, 'Measuring the Measures', *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, 10/2 (2007), 157–178.
[22] Neda Vanovac, 'Northern Territory Police Face Race Issues with New Officer Training for "Unconscious Bias"', *ABC News* (29 November 2018), at https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-11-29/northern-territory-police-race-training-unconscious-bias/10566548.
[23] Scaillet and Leyens, 'From Incorrect Deductive Reasoning', 50.
[24] Park, 'Evolutionary Perspectives', 189–191.

Those engaged in ministry might notice this tendency in themselves. Often a minister is sent to serve a group of people who share a particular characteristic: one that defines them as different from the minister, and perhaps as in need of help in some way. By keeping this psychological insight in mind, ministers can be aware of the danger of seeing that characteristic as defining all those with whom they are working, and of neglecting the diversity within the group. To avoid falling into this trap, they could keep in mind the diversity of those they consider strongly ingroup: their close friends and peers. By drawing on the diversity present in the ingroup, where it is easier to recognise, they can remember that an equivalent diversity is found among outgroup members with whom they are working. They can then actively seek to recognise this diversity, and respond accordingly.

The Meditation on the Incarnation could be a valuable resource for those lacking variety in their image of outgroup members. This meditation depicts the great variety of people in the world as the objects of God's love. God's love is presented both as a general concept and in the specific event of the incarnation (Exx 101–109). The three levels of scale—the Trinity sees the world, the people of the world and the specific events of the annunciation—help convey the notion that the vast mass of humanity is in fact made up of so many tiny, detailed stories of people's lives.[25]

[25] Cowan and Futrell, *Spiritual Exercises*, 99.

Humans Falsely Perceive Bias in Favour of Outgroup Members

When people encounter a description of conflict between their group and another group, they are likely to perceive this description as biased in favour of the other group.[26] This perception means that viewing a neutral description of a conflict can have a perverse effect. Rather than leaving a person better informed, and hence better able to understand the position of outgroup members, he or she is likely to feel attacked, and hence be strengthened in any resentment of the outgroup.[27]

This insight agrees with something Ignatius observed in a different context: that a person is usually moved by what he or she experiences interiorly, not by long explanations given by someone else (Exx 2). A giver of the Exercises may encounter someone who feels prejudice towards an outgroup. Moving past such prejudice would be beneficial to his or her spiritual life. However, the insight of psychology and of Ignatius shows that directors should usually resist the temptation to confront exercitants with detailed explanations of why they should let go of their prejudice.[28] Such explanations might be perceived as unfairly biased towards the outgroup, and end up strengthening the exercitants' prejudice. Instead, it would be better to trust that God will work in them, and simply to be ready to offer some suggestions if they seem ready to consider ways they might grow.

The structure of the Spiritual Exercises hints at how this growth might come about. The Exercises are aimed at helping a person serve God by serving other people, but their construction as a retreat, possibly undertaken highly removed from the world, focuses tightly on the individual retreatant.[29] The Call of the King and Two Standards meditations epitomize this. Both are ultimately directed towards service with Christ in the world, and explicitly state this in their descriptions of what it means to choose to be a follower of Christ. But their emotional content is found in the individual relationship between the retreatant and Jesus: the way Christ calls, and what it means to accept this call (Exx 91–98; 136–147).

[26] Robert P. Vallone, Lee Ross and Mark R. Lepper, 'The Hostile Media Phenomenon: Biased Perception and Perceptions of Media Bias in Coverage of the Beirut Massacre', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 49/3 (1985), 577–585.
[27] Charles G. Lord, Lee Ross and Mark R. Lepper, 'Biased Assimilation and Attitude Polarization: The Effects of Prior Theories on Subsequently Considered Evidence', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37/11 (1979), 2098–2109.
[28] Cowan and Futrell, *Spiritual Exercises*, 13.
[29] Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, 21.

This suggests a suitable strategy to help guide exercitants to overcome prejudice. They could begin by contemplating the universal love of God (for example Isaiah 49:1–7; Luke 2:29–32). From there, they might move to the Call of the King and Two Standards meditations, which invite them to share in spreading this love. To ensure that emotional realisations will take root in action, they should consider how they might practically be involved in the spreading of God's love. The director might encourage a particular focus on the universality of the mission to all people, observing that it might take exercitants beyond where they were comfortable.

The universality of the mission to all people

Next, the exercitants could ponder any personal barriers they feel are preventing them from participating fully in this mission, and pray for the graces needed to move past those barriers. They could draw on the many biblical examples of people pointing out personal shortcomings which prevent them from answering God's call, and God removing those shortcomings (for example Isaiah 6:1–8; Jeremiah 1:4–10). This would provide an opportunity for them to start to address their prejudice. Of course, one does not expect a sudden and total disappearance of an exercitant's prejudice. A single retreat cannot bring about all the growth a person needs, and often the growth it does bring is very different from that expected by the retreatant or director.[30]

Humans Doubt the Existence of Higher Emotions in Outgroup Members

One way people perceive ingroup members as more similar to themselves than outgroup members is in their experience of emotions.[31] Psychologists divide emotions into primary emotions, such as joy, sadness and anger, and secondary emotions, such as shame, hope and remorse.[32] Primary emotions are common to humans and animals, while secondary emotions are uniquely human. People are willing to admit that outgroup members experience primary emotions, but downplay their ability to experience secondary emotions.[33]

[30] William A. Barry, *Letting God Come Close: An Approach to the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises* (Chicago: Loyola, 2001), 9.
[31] Matthew J. Hornsey, Michael A. J. Wohl and Catherine R. Philpot, 'Collective Apologies and Their Effects on Forgiveness: Pessimistic Evidence but Constructive Implications', *Australian Psychologist*, 50 (2015), 106–114, at 110.
[32] Nancy L. Stein and Keith Oatley, 'Basic Emotions: Theory and Measurement', *Cognition and Emotion*, 6/3–4 (1992), 163–168.
[33] Jacques-Philippe Leyens and others, 'The Emotional Side of Prejudice: The Attribution of Secondary Emotions to Ingroups and Outgroups', *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 4/2 (2000), 186–197, at 187.

This rather startling finding gives reason to believe that Ignatian contemplation could be useful in helping someone come to understand or empathize with outgroup members. Ignatian spirituality seeks to make use of and integrate the different kinds of feelings a person has, from sensory perceptions, through primary to secondary emotions.[34] It also makes great use of placing oneself in a scriptural scene, in order to experience what the characters in the scene are experiencing.

These Ignatian techniques can help a person come to some experiential understanding of the emotions of outgroup members. It may be that he or she can name a particular situation that includes outgroup members and enter this situation contemplatively like a scriptural scene. In this way he or she can directly take on the role of an outgroup member, sharing his or her experiences, thoughts and feelings. Another approach would be less direct, making use of a biblical scene that draws together a large crowd of great variety (for example Mark 6:30–44; Acts 2:1–13). Exercitants could imagine the crowd as formed from a great diversity of people from the present day, ensuring that it contains people who are very different from them. They could then imagine how these different people are feeling in response to the presence of Jesus or of the Spirit. Such a contemplation might make a small contribution to their growth in empathy.

The difference in emotional attribution created by outgroup prejudice suggests a potential difficulty that some subjects may experience in taking full advantage of Ignatian contemplation. Ignatian contemplation requires putting oneself into a scene, perhaps taking on the role and the emotions of one of the biblical characters. In some cases, it is beneficial for someone praying to imagine him- or herself in the role of Jesus.[35]

Now the tendency to credit only primary emotions to outgroup members is part of an unconscious perception of them as not being quite as human as the perceiving subject and other ingroup members.[36] But in the case of Jesus, some might be inclined to view him as superhuman in a way that does not acknowledge his full humanity, by crediting him with only secondary emotions. They might find it difficult to imagine Jesus being tired, or frustrated, or afraid. In this case, they

[34] David L. Fleming, *What Is Ignatian Spirituality?* (Chicago: Loyola, 2008), 57.
[35] Tim Muldoon, *The Ignatian Workout: Daily Spiritual Exercises for a Healthy Faith* (Chicago: Loyola, 2004), 125.
[36] Leyens and others, 'Emotional Side of Prejudice', 187–189.

are seeing Jesus as an outgroup member or, more precisely, seeing themselves as member of a less prestigious outgroup relative to Jesus. This will make it very difficult to achieve the identification with Christ that the Exercises aim to inspire.[37]

While more time and greater familiarity with Ignatian contemplation are likely to be the only way to overcome this difficulty, the technique used in the Call of the King meditation might help. Here, Ignatius compares Jesus' call with the call of a 'temporal king' (Exx 91–94). Likewise, someone who finds it difficult to imagine Jesus as having the full range of human emotions could imagine these emotions in a greatly loved and respected person, and use the contemplation of this person as a model for contemplating Jesus.[38]

Prejudice towards the Outgroup Is Stronger when a Subject Feels Threatened

Naturally, outgroup prejudices are not present equally strongly in all circumstances. One circumstance that is particularly influential is whether the subject feels threatened. In such a case, people tend to identify more strongly with their ingroup, perceiving a greater resemblance among ingroup members.[39] If the threat comes from an outgroup, people are much more likely to be ill-disposed towards, or even to attack, outgroup members.[40] Even a threat that has nothing to do with an outgroup tends to increase a subject's negative thoughts about outgroup members.[41] Moreover the feeling of 'threat' can be minimal—as little as the elevation of arousal levels resulting from exercise.[42] A threat or perceived threat increases the likelihood that a person will incorrectly identify another as outgroup.[43]

The observation that feeling threatened increases outgroup prejudice comes with a corollary: that helping people increase their spiritual and psychological well-being should improve their capacity for empathy. Modern formulations of the Spiritual Exercises begin with extensive

[37] W. W. Meissner, 'Psychological Notes on the Spiritual Exercises II', *Woodstock Letters*, 93/1 (1964), 40.
[38] Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, 78.
[39] Baron, Kerr and Miller, *Group Process, Group Decision, Group Action*, 136.
[40] Scaillet and Leyens, 'From Incorrect Deductive Reasoning to Ingroup Favouritism', 56.
[41] Steven Fein and Steven J. Spencer, 'Prejudice as Self-Image Maintenance: Affirming the Self through Derogating Others', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73/1 (1997), 31–44.
[42] Hai-Sook Kim and Robert S. Baron, 'Exercise and the Illusory Correlation: Does Arousal Heighten Stereotypic Processing?', *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 24/4 (1988), 366–380.
[43] Saul L. Miller, Jon K. Maner and D. Vaughn Becker, 'Self-Protective Biases in Group Categorization: Threat Cues Shape the Psychological Boundary Between "Us" and "Them"', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 99/1 (2010), 62–77.

contemplations on God's love for the retreatant, recognising that knowledge of this love is a precondition for further spiritual growth.[44] Increasing a person's awareness of God's love, and hence decreasing his or her perception of spiritual threat, might be a more effective strategy for overcoming a tendency towards prejudice than any direct approach.

The Relevance of Psychology and the Fruitfulness of the Spiritual Exercises

I have not exhausted the discussion of outgroup prejudice and its relationship to the Spiritual Exercises, and did not intend to. Rather, my aim has been to illustrate two points. First, contemporary research provides quite specific descriptions of how common psychological tendencies are manifested, and a director who keeps these insights in mind will be equipped to guide an exercitant more helpfully. Second, important themes and exercises in Ignatian spirituality engage fruitfully with these products of psychological research. This fruitfulness springs from the psychological insight of Ignatius and those who have applied his techniques, and helps explain the lasting popularity of the Spiritual Exercises.

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[44] Schemel and Roemer, *Beyond Individuation*, 4.

'WHEN HIS EYES WERE OPENED A LITTLE'

The Role of Noticing in the Spiritual Exercises

Gail Paxman

AN EARLY BREAKTHROUGH in Ignatius of Loyola's relationship with God came 'when his eyes were opened a little'.[1] He noticed, and began reflecting on, the difference between his dry and discontented feelings after thinking about his romantic and social ambitions, and his feelings of contentment and happiness after daydreaming about imitating the saints. So began a practice that underpinned Ignatius' conversion and his journey with God: noticing.

Noticing became embedded within his Spiritual Exercises, in both overt and subtle ways, as Ignatius incorporated his lived experience of God's self-communication and unconditional love into the manual he created for givers of the Exercises. Readiness to undertake the Exercises, and the richness of the transformation experienced, are directly influenced by the ability of exercitants and givers to notice, articulate and reflect on God and on the self. Noticing, as an indispensable ingredient in the Spiritual Exercises, will be explored here in relation to the heart journey towards a deeper awareness of self and God.

William Connolly proposes: 'conscious growth in Christian life will depend on noticing God's action and one's own response'.[2] This implies that an exercitant who is unable to notice what is happening interiorly will probably have limited benefit from making the Exercises. Noticing is defined as 'to take notice of; to observe, to become aware of', and involves the act of observing or paying attention to something.[3] In the life

[1] *Autobiography*, n. 8.
[2] William J. Connolly, 'Noticing Key Interior Facts in the Early Stages of Spiritual Direction', *Review for Religious*, 35/1 (1976), 112–121, here 112.
[3] *Oxford English Dictionary*.

of a Christian, paying attention to God's action and one's own response leads to conscious growth and a deepening relationship with God.

This brings an inner knowledge which goes beyond the level of intellect into the interior of a person, penetrating to the mysteries of the heart and its deepest truths. Ignatius writes: 'what fills and satisfies the soul consists, not in knowing much, but in our understanding the realities profoundly and in savoring them interiorly' (Exx 2). Here we are interested in those inner movements which simply happen to a person, not the choices and decisions that are made. These may include 'new insight, unexpected emotion, some memory or imagination, deepened desire [or] inclinations towards some action'.[4]

In the Exercises, however, noticing has a more complex role than the developing awareness of the exercitant's personal inner response. Noticing has an impact on consciousness, relationality, resistance to spiritual experience, generativity for apostolic action, learning and mysticism. We will explore each of these areas and then consider the necessity of a mature capacity to notice for the giver of the Exercises.

Noticing for Consciousness

Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises are a school of prayer which assists exercitants 'to overcome oneself, and to order one's life, without reaching a decision through some disordered affection' (Exx 21). This self-transformation first requires that the exercitants have a degree of self-knowledge and self-awareness. As they travel through the Exercises their understanding of their spiritual identity as an accepted and loved sinner will grow and will invite an integration of all that has been, and a self-realisation in their authentic spiritual identity.

The transformation begins, however, with exercitants becoming conscious and accepting where they stand, here and now. The Principle and Foundation (Exx 23) begins a pricking of the conscience, telling the exercitants that they are not free, and is followed by the consideration in the First Week of their biographical experience in the light of the sins of the angels and humankind. The exercitants notice and develop knowledge of their emotions and feelings in the light of their gratitude for Christ's loving kindness and mercy to them.

[4] Brian Gallagher, *Set Me Free: Spiritual Direction and Discernment of Spirits* (Bayswater, Victoria: Coventry, 2019), 73.

Ignatius directs the noticing of the exercitants through the shape of each exercise, utilising their memory, intellect, will, desire, imagination and senses.[5] The preparatory prayer, preludes, *id quod volo,* points and colloquy are simply a framework for the exercitants. Their personal reflection and awakening desire, as they notice their own experience, allows them to 'discover something that will bring better understanding or a more personalized concept of the history' (Exx 2). The exercitants discover God at work in their lives and, through their consciousness, the Holy Spirit nudges them to recognise and accept Jesus' healing in their ways of acting, and become aware of the behaviours and masks which are their ill-ordered attachments.

Here the imbalance of head and heart begins to be adjusted. In St Paul's letter to the Romans he declares 'I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.' (7:15) This is an inward struggle with a divided self, the formation of which is a heritage from childhood when 'attitudes are implanted in us by others from our earliest years, not to mention the tendencies we have inherited from birth from our ancestors'.[6] When aspects of the self are denied or repressed, a false self or untruthful self-image is formed, affecting a person's way of 'perceiving reality, making judgements, choosing and acting'.[7] The person is unable to be his or her authentic, God-given self, indivisible

[5] Robert R. Marsh, 'Imagining Ignatian Spiritual Direction', *The Way*, 48/3 (July 2009), 27–42, here 34.
[6] Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon, *Urgings of the Heart: A Spirituality of Integration* (New York: Paulist, 1995), 7; Gerard W. Hughes, *Cry of Wonder: Our Own Real Identity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 209.
[7] Michael Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises: Text and Commentary. A Handbook for Retreat Directors* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2016), 2.

and distinct from other people.[8] Unconscious reactions and hidden intentions govern his or her behaviour. Noticing and freeing ourselves from these ill-ordered reactions and intentions is an important purpose of the Exercises. Self-reflectivity invites a realigning of the conscious and the unconscious, allowing healing and integration to take place.[9]

Governed by efficiency, rationality and success, the Western world places significant emphasis on intellect and control, while emotions and feelings have been minimised.[10] Noticing invites the exercitant to 'be present to, or in touch with himself or herself with affectivity, not just intellectual consciousness but with affective consciousness, passion, emotion, sentiment, will, [and] desire'.[11] As his or her emotional and spiritual intelligence ignites and grows, integration and individuation take place: 'As creative energies once bound up … become available to us, we may find, to our surprise, that we have more potential and enthusiasm for life than we had imagined'.[12]

Noticing for Relationality

Relationality is concerned with the way in which 'people or things are connected'.[13] Human beings, made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26–27, 5:1), are relational—made for intimate relationship with God.[14] The image of God within was distorted by the original sin of Adam and Eve in the garden (Genesis 3), damaging humankind's relationship with God and with each other. The Exercises cultivate the possibility of the integration of the human and the holy, and a deeper relationship with God through an experience of Christ's life. The redemption of these relationships has been made possible through Christ's humanity, suffering, death and resurrection.

Right from the beginning of the Exercises, Ignatius asks exercitants to engage with God: to pay attention to an experiential encounter with God, the active God who gazes on you and is intimately engaged—so suggests the third addition, added by Ignatius to help the exercitant to

[8] Au and Cannon, *Urgings of the Heart*, 17.
[9] George J. Schemel and Judith A. Roemer, *Beyond Individuation to Discipleship: A Directory for Those Who Give the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius* (Scranton: Institute for Contemporary Spirituality, 2000), 67.
[10] Gerard W. Hughes, 'The First Week and the Formation of Conscience', *The Way Supplement*, 24 (Spring 1975), 6–14, here 7.
[11] Schemel and Roemer, *Beyond Individuation to Discipleship*, 104.
[12] Au and Cannon, *Urgings of the Heart*, 41.
[13] *Oxford Dictionary of English*.
[14] Brian S. Rosner, *Known by God: A Biblical Theology of Personal Identity*, edited by Jonathan Lunde (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 79.

make the Exercises better. This is a practice undertaken at the beginning of every exercise where exercitants pause before the place where they will make the exercise, to raise their minds up and 'think how God our Lord is looking at me' (Exx 75). Robert Marsh has written about this experience, of 'looking at God looking at me', as a moment of experiencing a relationship in which '*we are desired*'.[15] This look begins an encounter with the living God, who is in relationship with the exercitants, and who desires to communicate with them.

Every exercise is posed to keep the focus on the movements within the exercitants, inviting them to pay attention to their consolations, desolations, agitations, thoughts or dryness. The giver of the Exercises, too, will engage in a conversation to gauge the progress of this relationship with God and will adapt the Exercises to suit 'the needs of the person who is agitated in this way' (Exx 17). There are, in fact, multiple relationships playing out within the dynamics of the Exercises: between God, Ignatius, the one who makes the Exercises, the one who gives the Exercises and the giver's supervisor. These actors' roles are not limited to certain defined activities; they each free their interaction with the movements of grace and desire to allow 'the Creator, to operate within His creature, to convert, to change, to transform utterly in love'.[16]

Love is the affective language of the Exercises. Through imaginative contemplation, exercitants see Christ's life experience through the lens of their own lives, and their life experience through the lens of Christ's, which is lived in response to the unconditional love and acceptance of the Father.[17] By noticing their interior reactions or spiritual movements during these contemplations, God can accomplish great healing in the exercitants.[18] This healing occurs because 'it is primarily through relationships that we learn about ourselves'.[19] The exercitants are spending significant time in relationship with the four actors of the Exercises, and particularly with the humanity of Christ.

Love is the affective language of the Exercises

[15] Robert R. Marsh, 'Looking at God Looking at You: Ignatius' Third Addition', *The Way*, 43/4 (October 2004), 19–28, here 26, 25 (original emphasis).
[16] Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, 'Discourse on Exercises and Co-Workers', *Review of Ignatian Spirituality*, 99 (2002), 25–33, here 32, 33.
[17] Brian O'Leary, 'Ignatian Mysticism and Contemporary Culture', *The Way*, 52/4 (October 2013), 44–56, here 51.
[18] See John Veltri, 'Preparatory Phases: The Disposition Days', in *Orientations: For Those Who Accompany Others on the Inward Journey* (Guelph: Loyola House, 1998), available at http://orientations.jesuits.ca/or2a_bintro.html#content, chapter 4 note 17.
[19] Au and Cannon, *Urgings of the Heart*, 119.

Modern science has discovered that mammals have a capacity called *limbic resonance*, whereby two individuals become attuned to each other's inner states in an unconscious and internal process. In a relationship based in love, *limbic revision* has the power to remodel emotional parts of a person, 'who we are and who we become depends, in part on whom we love'.[20] This is what happens as exercitants encounter Christ in a relational way in the Exercises; they look at someone else, watching, contemplating and noticing within an intimate and felt experience of unconditional love. They discover a mutual vision of knowing, loving and following as Christ reveals the nature of the Trinitarian God.[21] Through this relationship the exercitants have an 'ever-increasing ability to find God in every aspect of creation, and at every step in their unfolding personal history'.[22]

Noticing for Resistance

Spiritual growth is a cooperative process which 'rests on freely responding to God's invitation to us, as we perceive this in the moment'.[23] Based on the patterns of his own spiritual transformation, Ignatius has

[20] Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini and Richard Lannon, *A General Theory of Love* (New York: Vintage, 2001), 63, 144.
[21] Robert R. Marsh, '*Id quod volo*: The Erotic Grace of the Second Week', *The Way*, 45/4 (October 2006), 7–19, here 11.
[22] O'Leary, 'Ignatian Mysticism and Contemporary Culture', 52.
[23] Christopher Chapman, 'Striving for Perfection or Growing into Fruitfulness?' *The Way*, 57/3 (July 2018), 7–17, here 14.

exercitants pray for different graces at different moments during the Exercises. The use of silence and the structure of the prayer allow a space for the exercitants to own their longing for wholeness, in the form of the grace, and also to become aware of the 'deeply ingrained layers of … resistance'.[24]

The psychiatrist Gerald May describes the human mind as having 'an endless source of inventiveness when it comes to avoiding the implications of spiritual experience', hence there are untold ways in which resistance and defence mechanisms manifest in exercitants. These 'preserve, protect, and promulgate one's self-image and self-importance in the face of spiritual truth' and 'impinge dramatically upon prayer life or ascetical practice'.[25]

Ignatius expected there would be times when exercitants would not be able, willing or open enough to notice any spiritual movements. At these times the giver's exploration of how, where and when prayer is undertaken may help uncover what is blocking openness to God's call (Exx 6). It is a natural reaction not to notice movements that will challenge a sense of self; however, patience and encouragement to 'contemplate their resistance as they would a lively experience of God' can help exercitants to stay with their dryness and be attentive to the less familiar voice of God.[26] Over time the exercitants' willingness to notice can become a 'process of progressively greater openness to reality that is freely undertaken and freely pursued'.[27]

Adapting the Spiritual Exercises to the person wishing to engage in them is a key element of Ignatius' guide for givers, with many participants undertaking just a short retreat of initial Exercises (Exx 18). The exercitant who wishes to undertake the full Exercises (Exx 19, 20) requires certain personal qualities, desire, theological basis, and experience and skills. Myree Harris has outlined these in some detail for a contemporary setting.[28]

This, however, is no guarantee that undertaking the Exercises will result in personal progress and apostolic service, as even Ignatius was

[24] Chapman, 'Striving for Perfection or Growing into Fruitfulness?' 16.
[25] Gerald G. May, *Care of Mind, Care of Spirit: A Psychiatrist Explores Spiritual Direction* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992), 85, 89, 90.
[26] Maureen Conroy, *The Discerning Heart: Discovering a Personal God* (Chicago: Loyola U, 1993), 86.
[27] William A. Barry and William J. Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 83.
[28] See Myree Harris, 'Reflecting on Readiness to Make the Spiritual Exercises', *Review for Religious*, 70/1 (2011), 44–58, at 46–47.

discouraged at the 'small amount of good results that the Exercises seemed to have produced in spite of their widespread use'. Franco Imoda, in writing about the Exercises and psychology, asserts that the divisions in the human heart may not find effective freedom when those divisions have subconscious sources.[29] This impedes the exercitants' spiritual growth and concrete ability to live their Christian struggle.

But noticing their spiritual movements and being 'content to share them rather than attempt to change them or suppress them as they begin to emerge' will move their struggle from a purely psychological level on to a spiritual level.[30] For some exercitants this is more easily said than done; their unconscious resistance to conflicts and pain stops them from embracing the spiritual growth and transformation that can come through humbly and carefully reflecting on our suffering.[31]

Noticing for Generativity

The Ignatian charism opens the door to apostolic action, the natural outworking of the intimate relationship with God, which changes the way exercitants relate to themselves, to others and to the world around them. This is more than simply imitating the external aspects of Christ's life. Here one's generativity, or care for the future in the form of mission or purpose in life, comes into focus. In apostolic action one's freedom is not restricted, it is discovered in the act of living the experience of Love.[32] Love empowers a more realistic perspective on self as exercitants progress through the Exercises, calling them to grow into the unique persons God created them to be with a desire freely to love and serve in all things.[33]

A desire freely to love and serve in all things

Apostolic action finds authenticity in the meeting of exercitants' 'inner disposition of liberty in decision or election' with their desire to imitate Christ in 'deep devotion to God and unwavering pursuit of his vision of proclaiming the kingdom'.[34] Discovering where in the ebb and flow of their inner movements they find this disposition and desire is

[29] Franco Imoda, *The Spiritual Exercises and Psychology: The Breadth and Length and Height and Depth (Eph. 3,18)* (Rome: Pontificia Universitàa Gregoriana, 1996), 5, 60–61.
[30] Barry and Connolly, *Practice of Spiritual Direction*, 78.
[31] Au and Cannon, *Urgings of the Heart*, 119.
[32] James Hanvey, 'Ignatius of Loyola: Theology as a Way of Living', *Thinking Faith* (30 July 2010), at https://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/20100730_1.htm.
[33] Ruth Holgate, 'Growing into God', *The Way*, 42/3 (July 2003), 7–18, here 13.
[34] Luigi M. Rulla, 'The Discernment of Spirits and Christian Anthropology', *Gregorianum*, 59/3 (1978), 537–569, here 537; Au and Cannon, *Urgings of the Heart*, 17.

achieved through noticing. What Ignatius learnt on his sickbed is still relevant for our time: 'pay attention to our experience and ask where God is present in it'.[35] Ignatius' Rules for Discernment assist in seeing where God is present. The rules are 'really *descriptions* of what happens to people as they relate to God in a personal way. They also serve as *guidelines* for understanding and sifting through spiritual experiences.'[36]

Growth in ability to notice, and to judge or discern things correctly, guides exercitants in decisions which join them more closely with Christ and working with Christ in the world.[37] The exercitants find their way, their life work, by paying attention to their inner movements and discovering desires, values and fruits which are the gifts of their free response to God's love. They get a sense of their identity as the faith-grace persons they are before God, and of their vocation and mission in the world.[38] With this insight into the self, and their intimate relationship with Christ, they are well prepared for apostolic living.

Noticing for Learning

The focus up to this point has been on noticing as a key element in human and spiritual development. Noticing on its own, however, is insufficient to achieve such growth. The Ignatian pedagogy embeds noticing within a cyclical model of experience, reflection and action in which exercitants are continually called to 'reflect upon the entirety of one's experience in prayer in order to discern where the Spirit of God is leading'.[39] This is the path of spiritual formation, of becoming a contemplative in action, when the exercitants have developed their self-reflective and discernment skills to the point that they can actively draw on them in their daily life to seek and find God's will. Reflection in Ignatian pedagogy means 'a thoughtful reconsideration of some subject matter, experience, idea, purpose or spontaneous reaction, in order to grasp its significance more fully'.[40]

[35] William A. Barry, *Letting God Come Close: An Approach to the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises* (Chicago: Loyola, 2001), 136.
[36] Conroy, *Discerning Heart*, xiv (original emphasis).
[37] David L. Fleming, *What Is Ignatian Spirituality?* (Chicago: Loyola, 2008), 93.
[38] Schemel and Roemer, *Beyond Individuation to Discipleship*, 8–9.
[39] Agustin Alonso and others, *Ignatian Pedagogy: A Practical Approach* (Galway: International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education, 1993), n.25. Available at https://www.educatemagis.org/documents/ignatian-pedagogy-a-practical-approach-en/.
[40] *Ignatian Pedagogy*, n.49.

Reflection was the pivotal point for Ignatius in moving from experience to action: he put great effort into trying to 'discover what moved him in each situation'.[41] Giving priority to depth rather than breadth, he participated in each prayer experience with his whole self—heart, mind, will and body—through his imagination, feelings, senses and mind, engaging both affective and cognitive dimensions. He consciously observed, noticed, took stock of, perceived and looked at his resistances, impulses and desires, and, like a good meal, he chewed them over, tasting the full flavour of them.[42] Ignatius believed that God was dealing with him as a schoolteacher guides a child and his Exercises invite the exercitant into a similar, although uniquely personal, experience of God.[43]

During this experience exercitants learn to 'share their feelings with God as they are feeling them'.[44] Framed by the bookends of the Principle and Foundation and the Contemplation to Attain Love, the exercitants' sense of mission and purpose is transformed. At the beginning they are talking to *themselves* about what they ought to desire, and by the end they are talking to *someone else*—to God, to Christ.[45] Through the developing relationship with God exercitants are,

> … progressively learning more realistic images of self and God in relationship through the actual encounter with God … a process of losing [their] idols or false images of God (and self) through the encounter itself.[46]

In the flesh of the exercitants' imagination, God's Self is revealed through Christ, and they are drawn into friendship and into the intimacy of love.

Noticing for Mysticism

Mysticism places emphasis on interiority through the relational, spiritual or experiential aspects of one's faith.[47] Ignatian mysticism is rooted in the everyday, in finding God in all things, not only in the 'peak experiences' of mystical visions. This mystical stance is articulated in the Contemplation to Attain Love, whose four points (Exx 234–237) aim at 'opening

[41] *Ignatian Pedagogy*, n.47.
[42] Gerald Coleman, 'How the Spiritual Exercises Inform the Ministry of Teaching', in *Ignatian Spirituality for Today: Key Readings for Busy People*, edited by Martin Scroope (Pymble: Loyola Institute, 2011), 223.
[43] *Autobiography*, n.27.
[44] Conroy, *Discerning Heart*, 85.
[45] Marsh, '*Id quod volo*', 8.
[46] Barry, *Letting God Come Close*, 138.
[47] Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction* (Malden: Blackwell, 1999), 6.

retreatants to receive contemplative graces', not only during the Exercises, but also in the so-called Week Five, the day-by-day life ahead.[48]

With a continuing self-awareness and an ever-increasing ability to find God in the 'other' and in creation, exercitants' lives are progressively more integrated. Ignatius says of himself towards the end of his life that he was 'always growing in devotion, i.e. in facility in finding God, and now more than ever in his whole life. And every time and hour he wanted to find God, he found him.'[49] Searching for God and finding God in all things is a life of everyday mysticism and continued growth toward wholeness.

Integration leads towards a union of wills, in which God's will and the exercitant's will are 'woven together' in a union that is 'solid, lasting, precious'.[50] Noticing is an ingredient of self-awareness, of the ability to reflect critically and of the learning attitude, which are all prerequisites of this union with God.[51] Through noticing the exercitants' individuality and deepest self are empowered and they can make choices in freedom from ill-ordered attachments for their daily and future path.

Gerald May writes of unitive spiritual experiences: 'without words or reaction, there is a noticing that self-determination and self-defining activity is ceasing, and that an entirely different way of being is happening'. In these moments there is a feeling of peace, liberation and superb reconciliation. It is only in retrospect that a unitive experience can be

[48] O'Leary, 'Ignatian Mysticism and Contemporary Culture', 45, 52.
[49] *Autobiography*, n. 99.
[50] Sylvie Robert, 'Union with God in the Ignatian Election', *The Way Supplement*, 103 (May 2002), 100–112, here 108.
[51] Nancy J. Ault, 'Theological Reflection and Spiritual Direction', *The Australasian Catholic Record*, 90/1 (2013), 81–91, here 90.

identified, as any realisation in the moment that union is occurring will re-establish consciousness of self. In our world a contemplative stance which will 'increase one's openness, receptivity, and responsiveness to unitive experiences' is counter-cultural as we live in a superficial world of materialism, consumerism, competitiveness and busyness.[52] The antidote to the superficiality in which we lose 'touch with our deeper and more real selves' is interiority.[53] As awareness and experience of union with God grow, false senses of mastery and autonomy are destroyed, and our utter dependence on and connectedness with God and each other demand 'that love be freed into every moment and movement of our being'.[54]

This is what Ignatian spirituality is about: it is being a 'contemplative in action'. Rolphy Pinto expresses it thus:

> The 'contemplative' points to God above, though not exclusively. And 'in action' does not necessarily refer to activity. It also signifies cultivating or attaining a new vision of reality, a consciousness that dwells in God and enables a person to find God in all things and all things in God.[55]

The whole self is committed to its relationship with God, while meeting God in the action. This is the life path on which the Exercises sets exercitants if they are open, courageous and generous.[56] 'The unreflected life is not worth living' is attributed to Socrates.[57] Might we adapt this and say, *The unnoticed life is not worth living*?

How to Grow Noticing Skills

Developmental progress requires a safe context where trust can flourish. Givers of the Exercises should create a 'naturally therapeutic environment' when they 'listen to the person', explore 'how God has been working and is inviting', and confirm to exercitants that they are 'noticed, valued, worthwhile and competent'.[58] Being introduced to the

[52] May, *Care of Mind*, 84, 36.
[53] O'Leary, 'Ignatian Mysticism and Contemporary Culture', 55.
[54] May, *Care of Mind*, 85.
[55] Rolphy Pinto, 'Transcendence and Immanence II: Ignatian Spirituality and Spiritual Conversation', *The Way*, 57/3 (July 2018), 67–79, here 72; and see MHSJ MN 5, 162.
[56] David L. Fleming, *Draw Me into Your Friendship: A Literal Translation and a Contemporary Reading of the Spiritual Exercises* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), [5].
[57] Plato, *Apology*, 38a.
[58] Elizabeth Liebert, 'The Limits of Adaptability: The Eighteenth Annotation in Developmental Perspective', *The Way*, 42/3 (July 2003), 107–123, here 121, quoting Robert Kegan, *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard U, 1982).

loving, unconditional acceptance of Jesus is paramount because 'the love of God always initiates, always takes the first step, to give us the courage to continue going deeper'.[59] The giver offers an example of this unconditional love when the exercitant's story is heard, valued and received with empathy, and fears of disapproval, rejection or judgment are diminished.[60] The giver is the loving voice of God, reassuring the exercitant of God's acceptance and love.

Together, givers and exercitants can begin to develop language that helps the exercitant to articulate his or her inner experience.[61] Metaphor and imagery can be useful, because the English language 'lacks terms to express human relationship (that space "between persons") and lacks as well terms that refer to "experience" or "states of consciousness" with precision'.[62] Realising that one's story and one's experience are worth talking about promotes a confidence and growing interest which results in a more ready noticing.[63] Encouragement and practice assist exercitants to become more articulate as the giver helps them to join the dots, to name their feelings, and to acknowledge how they are hiding from God's presence. The Examen and the variety of approaches included in the Three Methods of Praying (Exx 238–260) are useful to provide a context for the progress by which exercitants develop their ability to notice and name inner movements.[64]

Noticing and the Giver

The ability of those who give the Exercises to notice is paramount, and consists of two parts. First there is the ability to help exercitants 'notice and develop the encounter with God already implicit in his or her experience', which has been considered up to this point.[65] And then there is the ability of givers to notice what is happening inside themselves as they are present to the exercitant.

[59] Thomas Acklin and Boniface Hicks, *Spiritual Direction: A Guide for Sharing the Father's Love* (Steubenville: Emmaus Road, 2017), 26.
[60] See Ray Lindahl, 'Listening: A Sacred Art and a Spiritual Practice', *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction*, 20/4 (2014), 19–26, here 25; David Townsend, 'The Counsellor, the Director and the Annotations', *The Way Supplement*, 42 (Autumn 1981), 40–55, here 49.
[61] Connolly, 'Noticing Key Interior Facts in the Early Stages of Spiritual Direction', 116.
[62] Eric Greenleaf, quoted in Mary Rose Bumpus, 'The Hopeful Imagination: A Place God Comes to Meet Us', *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction*, 16/1 (2010), 24–31, here 24.
[63] Connolly, 'Noticing Key Interior Facts in the Early Stages of Spiritual Direction', 116.
[64] Liebert, 'Limits of Adaptability', 118.
[65] Robert R. Marsh, 'Teaching Spiritual Direction as if God Were Real', *The Way*, 53/4 (October 2014), 57–67, here 60.

Ignatius is clear in the annotations that the Exercises bring 'more spiritual relish and spiritual fruit' (Exx 2) when the Creator and creature are left to work with each other (Exx 15). The danger for givers is of being unaware when they are interfering with the exercitants' noticing, which is so critical for them in being led by God. Givers may respond from their own attitudes or jump too quickly to an interpretation. For this reason they must be in touch with the self, so they are '*not re-acting to* the person but *acting for* the person'.[66] Gerald May writes, 'one must constantly be rechecking the openness of one's attention'.[67] To this end givers need to have first had their own experience of God's loving action in their lives, to have done their own inner work to become aware of their ill-ordered attachments, and to have psycho-spiritual and theological training.[68]

A key mechanism to help givers pay attention to and to review their reactions is that of supervision.[69] In this space they can 'differentiate between those feelings arising from [their] own experiences and those given … in empathy'.[70] Supervision helps givers become more competent by addressing their own faith life. In concentrating on their experience as a giver, on what was going on inside them as they listened to the exercitant, 'the lived beliefs that color their responses' become apparent. This leads them into 'greater awareness of what happens in direction', and reveals their strengths, weaknesses, faith and lack of faith.[71] Their ability to notice and pay attention to self is increased, helping them to grow further into their role as givers and enhancing their ability to facilitate the encounter of God and the exercitant.

The Richness of Transformation

In a culture which does not foster interiority, there are many people who live unexamined lives.[72] Without doubt, Ignatius' experience of noticing and reflecting on himself has produced a school of prayer which is a gift

[66] George P. Leach, 'Growing Freedom in the Spiritual Director', in *Notes on the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola*, edited by David L. Fleming (St Louis: Review for Religious, 1983), 40 (original emphasis).
[67] May, *Care of Mind*, 132.
[68] Barry and Connolly, *Practice of Spiritual Direction*, 136–40.
[69] Barry and Connolly, *Practice of Spiritual Direction*, 197.
[70] B. Moore, 'Group Supervision with a Multi-Disciplinary Trauma Resource Team in the North of Ireland' (D. Prof., Middlesex University, 2008), 51, quoted in Michael Carroll and Maria Gilbert, *On Being a Supervisee: Creating Learning Partnerships* (London: Vukani, 2011), 111.
[71] Barry and Connolly, *Practice of Spiritual Direction*, 187, 195, 196.
[72] Acklin and Hicks, *Spiritual Direction*, 48.

to those who desire to alter this situation and further their relationship with God. Developing the capacity for noticing illuminates and deepens this relationship in a manner which informs the lived experience of self and of being loved by God.

Noticing is intrinsic for achieving every milestone in the direction of a deeper relationship and response to God. It is an ongoing element in searching for, and finding, God in all things, to allow the richness of transformation to be shared, so that others can embark on their own journey of self-discovery in the light of God's love.

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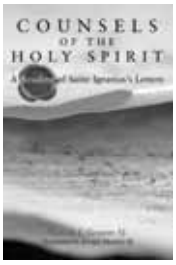

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THREE WAYS, FOUR DEGREES AND FOUR WEEKS?

Jean-Marc Laporte

IGNATIUS LOYOLA CAREFULLY REVIEWED whatever happened when, in his earlier pilgrim years, he directed others in prayer. He gradually devised a set of notes on the helpful patterns he discovered, and this led to the four weeks of the spiritual journey he proposed to those he felt were ready. These notes matured into a short book of spiritual exercises to guide future directors, a book whose impact has been invaluable.

What influences shaped his approach? There are many. By his time in the western Church there had emerged a classic pattern of spiritual progress (beginner, proficient, perfect), further described as three ways (purgative, illuminative and unitive). This pattern Ignatius knew at least from his studies in Paris.

What, then, is the relationship between the three ways and Ignatius' four Weeks? This question is raised by Gaston Fessard in the first volume of his *Dialectique des Exercises Spirituels de Saint Ignace*, and he offers significant clues.[1] But a prior question can be raised. Can we find any harbingers of an earlier fourfold pattern in spiritual progress? We will examine the work of a twelfth-century prior of an abbey of canons regular, Richard of St Victor, whose influence on Ignatius, if any, we have not been able to document. His treatise on *The Four Degrees of Violent Love* was quite influential in the later centuries of the Middle Ages. Does it shed any light on how to give the four weeks of the Ignatian Exercises?

Richard of St Victor: An Early Four-Stage Pattern

Richard of St Victor (1110–1173) was a member of the Abbey of St Victor, which flourished in Paris in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

[1] Gaston Fessard, *La Dialectique des Exercises Spirituels de Saint Ignace* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1956).

This abbey was not a typical monastic foundation somewhere in the wilderness with monks seeking the salvation of their souls in prayer and withdrawal from the world. It had an apostolic thrust, especially in the intellectual ministry, and played a role in building up Paris as a centre of theological study. Its members were not monks but canons regular. In rough terms, on the spectrum of religious life, canons regular are found somewhere between monks and contemporary apostolic religious. They lived a regular life in abbeys, sang the office, generally followed the Augustinian rule, but differed from monks in their apostolic commitments.[2] Richard was a spiritual guide, probably a novice master, for a time prior of his abbey, and he wrote abundantly in the area of spirituality.

The Four Degrees of Violent Love*:*

This is perhaps Richard's most innovative work.[3] For him, love makes a violent entrance and wrenches human beings as it progresses through its different stages. A love orientated towards what is less than God is not only wrenching but also destructive. If love is directed to God, this wrenching is good and wholesome, because it means being taken out of one's false self and transformed as much as possible in God. Richard's first three degrees have a clear affinity with purgation, illumination and union. The fourth, returning to the world as a vehicle of God's own compassion, is Richard's creative contribution to our understanding of the spiritual journey.

This diagrammatic presentation traces in an abbreviated and somewhat adapted form the gist of Richard's teaching on how to progress through these four degrees. The rows represent various aspects of this progression as described by Richard, and the columns each of the four degrees.

[2] Priests in the Society of Jesus, founded in the sixteenth century, were clerks regular: apostolic religious without the obligation of praying the office in common. Would this shared apostolic bent have something to do with the four stage pattern espoused by both Ignatius and Richard? Even without dependence of Ignatius on Richard, they may well have developed their four stages in a parallel response to a similar context.

[3] Richard of St Victor, *On the Four Degrees of Violent Love*, translated by Andrew B. Kraebel, in *On Love, A Selection of Works of Hugh, Adam, Achard, Richard, and Godfrey of St Victor*, edited by Hugh Feiss (Brepols: Turnhout, 2011). Other spiritual works from his pen are widely read and appreciated, such as his *Benjamin Major* (or *The Mystical Ark*) and *Benjamin Minor* (or *The Twelve Patriarchs*), translated in the Library of Christian Classics (Mahwah: Paulist, 1979). A lesser-known work, the *Edict of Alexander*, translated by J.-M. Laporte, is available at http://orientations.jesuits.ca/rsv%20edict.pdf. In these works we find the basis of a detailed approach to growth in the spiritual life and in contemplation. Richard, however, was a pioneering author. He came up with breathtaking vistas, but they can't be easily woven together in a totally coherent and seamless whole.

The Self ...	**Degree One Purgation**	**Degree Two Illumination**	**Degree Three Union**	**Degree Four Compassion**
In Movement	I return to myself	I rise above myself and journey towards God	I am totally carried and absorbed into God	I go out of myself, lower myself for the sake of God
At Prayer	I enter in meditation	I rise in contemplation	I am introduced into jubilation (ecstasy)	I go out in compassion
Thirsting	my restless soul thirsts for God	I thirst to journey towards God	I thirst to be absorbed into God	I thirst as God thirsts
In Transformation	I am elevated to my true self	I am elevated to God	I am transformed into the form of God: *death of the old self*	I am transformed into the form of the servant: *resurrection of the new self*
In Outpouring	I experience sweetness but still lack clarity	I am illuminated and find clarity	I am absorbed into God and liquefied	I pour myself out to others in service
In Relationship	engagement	marriage	intercourse	pregnancy/ children

The Self in Movement. This depicts the dynamic movement of persons going through the process of love's violent entry. The first step is entering into oneself, reflecting on oneself and one's situation, in imitation of the prodigal son as he began his process of return to his father and his conversion (Luke 15:17 following). Then one journeys towards God, which is a good description of the lengthy process of sanctification and illumination. In the state of union human beings are forgetful of self, and absorbed into God to the extent possible in this earthly existence.

But this is not the final state. One leaves the ecstasy of whatever experience of union one has received, goes out of oneself and lowers oneself in compassionate service of others.

The Self at Prayer. The second row gives us Richard's sense of the types of prayer that characterize each degree.[4] The first is meditative prayer, in which the mind moves in disciplined and fruitful reflection, akin to the type of prayer for which Ignatius calls in the First Week of the Exercises. The second is contemplative prayer, in which the mind rests in a penetrating and synoptic gaze, akin to the desired outcome of the prayer of imagination proposed by Ignatius for the Second Week.[5] In the third degree one is totally drawn out of oneself into God for periods of ecstasy.[6] In the fourth degree, one goes out in compassion, a compassion which returns to the hurly-burly of daily existence. It is akin to the descent, beckoned by Jesus, from the mount of transfiguration, or that, described by Plato, into the cave to help liberate those still caught up in shadows. This compassion is not a form of distraction but is grounded in the union with God which pertains to the third degree and continues it. Caught up in God, I cannot help but be caught up in God's compassion, and I am drawn to the areas of concern that God points out to me. There are outstanding examples of mystics who entered into periods of intense activity, with profound effects on the life of the Church, such as St Bernard of Clairvaux, St Catherine of Siena and St Ignatius of Loyola.

The Thirsting Self. Now we focus on the scriptural theme of thirst (to be found, for example, in Psalm 42), but whereas in the first three degrees one thirsts for God, in the fourth degree one begins to thirst as God thirsts, in compassion for broken creation and sinful humanity which need healing. When Jesus says 'I thirst' on the cross he demonstrates

[4] Richard suggests a clear classification of the types of prayer in *Mystical Ark*, 1.3. Prior to prayer there is the unfocused to and fro of consciousness, without labour and without fruit; meditation entails the effort of disciplined thought, with labour and with fruit; finally contemplation, the gift of a penetrating gaze, is without labour but bears much fruit. Later he suggests that ultimately contemplation draws the mind out of itself in a form of alienation (5.2).

[5] This outcome is most clearly expressed in Exx 254, where Ignatius instructs retreatants to remain where they have found and continue to find fruit, even for the whole hour of prayer. There is also the practice of revisiting key moments of consolation in earlier prayer, and that of applying the senses. Times of consolation are very precious, and often bring a deep simplification to the overall prayer experience.

[6] Reaching total and unending ecstasy in the presence of God would be definitive salvation, which occurs after death. Persons in the third degree of union in this life have an affinity for unitive prayer, can enter into it with relative ease and live more and more in the presence of God, but they must still at times focus on their human life and its needs. Many describe periodic periods of inner darkness which test them and bring them to an even deeper union, a more profound ecstasy.

that God really thirsts for us. In an Ignatian vein, rather than labouring to find God, in this fourth degree I allow God to labour through me, and I share in God's labour, God's thirst.

The Self in Transformation. In the last two degrees, Richard focuses on the death and resurrection of Christ:

> … who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form …. (Philippians 2:6–7)

Humans who have reached the third degree, that of union, find themselves absorbed into God, and in that sense they die to their own selves and are found in the form of God. But just as Jesus did not cling to the form of God, choosing to live in our world of struggle, violence and ambiguity, so too those who reach a felt union with God are invited to go beyond it in self-emptying, compassion and servanthood. In doing so they deeply and deliberately assume their messy human selves in a messy human situation, transformed by God's own compassion. God is no longer simply seen as object of their desire. God dwells in them and in them desires salvation for every human being. Union is not forsaken but lived out in a new way.

The Self in Outpouring. Here the last two degrees use another image to point to the same reality. Before I can be poured out in service (an image closely connected with the emptying out of the Philippians text) I must be liquefied. The solid self that I have built to assert and defend myself needs to be dissolved (third degree), so that I might pour myself out in selfless service (fourth degree), fitting into a mould of God's making.

The Self in Relationship. A clear progression can be seen in the area of marriage and conjugal love. Notable is the passage from ecstatic union in intercourse to the many interruptions and exhaustion experienced in raising children, to which it can lead. Similarly, in Richard's work on the Trinity, the love between two persons is incomplete: it must lead into the complexities of welcoming another or others into the circle, thus forming a community.[7]

[7] See Richard of St Victor, *On the Trinity*, 3.15, translated by Christopher P. Evans, in *Trinity and Creation: A Selection of Works of Hugh, Richard and Adam of St Victor*, edited by Boyd Taylor Coolman and Dale M. Coulter (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010).

Richard of St Victor, from the **Nuremberg Chronicle***, 1493*

The four degrees of violent love are not Richard's only contribution to the understanding of spiritual progress. An earlier work, *The Edict of Alexander*, adheres to the classical three stages, which he describes using the image of the three major liturgical processions that punctuate the life of his abbey: for the feasts of the Purification, of Palm Sunday and of the Ascension. These stages are not monoliths. Richard's description of them is dynamic, rich and colourful. The first stage begins with cleansing our iniquity, and moves on to overcoming our negligences (4.1). The second stage begins with eagerness for perfection, but this must be fulfilled in perseverance (3.6). In the third stage he develops a movement towards prophecy in some who enjoy union (3.11), which adumbrates the fourth of his degrees of violent love. The image this suggests is not that of steps with clear transitions and sharp ascents, but a melding of degrees and of gradual ascents from one to the next.

Richard within the Tradition: A Broader Perspective

The Apostle Paul offers a clear antecedent to Richard's transition from absorption into God (the third degree of violent love) to compassion for the world (the fourth degree). The key passage is Philippians 1:23–24: 'I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ …. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you.'[8] The liquefaction to which Richard alludes in his third degree is clearly evoked in this passage with the term 'be dissolved'. To be totally absorbed into Christ is Paul's deepest desire, but even stronger is his readiness to carry on his ministry in the earthly state as long as that is God's will for him. Another text which

[8] 'Be dissolved' here is a literal translation of 'cupio dissolvi' in the Vulgate, familiar to Richard. NRSV has 'depart'.

indicates his readiness to depart from warm intimacy with God is found in Romans 9:3: 'for I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people'. Thus Richard's fourth degree has good biblical foundations.

The Victorine canons regular professed a life of both contemplation and action. In their case contemplation was to issue in preaching and teaching. Later in the thirteenth century Franciscans and Dominicans followed a similar pattern, but in a more itinerant mode. Thomas Aquinas, the eminent theologian of the early Dominicans, vindicated their style of religious observance when he wrote, in *De caritate,* a passage which strikingly mirrors Richard's movement beyond contemplation to compassion:

> We can consider three degrees in charity: (1) There are some who freely, or without great vexation, are separated from the leisure of divine contemplation so that they are concerned with earthly affairs, and in these persons there appears to be either no charity or very little. (2) Some, however, so delight in the leisure of divine contemplation that they do not want to turn away from it even to apply their service of God to the salvation of their fellow human beings. (3) The highest degree, the third, applies to those who rise to the heights of charity so that even as they advance in divine contemplation, although they are very much delighted with it, they serve God in order to save their fellow human beings. This is the perfection meant by St Paul: '*I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ … but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you*' (Philippians 1:23–24) …. The perfection of love for a worthy person whom one tries to serve is to abstain from the pleasure of being in the friend's presence for the sake of that friend. So, according to that friendship, the one who would absent himself from a friend for the friend's sake would love the friend more that one who would not be ready to depart from the presence of that friend even for that friend's sake.[9]

The Four Weeks of Ignatius

How do Ignatius' four Weeks connect with the traditional three ways? Ignatius refers only to the purgative and illuminative ways, connecting them with the First and the Second Week respectively (Exx 10). The

[9] *De caritate*, 11.6. The text is from the disputed question *On Charity*, translated by Lottie H. Kendzierski (Milwaukee: Marquette U, 1960). In his writing Aquinas does not allude to Richard's four degrees.

Official Directory of the Exercises published in 1599 extends the illuminative way to the Third Week and describes the Fourth Week as unitive.[10] In Gaston Fessard's *Dialectique des Exercises Spirituels de Saint Ignace* each way plays a key role in two successive Weeks: the purgative way in both First and Second Weeks, the illuminative in both Second and Third, the unitive in both Third and Fourth.[11] We will follow Fessard's structure, but enriched by Richard's description of his third and fourth degrees.

Richard reflected more broadly on patterns of spiritual progress, whereas Ignatius chose a narrower focus, that of a retreat experience designed to help exercitants make a well-ordered election: a grace-inspired decision on how they are to serve the Lord in his mission. For Fessard this election is the pivotal point of the Exercises. Indeed at the heart of the Exercises are discovering and implementing the role that God uniquely desires for each one of us. But in the background there is an underlying spiritual dynamic similar to that developed by Richard.

The Dynamic of the Four Weeks

The integration of the three ways and the four Weeks involves some overlapping: the First Week is purgative, the Second both purgative and illuminative, the Third both illuminative and unitive, the Fourth unitive. This adds a complexity to each of the three ways which, as we have seen, Richard of Saint Victor explored in his earlier *Edict of Alexander*.

First Week: To Reform What Is Deformed. The First Week of the Exercises, as Ignatius himself indicates, is for beginners and is wholly purgative. Exercitants ponder the gravity of sin, enter into themselves to examine their consciences, acknowledge their own role in the dynamic of sin, and seek forgiveness from God. Acutely conscious of being forgiven sinners, they are ready to respond to whatever God wants of them. They may be in need of a profound conversion, of freedom from the disordered attachments which have enticed them away from God; or they may want to re-enter the space of conversion so as to give their spiritual life a greater impetus. They come with what is deformed in their selves, and open themselves to the grace of reformation.

[10] Dir 43:39.

[11] Fessard, *Dialectique des Exercises Spirituels de Saint Ignace de Loyola*, volume 1, 214–221, summarised in figure 10 (insert at the back of the book). As we have seen, Richard of St Victor offers a foretaste of this overlapping pattern in his *Edict of Alexander* (see above, 78).

Second Week: To Conform What Is Reformed. The Second Week of the Exercises, as Ignatius suggests, is linked to the illuminative way. Having undergone an experience of reformation in the First Week, exercitants are now ready to build on their conversion and to seek greater conformity to Christ as they grow in virtuous activity. More particularly, since they have received forgiveness without any merit of their own, how can they return God's grace by a life of service in accord with God's will? What concrete choice do they need to make, in accord with God's will for them, of a state of life, of a form of service, of a way to better either or both? Making this choice, this election, will be their response. The example given by Christ in his earthly life is the model they contemplate, and this model illumines their path forward.

Yet, while illumination begins in this Week, the purgative way continues. The first week conversion of the heart expands to the psyche, as the exercitants enter into contact with the earthly life and ministry of Jesus and find the courage to uncover and struggle against all the various manifestations and incitations of sin that remain within them. This expansion can be seen in the Two Standards, or in comparing the rules for discernment in the First and the Second Weeks. Evil in the First Week is blatant. In the Second it is insidious, introducing an often subtle disorder into our way of pursuing an objective which in itself is good, a disorder which gradually distances us from God's grace.

Third Week: To Confirm What Is Conformed. The Third Week of the Exercises moves exercitants to confirm whatever choice they have made in the Second Week, that it might be not just an empty choice for the moment but a lifelong commitment like that of Jesus, who chose a path in his ministry of faithful witness to the truth—a choice which led him to his passion and death. To implement any decision regarding the course of our lives requires patience and perseverance, the ability to meet and to surmount obstacles and temptations, and readiness to give up our lives. In this week the model proposed for us is the passion and death of Jesus. Thus it is easy to grasp why the 1599 Official Directory states that the illuminative way continues in the Third Week. Our path is illumined by Christ's example not only in what choice we make but also in how we live it out to the end.

At the same time this Week marks the emergence of the unitive way. Ignatius' pressing call is to unite ourselves with Christ in his passion, to ask for sorrow with Christ in sorrow, anguish with Christ in

anguish (Exx 203).[12] Just as Christ's divinity hides itself in his passion and death (Exx 196), so too—and this is a point made by Richard—we must allow our humanity to hide itself, to be liquefied, absorbed into God's love, a love most fully manifest in His death for us on the cross. This is union at its most intimate.

Fourth Week: To Transform What Is Confirmed. The Fourth Week of the Exercises moves exercitants to the other side of the paschal mystery. As with Christ's sorrow in the Third Week, now in the Fourth they are invited to share Christ's joy in rising from the dead, to move from contemplating how the divinity hides itself to how it manifests itself (Exx 221, 223). This parallelism shows how the unitive movement continues in the Fourth Week.

There is, however, a further instruction in the Fourth Week (Exx 224) with no counterpart in the Third: 'Consider the office of consoler that Christ our Lord exercises, and compare it with the way in which friends are wont to console each other'. Consolation for Ignatius is a broad term: it is the gift of a grace uniquely suited to its recipient: enlightenment, affective experience, effective decision in accord with God's will, and/or endurance to the end. We note in the assigned contemplations of the Fourth Week that the risen Christ consoles his disciples not only in helping them with their grief and discouragement, but in bringing them to the point where they are able to continue his mission in his absence. His compassion for them is broad and deep, and in effect teaches them how to have compassion for those to whom they will be sent.

The power of the resurrection, the gift of consolation, and the mission of compassion and consolation are integral to each other. For Richard union blossoms into compassion; for Ignatius it blossoms into mission. In both cases there is a re-entry into the messiness of the world. In this way the election confirmed in the Third Week is transformed in the Fourth: it becomes subsumed into a vast movement in which God not only creates, but is present to creation, and labours to bring it to its fulfilment. The understanding of this transformation is enhanced in the

[12] Directors of the Exercises often notice a shift in their retreatants from Second to Third Week. The imaginative use of the five senses in the Second Week is usually more complex and the accounts given by directees longer, but as one moves into the Third Week the prayer may become simpler. Sights and sounds are less prominent and spiritual taste and fragrance predominate. Just being there takes less time to describe. Indeed in both Second and Third Weeks the rule expressed in Exx 254 is very helpful. If retreatants find the Lord at a certain moment in their prayer, they are to stay there rather than continue with what they had planned earlier. These are the precious periods of contemplative fruit which require no concomitant effort. Thus the transition from meditation to more contemplative and unitive prayer is gradual.

Contemplation to Attain Love, which immediately follows the Fourth Week and is intimately connected with it. Our chosen state of life, ministry, form of service, is transformed in that we recognise that ultimately it is not we who act, but Christ who acts through us. He is present, acting, even toiling in all those who, with him, are builders of God's reign.

A Path of Progress

What overall lessons can one learn from reflecting on the three ways of spiritual progress (an earlier but perduring tradition), the four degrees (Richard), and the four weeks (Ignatius)?

All three patterns delineate a path of progress. This progress, however, can be interpreted in an unhelpful way, more like going up the steps of a staircase and less like a gradual ascent up an incline. Moving from one degree (or Week) to the next can be, but is not usually, like an instantaneous jolt. The degrees blend into one another, and this is helped by the overlapping, as we have seen, between the three ways and the four Weeks. The ways, degrees and Weeks are separated, but not by walls of separation but by osmotic membranes.

Ignatius offers us an important clue to a deeper understanding of all three patterns. The pattern of weeks that he offers us in his *Spiritual Exercises* comes out of careful reflections and notes on his own experience of what usually worked in his many spiritual encounters. Yes, the Spirit is at work in his encounters and subsequent reflections, but his book is not a heavenly command to be followed to the letter, a straitjacket for both director and directee. Based on his experiences, it offers a starting point for directors, a default option, allowing great freedom because they must pay close attention to how the Spirit leads them and each one of their directees. The ultimate directive is for the director to get out of the way and let the Spirit take over, at times in ways that go beyond the patterns carefully delineated by Ignatius. In current French language usage, one does not so much direct as accompany the Exercises. Likewise, Richard's degrees and the traditional three ways are but broad but helpful indications of how one might progress towards fulfilment in God. Ultimately God sets the pattern, unique for each human person.

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'EVERY INCREASE IN HOPE, FAITH, AND CHARITY'

Understanding Ignatian Consolation

Kevin Leidich

THE TERM 'CONSOLATION' describes the essence of Ignatius Loyola's spiritual experience. Consolation is the aim and purpose of God's labour in each person's life. Consolation also expresses the heart of our spiritual desires. Among the writings of Ignatius, his most familiar description of consolation is found in rule three concerning 'Rules for the Discernment of Spirits more suitable for the First Week of *The Spiritual Exercises*'. Rule three assists one 'to perceive and understand to some extent the various movements produced in the soul' (Exx 313). Ignatius explains:

> By [this kind of] consolation I mean that which occurs when some interior motion is caused within the soul through which it comes to be inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord. 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. Similarly, this consolation is experienced when the soul sheds tears which move it to love for its Lord—whether they are tears of grief for its own sins, or about the Passion of Christ our Lord, or about other matters directly ordered to his service and praise. Finally, under the word consolation I include every increase in hope, faith, and charity, and every interior joy which calls and attracts one toward heavenly things and to the salvation of one's soul, by bringing it tranquility and peace in its Creator and Lord. (Exx 316)

This Ignatian writing on consolation seems straightforward, yet the interpretation of its application has caused much confusion. As Brian McDermott has argued,

> A review of articles and books on Ignatian discernment in English since the Second Vatican Council reveals a great deal of disagreement

> about Ignatius' understanding of two fundamental topics: the nature of spiritual consolation and the role that spiritual consolation plays in the second time of election.[1]

This disagreement among writers is a source of confusion among those attracted to the Spiritual Exercises, from individuals reading about Ignatian spirituality for the first time to those training to be spiritual directors.

Spiritual and Non-Spiritual Consolation

One source of this confusion, I believe, results from the judgment that Ignatius had a conscious intention to distinguish 'consolation' from 'spiritual consolation'. For example, Timothy Gallagher writes, 'Ignatius employs the word consolation according to the common understanding of the word: something happy, uplifting, which instills joy and gives peace'. Gallagher names the experience of this common understanding 'non-spiritual consolation', which is essentially perceived as a feeling. However, he says,

> … certain movements among the many that stir in our hearts have special significance for our life of faith and our pursuit of God's will …. In an identical way Ignatius here speaks of *spiritual* consolation: happy, uplifting movement of the heart (and so, 'consolation') directly impacting our life of faith and the following of God's will (and so, 'spiritual').[2]

In the application of this twofold interpretation of the Ignatian term, one may have great difficulty in distinguishing 'spiritual consolation' from 'non-spiritual consolation'.

Jules Toner, in his seminal work, *A Commentary on St Ignatius' Rules for the Discernment of Spirits*, expands upon the distinction between 'non-spiritual' and 'spiritual consolation' in two key paragraphs:

> In our own lives, we sometimes experience consolations that are to us as obviously spiritual as the consolations experienced by those to whom Christ appeared after the Resurrection. But with many of our consolations it is not that clear. A number of factors conspire in leading us to uncertainty or error. On the side of the one

[1] Brian O. McDermott, 'Spiritual Consolation and Its Role in the Second Time of Election', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 50/4 (2018), 1.
[2] Timothy Gallagher, *The Discernment of Spirits: An Ignatian Guide for Everyday Living* (New York: Crossroad, 2005), 49.

> discerning, there may be a lack of sufficient learning and experience, carelessness and precipitousness in reaching a judgment. On the side of the consolation itself, there may be the superficial similarities of spiritual with non-spiritual consolation, or the simultaneity and even commingling of spiritual and non-spiritual consolation in the experience, or in the commingling of spiritual consolation with desolation, whether spiritual or non-spiritual ….
>
> When reading the illustrations of discernment between spiritual and non-spiritual consolation, some readers may wonder why all this apparently excessive refinement is necessary. What difference does it make so long as the non-spiritual consolation is not sinful? After one has seen enough people make important and (seemingly, at least) wrong decisions because they thought that they were prompted by the Holy Spirit when they were only experiencing a natural exhilaration at doing their own thing, one begins to prize care and accuracy and to shudder at cavalier discernment of spirits.[3]

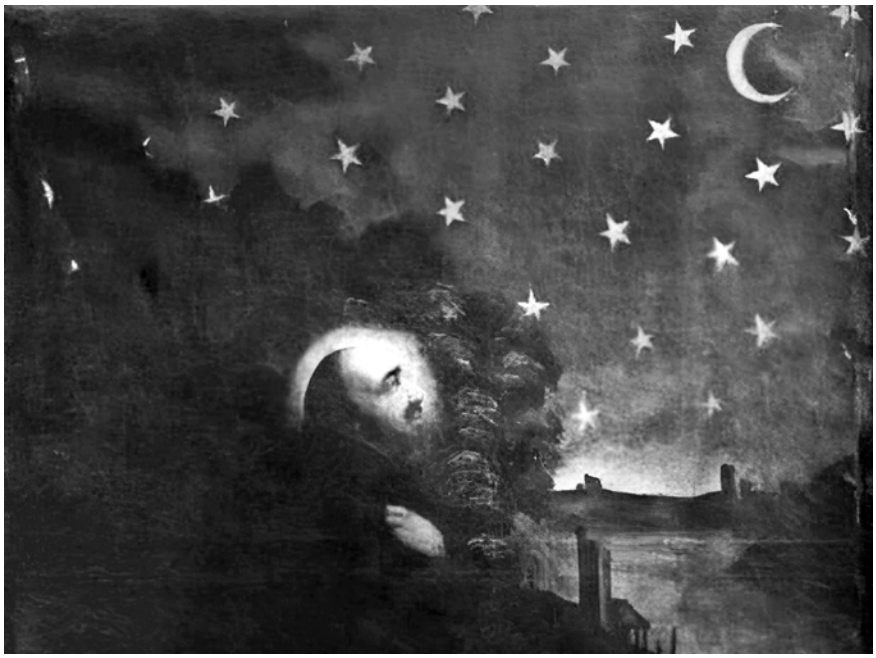
Indeed, the person engaged in discernment needs to be careful to have the needed dispositions of spiritual freedom, patience and generosity. The person must also have access to whatever information is necessary for a good and accurate discernment. But to what extent does the analysis need to be 'refined'? Suppose one is characterized by a 'lack of sufficient learning and experience'. In this case, does God withhold the graces of discernment and divine communication from that person?

As part of his explanation for these distinctions within the experience of consolation, Toner employs an example from the *Autobiography* of Ignatius as he reflects upon his growing spiritual awareness immediately after his conversion and long recovery from his wounds:

> And the greatest consolation he used to receive was to look at the sky and the stars, which he did often and for a long time, because with this he used to feel in himself a great impetus towards serving Our Lord. (n. 11)

In citing the example of Ignatius' 'greatest consolation', one wonders at what moment his 'non-spiritual consolation' in taking in the immensity and beauty of the stars became an experience of 'spiritual consolation' for him? At what point did Ignatius possess a sufficient intentionality of faith for the action of stargazing and its accompanying feelings to

[3] Jules Toner, *A Commentary on St Ignatius' Rules for the Discernment of Spirits* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1982), 11, 116.



Ignatius gazing at the stars, artist unknown

become 'spiritually consoling'? Making these distinctions within this simple experience of faith shows that Toner's interpretation, with its overemphasis on intentionality, can lead to uncertainty, complexity and perhaps needless scrupulosity.

Many commentators have subsequently followed Toner's line of thought in distinguishing 'consolation' from 'spiritual consolation'. But this distinction presents the experience of consolation as too complicated, and gives the impression that only an expert can accurately analyze the origins, direction and type of consolation with any accuracy. Those who are introduced to Ignatian spirituality through reading, conversation or spiritual direction may be discouraged by the complexity of its categories. Some writers have made subtle distinctions among consolation, non-spiritual consolation, anti-spiritual consolation, authentic spiritual consolation, non-authentic spiritual consolation and so forth.[4] Such a proliferation of categories complicates the language and process of spiritual direction, and distracts from identifying with clarity the foundational experience of God.

[4] McDermott, 'Spiritual Consolation and Its Role in the Second Time of Election', 20 note 37; and 48.

Ignatius did not desire this confusion, for God's communication through the language of love must be accessible to all. As Ignatius states in his Introductory Explanations to the *Spiritual Exercises*, we must 'allow the Creator to deal immediately with the creature and the creature with its Creator and Lord' (Exx 15). Only in the Second Week Rules for the Discernment of Spirits does Ignatius make any differentiation in the experience of consolation when he distinguishes 'consolation with cause' and 'consolation without cause' (Exx 330 and 336). But at the essence of both these categories is the experience of movement towards 'every increase of faith, hope, and charity'. In the whole text of the *Spiritual Exercises*, the phrase 'spiritual consolation' is found only three times, and all three instances are contained in the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits, twice in the rules pertaining to the First Week and once in the rules for the Second Week. The terms 'consolation' or 'consolations' occur 24 times in the entire *Spiritual Exercises*, of which 11 are in the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits (Exx 315–336).

Always a Gift from God

Michael Ivens has interpreted the Ignatian term 'consolation' in a simpler way which, I believe, is more faithful to the meaning intended by Ignatius. 'Consolation and desolation as understood in the *Exercises* are by definition "spiritual", and this qualification, though easily misunderstood, is crucial to the understanding of both experiences.'[5] This is consistent with the fourth point of the Contemplation to Attain Love: 'I will consider how all good things and gifts descend from above' (Exx 237). As Ivens comments, 'one is led to contemplate the attributes of God himself as the all-powerful, kind, pitiful and merciful Source not only of these particular gifts but of all good things'. These words provide an accurate understanding of rule three, where Ignatius explains consolation as 'that which occurs when some interior motion is caused within the soul through which it comes to be inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord' (Exx 316). Every positive and life-giving encounter or experience has the ability to point us to God, and hence each of these is 'spiritual', leading us to consolation which is always a gift from God. Hence, when Ignatius gazed at the stars, in his gratitude and wonder he was moving to a greater sense of consolation.

[5] Michael Ivens, *Keeping in Touch*, edited by Joseph A. Munitiz (Leominster: Gracewing, 2007), 108, 177.

Let us test this insight of Michael Ivens according to the patterns we detect in later Ignatian writings. Do these later Ignatian documents make a distinction between 'non-spiritual consolation' and 'spiritual consolation'? Do the later Ignatian sources, such as his letters, his dictated *Autobiography*, and his *Autograph Directory* along with other pre-1600 Directories, instruct us about the different types of consolation, or is his use of 'spiritual' merely a descriptive and arbitrary adjective? If Ignatius intends to make a distinction between non-spiritual consolation and spiritual consolation, then both of these terms must be clearly prominent in his later significant writings and in his advice to others.

The Ignatian Sources

In the *Autograph Directory*, a set of notes that have been preserved in copies of an original in Ignatius' own handwriting, an extensive instruction on 'consolation' is found in the Directory for the Elections:

> Among the three modes (times) of making an election, if God does not move him in the first he ought to dwell on the second, that of recognising his vocation by the experience of consolations and desolations. Then, as he continues with his meditations on Christ our Lord, he should examine, when he finds himself in consolation, in which direction God is moving him; similarly in desolation. A full explanation should be given of what consolation is; i.e., spiritual joy, love, hope for things above, tears, and every interior movement which leaves the soul consoled in our Lord. The opposite of this is desolation: sadness, lack of confidence, lack of love, dryness, and so on. (Dir 1:9)

Note that 'consolation' is defined here as 'every interior movement which leaves the soul consoled by the Lord'. This movement is clearly initiated by the Lord, and is not modified by the adjective 'spiritual'. Indeed, within the early directories of Ignatius, those of his contemporary Jesuits, and the official directory of 1599, 'consolation' is mentioned 72 times, and in only five of these instances is it modified by the adjective 'spiritual'.[6]

[6] Dir 1:5, 1:11 and 1:18; Dir 4:9 and 4:16; Dir 10:49; Dir 12:27; Dir 13:9; Dir 15:125; Dir 16:6; Dir 17:92; Dir 18:100; Dir 20:34, 20:35, 20:81–82 and 20:85; Dir 23:18, 23:21, 23:41, 23:85, 23:87 and 23:141; Dir 24:10 and 24:23; Dir 25:29; Dir 26:8, 26:16, 26:68, 26:74–75; Dir 27:8; Dir 29:19 and 29:35; Dir 31:73 and 31:120–122; Dir 32:17, 32:71, 32:112 and 32:129–130; Dir 43:26, 43:55–56, 43:61, 43:127, 43:157, 43:191–192, 43:194, 43:206, 43:220 and 43:228; Dir, appendix 2, 2:2. In all these documents, the term 'spiritual consolation' appears only five times: Dir 20:85 and 20:9; Dir 20bis:12 (first point); and Dir 43:17 and 43:173.

How often and in what manner does Ignatius employ 'consolation' in another primary document, his *Autobiography*, which he dictated in the mid-1550s? In describing his most significant spiritual experiences, does Ignatius make a distinction between 'consolation' and 'spiritual consolation'? In fact, despite giving many accounts of consolations that were important and significant for him, only twice does Ignatius use the term 'spiritual consolation'. In 1556, while very ill, 'thinking about death at this time he had such great joy and such great spiritual consolation at being due to die, that he was melting totally into tears' (n.33). And at the end of his account, Ignatius recounts his time giving the Exercises at Monte Cassino, 'during which he once saw Bachelor Hoces entering heaven, and at this had great tears and great spiritual consolation' (n.98). It is clear that in recounting his spiritual progress throughout his *Autobiography*, Ignatius does not make a systematic distinction between 'consolation' and 'spiritual consolation'.

In the spring of 1544, while discerning certain questions pertaining to the composition of the Jesuit *Constitutions*, Ignatius recorded the movements of his daily prayer in his Spiritual Diary. Ignatius may have kept other records of his daily prayer over the years. But the 1544 segment of the Spiritual Diary is the only one that has survived. In it, the term 'consolation' is mentioned six times. In one entry, of 17 February, Ignatius records a 'special consolation'. Nevertheless, the term 'spiritual consolation' does not appear at all in this document, which is composed in Ignatius' own handwriting.

Among the seven thousand examples of correspondence written or dictated by Ignatius, his letter of 18 June 1536 to Sister Teresa Rejadell contains a well-known commentary on the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits and a discussion of scruples. In this letter, 'consolation' is mentioned nine times. Ignatius reminds Sister Teresa that the first weapon of the enemy is to fail 'to remind us of the great comfort and consolation which Our Lord is wont to give to such souls'. Elsewhere in the letter, consolation is described as 'interior' and 'divine', but most references lack any modifying adjective.[7] In helping us identify and overcome the work of the enemy, the presumption is that all consolation is 'spiritual', although Ignatius does not employ this term in this letter.

[7] Ignatius of Loyola to Teresa Rejadell, 18 June 1536 , in *Letters of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, translated by William J. Young (Chicago: Loyola U, 1959), 19, 21.

The Language of Love

In the mid 1970s, Michael J. Buckley wrote a seminal article on Rules for the Discernment of Spirits for *The Way*. His insights reinforce the conclusions of Michael Ivens concerning the nature of consolation and how Ignatius consistently used this term. In discussing the rules for the First Week, Buckley notes that consolation and desolation,

> … are states of affectivity, 'an interior motion', defined by the direction of the movement. Consolation is any interior movement of emotionality, feeling, or sensibility whose term is God—a man is drawn or driven to God. The primary instance of such an experience is that of love …. Desolation is precisely the opposite, that is, any movement of emotionality or sensibility whose term is evil.[8]

Buckley warns that the terms *consolation* and *desolation* cannot be reduced to a feeling. Colloquial English views feelings as the essence of the experience of consolation and desolation. But the heart of the Ignatian use of these terms is *movement*, not feeling.

> In no sense does consolation merge with pleasure and desolation with pain. They are obvious states of affectivity, but they are not denoted by their sensible or even spiritual enjoyment, but by the direction, by their terminus.[9]

In Buckley's well-known example, 'men with their arms locked, singing bawdy songs on their way to a local whorehouse are in desolation for Ignatius: "any movement to base and earthly things"'.[10] Some commentators have interpreted the experience of these men differently, judging that these men are 'more likely experiencing non- or anti-spiritual consolation'.[11] But such language and interpretation cloud the issue by asserting that feelings are part of the essence of consolation and desolation, rather than the direction or terminus of the experience.

Hidden in the background within the consideration of consolation and discernment is the topic of 'confirmation'. The presumption is that God's confirmation is contained within the initial experience of consolation and discernment. However, in the 1520s, when first composing the

[8] Michael J. Buckley, 'The Structure of the Rules for Discernment of Spirits', *The Way Supplement*, 20 (Autumn 1973), 28–29.
[9] Buckley, 'Structure of the Rules for Discernment of Spirits', 29.
[10] Buckley, 'Structure of the Rules for Discernment of Spirits', 29.
[11] McDermott, 'Spiritual Consolation and Its Role in the Second Time of Election', 20.

Spiritual Exercises with its Rules for Discernment of Spirits, Ignatius had not yet experienced his foundational graces of confirmation. He described the process and criteria for confirmation in his *Autobiography* years later in the mid 1550s, after sufficient reflection on his life. His chief experience of God's confirmation occurred during a contemplative prayer experience at the La Storta Chapel outside Rome in 1537 (*Autobiography*, n.96). The quest for 'confirmation by God' is a major theme underlying his *Autobiography* since the grace of confirmation was experienced and identified by Ignatius only later in life.[12]

Another word that becomes increasingly prominent in Ignatius' later writings is 'devotion'. It is found only four times in the *Spiritual Exercises*. However, Ignatius uses it frequently in the *Autobiography*, the Spiritual Diary and the Jesuit *Constitutions*. Though not equivalent to 'consolation', 'Devotion is an aspect of consolation, an experience we have no power on our side to arouse or sustain and which we must not put down to our own account'. To 'find devotion' is to 'find what I want', in other words, an increase of hope, faith and love.[13] Devotion is the catalyst that points the individual to consolation. Examples may include an object, such as a work of art; a place, such as a shrine; a person, such as a saint; a style of prayer, such as contemplation or the rosary; or an event, such as a pilgrimage.

All of these examples point one to deeper consolation. 'Thus in prayer one should "rest until satisfied" at the point where one has found devotion'. Any experience, encounter, or memory that 'facilitates finding God' forms the essence of devotion.[14] Ignatius describes what he meant by devotion in his summary of his spirituality as recorded in the *Autobiography*. He was,

> … always growing in devotion, i.e. in facility in finding God, and now more than ever in his whole life. And every time and hour he wanted to find God, he found him. And that now too he had visions often, especially those which have been talked about above, when he saw Christ as a sun. This often used to happen as he was going along talking about important things, and that would make him arrive at assurance. (n.99)

[12] See Kevin Leidich, '"The Thing Has Been of God": Ignatius' Experience of God's Confirmation in His Autobiography', *The Way*, 55/2 (April 2016).
[13] Ivens, *Keeping in Touch*, 124.
[14] Ivens, *Keeping in Touch*, 124.

Devotion is the result of God's activity, always labouring to move us towards deeper hope, faith and love.

The language of God is always the language of love, of consolation. God communicates clearly in ways that the person addressed is able to comprehend. God adapts to us, to our capacity, our language (Exx 15). In Ignatius' consistent usage of the term, all consolation is by essence spiritual. As Ignatius writes in the fourth point of the Contemplation to Attain Love,

> All good things and gifts descend from above; for example, my limited power from the Supreme and Infinite Power above; and so of justice, goodness, piety, mercy and so forth—just as the rays come down from the sun, or the rains from their source (Exx 237).

Indeed, 'there is no created thing on the face of the earth that we can love in itself, but we love it only in the Creator of all things' (Exx 316).

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A HIGHER POWER

Revisiting the Parallels between the Spiritual Exercises and the Twelve Steps

Anonymous

BEFORE THE PANDEMIC, attending a weekly Alcoholics Anonymous meeting grounded me in my relationship with Jesus more than I had ever experienced in my life. I have done the thirty-day Spiritual Exercises, several silent Ignatian retreats, and multiple contemplative and charismatic spirituality workshops. However I never truly knew Christ, nor did I truly know Christ's love for me, until I made the decision to give up alcohol.

I was not a 'typical' addict or even a functioning alcoholic, but over time I used the bottle to self-medicate during times of stress, anger or anxiety. Alcohol was commonplace in my industry, and was the mode by which business at times got done. I never thought there was a 'problem'. Additionally I saw alcohol as a way to make friends and maintain relationships. I had friends who were regulars at bars, or I often met for a social drink. But after one Sunday of having too much, I decided to put down the bottle.

That Monday morning, I drove to work feeling very tired, very ashamed and very hopeless. However, during the drive I suddenly experienced an inflow of God's love for me. I felt that God was with me and that I had no reason to feel ashamed or unloved; in fact it was quite the opposite. I experienced God in that moment revealing to me that God loves me not in spite of my weakness, but partly because of it. On the Tuesday, I attended my first Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. There were several men, some younger and others much older, and overall they seemed pretty gruff. However they welcomed me like I was one of their own (and I was) and encouraged me to 'keep coming back'. And so I did, almost every week.

However gruff these members might have appeared to me, I heard some of the most pertinent and convincing words that I had ever encountered in a faith-sharing group—or the Jesuit novitiate. These members shared their deepest and truest selves, their brokenness and their desire to be whole, more than I had ever previously experienced. I better understood God's revelation to St Paul: 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness' (2 Corinthians 12:9).

I would like to reflect on my experience of Alcoholics Anonymous through the lens of the Ignatian Exercises. While this approach is not new, I believe my account may reinforce as well as provide further insight into the connections between the two. Ignatius regarded exercitants as loved sinners (Exx 71); this is precisely the disposition the alcoholic has when choosing to follow the Twelve Steps. Note that the Twelve Steps are not in perfect sequence with the Exercises: steps 4–11 correspond to the exercitant's prayer in the First Week of the Exercises. However, as Annotation 18 asserts, 'The Spiritual Exercises should be adapted to the disposition of the persons who desire to make them'—in this case, alcoholics.

The *Spiritual Exercises* begins with the First Principle and Foundation: 'human beings are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord' (Exx 23). Anything and anyone that diverts one from this purpose is a disordered attachment that needs to be overcome. For alcoholics, it is the bottle that prevents them from living according to this purpose. Both exercitants and alcoholics are seeking true freedom, which can only occur once such attachments have been renounced. While alcoholics following the Twelve Steps may name their Higher Power differently from exercitants, both believe in a Supreme Being who reflects a loving and merciful power greater than oneself.

Following the First Principle and Foundation, exercitants enter into the First Week of the Exercises: a reflection on sin. Alcoholics begins the first of the Twelve Steps by admitting powerlessness over the attachment to alcohol, resulting in life becoming unmanageable. Both exercitants and alcoholics receive a grace from God to see their individual brokenness in truth. In cooperating with this grace, both believe that only a Power greater than themselves can deliver them from this bondage (step 2). Exercitants and alcoholics both embrace the mercy from above, from the One who, as stated in the Principle and Foundation, created each one of us and calls us according to God's

purpose. The One who is greater than us also has a love that is greater than us, a love that is greater than our own love for ourselves.

Both exercitants and alcoholics accept the invitation from God, who loves them, enabling them to make a decision to turn their will and life over to the care of God (step 3). Exercitants, in particular, make this reflection between the First and the Second Week with the Call of the King meditation, saying 'yes' to the merciful lord and turning their lives over to him. Additionally exercitants reflect on their life choices in the Second Week through the Election (Exx 169). All forms of Election are rooted in the decision to turn one's life over to Jesus. For alcoholics the Election is sobriety, but they do not turn their lives over to a Higher Power solely for the sake of sobriety; rather they elect sobriety for the sake of God and living according to the purpose for which God created them.

Both exercitants and alcoholics make a searching and fearless moral inventory: exercitants through a General Examination of Conscience (Exx 32) and alcoholics through step 4. They are empowered by a loving God in this endeavour. Following the inventory, both exercitants and alcoholics admit to God and to themselves the exact nature of the wrongs they have done in prayer and meditation. Additionally exercitants admit these wrongs to another human being, a confessor or spiritual director, and alcoholics admit them to a sponsor. These actions correspond to step 5.

The goal of the Spiritual Exercises is transformation in Christ through the removal and renunciation of disordered attachments, freeing exercitants for spiritual transformation. Alcoholics are also seeking a

transformation that will enable them to be the person they were created to be, not the one ruled by alcohol. In order for such transformation to occur, not only is a reflection on past wrongs necessary but also a desire to have these shortcomings removed. These prayerful actions are reflective of steps 6 and 7.

For exercitants and alcoholics, the healing process includes reparation for past wrongs. Exercitants reflect in prayer on what the appropriate reparations are and consult their spiritual directors for confirmation. Alcoholics in step 8 makes a list of persons harmed and become willing to make amends to all of them—directly when possible, unless doing so would injure themselves or others (step 9). A discernment is made by alcoholics with their sponsors, both being empowered by their respective Higher Powers.

Transformation is not a one-time deal. For both exercitants and alcoholics, conversion is ongoing. The mantra for alcoholics is 'one day at a time'. Exercitants and alcoholics are called to continue to take personal inventory and promptly admit it when they are wrong (step 10). Exercitants engage in this process through the Daily Examen; alcoholics experience it in daily prayer and meditation. In conjunction, on a daily basis, both seek through prayer and meditation to improve conscious contact with God (however they understand God), praying only for knowledge of God's Will and the power to carry it out (step 11). Repetition and renewal are important practices in the Spiritual Exercises and in Alcoholics Anonymous.

The Twelfth Step in certain respects parallels the Exercises' Contemplation to Attain Divine Love (Exx 230). Both recognise the graces and blessings received by cooperating with Grace to seek freedom and transformation, and, on reflecting upon these graces and blessings, desire to offer a response to God in return. Both exercitants and alcoholics give themselves to God and to neighbour. Exercitants desire to share with others the Good News and graces received from the Exercises; alcoholics demonstrate gratitude for their spiritual awakening by carrying this message to other alcoholics and practising its principles in all their affairs. Both exercitants and alcoholics are on a new path of transformation and discipleship; moreover they are messengers of the Good News they have received. They are wounded healers, recognising that, as loved sinners, they are called to live in and share with others the love they have gratuitously received from above.

The final correlation between the Exercises and Alcoholics Anonymous for me relates to my experience of deep and immediate love following my decision to put down the bottle. Ignatius would refer to this experience as consolation without a preceding cause (Exx 330), which indicates the confirmation of one's choice and direction. For Ignatius, God alone can give consolation to the soul without preceding cause, that is, without any prior perception or knowledge of any subject that would lead the soul to this state.

My own soul's state was disgust and despair. Amid hopelessness I found God calling me God's own and embracing me. In my decision to put down the bottle—a decision I could not have made without God's grace—I experienced strength amid my weakness, joy amid my sorrow, hope amid my despair, love amid my self-hatred. These movements came to me without preceding cause other than the One who caused me to be. In and through God's love for me I enter each day with newfound gratitude, hope and love.

Having experienced the steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, I have a deeper appreciation for the Exercises and my relationship with Jesus than I did before choosing sobriety. Therefore I believe the goal of the Exercises, like that of Alcoholics Anonymous, is not only to transform us into the persons we were created to be but also to embrace more compassionately the darker and more deformed parts of ourselves as God embraces us. This enables us to teach others how to love themselves and others as well, not in spite of our character defects, but partly because of them, knowing that God also sees each of us fully and loves each one of us fully.

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SYSTEM DYNAMICS AND THE ELECTION

The Social Discernment Cycle

Elizabeth Liebert

OVER THE YEARS that I have been teaching discernment to individuals and groups, I have grown to appreciate the significance of context, and how it affects choice and therefore the dynamics of Election as presented in the Spiritual Exercises. Ignatius' wisdom on discernment of spirits and the Election continues to ground my perspective, but the contexts of today's decision-making are increasingly complex. The dynamics are often puzzling and attempts to move them forward in mutually beneficial ways are often frustrated. My colleagues and I have taken this complexity seriously and have sought to create a way forward, based on Election, but extending its reach to complex contexts.

This shift in perspective began more than thirty years ago at the Center for Spirituality and Justice in the Bronx, New York. The staff and students, all committed to social justice and alleviating the structures that worked to keep poor and marginalised persons under constraint, struggled long and hard trying to link social justice and spiritual direction. By trial and error, they discovered that they had to develop a whole new way of thinking about humans and the God–human relationship in order to establish that linkage. The result of this struggle grounds what we have come to call the social discernment cycle (or simply social discernment).

The key breakthrough came when the staff realised that human experience is multivalent. That is, humans have interior experience; they share interpersonal experience in small, intimate groups; and they

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experience themselves as embedded in systems and social structures of all kinds. (Later, this perspective was expanded to include the natural world: humans are embedded within the cosmos both as actor and as acted upon, forming a fourth arena of simultaneous experience influencing Election.)

These multiple forms of experience occur simultaneously, yet we rarely focus on more than one at a time. Furthermore, the languages we associate with these different arenas of experience are virtually mutually exclusive. The intrapersonal, that is, the realm of our interior movements, lends itself to psychological and spiritual language, the Rules for Discernment of Spirits (Exx 313–336) being a clear example. The languages of systems such as culture, politics, race and gender, on the other hand, never or rarely refer to the spiritual or employ language we recognise as spiritual and, consequently, these systems themselves appear outside the realm of the spiritual.

Once the centre staff understood the disjunction between interior, interpersonal and systemic experience caused by these mutually exclusive languages, they needed a way to bring these various realms of experience together within the spiritual direction relationship in order to connect spiritual direction and social justice explicitly. The method they eventually employed was based on a pastoral planning process called the pastoral circle, which they had encountered in their work in Christian Base Communities. The pastoral circle involves a fourfold dynamic consisting of insertion, social analysis, theological reflection and pastoral action. A complete cycle produces a new situation and initiates another cycle.[1] Based on their work, the pastoral circle likewise became the skeleton of the social discernment cycle.

What Is Election?

In order to begin the process of bringing system dynamics to bear on Election, it is important to clarify its meaning within the Spiritual Exercises. In the context of the Exercises, this choice is assumed to involve one's vocation and how to live it out, but it is clear from Ignatius' own practice and that of the early Jesuits that the process can go beyond this one kind of choice. The guiding question can be expanded to: *How is God leading me to act in this situation? What is God calling me to do or be here?*

[1] See Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1980). The pastoral circle model was developed as a methodology able to operate across complex situations. See *The Pastoral Circle Revisited: A Critical Quest for Truth and Transformation*, edited by Frans Wijsen, Peter Henriot and Rodrigo Mejía (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2005), where it is applied in various pastoral and academic contexts.

Election depends on *indifference*, as set out in the Principle and Foundation (Exx 23) and reiterated at the beginning of the section on Election (Exx 169), where Ignatius exhorts us that 'the eye of our intention ought to be single'. That is, I ask for the grace to listen deeply for how God is calling in the here and now, then, as I begin to sense what that call is, that is what I want to choose. Election also depends heavily on the ability to employ the Rules for Discernment of Spirits (Exx 313–336) to assess the inner movements that arise in the Election process, and follow the direction pointed out through the flux of consolation and desolation.

In social discernment, these same dynamics, that is, indifference and the Rules for Discernment of Spirits, continue to be crucial, but the focus shifts from individual persons to persons in systems. The question becomes: *How is God leading us, individually or collectively, to act in this particular moment, understood from a system perspective?* Theologically, the crucial faith statement can be formulated thus: God works in, through, with, against and in spite of human (limited and often broken) structures.

Acting in the World

Looking at Ignatian Election more deeply through a theological lens reveals a twofold dynamic. Ignatius operated on the principle that union with God comes about *in the world* through the continual discernment of God's call to act in this very world. The locus of this union between humans and God shifts from finding God by transcending this world to finding God in this very world: God first 'comes down to us' in the person of Jesus, who, as he empties himself out for others in this world, is increasingly united to God. As we pour ourselves out in the world, we are united to God in Christ. We do not 'go up' to meet God; we 'go out' to meet God, who is right here among us, acting for the redeeming of the world. Our union comes about through 'the act and art of "allowing" oneself to be chosen', as Javier Melloni puts it: allowing God to act through us in all the events of history.[2] If our vocation entails following God's call in the world, discerning how God might be calling us in and through the systems that permeate our lives is indeed part of that vocation.[3]

Union with God comes about in the world

[2] Javier Melloni, *The Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola in the Western Tradition* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2000), 50.

[3] Elizabeth Liebert, *Soul of Discernment: A Spiritual Practice for Communities and Institutions* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015), 25–26.

Besides being a spiritual practice for decision-making groups, social discernment can also enhance Election in individuals, because it expands their understanding of the whole situation under consideration. We continue weighing our interior motions to test the validity of any discernment, as is indicated in both the first and second method of the Third Time (Exx 178–188), but we allow our systemic understanding to become a part of what we assess interiorly. Furthermore, in any of the Third Time Election options, we test our tentative decision through an appropriate period of assessing the resulting consolations and desolations. In other words, Ignatian Election practices continue, but the considerations that are weighed now include a grasp of the system dynamics at play.

Steps in Discerned Decision-Making

A decision made through discernment generally contains seven steps:

- Seek spiritual freedom, the inner disposition often called 'indifference', upon which discernment rests and which creates the climate for discernment.
- Discover and focus the options open to decision. In a complex system, the deeper question may only emerge as the process unfolds.
- Gather and evaluate appropriate data relevant to these options. The kind of material gathered is informed by the situation and the question as first formulated. The data-gathering may help refine the question or cause it to change; the process is both fluid and cumulative.
- Pray in the light of all the information, seeking in the light of faith the better way forward among the options.
- Formulate a tentative decision through an appropriate process. Ignatius' Election processes come most directly to bear at this point.
- Seek confirmation that this option is God's call in this moment. Following Ignatius' insight, the discerners pause to sense whether the concrete decision just discerned is, in fact, God's call at this moment.

- Finalise the decision, put it into action and assess the result. This post-decision review is not simply an add-on; it is a crucial part of discerned decision-making.[4]

Attending to each of the major movements in a little more detail can bring out the deep connections to Election.

Seek Spiritual Freedom

This beginning point is not listed in the four movements of the pastoral circle, in which prayer remains somewhat implicit. Social discernment, however, *begins with and is grounded throughout* in seeking and waiting for at least a modicum of spiritual freedom to arise through the action of the Spirit. Indeed, the fact that spiritual freedom frames all that follows in the desire to respond to God's call forms a constitutive aspect that makes the process one of discernment, not simply another type of decision-making.

Indifference—the willingness to choose that which brings one closer to God's call in a given situation—is as essential in complex systems as in personal choices, but indifference in a system can be of a completely different order from indifference in one's own personal case. Because of this complexity, it is likely that prayer for indifference will need to continue throughout the process. In reiterating the prayer for indifference, social discernment follows Ignatius, who begins the first method of the Third Time (Exx 178–183) by first clarifying the matter for Election and then pausing to allow indifference to arise.

Look at the Current Situation.

The social discernment cycle begins with a deep examination of the current situation for the purpose of grounding the discernment in real life. The discerning individual or group may be clear about what requires a decision, or simply have a sense that something needs to be prayerfully investigated. In either case, the goal is first to describe the situation and the players. Name all those involved in the situation, including those upon whom the situation is landing, not just the power brokers. Investigate how things came to be this way, if such knowledge is available. Try to pay attention to the situation of the most overlooked, the one(s) not at the table. Include discerners' personal experience of the

[4] For a more extensive treatment of these common elements of discerned decision-making see Elizabeth Liebert, *Way of Discernment: Spiritual Practices for Decision Making* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 19–21.

situation, including feelings about what is happening; indeed, their own interior motions as related to their role in the situation are key to the unfolding process. It is not necessary to act as a dispassionate observer; discerners are embedded, feelings and all, in the situation.

Ignatius offers no particular method to assist us in this early step. He assumes that we all have situations that require decisions, and he simply begins with some considerations on what kinds of things are appropriate for Election. Yet, the entire First and Second Weeks of the Spiritual Exercises are designed to evoke deep self-awareness before God and to teach the spiritual practices and sensibilities that will come to bear on Election. Short of making the full Exercises, however, social discernment returns again and again to the prayer for indifference, counting on the Spirit to grant deeper spiritual freedom. If a group is discerning together, they should expect both a good bit of circling as they come to clarity on the matter for Election and the need to return frequently to the prayer for indifference.

Complete a Social Analysis

By social analysis, I mean a systematic attempt to uncover the linkages between the various social systems at work in the situation. This analysis is a crucial form of data-gathering with respect to social discernment. A large and complex question might merit extensive social analysis to uncover these linkages. A more modest discernment question needs far simpler social analysis, perhaps just a few questions thoughtfully pursued. The issue is not the amount of social analysis but developing the eyes to see the situation at the system level.

The Jesuit Peter Henriot provides helpful guidance on this step. He describes social analysis as 'the effort to obtain a more complete picture of a social situation by exploring its historical and structural relationships'.[5] He suggests working through a series of questions: 'What is the main line of *histor*y of this situation?' 'What are the major structures which influence this situation?' that is, the institutions, process and patterns which are determining factors in the situation. These structures could be economic, political, social, religious, cultural, and so on. 'What are the key *values* operative in this structure?' Any number of possibilities exist, so the slant of the social analysis should arise out of the situation itself. 'What is the future *direction* of this situation?' What future scenarios

[5] Peter Henriot, 'Social Analysis: A Practical Methodology', in Holland and Henriot, *Social Analysis*, 98.

could unfold, what trends, sources of creativity, what could the situation be like in ten years if it continues as it is at present?[6] A recent work by Maria Cimperman, *Social Analysis for the 21st Century,* offers many suggestions for social analysis to assist with different kinds of scenarios.[7] Henriot also presents a basic approach with ten questions that can suffice for many discernments and a simple questionnaire to start the process with groups that might be puzzled by how to begin.[8]

This step in social discernment is likely to raise the most resistance and to evoke the lament: *This is so-o-o-o unspiritual!* But is it? We are trying to develop new eyes to see places where God is at work that might be invisible without social analysis: what could be more spiritual than that? Part of the problem is that, because social analysis frequently requires hard analytical work, it is not seen as prayer. Social analysis within discernment invites us to expand our notion of prayer and of what is 'spiritual'—the crucial lesson learnt by the staff at the Center for Spirituality and Justice.

Prayerfully Search for God's Call

At last, we come to the part of the process that most closely resembles Ignatian Election. Here, discerners hold all that they have so far discovered, bringing it before the Spirit with the question, What would you have us do here? The answer might be so clear that no further

[6] Henriot, 'Social Analysis', 98–100.
[7] Maria Cimperman, *Social Analysis for the 21st Century* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2015), particularly 77–123 and 232–268.
[8] Henriot, 'Social Analysis', 102, 105–106.

questioning is needed. More likely is the flux of ideas and feelings—that is, all sorts of consolations and desolations—setting in motion a more extended time of praying and sharing similar to that sketched in the Second Time. It is also quite possible to use either of the options in the Third Time, praying through the pros and cons of the issue and its opposite, and entering into imaginative pondering based either directly on Ignatius' Third Time scenarios or others we might develop. It is also completely appropriate to go beyond the options suggested by Ignatius.[9] No matter the process chosen, the intent is deeply Ignatian.

Confirm the Tentative Decision before Finalising

This step also came directly from Election and is added to the fourfold pastoral circle dynamic. It contradicts what would be encouraged by contemporary (Western) culture, addicted as it is to money and underlying economic dynamics, including speed. *Didn't we just listen through a complex process?* discerners frequently wonder. At this moment, however, they are listening for something different. They step aside from all the work to get to this point and simply wait, resting. In that rest, discerners listen for the traces of God speaking via consolation and desolation. In other words, they discern the discernment before finalising the decision.

Finalise and Implement the Decision; Evaluate the Process and Its Fruits

If a reasonable amount of time has passed in listening for our interior responses of consolation and desolation, and nothing emerges that is significant enough to put a stop to moving forward, the discernment proceeds to this final step. Reviewing and evaluating allows us to deepen and nuance our understanding of discerned decision-making, but it also provides an invitation to glean information about the fruits of the decision within the system. As a result, discerners may realise that the implementation needs tweaking in order to bring about the richest fruit, or that fruits are not forthcoming in the system. In that case, they return to an earlier step in the social discernment cycle and pick up the process again. Ignatius knew how important it is to see what works—and what does not work—and why, and then use that information in the next case (Exx 333–334).

[9] For further elaboration of other Ignatian dynamics that can be brought to bear at this point, see Elizabeth Liebert, 'Praying Our Way Forward: Prayer in Ignatian Communal Discernment Today', in *The International Project on Ignatian Prayer*, edited by José García de Castro, forthcoming.

Moving Godward

There is one more significant contribution that a systems perspective offers to Election precisely at the point of confirmation and implementation. Ignatius envisions the confirmation step as happening interiorly, largely by paying attention to the flow of consolation and desolation. To these primarily interior dynamics we can add such other interior signs as underlying peace, rising courage, growing desire for this outcome, strengthening primary commitments and so on. But these indicators, happening as they do within the individual discerner, do not readily transfer to systems. Furthermore, a system does not begin to shift until it is acted upon. The implication for social discernment is that confirmation, as Ignatius envisions it, is only the first step to confirmation in structural discernment—it signals to the individual or discerning group to go ahead and initiate an action within the system.

What then happens in the system gives an indication of *structural* confirmation. Does the system itself begin to move in a more Godward direction? How would we know? Pondering this system problem has led me to offer the following list of system behaviours that, considered broadly, might confirm in the system its Godward movement: unity, security, justice, meaningful work, sustainable progress, roots, shalom/harmony, hope, inclusiveness, flexibility, care for creation. The first eight of these qualities were developed by the Irish priest and theologian Donal Dorr.[10] The final three are my additions over the years.[11]

The social discernment cycle is indeed a cycle. One discernment actualised brings us to a new situation and the opportunity to repeat the cycle, so that it spirals us forward in our discerned decision-making and, we trust, into greater and greater confirmation and action within the complex systems of our time and culture.

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[10] Donal Dorr, *Spirituality and Justice* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1984), especially chapters 7 and 8.
[11] See Liebert, *Soul of Discernment*, chapter 8, for an extended treatment of these structural touchstones.

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DEAR GRETA

Niall Leahy

The Ignatian Year gives Niall Leahy an opportunity to write to Greta Thunberg and invite her into a dialogue with Ignatius' story.

DEAR GRETA

I watched your documentary, *I Am Greta,* and it really got me thinking.[1] You are not a practising Christian and so what I am about to say may not resonate with you, but let me say it anyway. You are a person of good will and your life is a participation in the paschal mystery.[2] To be honest, I don't fully understand that either. Of all the mysteries of the Christian faith, the mystery of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is particularly hard to get our heads around. But despite not fully understanding what happened, what it signified and why it was efficacious, I recognise that God's saving grace retains the pattern of the cross: it is both mortifying and vivifying. This pattern of change is the sign of the paschal mystery at work in human history and I can't help but see it in your life. I'm not saying you're a saint, but your life corresponds in significant ways to Christ's life and the lives of holy people. I will mention just three of those ways.

Accepting a Life with Limits and Accepting Reality as It Is

I will start with the story of St Ignatius Loyola. Ignatius was a man of great desires and ambitions. He wanted to have everything and to be great

[1] *I Am Greta*, directed by Nathan Grossman (Hulu, 2020), available at https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p090xz9z/i-am-greta.

[2] In *Gaudium et spes* (1965), Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Pope Paul VI writes about the participation of all people of good will in the paschal mystery: 'since Christ died for all men, and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery' (n. 22). This article is inspired by a reflection on that text and on the conversion of St Ignatius Loyola.

in the eyes of men. Moreover, he saw the world as a place that would accommodate his ambitions. He was like today's capitalist fundamentalists who want eternal economic growth and believe that the earth is an infinite source of natural resources that will support this project. They are delusional to think that the world will accommodate their ambitions.

An unexpected cannonball and a badly broken leg disabused Ignatius of his delusion. He could have easily fallen into a state of *ressentiment*. Despite the strong evidence to the contrary, he could have doubled down on his belief that the world really ought to conform to his infinite ambitions and dreams. If he had done so, he would have spent the rest of his days condemning the actual world for the crime of not being his fantasy world. He would have retreated from this 'evil' world and rationalised his isolation and misery with a perverted sense of justice. He would also have lost his agency because, in measuring the world against his illusory standards, he would have lost what power he had to change it for the better. Thank God this did not happen. As he came to accept the limits of his power and autonomy, he also came to accept the world as it was and not as he wanted it to be.

Greta, you have noticed that the cannonballs are already hitting us, and you have decided to put limits on your life and your autonomy. You travel on trains and boats, and you have sacrificed eating meat. Moreover, accepting these limitations has acted as a catalyst for others in questioning the fantasy world that is presented by some news channels, television shows and attractive advertisements. You are free to ask the question: *What is the world actually like?* This is a precious question. It sounds strange but the reason you can change the world is

because you are learning about and accepting the world as it actually is, not as you want it to be.

Practising Discernment to Deepen Your Agency in a Moral World

Accepting the limits of your autonomy and accepting reality does not mean passively going along with whatever happens. To avoid this trap, we need to acknowledge another important dimension of reality: its moral dimension, which is also spiritual. Furthermore, we need to discover it in ourselves. When St Ignatius began to see and understand the moral and spiritual tensions within himself, he also began to see and understand them in the world around him. He no longer naïvely assumed that he and the people like him were the 'good guys'. He became more sensitive to good and evil in himself and around him. He perceived two dynamics: the bad dynamic that seeks riches, honours and pride; and the good dynamic that accepts poverty, insults and humility. This crucial insight allowed him to deepen his agency in two ways. First, he was able to choose the good and resist the evil in himself, and secondly, he was able to join and support other people in the world who had chosen what was good. For him, saints such as Francis and Dominic exemplified the good, and he wanted to add his efforts to theirs in the Church.

Greta, you have also perceived these moral tensions, on one hand the greed and prodigality that always want more, and on the other the sobriety and gratitude that are happy with just enough. Your conscience tells you which one is good and which one is evil. You also see this good and evil in the world around you. You see how individuals, communities, movements and institutions promote one dynamic or the other. I know you are a person of good will because you listen to your conscience, even when it says you should do something very difficult. You don't have much power but there is more agency in doing a small good and resisting evil than in having all the power in the world to do evil. So by following the voice of your conscience you have deepened your agency. Your personal sacrifices, your acceptance of insults, your need for help, and your tears of joy and sorrow tell me that you are acting from a deeper place than those who are simply promoting 'business as usual'.

Relationships Will Remain

Humans are relational by nature. We all specialise in nurturing one kind of relationship or another: for the politician it is political relationships, for the business person it is business relationships, for the parent it is

family relationships. Like our ancestors you are trying to nurture the ecological relationships of our common home because you understand they last much longer than and support all the others. Our ecosystem is the delicate but strong nest in which all our human relationships can develop.

Greta, you're afraid that the nest will break apart, everything you cherish will be destroyed and nothing will remain. And you know, you're right. The nest could break, and we could all be in big trouble. But I still have hope and I want to tell you why. As you try to forge a just and sustainable material reality, you are also participating in a spiritual reality. We Christians call it communion. The spiritual reality you are forging, the good connections, dynamics and relationships, will endure, regardless of whether you succeed in your material project or not. Life shows us that good relationships are what really matter, because they do not depend on that material success.

Christianity reaffirms this truth. On the cross, human sin stretched Jesus' relationship with the Father to its limits, beyond the constraints of his human body. But even in death their relationship endured, and he remained the Father's Son. The resurrection shows us that their relationship is limitless and eternal. It survives every attack and disaster, and it cannot be broken. All people of good will are invited to live, die and belong in this relationship forever. This is our hope. So even if you don't succeed in your mission, I want to assure you that none of your efforts have been wasted. Your courage and honesty, your dedication and your love will never be in vain. You have been weaving your own nest of loving relationships here on earth and it will endure in God.

If you ever get discouraged and feel like you're on the losing side, I suggest you read Jesus' words in Mark 13. He tells us that in the midst of the worst destruction there will be signs that the very best is coming. The branches of the fig tree will soften when it senses the summer is near. The sun will reveal everything that endures, and I believe that even if the fruits of your work are not successful in this world, they will endure into the next.

Fraternally,

Niall

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SEASONS OF THE SOUL

A Personal Reflection on the Structure and Dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises

Gem Yecla

CONTEXT MATTERED significantly to St Ignatius, who 'conceived the Spiritual Exercises and completed most of the revisions as a layperson, prior to his ordination and the founding of the Society of Jesus'.[1] Accordingly in writing about the Exercises here I am using an autoethnographic methodology, including my own experience, reflections and insights. Together with the voices of the theorists, I will also let my own voice be heard: the voice of a woman, lay, single and Filipina. This activity of writing is a way of gathering the gifts and graces that I have received during a time of Sabbath for ten months in Melbourne, Australia. I used to coordinate a programme called the Sabbatical Pilgrimage Experience at the East Asian Pastoral Institute in the Philippines and I would usually start the new term by sharing with the participants the words of the Benedictine sister and spiritual writer Joan Chittister: 'A Sabbatical is for relating in the God of life and bringing more to life as a result. Sabbath days are when we allow ourselves time out to look at life in fresh and penetrating way.'[2]

According to Judith Roemer and George Schemel:

> The movement of the *Exercises* in general is purification → illumination → confirmation → union. Or to put it another way purification → illumination → confirmation in suffering and confirmation in joy.[3]

This article is based on an essay written as part of the requirements for my master's degree in spiritual direction at the Jesuit College of Spirituality in Melbourne, Australia. I would like to acknowledge my professors, Michael Smith,SJ and Anne Pate, who both inspired me to write this essay.

[1] Katherine Dyckman, Mary Garvin and Elizabeth Liebert, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed: Uncovering Liberating Possibilities for Women* (New York: Paulist, 2001), 9.

[2] Quoted in the East Asian Pastoral Institute brochure, 2014.

[3] Judith Roemer and George Schemel, *Beyond Individuation to Discipleship: A Directory for Those Who Give the Spiritual Exercises* (Scranton: Institute for Contemporary Spirituality, 2000), 149.

I am using this 'seasons of the soul' model here, and these four themes will be my focus. I also propose that the seasons be regarded as stages of intimacy with the Trinitarian God as exercitants go through each one of them. This has been my own experience while making the Spiritual Exercises and in my life journey afterwards. William Barry says, 'The Exercises are an ordered progression in which one stage depends on the relatively "successful" completion of the prior stage, and the whole edifice depends on the solidity of the foundation'.[4]

Purification: First Week

The First Week of the Exercises may fittingly be called *purification* because it aims 'to rid oneself of disorder so that decisions are not made under the influence of disordered affections or attachments'. Roemer and Schemel continue:

> One of the main themes of the First Week is Sin. What is sin to Ignatius? Disorder. When thinking about sin, think of disorder. In good order there is God, the human person, then all other creatures. God comes first. Human beings have a way of 'mucking up' that order: putting creatures before the human person, putting the human person before God, putting creatures before God. When one gets that hierarchy out of order, that is sinfulness as far as Ignatius is concerned. It really is a great way of thinking about sin. It is different from the model of sin as hurting God somehow. Sin is disorder.[5]

For someone preparing to be a spiritual director, as I am, I believe it is important to be aware of and to be grounded in St Ignatius' doctrine of sin to be able to enter into the structure and dynamics of the Exercises. Right at the beginning of the Spiritual Exercises, St Ignatius lays down the foundation, sets things in the right order and invites exercitants to walk that path.

Hence, in the Principle and Foundation (Exx 23), St Ignatius begins with the purpose for which the human being exists:

> Human beings are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by means of doing this to save their souls. The other things on the face of the earth are created for the human beings, to help them in the pursuit of the end for which they are created.

[4] William Barry, *Letting God Come Close: An Approach to the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises* (Chicago: Loyola, 2001), 8.
[5] Roemer and Schemel, *Beyond Individuation*, 151.

Initially, these words seem to evoke a self-centred and utilitarian propensity that might be offensive to a twenty-first-century exercitant. That was how they came across to me when I first encountered them, but the brief and contextualised explanation of my spiritual director when I made my Spiritual Exercises helped me to unpack the meaning and led me to a prayerful stance. I find Joseph Tetlow's explanations and pointers for each prayer exercise and meditation to be attuned to the contemporary context of the exercitant and, therefore, very helpful. For instance, he expounds the Principle and Foundation as follows:

> God creates 'out of love', which means that God wants to share His love, to have others to love and to be loved by …. In calling me to live my special qualities and characteristics, God planted deep in my self an original purpose—the concrete expression of God's hopes in and for me. My life is to discover in myself that original purpose—what my concrete self 'adds up to'—and to live it out.[6]

Sin, too, should be viewed and experienced from within the reality of being loved by God. The authors of *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed* capture the essence of the First Week through the phrase 'Surrounded by Love': 'The loved sinner stands at the center of the First Week of the Exercises. Although sin provides the focus, the First Week really dwells on love, God's love, which is greater than human sin.'[7] Hans van Leeuwen states, 'When love does not reach the deepest core of our being, the outside world becomes a threat'.[8] Hence, it is important for exercitants to be anchored in God's love before they meditate on sin, both cosmic and personal, and the spiritual director has to be cognisant of this.

In my experience, looking at my own sin is very threatening, because it is my weak and ugly side that I want to hide with the 'unrelenting standards' that are my 'lifetrap'.[9] However, through scripture texts such as

[6] Joseph Tetlow, *Choosing Christ in the World: A Handbook for Directing the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola According to Annotations Eighteen and Nineteen* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1999), 121.

[7] Dyckman, Garvin and Liebert, *Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*, 153.

[8] Han van Leeuwen, 'Sin and the First Week in Our Actual Faith', *Review of Ignatian Spirituality*, 107 (2004), 1–13.

[9] These ideas come from Schema Therapy, pioneered by Jeffrey E. Young and others in the 1990s. 'Unrelenting standards' are an example of an 'early maladaptive schema' (or 'lifetrap' as Young called it in his self-help book *Reinventing Your Life*). Such schemas are described as 'self-defeating emotional and cognitive patterns that begin early in our development and repeat throughout life' (Jeffrey E. Young, Janet S. Klosko and Marjorie E. Weishaar, *Schema Therapy: A Practitioners' Guide* [New York: Guilford, 2003], 7).

Christ and the Sinner, *by Countess Kalkreuth, 1890s*

Psalm 139, Isaiah 43 and Psalm 8, I have come to realise and experience God's personal and unconditional love for me. I have started to see my family's love and care, the beauty of creation and the events of my life in the context of God's continuing love. Hence, when I came to the meditation on my personal sin, it became a liberating experience because I saw God loving and embracing me in my dark reality. Hans van Leeuwen writes, 'The aim of the First Week is to arrive at the merciful fidelity and love of God by going more deeply into your own infidelity. Awareness of how great your infidelity is can give the love of God a deeper colour.'[10]

All I needed to do was to be open and to give all to God. But this is not easy, and I struggle with it even now. As William Barry aptly points out,

> … only God can reveal our sins and sinful tendencies to us. Sin is precisely a blind spot that keeps us from knowing ourselves as we really are. So we beg God for God's view of ourselves and of our world so that we can repent and try to live out God's dream for us and for our world in cooperation with God's grace.[11]

Barry quotes the psychiatrist John G. Mackenzie, who states,

> The *enjoyment of God* should be the supreme end of spiritual technique; and it is in that enjoyment of God that we feel not only saved in the Evangelical sense, but safe: we are conscious of belonging to God, and hence are never alone; and, to the degree we have these two, hostile feelings disappear.[12]

[10] van Leeuwen, 'Sin and the First Week', 1.
[11] Barry, *Letting God Come Close*, 12.
[12] John G. Mackenzie, *Nervous Disorders and Character: A Study in Pastoral Pyschology and Psychotherapy* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1946), 36, quoted in Barry, *Letting God Come Close*, 5.

Barry comments: 'Such experiences of the "enjoyment of God" elicit the desire to get to know God better and to let one's life be governed by one's relationship with God'.[13]

In the First Week there is a dynamic of looking at our disordered attachments, the reality of sin in the world and in each of us, its horrors, the afflictions and pain wrought by the sins we all continue to commit, the shame, sadness and tears that we beg God to give us grace to experience. And yet, we are invited to taste the goodness and mercy of God and be solidly grounded in the enjoyment of experiencing God, so that we will have a strong desire to know Godself more closely. In the end, I understand the dynamic of the First Week to be such that God's love purifies our sinfulness, enabling us to respond to God's offer of love. This is the first season of the soul and the first stage of intimacy with God: purification.

Illumination: Second Week

The Second Week is the pivotal point of the Spiritual Exercises where the decision-making process is concerned—a crucial aspect of Ignatian spirituality. In *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*, Dyckman, Garvin and Liebert summarise its structure: 'The meditations and contemplations strategically placed throughout the week help in refining one's ability to make freer choices in following Christ'.[14] Roemer and Schemel emphasize, 'The *Exercises* are about ridding oneself of all inordinate attachments and having gotten rid of them, making decisions in the disposition of one's life with God, always with a view to apostolic effectiveness'. For them,

> This illuminative phase means putting on the mind and heart of Christ. The retreatant is contemplating Christ in the different events of Scripture and learning from Him: being illuminated by His way of thinking, His way of doing things. He is the Word from the Father and the retreatant is being taught and illumined by the Word made Flesh.[15]

Michael Ivens says:

> The personal love of Christ, which is the grace of the Second Week, is a love which changes and re-orientates the whole person. It is a

[13] Barry, *Letting God Come Close*, 5.
[14] Dyckman, Garvin and Liebert, *Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*, 182.
[15] Roemer and Schemel, *Beyond Individuation*, 89, 199.

> love by which we allow the loved-one to take over our lives, to lead us along his own ways towards his own objectives, the love by which we trust ourselves to the other's power to change us.[16]

In my own experience of the Exercises, this stage was illuminative for me because I saw my poverty and the simplicity of my family situation in the light of Jesus' humble birth during my contemplation on Nativity and his hidden life in Nazareth. That was a breakthrough experience and a very liberating one for me. Since then, I have had a growing friendship and intimacy with Jesus because I can connect with his humanity and appreciate my own through my affinity with him. Jesus is not only my God and my Lord; he is my friend. Poverty, in its various dimensions, is no longer a liability and a disadvantage, but an opportunity to see God's presence—and, therefore, an asset and an advantage, especially in a world where material success is given so much prominence. Poverty has become the place and the space of my deep communion with Jesus; because he entered my world and chose to be one with me, I also want to follow him and be one with him.

Jesus ... entered my world and chose to be one with me

My stay in Melbourne has given me another opportunity to follow Jesus in this path of poverty. I realised that being a student in a foreign country means being stripped of the identity and the security that I used to have when I was in the Philippines. I do not have my usual comfort zone that includes my family, ministry and friends. Even if the environment here is beautiful and orderly, and I thrive in it, there is still a part of me that longs for the familiar, no matter how chaotic it is at times. When I ride the tram, I feel so small and anonymous, so insignificant and obscure. Often, I wonder what my relevance in this context is. Jesus' hidden life in Nazareth makes such a powerful connection with me. I am one with Jesus in his obscurity, and this time of my Sabbath is a time of a deepening intimacy with him and a following in his footsteps.

From the first stage of intimacy, which is purgative, the exercitant moves now to the second, which is illuminative. William Barry captures this shift through a metaphor from Mark 10:52: 'In the First Week, we are like the blind man Bartimaeus, who wants Jesus to give him succour and heal his blindness. In the Second Week, we are like the now seeing

[16] Michael Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises: Textv and Commentary. A Handbook for Retreat Directors* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998), 75.

Bartimaeus, who follows Jesus 'on the way'.[17] This is following wherever that path leads because I love and trust this person who leads the way. It is not a passive following, though. There is so much dialogue, conversation and wrestling along the way, just as in any human friendship or intimate relationship.

Union in Suffering: Third Week

Although the material on the Election is given towards the end of the Second Week in the transition to the Third Week, I am including it here as part of *union in suffering* because, during my own thirty-day retreat, the process of Election brought me to enter into Jesus' suffering.[18] I took the decision to leave my religious congregation, the Cenacle Sisters, after two years of novitiate. This presented me with a bleak future and created so much anxiety. It was like dying to my own dreams and aspirations to be a religious sister and to serve God in that capacity, and it was very painful. Peter Fennessy gives an analysis of why such elections can be so distressing:,

> The election itself contributes to a recrudescence of … inordinate attachments. Attention to the chosen alternative brings the other alternatives to mind by an association of opposites. And these other alternatives also re-occur in accord with a mechanism of self-preservation …. while the inordinate inclinations may have subsided during the process of election, the final firm resolve threatens their satisfaction to such an extent that they rise again in a last-ditch attempt to overthrow the election.[19]

Thus, the prospect of leaving the convent became a dreadful possibility even though my discernment was already pointing in that direction. It was a difficult process, but I learnt the rigours of making a good decision and painfully detaching myself from the desire that I initially thought was what God wanted for me: to be a religious sister. It is now comforting for me to know that St Ignatius, too, had such an experience.

[17] Barry, *Letting God Come Close,* 78.
[18] Brian O'Leary talks about the debate among the early Jesuits regarding the proper place of the Election in the Spiritual Exercises. Some say that the Election should be given before the Third Week because of the underlying sorrow that permeates this Week, which is not a good atmosphere for making a choice; others contend that it is proper in the Third Week for the one making the choice to be really in union with Christ whose choice brought him to his passion. See 'Third and Fourth Weeks: What the Directories Say', *The Way Supplement*, 58 (Spring 1987), 7–20.
[19] Peter Fennessy, 'The Third Week of the Spiritual Exercises', *The Way Supplement*, 54 (Autumn 1978), 45–60, here 46.

> At Manresa … Ignatius himself came to the conclusion that God wanted him to work to 'help souls' in poverty. He also wrongly concluded that Jerusalem was to be the venue of his apostolate. Life after Manresa eventually taught Ignatius the concrete way in which God's election of him would enflesh itself.[20]

Roemer and Schemel note,

> Some of the graces in the Third Week have a difficult side to them and yet they are true unitive graces: graces that unite the person making the retreat with Christ in his own suffering. Here one is asked to pray for sorrow, shame, and compassion. They are difficult graces.[21]

From my own experience, I can say that it is only when we are drawn to Jesus, when we truly love him—and this is also a grace in itself—that we can beg for these graces. But once received, they remain and continue to sustain us in our journey.

Michael Ivens writes,

> Jesus' Passion is significant for us because he wishes it for us out of love, wishes it at the level not of instinct (which recoils) but of will, where he freely accepts it. In the human will of Jesus, the wish and the freedom of God break into history in an act of absolute love.[22]

It is my belief that in this season of the soul, this third stage of intimacy with Jesus, a union in suffering with him, one makes a conscious choice freely and deliberately to unite one's pain, helplessness and utter experience of nothingness and emptiness with Jesus. When one has already spent and given up everything—primarily things that boost one's ego—one is left with the self in its nakedness; and this is the one that I give to Jesus. This is where I am in my journey right now. This is the season of my soul and I freely embrace it.

Union in Joy: Fourth Week

I cannot exactly remember how I made the transition from the Third Week to the Fourth Week when I made my Spiritual Exercises. As I try to recall what happened, Ronald Mercier's words resonate with me when he says,

[20] Barry, *Letting God Come Close,* 19–20.
[21] Roemer and Schemel, *Beyond Individuation*, 244.
[22] Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, 152.

> *Without the grand silence of Holy Saturday, the 'seventh day' for Ignatius, we do not experience the joy and freedom of the Fourth Week*. Waiting in the transition—a transition into, not out of, emptiness—allows for creation of the space into which the Risen Lord comes, if we let the quiet ripen.[23]

Looking back at my own experience, there must have been this long but necessary period of Holy Saturday silence and emptiness for me. I believe that it is this space that allows one to stay with pain and loss, to come to terms with it and to heal so as to be able to move into the next phase. And it takes time.

Fennessy captures this in-between time:

> The third and fourth weeks are not adjacent rooms between which one may casually pass; they are deep pools that interconnect only in their depths. Only by entering totally into the death of Christ can one also enter into his risen life …. Good Friday and Easter Sunday constitute one event. The retreatant merely requires time to realize what it is he has entered into in being buried with Christ.[24]

For me, the joy of the resurrection came several years after I left the Cenacle congregation. It was very subtle and unobtrusive. I was giving prayer points to the first batch of Sabbatical Pilgrimage participants I coordinated at the East Asian Pastoral Institute when I sensed that I was deeply joyful in what I was doing. I was at home, at peace, and very much at ease with myself and the ministry in which I was involved. I felt that I was participating in God's work of helping the participants see their journey from God's perspective and appreciate more the beauty of that experience. Looking back now, I realised that I was gifted with the risen Christ's joy that filled my heart then and gave me the hope I needed to finish my studies in Melbourne, even when I felt exhausted, because God, Christ now risen, was with me labouring to finish this task.

Ivens has this to say about the dynamic of the Fourth Week:

> We are concerned with paschal joy, the joy proper to Easter, the joy which springs from a still fundamental grace, that of the faith and love that make the Risen Christ, though invisible, the very core of the believer's existence. The prime object of paschal joy, then, is the here-and-now reality of the risen Christ.[25]

[23] Ronald Mercier, 'Without the Drama: The Transition from the Third to Fourth Week of the Spiritual Exercises', *Review for Religious*, 71/1 (2012), 29–51, here 30.
[24] Fennessy, 'Third Week', 59.
[25] Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, 162.

The Resurrection, *by Bernardino Luini, sixteenth century*

Hence, I agree with the those theorists, especially Michael Buckley, who hold that the fitting ending of the Fourth Week is the Contemplation to Attain Love (Exx 230), because all the graces asked from the beginning up to the end of the Exercises are to culminate with the exercitant begging God for the grace to be able to love God—which is possible only when someone is in union with Christ's joy in the resurrection.[26]

I was in the middle of writing this when Donald Trump won the US presidential election and I had also received news from a friend of mine in the Philippines about recent killings under the Duterte administration.[27] I was upset and could not help but ask, *What is happening to the world?* However, I caught myself and thought of the *Contemplatio* and its relevance to me in the midst of my apprehension about the events in the world and in my own country. I found Ivens' words a fitting reminder for me:

[26] Michael Buckley, 'The Contemplation to Attain Love', *The Way Supplement*, 24 (Spring 1975), 92–104.
[27] See 'More than 7,000 Killed in the Philippines in Six Months, as President Encourages Murder', *Amnesty International UK*, available at https://www.amnesty.org.uk/philippines-president-duterte-war-on-drugs-thousands-killed.

> This integration of love with immediate experience has as its context a certain vision, a perception of the world as a divine *milieu*, in which the love of God is so sensed in everything that nothing can come as an interference between God and his creature because everything is a means to encounter and union.[28]

I see the fourth season of the soul and the fourth stage of intimacy with God, the union in joy with Christ, as highlighting the love that refuses to be defeated and continues to insert and assert itself in every aspect of our reality.

A Tango with the Lord

As a journey and a process, I am deeply convinced of the transformative power of the Spiritual Exercises but they are definitely not for the faint-hearted. It is my conviction that the Spiritual Exercises are for those with a strong sense of commitment, focus and desire to give themselves to God in loving service, even if they falter along the way, trusting only in God's generosity and grace. I have gained a better understanding now of why St Ignatius himself did not recommend the Exercises to everyone and of why he wrote the Annotations (Exx 18, 19 and 20) in his earnest desire to reach out to as many souls as possible.

I have always felt an innate affinity for spiritual direction. Perhaps, it can be considered my 'name of grace'. I was a seventeen-year-old college freshman when I first went on retreat. To this day, I can still remember the retreat facilitator playing 'Morning Has Broken' during our morning prayer. It felt like everything was alive and glowing as I listened with my eyes closed. Every word spoke to me and I was both happy and tearful at the same time. It was only later that I realised that I had been touched by God and had a deep religious experience.

Four years later, after graduating from college, I made my first psycho-spiritual retreat, facilitated by two Cenacle sisters. The retreat had such a strong impact on me that I found myself thinking that if ever God wanted me to be a religious sister, I would be a Cenacle sister because I wanted to take part in their ministry of spiritual direction. I did join the Cenacle congregation, but left after making the Spiritual Exercises and my Election. However, the attraction of journeying with people and helping them to discover and deepen their relationship

[28] Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, 170.

with God, and to see the beauty of life and creation, including the beauty in themselves, has remained with me. What I have received generously, I also want to give graciously.

At the height of my tiredness and exasperation as I was trying to finish papers for my MA, I found myself asking, *Why am I doing the MA in Spiritual Direction when I was already giving retreats and doing the spiritual direction ministry even if I did not have a formal training?* Intuitively, I know that I am good at this, but after an intensive course on the theory of the Spiritual Exercises, I started to doubt myself. What I thought to be easy and a natural gift is very difficult and challenging. It calls for a delicate balance of nuances and subtleties, art and discipline, work and also grace. Ivens says:

> As a qualification for giving the Spiritual Exercises, book-knowledge is secondary to such qualities as empathy, intuition, insight and overall personal wisdom. But this does not mean that knowledge of the Exercises should be played down. To guide another person through the Exercises of St Ignatius a good knowledge of the Exercises themselves is also required, even given a director well endowed with the more personal and fundamental gifts.[29]

As a spiritual director, I need to have a solid knowledge of the Exercises. I 'must study the book thoroughly … have it at [my] fingertips, especially the Annotations and Rules … and weigh every matter—indeed almost every word—with care'.[30] However, I am aware that I am at an awkward stage as far as my knowledge and skills in spiritual direction are concerned. My image is that of a dance, dancing a tango with the Lord, and I cannot find my rhythm with both the music and my partner. The dance is not yet flowing gracefully. Tango, for me, is a difficult dance with a lot of subtleties, feeling and sensing with one's partner, very much like spiritual direction. There is pleasure, though, attached to dancing tango because it is very passionate and sensual. And so it is with spiritual direction when I sense that there is a connection between the directee and myself, myself and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit and the directee; the three of us are in a beautiful dance. I am still learning and finding it challenging at the moment.

Bernadette Miles states,

[29] Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, xi.
[30] Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, xi.

> Personal experience is not static. As … students participate in the learning and formation process, their knowledge and understanding are stretched, grown and constantly challenged. Therefore the dynamic of learning continuously moves through the cycles of personal experience and integration of new understanding, and the students draw on this knowledge to facilitate further transformation and understanding.[31]

The things that I have put together here are the ones that I have integrated and owned. The ideas and concepts that I have read but do not appear here are still in the process of being chewed and digested. 'It takes time and some experimentation to find a good niche for a grace to blossom.'[32] I need to be patient as I move out of my comfort zone to acquire new knowledge and wisdom. 'The aim of transformative learning', according to Miles, 'is to be attentive to the potential for change within the learning process, to listen to new opportunities as they emerge and to allow the new data to take effect on our understanding as it is created'.[33] I believe that the invitation for me is to honour my process and to trust God who 'bestows his gifts, present in his gifts, works in his gifts and the source of his gifts'.[34]

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[31] Bernadette Miles, 'Incarnating Our Consolation through Transformative Academic Learning', *The Way*, 54/1 (January 2015), 37–50, here 43.
[32] Roemer and Schemel, *Beyond Individuation*, 236.
[33] Miles, 'Incarnating Our Consolation', 38.
[34] Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, 171.

IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY AND ACTION RESEARCH

Exploring Lay Ecclesial Ministerial Formation

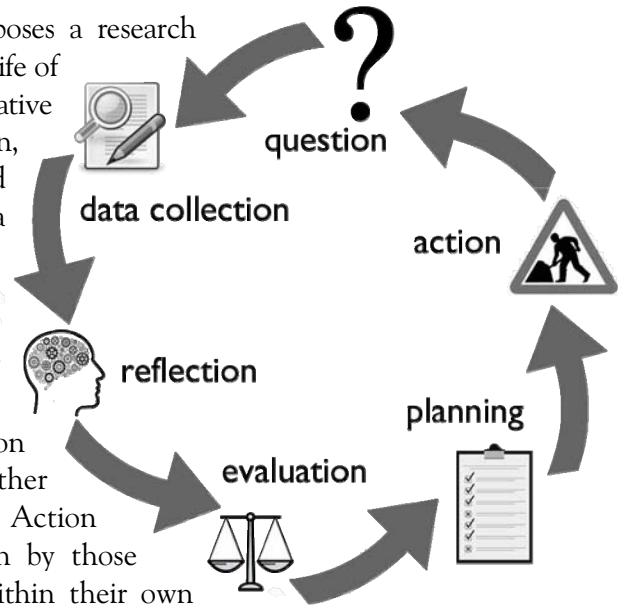
Deborah Ross

ACTION RESEARCH IS A PROCESS enabling individuals and organizations to reflect on and improve their professional practice. Between 2016 and 2018, the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University, a seminary in Berkeley, California, used an innovative combination of action research and Ignatian spirituality to assess its practice of lay ecclesial ministerial formation.[1] The unique synthesis of action research, a methodology commonly used in the social sciences and influenced by the work of the psychologist Kurt Lewin in the 1940s, and the sixteenth-century spiritual practice of St Ignatius, produced some rich results. The project also revealed a synergy between action research and Ignatian spirituality in the novel methodology it developed. The precepts of Ignatian spirituality guided the action research process in a prayerful and mission-orientated practice of institutional discernment.

Action research is a collaborative process that is 'context-based, addressing real-life problems'.[2] It entails a partnership between participants in an organization who are interested in researching aspects of their work, and external researchers who lead a mutual learning process. The participating members of the organization are viewed as agents who bring their lived experiences and practical competencies into the research process. The external researchers contribute expertise and provide an outside perspective.

[1] In the US, Roman Catholic lay ministers are referred to as 'lay ecclesial ministers', see United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2005).

[2] Helen Cameron and others, *Talking about God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology* (London: SCM, 2010), 36.



The action research process poses a research question or topic pertinent to the life of the organization, followed by qualitative and/or quantitative data collection, reflection, evaluation, planning and eventually the implementation of a new phase of action. This enables the generation of knowledge and leads to new understanding for both participants and researchers, and additionally to recommended organizational changes. As action research is an iterative process, further cycles of research may ensue.[3] Action research may also be undertaken by those wishing to engage in research within their own organizations, without the intervention of external researchers.[4]

The Jesuit School of Theology is one of two Jesuit theologates, or theology centres, located in the US. It is also a member of the nearby Graduate Theological Union, an ecumenical consortium of eight theology schools. Its diverse student body comprises US students and also international students from all over the world, Jesuits, other religious and lay, who are studying for civil and ecclesiastical graduate theology degrees. The Jesuit School of Theology community provides a unique seminary environment as students engage together in academic, pastoral, spiritual and human formation.[5] Students in the Master of Divinity degree programme comprise Jesuit scholastics approaching ordination, other religious and lay students preparing for ministry in the Church and in other contexts.

The various groups within the Jesuit School of Theology's student body have distinct formation needs, and the challenges for lay students are unique. So an action research exercise was undertaken to explore

[3] Cameron and others, *Talking about God in Practice*, 36–38.

[4] See David Coghlan, *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*, 5th edn (London: SAGE, 2019). As Coghlan explains, action research is influenced by several sources including the psychologist Kurt Lewin, Paulo Freire, various schools of liberation thought, and Aristotelian philosophy (58).

[5] For a description of these aspects of formation see *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord;* and United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Program of Priestly Formation*, 5th edn (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2006).

both the character of lay ecclesial ministry and opportunities for enhancing the formation of lay students. Almost ninety participants—students, faculty, staff and some former students who had graduated in the previous fifteen years—contributed to a cycle of action research. As the principal investigator, I initiated and developed this project, and in 2018 I authored a final report describing the research process and findings.[6]

The Action Research Design and Ignatian Spirituality

David Coghlan, writing for *The Way* in 2004, pointed to the compatibility of Ignatian spirituality and action research. Given the transformational nature of Ignatian spirituality, with its emphasis on practical action resulting from prayer, Coghlan suggests that Ignatian spirituality already promotes a form of action research.[7]

While Coghlan identifies a series of connections between Ignatian spirituality and action research on a theoretical level, I am presenting an action research process that intentionally infuses Ignatian spirituality into its methodology. This research gave rise to a six-step process:

1. Identify research questions/aims.
2. Design various research activities, incorporating Ignatian themes.
3. Conduct research activities, integrating Ignatian spirituality into the process.
4. Analyse the collected data.
5. Engage in theological reflection on the analysed data, utilising Ignatian spirituality.
6. Establish research recommendations to be implemented in the spirit of the *magis*.

The aims of the research included exploring the character of lay ecclesial ministry—as experienced by Jesuit School of Theology students, faculty, staff and alumni/ae—as well as revealing the formation needs of lay

[6] The project, entitled 'Ignatian Action Research', was supported by a Bannan Institute Working Group Grant awarded by Santa Clara University's Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education. Ignatian-based action research processes were conducted with two local parishes as part of the project. One of these explored the enhanced participation of parish laity. A second process looked at the implementation of an Eighteenth Annotation Ignatian parish retreat programme.

[7] David Coghlan, 'Seeking God in All Things: Ignatian Spirituality as Action Research', *The Way*, 43/1 (January 2004), 97–108, here 97.

students and looking for potential opportunities to enhance lay ecclesial formation.

A God-Focused Approach

An overarching Ignatian question guided the entire process and aided communal discernment: *What does God want for the lay students at the Jesuit School of Theology?* This question echoes the conversion dynamic of the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises and the need for discernment to be 'God-focused' rather than disproportionately 'self-focused'.[8] With this God-focused approach in mind, student discussion groups started with an Examen-type meditation that prayerfully set the tone for the ensuing conversation. The themes of consolation (what is life-giving and draws one closer to God) and desolation (what causes unease or turmoil and is not drawing one closer to God) also guided the opening Examen prayer and helped to frame questions raised within the groups. Students who participated in discussion groups later commented that the Examen-style prayer exercise prompted thoughts that they shared in their groups.

A supplemental online survey invited students to begin with a prayer incorporating aspects of the Principle and Foundation from the Spiritual Exercises before submitting their survey responses. The focus on personal reflection, and individual and group prayer, added a prayerful dimension to the action research cycle. Online surveys of staff, faculty and alumni/ae explored the ways in which the Ignatian tradition could inform lay ecclesial formation. The survey questions for alumni/ae were framed by the themes of consolation and desolation as participants were invited to reflect on their experiences both during and after their time at the school.

A Contextualised Approach

Three further themes guided the research design and process. First, there was attention to context. The Jesuit School of Theology has for many years pursued the culturally contextualised study of theology, alongside its mission-orientated commitment to 'reverent and critical service of the faith that does justice'.[9] This includes paying attention to

[8] See David Fleming, 'Ignatian Exercises and Conversion', *Review for Religious*, 48/3 (1989), 374–386.

[9] 'Who We Are', at https://www.scu.edu/jst/, accessed 18 March 2022. For an articulation of this contextual-theological approach see *Doing Theology as if People Mattered: Encounters in Contextual Theology*, edited by Deborah Ross and others (New York: Herder and Herder, 2019).

the context in which we do theology and conduct ministerial formation. Faculty members take a contextual-theological pedagogical approach in their courses, recognising, as Stephen Bevans has asserted, that all theology is contextual.[10] There is an acknowledgement of the varying theological contexts from which members of the school's diverse student body originate, and to which they will return.

This contextual theological approach fits well with the Ignatian emphasis on the mystery of the incarnation. An action research paradigm incorporating Ignatian spirituality can be attentive to the presence and movement of God within a particular context. In our research attention was given to God's presence within the life of the Jesuit School of Theology community and there was reflection on what God might be revealing about the lived reality and context of formation for lay students.

Our Deepest Desires

Secondly, the Ignatian theme of desire—that God calls us through our deepest desires—guided the action research process. Specific focus group and survey questions asked about participants' desires: *What is your deepest desire, or your hope, for the lay students at the Jesuit School of Theology?* As David Coghlan reminds us, 'The Exercises are concerned above all with "what I want and desire" (Exx 48.1) and with how these desires lead us to act in cooperation with God'. He recognises the congruence of this concept of desire with action research, as Ignatian spirituality encourages reflection on the ways behaviour is rooted in one's intentions and desires, while in action research, 'We try to understand our intentions, to develop appropriate plans and strategies, to be skilled at carrying them out, to reflect on how well we have carried them out, and to evaluate their results'.[11] Throughout the research process, there was attention to the desires of members of the community, and particularly those of the lay students.

The Magis

Thirdly, we were guided by the theme of the *magis*. Action research processes are designed to develop outcomes leading to further action and prompt organizational change as researchers and practitioners seek to improve their practices. The final stage of the Ignatian action research

[10] Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, rev. edn (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002), 3.
[11] Coghlan, 'Seeking God in All Things', 103.

process developed in the project, including reflection on and consideration of next steps, and was guided by the Ignatian concept of the *magis*, the encouragement to reach higher and for more, while remaining focused on God.

Research Findings

A research technique called grounded theory, that enables the construction of theory grounded in qualitative data, was utilised to code and categorize focus-group transcripts and survey responses.[12] This resulted in the emergence of eight categories that described the experiences of lay students at the Jesuit School of Theology, along with the subsequent ministerial experiences of alumni/ae:

1. what attracts lay students;
2. life-giving aspects of formation;
3. challenges experienced by lay students;
4. lay student 'identifying moments';
5. the lived praxis of lay ecclesial ministry;
6. the Ignatian tradition;
7. emerging theology of lay ministry;
8. looking to the future.

The students surveyed identified various life-giving aspects of the formation on offer at the Jesuit School of Theology. Formation in the Ignatian tradition and spiritual formation, including receiving spiritual direction and having the opportunity to train in it, figured prominently. Students who participated in supervised field education placements reported benefitting from this aspect of ministerial formation. The opportunity for to live in a residential Lay Intentional Community was also described as highly formative.

While some lay students found that that interaction with Jesuit classmates was life-giving and formative, others commented that their own formation was lacking in certain areas in comparison to that of the Jesuit students. For example, Jesuit scholastics have generally received more academic theological and philosophical training before joining

[12] See Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 2nd edn (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2013).

the Jesuit School of Theology than the lay students have. Jesuit scholastics have also had, on average, up to eight to ten years of formation in the Society, whereas lay students in some cases arrive without any formal formation experiences. Lay students observed other differences, including that Jesuits have more opportunities than lay students for structured community life at the Jesuit School of Theology.

Lay ecclesial ministerial identity was an important emergent theme in the research. The construction of lay identity occurs within the academic, spiritual, pastoral and community dimensions of school life. It is not uncommon for lay students to arrive at the Jesuit School of Theology unaware of Vatican II teachings on the theology of the laity, or ecclesial documents on lay formation—or even the title of 'lay ecclesial minister'. Lay students often experience a form of 'consciousness-raising' about their lay ecclesial identities while at the school and during their studies. Lay ecclesial identity may be heightened for them, particularly as they study together with Jesuits. As the lay ministerial vocation is brought into sharp relief, lay students are prompted to embrace their identities as lay ecclesial ministers.

In the course of the action research, alumni/ae shared their experiences of lay ministry and understandings of ministerial identity after their studies ended. They discussed the challenges of collaborative ministry, and the sometimes ambiguous nature of their roles as lay ministers. This included a lack of recognition and understanding from co-workers and those to whom they minister. They described claiming recognition as lay ministers through the lived praxis of their ministries; some did not depend upon or identify with the title 'lay ecclesial

minister'. These individuals were more focused on the lived praxis of ministry than on titles or descriptions of who they were as ministers. Alumni/ae also stated that the uncertainty surrounding lay ministerial identity was of minor importance once they were engaged in the practice of ministry beyond the Jesuit School of Theology, as ministry includes being formed by the people one serves.

Theological Reflection: Epiphanies and Signposts

Eleven representative participants, comprising students, faculty and staff, the then rector of the Jesuit community and an alumnus, joined two theological reflection meetings to discuss a draft report analyzing the empirical focus group and survey data. In addition to reading the draft report, theological reflection participants were provided with a series of questions to consider, including the following:

- What moved participants as they read the data findings?
- Where was God in the lived experience of the research participants?
- Where did participants notice moments of grace?
- What theological themes or insights from Ignatian spirituality could guide the theological reflection stage of the process?
- As participants prayed over the draft report findings, what did they sense God wanted for the lay students at the Jesuit School of Theology?

The theological reflection meetings began with prayer. The reflection was structured according to the pastoral circle model of theological reflection, with specific reference to 'social analysis', or the influence of social, religious and economic factors on a pastoral situation.[13] As the theological reflection groups moved through the four stages of the pastoral circle—insertion, social analysis, theological reflection and pastoral planning—specific themes from the research data were considered through an Ignatian lens. The reflection questions were mapped on to the four stages of the pastoral circle and helped to guide the discussion. The inclusion of Ignatian, God-focused questions fostered an attitude of discernment within this phase of the action research cycle. The themes

[13] See Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000).

of consolation and desolation were recognised in both the research findings and the participants' reactions as they contemplated what moved them within the findings. Three theological themes also emerged.

A Developing Theology of Lay Ecclesial Ministry

The Second Vatican Council initiated the opening up of the role of the laity, and this prompted a period of creative exploration of lay ministerial activity in the Church. Participants reflected on the developing theology of lay ecclesial ministry within the contemporary Church based on the universal call to holiness inspired by baptism. It was acknowledged, however, that lay ecclesial ministerial identity has not yet permeated the larger Roman Catholic imagination. This is evident as lay students may arrive at the Jesuit School of Theology unfamiliar with Vatican II documents concerning the laity, even though these were written over fifty years ago. Lay students are sometimes also unaware of other ecclesial documents relating to lay formation.

An insight that emerged from the theological reflection meetings was that suffering and sacrifice are part of the developing lay ecclesial ministerial vocation. The challenges of lay ministry, as voiced by the research subjects, may give rise to a theology of suffering and lament. Such a theology needs to be recognised and discerned. This may require paying attention to the movements of consolation and desolation within the lay vocational experience. These movements need to be considered within a redemptive framework that pays attention to the life-giving aspects of the lay vocation and the call of Christ to participate in lay ecclesial ministry.

Community Space: Developing a Theology of Friendship and Witness

Participants in the theological reflection noted that, given the various vocational pathways for ordained and lay ministers, creative tension might arise within the shared community space of lay and Jesuit students. An acknowledged strength of the Jesuit School of Theology is that students in the Master of Divinity programme preparing for the priesthood and for lay ecclesial ministry are not separated. Students need to embrace any creative tension and exercise a theology of collaborative friendship.

The theologian Bernard Cooke has described 'human love and friendship' as the basic sacrament.[14] Friendship, with this sacramental, and hence revelatory, dimension, is expressive of God's love and is a

[14] Bernard Cooke, *Sacraments and Sacramentality* (Mystic: Twenty Third, 1983), 85–86.

paradigm that students can be encouraged to exemplify in supporting and ministering to one another's vocational callings. The call to collaboration and dialogue between lay ecclesial ministers and those who are, or will be, ordained, is nurtured by the liturgical life of the Jesuit School of Theology and the shared life of the assembly. A theology of collaboration between lay and religious, rooted in the celebration of the liturgy, may be expressed through a lived theology of friendship. Sacramental worship, and the presence of Christ within the liturgical assembly, were formative experiences mentioned by research participants. Students talked about the liturgical and eucharistic sacramental life of the Jesuit School of Theology and the ways in which this animates the baptismal identity of all ministers and inspires conversation about lay and priestly formation and collaboration.

A theology of collaboration between lay and religious

Ignatian Discernment

Finally, Ignatian discernment, influential in the design of the action research project, was a prominent theme in the theological reflection stage. Given the Jesuit School of Theology's mission, the discernment of spirits is particularly important as the evil spirit may be at work in trying to cause division and conflict and to disrupt aspects of collaborative ministerial formation. The challenges that may arise from shared lay-Jesuit community space are fertile areas for this. It is important for the school to be aware of this dynamic and for staff and students constantly to discern spirits and spiritual movements, in order to address any tensions that may exist within the shared community.

Pastoral Planning and Recommendations

Action research prompts change within an organization, and this research project generated ideas and led to recommendations for planning future lay formation activities specific to the Jesuit School of Theology's unique context. These recommendations incorporated the theme of the *magis*, a desire to reach higher and for more. They began with the writing of a cohesive narrative describing formation, resources and activities, and the varied dimensions of lay formation offerings at the school, including retreats for lay students. Changes included pastoral planning to provide more structured lay ecclesial formation activities alongside existing retreat opportunities. This was in response to the desires that surfaced in the voices of research participants and in the subsequent theological reflection process.

The confluence of these participant voices in the research was revealing, and the responses of former students were particularly significant. Alumni/ae survey responses provided insights into the Jesuit School of Theology's preparation of its lay graduate ministers for post-graduation ministries. The graduates described lay ministry from the standpoint of their lived experience following their studies. This inspired a research recommendation to explore and implement further contact between current lay students and alumni/ae, including mentoring of current lay students by alumni/ae. Since the conclusion of the research, regular lay formation events have been established, creating spaces for lay students to gather, pray, share meals and engage in conversation, often with a guest alumni/ae speaker. At these events alumni/ae support and encourage the lay students. Future academic courses and workshops at the Jesuit School of Theology in the area of lay ecclesial formation are being considered.

Reflection on the research findings prompted a consciousness-raising exercise to encourage ongoing dialogue about lay ecclesial ministry. The need for continuing individual and communal discernment was discussed during the theological reflection stage of the research. Lay students should be encouraged to pay attention in their discernment to their interior freedom and to God's call. Spiritual direction, offered to all Jesuit School of Theology students, provides a formative space for them as they discern their graced experiences and movements within their prayer. As part of this conversation and communal discernment, the theologian Edward Hahnenberg was invited to deliver a lecture on lay ecclesial ministry and meet students, faculty and staff to discuss lay ecclesial formation.

The Jesuit School of Theology's lay formation research revealed much that is positive and worth celebrating about both the lay-orientated and school-wide experiences of formation, providing encouraging themes to guide a way of proceeding for the future. The research process also fostered community-building through the focus groups, shared theological reflection and community dissemination sessions after the final report was completed. The themes of collaboration, accompaniment and discernment are identified as mission-orientated values within the Jesuit School of Theology Strategic Plan.[15] The

[15] *Santa Clara University, Jesuit School of Theology Strategic Plan, 2018–2023*, available at https://www.scu.edu/media/jst/Strategic-Plan-FINAL.pdf, accessed 19 March 2022.

research project has assisted with defining the application of these values to lay formation and community life.

Ignatian Spirituality and Action Research: A Synergy

Action researchers often employ the terms *first-*, *second-* and *third-person research* to describe various levels of learning inquiry within an action research process. David Coghlan explores a synthesis between these three levels of inquiry and Ignatian spirituality. First-person research refers to an individual researcher's work and observations. Coghlan likens this to St Ignatius' personal reflections, of the kind found in his *Autobiography*, and to individuals engaging in prayer, such as the Ignatian Examen. Second-person inquiry refers to the kind of community engagement that a researcher fosters during the research process. This Coghlan compares to the formal 'deliberation' in which Ignatius and his companions engaged as they discerned whether they should become a permanent group, resulting in the founding of the Society of Jesus.[16] Third-person inquiry refers to the dissemination of the results of an action research process, often in the form of written reports or published works. Coghlan observes that the *Spiritual Exercises* and *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* constitute such third-person reflections.[17]

First-, second- and third-person inquiry can be identified within the Jesuit School of Theology's lay formation research. The Examen-style prayer at the beginning of focus groups was an opportunity for individual first-person practice and reflection. The theological reflection process, which included various members of the school community, set the stage for communal second-person inquiry. As community members engaged in prayerful theological reflection and consideration of next steps, they created knowledge and engaged in a capacity-building exercise. The resulting final research report, read by faculty, staff, students, alumni/ae and prospective students, is an example of third-person inquiry in action research.

The explicit incorporation of Ignatian spirituality into an action research paradigm yielded a dynamic reflective process that educated participants and researchers alike. Coghlan observes that if the traditions of Ignatian spirituality and action research 'can converse and cross-fertilise,

[16] Coghlan, 'Seeking God in All Things', 106. Coghlan refers to Jules J. Toner, 'The Deliberation that Started the Jesuits', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 6/4 (September 1974).
[17] Coghlan, 'Seeking God in All Things', 103–107.

the fruit may well be both abundant and rich', and our Ignatian action research process provided plentiful and stimulating reflection and practical results.[18] At each stage of the research, Ignatian precepts inspired the Jesuit School of Theology community to progress deeper in its reflection on lay ecclesial formation. The project offered a means to take notice of the movements of God's spirit within the school, endowing the process with an incarnational quality. It enabled the community to consider its own practices and engage in prayerful institutional discernment, leading to the identification of opportunities to enhance formation.

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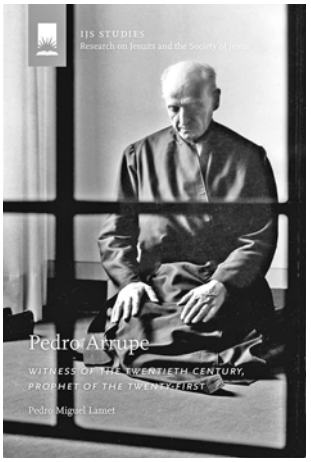
[18] Coghlan, 'Seeking God in All Things', 108.

RECENT BOOKS

Pedro Miguel Lamet, *Pedro Arrupe: Witness of the Twentieth Century, Prophet of the Twenty-First*, translated by Joseph V. Owens (Georgetown: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2020). 978 1947 6170 87, pp.495, $24.95.



The first version of this book appeared over 25 years ago, shortly after the death of the famous superior general of the Jesuits, Pedro Arrupe (1907–1991). This expanded new edition is informed by several important works published in the meanwhile, notably the collection edited by Gianni La Bella, *Pedro Arrupe. Un uomo per gli altri* (2007). It has also benefitted from greater freedom in referring to sensitive material involving the Vatican. An outstanding feature of the new book is the wealth of illustrations that cover the whole long life of Arrupe from his birth in the *barrio viejo* (historic original area of Bilbao) to the painful, final ten years when he was confined to a bare infirmary room.

The paradox of this story is that, for the first twenty years, the man who was to epitomise the modern Jesuit, seems to have had no thought of becoming a Jesuit. Aged sixteen, he had moved to Madrid to study medicine with a view to becoming a doctor. However, during the next four years, two experiences seem to have shaken him profoundly. The first was contact with the slums of Madrid, where he discovered hunger and poverty for the first time. The second was a stay in Lourdes, where as a trainee doctor he was allowed to examine two dramatic miracles. Suddenly God intervened in his life, but only very gradually—so it seems—did he began to turn over in his mind the thought of devoting himself to Christ in the Society of Jesus.

In Madrid, he had made some remarkable contacts—with a future prime minister of the Spanish Republic, Juan Negrín, and with a future Nobel laureate, Severo Ochoa. Both became friends and provide proof, if that was needed, of the exceptional capacity for friendship that was to be such a feature of Arrupe's life: 'Without a doubt, in all the Society's history, Arrupe is the superior general who has most cultivated friendship' (323 note 4, and see 353 for the breadth of his friendships).

Caught up in the frequent expulsions of Jesuits from Spain, in 1931 Arrupe began the series of travels which were to become a prominent feature of his

life. Over the course of eight years he visited Belgium, Germany and then the USA. Finally, in 1938 he reached Japan, a mission he had requested almost as soon as he began his interrupted philosophy studies at Oña in Spain. From very early on, he seems to have had a clear vocation for Japan. He felt very strongly that such was God's will for him: 'My only motivation for the missions was the will of God. I felt that God was calling me to Japan, and therefore I wanted to go there.'[1] Lamet comments: 'That attitude of following God's will at each moment would [be] the spiritual key to all of Arrupe's life' (103).

Once established in Japan, Arrupe had to struggle with the complexities of the Japanese language (well presented by Lamet, 113–114). Eventually he was appointed novice master and then provincial. However, while involved in pastoral work he went through a soul-searing experience during the Second World War, when he was imprisoned for a month as a suspected spy and interrogated. The incident ended with friendship between Arrupe and his captors. An even more soul-shaking experience was to follow when his medical skills were put to the test helping victims of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima, where the chance finding of a sack of boric acid (an antiseptic) came as a godsend (181).

His activity as a writer, such as his translation at this time into Japanese of St John of the Cross, was remarkable and remained a prominent feature of his life.[2] His years as provincial, undertaken with enormous energy, provoked criticisms—a presage of troubles to come when he was general. Fortunately this biography, though written with great admiration for Arrupe, allows one to see why people could find him difficult. In my own conversations with those who served under him in Japan I gathered that several hoped he would be elected general so that he would not return![3] Lamet rather skates over the way Arrupe smuggled cultivated Japanese pearls out of the country to raise money (209), and one Spanish scholastic complained to me about the severity with which Arrupe prohibited smoking. However, the overall impression he made—both by his physical energy[4] and his spiritual depth—was overwhelming.

Arrupe was a man of acute vision and imagination who could intuit where pastoral work was needed. This became apparent worldwide when he was elected general in 1963. Under his leadership the Society of Jesus underwent a transformation. At the beginning he still carried the intellectual and cultural baggage of an earlier epoch; he gradually came to realise,

[1] The quotation is from the *Memorias* written by Arrupe in 1959.
[2] Nine volumes are attributed to him in the bibliography (489) and Lamet discovered eight works published by Arrupe in Japanese (200 note 13).
[3] For criticisms, see .222, 240 with note 13, and 370: 'He was criticized for his naiveté, idealism, lack of force and excessive optimism'.
[4] He survived on only four hours' sleep and a meagre diet.

> It meant relinquishing a whole series of attitudes, practices, concepts, and priorities that had to be left behind, according to the council [Vatican II], in order to enter into others that were more amorphous, still to be clarified and defined; it meant leaving a world of security created in the course of that age-old tradition of the church and the Society, in order to enter on a road that led to a world still *in fieri*, a world unfamiliar to us, but one to which God was calling us by the council. (373)[5]

Of the twenty chapters in this book, six deal with the years of Arrupe's generalate (1963–1983). Key events here were the two general congregations (1963, 1973) and in particular his dealings with Popes Paul VI and John Paul II: both were complicated, especially given the latter's more authoritarian style of government. Lurking in the background seem to have been different understandings of obedience.[6] But major problems had to be faced by Arrupe with the attitude of fellow Jesuits, either the extreme traditionalists (who wanted to preserve what they called the 'true' Society; 295–296), or those progressives who wanted an accelerated rate of change (notably José María Diéz Alegría, the outstanding Jesuit moralist and friend of Arrupe; 314–331).

Some would claim that his major achievement ('the most relevant and dynamic' in the words of Adolfo Nicolás, the second successor of Arrupe as general; prologue, 3) was the foundation of the Jesuit Refugee Service, but Arrupe himself probably saw it as the option for social justice, culminating in decree 4 of General Congregation 32 (1973): 'That year [1973] I saw clearly that something completely new was beginning. I was interiorly certain.' (336)

Pedro Lamet is a professional journalist, with numerous books to his credit. He writes with verve and imagination, so that his text is a pleasure to read (and here ably translated). Many of the details he mentions, such as Arrupe's addiction to the Japanese habit of the *furo* (a hot bath after the main meal to restore one's energy; 349), bring his subject alive as a real human being. The readership aimed at is clearly Spanish and no attempt has been made to adapt the numerous references for an English-reading public.[7] There is a good index and the price is very reasonable.

For readers of *The Way*, the spiritual life of Arrupe depicted here has a special interest. He found prayer easy and devoted several hours a day to its practice. One may ask if he was a mystic. A number of profound—mystical—experiences are mentioned. Lamet records a series of very important and revealing interviews he was able to conduct in 1983 with Arrupe, who by this time was a very sick man:

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[5] A passage from a series of studies published in Arrupe, *La Identitad del jesuita*, in 1981.

[6] 'We are not "papists" in the old understanding of the term', Arrupe remarked at one point (335).

[7] For example, Arrupe's retreat notes of 1965 have been available in English since 2010: *Chosen by God*, translated with an introduction by Joseph A. Munitiz (Oxford: Way Books).

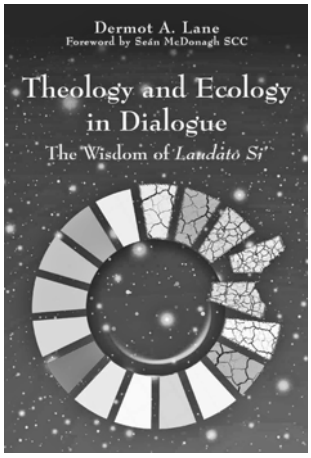
> He confided to me that he felt broken by his infirmity: 'I am alone, I am no use for anything. I used to speak seven languages and now I cannot even express myself in Spanish. Everybody treats me with kindness, but I am alone, alone.' At the same time, he confessed, 'I was always happy', and he recapitulated three important spiritual lights he had thus far had in his life: in Oña [1931 while beginning his philosophical studies], when he had a kind of illumination and 'saw everything as new'; in Cleveland [1937, while in tertianship], when it seemed that he 'was being born again', and in Yokahama [1938 on reaching Japan], where he felt himself to be 'one with Christ'. (110 note 6; see also 431)

One recurring theme is the primacy of example over words: his authenticity, his interior harmony, his simplicity and his transparency of soul did more to convince his audience than any words (133; and see 2, 127, 143, 166). My own impression is that Arrupe is a perfect—saintly—example of the 'contemplative in action' so desired by Ignatius.

Joseph A. Munitiz SJ

Copies of *Pedro Arrupe: Witness of the Twentieth Century, Prophet of the Twenty-First* may be purchased from the Way Ignatian Book Service, at www.theway.org.uk/BookService.shtml, or by contacting the editorial office.

Dermot A. Lane, *Theology and Ecology in Dialogue: The Wisdom of* Laudato si' (Dublin: Messenger, 2020). 978 1 7881 2194 1, pp.160, £18.95.



Interest in ecotheology—the attempt to bring together thinking on ecology and theology—has been slowly building for a few decades. In a now famous essay from 1967, Lynn White argued that the 'historical roots of our ecologic crisis' can be found in the human-centredness of Judaeo-Christian religion.[8] But White also admits, towards the end of the same essay, that it may yet be possible to find more ecologically minded strands of thought woven into the Christian tradition—and he points towards the example of St Francis.

It is fitting, then, that it is Pope Francis's 2015 encyclical letter *Laudato si': On Care for Our Common Home* that has really brought these ecotheological conversations to the fore. For those within the Church, *Laudato si'* initiated a raft of regional, national and local

[8] Lynn White Jr, 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis', *Science*, 155/3767 (10 March 1967), 1203–1207.

initiatives to attempt to care better for our common home. For those outside, *Laudato si'* sent a significant signal that many Christians are ready and willing to engage with ecological concerns. Indeed, some have speculated that the Paris climate agreement of December 2015 benefitted quite directly from Francis's moral impetus.

Dermot Lane's *Theology and Ecology in Dialogue* was published in May 2020, on the fifth anniversary of the landmark encyclical. The aim of the book is to pick up where *Laudato si'* leaves off by articulating, in a little more detail, what Francis's vision means for various topics within systematic theology. In other words, how does the 'radical call' of *Laudato si'* affect theological thinking about Christ, the Holy Spirit, worship, the eucharist, the place of humanity and our ultimate destiny (13)? Lane suggests that *Laudato si'* does not engage in these topics directly because it is addressed to all of humanity and does not want to alienate non-believers (20). Yet Lane is convinced that a new theology is required.

Part of Lane's underlying argument is that *Laudato si'* has more than simply ethical ramifications. If we take Francis at his word, we do not just need to change how we live; we might also need to reconsider what we believe. Implicit in Lane's proposal, then, is an important connection between doctrine and praxis: what we think (at least to some extent) influences what we do. And how we worship influences both what we think and what we do. Indeed, Sean McDonagh alerts us to these connections in his foreword to the book (7). Phrases such as 'Lord, teach us to despise the things of the earth and to love the things of heaven'—from a post-communion prayer in the Roman missal—encourage an escapist theology and discourage care for the earth.

So, what does Lane's re-envisioned systematic theology entail? In terms of Christ, Lane wants to make sure that our understanding of salvation is not separate from our conception of creation. He writes: 'Incarnation is built into the interiority of creation from the dawn of time. The purpose of creation is to provide a suitable context for the advent of the Word/Wisdom/Spirit made flesh.' (87) In other words, Christ was not a Plan B, to save us from our sins, but a continuation and a concentration of the self-giving of God in creation. Lane also touches on Niels Gregersen's notion of 'Deep Incarnation'—the idea that Christ's incarnation is embedded within much broader social, biological and material processes. Similarly, he encourages us to seek the Holy Spirit in nature, drawing on various understandings of the Spirit in the Hebrew Bible. As he writes: 'the Spirit sleeps in stones, dreams in flowers and dances in human beings' (71).

In terms of the place of humanity, Lane insists that we need to break down the residual human-centredness that Lynn White identified, and replace it with a 'radical relationality' (35). We should envisage, he says,

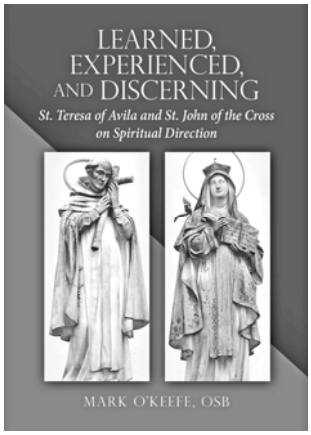
neither dominion nor stewardship, but a community of creation model, where humans take their place alongside other creatures (124). On this understanding, it is not just humanity that is made in the image of God, but the whole of creation (129).

According to Lane, changes in religious practice are also in order. In his view, liturgy has become 'socially and culturally isolated from what is going on in the world' (115). Ideally, liturgy ought to be able to take account of suffering in the natural world, diagnose ecological sin and motivate ecological sensitivity. One obvious way to do this would be by reconnecting with the cosmic dimensions of the eucharist. Drawing on Teilhard de Chardin's mass on the world, Lane proposes that the eucharist offers a moment for sublime 'communion with nature' (136). Lane also asserts: 'If this [ecological] outlook is not reflected within the vision and language of liturgy, more and more people will feel ill at ease at Sunday Eucharist, and will simply walk away' (144). This is a striking claim about the need for liturgical relevance.

Lane is good at collating the work of others, often providing bullet-point summaries of key ideas. But he spends less time critiquing or developing those with whom he engages. Each of his chapters is therefore a fruitful starting point for further doctrinal reflection, providing basic ingredients for much larger works of systematic theology. What Lane does illustrate, though, is the sheer extent to which ecological concerns might penetrate theology and practice. For systematic theologians, *Laudato si'* really is a radical call.

Tim Middleton

Mark O'Keefe, *Learned, Experienced, and Discerning: St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross on Spiritual Direction* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2020). 978 0 8146 8810 6, pp.184, £14.99.



At the heart of this interesting little book lies the question: 'What exactly *is* spiritual direction?' Readers of *The Way* would, presumably, give an answer based on the example and legacy of St Ignatius Loyola and his followers. Yet, as this book demonstrates, there are alternative ways of understanding this unique helping relationship between two individuals and, indeed, these stretch back to Ignatius' own lifetime. Both saints, Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582) and John of the Cross (1542–1591) were contemporaries of Ignatius, but, as this book demonstrates,

they reveal differing currents of spirituality that were active on the Iberian peninsula during Ignatius' life and ministry.

The book is clearly organized into three sections, the first of which looks at the question, 'What is spiritual direction?'; the second examines St Teresa on the subject; and the third turns to her co-worker, St John. The overarching conceit, derived from the Carmelites' description of the director, is that the essential characteristic of such Teresian-Sanjuanist direction is for the director to be 'learned, experienced and discerning'. Various authors have tackled this subject over the years, usually, however, concentrating on one or other of the saints. O'Keefe is to be commended in providing a very readable summary of the saints' own writings as well as some of the pertinent literature on the subject of the past few decades (with both English and Spanish sources being cited).

As O'Keefe points out from the start, since neither of the Carmelites actually wrote about 'spiritual direction' or 'spiritual directors', his topic presents something of a conundrum. He responds by consulting several recent authors in the field, most especially Williams Barry and Connolly, finally agreeing with Gordon Smith that contemporary understanding suggests that 'a good spiritual director' should have five essential characteristics: a basic understanding of theology, an awareness of Christian spirituality, compassion, attention to the Holy Spirit and the ability to maintain confidentiality (11). Inspiring though such definitions are, however, O'Keefe points out that they do not necessarily portray what the Carmelites develop in their lives and ministry. This O'Keefe goes on to explore in his two sections on Teresa and John. In both the context is well delineated and he uses both primary and secondary sources well.

In this respect readers of *The Way* will find especially interesting the fascinating story of Teresa's interaction with her own Jesuit confessors. This is important for several reasons. First, there is Teresa's first-hand account in the *Book of the Life* which gives us unique insights into the role and nature of spiritual direction in the early years of the Society. Secondly, as Teresa had the great good fortune to meet some of the 'giants' of early Jesuit spirituality such as Baltasar Álvarez and Francisco Borja, she gives us fascinating insights into the early history of spiritual direction at the birth of the Order. One assumes that Teresa must have undergone some sort of Ignatian exercises with these directors but little evidence remains of this (although the impression of Ignatian spirituality can be found in her later writings).

As a Benedictine himself the author, perhaps wisely, does not pursue this line of enquiry. Personally, I have always found the clearest example of Teresa's brand of spiritual direction in her extraordinary correspondence. This is written to princes, prelates, family members and religious but always with that mixture of humanity and wisdom that makes her so irresistible as a saint. Numerous examples are given but the way *la Santa* nurtured and guided her *conquistador* brother, Lorenzo, is particularly noteworthy.

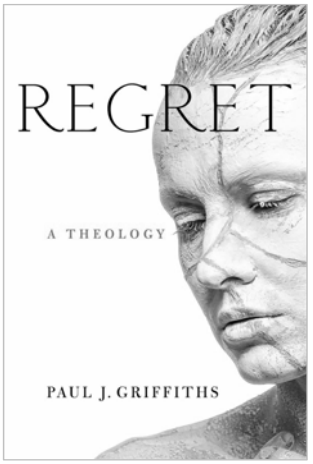
Turning to St John, once again O'Keefe surveys all the fascinating writing of this 'prince of mystics' on the subject emphasizing throughout (following Kevin Culligan) his 'genuineness, caring and understanding' (103). Of particular note, and given due attention, are the advices on good and bad spiritual direction in *The Living Flame of Love.* O'Keefe informs us that the late American spiritual writer Thomas Green read these passages annually to remind him of the skills required as a spiritual director. I would heartily concur with this advice and if the present book can lead its readers to a greater acquaintance with John's writing here then it will have served an important role in the current promotion of spiritual direction as a key Christian ministry.

What is fascinating in John's account is not so much the qualities he ascribes to the good spiritual director as those that define a bad director. These errant directors, he tells us, force themselves on the soul of the poor directee 'like a blacksmith' who 'knows no more than how to hammer and pound with the faculties. Since hammering with the faculties is this director's only teaching.' (126–127) Like Teresa, John must surely have had his share of bad directors (although he demurs from naming names, unlike Teresa), and his whole treatise is a profound call for what we would today call 'good practice' in the art of spiritual direction.

So, in summary, this is a fascinating book and well worth acquiring. As usual today there is no index—but perhaps we have now moved into a 'post-index' era. There is one disappointment: the cover tells us that Fr O'Keefe is 'an experienced spiritual guide and retreat director' yet (like John and unlike Teresa) he relates little of his personal experience in the field—perhaps we may see that in a later volume? That said, I agree entirely with his final definition of the 'spiritual director' based on his Carmelite researches: 'spiritual direction is fundamentally a graced human relationship that serves and seeks to deepen a human relationship with the divine, lived in ordinary daily life' (158). Amen to that.

Peter Tyler

Paul J. Griffiths, *Regret: A Theology* (Notre Dame: U. of Notre Dame, 2021). 978 0 2682 0026 8, pp.152, $30.00.



The French novelist Léon Bloy wrote, 'When you die, this is what you take with you: the tears you have shed and the tears you have caused to be shed, your store of bliss and terror. It is on these tears that we shall be judged.'[9] Paul Griffiths' *Regret: A Theology* probes what it means to be in situations that we wish were otherwise, and the attitudes—regret, as well as remorse, contrition and penance—that surround them. A Catholic theologian's task, he tells us with a wink, is not to be right, but to be interesting (xi). In 2017 Griffiths courted controversy and very publicly stepped down from his position at Duke University on a matter of principle. In light of that, this slim volume reads like a phenomenological working through of the interior contours and shades of someone familiar with wishing things had gone otherwise.

The text is divided into eight chapters, beginning where all theology ought to: the LORD. Griffiths rejects clunky pronouns in lieu of the divine name, and so the LORD jumps out from nearly every page. In chapter one, Griffiths considers whether the LORD might have regrets. He translates God's scriptural sentiment (*paenitet me*) as 'I regret-repent' of previous actions. The LORD regret-repents by sending the flood to reset creation, by sparing Nineveh, by replacing Saul with David, and by sending Christ to undo the stain of Adam.

Griffiths argues that these divine reversals of course involve 'acknowledgement that what had been undertaken [by God] was a mistake, or at least hasn't yielded the fruit it was intended and thought likely to yield' (8). But how does this square with God being all-knowing and all-powerful? Griffiths suggests that divine regret-repentance is 'narrative-devotional talk' while the latter is more theoretical, and a Christian grammar admits of different registers of speech for different contexts and purposes (11).

A fuller answer comes in chapter two, which treats Adam and Eve's disobedience in the Garden. Their *felix culpa*—a 'happy fault'—prompted God to bring about good fruit, precisely *because of* their transgression (17). Rather than blunt causal necessity, Griffiths argues that happy faults are patently bad conditions upon which 'the mode of possibility' of God's often

[9] Léon Bloy, *L'Invendable* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1919), 37,

opaque love can bring about felicities that do not erase the initial faults (22). God uses Adam and Eve's disobedience to make them conscious of their moral agency as humans, which is a good. And yet they—we—can wish that this knowledge arrived otherwise. Human (or angelic) transgressions require nothing short of God's grace to bring about good; only Jesus' rising can undo the Fall of Adam. But God does not preordain our failings as a necessary set-up for God to swoop in dramatically as saviour in the final act. That way of thinking leads to some strange interpretations of human-wrought atrocities.

Chapter three offers a philosophical-theological meditation on space and time, and on how liturgy, poetry and art disrupt our sense of both. While the 'otherwise-attitudes' (of regret, remorse, contrition and so on) are typically coupled with past actions, Griffiths gives compelling examples of regretting *future* near-certainties: regret about ongoing marital infidelity, addictive habits and the like.

The fourth chapter, on lament, shows how it differs slightly from regret in that one can lament something without wishing it otherwise. Griffiths offers a pastoral reflection on how to acknowledge an unpleasant reality, while 'refusing to avert [one's] gaze from it' (56). Comparing Augustine's mourning of his mother's death to a dark latter-day poem of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Griffiths carefully rescues lament (an appropriate Christian response) from the clutches of despair. Despair is an overdramatized distortion of lament that occludes Christian hope. For those engaged in pastoral ministry, this chapter alone is worth reading to help people address grief, death, and loss without becoming 'hypnotized by the snake eyes of despair' (64).

Chapter five is a literary excursus on the 'flesh-tearing bite of remorse' (from Latin *mordere*, to bite) (67). Griffiths artfully shows the limits of psychological interiority and anguish from within secular literature. This paves the way for chapter six, on religious contrition and solidarity: 'In remorse, I want my pain to go away; in contrition, I begin to want the world's damage to be redressed' (78). The conception of human interrelation from Buddhism—Griffiths' other field of interest—appears too briefly as a fellow traveller with Christian solidarity. Thomas Aquinas' theology of contrition also makes a regrettably brief appearance. Griffiths notes in the preface that he 'largely eschews' (xii) engaging with other voices from the Catholic tradition, which is a pity. But the omission may be tactical, given that his audience may include secular lovers of literature who are not (yet) theologically committed.

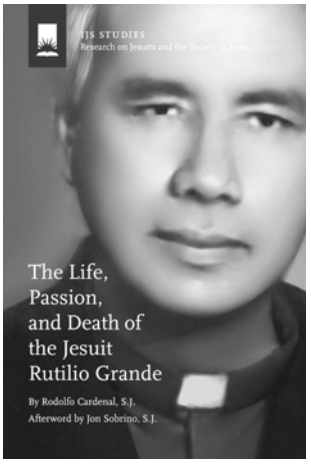
Chapters seven and eight delve into confession and penance, from the general to the sacramental particulars. Griffiths argues that, in order to avoid self-deception, penitents are better off simply listing their sins ('I stole five times') rather than curating dramatic narratives *around* sins ('I guess I

steal because I want my parents' attention'). If the goal of confessing is to move one's gaze from the *nothings* of sin ('what is not the LORD, which is always and exactly nothing'; 101) back to the LORD, then we ought to avoid ornamentation. As a priest who hears confessions, I can affirm that sins are, in fact, boring *nothings*. Yet sins occur in concrete situations, and a priest-confessor's goal is to prompt self-reflection that yields graced insights, not past artifice. When appropriate I ask penitents if they notice any patterns or habits of the heart that lead up to their listed sins. If sins are sicknesses of the soul—a metaphor Griffiths offers—then a good doctor asks not just 'what hurts?' but '*how* did you hurt it?' Such diagnostics help accurately to assess virulence (culpability), and a suitable remedy (penance).

Griffiths' chapters often end with pastoral codas; we learn to separate regret about a soured marriage from celebrating the children born of it. We abhor injustices while calibrating our own culpability for, and penitential response to, structures of sin. The most memorable insight for me is double-barrelled: 'Heaven makes nothing go away' (29). There the *nothings* of sin, evil and death are vanquished. But it also means that the tears we shed and cause—our store of regrets?—are not dismissed, but transformed.

Joseph Simmons SJ

Rodolfo Cardenal, *The Life, Passion, and Death of the Jesuit Rutilio Grande* (Boston, Ma: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2020). 978 1 9476 1706 3, pp.482, $32.95.



This timely biography of the recently beatified Jesuit martyr Rutilio Grande is a treasury of intimate detail and of the social and political history of El Salvador, and a testament to the difficulty of implementing the changes of Vatican II and the CELAM conference of Medellín. The book is based on two Spanish biographies written by the same author, *Rutilio Grande. Martir de la evangelizacion rural en El Salvador* (San Salvador: UCA, 1978), and *Historia de una esperanza: Vida de Rutilio Grande* (San Salvador: UCA, 1985).

Cardenal's work proceeds chronologically, beginning with intimate details of Rutilio's family life, upbringing and vocation. Interviews with family members, friends and colleagues supplement

some written resources, mainly personal letters, and give the reader a view inside the world of small-village life in the mid-1900s in El Salvador. Material drawn from letters archived at the Central American Archive of the Society of Jesus is used to present Fr Grande's own self-understanding as he realised his vocation in the course of his human development.

Fr Grande's early formative years in seminary are painstakingly recalled, mainly through correspondence and interviews, and shed light not only on his vocation, but on the politics and spirituality of seminary life in the context of a Church before, during and after Vatican II. The narrative bogs down a little in the details of chapters three and four, but quickly picks up as the pastoral project of Fr Grande begins to emerge from a formation that was European and yet grounded in the experience of the Salvadoran people. Of particular interest are the influence of *Lumen vitae* on the perspective of Fr Grande as well as the continual mental and physical health challenges he faced throughout these years.

The first and second stages of the 'missions' are summarised with the help of an article written by Fr Grande's missionary team in *Busqueda*, the journal of the archdiocese of El Salvador (1975) but Cardenal provides details beyond that source. Interviews with mission team members flesh out his account of the difficult and tension-filled work that both benefitted from and was threatened by different approaches to ministry. In this process the reader sees the development of a delicate, bold and important mission to poor rural communities that had a transformative effect on the people and parishes of the region around Aguilares. Of particular interest is Fr Grande's social science background and its usefulness in understanding and ministering to poor agricultural communities that had suffered oppression for generations. One of the great gifts of this biography is its explicit appeal to the social sciences and their value for understanding what working for the Kingdom of God in any context requires.

Evident throughout the narrative is the great division between the majority of bishops of El Salvador (including Óscar Romero at that time) and the work of the Jesuits and of Archbishop Chavez and Auxiliar Bishop Rivera y Damas. This is illustrative of the divide between those who truly seek a collaborative ministry in the servant-leader model of Vatican II and those who cling to tradition because it is comfortable and familiar. The hierarchy was split between those who accepted the council and what it meant for concrete pastoral ministry, and those who did not.

The remainder of the biography is an excellent illustration of the complexity of parish life within the explosive social and political context of El Salvador in the 1970s. The chapter on 'The Parish and the Popular Organizations' is a detailed account of the difficulty of working for the Kingdom

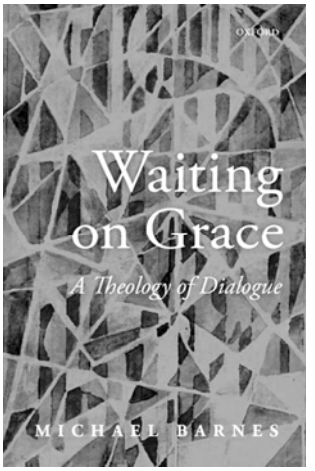
of God in a political context where neutrality was impossible. The Church shared public space with other organizations with which it could, at times, collaborate. At other times the misunderstandings from such collaboration created a difficult, even dangerous, situation for priests and pastoral workers.

The concluding chapters focus on the evolution of Óscar Romero when he became archbishop, and the death of Fr Grande. Eyewitness testimony is helpful in understanding those crucial weeks between Archbishop Romero's assumption of office and Fr Grande's death. Interesting supplementary material on the two people murdered with Fr Grande—Manuel Solorzano and Lemus Rutilio Nelson—is helpful in understanding the relationships at the centre of Fr Grande's life, and death. The response of the Salvadoran people to these murders, the actions of Archbishop Romero and the role of the papal nuncio and other bishops are all carefully detailed—and much of it is disturbing. While many of the wealthy conservative Roman Catholics of El Salvador accused Archbishop Romero of being manipulated by subversive priests, especially Jesuits, they were themselves manipulating the other bishops quite successfully.

The afterword by Fr Jon Sobrino is a helpful addition on martyrology and the importance of martyrs in the Catholic tradition. It uses real examples from El Salvador so that the martyrs for the faith in El Salvador are always understood to be in relation to a crucified people.

Thomas M. Kelly

Michael Barnes, *Waiting on Grace: A Theology of Dialogue* (Oxford: OUP, 2020). 978 0 1988 4219 4, pp.272, £63.00.



Imagine browsing the library shelves, having already found the book you are looking for, when your eyes are caught by a slim volume, the name of whose author creates a certain frisson for you. He is Arthur Day, a Jesuit priest, and he was your father's instructor on the journey to become a convert to Roman Catholicism.

This autobiographical memory is the point of departure for a beautiful book by another Jesuit, Michael Barnes, who combines deep and learned scholarship with a wise and generous humanity as he explores the nature of the Jewish–Christian relationship and its relevance

for dialogue between all religions and none. Day was a humane but 'old school' Christian apologist and confident missiologist: the title of his book (*Our Friends the Jews*) captures well this humane side—he really did have many Jewish friends—but the subtitle (*Confessions of a Proselytiser)* captures equally well his theological outlook. This is what Barnes calls 'classic supersessionism' (5), which holds that the promise made to the Jews has now passed to their Christian cousins and the 'Old Testament' is replaced by the New.

Barnes wants to explore the implications of the transition from this theological outlook to something that places dialogue at the heart of the Jewish–Christian relationship (chapter one), drawing on the declaration *Nostra aetatae* of the Second Vatican Council (chapters two and three). The mission of the Church is now understood within the *missio Dei*, the mission of God to the world; it is anachronistic to think of Judaism and Christianity in the first century (and even later) as separate 'religions'; instead a missionary Church continues to be formed within 'a Jewish matrix'. In this new context, influenced nowadays so much by our post-Shoah/Holocaust world (see chapter four, on Metz and Edith Stein, in particular), we can appreciate better the anti-Semitic effects of a supersessionary approach, and move to replace it with the 'theology of dialogue', which is the subtitle of Barnes's book.

Barnes is so good on what he means by dialogue. With Richard Kearney he notes that hospitality towards the stranger/other is not without risk and danger: and yet our instinct for survival is tempered by other emotions—curiosity, generosity, compassion. With Paul Ricoeur he is alive to the pattern of Self, Other, Analogy in human interaction. And so, despite risk, we do engage in dialogue with the 'other', a dialogue best characterized not so much by the Platonic model of the search for, and capture of, truth, but more by the model of Martin Buber, that affective-cognitive process which sees dialogue as an 'event', where something 'happens'. There are clear resonances here—as elsewhere in this study—with the stress placed by Pope Francis on 'encounter' and 'the peripheries'. There are also clear advantages to an approach that seeks to negotiate a way through the contemporary cultural terrain conjured by what Barnes refers to as 'Gillian Rose's brilliantly evocative term a "broken middle"' (22) between the ideological partiality of modernity and the fractured nihilism of postmodernity.

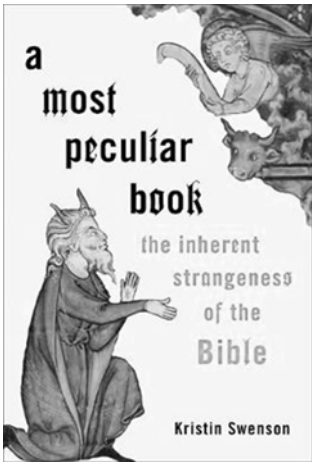
In dialogue with Abraham Heschel and Emmanuel Levinas (the prophetic, chapter five), Edith Stein (empathy, chapter six), Simone Weil (a different kind of waiting from Beckett's Godot, chapter seven) and many others,

Barnes explores further this notion of dialogue. Above all he is keen to distinguish a theology *for* dialogue (dialogue as instrumental, a communications tool) from a theology *of* dialogue (dialogue at the core of being human, the image and likeness of our Trinitarian God—we discover ourselves in the 'in between space', the 'third space' which 'intentional relationality' and dialogue involve; 229). I was reminded in this context of Hans Urs von Balthasar and his speculative theology of an 'event' or 'happening' (*Ereignis)* at the heart of the Trinity.

And so, back to the discovery of the book by Day in the library. Was this a purely random event or … a gift to someone already waiting, on the 'lookout'? The notion of dialogue as a predisposition (and already a fruit) of grace runs throughout this book, which is shot through with the generous outlook of Karl Rahner and his notion of God's self-communication to our world. In the context of this divine self-communication, 'waiting for grace' disposes us to the gift which always surpasses our expectations, those moments which 'catch the heart off guard and blow it open' (Seamus Heaney, postscript). This book, carefully argued, with precise analysis, is peppered with interesting conversation partners and (auto)biographical details. It is vintage stuff, the mature fruit of a lifetime of experience and scholarship in the field. It invites and amply rewards attentive reading.

Gerry O'Hanlon SJ

Kristin Swenson, *A Most Peculiar Book: The Inherent Strangeness of the Bible* (Oxford: OUP, 2021). 978 0 1906 5173 2, pp.288, £18.99.



This is a remarkable piece of work, which will be of interest to readers of *The Way*, especially those who are attracted, but also rather alarmed, by that strange collection of texts to which we give the deceptively monolithic name of 'The Bible'. It comes in four parts: 'A Book like No Other', 'Beings Odd and Otherwise', 'Troubling Texts' and 'But the Bible Says …'. You catch the general drift. This is not, however, an assault on the Bible; at the very beginning, the author (who is nobody's fool) proclaims, 'I love the Bible', but then immediately adds, in more or less the same breath, 'that statement gives me the willies' (xiii).

Our author is someone who knows the Bible well, and in scholarly terms, and she also thinks it very important. She is quite clear on the difficult process of canonization, so different among the many groups who use the Bible. Jews just use what we call the Old Testament, Protestants add the New Testament, while Roman Catholics and Orthodox have yet another Bible, with the additions taken not from the New Testament, but from a different version of the Old Testament. Swenson makes it clear that there could be no Christianity without the Hebrew Bible. This complex library of books was not just written in a single day by a single author, but over a period of two millennia by a number of contributing authors, most of whom are anonymous, and all of whom wrote in what are now 'dead languages'.

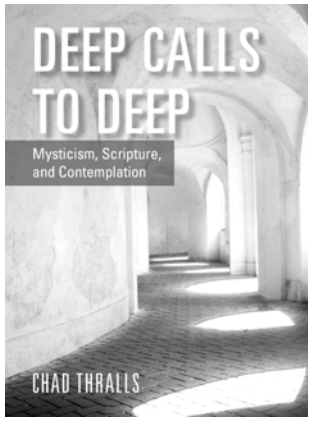
Not only that, but many of the authors of our biblical texts openly disagree with each other. So there are complexities here. And Swenson does not run away from them, especially the tricky question of who God is in the Bible. (The answer is not as easy as you might suppose: 'In the Bible, even the nature of God is a messy affair'; 59.) It is hard to see who the heroes of the Bible might be: no human being except Jesus ever gets everything right. Even current neuralgic issues such as homosexuality or abortion do not have clear-cut solutions from the text of the Bible (see 138, for example).

Again and again Swenson points to awkward or embarrassing disagreements in the Bible. We need to learn to see these as invitations to go deeper. How do you hold together, for example, the different accounts in the books of Joshua and Judges of the conquest of the Holy Land? What are we to say about the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the Bible was read as permitting slavery, with horrible results whose consequences remain with us today? What about Elisha apparently persuading two bears to eat 42 children who had teased him for his baldness?

This challenging book ends with 'Ten Commandments for Reading the Bible'. Or rather, since nothing is simple, ten commandments and one or two 'dos and 'don'ts'. In her final paragraph Swenson brings the whole story beautifully together: 'if you depend only on the Bible for developing a theologically sound manner of living, then you must approach the text in the most generous and open-minded way. Think for yourself with the best information available.' (232). Do read this book, generously and open-mindedly. You will not regret it.

Nicholas King SJ

Chad Thralls, *Deep Calls to Deep: Mysticism, Scripture, and Contemplation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2020). 978 1 6269 8398 4, pp. 192, £14.99.



As a student of Christian mysticism, I sometimes have this thought when reading classic mystical texts: *This may have made sense to persons in the early Church or the Middle Ages, but what about today? What would a mystical experience look like in the here and now?* I would guess I am not alone in asking this question. A great gift of this book is that it offers an answer to this question. In so doing, it makes mysticism seem less like a memory from times past and more like a living reality of today. In the words of the author:

> Our goal is to show how a mystical approach to Christian faith through an exploration of biblical passages, the teachings of a variety of mystics, and practices such as contemplation cultivates intimacy with God, which, in turn, can help readers experience mystical consciousness for themselves (xv).

This book approaches its subject in a way that invites readers to consider what it might mean to participate in the traditions of Christian mysticism.

Each of the book's chapters addresses a fundamental idea or practice in Christian mysticism. Chapter 1 defines mysticism. In doing so, the author emphasizes that mysticism is a journey, rather than being concerned only with extraordinary experiences. He also suggests that mysticism is for all persons rather than only a religious elite. In chapter 2, Thralls discusses the place of scripture in mysticism, most especially a mystical reading of the Bible that looks for hidden meaning about the human encounter with God in the text. Chapter 3 is about the understanding of God as this is found in the cataphatic way (which employs images and ideas to describe God), and the apophatic way (which claims that all such images and ideas must ultimately be transcended fully to encounter the mystery of the divine).

In chapter 4 the place of the human being in Christian mysticism is addressed, particularly as this is described in terms of the outer self of one's ego and the inner self that is the locus of encounter with God. Chapter 5 considers how the human experience of God is described in the Bible and in a selection of Christian mystical writings. In chapter 6, on contemplative prayer, particular attention is given to practices such as Centring Prayer and the Jesus Prayer, and the way these lead to a stilling of the mind's thoughts. This chapter also discusses the effects of contemplative prayer on

the mind of the practitioner and the criteria by which one may know if what is experienced in contemplation is authentic. Chapter 7 addresses the mystical life that is associated with contemplative practice. Specifically, it describes an interior disposition of feeling connected with, rather than separated from, other persons, and the qualities of action in the world that flows from mystical consciousness. Finally, chapter 8 focuses on the way mysticism brings a person into a sense of connection with the natural world.

There are a number of things that make this book worthy of recommendation. The author does an admirable job in weaving together perspectives from various sources in Christian mysticism, including the Bible, which the author describes as a 'primary mystical text' (xiv). Among classic mystical texts from throughout the history of Christianity the reader will find figures such as Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Bernard of Clairvaux and Teresa of Ávila. The book also includes contemporary voices, including Howard Thurman, Thomas Merton, Martin Laird, Cynthia Bourgeault and Bernard McGinn. The bringing together of past and present perspectives can be seen most prominently in the book's treatment of contemplative prayer, which places classic and contemporary mystical writings alongside each other, thus providing for a comprehensive understanding of this mystical practice.

The variety of sources referenced in this book points to another of its strengths, which is a synthetic approach to its subject. While much is to be gained from scholarship on mysticism that involves in-depth discussion of a particular mystical figure or text, it is also important to have studies that treat mysticism more broadly, addressing themes that are found throughout figures, texts and historical periods. This book is a wonderful example of a synthetic approach to the study of Christian mysticism.

In *Deep Calls to Deep*, Chad Thralls writes with intention, and that intention is to help readers appreciate that the mystical element of Christianity is something that can touch and bring meaning to their lives. As the book concludes, 'the point of being religious … is to deepen our consciousness of God's presence. The primary goal of this book is to help readers come to know the contemplative life by experiencing it for themselves.' (163) I would highly recommend this book to anyone who wants to come to see what mysticism might look like in his or her life in the present day.

Glenn Young