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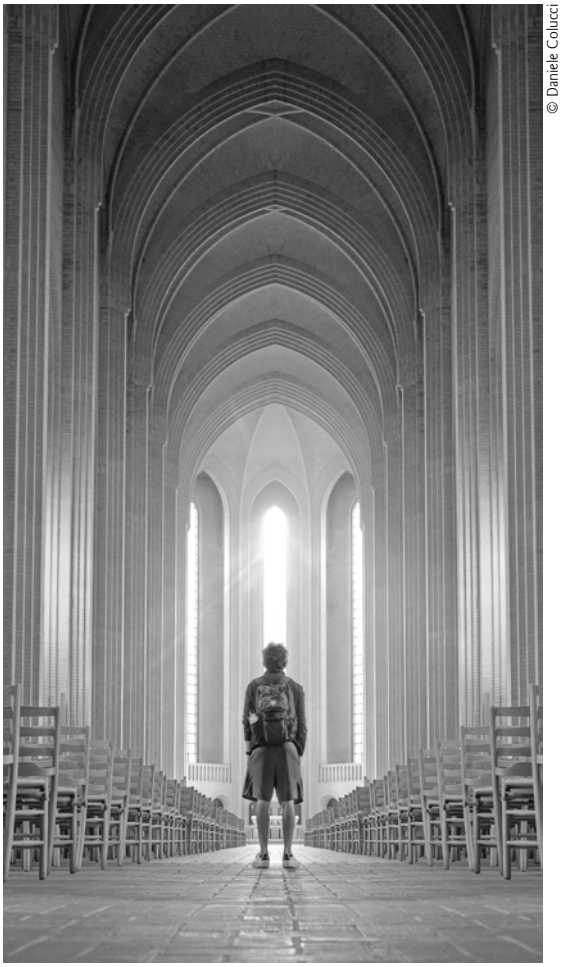
CONVERSION



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.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABBREVIATIONS

Autobiography	Ignatius of Loyola, 'Reminiscences (Autobiography)', in *Personal Writings*
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 *Personal Writings*
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–)
Personal Writings	*Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, translated by Philip Endean and Joseph A. Munitiz (London: Penguin, 1996)

Papal documents may be found at www.vatican.va

FOREWORD

ON 20 MAY 1521 the Basque knight Iñigo de Loyola was seriously injured by a cannonball while defending the town of Pamplona against French besiegers. His long recovery gave him a chance to reassess his life, and set him on the path towards composing the *Spiritual Exercises* and founding the Society of Jesus. The Society has been celebrating the fifth centenary of this event with an anniversary year, running up to his feast-day on 31 July 2022. The theme of 'conversion', chosen for this commemoration, is reflected in this year's special issue of *The Way*.

As part of the same celebrations, Campion Hall in Oxford hosted the annual St Beuno's conference in March this year, entitled The Art of Change: Ignatius and Conversion. The event brought together those involved in the theory and practice of the Spiritual Exercises, and three of its keynote addresses are printed as the first three articles here. Nicholas Austin suggests that the idea of *progress* is the best way of understanding Ignatius' attitude to conversion. Philip Endean argues that current Ignatian thought sees conversion as ongoing rather than a specific event, and Celia Deane-Drummond writes about the concept of ecological conversion, which is reflected in several other pieces collected here.

Meanwhile the French Jesuits at the Centre Sèvres in Paris have also been celebrating the anniversary, and we take the opportunity to present three papers in translation.[1] Tiziano Ferraroni and Sylvie Robert consider the theme as it is presented in the *Spiritual Exercises*, the former focusing on changing images of God, and the latter on the Rules for Discernment. Like Endean, Patrick Goujon is interested in tracing initial conversion as the beginning of a continuing search for the leading of the Spirit. Staying with Ignatius, Joseph Munitiz considers some of the factors that may have led up to his conversion, and Rob Faesan compares his experiences with those of another saint noted for a radical change of lifestyle, Francis of Assisi.

The Canadian Jesuit philosopher and theologian Bernard Lonergan wrote extensively on conversion, and two of our authors develop aspects of his thinking. Finbarr Coffey looks at four forms taken by such change: the religious, the affective, the moral and the intellectual. The Dominican

[1] These were originally presented at a study day in April 2022 and are being published in *Ignace de Loyola: quelles conversions. Études de spiritualité ignatienne* (Paris: Mediasèvres, 2022).

writer Louis Roy focuses on two of these, the moral and religious, considering how conversion in one field inevitably affects the other.

The Roman Catholic Church is preparing for a worldwide synod of bishops in Rome next year. The process of preparation for this is being led by a Jesuit Pope, Francis, so it is no surprise that it is rooted in discernment. In her essay Nathalie Bécquart shows how this preparation can usefully be regarded as an extended conversion exercise for the Church as a whole. In a personal reflection, Marion Morgan looks back to the last time the Vatican supported such a fundamental rethink of the ways in which the faith could be presented, in the years following the Second Vatican Council—years in which she herself moved from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism. Conversion is often linked to specific times, as she shows, but may also be influenced strongly by place. Kevin McDonnell illustrates this by presenting an understanding of the call to ecological conversion shaped by the situation of rural Australia.

It is clear that the changes brought about in Ignatius as he spent months recuperating in Loyola were only the beginning of a process that would last for years, and indeed persist for the rest of his life. The writings gathered here all present conversion as the beginning of a journey, not its end. Celebrating the fifth centenary of the Pamplona cannonball is not to look back on a journey that has ended, but to demonstrate its contemporary vibrancy and relevance in a world that must continue to grow in its awareness of the Spirit of God at work.

After 15 years, 59 issues, and approximately 500 articles published in *The Way*, the time has come for me to make way for a new editor. From the October 2022 issue Philip Harrison will occupy the editor's chair. Philip is a British Province Jesuit, ordained in 2018, who has recently completed licentiate studies in sacred scripture at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. I wish him well, and would like to thank all those who have enabled the journal to appear regularly in what have been challenging times for print media: the British Province of the Society of Jesus, for its continued support; the Editorial Board and editorial staff (you can find their names inside the back cover); all those who have submitted articles for consideration, whether or not we have published them; and above all my Assistant Editor, Elizabeth Lock who, as I regularly remark, does 90 per cent of the work involved in producing the publication that you are reading. Finally, let me thank each of you, the readers, for as is surely obvious none of this would be possible without you.

Paul Nicholson SJ
Editor

THE IGNATIAN ART OF MOVING FORWARD

Nicholas Austin

IN PIER PAOLO PASOLINI'S neorealist film *The Gospel According to St Matthew* (1964), Jesus is portrayed moving around Galilee at a rapid pace and turning towards Jerusalem with urgency. The disciples are constantly falling behind in their efforts to keep up. In the light of this film and of the theological tradition, James Keenan comments that, in the Christian life, we are called never to stand still but always to move forward to a closer discipleship.[1]

The image of moving forward, of making progress, is one that Ignatius uses frequently in the *Spiritual Exercises* and the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*. When, in 2003, Philip Endean published his important programmatic essay for the refounding of *The Way*, he noted the importance of this motif in Ignatian spirituality:

> What we do in ministry is pointing us further forward along the way of 'the divine service'—not only the service we perform for God but also God's service to us …. The process is a way of continuous growth, of God carrying forward what God has begun.[2]

Moving forward powerfully expresses the Ignatian ideal of the *magis*, of the virtue of magnanimity, by which we are called not to be slothful or pusillanimous, content merely with the minimum in the Christian life, but to seek always to move forward, to do what is for the greater glory of God. This image lies at the heart of the wisdom of Ignatian discernment of spirits, since the good spirit is the ally of progress along this Way,

My thanks to the participants in the Dynamic of Development in the Jesuit Constitutions, Campion Hall reading seminar, Michaelmas Term, 2020. The discussions and insights shared in this seminar have greatly influenced this article from beginning to end.

[1] James Keenan, D'Arcy Lectures 2022: Preparing for the Moral Life, Campion Hall, Oxford, 26 April–14 June 2022; see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wz4Zd1zozaY&list=PLIJQ9ZPTJfQAdrFOTQI1B1cfMNlIb4cKd.

[2] Philip Endean, 'The Ignatian Spirituality of the Way', *The Way*, 42/1 (January 2003), 7–19, here 8–9.

the bad spirit its enemy. Discernment, in Ignatian spirituality, is just the art of moving forward along the path of the divine service.

My own enthusiasm for the Ignatian motif of progress has not always found a corresponding affirmation in my conversation partners. I recently led a seminar at Campion Hall, Oxford, with a group of mostly Jesuit academics. I focused the seminar on the idea of progress, especially as expressed in the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*. For Ignatius does not talk much of conversion, or formation, but speaks often of progress. He wants Jesuits to progress; he wants Jesuits to help others to progress; and he wants the Society of Jesus as a whole to progress in serving God. Nevertheless, I vividly remember one of our sessions when objections to this ideal of progress, one after another, were raised (objections that I shall recount below).The theme that I had proposed for the seminar fell radically into question.

We therefore find ourselves in the sphere of discernment. The spirits are moving contrarily. We find attractions but also resistances to the ideal of progress. I propose that if we are to retrieve the Ignatian image of moving forward, we need to discern bad spirit versions of this spiritual ideal from that which Ignatius proposes. The question is not, *Should we accept the ideal of progress or not?* There is no question but that progress is an indispensable concept in Ignatian spirituality. The question, rather, is, *What, in Ignatian terms, does it mean to move forward?* My proposal is that we need Ignatian progress, but that Ignatian progress may not be what we think it is.

The Idea of Progress in the Tradition

Progress is a metaphor, and a quotidian one at that. Literally, it connotes forward spatial movement towards an intended destination. We adopt this metaphor in many different spheres of life, when we celebrate someone 'taking a step forward', or bemoan a feeling of 'getting stuck' or 'going backwards'. There is nothing remarkable about this metaphor in itself. It gains valence from the context in which it finds its specific meaning: the implicit standard against which progress is measured, the end to which it is directed and the means by which it is thought to be effected.

Krijn Pansters notes, 'Spiritual progress is a main theme in Christian theology and spirituality'.[3] In classical Christian writings, often progress

[3] Krijn Pansters, '*Profectus virtutuum*: From Psalm 83: 8 to David of Augsburg's *Profectus religiosorum*', *Studies in Spirituality*, 18 (2008), 185–194, here 186.

is understood through the medium of an image of graduation. There is a path, a ladder or a mountain to be walked, scaled or ascended; there is also a schema that divides the progress into distinct stages. In St Benedict, the monk is to climb the twelve steps of humility. In St Gregory the Great and St Thomas Aquinas, we find the schema of beginners (*incipientes*), those who are progressing (*proficientes*) and the perfect (*perfecti*). Another tripartite movement is that of the purgative way, the illuminative way and the unitive way, as in Pseudo-Dionysius and Bonaventure. Additionally, Bonaventure, in his *Itinerarium*, reports a vision he had on the mountain of Alverna. We are to fly to God on the six wings of the seraph, which correspond to six levels of ascent. However the steps or levels are named, spiritual progress, in the tradition, is an advancement through a series of stages of turning from sin, increasing virtue and union with God.

As Pansters notes, the idea of progress in the virtues, *profectus virtutuum*, is especially significant in this tradition.[4] The idea has its roots in ancient philosophy, in thinkers such as Philo of Alexandria and Plutarch; the latter notably wrote an essay on the topic. Reacting against extreme Stoic doctrine that makes of virtue an all-or-nothing affair, Plutarch argues that ethical development is possible, and recognisable by various signs.[5] For many of the ancient philosophers, we do not become perfectly virtuous overnight, but engage in a gradual process of increasing

[4] Pansters, '*Profectus virtutuum*', 186–187.

[5] Plutarch, 'How a Man May Become Aware of His Progress in Virtue', in *Moralia,* volume 1, translated by Frank Cole Babbitt, edited by Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard U, 1922), 399–457.

in virtue through certain practices, just as athletes grow in strength and facility through diet and the exercises proper to their athletic discipline or soldiers learn their profession by military training. This philosophical tradition is assimilated by the early Christian tradition in the thought of writers such as John Cassian, Ambrose and Augustine. The themes of progress and regress become significant dimensions of Thomas Aquinas's spiritual theology.[6] The *Devotio moderna* on which Ignatius drew, even while he went beyond it, accents progress in the virtues.[7]

When an idea enters the Christian tradition from ancient philosophy, it does not stay quite the same. The idea of progress in the virtues is often legitimised by Christian authors with reference to Psalm 83:8: 'They will go from virtue to virtue; they will see the God of gods in Sion'.[8] Progress in the spiritual life, in the Christian tradition, means growing not only in the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance, as with the ancient philosophers, but also in the more obviously Christian virtues of faith, hope, love, humility, mercy, patience and gratitude. Jesus is seen as the primary exemplar of the virtues. While the Christian authors recognise with the ancient philosophers that there is an *ascesis*, a set of practices necessary to grow in virtue, they also emphasize the need for grace. In the Christian tradition, progress in the virtues is ultimately gift.

Problems with Progress

Despite its respectable genealogy in the Christian tradition and the attractiveness of the ideal, today the notion of progress often meets with resistance, even from those sympathetic to the Ignatian tradition. I group the objections to progress into three main concerns: wilfulness, a disordered need to measure and lack of humble acceptance. I am indebted to the members of the seminar mentioned above for these points.

First, wilfulness: it is objected that progress is too muscular a concept for the spiritual life. The desire to progress may motivate an excessive effort to grow, a Pelagian striving, an over-trying incompatible with openness to grace.

[6] See Basil Cole, 'Thomas Aquinas on Progress and Regress in the Spiritual Life', *Nova et Vetera*, 8/1 (2010), 89–106.

[7] 'Progress in the virtues, *profectus virtutuum*, might well be labelled the "leitmotif" or "basso continuo" of the entire movement of the Modern Devotion' (Pansters, '*Profectus virtutuum*', 185).

[8] Translated from the Latin Vulgate: 'Ibunt de virtute in virtutem; videbitur Deus deorum in Sion'.

Secondly, there is the unhealthy need to measure one's own progress. The desire for spiritual progress, it may seem, implies tracking how far we have advanced. This self-monitoring can be singularly unhelpful. The bad spirit can have a field day instilling the felt need to measure up to a perceived ideal of holiness, leading to a harsh self-judgment inimical to the reception of God's loving kindness. Worse, one might actually succeed in measuring up to the ideal one sets oneself, resulting in an insufferable pride in one's own achievement and disdain for those who do not, as exhibited by the Pharisee in the parable (Luke 18:9–14). Moreover, by whose standards or whose judgment can I be said to have moved forward? What God thinks of as progress may not correspond to the measures I set myself, which can be distorted by the lens of my self-centredness.

Thirdly, and finally, there is lack of humble acceptance: the spiritual life, in Christian experience, often does not resemble an orderly ascent. There are moments of rupture, interruption, even regression, that tend to characterize Christian experience. An ideal of progress may occlude the value of learning a humble acceptance of the present moment, even to the extent of accepting failure. Do we not open ourselves by God more by acknowledging our sinfulness and limitations, rather than rushing ahead to some imagined ideal future self?

Each of these objections contains a helpful insight. It would be more discerning, in my view, not to reject outright the ideal of progress on their basis, but rather to distinguish the true ideal of Christian progress from the counterfeit, bad-spirit versions we rightly resist. The objections to progress may arise from misplaced assumptions about what spiritual progress means, due to Enlightenment-influenced concepts of progress through human reason and agency. The interesting question is not *whether* to strive to progress, but *what* we mean by progress in the spiritual life, and *what does Ignatius mean by progress?*

What does Ignatius mean by progress?

Ignatius' Way of Seeing

In the historic moment when Pope Francis, the first Jesuit pope, addressed the 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, he began with an exhortation to walk forward together, recalling some words to the Jesuits of an earlier pope, Paul VI. Francis's choice of this image was not accidental. He claims that what is at stake here is more than a helpful metaphor: it is a characteristic way of looking at things, an Ignatian paradigm.

> I rather like Ignatius' way of seeing everything—except for what is absolutely essential—as constantly developing [*in fieri*], because it frees the Society from all kinds of paralysis and wishful thinking …. For Ignatius the journey is not an aimless wandering; rather, it translates into something qualitative: it is a 'gain' or progress, a moving forward, a doing something for others.[9]

To support this claim, Francis quotes a letter in which Ignatius responds to critics of the new Society of Jesus, who had asserted that this upstart order was insufficiently well founded.[10] Ignatius says they ignore the way of the Society of Jesus, in which all things, except an essential core of basic requirements, are always *in fieri*, in development, open to change. For Pope Francis, then, the Ignatian paradigm, Ignatius' way of seeing everything, is an attentiveness to development, movement, progress.

There is plenty of evidence that this 'way of seeing' is indeed characteristically Ignatian. Michael Buckley observes:

> What Ignatius saw, he saw as movement. The reality about him was essentially in process. His own life was understood as the history of a pilgrim, painfully learning as a child taught by God to grow into the contemplative for whom God was always present.[11]

Elsewhere, Buckley pithily remarks, 'Ignatius saw everything human in terms of developing processes'. The central Ignatian texts (the *Autobiography*, the *Spiritual Exercises* and the *Constitutions*) are all 'developing movements'.[12] Commentators used to refer to the 'logic' of the Spiritual Exercises; today we prefer to refer to their 'dynamic'.[13] Throughout the text of the *Spiritual Exercises*, there is language that expresses a forward dynamism.[14]

[9] Pope Francis, 'Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus', GC 36.

[10] Ignatius to Francis Borja, July 1549, MHSJ EI 12, 632–654; English in St Ignatius of Loyola, *Letters and Instructions*, edited and translated by Martin E. Palmer, John W. Padberg and John L. McCarthy (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2006), 266–283. And see M. A. Fiorito and A. Swinnen, 'La Fórmula del Instituto de la Compañía de Jesús (introducción y versión castellana)', *Stromata*, 33/4 (July–December 1977), 249–286, at 259–260.

[11] Michael Buckley, 'The Contemplation to Attain Love', *The Way Supplement*, 45 (1975), 92–104, here 94.

[12] Michael Buckley, 'Freedom, Election, and Self-Transcendence: Some Reflections upon the Ignatian Development of a Life of Ministry', in *Ignatian Spirituality in a Secular Age*, edited by George Schner (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier U, 2006), 65–90 , here 73, 74.

[13] Joseph Veale, 'The Dynamic of the Exercises', *The Way Supplement*, 52 (1985), 3–18. For Veale, the metaphor refers to 'organic growth': 'I take it to mean the way in which the factors or parts in their relationship and interaction make for movement and growth' (3).

[14] The most important of the terms Ignatius uses is that of *aprovachiemento* and its cognates (in Latin *profectus*). In an email communication to the author, Mark Rotsaert comments, 'the verb "aprovechar,

It is surely no accident that, in the *Spiritual Exercises*, about forty of the approximately fifty contemplations in Four Weeks involve a journey.[15] Ignatius is consistently concerned with what enables exercitants to make progress, to move forward.

Discerning Progress

Ignatius begins his Rules for the Discernment of Spirits by distinguishing between those who are regressing and those progressing (Exx 314–315). The Rules, then, do not follow the older classification, which distinguishes sinners on the one hand and, on the other, beginners, those who are progressing and the perfect. There are here only two categories left: the ones making progress and the ones regressing. Simplifying the tradition by accentuating movement in the present moment, what matters now is not so much how far one has come, but only whether one is moving forwards or backwards.

Ignatius offers only one rule for the regressive: to those who go 'from one mortal sin to another' the bad spirit promises sensual satisfactions, in order to confirm their vices, whereas the good spirit brings about conscientious feelings of remorse (Exx 314). For those who are progressing, the corresponding rule turns this approach on its head:

> In the case of persons who are earnestly purging away their sins, and who are progressing from good to better in the service of God our Lord, the procedure used is the opposite of that described in the First Rule. For in this case it is characteristic of the evil spirit to cause gnawing anxiety, to sadden, and to set up obstacles. In this way he unsettles these persons by false reasons aimed at preventing their progress. But with persons of this type it is characteristic of the good spirit to stir up courage and strength, consolations, tears, inspirations, and tranquility. He makes things easier and eliminates all obstacles, so that the persons may move forward in doing good. (Exx 315)

The bad spirit, for Ignatius, is the saboteur of progress, throwing the spanners of sadness and illusion into the works; the good spirit is the ally of progress, removing obstacles and oiling the mechanism with the gifts of consolation and ease in moving forward. Discernment of spirits is the

aprovecharse" is an important verb in the *Spiritual Exercises* (35 uses, of which 9 in the Annotations) as is the noun "provecho". Aprovechar has, at least, two meanings in the Spiritual Exercises, depending on the context: 1) to make progress, improvement; 2) to be useful, profitable, advantageous'. Similarly, in the Latin versions of the *Exercises*, the verb *proficio* can mean to progress or to profit.'

[15] Tad Dunne, 'Models of Discernment', *The Way Supplement*, 23 (Autumn 1974), 18–26, here 82.

practice or art of noticing and distinguishing what aids progress and what hinders it, and integrating what helps into one's being and doing.

While the traditional language of 'progress in the virtues' is absent in the Rules, the idea may be present. In one of his descriptions of consolation, Ignatius states: 'I give the name "consolation" to every increase of hope, faith and charity' (Exx 316). By noticing, discerning and receiving the good movements that come from the good spirit, we progress in the theological virtues (and, no doubt, the other virtues also). Progress involves becoming a different kind of person: more trusting, hope-filled, loving, humble, grateful and compassionate.

In the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius specifies progress using other phrases, such as 'progress of the soul', 'progress in the spiritual life', 'move forward in doing good'. The most important term for Ignatius, however, is that of 'progress … in the service of God our Lord'. As we have just seen, the Rules for Discernment are primarily for those who are 'progressing from good to better in the service of God our Lord'. Ignatius, then, is putting his own spin on the tradition of spiritual progress. While growth in the virtues is important, it is not the final goal, which is to move forward in the praise, reverence and service of God.

To move forward in the praise, reverence and service of God

Progress in the Constitutions

The primary text for understanding Ignatius' concept of progress is the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, written by Ignatius and Juan Alfonso de Polanco (1517–1576), his able secretary. Michael Buckley has argued that Ignatius' *Constitutions* are innovative when compared to other religious rules, since they do not focus on a daily structure for community life nor a close list of obligations. Rather, they 'chart a history, the progress through life of a Jesuit from admission to final incorporation, mission, government and the development of the entire Society'.[16] Similarly, János Lukács has shown that one central idea in the *Constitutions* is precisely the idea of progress. He says:

> The striking linguistic resemblance between the *Spiritual Exercises* and the *Constitutions* lets one assume that both texts presuppose a dynamic vision of a person constantly on the move, and that a primary aim of both texts is to help foster this progress with means that are most suitable to the current position of the person …. the metaphor

[16] Buckley, 'Contemplation to Attain Love', 94.

> of progressing is just as indispensable for interpreting the *Constitutions* as it is for understanding the *Spiritual Exercises*.[17]

For Lukács, the idea of progress therefore becomes a 'hermeneutical key' for reading the *Constitutions*: 'Ignatian instructions should thus be interpreted according to the criterion of how they help us to make progress'.[18] For confirmation of this view, we need only note the preface to the *Constitutions*: 'we think it necessary that constitutions should be written to aid us to proceed better, in conformity with our Institute, along the path of divine service on which we have entered'. (Preamble 1 [134]) As Endean comments, 'the purpose of the laws is not to instil a spirit of conformity, but rather to keep people moving'.[19]

I suggest that there are three striking aspects of Ignatius' ideal of progress, as it appears in the *Constitutions*, that make it distinctive when viewed against the foil of the preceding tradition: its accent on the apostolic community, its emphasis on divine service through helping souls and its open-ended character.

First, then, while the *Constitutions* deal with the progress of individual Jesuits from candidacy through to final vows, they are not primarily focused on the individuals themselves, but on the body of the Society (X.1 [812]–X.2 [813]). The individual Jesuit will find himself and his progress in the *Constitutions* only as a member of a community, a body, that is itself progressing.[20] As the *Constitutions* themselves explain their own purpose: 'The purpose of the *Constitutions* is to aid the body of the Society as a whole and also its individual members towards their preservation and development for the divine glory and the good of the universal Church' (Preamble [136]).[21]

Secondly, for Ignatius the goal is always advancement in divine service; other kinds of progress, even spiritual growth and increase in virtue, are orientated towards this end. One textual example of this new accent comes in Ignatius' description of how to care for novices and their vocation, 'enabling them to make progress both in spirit and in virtues

[17] János Lukács, *Ignatian Formation: The Inspiration of the* Constitutions (Leominster: Gracewing, 2016), 18–19.
[18] Lukács, *Ignatian Formation*, 22.
[19] Endean, 'Ignatian Spirituality of the Way', 8.
[20] I thank Patrick Goujon for conversation on this point.
[21] See also X.1 [812]: 'The Society was not instituted by human means; and it is not through them that it can be preserved and increased, but through the grace of the omnipotent hand of Christ our God and Lord. Therefore in him alone must be placed the hope that he will preserve and carry forward what he deigned to begin for his service and praise and for the aid of souls.'

along the path of the divine service' (III. 1. 1 [243]). What we saw in the Rules for Discernment is therefore confirmed in the *Constitutions*: the kind of progress that ultimately counts for Ignatius is advancing from good to better in serving God. Spiritual progress and progress in the virtues are important because it is by them that we progress in the divine service.

Ignatius' new accent on progress in serving God makes eminent sense in terms of his apostolic spirituality, according to which the goal is always to serve God, especially by helping souls. Ignatius offers a wonderful image for this progress in divine service: that of becoming an instrument more united with God and ever better disposed to be used (X. 2 [813]).

Today we might apply a little creative licence to interpret the 'instrument' through a musical metaphor. To move forward in serving God, it is necessary, one might say, to 'tune up' the human instrument, so that it may be ever more dextrously wielded by the divine hand. The human instrument is attuned to God's artistry by goodness and virtue, familiarity with God in prayer and action, zeal for souls and singleness of intention to place all at the service of God. Also important are learning, the ability to preach and teach, and 'the art of dealing and conversing with others' (X. 3 [814]). This process of tuning happens by both supernatural and natural means, both grace and discipline.

Progress for Ignatius is therefore always apostolic: it is about becoming the kind of instrument that is apt to be used by God's hand in helping souls. In the *Formula of the Institute* (the foundational document of the Society of Jesus, preceding and presupposed by the *Constitutions*), the very aim of the Society of Jesus is expressed as: 'to strive especially for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine' (n. 1). There is a wonderful consonance between means and end here: Ignatius sees Jesuits as individuals striving to progress together in Christian life, with the purpose of helping others do so also.

Thirdly, Ignatius defines the specificity of what the progress of a Jesuit is about, without succumbing to the temptation to force Jesuits into a particular mould. It is a delicate balance, a held tension. As we have seen, it is hoped that the formed Jesuit exemplifies the contemplation in action, as well as the apostolic virtues, learning and the art of conversation (X. 2 [813] – X. 3 [814]). Yet Ignatius is not overly prescriptive about how these qualities are manifested. We see this in his instructions on Jesuit prayer. Early on in the *Constitutions*, Ignatius lays down generic guidance for the prayer, confessions and other devotional practices of scholastics, but insists that they follow the judgment of their superiors

(IV.4.2[340]–IV.4.C[345]). Later on, when he describes the prayer of a fully professed Jesuit, he disappoints us if we are expecting a clear set of guidelines.

Endean comments, 'Ignatius' attitude to the question of how Jesuits should pray was relaxed'.[22] I quibble with the word 'relaxed'. Ignatius says that prayer and penances are to be pursued according to no other 'rule' than 'what discreet charity dictates to them' (VI.3.1[582]). Discreet charity implies discerning charity. Here, the professed Jesuit, assumed to be a discerning man, follows his own prayerful judgment, although not without accountability to and support from his confessor or superior. As a help to his discernment, he is reminded not to go over the top with his prayerful and penitential practices, nor to become too lax: discretion finds the mean. It is not, then, a question of being 'relaxed' about how a formed Jesuit prays. Rather, Ignatius trusts the Jesuit's discreet charity as the best guide. Discretion is not relaxed, but well poised: it will find the appropriate balance, the right tension.

Endean is right to note that Ignatius does not give specific guidelines about how much, or in what way, the Jesuit should be praying. This atmosphere of freedom and discretion was arguably quickly forgotten in the Society in the generations after him, who were much more confident in ruling what was, and what was not, Jesuit prayer.[23] For Ignatius, what is most fitting almost always has to be discerned on a case-by-case basis.

The Paradox of Progress

Given the Ignatian concept of progress that emerges from the *Spiritual Exercises* and the *Constitutions*, how is it best to deal with the objections raised earlier? In my view, they are not devastating to the ideal of Ignatian progress, but purifying. The objections are ways to refine our image of what it means to move forward.

Firstly, the desire to progress can indeed lead to an excess of will, as in Ignatius shortly after his initial conversion experience. But there is nothing within the idea of progress that implies it happens by our effort

[22] Philip Endean, 'To Reflect and Draw Profit', *The Way Supplement*, 82 (1995), 84–95, here 85.

[23] See Endean, 'To Reflect and Draw Profit', 85–85. An apposite example lies in an unfortunate episode concerning Baltasar Álvarez, a spiritual director of Teresa of Ávila, who had begun to teach a kind of 'quiet prayer', or contemplative prayer. His superiors judged that this was not according to the Jesuit institute—it was not the Jesuit way of praying—and so told him, not only not to teach this prayer, but even not to practise it himself! The ideal of discreet charity seems absent here. See Baltasar Álvarez, 'Beyond the Train of Ideas', translated by Philip Endean, *The Way Supplement*, 103 (2002), 43–54.

alone. For the mature Ignatius, God is the primary agent, with whom we cooperate. 'Therefore in him alone must be placed the hope that he will preserve and carry forward what he deigned to begin for his service and praise and for the aid of souls.' (X.1[812]) Moreover, there is no hint of spiritual narcissism in Ignatius' image of progress. For the mature Ignatius, progress is growth in charity, zeal for souls and a pure intention to do God's will. The desire to grow in virtue, in this picture, must be a good but somewhat back-seat desire: as we progress, our driving-seat desire increasingly becomes other-centred, as we act on a charitable desire to 'help souls'.[24]

Secondly, it was suggested that this concept could lead to an unhealthy focus on measuring one's own progress. As I noted earlier, in much of the Christian tradition that precedes (and indeed follows) Ignatius, progress is understood against the interpretative background of a schema of steps: beginner, progressing, perfect; purgative, illuminative, unitive; the twelve steps of humility; the six wings of the seraph; the mansions of the interior castle; and so on. Occasionally, authors attempt to find some correlation in Ignatius, as when someone claims, for example, that the First Week of the Exercises is purgative, the Second Week illuminative, and the Third and Fourth Weeks unitive.

But on my reading there is no indication that Ignatius wanted to get drawn into talk of these kind of stages. As we saw, in the *Constitutions* he casts a veil over the prayer of a professed Jesuit, only asking that he continue to move forward with discreet charity. This lack of a schematic

[24] Rob Marsh has raised a concern about 'misplaced attention'. In the Exercises and spiritual direction, 'progress happens as a consequence or by-product of engaging with God and God's action in the exercitant. That seems to me where the dynamism comes from and change occurs, progress happens. It seems to me that paying (too much?) attention to the progress is a distraction from the God who is taking the initiative to engage the retreatant in many and creative ways (and unpredictable ways too).' (Email communication.) I thank Rob for this point and agree with it. Progress does not come primarily by focusing on progress, but happens more obliquely than that, by loving attention to God and others.

developmental theory of the spiritual life is frustrating for those who wish to measure progress, but it gives Ignatian progress a liberating quality, a reverence for the surprising and unique ways the Spirit brings different people to grow differently. Endean observes that Ignatian spirituality, consequently, is especially suitable for those whose Christian vocations lead them 'beyond the normal': 'The discernment learnt in the school of the Exercises enables us to act with integrity in worlds for which rule books have not been written, or where those that are available are inadequate'.[25]

The image of the end point at which Ignatius progress aims is substantive but open-ended, as it lies in the apostolic virtues and the life of loving service. Since the life of service may look different in different people in diverse circumstances, the primary guide moving forward is not, for Ignatius, a schema of predictable stages, the same for all, but the practice of discernment or discretion.

Spiritual progress is, in fact, a mystery. It is a mystery because it is a Christomorphic process, a way of become conformed to Christ.[26] It is progress in discipleship, in knowing the Lord 'that I may love him more intensely and follow him more closely' (Exx 104). Being a mystery, this growing participation in Christ's life is rich and multifaceted. However, while it is not exhausted by any formula or description, it is not hopelessly vague or undefined. It is to be expected that one's understanding of progress itself progresses as one moves forward along the way of the Lord. To the question, *What is spiritual progress?* the mature Ignatius would have given a very different answer to that of Iñigo shortly after his initial conversion in Loyola.

The third and final objection is, in my view, the most serious. Is it not better to accept the reality of the present moment, where God is truly to be found, then to be seeking to move on towards what one imagines one ought to be? Should we not be practising acceptance, even in apparent failure and regression, rather than striving for progress? But this question contains false assumption: *either* acceptance *or* progress. Progress is practised best *through* humble acceptance, since it is through the latter that we become open to graced change.

Within the Gestalt school of psychology and therapy, Arnold Beisser stands out, not only for his description of what he calls 'the

[25] Endean, 'To Reflect and Draw Profit', 9.
[26] Thanks to Graham Ward for this way of putting things.

paradoxical theory of change', but also for being a living example of the paradox he describes. The paradox, on his view, is that one changes, not so much by trying to be what one is not, but by accepting what one is. In a well-known essay on the topic, he explains:

> The Gestalt therapist rejects the role of 'changer', for his strategy is to encourage, even insist, that the patient be where and what he is. He believes change does not take place by 'trying', coercion, or persuasion, or by insight, interpretation, or any other such means. Rather, change can occur when the patient abandons, at least for the moment, what he would like to become and attempts to be what he is. The premise is that one must stand in one place in order to have firm footing to move and that it is difficult or impossible to move without that footing.[27]

Beisser's life was a living parable demonstrating this insight. While a successful young man—a national tennis champion and a qualified medic—Beisser caught polio and became paralyzed, unable to move not only his hands and legs, but even his head—unable to live outside an iron lung. Beisser recounts, in his short autobiographical book *Flying without Wings*, how he came, after such a dramatic interruption in life, nevertheless to flourish. Lying incapacitated on his bed, he began to set goals for his recovery: relationships, gaining a profession, becoming a writer. 'I thought achievements could make me feel worthwhile again and give me self-respect.' In retrospect, he acknowledges this search was based on a 'misunderstanding'. 'The major transition needed was from seeing life as a competition to experiencing it much more simply and directly for what it was.'[28] While in time the things he desired were indeed given, the change occurred only by the embrace of his current reality, with its own surprising possibilities and gifts.

An Ignatian spiritual director would resonate with many aspects of this philosophy. When directees come for spiritual direction, the Ignatian director sets aside his or her own agenda and expectations, attempting to meet them where they are. The director may encourage directees to let go, for a moment, of strong ideals of where they should be, with their attendant guilt or self-satisfaction or over-trying, and to dwell

[27] Arnold Beisser, 'The Paradoxical Theory of Change', in *Gestalt Therapy Now: Theory, Techniques, Applications*, edited by Joen Fagan and Irma Lee Shepherd (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 77–80, here 77.

[28] Arnold Beisser, *Flying without Wings: Personal Reflections on Loss, Disability, and Healing* (New York: Bantam, 1990), 11.

simply with the God who is actually present to a person as he or she is. It is paradoxically in the letting go, in being with what is real, that forward movement takes place.

In the Spiritual Exercises, the correlate of Beisser's acceptance is, I suggest, found in the Two Standards exercise (Exx 138–148). Here Ignatius adapts the traditional identification of humility as the necessary condition for progress in the spiritual life.[29] Ignatius portrays a humble Christ, located in a place that is 'lowly, beautiful, and attractive' (Exx 144). The Lord disseminates his sacred teaching by the non-coercive force of attraction, drawing all to spiritual poverty and humility, qualities he exemplifies himself. From these gracious qualities, Christ's friends and servants 'should induce people to all the other virtues' (Exx 146). For Ignatius, poverty and humility are the gateway to progress in the virtues and the following of Christ's way.

The paradox of progress, of moving forward through humble acceptance, may be especially tangible in moments of interruption, rupture, even failure.[30] These are not reasons to abandon the ideal of moving forward, but occasions for reassessing what it involves. The shape of Ignatian progress often follows the pattern of suffering, death and resurrection. What is experienced as failure can involve a stripping away of illusory ideals, a clearer perspective on what really matters, and growth rooted in humble acceptance rather than driven aspiration.

Beisser talks about change through acceptance; Ignatius portrays the grace of progress that comes through poverty and humility. The paradox of progress, then, is this: one makes progress in the spiritual life, not so much by striving to be what one is not, but by being oneself, as one is, before the gracious God. Grounded in this lowly place, we find a foothold from which to practise discernment, the Ignatian art of moving forward along the path of the divine service.

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[29] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 2.2, q.161, a.5, ad.2, where humility is described as the 'foundation of the spiritual edifice' because it makes a person open to the influx of grace. For narrative display of this insight, Aquinas would have pointed to Augustine's *Confessions*.

[30] Thanks to Eddie Howells and Graham Ward for discussion on this point.

ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION AS VOCATION

Personal, Communal and Global Dimensions

Celia Deane-Drummond

IN RECOGNITION of the 500th anniversary of Ignatius of Loyola's dramatic conversion after being wounded by a cannonball at the siege of Pamplona, the human rights activist Adolfo Canales Muñoz has written about climate migration as 'a cannonball of our times'. Today many decisive moments 'call for a radical change not only in our lives but also for a radical change in our world'.[1] Environmental issues such as water pollution and scarcity, for example, are not just pressing in relation to ecological devastation; they also have a social, economic and political impact on the lives of millions of people worldwide. The ecological devastation arising from collective human activities is expressed through the pollution of water supplies that directly affect human livelihoods. The misery of climate-induced migration, because of factors such as the loss of soil fertility, drought, rising sea levels and the resulting human conflict over increasingly limited resources, is among its grim consequences.

Muñoz concludes his article with a description of what ecological conversion to address climate migration at a communal and global level might mean in practice:

> Around the world there are many organisations already working with people in the context of climate change and most importantly working in the field with communities directly affected. However, this is far from enough and it is time Governments also get involved in providing food, protection and assistance to coastal communities affected by sea-level rise. This should be a priority in order to prevent a further migratory crisis. As part of the different actions that need to be taken by States globally, I believe that the creation of a structured programme for relocation on a regional, national and international level should be a top priority.[2]

[1] Adolfo Canales Muñoz, 'Climate Migrants: A Cannonball of Our Time', *Promotio Iustitiae*, 132, 'The Cry of Water and the Cry of the Poor' (2021), 55–57, here 55.
[2] Muñoz, 'Climate Migrants', 57.

This example is just one tiny element among the changes that are required to bring about a sustainable and habitable world. What is left unanswered is more precisely how such changes can start to become integrated as a priority in the lives of each and every human being living on this planet. It is simply not true that ecological and environmental issues are just one of the challenges we face. Rather, they are the *ultimate* global challenge which, if not addressed, will eventually make life on earth impossible, at least for future human generations. In order to begin to work towards the changes required, within a religious context and even beyond it, I am going to argue that we need to understand clearly what ecological conversion means and rethink the meaning of vocation.

What Is Ecological Conversion?

Ecological conversion did not just appear suddenly on the agenda with *Laudato si*', but has been woven into Catholic social thought since the turn of this century. John Paul II was perhaps more aware than any previous pope of the need to link the needs of people and planet. In a joint declaration on the environment with the ecumenical patriarchate of the Orthodox Church, he declared:

> What is required is an act of repentance on our part and a renewed attempt to view ourselves, one another, and the world around us within the perspective of the divine design for creation. The problem is not simply economic and technological; it is moral and spiritual. A solution at the economic and technological level can be found only if we undergo, in the most radical way, an *inner change of heart*, which can lead to a change in lifestyle and of unsustainable patterns of consumption and production. A genuine conversion in Christ will enable us to change the way we think and act.[3]

The *radical* aspect of this 'genuine conversion' is about going back to our roots, that is, to the deep sources of our faith, in order to rethink our place in the world. It is also radical because it is not just superficial but lasting: a determined change in habits of mind and thinking. A first step is repentance, but it is also an attempt to understand the world from God's perspective and act accordingly. It is important to note, too, that a conversion that is going to be positive in ecological terms requires, at least for Christian believers, acknowledgment of the spiritual and moral aspects

[3] 'Declaration on the Environment', signed by Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, 10 June 2002.

of the issue, and change that flows from an even deeper relationship with Christ, for it is through Christ that it becomes possible to act aright.

A year before this declaration Pope John Paul II stated, 'We must therefore encourage and support the "ecological conversion" which in recent decades has made humanity more sensitive to the catastrophe to which it has been heading'. Even at this stage he insisted that ecological concerns be joined and integrated with concerns for human well-being.

> At stake, then, is not only a 'physical' ecology that is concerned to safeguard the habitat of the various living beings, but also a 'human' ecology which makes the existence of creatures more dignified, by protecting the fundamental good of life in all its manifestations and by preparing for future generations an environment more in conformity with the Creator's plan.[4]

This joining together of human and ecological concerns was to become one of the hallmarks of Pope Francis's *Laudato si'*. Whereas John Paul II used the term 'human ecology', and Benedict XVI 'integral human development', Pope Francis prefers 'integral ecology', a united and integrated paradigmatic approach to our ways of being in the world.

Pope Francis develops the third section, explicitly discussing ecological conversion, in the last chapter of *Laudato si'* (on ecological education and spirituality) so as to build on the concepts used by his predecessors. It is important to note that the first paragraph in this dedicated section is devoted to the need for a renewed spirituality. So, 'More than in ideas or concepts as such, I am interested in how such a spirituality can motivate us to a more passionate concern for the protection of our world'.[5]

The interior impulse to make the necessary changes has to come from the depth of our spiritual journey with God. We have become 'dry' inside, like 'internal deserts', and the way to remedy that is to understand more fully that our encounter with Jesus Christ is not an option but is a requirement for each and every Christian:

> … what they all need is an 'ecological conversion', whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience. (n. 217)

[4] John Paul II, general audience in St Peter's Square, 17 January 2001, n. 4.
[5] Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, n. 216 (subsequent references in the text).

It is particularly crucial to note that ecological conversion flows from our life in Christ, and from that ecological conversion comes the *vocation* to be protectors of God's handiwork. Further, this is not just an option but integral to what it means to be a Christian believer. The stages in that ecological conversion process include a number of different but interconnected elements.

Acknowledgement of Where We Have Gone Wrong

A healthy relationship with creation requires in the first instance acknowledgement of where we have gone wrong. It 'entails the recognition of our errors, sins, faults and failures' (n. 218). We need to dwell, therefore, in the first week of the Spiritual Exercises in a primary rather than a secondary sense in relation to our ongoing ecological failures as well as to other kinds of sin, for ecological sins undercut the basis of human existence and indeed the existence of life as such. I suggest, therefore, that we need to come up with a new terminology appropriate for this kind of activity, and name it as *anthropogenic evil*, that is, evil brought about by human actions at the broadest level, situated between natural evils and moral evils.[6]

I also think it appropriate to name this as *anthropogenic sin*, in so far as it reflects a breakdown of relationships in a manner that is dishonouring to God as Creator of all that is.[7] Of course, the level and extent of sin or evil will vary, but it leads to both environmental injustice—that is, the disproportionate impact of environmental harms on the poorest of the poor and the most vulnerable—and ecological injustice, or the damaging or destruction of other living beings on whom our life depends.[8] The corollary of this is that having recognised such injustice, we not only simply confess our guilt, but also find ways to ameliorate the situation through a constructive approach to the issues at all levels, be they local and practical, or political and economic.

Active Working at the Community Level

Individuals and communities need to work together to remedy the complex ecological problems that face our societies. Pope Francis draws on Romano Guardini to argue against individualistic approaches being adequate. It is important to recognise that community conversion is

[6] Celia Deane-Drummond, *Ecotheology* (London: DLT, 2008), 116.
[7] Deane-Drummond, *Ecotheology*, 103.
[8] I am not, therefore, suggesting that killing vermin such as rats, for example, is an act of ecological injustice; but it would be if there was an attempt to exterminate all rats in the wild regardless of their impact on human health and well-being.

necessary and a requirement, for individuals know only too well that their actions, however large, on behalf of ecological flourishing will never be sufficient. This means, in practice, changing what happens in communal settings to create an active responsiveness to ecological demands.

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It is not just a matter of recycling paper and plastic, even though these are emblems of a sustainable way of life. It is rather exploring and examining every aspect of community life in terms of how resources are used and what priority is given to protecting the natural environment and preserving biodiversity. Ecological restoration is possible where there is a will to make change, and the conversion of habitats to those that foster greater variety of wildlife is both good for the planet and good for those who are involved as a way of building up community life. Religious communities have a specific opportunity to live in a way that is in tune with ecological flourishing and can serve as witness to a different way of being in the world.

Developing an Attitude of Gratuitousness.

Ecological conversion requires gratitude and gratuitousness: recognising that the world is God's gift. Gratitude is, as every practitioner in Ignatian spirituality knows, integral to Ignatius' approach, especially in his particular focus on gratitude in the Examen. The first step in making the examination of conscience is 'to give thanks to God our Lord for the benefits I have received' (Exx 43). A basic way of beginning any examen at any time of day or over any period is to reflect on positive inner emotions and gratitude to God for the relationships or events involved. Gratitude is, in a primary sense, about one's relationship with God and understanding the self in its dependence on God. But that dependence includes material dependence on God's creation. In addition, the First Principle and Foundation, on which the Exercises are based, states:

'Human beings are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by means of doing this to save their souls' (Exx 23).

In a letter to Simão Rodrigues on 18 March 1542, Ignatius writes:

> Ingratitude is one of the things most worthy of detestation before our Creator and Lord … out of all the sins and evils which can be imagined. For it is a failure to recognize the good things, the graces and the gifts received. As such, it is the cause, beginning and origin of all evils and sins. On the contrary, recognition and gratitude for the good things and gifts received is greatly loved and esteemed both in heaven and on earth.[9]

Timothy Gallagher writes of this passage: 'It would be difficult to express more strongly a sense of the incomparable value of gratitude'.[10] The theologian Gerard Fagin agrees, affirming that these words show how, 'At the heart of Ignatius' vision is the virtue of gratitude'.[11]

At the deepest level, the primary relation between God and the believer is love, and that between the believer and God is gratitude. Fostering gratitude was therefore the engine which drove the first Jesuits to greater acts of individual sacrifice in obedience to a specific God-given command or call. That calling now is to ecological conversion. Ignatius' understanding implies a direct correlation between gratitude and the spiritual life; one cannot be considered without the other.

For Ignatius the ability to show discernment of spirits and gratitude is fundamentally about the spiritual life, so we discern a path in our relationship with God, and that path is one filled at its most basic level with gratitude. The positive movements of the Spirit are therefore discerned through monitoring inner feelings of gratitude that are then related back to the divine. Gratitude for creation is, therefore, the first moment in the discernment of how to live within creation in a vocational path orientated towards God.

Acknowledging the Deep Interconnectedness of All Creatures

Ecological conversion, as Pope Francis notes, 'entails a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion' (n. 220). Understanding and recognising

[9] MHSJ EI 1, 192–196, translated by Timothy Gallagher.
[10] Timothy Gallagher, *The Examen Prayer: Ignatian Wisdom for Our Lives Today* (New York: Crossroad, 2006), 59.
[11] Gerard M. Fagin, *Ignatius Loyola: A Mysticism of Gratitude* (New Orleans: Loyola U, 1992), 1.

that interconnectedness is perhaps harder for those who have been inculcated with the values of Western societies than we might think. It comes naturally to indigenous communities; their cultural enfolding in the creatures around them is like a second nature. While some care needs to be taken not to romanticise indigenous cultures, there are lessons here to be learnt by the Western world, with its destructive patterns of industrialisation and consumerism.

The anthropologist Tim Ingold, who has spent many years living among indigenous communities, mostly in the northern territories in Canada, is a helpful resource in this respect. Ingold uses the concept of a 'meshwork'—'entangled lines of life, growth and movement', as opposed to a network of points or intersections—to describe the 'web of life' in the world. The clearest development of this argument is found in his book *Being Alive*, though meshwork thinking makes its appearance in many other texts as well.[12]

Central to his work is a 'way of being that is alive and open to a world in continuous birth', giving rise to 'astonishment' rather than 'surprise'. In the world of becoming, in contrast to the surprise of unfulfilled predictions, astonishment is common even in the ordinary events of life.[13] A life suffused by astonished wonder is also consonant with one attuned to sensing God's immanence in the world, in which God's presence, as the mystics understood so well, can become evident in the ordinary events of the everyday rather than just being confined to the extraordinary or the surprise of the miraculous.[14] Ingold's discussion on meshwork is important for theology since it offers us a different way of perceiving how humanity might connect with other beings and even of approaching what it means for life to encompass the spiritual.

Sensing God's immanence in the world

Ecological conversion is about recognising that we are dust, humus, of the earth. That sense of connectivity and recognition of our frailty is much more likely to be appreciated by those who are already living close to the land, such as the hunter-gatherers and the indigenous societies that Pope Francis finds particularly inspiring. If we lived our lives day by day, as if each day were our last, perhaps we would no longer put off the decisions we need to make until tomorrow. The recognition of our

[12] Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (London: Routledge, 2011), 63.
[13] Ingold, *Being Alive*, 63–64.
[14] See Celia Deane-Drummond, *Wonder and Wisdom: Conversations in Science, Spirituality, and Theology* (Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation, 2006).

origins in the earth renews a sense of humility, that we are ultimately dependent on the earth for our life and health, as are all the other creatures on the planet.

Traditionally anthropocentric in the narrow sense, theologians have given far more attention to history and salvation than to wider creation, especially since the post-Enlightenment rise of modern science. Taking other beings as topics worthy of serious theological reflection was, for more conservative Protestant and Catholic theologians, to edge towards the crime of pantheism, a belief that God and the world are one and the same. In his 2009 encyclical *Caritas in veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI, for example, spoke of the risks of pantheism and relativism in engaging with ecological issues:

> It is contrary to authentic development to view nature as something more important than the human person. This position leads to attitudes of neo-paganism or a new pantheism—human salvation cannot come from nature alone, understood in a purely naturalistic sense. This having been said, it is also necessary to reject the opposite position, which aims at total technical dominion over nature.[15]

Over time, the centre of gravity for academic theological studies has shifted, so pantheism or positions close to it are common and even often celebrated.[16] Pope Francis sits between these positions. On the

[15] Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate* n. 48.
[16] See Katherine Keller and Mary-Jane Rubenstein, *Entangled Worlds: Religion, Science and New Materialisms* (New York: Fordham U, 2017).

one hand he rejects pantheism of all sorts, and stresses traditional notions of uniquely human dignity and God as transcendent, while on the other hand he welcomes insights arising from indigenous spirituality referring to the earth as mother and stressing the practical lessons that can be learnt from their ways of being in the world. He is not afraid to use the language of superiority when it comes to speaking about human beings, even if that is cast in ecological contexts. So, 'We do not understand our superiority as a reason for personal glory or irresponsible dominion, but rather as a different capacity which, in its turn, entails a serious responsibility stemming from our faith' (n.220). My own view is somewhere between that of Pope Francis and more radical positions so, while respecting the uniqueness of human dignity, I argue that that dignity can only be understood as process of human becoming that is still intricately bound up in a meshwork with the lives of other creatures.

Honouring Each Creature as a Reflection of Divine Love

A Christian faith perspective is important for Pope Francis in ecological renewal since it allows us to see creation in a different way. It is a new way of perceiving that 'each creature reflects something of God and has a message to convey to us' (n.221). Of course, given the rapidly unfolding ecological crisis, those messages will progressively become mute as each species becomes extinct because of human activities. Our desire to preserve these creatures is therefore motivated by the knowledge that each creature is created by God: 'God created the world, writing into it an order and a dynamism that human beings have no right to ignore'. Pope Francis does not mince his words here, requiring 'all Christians to recognize and to live fully this dimension of their conversion' (n.221).

Discovering the Ecological Meaning of Vocation

Just as I have teased out the different dimensions of ecological conversion, particularly in its rootedness in the spiritual life, I will now turn to the meaning of *vocation* in this context. Apart from his reference to the human vocation to protect God's handiwork, the only time that Pope Francis uses the term in *Laudato si'* is when he says that 'we were created with a vocation to work' (n.128). He also talks about God calling us to love one another and the earth. Importantly, he joins up personal relationships of love with wider social and political consequences. So, citing John Paul II and Benedict XVI, he says:

> Social love is the key to authentic development: 'In order to make society more human, more worthy of the human person, love in social life—political, economic and cultural—must be given renewed value, becoming the constant and highest norm for all activity'. In this framework, along with the importance of little everyday gestures, social love moves us to devise larger strategies to halt environmental degradation and to encourage a 'culture of care' which permeates all of society. When we feel that God is calling us to intervene with others in these social dynamics, we should realize that this too is part of our spirituality, which is an exercise of charity and, as such, matures and sanctifies us. (n. 231)[17]

So, the vocation to which we are being invited is to weave a different approach into all aspects of our lives so that ecological conversion becomes not just a half-hearted attempt to change our ways but an ongoing and a sacred calling. Pope Francis is aware that 'not everyone is called to engage directly in political life', but those who are in positions of leadership and influence are obliged to act in ecologically responsible ways within the organisations where they are situated. It is in the context of community actions that relationships develop and what he terms a 'new social fabric' emerges. Further, 'These community actions, when they express self-giving love, can also become intense spiritual experiences' (n. 232).

The Sense of Wonder and Paying Attention

The discovery of God in all things is a characteristic maxim of Ignatian thinking. Why is it, therefore, that we have been so slow to find what Pope Francis calls mystical meaning 'in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face' (n. 233)? Understanding all things in God leads to feelings of intense awe and wonder. But that wonder requires some effort, at least initially, on our part, for, I suggest, it is related to the ability to develop the virtue of paying attention.

We can also ask ourselves what the relationship is, if any, between the human capacity for wonder and ecologically good acts. For environmentalists such as the pioneering writer and conservationist Rachel Carson, the experience of wonder is explicitly grounded in contact with the natural world, so that, 'The more clearly we focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the world about us, the less taste we shall have for destruction'.[18] Elsewhere she writes:

[17] Referring to Pope John Paul II, *Dives in misericordia*, n. 14.
[18] Rachel Carson, 'Design for Nature Writing', speech on receiving the John Burroughs medal, April 1952, in *Lost Woods: The Discovered Writing of Rachel Carson*, edited by Linda Lear (Boston: Beacon, 2011), 94.

> A child's world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement. It is to our misfortune that for most of us that clear-eyed vision, that true instinct for what is beautiful and awe-inspiring is dimmed and even lost when we reach adulthood.[19]

But such a wonder is also a spiritual gift, one that we may always receive if we are open to it.

For the early saints a pregnant sense of the world infused with the presence of God inspired a strong sense of wonderment; according to the Eastern Orthodox scholar Elizabeth Theokritoff, their 'vivid sense of God's hand constantly at work in all his creation fuels their sense of the universe as a great wonder, a continuing miracle'.[20] The natural world therefore acts as a mirror for the presence of God, but also implies that 'our primary task in our dealings with the rest of creation is to "listen" to it, and respond by praising God'.[21]

What is the creation 'saying' to us at our present time? It is a cry of devastation and loss, a lament in the final death throes of dying species as each one is brought to extinction, even though, as scientists are fully aware, biodiversity helps stabilise the basic planetary conditions that makes life possible. In paying attention to the natural world it is necessary, as Simon Weil knew, not to turn away from suffering but to face it with honesty in the spirit of love. For her, the human soul had to 'pass through its own annihilation to the place where alone it can get the sort of attention which can attend to truth and to affliction …. The name of this intense, pure, disinterested, gratuitous, generous attention is love.'[22]

Thomas Aquinas also speaks about a virtue known as *studiositas*, which is relevant in this context since it is about paying attention in a particular way. Nicholas Austin helpfully describes this virtue as the ethics of the eye. It is about the way we see things; while Augustine rejected curiosity as a vice in relation to the world of nature, *studiositas* is different in that it understands all things not in order to grasp them or manipulate them, but for their own sake and for their end in God.

[19] Rachel Carson, *The Sense of Wonder: A Celebration of Nature for Parents and Children* (New York: Harper, 1998), 30.
[20] Elizabeth Theokritoff, *Living in God's Creation: Orthodox Perspectives on Ecology* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary, 2009), 43.
[21] Theokritoff, *Living in God's Creation*, 48.
[22] Simone Weil, 'The Human Personality' [1943], in *Simone Weil: An Anthology*, edited by Siân Miles, (London: Penguin, 2005), 92.

Aquinas is most concerned about *precisely* what we give our attention to and why, so to be more aware of the risks of turning it towards those things that are 'not useful' or that lead to a greater likelihood of falling into temptation.[23] Paying attention is also a necessary ingredient in prayer—'attention is absolutely necessary for prayer'—but without becoming excessive in its devotion.[24] The important point here is that there is an ethical outcome of studied devotion.

What Lies Ahead

I began with a reflection on the environmental crisis, particularly the desperate plight of climate and other environmental refugees, which will become increasingly intense in the years to come, as the 'cannonball of our times'. Have we yet woken up to the seriousness of what is going on around us and felt the world's pain, including that of all creatures? If we have, then we have taken the first step in ecological conversion; for all of us, without exception, are implicated in the failures of our modern societies. Pope Francis gives us manifold clues about how to understand ecological conversion as a spiritual journey. Not all of us will be able to express that conversion in the same way, but each of us, according to our own place in the world around us, has the capacity to do something. I cannot say that I have even begun to

[23] Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 2. 2, q.167, a. 2.
[24] Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 2. 2, q. 83, a. 13.

arrive after more than thirty years of reflection on this topic but, rather, I am still on the journey.

In Philippians 2:12 we are instructed: 'work out your own salvation with fear and trembling'. Given the enormity of the task, and our own vulnerabilities and limited abilities, such an outcome is one that can only be given to us by God's grace. But, as Paul says later in the same epistle, 'forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus' (3:13–14). That call for us now must be ecological conversion. We simply don't have a choice in the matter if we are to be faithful to the God who is the author of all life, and if we care about the future of our own and coming generations.

While recognising the radicality of that demand, there is also a sense in which we discover that path through becoming wayfarers in a different way of being and acting. Therefore both an immediate transformation and at the same time an ongoing one are necessary for ecological conversion to be real in our individual lives and communities. But we can take hope from Pope Francis that the task is not impossible, for there are others who share that journey with us. As he affirms:

> In the meantime, we come together to take charge of this home which has been entrusted to us, knowing that all the good which exists here will be taken up into the heavenly feast. In union with all creatures, we journey through this land seeking God, for 'if the world has a beginning and if it has been created, we must enquire who gave it this beginning, and who was its Creator'. Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope. (n. 244)

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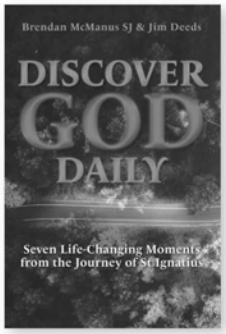

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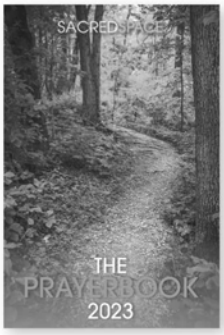

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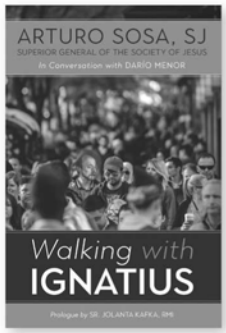

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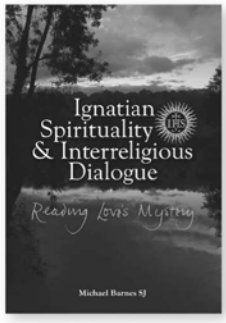

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ONGOING CONVERSION

A New Ignatian Ideal?

Philip Endean

WHAT WE NOW CALL Ignatian spirituality has from the outset been concerned with the art of change. People make choices, amend their lives, confront their disordered attachments. The Jesuit charism is about interaction, the help of souls. As such it is essentially 'a way of moving forward', constantly responsive to persons, times and circumstances, constantly changing.

Nevertheless, in this jubilee year, marking the fifth centenary of Ignatius' experiences at Loyola and Manresa, there has been a new stress on a particular kind of change. The central theme has been conversion, and in particular ongoing conversion. When Arturo Sosa, the present General Superior of the Jesuits, convoked this jubilee, he expressed the hope that 'at the heart of this Ignatian year we would hear the Lord calling us, and we would allow him to work our conversion inspired by the personal experience of Ignatius'.[1]

This emphasis differs from that of previous Ignatian jubilees. When Father General Vitelleschi wrote regarding the Society's centenary in 1640, he focused, not on Ignatius' biography, but on the finished product: the 'wondrous workshop, fully equipped and furnished with most perfect instruments'—the rules which God has given us through Ignatius and his successors and which 'he merely asks [us] to keep faithfully and observe exactly'.[2] But now the focus is on how Ignatius changed: the 2021–2022 jubilee is about seeing in Ignatius 'the spiritual journey of every convert, of everyone in search of God'.[3] Ultimately the jubilee is less about Ignatius that about letting the Lord Himself continue to renew

[1] Quotations from Fr Sosa in this article are taken from three letters written to members of the Society of Jesus in 2019: 'Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus, 2019–2029' (19 February); 'Assimilating and Implementing the Universal Apostolic Preferences 2019–2029' (21 April); 'Ignatian Year 2021–2022' (27 Sept).

[2] *Select Letters of Our Very Reverend Fathers General to the Fathers and Brothers of the Society of Jesus* (Woodstock, Md: Woodstock College, 1900), 97, 116–117.

[3] Arturo Sosa, 'Ignatian Year'.

us. And it is less about the Jesuits as such, and more about any Christian seeking a more authentic life.

I should like to begin by presenting the idea of ongoing conversion: a new motif in official Jesuit and Ignatian rhetoric, with a new centrality. The claim will be that newness is in line with the ways in which, more or less consciously, we now read Ignatius through an understanding of grace and salvation rather different from his. That will lead to some suggestions for our contemporary making and giving of the Exercises.

The Colloquy of Mercy as Source of Mission

When Pope Francis visited the Jesuit General Congregation in 2016, he gave a talk that was rather rambling, perhaps a little coded, but certainly very suggestive.[4] Its structure was that of a classic Jesuit retreat conference: a preamble and three points. The second point was about being moved by Christ on the cross. The passage is interesting on several counts. Here we can just note that he refers directly to the second exercise of the First Week, the colloquy of mercy (Exx 60–61):

> The entire second Exercise is a conversation full of sentiments of shame, confusion, sorrow, and tears of gratitude, seeing precisely who I am—by making myself small—and who God is—by magnifying him—he who 'preserved my life until now'; and by seeing who Jesus is, hanging on the cross for me.

It is on this experience that mission centres:

> The Lord, who looks upon us with mercy and chooses us, sends us forth with the same powerful mercy to the poor, the sinners, the abandoned, the crucified and anyone who suffers from injustice and violence in today's world.[5]

We will return later to the theme of mercy. The section is rich: the full text on the handout alludes to a theology of divine mercy, and perhaps also to the *teología del pueblo* as a corrective to more Marxist-inspired approaches to structural injustice.[6] It also evokes two texts of Ignatius

[4] At the outset he refers to Paul VI's speech at the beginning of the 1974–1975 General Congregation—'the best speech ever written by a pope to the Society of Jesus' (conversation with Jesuit editors, 19 May 2022). Bergoglio's rather partial reception of GC 32 seems connected with the complications in his relationship with the Society of Jesus that were quickly resolved once he became Pope.

[5] 'Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus', n. 2, GC 36.

[6] Since I do not take up this latter point later, I quote here the relevant sentences: 'The Lord, who looks upon us with mercy and chooses us, sends us forth with the same powerful mercy to the poor, the

that sound more Lutheran than Tridentine in their theology of sin—something to which we will return below. For the moment the point to note is that Francis is evoking a central Jesuit theme, that of mission and of how God chooses people to be sent. But whereas Ignatius sets these ideas in the Second Week of the book of the *Spiritual Exercises*—in particular in the way he evokes Christ speaking to his servants in the Two Standards (Exx 146)—Francis links them to the colloquy of mercy in the second exercise of the First Week.

Something of this might be very personal. After all, as bishop in Buenos Aires, Francis had as his motto a quotation from St Bede commenting on the call of Matthew: *misereando atque eligendo*—Christ at once has mercy on Levi and in that very act chooses him. We know that as a young man Jorge Bergoglio had a major conversion experience on the feast of St Matthew (21 September).[7] But Francis's emphasis

The Calling of St Matthew, *by Hendrick ter Brugghen, 1621*

sinners, the abandoned, the crucified and anyone who suffers from injustice and violence in today's world. Only when we experience this healing force in our own lives and in our own wounds [wounds with first and last names]—as individuals and as a body—will we be able to lose our fear of allowing ourselves to be moved by the immense suffering of our brothers and sisters so as to go out and walk patiently with our people, learning from them the best way to help and serve them (cf. GC 32, decree 4, n. 50).'

[7] See Austen Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer* (New York: Henry Holt, 2014), 35–36.

converges with ways in which the Society of Jesus had been understanding its mission in terms of reconciliation.[8]

As he promulgated the 2019 Universal Apostolic Preferences, Fr Sosa wrote of how the Church and the Society have become newly aware of sinfulness within. The immediate context is the abuse crisis, but we can also point to the beginnings of a theology of the Church's sinfulness and need for permanent reform from the conciliar period onwards. Then, like Pope Francis, Fr Sosa alludes to the First Week colloquy, and suggests that it is the experience of being forgiven that calls us to mission:

> We feel shame and confusion when we stand before the Lord, asking him to forgive us, to heal us and to show us his merciful love …. We can bring his compassion to others only if we ourselves, individually and as a body, have experienced that compassion. Indeed, it is our own experience of being loved and saved that gives our desire for mission its depth and energy. It is precisely in the challenges of our wounded world and our own wounds that we hear the gentle but insistent call of the Lord.[9]

'Our wounded world and our own wounds': similar documents—starting with the Ignatian contemplation on the Incarnation—had regularly spoken, in various tones, of the needs of the world. But the connection with 'the wounds within' is new.

Conversion as Fruit of Mission

A conversion experience then—the grace of the First Week—is the *source* of mission. But in this new rhetoric, conversion is also, in some important ways, the *fruit* of mission. The criteria for a fruitful mission are not centred on its success or on how well it meets the needs of the world. A fruitful mission opens us up to new conversion.

It is this vision that informed the choice of the Jesuit Universal Apostolic Preferences after a two-year discernment process throughout the Society. We accompany young people, not just because they are the world's future, or because such work represents the greatest service we can give to society—arguments we find in Jesuit tradition right at the beginning. Rather—so Fr Sosa puts it in February 2019—'accompanying young people puts us on the path of personal, communitarian, and

[8] The 2016 General Congregation was anticipated by an important circular letter of Father General Adolfo Nicolás, 8 September 2014, on the centrality of reconciliation and working for peace.
[9] Arturo Sosa, 'Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus'.

institutional conversion'. The preferences 'provide a spiritual path. They do not seek merely to establish static apostolic ends or actions but, rather, they are a dynamic means for us to continue to be led by the Spirit of renewal.'[10]

We are not far from the intuition that led Ignatius in a document—named, confusingly, the Examen—to set out six testing experiences for candidates, of which a month or so of spiritual exercises were the first. What matters is that the external activity—whatever form that takes—earths and deepens the prayer experience, enabling us to experience more fully the interplay of consolations and desolations characteristic of genuine spiritual growth.

There are four Universal Apostolic Preferences: opening the way to God, walking with the poor, accompanying young people and collaborating in the care of our common home. But it is not that the first, about God, is the spiritual foundation of three worthy worldly activities of service to our neighbour. It is rather that those three orientations have been identified as privileged points of access to the subversive, transforming touch of God, calling us to constant conversion: personal, communal and institutional. As Pope Francis put it in his homily marking the centenary of Ignatius and Francis Xavier's canonization: 'if prayer is living, it "unhinges" us from within, reignites the fire of mission, rekindles our joy, and continually prompts us to allow ourselves to be troubled by the plea of all those who suffer in our world'.[11] The God present in all things is a God calling us to a communion involving not only friendship and mission, but also ongoing conversion—all three interlinked and interpenetrating.

Doctrine Developed

What may be surprising is that this language, at least in a Jesuit context, is in some ways innovative. At least on the surface of Ignatius' texts, the conversion experience of the First Week appears more as an important prelude, leading into a more refined process of discernment, in which one finds a vocation in keeping with the praise of God and the salvation of one's soul (Exx 169). The different Weeks of the Exercises cover different phases. Mission emerges from the prayer of the Second Week—

[10] Arturo Sosa, 'Assimilating and Implementing the Universal Apostolic Preferences'.
[11] Pope Francis, homily, Mass on the 400th anniversary of the canonization of St Ignatius of Loyola, 12 March 2022.

according to the oldest Jesuit tradition from the Kingdom and the Two Standards. So the latter meditation invites us to, 'consider how the Lord of all the world chooses so many persons—Apostles, Disciples, etc.,—and sends them through all the world spreading His sacred doctrine through all states and conditions of persons' (Exx 145).

This Second Week call is confirmed by the prayers of the passion and the resurrection that follow, just as it has been prepared by the First Week conversion. Older Jesuit texts about spiritual growth spoke not of ongoing conversion, but of the quest for perfection. The difference in language there has something to do with the role of willpower in the process, but also a sense that the basic turning away from sin, conversion in its primary sense, is something that happens once for all at the beginning.

It would be a mistake to make too much of this point. But simply from a literary point of view, there are sharp differences between the First Week and what comes after. In Ignatius' text—contemporary practice is different—no scripture is recommended. Nor is there any fixed timetable—just five exercises, with no real guidance about their distribution over the days, so that today we still discuss whether all five exercises should be given on one day or not. The First Week occurs in a shadow world, where all are in the process of 'going down into Hell'. It is when the Second Person of the Trinity descends from outside that order and structure appear (Exx 102).[12] To be sure, disordered tendencies are still present and still being worked with. The prayer of the Two Standards is about becoming aware of the hidden deceits of the enemy chief, about how our sinful tendencies can become manifest under the appearance of good. But the confrontation with divine mercy in the First Week is somehow presupposed. When Pope Francis suggests that the experience of conversion remains central to the process, he is going beyond Ignatius' text.

Moreover, the idea that a discernment opens you up to continuing conversion also goes beyond the consensus of the early sources. To be sure, we have texts from Jerónimo Nadal (1507–1580) that speak of the circle of prayer and action, of how prayer feeds the apostolate and the apostolate in its turn feeds prayer. The idea that the service of others represents the path of personal growth is also present. When

[12] See Johannes Maria Steinke, 'The Single Day of the First Week Exercises', *The Way*, 49/3 (July 2010), 23–44.

Ignatius suggested to Nadal, newly arrived in Rome, that he should preach, Nadal's reaction was to say that his sins and misery made that impossible. Ignatius rejoined, 'it is precisely in this way that you will make progress, by seeking the salvation of the neighbour'.[13] But these considerations—outside the experiments for candidates—are never central to the Jesuit apostolic purpose. The Formula of the Institute leaves the apostle's ongoing growth to one side. What matters is the glory of God and the universal good.

Revealing here is what is probably the first major letter written in Ignatius' name by his secretary Juan de Polanco, who arrived in Rome in 1547. The letter expresses the Jesuit ideal for a community of young recruits in Portugal. It evokes salvation: God *transfers* the saved to the kingdom of the Son; for religious, he reinforces this by taking them in one sense *out* of 'the dangerous gulf of the world', notwithstanding their particular consecration to ministry—'the … publicly visible means arranged by His Providence for us to use in helping each other'.[14] Now, the contemporary doctrine of ongoing conversion invites us to recognise that our encounters in ministry themselves challenge us and send us back to the beginning of the process in a new cycle of conversion. That is not a move that Polanco and Ignatius make. Instead, they simply encourage the young men by telling them that their vocation is better than everyone else's. 'How noble and royal a way of life you have adopted': no more important task can be imagined. You are converted, you discern your vocation and then you try to live it. Conversion is important, but it remains a prelude.

Reimagining Sin and Grace

The previous paragraphs may have seemed rather literal-minded and crass. In one sense we know that Ignatius drew on worldviews we no longer share, and in all sorts of ways we make intelligent allowances for those differences as we read his texts and share his process. But often this adjustment is unconscious. We may not realise how radically contemporary practice in one sense goes beyond the historical Ignatius.

The Ignatian Exercises are, of course, a resource to be received and worked on rather than read. And their reception has led us along

[13] MHSJ MN 4, 650, quoted in Raymond Hostie, 'The Cycle of Activity and Prayer According to Father Jerome Nadal', in *Finding God in All Things: Essays in Ignatian Spirituality Selected from* Christus, translated by William J. Young (Chicago: Regnery, 1958), 153–165.
[14] Ignatius to the students in Coimbra, 7 May 1547, in *Personal Writings*, 172–173.

paths beyond the imagination of the historical Ignatius who wrote so precisely.[15] Ignatius seems to have imagined the Exercises as a once-in-a-lifetime process. He did not envision the use that Jesuits have made of them since the second generation of the Society, as a primary source for regular prayer proper to a new form of consecrated life.[16] Further, the Exercises are lived and received today far beyond Jesuit circles. The text of the Exercises is 'applied' (Exx 18) to experiences way beyond what Ignatius himself could have envisaged. And though Ignatius in the *Constitutions* knows he cannot anticipate where his way of moving forward will lead us, he makes provision: his concern is that the body not only be conserved, but also develop in a good way.[17] It is not just about fidelity, but about being creative.

Pope Francis sets his reading of the colloquy of mercy in the First Week in the context of the extraordinary jubilee of year of mercy that was taking place as the Jesuit Congregation was meeting. His concept of mercy is deeply felt, even if the expression is cryptic. Before referring to Ignatius, Francis had spoken of the ministries of mercy:

> I use the plural because mercy is not an abstraction but a lifestyle consisting in concrete gestures rather than mere words: reaching out and touching the flesh of the neighbour and institutionalizing the works of mercy. For those of us who make the Exercises, this grace by means of which Jesus commands us to become like the Father (cf. Luke 6:36) begins with a colloquy of mercy that is an extension of our colloquy with the Lord crucified because of my sins.[18]

The Pope is taking up lines of reflection popularised by St Faustina's cult of divine mercy through Pope John Paul II, and perhaps deepened by Walter Kasper.[19] The concern is that we should somehow put mercy, God's dealings with creation, at the centre of our doctrine of God rather than as some sort of secondary attribute. In *Amoris laetitia* Francis takes up the accusation of watering down the gospel so often made by authoritarian voices, and turns it against them:

[15] See the essays by Patrick Goujon and Sylvie Robert in this collection.
[16] In the *Constitutions*, the Exercises appear as an activity for candidates, and as an apostolic tool. The sentences on what we now call the tertianship, the 'school of the heart', do not mention the Exercises. Only the Examen is specified for daily prayer, and then only for those in formation. The annual retreat is established only in the generations after Ignatius.
[17] The allusion is to the title of part X of the *Constitutions*: 'de cómo se conservará y augmentará todo este cuerpo en su buen ser'.
[18] 'Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus', n. 2.
[19] See Walter Kasper, *Mercy* (Mahwah: Paulist, 2014).

> We put so many conditions on mercy that we empty it of its concrete meaning and real significance. *That* is the worst way of watering down the Gospel. It is true, for example, that mercy does not exclude justice and truth, but first and foremost we have to say that mercy is the fullness of justice and the most radiant manifestation of God's truth. (n. 311, emphasis added)

We can thus situate this approach to divine mercy within wider currents of twentieth-century theology that integrate more closely the mysteries of creation and salvation. We talk less of the Christian message as the only source of goodness in an otherwise godless world, and more of the Church as sign and sacrament of a saving will of God present universally. The object of conversion is thus not exclusively service of Jesus Christ, but rather entry into a movement of reconciliation and recapitulation that has been present in creation since the beginning. Even if Christ remains a definitive focus, the God to whom we relate is a God present in all things.

A saving will of God present universally

The theology on the surface of Ignatius' texts does not work like this. The incarnation is a reaction to human sinfulness. It is 'determined in their eternity' by the three divine Persons 'that the Second Person shall become human to save the human race' (Exx 102). In one sense we know, and Ignatius knew, that there is no sequence in an eternal decision, and such language is simply an accommodation to finite minds. Nevertheless, it is not a universal reconciliation, but the confrontation between the goodness of God and the sinfulness of the world that structures Ignatius' imaginative presentation of sin and grace.

In the Ignatian meditations on sin, Christ appears suddenly and dramatically, nailed to the cross. In the Second Week we pray to know, love and follow this incarnate Word, largely in terms of renouncing the world and its drives towards riches and pride, and attaching ourselves to the Word who has descended to us from outside in generosity, poverty and humility. Our service has a great deal to do with fighting against enemies. Only at the very end of the process, in the Contemplation to Attain Love, do we have a sense of the world as a good place, sustained by the creative action of God. Theological reflection may then make us go further and recognise that it had in fact been a good place all the time. But that is not a move that Ignatius makes, and it does not condition how he presents things.

Contemporary Practice

During the twentieth century, particularly, we have come to recognise the limitations of the ways in which Ignatius speaks of sin and grace. It is in this context that perhaps we can understand the new discourse about permanent conversion as a further elaboration of moves we have long been making. We have learnt to present the challenge of conversion, the prayer of the First Week, in ways that depart quite radically from the surface of Ignatius' text, introducing themes of the love of God right at the beginning, and toning down the threatening rhetoric of Hell that so fascinated James Joyce. We have made the Contemplation to Attain Love the key for interpreting the whole process.

The Principle and Foundation

Thus, it has become common to treat the Principle and Foundation as a section of the Ignatian retreat in its own right. It seems self-evident that we need to encourage retreatants to explore the themes of creation and the love of God, and only on that basis to begin to encounter the difficult ideas of sin. But it was not always so. Ignatius' text places the Principle and Foundation clearly as part of the First Week.

In 1599 the Official Directory was published: a manual of custom and practice that the early Jesuits put together after quite a complicated process.[20] It imagines the beginning of the full Exercises in ways we might find disconcerting. At the beginning of the retreat, the exercitant should be visited several times a day, with something new being given at each meeting. On the first morning, the Principle and Foundation is proposed. During the second visit, 'the director should give the Particular Examen', and explain 'that every person usually has one or two principal faults or sins which are the source or root of the others' (n.111). The stress is ascetical.

In the Directory, the emphasis is on the moral exigency for indifference: the Foundation serves not to excite gratitude, but to remind us that 'all these things have been given to us by God in order for us to attain our final end'. Already we are meant to be preparing for the exercises on sin, reflecting on how we have 'gone astray by making a wrong use' of the creatures that were meant to be helping us (n.107). A document going back to Ignatius himself envisages that the First Week proper begins on the evening of the first full day of the

[20] Dir 43.

retreat.[21] It is only those 'unused to mental prayer who may find it rather dry and barren' who might be given material on creation as such (n. 106).

Contemporary practice thus, often unconsciously, reshapes Ignatius' spiritual pedagogy of conversion. We are now introducing right at the beginning motifs about God's constant creative and saving agency that Ignatius deals with only later, and in doing so we are changing the character of what he himself seems to have envisaged. Famously, the examination of conscience has become an examen of consciousness, placing much more weight on the prayer for light and on gratitude for God's goodness than on moral performance. Though some have criticized excesses and laxism in this trend, no one now criticizes its underlying rightness.[22]

It is perhaps in this context that the new discourse of ongoing conversion can take its place. Just as we have learnt to present conversion in the light of God's creative and saving goodness, so perhaps we might think of salvation, discernment and mission with a new sensitivity to the conversion to which this goodness is constantly—and not just at the beginning—inviting us.

Fr Sosa seems to be writing in this spirit when he evokes the Contemplation to Attain Love in his letter promulgating the Universal Apostolic Preferences.

> The Contemplation to Attain Love begins with a point that seems to be common sense but which must be continually kept in mind: 'Love ought to manifest itself more by deeds than by words'. The process of discerning the universal apostolic preferences filled the participants with a profound sense of gratitude for the abundant graces received. At the same time, we experienced a strong call to personal, communal and institutional conversion.

Ignatius invites us to think of God's goodness and to imagine what we might do in return—the context of the prayer, 'Take, Lord, receive'. At the end of the process, it is almost as though creator and creature have become equal partners in a process of mutual self-giving. Fr Sosa is perhaps pointing us towards a corrective. Even here, there is a need for conversion. Even here, there is a strong sense of unworthiness.

[21] Dir 3: 1.

[22] See George Aschenbrenner, 'Consciousness Examen', *Review for Religious*, 31/1 (1972), 14–21; Nicholas Austin, 'Mind and Heart: Towards an Ignatian Spirituality of Study', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 46/4 (2014), 17–26.

Call and Mission

The point might be extended to how we understand call and mission. As I have already noted, Ignatius does recognise the ongoing influence of disordered tendencies in the Second Week. But he expects them to be hidden. Sin, as such, has been dealt with earlier in the First Week and perhaps in the first parts of it, before the colloquy at the end of the third exercise. In the Bible, however, the prophet Isaiah receives his call after a vision of God that causes him to cry out: 'Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips.' (Isaiah 6:5) And in Luke's Gospel, the call of Peter is accompanied by a miracle that makes Peter cry out, 'go away from me, for I am a sinful man' (Luke 5:8). Perhaps then, obviously without forcing things or becoming too grim about it, we might recognise, in ways that Ignatius does not directly encourage, a call to ongoing conversion throughout the whole dynamic of the four Weeks.

Imagine, for example, an older person, experienced in ministry, who, during the 'disposition days' at the beginning of the full Exercises, is struck in a quite new way by a sense of God's personal love, opening up a confrontation with difficult childhood realities that had long remained in unconscious memory. The ensuing First Week experience is powerful, and continues to mark the subsequent Weeks. During the

The Calling of St Peter, *by Philippe de Champaigne, late seventeenth century*

Second Week, the person recognises how he or she had been in thrall to an image of Jesus placing unreasonable demands, while missing the ways in which the Lord had really been calling him or her over many years. The person's prayer is primarily of repentance and gratitude all the way through.

The case is fictional, but not, I think, unrealistic or uncommon. No doubt any competent retreat-giver will support a process such as this empathetically. But some might nevertheless question whether such a person has really made the Exercises. The First Week experience overlays everything else. Some might say that a good screening process beforehand would have recognised such a person's need and encouraged him or her to work on it before the Exercises. But perhaps that response is too harsh and rigorist. Perhaps we need to recognise that the call to discipleship and union with God is at every stage also a call to conversion, and that such a case illustrates this interplay profoundly.

Common Grace

One final illustration of the interplay of conversion and discipleship may be worth highlighting. Pope Francis's dense paragraph cites two primary sources: an Ignatian letter and a saying attributed to Ignatius, both of which express a delicate and paradoxical vision of sin and forgiveness: 'He believed there was no other man in the world in whom these two things came together more strikingly: failing God so much on the one hand, and receiving so many graces from Him on the other'.[23]

Such paradoxes are typical of the Lutheran tradition. But Roman Catholicism rejected any attempt to codify such a vision theologically. It was important to safeguard the objective reality of salvation. Such a concern may be reflected in the way Ignatius presents vocation. He certainly allows that it is possible to make a good Election for the way of the precepts rather than the evangelical counsels. But the model of holiness that he seems to privilege is that of a properly committed cleric: a person who has decisively broken with sin and attached himself to a Christ who comes to the world from outside, as the agent of a transformative force that would otherwise be unavailable. The holy

[23] Pope Francis cites this text in Italian because he could not find the Spanish. In English, see Pedro de Ribadeneira, *The Life of Ignatius of Loyola*, translated by Claude Nicholas Pavur (Saint Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2014), 5.1.18 (346). The Pope also cites Ignatius to Francis Borja, late 1545: 'As for me, I persuade myself both before and after that I am nothing but an obstacle; and from this I derive great spiritual contentment and joy in our Lord in so far as I cannot take credit for anything that appears good' (*Personal Writings*, 161).

person is seen as leaving the world and participating in an authority that descends from God. Even if he serves Christ's mission of salvation, his true identity is in heaven. And much of his self-image involves rejecting the world.

That model of holiness has certainly been influential in Catholic Christianity, and it has a psychological attractiveness. But perhaps we are moving beyond it. Perhaps we are appropriating the wisdom in the Reformed tradition's insistence that holiness is to be found in everyday life. A generation ago, the standard textbook on the Ignatian tradition was centred on the Jesuits: Joseph de Guibert's *La Spiritualité de la Compagnie de Jésus*. Now we are more likely to begin with a book entitled *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything*, directed at publics well beyond the limits of Church authority as conceived in Tridentine terms.[24] The experience of being saved in Christ takes on a new centrality. We have recognised a universal call to holiness, and a need to re-imagine clerical and consecrated life accordingly. We have also become newly aware of sinfulness within the Church.

The issues here are vast and require wider discussion. But clearly, we now imagine divine action in terms very different from those of Counter-Reformation Catholicism. The holiness we encourage is no longer that of saints leaving the world to consecrate themselves to a Christ who comes from outside, with problematic associations of elitism and perfectionism. The Exercises now nourish the common experience of being ensnared in sin and yet sustained by grace, justified and sinner at the same time, caught up with all other creatures in God's transforming work. That shift might explain why we now see closer connections between the graces of the First and subsequent Weeks. The conversion to which we are called is no mere prelude to discerning a state of perfection. Rather, it is an ongoing and permanent feature of every Christian vocation.

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[24] In English: Joseph de Guibert, *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice. A Historical Study*, edited by George E. Ganss and William J. Young (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1964). James Martin, *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything: A Spirituality for Real Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010).

PRELIMINARIES TO A CONVERSION

Joseph A. Munitiz

SAINTS USUALLY THINK and speak of themselves as sinners, and St Ignatius Loyola (1491–1556) was no exception: in the opening words of the autobiography he dictated to Gonçalves da Câmara (1519?–1575) in 1553, just three years before his death: 'Until the age of twenty-six he was a man given up to the vanities of the world, and his chief delight used to be in the exercise of arms with a great and vain desire to gain honour' (*Autobiography*, n. 1).

This account is confirmed by Juan Polanco (1517–1576), who served as secretary to Ignatius from 1547 up to the latter's death. As soon as he was appointed to be secretary, he had asked Diego Laínez (1512–1565), one of the very first companions, to provide information on the life of Ignatius. Laínez (although involved in the Council of Trent) replied at once, and wrote:

> Ignatius was in secular terms a nobleman and came from one of the principal families of his region, also leaving to one side that while still in the world he was by nature capable, and prudent, and full of spirit and fiery, *inclined to arms and to other misdemeanours* [my italics].[1]

Polanco, who knew Ignatius well, wrote a 'supplement' enlarging the picture of the early years:

> Until this time [his wounding at Pamplona], although he was attached to the faith, his life was not at all in conformity with it, and he took no care about avoiding sins, rather he was especially misbehaved in gaming and things relating to women, and in brawls and armed fighting; however, all this was just the evil effect of custom. In spite of all that he gave proof of having many virtues.[2]

[1] Ignatius in the autobiographical account omits all mention of his aristocratic lineage.

[2] Both texts were published in MHSJ FN: for an English translation, see Diego Laínez and Juan Polanco, *The First Biographies of St Ignatius Loyola*, edited and translated by Joseph A. Munitiz (Oxford: Way Books, 2019).

Both these accounts were written well before Ignatius dictated his *Autobiography*, and the fact that Polanco gives so similar a version to that given there indicates that Ignatius must have already told his early companions about his former life. Moreover, when he came to make a general confession to a monk in Monserrat (in 1522), it took him three days to do so (*Autobiography*, n.17).

This picture of a sinner is reinforced by historical evidence: in 1515 Iñigo (as he was then known), while in his early twenties, was arrested for misconduct, *cierto eceso, delictos calificados* y *muy henormes* (a certain excess, crimes categorized as very great) or as another document says, *dellicta varia et diversia ac enormia* (various crimes, diverse and great).[3] Iñigo was probably involved in a serious brawl, in which individuals were injured, while on a visit to Azpeitia for the carnival. His crimes were committed along with his priest-brother, Pero (Pedro) López, who escaped arrest as a cleric. Iñigo also escaped eventually by claiming clerical status, showing that he had received some minor order as a young boy.

Ignatius as a young man, artist unknown, 1850

And yet, with the 500th anniversary of the 'conversion' of St Ignatius, I have been puzzled about what could have led up to it. There are signs that the ground was being prepared. I first suspected this when I saw that in the *Autobiography* the opening words, 'Until the age of twenty-six', seem to point to 1517 and not 1521, the date of Pamplona. Cándido de Dalmases, among others, put this down to a simple error and rejected the possibility that Iñigo did undergo some sort of change of mind prior to the convalescent experience at Loyola.[4] However, 1517 was the year when his patron, Juan Velázquez de Cuéllar, the

[3] The quotations are from documents recording the trial in Pamplona which released Iñigo, who had claimed clerical status: MHSJ FD, 239–246, in particular 235, 237–238, 240.

[4] See Ignatius de Loyola, *Obras*, edited by Ignacio Iparraguirre and Cándido de Dalmases (Madrid: BAC, 1997), 84.

royal treasurer, was disgraced and died; Iñigo then, thanks to the kindness of his patron's widow, María de Velasco, moved (with a grant of money and two horses) to employment by the duke of Nájera. This must have been a major upheaval in his life and would have imprinted itself on his memory.

A good example of how difficult it is to gauge the piety of Iñigo in those years is to be found in the recent biography of Ignatius by Enrique García Hernán, in the improved French translation by Pierre-Antoine Fabre. This refers to a letter from Ignatius to Laínez of 24 February 1554, in which Ignatius writes: 'Entre el señor don Rodrigo Ponce y nosotros ay muy special amor en el Señor nuestro mucho annos ha, y en cofessiones y couersationes spirituales se communicha harta[s] uezes.' This sentence I would translate: 'Between Don Rodrigo Ponce and myself there is a special affection in Our Lord from many years back, and he has been in touch many times in confessions and spiritual conversations'. However, García Hernán (or rather his translator) gives this version: 'Don Rodrigo Ponce et nous partageons *un amour très particulier pour Notre Seigneur* depuis très longtemps déjà, et pour ses confessions comme pour ses conversations spirituelles il s'adresse très souvent à notre maison'.[5] But this looks like a mistranslation. Ignatius is not referring to a *shared devotion*, but simply stating that they were close friends 'in the Lord'.

We do know from Polanco that Iñigo had a devotion to St Peter and wrote poems in his honour.[6] But even here the motivation is far from clear. After all, his favourite elder priest-brother was called Peter, and the writing of verses may have been part of the humanist training he received in a noble household.

More significant it seems to me is the fact that as a soldier he did not take part in the looting of Nájera in 1520, although he was involved in its capture.[7] Philip Caraman, when he mentions this example of 'magnanimity', agrees with Pedro de Leturia, that it indicates how Iñigo respected the code of a *hidalgo* and may not have had any religious motivation.[8] However, there is a contrast here between the hooligan

[5] Enrique García Hernán, *Ignacio de Loyola* (Madrid: Taurus, 2013), 491 note 35; French translation by Pierre-Antoine Fabre (Paris: Seuil, 2016), 106 note 1.

[6] MHSJ FN 2, 517.

[7] The town had become rebellious when Charles V took over as king of Spain.

[8] Pedro de Leturia, "La conversion de S. Ignacio: nuevos datos y ensayo de síntesis', *Archivum Historicum Societatis Jesu*, 5 (1936), 19. Compare Philip Caraman, *Ignatius Loyola* (London: Collins, 1990), 18.

who rioted in Azpeitia in 1515 and the well-behaved soldier of 1520. Again, early in 1521 the viceroy appointed him to negotiate a peace settlement in his home province of Guipúzcoa: this suggests a balanced diplomat who could manage men.[9]

How then should one interpret the opening reference to 'twenty-six years of age'? There is one other occasion in the reminiscences where Ignatius refers to his age: when recounting the revelation received in Manresa next to the river Cardoner he seems to have said:

> One cannot set out the particular things he understood then, though they were many: only that he received a greater clarity in his understanding, such that in the whole course of his life, *right up to the sixty-two years he has had from God*, he does not think … that he has ever attained so much as on that single occasion (*Autobiography*, n.30).

The translators point out that if the year in question is 1555, Ignatius would be saying that he was born in 1493.[10] However, it is certain that Ignatius began recounting his story in 1553, which would point to the year 1491 as that of this birth. There is solid evidence (based on the testimony of the woman who suckled him) that such was the correct year. People who knew Ignatius admired his precision, and this is what one would expect from someone trained in the service of a financial administrator. On other occasions when he mentions dates (1528/1527 in n.73 and 1537 in n.93) he is correct.

For all these reasons I fully agree with the line taken by Jean-Claude Dhôtel in his French translation and notes to the *Autobiography* that the opening words of this text refer to the year 1517. '*Sans qu'on puisse encore parler de conversion*' (even though one may not yet speak of conversion), nevertheless, there was a change of life.[11] Ignatius continued to dream of life as a courtier, with his mind focused on some beautiful lady, but the ground was being prepared for the great change to come.

The word 'conversion' should be treated with caution. Thus, scholars have questioned how appropriate it is to speak of St Paul having being 'converted'; he did not change in his devotion to God or

[9] MNSJ FN 1, 156.
[10] See *Personal Writings*, 364 note 40.
[11] *Ignace de Loyola. Écrits*, edited and translated by Maurice Giuliani (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1991), 1019.

go from unbelief to belief.[12] Similarly there is no evidence that Iñigo was an unbeliever before his experience on his sickbed. The crucial change at that point was that he suddenly became aware of the activity of the Holy Spirit in his soul. This became evident to him when certain thoughts gave him a lasting comfort whereas others brought only a passing enjoyment. Without doubt, this was a crucial step, as Gonçalves da Câmara noted in the margin of the *Autobiography*.[13]

But Iñigo was very far at that stage from any appreciation of what closeness to God would imply, as he himself took pains to point out: 'not knowing what humility was or charity or patience, or discernment in regulating and balancing these virtues' (n. 14). For Ignatius 'conversion' was rather the start of a process, which would reach a climax when he learned to free himself from scruples (n. 25) and had his mind opened on the banks of the Cardoner (n. 30). But it is helpful, I think, to realise that there were 'preliminaries', which too often have not been appreciated.

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[12] Some comments made by Peter Edmonds were a great help at this point.

[13] Hence the comment he seems to have added in the margin: in the Philip Endean edition (*Personal Writings*), notes 10 and 15.

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Away in the loveable west,
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CONVERSION

A Continuing Journey

Marion Morgan

DRAMATIC CONVERSIONS such as that of St Paul on the way to Damascus can be likened to the crash and roar of a wave as it reaches the seashore. That event, although attracting all the attention, is neither the beginning nor the end of the motion of the water. It is simply the event that we see and hear. The wave originated way out at sea, and its consequences lie in the future.

When I was about thirteen (in 1955) I was asked whether or not I had been converted. The question confused me. I had been attending the local Anglican church since I joined the nursery class of the Sunday School at 4 years old, and had been going to Evensong with the family ever since, on a Sunday evening. In addition, my mother helped me read a passage of scripture every night with Scripture Union notes to go with it, according to the age I was at the time.

'Conversion' was more or less a new term, which arrived at the same time as a new vicar, who was very Evangelical. I was also asked if I had a 'spiritual birthday'. It reminds me of my young great-nephew, who was brought up in a Baptist church. When a visiting preacher came and asked those who wanted to be committed to Christ to come to the front of the church, he went up. He told his parents afterwards that no one else had gone up so he went as he felt sorry for the preacher. He has since gone on to study law and is 'keeping an open mind' regarding religion.

Years later, after leaving home in 1967 and after many different experiences of life, including the long-term illness of my mother, I found myself in Bristol, looking for a church in which to worship. I tried a Methodist church, a high Church of England one, a cathedral, but still felt unsatisfied. What they taught was all so different. Sometimes there were contradictory doctrines in the same congregation. I had questions and I wanted real answers. The Roman Catholic Church claimed to have the truth so I went to the local Catholic parish and asked for instruction. 'I am a confirmed, convinced Anglican', I said, 'but I want to know more'. I wanted to know the meaning of life. I also needed a

lot of personal help, but could not bear to accept it until I could trust the Catholics. What if they preached a doctrine I could not accept?

Happily, the theology of the Catholic Church captivated me. It made sense. God was so much greater and so much holier than I had found elsewhere, that everything else fitted into this new context. I fell in love with this Church and its theology—and with Christ, all over again. Was this a conversion? I rejected the term. I was not turning away from anything. It was the faith that I had found in the Anglican Church which had led me to this point and this new development.

That was just the beginning. I had to get used to a whole new set of customs and a very different congregation from the ones of which I had previously been a part. The parish simply did not seem 'English' in the way I was used to. This was in 1969, when parishes were still struggling to put into practice the changes of Vatican II. Many of the hymns were different and the style of music was often strange to me. There was little reference to, let alone sense of responsibility about, topics of national interest or concern. It was as if this was not really part of the thinking of the congregation.

So this 'conversion' meant a rethinking of mental and cultural patterns, and a real change in the way that I thought. There was a lot of rearrangement of my assumptions regarding Catholics in general: many prejudices were still rife in my mind. It meant learning to see the world from a different perspective, and led to reviewing my lifestyle and my job. I was then working in the Civil Service in an office-based environment. It became clear to me that I was being called to work for greater unity and understanding between the different Christian denominations in the ecumenical movement. To do this, I needed to be better qualified. I resigned from my job, was accepted to study theology at Bristol University and went on to complete the postgraduate diploma in pastoral theology at Heythrop College, then in London. One way or another I was engaged in this ministry for over twenty years, but that is another story.

Over the years I went on many Jesuit-run retreats and gradually began to integrate into my being the wonders of a personal relationship with Christ, lived out in the secular world as well as within church structures. Was this at last the real process of conversion, gradually transforming my life?

'Conversion' as such surely strictly refers to an event when we change from one way of life, which is broadly against the will of God,

to accepting and following the will of God in our life to the best of our ability, trusting wholly in God to provide the help and the means to do this. But this decision must be made over and over again, at different times in our life and in different circumstances. The decision must be made at all levels of our being. Sometimes, the deepest decision comes first, and then has to be ratified at every level of our inner and outer life over many years. Sometimes it may begin with a seemingly quite minor decision—like my grandmother's resolution when she got married to try always to continue to attend chapel services, which she did—and then it gradually deepens to become the bedrock of a person's life.

Although real conversion depends on a single decision, it also needs to be lived out in the everyday choices of our own particular circumstances. And it needs time to take in. St Paul himself went off to Tarsus and spent some years thinking out the implications of what had happened to him. People who are recently converted need gentle handling. St Ignatius' warning about noting the end of a period of consolation (Exx 336) is important, because it is then, when still in a heightened state of consciousness, that rogue ideas can creep in.[1] How

The Conversion of St Paul, *by Palma the Younger, 1590–1595*

[1] 'One should distinguish the time when the consolation itself was present from the time after it, in which the soul remains still warm and favored with the gifts and after effects of the consolation which has itself passed away. For often during this later period we ourselves act either through our own reasoning which springs from our own habits and the conclusions we draw from our own concepts and judgments, or through the influence of either a good or an evil spirit.'

many sects have been founded after what was probably a genuine conversion experience?

But conversion can never be dissociated from mission. A personal experience of conversion is, of course, a great gift to the individual concerned, but it is also a gift to the Church at large and the world around us. How this works out in practice is as individual as the conversion experience. Conversion is really about the growth of a relationship with our Trinitarian God. Like marriage, this is different for every person. Sometimes it starts off with a friendship which gradually develops. Other times there is a sudden and unexpected 'falling in love', which seems to short-circuit many of the intervening stages of getting to know someone. These are usually negotiated later on. In an arranged marriage, the relationship may grow and develop into mature love over many years. Relationships have their own individual journeys. But the relationship with God is always dependent on God's initiative and the person's response of 'yes' or 'no' or 'not yet'. Conversion events may simply mark these decisions.

I ran a Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults group for several years. Those who attended came for a variety of reasons. Many came because they were preparing for marriage to a Catholic. Others came because they had experienced deep trauma in their lives and were looking for meaning, which was not found elsewhere. One person in a group I was running came because he had been asked to be a godparent to his expected nephew and had rarely been to church, even though he had been baptized himself. Being confirmed was a requirement in Poland, where the baptism was to take place.

It is intensely moving to see faith growing in people over the weeks and months. It is also inspirational to see the difference in them as they begin to receive the sacraments—if they do. Sadly, some appear to lapse quite soon afterwards. Others progress into being faithful and valued members of the Church. The sacramental life of the Church is vital and nourishes us at every stage of the way. But the actual occasion when we receive the sacraments, especially that of baptism, does not always coincide in time with our conversion experiences. When they do, the effect is very powerful. The essential strength and effect of, say, infant baptism, cannot be assessed but can be considered the very first step of an ultimate transformation.

I prefer the word 'transformation' to 'conversion', and would apply it to the whole of a life. We are too complex to be 'converted' in one

moment of time or one special event. Our growing transformation flows from decisions made at very different times. Of course the really significant events happen. They 'convert' us from what and who we are at the time to a new direction. But I would prefer to say they are landmarks on a continuing journey, building on the past which brought us to this point, and looking to the future when we move on to discover new truths. The dramatic events—the breaking wave—are what draw the attention; the real work carries on for years beforehand and a lifetime afterwards. 'Transformation' covers the whole process, including those special events which break straight into ordinary time and ordinary lifestyles. We need them—oh yes! But we need also to look at what led up to these events and what follows afterwards.

Landmarks on a continuing journey

Life after Conversion

The first few years after a specific conversion moment are usually special. The new energy releases good thoughts and actions and may set a person's path for a long time to come. But what happens after, say, twenty or thirty years, for those who had such an experience when comparatively young?

It may be that some enter a period of great dryness. Consolations seem to be a far-off dream. The realities of life press in on all sides. Prayer may be reduced to a mere, 'Lord, have mercy on me', with perhaps an occasional moment of grace which spurs us on during the harsh times we are encountering. This can be a moment for pondering all that has happened and all we have done since the dramatic moment of our 'conversion'. It may be a chance to explore more rationally other ways of thinking and to listen more closely to those who hold different views. If we persevere, we may come to a deeper and more solid and integrated faith than the one that propelled us into activity in earlier years, however fruitful such activity turned out to be. Now may be the time to pray the prayer recommended to me by Michael Ivens in a conversation many years ago: 'Pray to the Holy Spirit to show you now how to respond to the graces of then'.

So we plod on and, as though the tide were gradually returning to the emptied bay of a river estuary, so the dry reeds of our life begin to soften and soak up life-giving water once more. New ways of service may gently grow in our lives. We may learn to appreciate our family and friends more. Spiritual conversation with them may provide much

support. New, quieter ways of mission may open up. This is a long journey, and seems especially so when the active years come to an end. Now is the time to reassess and to believe that we are not abandoned. The Lord has been good to us and will continue to sustain us in the future. It is no time to give up, even though our prayer and service take a very different form as age and infirmity take their toll. We may be a long way from our conversion experience but we are closer than ever to the crucified and risen Lord.

There will be times also when we look back in awe and gratitude at the life we have led, and the evidence of God's providence and the work of the Holy Spirit which are apparent throughout. We may experience a great tenderness as we finally enter and embrace a more restricted lifestyle as the exigencies of illness and age make them themselves obvious. This is how conversion may be seen as one part—even though a most important part—of a lifetime of transformation. We await the final completion of the whole conversion process as we prepare to pass at last into the heart of Christ and so into the beating and living heart of the Trinity and the whole of Creation and beyond. Our true mission is just beginning.

Marion Morgan was received into the Roman Catholic Church in 1969 and has since been involved in ecumenism at local and national levels, parish work, freelance writing and caring for an autistic adult. Following his death, Marion is no longer a carer but lives quietly with her dog, adapting to a new way of life. She is still involved in St Mary-on-the-Quay parish in Bristol and has just turned eighty. She is a member of the Order of Consecrated Virgins.

SYNODALITY

A Path of Personal and Communal Conversion

Nathalie Bécquart

FROM 2012 TO 2018 I was director of the National Service for the Evangelization of Youth and for Vocations at the French Bishops' Conference. Like the other national service directors, I participated each year in the plenary assembly of the bishops of France at Lourdes. In 2015 we had a series of discussions about the Second Synod of Bishops on the Family that had just taken place in Rome. The French bishops who were delegates to the synod shared some reports on this experience with their peers.

Each then testified to how this month of meetings with the bishops of the whole world had transformed his point of view and converted him. Cardinal André Vingt-Trois—then archbishop of Paris—expressed with his usual humour: 'Even I, an old cardinal well anchored in his convictions as you can imagine, was changed by this synod!' Back in 2012, on returning from the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization, I was struck by the remark of Yves Le Saux, bishop of Le Mans:

> During this synod, we became aware of the radical changes in our society and of what is at stake in a pastoral conversion. And we understood, as bishops, that evangelization begins with our own personal conversion.

Then in October 2018, having the chance to participate in the Synod of Bishops on Youth, Faith and Vocational Discernment as an observer, I myself had direct experience. That synod profoundly transformed me, far beyond what I could have imagined. Synodality—lived in a profound attitude of listening to the Spirit, in an attitude of discernment—is truly a path of personal and community conversion.

Pope Francis expressed it this way in his latest book of interviews on the current crisis: 'What characterizes a synod's journey is the role of the Holy Spirit …. Open to changes and new possibilities, the synod is

for everyone an experience of conversion.'[1] Synodality is not a path marked out in advance, and it requires us to open ourselves to the unexpected from God who comes to touch us, to shake us up, to move us interiorly, through listening to others. As a path of discernment in common by an assembly, rooted in the eucharist, that becomes aware of itself and sets out together, synodality is fundamentally a call to conversion in order to aim at and produce a missionary communion at the service of the world. It is a process—a spiritual process—that unfolds over time. It needs a framework and structure, but more fundamentally synodality

> … denotes the particular style that qualifies the life and mission of the Church, expressing her nature as the People of God journeying together and gathering in assembly, summoned by the Lord Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel.[2]

It therefore calls for certain human and spiritual attitudes that we will take the time to explore after having tried further to define what synodality is.

A Call to Live in the Breath of the Trinity

Synodality has become a buzzword for many! In the Church of France, for instance, many initiatives and publications advocate the implementation at all levels of a more synodal Church. With Pope Francis, who has made synodality a major axis of his pontificate and the theme of the next synod of bishops, all the baptized are called to be promoters and actors of synodality.[3] But what exactly is synodality? What vision of the Church does it express? What practices does it call for?

Often, to put it simply, synodality is presented according to the etymology of the word synod—which comes from the Greek *sun-odos*, that is to say, 'journey together'—as walking together in listening to the Spirit. But synodality, an ancient notion whose Latin equivalent *concilium* (in English, council) designates an assembly of bishops, is a

[1] Pope Francis, *Let Us Dream: The Path to a Better Future* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2020), 86.
[2] International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church,* 2 March 2018, n. 70a.
[3] As announced on 7 March 2020, Pope Francis has chosen For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission as the theme for the next Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. See https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2020/03/07/0145/00318.html, accessed 27 June 2022.

Pope Francis opens the Synod on Synodality, October 2021

rich and polymorphous notion that has no completely settled definition. For synodality is a *modus vivendi et operandi* that,

> … works through the community listening to the Word and celebrating the Eucharist, the brotherhood of communion and the co-responsibility and participation of the whole People of God in its life and mission, on all levels and distinguishing between various ministries and roles.[4]

Synodality, so to speak, is a style, a practice, a way of being Church in history 'in the image of Trinitarian communion' as Pope Francis tells us:

> The practice of synodality, traditional but always to be renewed, is the implementation, in the history of the People of God on their journey, of the Church as a mystery of communion, in the image of Trinitarian communion. As you know, this theme is very close to my heart: synodality is walking together and it is what the Lord expects of the Church in the third millennium.[5]

This ancient notion in fact characterized the early Church because, in the first centuries, many local synods and councils were organized

[4] *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church,* n. 70a.
[5] Pope Francis, address to members of the International Theological Commission, 29 November 2019.

to allow the assembled bishops to discuss and discern the decisions to be taken in a context marked by controversies and heresies that had to be resolved. With the historian John O'Malley, one can recognise that 'from a historical viewpoint, traditional Church governance was synodal governance'. And, more precisely, 'On both the local and the church-wide level, traditional church governance was synodal, that is, collegial'.[6]

If synodality has its roots in the Bible—and in particular in the often quoted reference point of the 'Council' of Jerusalem in Acts 15, considered the 'paradigmatic model' of all subsequent councils—in its modern vision and reappropriation, it is considered and developed today as a fruit of the Second Vatican Council.[7] In fact, the institution of the synod of bishops in September 1965 by Paul VI at the opening of the fourth and last session of the council was intended to be an expression of synodality and a means to follow up on the experience of collegiality lived and desired by the Council Fathers.[8]

With Pope Francis making the synod of bishops an important instrument of his project of reforming the Church in view of its missionary transformation, synodality is growing in scale and unfolding as a dynamic vision for the Church, a Church centred on mercy and called to permanent conversion. Synodality, church reform and conversion are thus intrinsically linked. At the eucharist celebrated on 9 November 2013 in Saint Martha, Pope Francis speaks of the challenge of the Church in this way: '*Ecclesia semper reformanda*. The Church always needs to renew itself because its members are sinners and need conversion.'[9]

Synodality, therefore, carries within itself in its practice and implementation the call to personal and community conversion. It is a path of spiritual and pastoral conversion. It presupposes and requires spiritual attitudes; one could even speak of a spirituality of synodality which is in fact a spirituality of communion, as well described in the important document of the International Theological Commission on

[6] John O'Malley, *When Bishops Meet: An Essay Comparing Trent, Vatican I, and Vatican II*, (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard U, 2019), 58.

[7] *Synod and Synodality: Theology, History, Canon Law and Ecumenism*, edited by Alberto Meloni and Scatena Silvia (Münster: LIT, 2005), 113.

[8] If synodality and collegiality participate in the same 'dynamism of communion' that constitutes the Church, today, in the technical sense, we can distinguish between collegiality—that is, episcopal collegiality as reintroduced at Vatican II—and synodality, which is no longer the expression of episcopal collegiality alone but involves all the faithful.

[9] Pope Francis, 'The Water Flowing through the Church', morning meditation, 9 November 2013,

Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church (2018), in paragraph 107 on 'Spirituality of Communion and Formation for Synodal Life':

> Hence the need for the Church to become 'the home and school of communion'. Without conversion of heart and mind and without disciplined training for welcoming and listening to one another the external instruments of communion would be of hardly any use; on the contrary, they could be transformed into mere heartless, faceless masks. 'While the wisdom of the law, by providing precise rules for participation, attests to the hierarchical structure of the Church and averts any temptation to arbitrariness or unjust claims, the spirituality of communion, by prompting a trust and openness wholly in accord with the dignity and responsibility of every member of the People of God, supplies institutional reality with a soul'.[10]

A Spirituality of the Ecclesial 'We'

To enable this walking together in listening to the Spirit, synodality must implement a practice of discernment in common that 'stimulates the generation and implementation of processes that build us up as the People of God' and aims at missionary communion.[11] In summary, one could say that synodality is about moving from 'I' to 'we', but a 'we' that integrates the singular 'I's in an inclusive process. It is a 'we' in which each 'I' is a protagonist.[12] Synodality means rediscovering the priority of the ecclesial 'we' in order to serve the common good by becoming aware that 'Life is a communal journey where tasks and responsibilities are apportioned and shared on the basis of the common good'.[13]

Synodality, which presupposes that all the baptized take their baptism seriously in order to be protagonists of the directions to be taken and

[10] *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church,* n. 107, citing John Paul II, *Novo millennio ineunte*, nn. 43, 45.

[11] Pope Francis, letter to the Church in Germany, 29 June 2019.

[12] 'Synodality is a fundamental quality of the Church as a whole. As St John Chrysostom said: "'Church' means both gathering [*systema*] and synod [*synodos*]". The term comes from the word "council" (*synodos* in Greek, *concilium* in Latin), which primarily denotes a gathering of bishops, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for common deliberation and action in caring for the Church. Broadly, it refers to the active participation of all the faithful in the life and mission of the Church.' Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, *Synodality and Primacy during the First Millennium: Towards a Common Understanding in Service to the Unity of the Church*, Chieti, 21 September 2016, n. 3, citing St John Chrysostom, *Explicatio in Psalmos*, n. 149, available at http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-orientale/ chiese-ortodosse-di-tradizione-bizantina/commissione-mista-internazionale-per-il-dialogo-teologico-tra-la/ documenti-di-dialogo/testo-in-inglese1.html

[13] Pope Francis, post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Querida Amazonia*, 2 February 2020, n. 20.

actors in the mission of the Church, reawakens and strengthens in us the constitutive ecclesial dimension of our baptismal vocation. Synodality is deeply connected to and rooted in an ecclesiology of the People of God: 'Synodality also characterizes the Church of the Second Vatican Council, understood as the People of God in their equality and common dignity with regard to the diversity of ministries, charisms and services'.[14] So synodality emphasizes the equal dignity of all the baptized, all who are inhabited by the Spirit, all who are called and all missionary disciples. It calls for taking the *sensus fidei* seriously and therefore listening to everyone, taking into account the diversity of voices in the Church.[15] 'The same dispositions that are required to live and bring to maturity the *sensus fidei,* with which all believers are endowed, are also required to put it into use on the synodal path.'[16]

Thus synodality asks us to look at the Church in a dynamic and systemic, inclusive and non-competitive vision that takes into account the diversity of charisms: that is to say, a broad integral vision that emphasizes relationships and community, listening and dialogue, participation and co-responsibility, reciprocity among all members and interaction between all ecclesial levels.[17] Beyond the formal synodality that unfolds in institutional structures and processes such as pastoral councils, synods or councils, this call to 'journey together' and gather in assembly, summoned by the Lord Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel … ought to be expressed in the Church's ordinary way of living and working'.[18] Synodality is therefore a process, a spiritual process that must be promoted at the grassroots in local churches and at every level. It is a way of life that fosters and develops the participation and collaboration of all.

[14] Final Document of the Synod of Bishops on the Amazon, 26 October 2019, n. 87.

[15] 'What the Lord is asking of us is already in some sense present in the very word "synod". Journeying together—laity, pastors, the Bishop of Rome—is an easy concept to put into words, but not so easy to put into practice. After stating that the people of God is comprised of all the baptized who are called to "be a spiritual house and a holy priesthood", the Second Vatican Council went on to say that "the whole body of the faithful, who have an anointing which comes from the holy one (cf. 1 John 2:20, 27), cannot err in matters of belief. This characteristic is shown in the supernatural sense of the faith (*sensus fidei*) of the whole people of God, when 'from the bishops to the last of the faithful' it manifests a universal consensus in matters of faith and morals". These are the famous words *infallible "in credendo*".' Pope Francis, 'Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops', 17 October 2015, citing *Lumen gentium*, nn.10, 12.

[16] *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church,* n. 108

[17] To use an expression from Richard Gaillardetz, 'Vatican II's Noncompetitive Theology of the Church', *Louvain Studies*, 37 (2013), 3–27.

[18] *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church,* n. 70a.

To enter into this style and practice of synodality, we need to cultivate and employ spiritual attitudes such as listening, dialogue, empathy, sharing, inner freedom and freedom of speech, humility, the search for truth and, above all, faith and trust in God, all anchored in prayer and the eucharist. We need to nurture trust in the Holy Spirit who breathes in each one and in the group that walks together through synodality. For the experience of synodality is first of all an experience of the Spirit; it is an open path, not traced out in advance, but created through encounter, dialogue and sharing that broadens and shifts the vision of each person. It is a path of humanity and fraternity that makes us become 'one family', one community.

To enter into synodality is therefore to agree to set out on a journey, to live as pilgrims in a pilgrim Church on this earth. Synodality is an experience of incarnation that makes us attuned to the reality, cries and needs of the world. It is 'a way of being and working together, young and old, in listening and in discernment, in order to arrive at pastoral choices that respond to reality'.[19] Synodality is a call to change in a Church on the move. It is like 'a dance together' in which all—pastors and faithful, through a living dialogue and sharing in trust—move together, listening to one another and to the music of the Spirit.

A call to change in a Church on the move

In order to enter into a changed attitude of dialogue and sharing that requires both 'to speak with courage and frankness (*parrhesia*), namely to integrate *freedom, truth and charity*' and to enter into 'the humility of listening', synodality requires interiority and attention to the movements of the spirits in oneself and in the group.[20] One cannot develop synodality in the Church without training in discernment, because it presupposes being able to recognise those fruits of the Spirit which are also the fruits of synodality: joy, peace, missionary zeal, communion, desire for commitment, love of others and of the Church, and so on. To be implemented at all levels of the Church, both local and universal, synodality needs 'leaders' capable of directing and accompanying synodal processes.

For in the Catholic regime there is no synodality without primacy. Enlarging on this, because the structure of the Roman Catholic Church contains a hierarchical principle, it follows that synodality cannot be

[19] Pope Francis, angelus at the end of the Synod on Youth, 29 October 2018.
[20] Pope Francis, address at the opening of the synod of bishops, 3 October 2018.

implemented at all levels without including those in authority. This is undoubtedly one of the greatest challenges. To employ synodality, to implement synodal pastoral care, the Church today needs pastors trained in synodality who exercise a new style of leadership—which can be characterized as collaborative leadership—no longer vertical and clerical but more horizontal and cooperative.

This is a servant leadership that translates into a new relationship with power and a new way of exercising authority conceived as a service of freedom. It is a certain way of accompanying by placing oneself in the midst of others, to be with them in a co-responsibility that seeks the empowerment and participation of all. This requires integrating and implementing a sense of authority seen as a generating force for liberating freedom and not as a power of imposition. In the image of Pope Francis—a model of leadership for a synodal Church—pastoral leaders at the service of the synod are called to be both pastors and disciples, and called to embrace these keywords: closeness, availability, trust, mutuality. And they should not forget the responsibility to maintain the objective of synodality, which is to build a people, a fraternal and missionary community, at the service of the common good of society.

In conclusion, synodality as a process of conversion is in fact an art, the art of discernment that welcomes and names the life of the Spirit to make the Church a ship under sail. It is the art of a Church that allows itself to be renewed, to become more and more of a relational, inclusive, dialogic and generative Church—that is to say, an emerging Church that is constantly being reborn with and by those who keep it alive.

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THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES AND CONVERSION

Patrick Goujon

IN WHAT SENSE are the Spiritual Exercises concerned with conversion? The answer to this question is not at all obvious, since the term 'conversion' is one that Ignatius almost never uses. How, then, are we to proceed? In convoking the recent Ignatian Jubilee, Father General Arturo Sosa takes up one of Ignatius' phrases: 'what new life is this we're beginning now?' (*Autobiography*, n.21). I want to suggest six key elements that seem important for understanding this newness.

Beginning a Quest for God

In Ignatius' life, what begins is a quest. His conversion marks not an end but a beginning. It opens things up. And the quest is a quest for God. This quest gives life its dynamism, its zest, and invites us into relationships with others. Particularly significant here is our desire for life to be fruitful. Fruit cannot grow if we are completely alone. Fruit involves someone sowing it, planting it. However we understand our lives, they depend on relationships—or, better, covenant.

Covenant: let us keep this key word from the scriptures. For in a covenant, the two parties need to be active: it involves both you and me, both humanity and God. When we are caught up in illusions of love, we can forget this. We can imagine that love involves total self-forgetfulness, the removal of the barriers between the self and the other. But covenant love involves relationship.

Now, as we have already said, the word 'conversion' is almost completely absent from Ignatius' vocabulary, barely appearing in the *Spiritual Exercises* at all. It is used once in connection with Mary Magdalene (Exx 282). The other significant use of the word is about a movement in the other direction: 'the sin of the angels: How they were created in grace and then … they fell into pride, were changed [*conuertidos*] from grace to malice, and were hurled from heaven into hell' (Exx 50). In Ignatius' vocabulary, 'conversion' refers to a change. It does not necessarily imply that the change is towards God.

By contrast, what interests Ignatius is something different, more determinate. What matters for him is the basic orientation and relationship that sustain a person as he or she moves forward, a movement orientated in a particular way. We need to specify further.

A Method of Perception and Understanding

The most important point about the quest for God—with Ignatius and with anyone else—is that it should give life dynamism and momentum. When we begin, there is a rupture. There is a before and after, just as day follows night. There is a birth. Initially it is unexpected, a surprise. It may be a happy moment, as for Paul Claudel behind his pillar in Notre Dame one Christmas night, 'I had suddenly received the heart-rending feeling of innocence, of the eternal childhood of God, an ineffable revelation'.[1] But the birth can also be painful, as with Ignatius and his cannonball.

Now, Ignatius noticed something as he convalesced in bed at Loyola. Some of the thoughts that had aroused his enthusiasm had nevertheless ended up leaving him sad, while with others the contentment had remained. Ignatius later learned the significance of this difference, between what lasts and what—even if it is quite intense—passes; between what opens up a genuine way forward, and what merely carries one away in enthusiasm. Thinking about this discovery today, when we make so much of the emotions, we are no doubt tempted to limit ourselves to the language of happiness, of inner movements, of the inner world and its fluctuations, as noted by Ignatius. But Ignatius develops something which we can all too easily hear as opposed to this focus on the world within. He develops a method.

> There was this difference: that when he was thinking about that worldly stuff he would take much delight, but when he left it aside after getting tired, he would find himself dry and discontented. But when about going to Jerusalem barefoot, and about not eating except herbs, and about doing all the other rigours he was seeing the saints had done, not only used he to be consoled while in such thoughts, but he would remain content and happy even after having left them aside. But he wasn't investigating [*miraba*] this, nor stopping to ponder this difference, until one time when his eyes were opened a little, and he began to marvel at this difference in kind and to

[1] Paul Claudel, 'Ma conversion' (1913), in *Oeuvres en prose* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), 1009–1010.

The Conversion of St Ignatius, *by Lorenzo Coulault-Valera, early twentieth century*

> reflect on it, picking it up from experience [*cogiendo por experiencia*] that from some thoughts he would be left sad and from others happy, and little by little coming to know the difference in kind of spirits that were stirring: the one from the devil, and the other from God. (*Autobiography*, n.8)

For Ignatius, the birth into spiritual interiority is a matter of sensing things (*sentir*—better to avoid expressions that are too affective or static). It involves a method: paying attention, stopping to weigh, reflecting, grasping from experience. Our lives are nourished and sustained by what we learn through experience. I marvel at the richness and diversity of what happens to me, at its significance, at what I can conclude, if I reflect on it, about how to live my life. Ignatius' method starts from everyday life, but its basis is experience as decoded and interpreted: normal events sensed and perceived, evaluated, reflected upon and recognised as leading towards God or away from God. The things that happen to me, if only I can pay them attention, have much to teach me.

But Ignatius was not content just with observing everyday experience and its flow, with the perception of fine-grained distinctions and different movements that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. Rather, he set about organizing a veritable battery of exercises that, over

a set period, would *intensify* this sort of observation. The Exercises put what we experience under a magnifying glass, so to speak, so that we can better find what we are looking for—better perceive and recognise what is guiding us towards God. The Spiritual Exercises are about the concentration of our attention in such a way as to help us find God.

To repeat and emphasize the point: conversion is a matter of perception and understanding. Our inner life grows through our paying it attention, an attention arising from wonder, from feeling and from reflection. Ignatius has a rich word for this: *mirar*. It implies looking at things attentively, reflectively, with consideration. Already there is a note of respect, even—to use a word so important for Ignatius—a certain reverence. The way we relate to what is happening in ourselves should be like the way we relate to God: attentively, reverently. *Mirar* comes from the Latin *mirar*, to see with surprise and admiration. Ignatius' method always involves relish, a relish arising from what life itself gives us.

Seeking the Spirit

There is a dynamism orientating us towards God. St Paul tells us that God 'gives life [*zōē*] to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist' (Romans 4:17). This dynamism runs through us. It is communicated to us by others (the witnesses of Christ's life); it is revealed to us in the scriptures, and particularly in the way Jesus went through towns and villages. Ignatius is fond of emphasizing this point, especially when it comes to inviting people to follow him around the world. But this dynamism running through us is, above all, the dynamism of the Spirit. Conversion is the perception of the dynamism of the Spirit pervading us. What counts above all, therefore, for Ignatius, is to identify this movement and to follow it.

> Ignatius was following the Spirit's lead, not running ahead of it. And so he was being gently led to a place he did not know … making the journey with a sort of wisdom beyond prudence, in the simplicity of his heart in Christ.[2]

So Nadal wrote about Ignatius.

Discernment consists in perceiving the touch proper to the Holy Spirit and seeking to move forward by settling into that movement. All

[2] MHSJ FN 2, 252.

this produces much fruit: not only the consolation which guides us, but fruit in real life, fruit enabling us to love, to hope, to trust. Ignatius describes this movement by saying that if we follow the consolation we perceive, we move out of ourselves, away from what locks us in on ourselves. If you are concerned only with yourself, you are alone and you die. 'I can only breathe by forgetting myself', wrote the poet Philippe Jaccottet.[3] But forgetting oneself does not mean suffocating, keeping silent and dying. On the contrary it is the covenant, the relationship, that enables me to breathe. By their very intensity the Exercises get us in touch with how our life is orientated towards the gift that God is giving in abundance. Through them, we train ourselves to perceive more clearly the gift of God's life flowing through us and sustaining us.

Confronting Obstacles

But much can impede our breathing. The air within us does not necessarily circulate freely. Conversion also entails that we remove the obstructions we place on God's movement. We can prevent ourselves from speaking the truth. We can avoid looking at reality, and instead imagine it as we please, as if we are in control or have mastery over it. Our lives become fruitful to the extent that we can free ourselves—so far as lies within our power—from that which blocks us.

We can go back to Ignatius' language. It helps us understand the kinds of conversion with which the Exercises are concerned. Ignatius talks not about conversion but about the reform of life: reordering our lives, turning things in the right direction, reorganizing the different elements in our lives in keeping with the One who gives them their basic orientation.

> Toward amending and reforming one's own life and state …. In all this and by it, each one should desire and seek nothing except the greater praise and glory of God our Lord. For everyone ought to reflect that in all spiritual matters, the more one divests oneself of self-love, self-will, and self interests, the more progress one will make. (Exx 189)

This is a strong statement. A metaphorical language is needed to sustain the effort, to continue moving forward towards a goal which is not so easy to attain: the good life. I can understand Ignatius here, and

[3] Philippe Jaccottet, *La Promenade sous les arbres* (Lausanne: Bibliothèque des Arts, 1957), 130.

I am indeed grateful for how directly he speaks. There is simply no good reason for letting ourselves be diverted from what enables us to live deeply, despite all the images of easy success that might assail us, despite our desire to be in control. Ignatius expresses the point to Teresa Rejadell: 'the enemy does not care whether he is telling the truth or lying, but only wants to prevail'.[4]

Now, we also make alliances with the enemy, which are often matters of compromise (it is rare—though it does happen—for the commitment to be overt). Ignatius opens our eyes, as they were opened for him, gradually. He teaches us to see that we are not strangers to evil. Ignatius' aim here is not to shame us, but simply to remind us of a reality. In his great fresco, known as the Two Standards, Ignatius puts before our eyes what in one sense we know well. But we still need to look at it in all its starkness. There are two camps, that of Christ, and 'the other of Lucifer' (Exx 136). On the one hand, there is the vast camp of the sovereign and true captain who calls his servants and friends whom he sends out to help everyone. On the other is 'the leader of all the enemy' who 'summons uncountable devils, disperses some to one city and others to another, and thus throughout the whole world, without missing any provinces, places, states, or individual persons' (Exx 140–141).

We might be tempted to smile at this—except that our lives confront us with the harsh truth. No one can in principle escape the touch of evil. The schematic contrast between the good captain and Lucifer has the merit of sharpening the issue amid all the grey areas of our lives where we wallow in confusion. Ignatius follows spiritual tradition. We can easily be seduced by something attractive, and then be led into real evil—as he wrote of the angels who 'converted' from grace to evil. Riches, honour and a good reputation are not sins. But they can easily give occasion for us to turn in on ourselves, to become stuck in trying to increase our own power, to abandon any concern for others. The rich man, dressed in purple and fine linen, did not see that he had created a great abyss between himself and the poor man who stood at his door and to whom he refused even his crumbs (Luke 16:19–26). The Exercises teach us to discover what prevents us from moving forward.

[4] Ignatius to Teresa Rejadell, 18 June 1536, n. 9, MHSJ EI 1, 102 And see Patrick Goujon, *Counsels of the Holy Spirit: A Reading of St Ignatius's Letters*, translated by Joseph A. Munitiz (Dublin: Messenger, 2021), chapter 4.

Recoiling in Horror

But it is not enough just to be aware of what causes difficulties for us, what does harm. Ignatius invites us to regard it with horror. Once again, his vocabulary is instructive. Ignatius uses the verb *aborrecer*: abhor, detest utterly. This verb reaches into the deepest parts of ourselves. If something causes us horror we recoil from it viscerally, as something which every fibre in our being recognises as dangerous. Horror protects us: by shunning what we regard with horror, we keep it at a distance in order to keep our lives safe. There is a holy horror, a grace of horror, a gift that enables us to avoid getting ensnared. When we are horror-struck, shuddering, shocked, recoiling, crying out in alarm—the sinews of our being are telling us: 'Get back! Don't go there!' Horror is thus a grace. Of course, grace generally tastes sweet as honey in the mouth. But sometimes, and for our good, it can make our stomach bitter (Revelation 10:10).

Let us look again at the colloquy in the third exercise of the First Week, the repetition of the two that have proceeded.

> The First Colloquy will be with our Lady, that she may obtain for me from her Son and Lord grace for three things:
>
> First, that I may feel an interior knowledge of my sins and also an abhorrence of them;
>
> Second, that I may perceive the disorder in my actions, in order to detest them, amend myself, and put myself in order;
>
> Third, that I may have a knowledge of the world, in order to detest it and rid myself of all that is worldly and vain. Then I will say a Hail Mary. (Exx 63)

Conversion happens thanks to a blessed horror. It would be a terrible mistake to be moralistic here. The cry of holy horror is far more than a bland reaction against what does not happen to suit us. The Exercises are training us how to live well. And we all know that sometimes this requires difficult struggles against the forces within us that would lead us to our destruction. When a person's vision and sensibility are well attuned, nothing associated with death can continue within the one who has chosen life—life which, for a Christian, bears the name of Jesus Christ. In the *Constitutions* which he wrote for the Jesuits, Ignatius puts it quite starkly.

The Exercises are training us how to live well

> It is likewise very important to bring to the attention of those who are being examined, emphasizing it and giving it great weight in the sight of our Creator and Lord, to how great a degree it helps and profits in the spiritual life to abhor in its totality and not in part whatever the world loves and embraces, and to accept and desire with all possible energy whatever Christ our Lord has loved and embraced. Just as the men of the world who follow the world love and seek with such great diligence honours, fame, and esteem for a great name on earth, as the world teaches them, so those who proceed spiritually and truly follow Christ our Lord love and intensely desire everything opposite. That is to say, they desire to clothe themselves with the same garb and uniform of their Lord because of the love and reverence owed to him … because of their desire to resemble and imitate in some manner our Creator and Lord Jesus Christ, by putting on his garb and uniform, since it was for our spiritual profit that he clothed himself as he did. For he gave us an example that in all things possible to us we might seek, with the aid of his grace, to imitate and follow him, since he is the way which leads men to life. (Examen 4.44 [101])

Gentleness

There is a sixth and final feature that we need to note before ending this reflection on the kind of conversion to which the Exercises call us. What has been said so far may make the Exercises seem threatening. People have been tempted to see them as a school of conversion, notably in the nineteenth century, in the sense of controlling the will, even to breaking point. In a letter that he wrote to Francis Borja, newly become a Jesuit, and given to very austere penances, Ignatius reminded him that that the first things to be sought are the gifts of God. They can come through the tears through which we acknowledge our sins—tears of bitter remorse at not having been able to relish the true life and at having gone after false substitutes. But God gives Godself also in the contemplation of the life of Christ: 'Instead of drawing blood and somehow trying to force it out in some way, you should seek more directly from the Lord of everyone His most holy gifts'.[5]

Moreover, we can remember how Ignatius followed the Holy Spirit gently, as Nadal indicates. And Ignatius recommends this to the one giving the Exercises in his or her treatment of the one making them, precisely when discovering the traps into which the person can fall.

[5] Ignatius to Francis Borja, 20 September 1548, n. 8, in *Personal Writings*, 206; MHSJ EI 2, 236.

> If the giver of the Exercises sees that the one making them is experiencing desolation and temptation, he or she should not treat the retreatant severely or harshly, but gently and kindly. The director should encourage and strengthen the exercitant for the future, unmask the deceptive tactics of the enemy of our human nature, and help the retreatant to prepare and dispose himself or herself for the consolation which will come. (Exx 7)

***

We have explored six key characteristics of the kind of conversion fostered by Ignatius' Exercises. Conversion opens up our quest for God; it involves a method of perception and understanding; it is connected to the Spirit whose life is running through us; it involves a commitment to removing obstacles; it is the grace of a holy horror; it is marked by gentleness.

With all these expressions, there is just one thing to be remembered: 'one should desire and seek nothing except the greater praise and glory of God our Lord' (Exx 189). This 'in everything and for everything' is a radical drive leaving us to 'hold in horror' everything opposed to the life of God within us. But its radicality, which is the radicality of Christ and his Spirit, is marked also by the gentleness with which it operates. We can end by quoting the seventh of the Second Week Rules for Discernment.

> In the case of those who are going from good to better, the good angel touches the soul gently, lightly, and sweetly, like a drop of water going into a sponge. The evil spirit touches it sharply, with noise and disturbance, like a drop of water falling onto a stone. In the case of those who are going from bad to worse, these spirits touch the souls in the opposite manner. The reason for this is the fact that the disposition of the soul is either similar to or different from the respective spirits who are entering. When the soul is different, they enter with perceptible noise and are quickly noticed. When the soul is similar, they enter silently, like those who go into their own house by an open door. (Exx 335)

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translated by Philip Endean SJ

A THEOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN CONVERSION

Finbarr Coffey

BERNARD LONERGAN'S foundational theological position seeks to back away from doctrinal questions and start probing the experiences that lie at the basis of Christian faith, in order to come to a normative account of what these experiences ought to be. One central such experience is *conversion*. According to his fellow US Jesuit theologian, Donald L. Gelpi:

> Lonergan describes conversion as any conscious act of self-appropriation that opens up a new evaluative horizon within which personal growth and commitment may subsequently transpire. He argues that one may undergo conversion at an intellectual, at a moral, or at a religious level. And he correctly insists that these three dimensions of conversion are interconnected but distinct. One who is intellectually converted may remain morally or religiously unconverted but should not. One morally converted may remain intellectually and religiously unconverted but should not. One religiously converted may remain intellectually and morally unconverted but should not.[1]

Lonergan also states that, from a causal point of view, the first and most basic form of conversion is what he calls religious conversion, the second is moral conversion and the third is intellectual conversion.[2] Gelpi agrees, but adds:

> What troubled me in Lonergan's theory of conversion was his almost total failure to take into account the emotive elements that shape human religious experience or to acknowledge their complex speculative claims (45).

[1] Donald L. Gelpi, *Experiencing God: A Theology of Human Emergence* (New York: Paulist, 1978), 44–45. Subsequent references to this work are in the text. Gelpi was professor of theology and the co-director of the Institute of Spirituality and Worship at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, California from 1980 until 2009. He examined the US philosophical works of Edwards, Peirce, James, Dewey and Whitehead and their contributions to the Christian heritage.

[2] See Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1973), 237 following.

To overcome this problem Gelpi proposes 'to adopt the term "experience" rather than "being" or some other category as central to my own thought'. 'A foundational theology of experience', he argues, could 'accommodate an affective moment within conversion more easily than Lonergan's transcendental Thomism' (45).

For in Thomas Aquinas one is dealing with a construct of the human person whose primary relationship with God is located psychologically in the intellect and will. There is the intellect, by which the person grasps being, and the will, by which he or she is orientated towards the good. But this approach produces too narrow a conception of how persons relate to God and it does not adequately interpret human religious experience.

Drawing on Gelpi's critique of Lonergan, I propose a model of religious experience where our initial relationship with God is affective and our most fundamental contact with God is not through the will but at the level of affectivity. This means that God must impinge upon me in some way, in some impulse of grace that is operative either directly or through the mediation of the Christian community. It also entails a fourth—affective—form of conversion.

What Does It Mean to Undergo a Conversion Experience?

I shall begin with an attempt to clarify the meaning of conversion. Gelpi writes:

> To assume conscious personal autonomy for oneself in any controllable area of personal growth is to experience conversion.
>
> Normally, the term 'conversion' is exclusively religious in connotation. Moreover, like the term 'freedom' it has over the centuries acquired a number of narrow and misleading associations. The pietistic and the revivalistic traditions have tended to link conversion with 'subjective' experiences of emotional upheaval. Denominationalism equates conversion with successful proselytization. In denominational religion one is converted from heresy and unbelief to objective creedal orthodoxy.
>
> There is a half truth struggling to expression in both positions. Religious conversion does entail a change of heart …. Similarly, authentic conversion does in fact bind one in love and compassion to others. It bears fruit, therefore, in incorporation into a community of faith. Nor are all creeds mutually compatible. To this extent the proselytizing preacher is correct in demanding ritual induction into a concrete religious community ….

> Religious conversion may be correctly described as the assumption of personal responsibility for responding appropriately to the historical self-revelation of God. (178–179)

I am defining conversion, following Gelpi, as a decision to take responsibility for some area of one's experience. Conversion is crucial, because it is the act by which I take charge of my own historical process of self-definition.

Three Types of Conversion

I have begun by making the claim that there are three different types of conversion in addition to religious conversion—namely affective, moral and intellectual. These correspond to three different realms of the human person.

Affective conversion is a decision to seek healthy growth in the more or less vague tendency to evaluate and decide in a specific manner on an instance of experience. According to Gelpi, the first stage of affectivity is sensation. One can react to experience simply on this basis. For example, some persons will faint when they see blood—which promptly brings the experience to an end. But if experience is allowed to grow then it moves beyond mere sensation into the types of emotion, positive and negative affections and feelings.

As this evaluative response develops, emotions tend to be clarified by images.[3] Fantasy lets the imagination run freely and is often about some aspect of the future. There are also archetypal images: recurring patterns that show up among individuals within different cultures and epochs, such as 'mother' or 'father'. These images have a strong emotive power and similar connotations whenever they appear.[4] Without affective conversion a person may be affectively irresponsible, that is to say, may remain opaque to his or her feelings or not come to terms with them. He or she is not moving towards a healthy emotional integration of the conscious and unconscious dimensions of his or her experience.

If one focuses on thinking, then intellectual conversion is the decision to assume responsibility for the quality of one's beliefs (181–183). The intellectually responsible person will think through what he or she needs to think through, and ask whether the frame of reference for this

[3] Gelpi defines 'evaluative response' as a 'sensation, image, or conceptual perception' (Donald Gelpi, *The Turn to Experience in Contemporary Theology* [New York: Paulist, 1994], 101).
[4] See Gelpi, *Turn to Experience*, 127–129.

process is adequate or inadequate, thereby taking responsibility for his or her beliefs.

Moral conversion involves taking the decision to assume responsibility for the quality of one's moral decisions. A person will ask: what will the quality of my responses be? Do the decisions that I take measure up to the ideals that I recognise as making a claim on me? Ideals take on a moral character when I do not affirm them simply out of pragmatic concerns. Moral ideals have a claim on a person in any and all circumstances, not only when it is convenient (183–184).

Religious Conversion and Natural Conversion

I can now turn to the notion of religious conversion. Responding to the self-revelation of God in an appropriate way includes recognising that God's revelation makes a claim on one's life: I acknowledge the fact of revelation and decide to live out the consequences, knowing that the only appropriate response is affirmative belief.

In religious conversion God holds the initiative. The human response involves a decision to believe; and, of course, this involves grace:

> Religious conversion lives, then, at the level of decision. But it is motivated by attitudes and beliefs that have been touched by a sense of ultimacy. Because it is the decision to respond to the free and humanly transforming eruption of God into history, authentic religious conversion must be the work of grace. (179)

Grace is a process that stands in a positive evaluative response to the self-revelation of God. It is a process whose evaluation and shape and form are marked by faith. Faith is my positive response to some experience of God revealing himself to me, however that happens and whatever the character of the revelation.

Gelpi continues:

> At the same time, to the extent that graced conversion involves the assumption of conscious responsibility for one's personal reactions, it has something in common with other growth experiences that can be wholly natural in origin. (179)

A natural process can be understood as one which takes place without any positive evaluative response to God. Dogs, cats, trees give no evidence of overt religious experience. There are aspects of our human lives, also, which transpire obliviously of God. There are many decisions

that we make that are taken simply as a response to the world around us: 'For I can in principle and in fact decide to assume responsibility for my personal affective, intellectual, and moral development in total abstraction from God, revelation, and grace' (179).

This leads to the idea that certain types of conversion can occur naturally. I can come to assume responsibility for myself intellectually, affectively, morally, without God entering the picture at all.

> Here, however, it is important to recognize that authentic natural conversion is not of itself sinful. It is not opposed to God. Through the processes of abstraction, it is simply religiously neutral. As a consequence, it is also incomplete ….
>
> Furthermore, the laws governing sound affective, intellectual, and moral development are not the same. Psychology and psychotherapy are not logic. Ethics is different from all three. Hence, to consciously take responsibility for one's life at one level is not necessarily to cultivate taking responsibility in another. (179)

As in Lonergan,

> One may, then, in principle be affectively converted, but intellectually and morally unconverted, or morally converted but intellectually and affectively unconverted. The ideal, of course, is to be integrally converted. (179)

Religious conversion transforms and *transvalues* the other types of conversion.[5] Religion provides one with a frame of reference in which the fundamental presupposition is one of faith. Intellectual processes are changed into faith. This experience of faith begins to transvalue ordinary human affective responses. In Christian conversion natural hope is transformed into Christian hope and moral responses are changed into Christian charity.[6]

The fundamental presupposition is one of faith

A faith stance allows us to identify in society those things that are of God and those that are sinful. Sin, in this frame of reference, presupposes

[5] An experience is transvalued when one introduces a new element, and one integrates that element into the experience in such a way that it forms a new kind of unity. This occurs especially when one has a new context for thinking. See Gelpi, *Experiencing God*, 397.

[6] On the relationship between religious and specifically Christian conversion, Gelpi writes: 'The empirical study of conversion allows us to view it as a religious event similar to the conversions that occur in other religions. Only normative thinking about the experience of Christian conversion allows us, however, to deal with the specific demands that commitment to Jesus Christ makes upon potential converts.' Donald L. Gelpi, *The Conversion Experience: A Reflective Process for RCIA Participants and Others* (Mahwah: Paulist, 1998), 21.

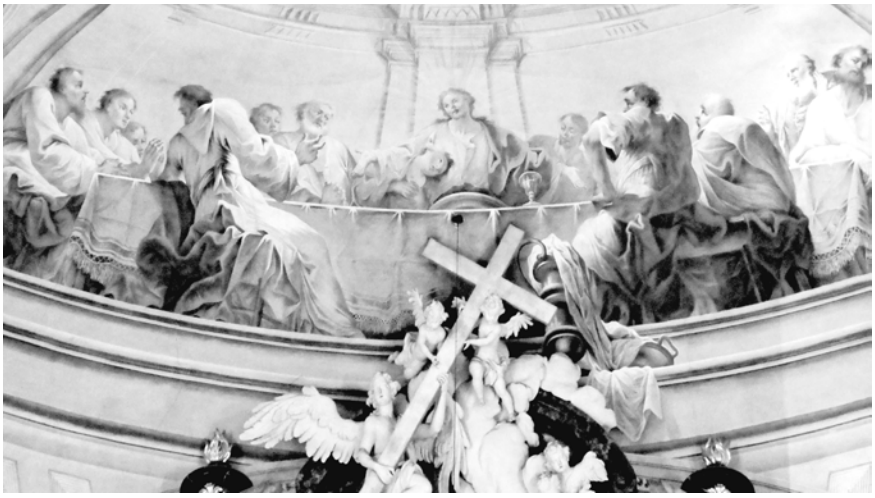
a God-experience. Sin is evil done before God. If one does not have God in the picture, it makes no sense to talk about sin. If there is no God, what one is dealing with is so-called immoral behaviour, that is, mistakes that need to be rectified. It is also necessary here to distinguish between initial and ongoing conversion. Initial conversion is the decision to assume responsibility for myself in some area of my life in response to God. That decision creates a frame of reference. In choosing, I have distinguished between responsible and irresponsible behaviour and I am choosing freely to behave responsibly. As I try to live out the consequences of the initial decision, what I experience is ongoing conversion.[7]

Christian Conversion

Christian conversion commits us to Jesus Christ as the norm of how we are to relate to other people. For example, when we take heroic imagery and use it in a specifically Christian context to interpret the life of Jesus of Nazareth then we transform the meaning of heroism. In Jungian thought the hero is a symbol of an increasingly autonomous, rational and controlling ego promoting sexist social structures.[8] But if we state that Jesus Christ is the divine hero then we are dealing with a person who tells us: do not live by autonomy but by faith; do not live by seeking to control your future, but by unconditional faith; society should not ultimately be structured by purely rational legal processes, by the force of law—it should not be ruled by the principalities and powers of this world, but based on the worship of God, where the presence of authentic worship lies in mutual forgiveness and where the ultimate manifestation of forgiveness is the crucifixion (188–191).

Christian conversion may be understood as being baptized in the same Divine Spirit that dwelt in Jesus; it entails undergoing a baptism in the Holy Spirit of God. Jesus' own baptismal experience (Mark 3:13–17) culminates on Calvary. The Spirit of God that comes to him not only sends him to proclaim the reign of God, but dwells in him and sets him in opposition to the dark powers of this world which eventually crucify him. After his resurrection Jesus sends the Spirit into the community; then the community is drawn into an experience of being liberated, but it is also set in conflict with the powers of darkness and

[7] See Donald Gelpi, *Committed Worship: A Sacramental Theology for Converting Christians*, volume 1, *Adult Conversion and Initiation* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1993), 19.
[8] See Edward C. Whitmont, *The Symbolic Quest* (New York: Harper, 1969), 83–90.



Ceiling fresco by Joseph Keller, St George's Church, Neustift, Austria, 1772

is, therefore, drawn into Jesus' experience of death and resurrection (John 20:19–23; Acts 2). His dying and rising experience is felt as liberation, and the ultimate roots of this are located in the eucharist. Jesus, at the Last Supper, is not only celebrating the Passover, but in symbolizing the meaning of the death he is about to die, he uses covenant imagery when speaking to his disciples (157–158).

With any theological question, it is important to look at the images that surround it. The images that are used to interpret Christian conversion are all linked to freedom and liberation—Exodus imagery (156). Coming to conversion is coming to a new kind of freedom. Within this understanding of Christian conversion, *freedom* can be defined at its most basic level as 'the ability to act or not to act, to do one thing rather than another' (158). A more fundamental challenge, though, is that of achieving freedom. What are the conditions for coming to personal freedom? This is where the affective relationship with God is crucial in religious and Christian conversion.

Affective Growth and the Grace of the Holy Spirit

Here we must talk about the experience described as the 'night of the senses'. In John of the Cross's poem the 'dark night' is the night of union and of love. The image that dominates the poem is that of the lover slipping out in the dark and searching for the beloved. But in order to reach the beloved one has to pass through darkness, through

demonic temptations and impulses; one has to move through a period of purification, but what is waiting for one at the other end is union. What need to be purified are those affections 'that darken, defile, torment, weaken and weary the soul'.[9] In psychological terms, these are personality dysfunctions: the disintegration of the personality caused by negative emotions that shape experience and, when repressed, become increasing violent.[10] They need to be healed in faith; this is not simply psychological healing or therapy.

The Spiritual Exercises

In the Spiritual Exercises, St Ignatius provides ways of introducing a person practically into the dark night of the senses. This is the fundamental task of the First Week. What Ignatius demands is that, first of all, there be a desire for freedom. Exercitants cannot enter the dark night unless they are willing to admit that they are, in fact, bound in some ways and that they need to come to freedom in some area of their lives. In the First Principle and Foundation Ignatius describes how we should 'free ourselves' by 'mak[ing] ourselves indifferent to all created things' (Exx 23).

He then brings the exercitants to a conviction in prayer of the absolute mercy of God. This he does in the meditation on the triple sin (Exx 45–54), where he asks them to consider what it would have been like to deal with God if He had chosen to deal with them out of pure justice—if God had decided to give them exactly what they deserved, nothing more, nothing less; to get a 'gut feeling' of what this would be like; and then to turn and see how God actually chose to deal with them. Ignatius places them at the foot of the Cross, and asks them to contemplate the mercy of God.

The grace being sought here is a radical conviction of God's mercy. In order to move into this affective conversion one needs to experience that mercy, and usually the experience has to be mediated. Implicit in the conversion process, therefore, is the need for a faith community of some type. It is a community that accepts the individual's inner unfreedoms, and helps him or her to confront what needs to be healed and freed by God's grace. This is done in a context of honesty and

[9] St John of the Cross, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, 6.1, in *The Collected Works of St John of the Cross*, translated by Kieran Kavanagh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington, DC: ICS, 1964), 69.
[10] See Rollo May, *Love and Will* (New York: Dell, 1969), 122–178.

growth in self-knowledge, and also in the context of prayer. It is only after exercitants have come to an experience of God's mercy that Ignatius moves them on to self-knowledge. He asks them to understand their need for healing in the light of their personal history. So the exercitants begin to go through the experience of facing the dark forces within. Once someone recognises his or her need for healing, then he or she has to seek it from God as a gift. One does not heal oneself.

When persons try this, what they actually do experience is freedom from being bound in some way in the presence of the mercy of God. This leads to a way of understanding the process of repentance, on the one hand, in terms of opening one's emotional heart to God and, on the other hand, in terms of the meaning of Christian hope. Conversion begins in affectivity. As negative feelings loosen their grip, what develops is a growing capacity to be attracted to Jesus and Jesus-like people; and that attraction indicates a readiness for a commitment to discipleship. Once a person has made this commitment then he or she is bound to live in a moral way. To consent to Jesus is to accept the moral consequences of conversion.

The Community of Faith

Within Christian conversion my relationship to God is a function of my relationship to other people. Christianity is a covenant religion. To consent to Jesus is to consent to someone who makes very specific moral demands. He has come to teach us how to live as children of God, in God's image. This entails introducing gospel values into our moral decision-making. We acknowledge these values as morally binding, not because it is the decent thing to do, but because God has revealed Himself, and in the light of that revelation we recognise that God is making moral claims on us to which we are bound to respond. Once the variable of faith is introduced, then it is going to make a lot of demands that run counter to the habits we have hitherto built into ourselves.

The words and deeds of Jesus were and are events that call for faith responses at the affective, moral and intellectual levels that acknowledge the presence of God and God's Spirit in the ministry of the Son. These are salvific facts to which a religiously converted person must respond with appropriate faith if he or she is to perceive the God whose saving presence they reveal. The direct action of the Spirit on the human heart is also a fact to which the one touched must

respond appropriately. Through the gracing of the human ego at each level (affective, moral and intellectual) certain tendencies are built into the personality to respond in faith.[11] It is the habit of responding out of a faith stance. A community of faith creates an environment of faith and of grace which nurtures personal faith. Christians come to God in community and that community of the Church is there as revelatory of the reality of God.

Transvaluation and Integral Conversion

Conversion, whether affective, moral, intellectual or religious, introduces a new level of freedom into experience. When I grasp the relationship between different frames of reference then I have a new capacity to act. Religious conversion brings about an enhanced freedom, precisely through the process of transvaluation. Transvaluation takes place wherever there is a new frame of reference. Say, I have a highly differentiated knowledge of science and a highly differentiated knowledge of theology or theological ability, but the two are never interrelated. When I come to deal with science I think scientifically, but when I think with theology I think theologically. The day I put them together within the frame of Christian faith, I come to a new freedom. Christian faith transforms or transvalues intellectual conversion by providing it with a frame of reference that has been touched by Divine revelation.

Conversely, a religiously converted person who remains affectively unconverted will not be able to distinguish the felt impulses of grace from neurotic tendencies. He or she will have a strong propensity to project his or her neurotic tendencies on to God and to identify them with the will of God. Furthermore, he or she will remain insensitive to the highest expressions of beauty, namely religious art. A person who is religiously converted but not morally converted will be a quietist. He or she will pray, but pay no attention to the injustice in the world. A person who is religiously converted but not intellectually converted will be a fundamentalist; and a person who is intellectually converted but not religiously converted will make shallow statements about religion. A person who is intellectually converted but not affectively converted will have all kinds of hidden agendas which he or she will be able to rationalise. An intellectually converted person who is not morally

[11] This is what the scholastics call habitual grace.

converted could become the scientist who creates the atom bomb and claims there is no problem. And if a person is morally converted but not affectively converted he or she will tend to ride roughshod over the sensibilities of others, while tending to rationalise such insensitivity with the noblest kind of abstract justifications.

I have defined conversion as a decision to take responsibility for some area of one's life, and argued—drawing on Donald Gelpi's critique of Bernard Lonergan—that there are four moments within a conversion experience. The first and most basic is religious conversion, the second is affective conversion, the third is moral conversion and the fourth is intellectual conversion. Affective, moral and intellectual conversion can take place at a purely natural level: it is possible for a person to decide to be intellectually responsible without God entering the picture: to make sense of one's beliefs is simply the adult and the responsible thing to do. It is also possible to be morally responsible without God: one can come to moral conversion as part of the maturing process. But when affective, moral and intellectual conversions take place in the context of a faith response to God's revelation then we have religious conversion, and specifically Christian conversion. Such a religious conversion involves a choice, a decision to believe and, of course, it involves grace.

Religious conversion is about the radicalness of taking a position before God, the seriousness and unequivocality of an answer given and lived in one's heart of hearts. There falsity, frills and the biases in our judgments of fact and value which weigh so heavily when we pose for others in our society and culture, have no meaning and no seductive or obscuring attractiveness.

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RELIGIOUS CONVERSION AND MORAL CONVERSION

How Are They Interrelated?

Louis Roy

NOTWITHSTANDING the usefulness of Bernard Lonergan's distinction between religious and moral conversion, we shall see that the distinction has to be complemented by discussion of a question he did not ask: could we understand not only, as he asserts, moral conversion as dependent on religious conversion, but also—the other way round—religious conversion as dependent on moral conversion? In other words, can a person's strong ethical commitment prepare the way, although not necessarily in explicit intention, for the development of her or his religious sense?

Lonergan's Approach to Conversion

In chapter 1 of *Method in Theology* Lonergan describes human intentionality as a desire to know, respect and enhance what is outside us (people, animals and things): an in-tending of, that is, a reaching out towards, reality. He delineates four levels of human intentionality. They are: 1. experience (perception); 2. understanding (getting an insight into a particular subject matter); 3. judgment of fact (stating what is the case); and 4. judgment of value and decision (discovering what is worthwhile and opting for or against it).[1]

In chapter 4 of the same book he introduces religious experience from the perspective of human intentionality, which actively pursues personal self-transcendence. In addition to the *cognitive* levels of self-transcendence (levels 1–3), people can experience an *affective* form (level 4), which consists of both moral and religious self-transcendence

[1] See *Method in Theology*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan volume 14, edited by Robert M. Doran and John D. Dadosky (Toronto: U. of Toronto, 2017), 13–14 (subsequent references in the text). For an earlier, much longer and detailed account of intentionality, see *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan volume 3, edited by Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: U. of Toronto, 1992).

(99–104). In chapter 10, he describes three kinds of conversion: religious, moral and intellectual (223–229). In this article I won't introduce the latter, which is required for professional theologians—Lonergan's book is about method *in theology*, not directly about the broader sphere of Christian life—so as to focus on religious and moral conversion.[2] Let us note that he supposes, without saying so, that religious conversion amounts to religious experience.[3]

Lonergan's Definitions of Moral and Religious Conversions

What is Lonergan's understanding of *moral* conversion? He writes:

> Moral conversion changes the criterion of one's decisions and choices from satisfaction to values …. So we move to the existential moment when we discover for ourselves that our choosing affects ourselves no less than the chosen or rejected objects, and that is up to each of us to decide for himself what he is to make of himself …. Moral conversion consists in opting for the truly good, even for value against satisfaction when value and satisfaction conflict. (225–226)[4]

Morally acting is more demanding than defining moral conversion. Thus Lonergan enumerates a series of requirements: discovering one's own various forms of bias; taking account of existing situations; avoiding personal and group decline; fostering elements of progress in one's life and in society; explicating and possibly redressing one's scale of values; listening to criticisms; being ready to learn from others (226).

What is Lonergan's understanding of *religious* conversion? He writes:

> Religious conversion is being grasped by ultimate concern. It is otherworldly falling in love. It is total and permanent self-surrender without conditions, qualifications, reservations. But it is such a surrender, not as an act, but as a dynamic state that is prior to and principle of subsequent acts …. It is interpreted differently in the context of different religious traditions. For Christians it is God's love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us (226).

[2] In *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations: Toward a Reorientation of the Human Sciences* (Chico: Scholars, 1981), Robert M. Doran has enriched the study of the affective aspect of conversion.

[3] By contrast, for a justification of a distinction between religious conversion (which is a particular event) and religious experience (which is a pervasive state), see Louis Roy, *Transcendent Experiences: Phenomenology and Critique* (Toronto: U. of Toronto, 2001), 139–140.

[4] Lonergan's position here is close to Immanuel Kant's, for whom a person's good will is by definition not affected by inclinations and does not pursue pleasure or happiness. Lonergan does not hold that the good person ought never to consider pleasure or happiness; instead, he simply teaches that the good person must opt for 'the truly good … when value and satisfaction conflict' (226). Of course value and satisfaction do not always conflict.

Perhaps several of my readers have just noticed here a shortened quotation of Romans 5:5: 'Hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us'. Lonergan was fond of this marvellous sentence by St Paul; he referred to it many times in his writings, including six other times in *Method in Theology*.[5] Lonergan also situates religious experience within his overall conception of human intentionality:

> Being in love with God is the basic fulfilment of our conscious intentionality. That fulfilment brings a deep-set joy that can remain despite humiliation, failure, privation, pain, betrayal, desertion. That fulfilment brings a radical peace, the peace that the world cannot give. (101)

In *Method in Theology* we find a hint that suggests Lonergan was not unaware of the moral conversion's influence on religious conversion. He formulates the following question: 'To deliberate about deliberating is to ask whether any deliberating is worthwhile. Has "worthwhile" any ultimate meaning?' (97) This question is not merely theoretical. Thus Lonergan adds: 'The questions arise, and clearly our attitudes and our resoluteness may be profoundly affected by our answers' (98). We shall see further on that the psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg entertained a similar enquiry.

Bernard Lonergan

In sum, our main question has been: although Lonergan stresses solely the influence of religious conversion upon moral conversion, is it conceivable that their influence might be reciprocal? Thus I will submit that whereas moral conversion is grounded at least in an implicit religious conversion, the latter cannot take place without the former, namely without some exercise of moral conscience.

[5] See index at 'Romans 5:5'; notice also the references at 'Romans 8:38–39' in the index.

Hints from Newman, Frankl and Kohlberg

John Henry Newman

For Newman 'Conscience'—he spells it with a capital C—which speaks in 'our own mind', is a channel that carries people towards God.[6] In two sections of his *Grammar of Assent*, he undertakes to 'show how we apprehend Him, not merely as a notion, but as a reality'. He endeavours 'to explain how we gain an image of God'. In the variegated feelings that are associated with conscience (for instance, 'grief, regret, joy, or desire'; 'self-approval and hope, or compunction and fear'), he locates 'the materials for the real apprehension of a Divine Sovereign and Judge'.[7]

He also points out: 'The feeling of conscience … is twofold:—it is a moral sense, and a sense of duty; a judgment of the reason and a magisterial dictate …. Thus conscience has both a critical and a judicial office.' The first amounts to 'a rule of right conduct'; the second offers us 'a sanction of right conduct'.[8] In Newman's eyes, then, conscience helps us to picture God as a living Person both as the originator of specific ethical norms (the 'Sovereign') and as the one to whom we are accountable (the 'Judge').

Newman's foray into human conscience makes us aware of its moral strength and of its potential impact on a person's religiousness. Of course the awareness is far from being always patent:

> Conscience does not repose on itself, but vaguely reaches forward to something beyond self, and dimly discerns a sanction higher than self for its decisions, as is evidenced in that keen sense of obligation and responsibility which informs them.[9]

Unfortunately there are several modes of deceiving one's conscience and of evading its presence.[10] None the less, in numerous cases, *moral* conscience does initiate a *religious* consciousness in sinners, whatever the depth of their culpability.

Viktor Frankl

Although in a fashion quite different from Newman's, the psychiatrist Viktor Frankl emphasizes the transcendent character of conscience. He

[6] John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, edited by I. T. Ker (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985 [1889]), 389. I refer to the pagination of the eighth edition, which the editor placed in the margins.
[7] Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 104 (see sections 5.1 and 10.1), 105.
[8] Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 105, 106.
[9] Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 74.
[10] As Newman points out in Sermon 8 of his *Fifteen Sermons Preached before the University of Oxford between AD 1826 and 1843*, 3rd edn (Notre Dame: U. of Notre Dame, 1997 [1872).

notes: 'Conscience is not only a fact within psychological immanence but also a referent to transcendence; only with a reference to transcendence, only as some sort of transcendent phenomenon, can it really be understood'.[11] Notwithstanding this helpful distinction between the psychological and the transcendent, his account of what he calls 'the transcendent quality of conscience'—the title of the chapter from which I have just quoted—remains hazy.

When he writes that 'man's unconscious relation to God is profoundly personal', it is not clear whether his 'unconscious God' is personal or impersonal.[12] As a matter of fact, he does not think it is possible for humans to make accurate judgments about God; neither revelation nor argumentation can achieve real knowledge of the divine.[13] Consequently his God does not talk and there is no indication in Frankl's corpus that God has established an interpersonal relationship with human beings. So we must wonder what is the *exact* sense of this sentence about the 'religious man': 'He is also aware of the taskmaster, the source of his mission. For thousands of years that source has been called God.'[14]

However, the contrast that Frankl draws between the 'irreligious man' and the 'religious man' is useful for our purposes here. He states:

> An irreligious man is one who does not recognize this transcendent quality. Needless to say, the irreligious man also 'has' a conscience, and he also is responsible; he simply asks no further—neither what he is responsible to, nor from what his conscience stems.

Frankl then asks: 'what is the reason the irreligious man does not go further?' He answers:

> It is because he does not want to lose the 'firm ground under his feet'. The true summit is barred from his vision; it is hidden in the fog, and he does not risk venturing into it, into this uncertainty. Only the religious man hazards it.[15]

Even though, according to this description, the 'religious man' appears to be more intellectually persistent and more daring, it is my conviction

[11] Viktor Frankl, *The Unconscious God: Psychotherapy and Theology* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), 54.
[12] Frankl, *Unconscious God*, 63.
[13] Viktor Frankl, *The Will to Meaning: Foundations and Applications of Logotherapy* (New York: New American Library, 1969), 148.
[14] Viktor Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul: From Psychotherapy to Logotherapy*, translated by Richard and Clara Winston (Baltimore: Penguin, 1965), 13.
[15] Frankl, *Unconscious God*, 55–56.

that the 'irreligious man', if conscientious and responsible, is in fact open to transcendence, namely to a potential religious conversion.

Lawrence Kohlberg

Lawrence Kohlberg is well known for his essays on six stages of moral development (the last being called 'a universal humanistic perspective').[16] However, in his last fifteen years he supplemented his scheme with a *seventh* stage, termed 'a cosmic perspective'. While his sixth stage would amount to what Lonergan described as 'moral conversion', the seventh amounts to 'religious conversion'. The transition from the sixth to the seventh stage would be prompted by the transition from the question 'how can we be moral?' to the question 'why be moral?'[17] This latter type of question is by and large the same as the one we noticed earlier in this essay; and it may sometimes elicit, from a moral standpoint, a serious interest in a higher stage, namely 'religious conversion'.

The Influence of Moral Conversion upon Religious Conversion

There can be a presence of religious conversion within moral conversion even when it is not acknowledged by those who do not care about religion. Numerous unbelievers who are *morally* converted—we meet them frequently these days—may also be *religiously* converted. Many agnostics have a sense of transcendence, also termed an absolute, although most of them do not put their vague awareness into words. This peculiar feeling of transcendence presupposes a moral sense that manifests itself in the acceptance of a summons to the implementation of meaning (no muddling), veracity (no lying), loyalty (no treachery), goodness (no hatred), or justice (no unfairness) in particular declarations and actions. (The list could be longer.) Those people then hear and respond to a demanding imperative coming from an unknown Source.

A transcendent experience can be characterized as an event in which individuals, by themselves or in a group, have the impression that they are in contact with something boundless and limitless, which they cannot get hold of and which utterly surpasses human capacities. Whether within their ordinary lives or within Churches and religious groups,

[16] See Lawrence Kohlberg, 'Education, Moral Development and Faith', *Journal of Moral Education*, 4 (1974), 5–16.

[17] See Lawrence Kohlberg, 'Continuities and Discontinuities in Childhood and Adult Moral Development Revisited', in *Life-Span Developmental Psychology: Personality and Socialization* (New York: Academic, 1973), 180–204, here 202.

people of all ages and of various social backgrounds report having had gone through unique episodes that are rooted in a feeling of transcendence, which are interpreted in various ways.[18]

For instance, in England the zoologist-philosopher Sir Alister Hardy and his team at Manchester College, Oxford, studied that sense of transcendence. They asked: 'Have you ever been aware of or influenced by a presence or power, whether you call it God or not, which is different from your everyday self?' This question was used in a survey by National Opinion Polls in Great Britain in 1976. In that country, where Sunday church attendance was and is significantly lower than in the United States, somewhat surprisingly the percentage of 'yes' answers was about the same (36 per cent; or 31 per cent according to another survey). Interestingly about 25 per cent of agnostics and atheists answered 'yes' to this question.[19]

Consequently, in conversations with unbelievers it matters to recognise their *moral* authenticity along with the values they pursue, at times with considerable losses or sacrifices. When dialogue takes place in friendship and trust, we can also hint at the sense of transcendence they may have, however dimly.[20] In terms of human intentionality, there is no watertight partition between the two movements of an intentional consciousness: the movement downwards from religious experience to moral experience, and the movement upwards from the latter to the former. However, since speaking of 'conversions' often smacks of excessive emotion, it may be preferable to speak of moral and religious 'transformations' or 'convictions'.

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[18] I have written two books on this subject. The first draws from aspects of modern philosophy of religion: *Transcendent Experiences*, cited above. The second one is theological and psychological: *The Feeling of Transcendence, an Experience of God?*, translated by Pierre LaViolette and Louise Anne Mahoney (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2021).

[19] David Hay and Ann Morisy, 'Reports of Esctatic, Paranormal, or Religious Experience in Great Britain and the United States: A Comparison of Trends', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 17/3 (September 1978), 255–268.

[20] See Louis Roy, 'Principles of Fruitful Interreligious Dialogue: A Few Suggestions', *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue*, 29 (2019), 159–183.

A HIDDEN ENCOUNTER

Ignatius' Conversion

Rob Faesen

The 'Conversion' of Ignatius in 1521

THE STORY OF IGNATIUS' 'conversion'—from worldly courtier to committed follower of Christ—is well known. It begins in the period when he still bore his baptismal name, Iñigo, after the local Basque saint Enneco. He was a young man from a family of the lesser nobility, who nevertheless received his education as a page at the court of Juan Velazquez de Cuellar, the treasurer of the Spanish king Ferdinand and, after the former's death, at the court of Duke Antonio Manrique de Lara, the viceroy of Navarre. Iñigo's family clearly had big plans for the boy.

As a loyal courtier, Iñigo took part in military expeditions, with all the attendant risks. In 1521, during a battle against the French at Pamplona, he was seriously wounded in the right leg and was captured by the enemy, who nursed him and then brought him home. This injury required a long convalescence in Loyola. During that period, there was an inner turning point in Iñigo's life. Although he had previously been a faithful Christian, with a certain devotion to the Blessed Virgin and to St Peter, he could have been called *populariter christianus*, an average Christian.

As a result of this turnaround in his life he no longer placed his loyalty in the service of this or that secular ruler, but in radical service to Jesus Christ. His idols were no longer the heroes of profane chivalric epic but the saints, heroes of radical surrender and service to Christ. The life of Iñigo became Christocentric. What caused this turnaround? Years later, when Luis Gonçalves da Câmara asked him to tell his spiritual life-story, Ignatius somewhat avoided the heart of the matter and cleverly diverted attention by referring to internal movements he experienced while reading two books: the *Vita Christi* by Ludolphus the Carthusian and the *Flos sanctorum* by Jacobus de Voragine. The question then, of course, is *why* these particular books suddenly touched him

more deeply than chivalric novels? Why this sudden and intense focus on Jesus Christ, this fascination with Him? Ignatius did not say it explicitly, and kept the central issue hidden, but still gave two small, very discreet indications, as we shall see.

A Remarkable Parallel: Francis of Assisi

Before looking for that hidden core, we may first observe a famous resemblance with another young man who lived several centuries earlier, but whose 'conversion' bears surprising similarities to that of Ignatius—namely Francis of Assisi. Francis's family also had big plans for him: his father Bernardone demanded that his son, who was born while he was on a business trip and who had been baptized Giovanni, should be called 'Francesco'. After all, in that period in Italy, everything French was considered chic.

Francis was also a worldly young man, and although he was a shrewd businessman (*cautus negotiator*) like his father, he was above all lavish with money (*sed vanissimus dispensator*), as the nobility were.[1] Francis, too, had taken part in a military venture, an armed conflict between Assisi and Perugia in 1202, and he, too, had been captured by the enemy and had to return home—humiliated and sick. The turning point in his life likewise occurred in the period after his failed military expedition. And Francis also, after this turnaround, remained immensely fascinated by Christ all his life. The story of Francis and that of Ignatius a few centuries later show striking similarities.

In order to see exactly what happened in this 'turning around', we cannot consult an autobiography of Francis (as with Ignatius), because there is none. Although there are a few autobiographical elements in his *Testament* of 1226—we will return to these later—we must look to other biographers for the story of his life. For centuries, the account by Bonaventure was regarded as the official version, the so-called *Legenda maior*. The General Chapter of the Franciscans had asked this learned scholar to write a biography in 1260, and he completed it three years later. But there are older biographies. For example, there is the *Vita prima* of 1229 by Thomas of Celano, someone who had known Francis personally, and who wrote his biography at the request of Pope Gregory IX.

[1] Thomas of Celano, *Vita prima*, chapter 1. English translation: *The Life of Saint Francis by Thomas of Celano*, in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, volume 1, *The Saint*, edited by Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann and William J. Short (New York: New City, 2000), 183.

For our subject, it is remarkable that, in this oldest biography, Thomas of Celano explicitly presents the 'turnaround' in the life of Francis as an initiative from God—it certainly did not come from his parents or from Francis's upbringing. On the contrary, Thomas says that this upbringing was very worldly, even though everyone called themselves Christians. We might say *populariter christiani*—average Christians—once again, as most people from Assisi probably were. The same can be said of Francis's peers. Nor was there anything in Francis himself to predict any aspect of his later reversal. He was admired by all, and was extremely ambitious and ostentatious.

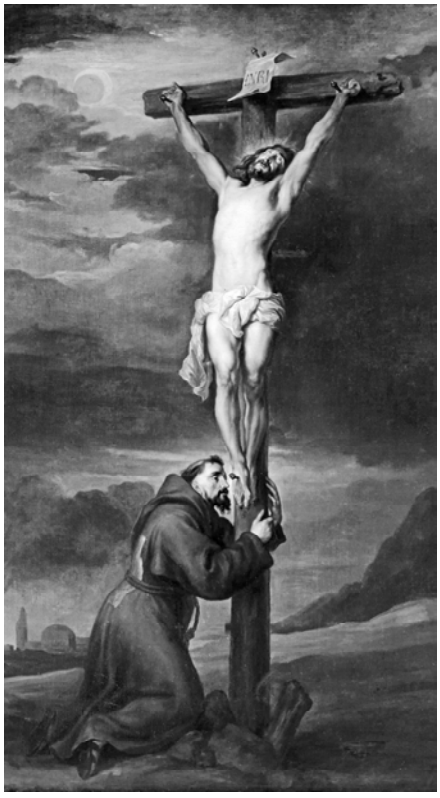
'But', says Thomas of Celano, 'God in his goodness cast his gaze upon him. The hand of the Lord came upon him, and he was transformed by the right hand of the Most High.'[2] During his long illness Francis began to think inwardly in a different way from before. On a walk during his convalescence, he looked at the beauty of the landscape, but found that it gave him less satisfaction than before. And he marvelled at the inner change, Celano says.[3] The latter is what Ignatius also says a few centuries later: 'he [Ignatius] began to marvel at this change' (*Autobiography*, n.8; my translation). This amazement is telling: Francis himself had not foreseen the turning point, any more than had Ignatius centuries later.

When Francis, even though his soul had undergone a profound and astonishing change, was still preparing to engage in another military conflict—this time between the Pope and the seneschal of the German empire—his inner transformation was confirmed by a vision of Christ in a dream, definitively confirming the turning point in his life. We also read something similar in Ignatius. He relates that at one point his changed inner orientation was 'confirmed by a visitation … a likeness of Our Lady with the Holy Child Jesus' (*Autobiography*, n.10). This is a very discreet indication from Ignatius as to where we should look for the origins of his reversal.

Conversion as Encounter

The parallel between the story of Francis's 'conversion' and that of Ignatius is surprisingly close. The interesting thing is that, in the case of Francis, the biographer Celano states very explicitly that Christ took

[2] Thomas of Celano, *Vita prima*, chapter 1.
[3] Thomas of Celano, *Vita prima*, chapter 2.



St Francis at the Foot of the Cross, *by Anthony Van Dyck, late 1620s*

the initiative. Francis is fascinated by Christ precisely because Christ presented Himself—unexpectedly but unmistakably. Is this a forced interpretation from Thomas of Celano? Certainly not. After all, Francis himself actually suggests the same thing in his *Testament*, where he states that it is the Lord who gave him his way of life.[4] We also see this in the case of Ignatius. He says that from the effects of the turning point in his life 'one can judge that the thing has been of God, although he himself did not venture to define it' (*Autobiography*, n. 10)—again a discreet indication. The sixteenth-century Ignatius is apparently a bit more hesitant than the thirteenth-century Francis, but they both agree: the turnaround is an initiative of Christ, and that initiative had a huge impact on the personal lives of both. Francis and Ignatius both remained totally fascinated by Jesus Christ until the end of their lives. But neither of them came to this himself; the initiative came from the Other.

An Ideological Difference in Interpretation

It seems to me that this interpretation—supported by the sources—differs from the one that is more common in current historiography. Contemporary depictions often assume that what happened to Ignatius in 1521 was primarily a form of introspection. It would seem then that Ignatius' attention was focused on himself and what was occurring within himself. He analyzed his own inner movements, and drew his own conclusions from them, or so it is often presented.

[4] St Francis, *Testamentum*, n. 1: English translation in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, volume 1, 124.

This representation corresponds very well to a general interpretation of Ignatius and the Ignatian tradition as exponents of the new individualism in modernity, as many contemporary historians argue. While in earlier periods, it is said, a central emphasis was placed on the community, modernity brought the birth of the individual. Individuals make autonomous choices, design their own lives, and decide for themselves to which groups they wish to belong. It goes without saying that Ignatius is then cited as a typical example of this new trend. His 'conversion' of 1521 seems fully to confirm this picture. The self-analysis of Ignatius and the way in which he draws his own conclusions from it for the rest of his life are a perfect example of the incipient individualism of modernity which, moreover, is believed to have been profoundly influenced by his *Spiritual Exercises*.

This representation is, of course, very useful for what is seen as the ideal of religion today, in the twenty-first century: a purely personal matter, something that the individual (on whatever rational or irrational inner grounds) freely chooses, and which is respectable as long as it remains wholly private. How often do we hear that spirituality consists in 'listening to yourself'? This, of course, leaves the role of God completely out of the picture, and that is perhaps exactly what this ideologically coloured interpretation prefers.

Encounter

Our reading of Ignatius' turnaround shows, however, that he did not listen primarily to himself, but to the Other—to God—who unexpectedly approached him and met him. This makes a world of difference. Ignatius was not an individual who engaged in self-analysis and made certain choices based on his own inner movements. On the contrary, he was a person who was liberated from the tyranny of the 'self' because of his immense fascination with that Other who came to meet him. Ignatius does not say it in so many words in the *Autobiography*, but it seems to me the best interpretative key to understanding its coherence.

It was no longer Ignatius' own 'I' and his own movements that were at the centre of his attention, but the fascinating Other. That is why he was more moved by the *Vita Christi* and the *Flos sanctorum* than by chivalric romance. That is why he wanted to go to the Holy Land: to get to know the Other even better, by discovering and investigating countless small details that had to do with that Other. That is why Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* bear witness to the same fascination and

essential orientation towards the Other. The words of Erasmus, a man who was equally fascinated by Christ all his life, apply perfectly to the *Spiritual Exercises*:

> In order to read the Gospel fruitfully, one should read it in a sober way, not sleepy—as when you read a story about people, which does not concern you—but fascinated, with a never-ceasing attention. One should proceed as a devoted disciple of Jesus, who tries to reach Him in all kinds of ways. He should watch closely what Jesus does, what Jesus says; he would like to investigate it all, to search it and to think it over. In the very simple and natural Scriptures, he will find the ineffable advice of heavenly Wisdom: he will find in this—if we may say so—at first sight lowly and reprehensible foolishness of God something which is much higher than all human science, however sublime and wondrous it may be.[5]

In Ignatius we see what the Jesuit Albert Deblaere once succinctly described as 'vocation: a fundamental fact that escapes verification, but that changes society'.[6] What we often call the 'conversion' of Ignatius is actually an encounter, a calling by God. That encounter is a fact that, on the one hand, is impossible for a historian to trace as such, but, on the other hand, changed Ignatius as a person and through him societies around the world.

If we want to understand the structure of that encounter properly, we must realise that Ignatius was fascinated by Christ in a special way after 1521: not by certain values and norms, not by structures or institutions, not by beautiful religious experiences, not by a challenging task, but by a person. Purely and only because he was *that* Person. In one of his essays, Michel de Montaigne wrote about friendship, and specifically about his own friendship with Étienne de La Boétie: 'If I had to say why I loved him, I don't know the answer apart from this: "Because it was him, because it was me [*parce que c'était lui, parce que c'était moi*]"'.[7] This also applies in an eminent way to Ignatius (and to so many others, such as Francis, Bernard of Clairvaux, John of Ruusbroec, Theresa of Ávila …), namely a fascination with Christ purely for the sake of Christ himself. This fascination gave Ignatius an astonishing

[5] Desiderius Erasmus, 'Pio lectori', in *Evangelium Matthaei paraphrasis*.
[6] Albert Deblaere, 'Humanisme chrétien et vocation monastique', *Studia Missionalia*, 28 (1979), 97–132, here 97.
[7] Michel de Montaigne, 'L'Amitié', in *Essais*, volume 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), 265–279, here 271.

freedom to lead a life that had only one goal, and therefore only one criterion: the ever-deepening encounter with that Person.

This freedom does change society, as church history shows on almost every page. The freedom to think and choose purely and solely out of a deepening encounter with the divine Other: this freedom no longer cares about one's own image, about prevailing trends, about ideologically correct discourse—all the things that keep society closed and controlled. A freedom comes into being that contains a seed of the real humanisation of society.

The Secret

Finally, we must consider one more question. Why is it that Ignatius was so wary, evasive and even silent about the real significance of what happened in 1521 in speaking to Luis Gonçalves da Câmara, who had nevertheless urged him to tell the story?

The answer is simple: because Ignatius must have been a very refined, courteous and sensitive man, who would not display the beautiful secret that had unfolded between him and God. In fact, in doing so, he joins many others before him, who have valued the same attitude of reverence toward intimacy with God. In a famous example, William of Saint-Thierry (c. 1080–1148) described the development of the spiritual life in a letter to the Carthusians of Mont-Dieu—a letter that became so widely read in the following centuries that it is sometimes called the *Epistola aurea* ('golden letter'). The author starts at the very beginning; and at the end of the 'letter' (which in fact has more characteristics of a treatise), William advises the fully grown spiritual man:

> … may he not put his treasure in the mouth of men, but hide it in his cell and store it in his conscience. Then he can always put the following inscription both above the entrance to his conscience and above the door of his cell: 'My secret is my own, my secret is my own' (Isaiah 24:16).[8]

This is the secret of all who have encountered Christ. *What* has happened belongs to the intimacy of the personal encounter. On the other hand, they cannot remain silent about that Person. We might

[8] William of Saint-Thierry to the brothers of Mont-Dieu, n.3, in *Patrologia Latina*, edited by Jean-Paul Migne, volume 184 (Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1855), col. 295.

think of the meeting of the first disciples with Jesus as described in the fourth Gospel (John 1:35–42). Jesus clearly takes the initiative, and afterwards, the disciples cannot keep silent about him, and Andrew speaks to his brother Peter about him. But *what* happened exactly? All we read is: 'they remained with Him that day' (John 1:39).

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THE ROLE OF PLACE IN ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION

Kevin L. McDonnell

> The spiritual challenge of the ecological crisis draws us back to our religious traditions, to reflect on and celebrate the natural world in its most profound sense of mystery as a manifestation and experience of the sacred.[1]

Ecological Conversion in Papal Statements

The first to use the term 'ecological conversion' was Pope John Paul II, in 2001. He identified as a moral problem that,

> Man, especially in our time, has without hesitation devastated wooded plains and valleys, polluted waters, disfigured the earth's habitat, made the air unbreathable, disturbed the hydrogeological and atmospheric systems … degrading that 'flowerbed' … which is the earth, our dwelling-place.

He then went on to say, 'We must therefore encourage and support the "ecological conversion" which in recent decades has made humanity more sensitive to the catastrophe to which it has been heading'.[2] He recognised that such conversion had already begun in some practical ways as a movement in society.

In his inaugural homily as Pope in 2005, Benedict XVI highlighted the connection between spirituality and what was happening to Earth's ecosystems: 'The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast'.[3] Ten years later, in his encyclical letter *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis quoted this, and offered it as the reason that 'the ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion'.[4]

[1] *Earth and Faith: A Book of Reflection for Action*, edited by Libby Bassett (New York: United Nations Environment Programme, 2000), 7.
[2] Pope John Paul II, general audience in St Peter's Square, 17 January 2001, nn. 3–4.
[3] Pope Benedict XVI, homily, 24 April 2005.
[4] Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, n. 217 (subsequent references in the text).

Francis used the term 'Ecological Conversion' as the title of section 3 of *Laudato si'* (nn. 216–221), and in this section he sketches the outline of what such conversion might entail. In my summary, 'recognition' suggests primarily new knowledge, while 'realisation' and 'awareness' invoke also changes in feelings, moods and attitudes:

> 217. recognition of the fact that protection of creation is not optional for Christians, but is essential to a life of virtue;
>
> 218. realisation that the development of a healthy relationship with creation includes recognition of our past mistakes and sincere repentance;
>
> 219. recognition of the need for community conversion so individuals are supported by community networks;
>
> 220. awareness of the deep, intimate interconnectedness of all things, and gratitude for the beautiful gift of creation;
>
> 221. awareness that all creation reveals something of God, and that the Risen Christ is intimately present to every creature.

Some of the hoped-for outcomes of such conversion are:

> 216. a passionate concern for the protection of our common home.
>
> 217. a relationship with the world around us that springs from our encounter with Jesus Christ;
>
> 220. creativity and enthusiasm in resolving difficult issues, and acceptance that human superiority brings with it serious responsibilities;
>
> 221. commitment to living fully as a member of the whole family of creation, which includes both living and non-living members.

Unpacking Ecological Conversion

Several scholars in Earth-centred theology and spirituality provide clarifications and extensions of Pope Francis's call to ecological conversion.[5] The deep interconnectedness of all things (n. 220) and the indwelling of the Divine in all of creation (n. 221) are the themes that have attracted most attention. Francis holds that,

[5] In this essay 'Earth' is capitalised as the name of the planet, and used without the definite article.

> Each creature reflects something of God and … that Christ has taken unto himself this material world and now, risen, is intimately present to each being, surrounding it with his affection and penetrating it with his light (n. 221).

Elizabeth Johnson expands this in seeing ecological conversion as 'making clear that the Creator is also the Redeemer who accompanies the whole natural world with saving compassion', and the neighbour we are called upon to love is inclusive of suffering Earth and all its creatures.[6]

Eric Jensen makes a helpful distinction between *environmental* conversion and *ecological* conversion. He quotes the experience of Thomas Merton, whose longstanding empathy with the beauty and fragility of nature led him to an environmental conversion when he became aware of the damage caused by chemical pesticides. Subsequently he underwent what Jensen describes as a 'true ecological conversion', one which is also 'a religious conversion, that acknowledges Earth as part of a created universe brought into being by a personal, loving Creator'.[7] The conversion identified by John Paul II in 2001 as already happening around the world was, in Jensen's terms, environmental conversion. In *Laudato si'* Pope Francis uses 'ecological conversion' to encompass both.

For David Tacey the core of ecological conversion is the resacralisation of nature: 'Once sanctity is restored to creation, respect is restored to the environment'.[8] He emphasizes the critical importance of becoming attuned to the presence of the Divine in all created things. Tacey suggests that the Catholic tradition has much to offer in promoting sensitivity to Earth as sacred through our 'long line of mystics and saints who communed with nature', and through the Celtic tradition which 'was intensely earth-focused and based on the sanctity of creation, and the spiritual significance of rocks, streams and forests'.[9]

Another way to express the mystery of divine indwelling in creation is through the notion of the 'cosmic Christ'. Celia Deane-Drummond shows how 'cosmic interpretations of Christology lend themselves to an ecological interpretation' with the presence of the Risen Christ

[6] Elizabeth Johnson, *Creation and the Cross: The Mercy of God for a Planet in Peril* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2018), 195.
[7] Eric Jensen, 'Ecological Conversion and the Spiritual Exercises', *The Way*, 59/2 (April 2020), 7–18, here 10.
[8] David Tacey, 'Environmental Spirituality', *International Journal of New Perspectives in Christianity*, 1/1 (2009), 17–21, here 19.
[9] Tacey, 'Environmental Spirituality', 19.

shining through everything.[10] She recognises the deep interconnectedness of all things, including humans, and sees cosmic Christology as 'seeing Christ in a different kind of way. Not narrowly as just a human being, but also in a cosmic sense.'[11]

Ilia Delio expands this idea:

> When the adjective 'cosmic' is used to describe Christ, it means that Christ is the instrument of God's creative activity, the source and goal of all things …. Basically the term relates Christ to the entire created order, emphasizing that Christ's relationship to creation extends beyond the compass of earthly humans and includes the whole cosmos.[12]

Ecological conversion in a Christian context therefore involves replacing a narrow conception of Christ as personal saviour with an all-encompassing cosmic one. Delio understands this conversion as a transformation of both inner life and outer action, as does Francis, for example in *Laudato si'*, n. 217.[13] Delio also amplifies the call to community conversion

[10] Celia Deane-Drummond, *Eco-Theology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2008), 112.
[11] Celia Deane-Drummond, interview, 'Recovering the Cosmic Christ', Catholic Ecology (9 October 2014), at https://catholicecology.net/blog/interviewdr-celia-deane-drummond-part-2-recovering-cosmic-christ, acceessed 16 June 2022.
[12] Ilia Delio, *Christ in Evolution* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008), 50. On the cosmic Christ see also Ahilya Noone, 'The Cosmic Christ', *The Way*, 59/2 (April 2020), 19–27.
[13] *Personal Transformation and a New Creation: The Spiritual Revolution of Beatrice Bruteau*, edited by Ilia Delio (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2016), 2.

(compare n.219) when she notes that the process of repentance and reconciliation (compare n.218) is not a purely personal experience, but,

> Its transformative implications radiate outward into society and the world …. We are called to simplify our lifestyles, to find ways of living that reflect our belief in the goodness and integrity of creation …. We, too, must find ways of engaging other members of society and dominant social values, and call them to conversion of heart and life.[14]

In sum, ecological conversion may be described as the transformation of our spirituality so that it fully recognises the sacredness of the cosmos as imbued with the presence of a loving Creator, leading to engagement with others in caring for our common home.

Ecological Conversion and Theodicy

There are many obstacles to ecological conversion. One of particular concern to ecotheologians such as Christopher Southgate and Celia Deane-Drummond, is the presence of violence, suffering and death in the evolutionary story and in the way ecosystems operate.[15] The fossil record tells us that more than 99 per cent of all species that have ever existed have become extinct. Predation, pain and death are intrinsic to the maintenance of ecological harmony. The problem of reconciling this with the notion of a loving Creator is one that holds many people back from recognising God's presence in creation. Everything in nature, living and non-living, eventually gives up its existence for the sake of something else in the future. As Holmes Rolston III expresses it, 'all the creatures are forever being sacrificed to contribute to lives beyond their own'.[16] The whole of creation follows the path of the paschal mystery—though choice, of course, appeared in the evolutionary story only with the development of consciousness.

Laudato si' does not deal with this topic, apart from one brief mention in n.80 (see also his note 49), in which Francis uses the eschatological argument that sees humans as co-creators of an unfinished universe. Denis Edwards argues that Francis's statement in n.89 that we live in 'sublime communion' with the whole of creation provides a key to the

[14] Ilia Delio, Keith Douglass Warner and Pamela Wood, *Care for Creation: A Franciscan Spirituality of the Earth* (Cincinnati: Franciscan Media, 2008), 167.
[15] See Christopher Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution and the Problem of Evil* (London: Westminster John Knox, 2008); and Deane-Drummond, *Eco-Theology*, chapter 9, 'Ecology and Theodicy'.
[16] Holmes Rolston III, 'Kenosis and Nature', in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, edited by John Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 60.

Pope's thinking in this area. He explores the use of the word 'sublime' in a poem of John of the Cross quoted by Francis in n. 234, and concludes that 'sublime communion' can encompass not just beauty and wonder, but also the mysterious ambiguity and violence of nature. He holds that, in Jesus, 'God is revealed as Love that embraces suffering creation, transforming it from within, bringing it to liberation and fulfilment'.[17]

In the context of ecological conversion it would seem important to ponder and discuss this topic rather than ignore it, or, worse still, see it as an insurmountable obstacle.

Place and Journey

Deep in the human psyche is attachment to place. Plants and animals are, for the most part, tied to particular environmental niches, while we humans possess the creativity and technical ability to adapt environmental conditions to suit our own needs. We still, however, experience a need to belong, to be at home in our own particular places. To be embodied is to be in a place, and the place we call home is usually a place of familiarity, safety, companionship and well-being.[18] One expression of this ancient sense of place is the strong attachment to land experienced by many indigenous people such as the Aboriginal people of Australia. They have a kinship relationship with country that is integral to their spirituality.[19]

At the same time there is in the human heart a desire to leave familiar places and be on the way to somewhere else. Murray Silverstein holds that 'deep inside (so to speak) the very nature of place, along with its obvious pleasures, is the desire to leave it', and that we live 'as if at home in the world, when all the while we are *en route*'.[20] This tension between 'the longing for a deep and abiding sense of attachment to place and the desire for freedom of movement and opportunity' is expressed, but not resolved, in the biblical stories of journey, settlement, exile and return.[21]

Within an evolutionary framework we can also understand place as always in the process of leaving us. The daily changes in both the

[17] Denis Edwards, 'Sublime Communion and the Costs of Evolution', *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 84/1 (February 2019), 23–24, 31.
[18] David Seamon, 'A Way of Seeing People and Place: Phenomenology in Environment-Behavior Research', in *Theoretical Perspectives in Environment-Behavior Research*, edited by Seymour Wapner, Jack Demick, Takiji Yamamoto and Hirofumi Minami (New York: Plenum, 2000), 162–163.
[19] See David Tacey, 'Environmental Spirituality', 19.
[20] Murray Silverstein, 'Is Place a Journey?' *Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology Newsletter*, 5/1 (1994), 14–15.
[21] Douglas E. Burton-Christie, 'Living between Two Worlds: Home, Journey and the Quest for Sacred Place', *Anglican Theological Review*, 79/3 (Summer 1997), 415.

living and non-living members of any given ecosystem, slight though they may be, mark the inevitable transformation of every member, and therefore of the place itself. The whole cosmos is dynamic, in a constant state of flux. It, too, is on a journey, and its apparent stability is an illusion wrought through the differences between human, geological and cosmic time scales. The place-journey tension pervades the whole of creation.

The particular place in which we find ourselves at any given time is the only point of physical contact we have with the cosmos. It is the only part of planet Earth that we can directly see, hear, touch, taste and smell. Because ecological conversion involves awareness of the sacredness of the cosmos, of every place being a locus of Divine presence, it follows that there is a role for place to play in such conversion.

Place and Ecological Conversion

That the path to ecological conversion passes through specific places is recognised by Francis in *Laudato si'* when he points out, 'The history of our friendship with God is always linked to particular places' (n.84). The biblical story is replete with place names. As Douglas Burton-Christie observes,

> Place anchors the biblical story, from the garden, to the mountain, to the holy city of Jerusalem. These are places of encounter, epiphany, promise. Into such places are poured the hopes and longings of the Jewish and Christian communities. And in retrospect, they become places of memory in which are embedded the deep knowledge of the communities' experience with God.[22]

Similarly, a particular place can be one of encounter, epiphany and promise for anyone open to ecological conversion, because such conversion involves the cultivation of deep intimacy with creation, not just in a notional sense but as a real, embodied feeling of oneness with nature. For this feeling, described as 'cosmic intimacy' by Gem Yecla, to develop, one needs to have immediate contact with a specific place, the particularity of which offers a vital stepping stone to ecological conversion.[23] As Sandra Schneiders remarks about experiencing the sacred, 'the "where" is as determinative as the "how"'.[24]

[22] Burton-Christie, 'Living between Two Worlds', 422.
[23] See Gem Yecla, 'Cosmic Intimacy', *The Way*, 59/2 (April 2020), 29–33.
[24] Sandra Schneiders, 'Foreword', in Belden C. Lane, *Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality* (New York: Paulist, 1988), xii.

The intimacy required for conversion ordinarily develops in stages. The first of these generally involves gaining some familiarity with the natural history of the place. This might include basic understanding of, say, its geography, climate, rocks, soils, plants, insects, birds and other animals, and ways in which all of these are interconnected. Such knowledge need not be advanced or technical but, in this time of widespread public education and digital media, relevant information is readily available. While someone seeking understanding of a place might begin as an outsider, observing natural phenomena, the invitation is to become a member of a community getting to know the other members. One author who recognises this is Burton-Christie:

> Cultivating attachment to a place … means entering into relationships of mutual commitment and responsibility, becoming part of a community. It may entail … expanding one's sense of community to include all the plant and animal species of a bio-region, cultivating a sense of being a member of what Thomas Berry refers to as the 'earth community'.[25]

In the second stage, the beauty of the patterns in nature, the elegance of relationships between living and non-living members of an ecosystem, and the extraordinary extent of biodiversity become a constant source of awe and wonder. This can generate a genuine love for nature in its beauty and mystery, and empathy with it in its fragility. This stage corresponds to Jensen's 'environmental conversion', exemplified in Thomas Merton's experience described above. Merton expresses his love for nature in his poem 'Sweet Irrational Worship':

> I am earth, earth
> My heart's love
> Bursts with hay and flowers.[26]

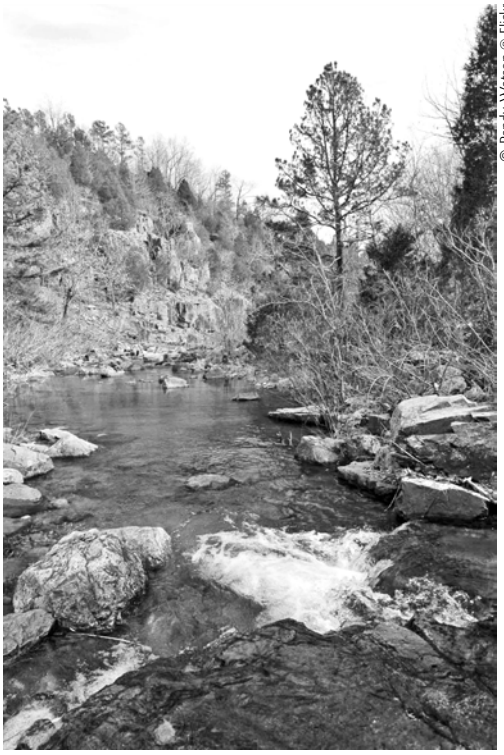
A third stage, which corresponds to Jensen's 'true ecological conversion', is loving Earth (and the whole cosmos) as the incarnate presence of God. At this level not only every human person, but every creature, is revered as a revelation of the Divine. As Pope Francis says, reflecting on the mysticism of John of the Cross, 'This is not because the finite things of this world are really divine, but because the mystic

[25] Burton-Christie, 'Living between Two Worlds', 418.
[26] Thomas Merton, 'Sweet Irrational', in *In the Dark before Dawn: New Selected Poems of Thomas Merton*, edited by Lynn Szabo (New York: New Directions, 2005), 97.

experiences the intimate connection between God and all beings, and thus feels that "all things are God"' (n.234). Merton expresses this in many ways in both prose and poetry. For example, after reflecting on trees, tiger lilies, cornflowers and clouds, in *Thoughts in Solitude* he says: 'In the midst of them all, I know you and I know of your Presence'.[27] For Merton, along with many other mystics such as Francis of Assisi, love of Earth and all its inhabitants was integral to love of God.

A modern writer in spirituality who has found a pathway to the divine through contact with nature is Belden C. Lane. He has developed the activity of hiking in the wilderness as spiritual practice by linking it with the reading of spiritual classics, deriving inspiration from the example of the Desert Fathers, from Celtic spirituality and from medieval and modern mystics. He finds that in walking and reading each throws light on the meaning of the other and also, importantly, on the contours of his own interior landscape.

For example, he cites the interaction of terrain, plants, animals and birds that he observed in the valley of Lower Rock Creek, Missouri: between creek erosion and the forest, termites and dead leaves, squirrels and pine seeds, and vultures and squirrels.[28] These relationships contribute to the harmonious working and delicate balance of the valley ecosystem community: 'It sings. It shares a common life and sustains itself through mutual woes. I find examples of cooperation—even signs of a shared consciousness—that



Lower Rock Creek valley

[27] Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1958), 99.
[28] Belden C. Lane, *Backpacking with the Saints: Wilderness Hiking as Spiritual Practice* (Oxford: OUP, 2015), 168–180.

contribute to the integrity of the whole.'[29] Familiarity with this particular place made him feel part of the Earth community. He turned to Teilhard de Chardin's *Divine Milieu* for deeper insight into community as the goal of evolution, with love as the driving force and the cosmic Christ as the ultimate Omega Point of union.[30] The whole experience led him to a new appreciation of the ties that bound him to other people.

Elements of Lane's approach, and a range of other processes, have been used to foster love of Earth, and so environmental and ecological conversion, at the Archer Mountain Community centre in south-east Queensland, Australia.

The Archer Mountain Community

The Archer Mountain Community (the Archer) is a place of Earth-centred spirituality in a rural area north of Brisbane.[31] It is located on the lower slopes of Mt Archer in the D'Aguilar range, with views over the Glasshouse Mountains, the Conondale range and the Stanley river valley. The property consists of partly cleared land that has been replanted with native and exotic trees, together with largely undisturbed eucalypt forest and a small area of dry vine rainforest. It is a haven for wildlife.

Over the past seventeen years various opportunities have been offered to visitors and retreatants to promote increased awareness of, and participation in, the whole Earth community, and to foster environmental and ecological conversion. The processes that have been used to this end include the following:

- close observation of natural features;
- artwork as an aid to observation and reflection;
- presentations on natural history;
- relevant readings and access to a library;
- reflection and sharing on nature poetry;
- awareness, reading and reflection at twelve Earth Stations highlighting natural features and views;

[29] Lane, *Backpacking with the Saints*, 175.
[30] See Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu: An Essay on the Interior* Life (New York: Harper and Row, 1960).
[31] See http://www.thearcher.org.au/.

- tree walks focusing on evolution of eucalypts and Gondwanaland conifers;
- stargazing with special attention to constellations and planets;
- guided excursions to a nearby conservation park;
- Earth story walks;
- prayer and meditation;
- contemplative walks;
- storytelling: Universe, cosmic Christ and personal stories;
- reflection on stories;
- rituals involving music and song, readings, prayer, sharing;
- walking the labyrinth and cosmic spiral;
- equinox, solstice and seasonal celebrations;
- one-on-one and group discussion and sharing;
- response to experiences through art, poetry, music and dance.

These processes have been designed to promote a contemplative attitude to all life, a feeling for the deep interconnectedness of the whole of creation, and a sense of the Divine indwelling in all things and, as a practical outcome, enthusiastic care for our common home. Underlying them are the changes in mind and heart required for ecological conversion as expressed in nn. 217–221 of *Laudato si'*.

In order to gauge the impact of these processes on participants, an informal survey was conducted in June 2020.

The Archer Survey

Two questions were asked;

1. What does the Archer mean to you personally, and to the wider Earth community?
2. How can the Archer be sustained into the future?

There were 25 responses from 30 respondents, some submitting one response on behalf of two people. More than sixty key words or phrases were identified, and the number of times each one was used was tallied. These were then grouped into nine clusters, which were in turn placed under three headings:

1. the place (features of the Archer most often mentioned);
2. impact (experiences and outcomes most appreciated by respondents);
3. challenge (challenges to respond to justice issues with respect to the whole Earth community).

These are the results:

Word Cluster	Key Words / Phrases	Mentions
Place		
Ambience	Silence, quiet, slow down, still(ness), rest, solitude, listen(ing), peace, tranquil(lity), calm, heal, sanctuary	35
Environment	Land, landscape, beauty, mountain, trees, birds, (other animals), nature, earth, view, sky, weather, natural rhythms, seasons, ground, outdoors	32
Place	Place, space	23
Indigenous Presence	First peoples, first nations, indigenous	14
Impact		
Spirituality	Spiritual(ity), sacred(ness), reflection, ritual, prayer, mystical, retreat, worship, meditation	39
Connection	Connect(ion), communion, community, conversation, home, interdependence, hospitality, welcome	34
Learnings	Wisdom, insight, prophetic, consciousness, awareness, awake	14
Nourishment	Nourishment, sustenance, sustainable, simplicity	9
Challenge		
Justice	Cry of the Earth, Earth rights, ecojustice, refugees, asylum seekers	7

This summary does not reveal the richness of the observations and suggestions made in the surveys, but the words used do give some indication of the range and strength of the participants' responses to their experience. No attempt was made directly to assess the achievement

of ecological conversion as described in *Laudato si'* nn. 216–217 and nn. 220–221. However, the language used provides evidence that, through activities that encourage close attention to nature, awareness, reflection and community building, the Archer has been instrumental in leading people towards environmental and ecological conversion.

With the call of *Laudato si'* gradually being taken up in Australia and across the world, it is an opportune time to explore further options in searching for ever more effective ways of fostering such conversion.

Fostering Ecological Conversion into the Future

L. Suganthi is a researcher who has developed a methodology for assessing a person's attitude to nature. She lists descriptions of personal values, attitudes and behaviours in relation to nature that she regards as indicative of an underlying ecospirituality, and that one would expect to find in someone who has experienced environmental conversion:

- I belong to this universe.
- I nurture the environment.
- I feel honoured to participate in any proactive action taken for the environment.
- I perceive a sense of wonder, seeing the complexity of this universe.
- I feel this universe is precious.
- I have an organic relationship with this universe,
- I feel a sense of mystery in being part of this universe.[32]

These, together with the others she has listed, provide a helpful guide for designing processes to achieve particular outcomes, enhancing their chances of fostering conversion at this level.

Another source of ideas is the creative work of Christine Valters Paintner in *Earth Our Original Monastery*.[33] In this reflection on contemplative living in the modern world through the lens of the Western monastic tradition of closeness to nature, Paintner has devised

[32] L. Suganthi, 'Ecospirituality: A Scale to Measure an Individual's Reverential Respect for the Environment', *Ecopsychology*, 11/2 (2019), 110–122, here 121–122.
[33] Christine Valters Paintner, *Earth Our Original Monastery: Cultivating Wonder and Gratitude through Intimacy with Nature* (Notre Dame: Sorin, 2020).

seven sets of transformative practices under such headings as 'Earth as the Original Cathedral' and 'Earth as the Original Scriptures'. These include reading, scripture reflection, meditation, a contemplative walk, a ritual with herbs, artistic expression, writing and a blessing. It is a rich resource for fostering ecological conversion into the future.

The beauty, complexity and wonder of every place on Earth is an invitation to humans to fall in love with creation. Developing empathy with Earth and all its creatures is the essence of environmental conversion, and a deep personal relationship with a particular place has the capacity to bring about this change in us. Such change ordinarily finds expression in a desire to protect and care for those parts of nature threatened with degradation and death as a result of human irresponsibility. Similarly if, for a person of faith, every part of creation is a locus for the presence of Divine Spirit, then each particular place is an invitation to come into personal contact with that Spirit. It is a pathway into Mystery that can lead to true ecological conversion.

Place, therefore, has a vital role to play in realising Pope Francis's dream for global environmental and ecological conversion that will result in healing both the external deserts of the world and the internal deserts of our spirits.

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IGNATIUS' CONVERSION

From a God in His Own Image to a God Greater than Any Image

Tiziano Ferraroni

THERE ARE SEVERAL WAYS of thinking about conversion. It can be understood as an act of the will, driven by a moral purpose: *be converted and repent*. Here much seems to depend on our personal effort. Conversion can also be thought of as a transition: the person moves from a life where faith is inactive or marginal to one in which faith plays a central role.

Ignatius' *Autobiography* indeed shows that he experienced conversion in both these senses. But there is another kind of light that it throws on Ignatius' life, one that shows us that his most significant, most effective and most lasting conversion was in fact a long process that took place in his interior life. This conversion transformed images deep within his psyche, in particular his images of God.

We will begin by looking at the passages in the *Autobiography* that reveal this conversion of the deep images within Iñigo (to give him his original name). Then we will explore some paragraphs of the Spiritual Diary. These latter show how this conversion of the imagination is never complete. More centrally, they indicate how, as a person advances in the spiritual life, change arises not only in the deep images within, but also, and more importantly, in how the person relates to them.

The Painted Chamber of the Soul

One event in the *Autobiography* shows how the images within the young Iñigo changed. He was bedridden after being wounded in Pamplona and was beginning to become aware of what was going on inside him when he had a spiritual experience that marked him deeply:

> And now he was coming to forget his past thoughts with these holy desires he was having.
>
> These desires were confirmed for him by a visitation as follows: being awake one night, he saw clearly a likeness of Our Lady with

> the Holy Child Jesus, at the sight of which, for an appreciable time, he received a very extraordinary consolation. He was left so sickened at his whole past life, and especially at matters of the flesh, that it seemed to him that there had been removed from his soul all the likenesses that he had previously had painted in it. Thus, from that hour until August 1553, when this is being written, he never again had even the slightest complicity in matters of the flesh. On the basis of this effect one can judge that the thing has been of God, although he himself did not venture to define it, nor was he saying more than to affirm the above said. But as a result his brother, like everyone else in the house, gradually realized from the outside the change that had been made inwardly in his soul. (n. 10)

Note the metaphor here: the soul is imagined as a room with painted walls. This idea leads to a sense of images deep within us conditioning our actions, whether we are conscious of this or not. What we do is an expression of these frescoes in our inner chamber.

But what had so turned the life of the young convalescent upside down? The *Autobiography* does not give us many clues. It simply says that one night 'he clearly saw an image of Our Lady with the Holy Child Jesus'. Was it a painting that was already in his room at Loyola and suddenly caught his eye and conveyed some sort of presence? Or was it an interior representation? In any case, the narrative speaks of this experience as a 'visitation'. We are dealing with an image, one that had such a powerful effect on Ignatius that it could reach into his inner life and remove 'all the likenesses that he had previously had painted in it' and that had been there for a long time.

The Conversion of St Ignatius *(detail), by Miguel Cabrera, eighteenth century*

The *Autobiography* also gives a glimpse of the content of the images that decorated Ignatius' soul before he had this visitation: images related to sexuality, to

the flesh. Researchers who have studied the psychology of Ignatius on the basis of these statements and other historical information affirm that the young Ignatius was seeking to fill the void left by the premature death of his mother through a 'disordered' search for women. By implication, this image of sweetness and tenderness came to fill this void. Faced with the strength of this image, the other images, which were only palliatives, receded.

The narrator then says: 'from that hour until August 1553, when this is being written, he never again had even the slightest complicity in matters of the flesh'. He does not say that the impulses of the flesh no longer presented themselves, but rather that Ignatius no longer consented to them in any way, because the authenticity of this new experience had shown up the inauthenticity and inconsistency of what had been there before.

The *Autobiography* give two criteria for attesting the authenticity of this experience. First, the change that had taken place in Ignatius' interior was reflected in his external behaviour in a quite spontaneous way. He had not told anyone what he had experienced, but his acquaintances had noticed the change. Second, the duration: the effects of this experience still lasted thirty years later.

A Pathway of Purifying Images

This episode is emblematic of the transformation of the imagination that takes place within Ignatius. A close look at the early chapters of the *Autobiography*, generally regarded as recounting Ignatius' conversion in Loyola and Manresa, shows us that this conversion of the imagination was in reality a long, patient and even painful process, which concerned above all his relationship with God. We can follow the fundamental stages by which Ignatius discovered a God becoming present in his life, and connect this process with the transformation of the images of God that gradually took place in him.

Before Ignatius fell at Pamplona, God was not really present in his thoughts. Ignatius was a Christian because he was part of a Christian society, but his heart was occupied with worldly concerns: gambling, women, arms. It was during his convalescence, thanks to the books he read—a *Life of Christ* and a *Life of the Saints* (*Autobiography*, n.5)—that the word God became a part of his vocabulary. From then on, the story shows a young man dreaming of doing great deeds for God. This theme appears every time the narrator speaks of Ignatius' thoughts and dreams,

every time he moves into the protagonist's inner world. The books he read introduced an important change: they brought God into Ignatius' imaginative world.

Nevertheless, if we look carefully at the essentials of how Ignatius was understanding himself and others, we notice that it has not really changed. Before the wound at Pamplona, Ignatius was the hero who won games, conquered women and was the first to risk himself in battle (*Autobiography*, n.1). This young man was marked by ideas of greatness, even omnipotence, shaping his actions. After the wound, during his convalescence, Ignatius began to dream of accomplishing great deeds for God, wanting to imitate the great saints and to do even more (*Autobiography*, n.14). The goal motivating his gestures may have changed, but the image of greatness animating him is still the same. Before he saw himself as a hero for the world; now he sees himself as a hero for God, a saint. Ignatius remains at the centre, the undisputed protagonist of his world.

God may, then, have entered into Ignatius' imaginative world. But had God entered his real life? Or had God just been drawn into his imaginings?

Another point also encourages us to ask this sort of question. In the paragraphs where the young 'convert' envisages performing great exploits for God, there is never any question of his asking God what God wants from him. Did Ignatius ever ask that sort of question? Did he ever listen to God's voice in order to hear what God wanted? It is not a matter here of making accusations against Ignatius. He did not know how to ask such questions, and perhaps he did not even know that it was possible. But the absence of this kind of dialogue nevertheless confirms that God at this point was rather an image constructed by Ignatius himself, perhaps even a projection of himself: an idealized image of his own self corresponding to his fantasies of omnipotence.

But a point comes in the *Autobiography* where this fantasy, and the image of God associated with it, ceases to work. It is in Manresa that all this breaks down. Ignatius had arrived in this city to fulfil his desire for 'holiness': he no longer takes care of his body, he fasts, he prays for seven hours a day … but things do not turn out as he expected. Despite all he is doing, he cannot feel God's love. He is caught up in scruples. He feels permanently guilty, permanently imperfect: what he does is never enough. Perhaps his scruples amount to a final covert attempt to work out his own salvation, an attempt to obtain love through his own

merits. His image of perfection, an idealized image of himself projected on to God, is all too present. But instead of being a stimulus and an encouragement, it has become a weight that oppresses him, that condemns him. And God is silent. Ignatius is then overcome by such anguish that he is tempted to commit suicide: he feels impelled to throw himself out of an opening in his room (*Autobiography*, n. 24).

At the end of his strength, he cries out. He cries out to God: 'Help me, Lord: I can find no cure in human beings nor in any creature' (n. 23). This is the first time in the narrative that the pilgrim addresses God in direct speech, in the second person, saying 'you'. And it is the first time that he addresses God as 'Lord'. Up to this point, it is the word 'God' that occurred in the context of Ignatius' inner world. But 'Lord' is different from 'God'. 'God' can sound abstract, conceptual, even impersonal. 'Lord' evokes a relationship, and therefore a personal involvement, a relationship with someone whom we hold as superior and whom we respect and obey. It is as though until the moment of this cry Ignatius had just been talking *about* God. Now he is speaking *to* God. He is praying.

This cry also marks the first time Ignatius asks God for help. He who had wanted to do something for God at all costs, now finds himself invoking a God whom he needs. This cry is fundamentally the expression of a surrender, of the collapse of his fantasy of omnipotence. His self-image has finally collapsed: the great hero has become puny; the man who was always excelling is now willing to 'follow a little dog so that it can give me the cure' (*Autobiography*, n. 23). Little by little he is led to adopt a posture of profound humility. In the end, he will not die physically. But there will be a death: the death of certain self-images and God-images that up till then had been the living force within him.

At one point, the *Autobiography* tells us, 'he woke up as if from a dream'—or rather from a nightmare—and 'he knew that God had willed to save him by his mercy' (*Autobiography*, n. 25). This awakening marks a radical reversal. Ignatius discovers that God is not there to be conquered, seduced or bought off by his merits. God is the God of mercy, of gratuitous love, of unconditional love. The image of God that had been within him bursts apart. A new image arises, that of the merciful God. Moreover, Ignatius begins to realise that God is a living God, one with whom he can enter into a relationship. And God becomes a real interlocutor for him.

God is the God of mercy, of gratuitous love

We do not know to what extent Ignatius was aware of this transformation of the deep images within him. But this crisis brought about a radical change in his image of God. It took him out of his imagination populated by static images of himself, of others and of God, and brought him instead into the real world, where people—and God—can no longer be reduced to his own expectations or determined by his own imaginings. True conversion involves a conversion of our images of God, but above all a conversion to a God who is the living One, a God who as such always surpasses any image.

A God beyond All Images

Ignatius' Spiritual Diary shows a further and deeper conversion of his images of God. The Diary was written in the years 1544–1545, some twenty years after the episodes we have just read. Conversion is never complete.

A reminder of the context: Ignatius had become Superior General of the new Society of Jesus and was wondering about how the poverty of the churches entrusted to the Society of Jesus should be regulated. Should the churches accept fixed annuities or not? This was an important question, which would influence the way poverty was lived in the Society. Ignatius did not want the decision to come from himself alone. He wanted it to be discerned in the Lord. He immersed himself in a process of discernment that lasted a few weeks. He explored the different options, he listened to himself, he perceived the resonance that these options produced in him, especially when he celebrated Mass. Often, when he felt the presence of God, tears sprang from his eyes. He took note of all the interior motions and the reactions of his body caused by these motions, and thus wrote what we call the Spiritual Diary. This text remains difficult to decipher, because of the abundant use of codes, crossings out and rewritings. One can say that it is really his private diary. Only he could fully understand it.

One passage highlights the new conversion that is at work in Ignatius. The process has reached a moment of crisis: Ignatius has attained sufficient clarity about the decision, but he is unable actually to make it. He has understood that God is inclining him towards a stricter poverty, but he does not want to conclude his discernment without having received a strong confirmation from God. He has decided in his heart that it is up to God to have the final word, and that this should

come through consoling feelings and copious tears. However, things do not go as Ignatius expects. God seems to have withdrawn his consolations. Ignatius then becomes angry, even indignant against the Holy Trinity (Diary, 18 February 1544). This movement of indignation lasts only for a moment, but when he recovers, he realises that he must undertake a path of reconciliation. The Spiritual Diary bears witness to this tormented process, which ends with these words on 12 March 1544:

> At last I considered if I should proceed further. On the one hand, I seemed to be wanting too many signs, and wanting them during certain periods or during masses ending in my own satisfaction; the question itself was clear; I was looking not for more certainty, but for a finishing touch that would be to my taste. On the other hand, I thought that if I were to cease entirely at this juncture, in a state of such exile, later I would not be contented etc. At last I considered whether, as the problem did not concern the election itself, it would please God Our Lord more were I to conclude now without waiting and searching for further proofs, or whether I should say more masses for them. To settle the matter I made an election and felt that to conclude would be more pleasing to God Our Lord. I felt myself wishing that the Lord would condescend to my desire i.e. that I might finish in a time of great visitation. Then as I became aware of my own inclination and, on the other hand, of the good pleasure of God Our Lord, I began to take notice and wanted to follow the good pleasure of God Our Lord.

When he wrote his Spiritual Diary, Ignatius had a much clearer awareness of himself and of God than he had at the very beginning of his journey. He now realises that he is looking for too many signs, too many consolations, and that he is becoming attached to these consolations. It is as though Ignatius had an imaginative understanding of God as 'the one who gives consolations', and stopped with that image. The image gave him pleasure. But once again, God does not play this game. God resists, and shows Godself as God is: a living, free God. God withholds divine consolation, Thus God invites Ignatius to make up his own mind, to make his own decision, without there being an abundance of consolation.[1] Once again, but now more subtly, Ignatius is led to leave the image of God he had forged for himself, and to go out to meet the God of surprises.

[1] This interpretation follows Maurice Giuliani in his introduction to his groundbreaking French translation: *Journal spirituel* (Paris: Desclée, 1959), 22–27.

There is another element in the Spiritual Diary which illustrates this interior journey that Ignatius makes. At one point he realises that he has become too attached to tears, to the point that they have become disordered affections for him (Diary, 6 March 1544). He thus begins to detach himself from them, and no longer to desire them with such force. He accepts them when they come, but he no longer seeks them. At the same time, particularly after this change, a new word appears in the Diary: *acatamiento*. 'Reverent submission' is one possible translation.[2]

Ignatius uses this word to describe the new feeling he experiences when he perceives himself in the presence of God. It is the feeling of the presence of the Other. Or better, the feeling of the presence of the Other as Other. And it is this feeling which turns out to be the most appropriate for his relationship with God, the most respectful of God's irreducible otherness. Gradually, Ignatius begins to prefer *acatamiento* to tears. Tears may be about God's presence, but they also express the personality of the one weeping. *Acatamiento,* by contrast, indicates a person who has renounced any centredness on self, and who can let the Other be within him or her. Or, to return to the idea of the conversion of images, *acatamiento* is the feeling of one whose respect for God has become so profound that he or she has abandoned any attempt to make an image of God. Instead, this person remains on the move, passing from one image to another, towards a God who is always greater than any image.

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[2] See Adrien Demoustier, 'Le respect amoureux. Un aspect de la vie mystique d'Ignace de Loyola', *Christus*, 195 (July 2002), 353–361.

CONVERSION AND DISCERNMENT

Sylvie Robert

IGNATIUS' OWN ACCOUNT of 'how the Lord had guided him since his conversion'—to use a phrase from Jerónimo Nadal's preface to the *Autobiography*—gives a central place to his first discovery of interior movements, which made him aware of 'the difference in kind of spirits that were stirring: the one from the devil, and the other from God' (*Autobiography*, n.8).

Now, a good discernment is generally understood to be a means of recognising the voice of God within oneself and, on that basis, of making decisions. What is the connection between Ignatius' first discovery of discernment during his convalescence at Loyola and the conversion of life that it brought about? Is discernment in fact a process of conversion?

To explore this question, we will begin by looking at the immediate effects of this initial discernment experience. How did this discovery of the movements agitating him change Ignatius' life? Then we will look at the rules of discernment in the *Spiritual Exercises*: the fullest and most systematic presentation of discernment in Ignatius' writings, situated within the structured process of the Exercises. The first set of Rules are presented as 'more suitable for the First Week' (Exx 313), which Ignatius links to the 'purgative life' (Exx 10). What are the links between these Rules and the process of the First Week? How do they help this process? But there are also further questions. Once the First Week is over, and the person continues along a way that is no longer that of the 'purgative life', discernment does not stop but becomes more refined. How does this affect the relationship between discernment and 'conversion'? Looking at these issues may help us understand both terms more clearly.

The Light Given at Loyola

First Stirrings

We are no doubt well used to reading the episode of Ignatius' convalescence at Loyola for what it tells us first about the various 'motions' and then about the difference between them. The actual

narrative shows very vividly how the convalescent Ignatius is tossed back and forth between different thoughts: the worldly one of seducing a beautiful and great lady, and the one inspired by reading the only two books that are put in his hands, the life of Christ and lives of the saints. The text shows that a 'thought' gives rise to effects—effects which, depending on the originating thought, differ in nature, quality and duration. Ignatius delights in the worldly thought but remains 'dry and discontented' once he is no longer thinking about it. He is consoled when he considers going on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and, when this thought has disappeared, the consolation remains.

> He wasn't investigating this, nor stopping to ponder this difference, until one time when his eyes were opened a little, and he began to marvel at this difference in kind and to reflect on it, picking it up from experience that from some thoughts he would be left sad and from others happy, and little by little coming to know the difference in kind of spirits that were stirring: the one from the devil, and the other from God. (*Autobiography*, n.8)

This experience is the principal breakthrough. 'When his eyes were opened a little', he is surprised. He observes a difference that before he had neither noticed nor considered. The discovery shows him that he is subject to movements that come not from him but from 'spirits'. In Ignatius' time, this term referred to anything that could not be explained in terms of the laws of nature or of human acts. Ignatius' experience at Loyola resembles to some extent Moses' at the burning bush. But for Ignatius there is an awareness of different movements occurring within him: some have beneficial effects, while others do not.

All this is well known to us. But what follows is important. Ignatius refers to the value and the fruitfulness of the discovery, and his language has a force that we often overlook: 'having received no small clarity from this reading [*lección*]' (n.9).

The lección *at Loyola*

Lección, of course, refers to the act of reading. And Ignatius had previously been engaged in reading books. But the term *lección* appears only now in the *Autobiography*. Earlier it has used not the noun but various forms of the verb to indicate Ignatius' taste for books of chivalry and his habit of reading them (nn.5, 6, 8). In the paragraphs that describe his discovery of inner movements and of their diversity, Ignatius follows the classical tradition of discernment in speaking of 'thoughts' not as abstract ideas but as projects which occur to him.

The noun *lección* comes only later, precisely in the expression that is marking the transition from Ignatius' first discovery of discernment to its consequences for him: 'having received no small clarity from this reading'. This first discovery is a *lección*. The translation of *lección* as 'reading' is obviously quite accurate and legitimate. But nevertheless, a quite particular kind of reading is at stake: no longer the reading of a book, but a reading of the interior movements occurring within him. The term *lección* recurs a few lines later: Ignatius, 'not troubling himself with anything, was persevering in his reading and his good intentions' (n. 11). At this point, he sets about writing a book, in which he notes 'in summary, some of the most essential things about the life of Christ and the saints' that he wants to retain. In other words, having made a *lectio divina* within himself, he moves on to the life of Christ and the saints. *Lección* is taking on nuances of 'lesson', of teaching.

This new meaning and its relationship with discernment are confirmed by the long letter Ignatius addressed to the Barcelona nun Teresa Rejadell on 18 June 1536. The whole letter deals with discernment. Often it is very close in expression to the rules of the Exercises. Here Ignatius speaks of consolation and desolation as two different '*lecciones*';

> I shall speak, though briefly, about two lessons [*lectiones*] that the Lord is accustomed to give, or at least permit (he gives the one and permits the other). The one he gives is interior consolation, which casts out all disturbance and draws us into total love of the Lord …. Then as we are left without this sort of consolation, the other lesson soon comes: I mean that our old enemy places before us every possible obstacle to divert us from what has been begun, attacking us very much.[1]

[1] Ignatius to Teresa Rejadell, 18 June 1536, n. 12, in *Personal Writings*, 132.

This text confirms that discernment depends on a reading of our experience. But consolation and desolation—presented very much in continuity with the light received at Loyola—also now appear as 'lessons'. During his convalescence at Loyola—the pivotal moment of his life—Ignatius learns to read in a new way, and thereby receives light. This is indeed also the meaning of *lección*—which is perfectly consistent with the fact that Ignatius acquires great light from his discovery at Loyola.

The Effects of the Lesson

But what sort of light does Ignatius receive? The *Autobiography* tells us that 'he began to think more in earnest about his past life, and about how much need he had to do penance for it'; 'holy desires' present themselves to him, 'to imitate the saints' and above all to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, 'with all the acts of discipline and all the acts of self-denial that a generous spirit, fired with God, generally wants to do' (nn. 9–10). He receives a consolation whose relational dimension is well highlighted—a 'visitation' of Our Lady with the child Jesus—which is followed by an effect of transformation, perceptible even by those around him:

> He received a very extraordinary consolation. He was left so sickened at his whole past life, and especially at matters of the flesh, that it seemed to him that there had been removed from his soul all the likenesses that he had previously had painted in it. Thus, from that hour until August 1553, when this is being written, he never again had even the slightest complicity in matters of the flesh. (n. 10)

Then he perseveres 'in his reading [*lección*] and his good intentions': helping souls, copying down the words of Christ and Our Lady, praying. He feels 'in himself a great impetus towards serving Our Lord'. He reflects on his pilgrimage to Jerusalem and forms some plans 'so as always to live in penance' (nn. 11–12).

This first experience of discernment thus leads Ignatius to something close to the First Week of the Exercises: a process of penance as he thinks about his past life, a process that frees up new desires within him, separates him from his addictions and leads him to take Christ's life as his model. He is driven by a new enthusiasm for Christ's service, and plans accordingly: immediately, he resolves to leave on pilgrimage for Jerusalem, and he is already thinking about where to commit himself on his return.

Ignatius still needs to make the transition from ascetical excess to 'acquaintance with spiritual things within the self' (n. 20). But you can see here the outline of what would become the process of the Exercises

as presented in the Annotations: 'preparing and disposing our soul to rid itself of all its disordered affections and then, after their removal, of seeking and finding God's will in the ordering of our life for the salvation of our soul' (Exx 1). Indeed, we are also close to the whole dynamic of the Exercises as described in the Fourth Annotation: after 'the consideration and contemplation of sins', contemplating 'the life of Christ our Lord' up to the paschal mystery (Exx 4).

Now, in the Exercises, discernment is presented in the form of two series of Rules which are about 'recognizing the different kinds of spirits' (Exx 8). The first set are more concerned with the purgative way (Exx 10) and are more proper to the First Week (Exx 313). We need, then, to see how the First Week, during which exercitants give themselves to 'the consideration and contemplation of sins' (Exx 4) demands discernment. And, conversely, how the Rules for this First Week help us along the way of repentance.

Discernment and the Path of Penance

Conversion and the First Week Rules

Are these First Week Rules concerned with 'conversion'? The word as such does not occur. But there is clear evidence of a concern with sin and penance, even if it is rather less marked than, say, in the Examens, which deal directly with evaluating merit and sin, and the seriousness of sins whether of thought, word or deed.

The series, indeed, begins by referring to 'persons who are going from one mortal sin to another' (Exx 314), as opposed to those 'who are earnestly purging away their sins, and who are progressing from good to better in the service of God our Lord' (Exx 315). Later, Ignatius even says the first cause of desolation 'is that we ourselves are tepid, lazy, or negligent in our spiritual exercises. Thus the spiritual consolation leaves us because of our own faults.' (Exx 322) Moreover, in order 'to make vigorous changes in ourselves against [a] desolation', it is advisable, among other things, to find 'some suitable way of doing penance' (Exx 319). Finally, one of the forms of consolation is 'when the soul sheds tears which move it to love for its Lord … tears of grief for its own sins' (Exx 316). The theme of penance is thus certainly present in these paragraphs.

However, the Rules are concerned more with the action and behaviour characteristic of the two spirits, especially of the 'enemy', so that one can recognise the motions, receive the good ones and reject the bad ones (Exx 313), and above all resist 'the various agitations and temptations

of the enemy' (Exx 320) and 'the vexations which are being experienced' (Exx 321). The idea of sin as such is noticeably less present than the motions, temptations and manoeuvres of 'the enemy', whose intention is to entrap exercitants, and prevent them from advancing in 'earnestly purging away their sins' and in 'progressing from good to better in the service of God our Lord' (Exx 315).[2]

The Rules for Discernment are concerned essentially with something prior to sin, with what can be the occasion of sin: 'thoughts … which spring from desolation' (Exx 317), 'counsels' of the evil spirit, with which 'we can never find the way to a right decision' (Exx 318). If the one making the Exercises is undergoing a struggle, it is the enemy that must be resisted, not oneself or one's vices. Discernment is about motions, not about acts and their moral value; it is exercised only within the framework set out in the Principle and Foundation, namely the exercise of human freedom 'in regard to everything which is left to our free will and is not forbidden' (Exx 23), in respect for God's law.[3] The clarification given by Ignatius in his rules is about what the enemy is doing rather than on how the exercitant should act.

Discernment is about motions, not about acts

Discernment during the First Week

However, Ignatius links these rules of discernment to the First Week, to the purgative way. What then is their role in this process? The First Week process of acquiring 'an interior knowledge of my sins' (Exx 63), of being opened up to the experience of God's mercy, and of 'proposing, with his grace, amendment for the future' (Exx 61)—why does this involve discernment?

In the First Week, the only explicit reference to discernment is in the exercise of 'repetition': the Third Exercise consists in 'a repetition of the first and the second exercises. I should notice and dwell on those points where I felt greater consolation or desolation, or had a greater spiritual experience.' (Exx 62) Repetition thus presupposes an elementary exercise of discernment: the identification of consolation and desolation.

However, the meditations engage the memory, understanding and will. (In Ignatius' time, 'will' meant the deep affectivity which makes one

[2] 'Sin' is mentioned four times (Exx 314–315), and temptations five (317, 320, 325), in association with 'the enemy', the 'bad spirit' and different terms indicating its actions and manoeuvres.

[3] Note the difference here between exercising discernment and the examination of conscience, which is concerned with the subject's thoughts, words and deeds, and distinguishes what in these is a matter of sin, and how grave it is (Exx 32–35).

experience 'spiritual feelings'). The graces asked for are requests to be 'affected'. These graces indicate a close relationship with the rules of discernment: from the second exercise to the fourth, one asks for 'growing and intense sorrow and tears for my sins' (Exx 55), which are none other than the painful form of consolation described in the Rules: 'tears which move it to love for its Lord … tears of grief for its own sins' (Exx 316).

Moreover, it is these graces and interior dispositions which guide the right discernment and practice of 'external' penance, specific acts with the aim,

> … to seek and obtain some grace or gift which one wishes and desires, such as interior contrition for one's sins, or abundant tears because of them or of the pains and sufferings which Christ our Lord underwent in his Passion; or to obtain a solution to some doubt in which one finds oneself (Exx 87).

A final point to be made here is that the First Week moves beyond the recognition of one's personal sinfulness to a broader abhorrence of sin and of what leads to it, whether arising from the disorder within one's life, or from the given reality of the environment, or from the temptations of the world (see Exx 63). In the meditation on Hell at the end of the sequence, one asks 'for an interior sense of the pain suffered by the damned, so that if through my faults I should forget the love of the Eternal Lord, at least the fear of those pains will serve to keep me from falling into sin' (Exx 65). By this stage we have moved beyond an awareness of past sins to forestalling those we might be at risk of committing. Now, the Rules for Discernment enable us to recognise different 'motions', and the spirit from which a thought or project is proceeding. They enable us to recognise the enemy's temptations and how not to get caught up in his traps. In these contexts, their relevance is obvious.

If discernment is thus fully part of the purgative life, what are the benefits it brings? A starting point is that the Exercises are trying to open up 'a *deeper interior* understanding of the reality and malice of one's sins', 'coming to know and grieve for the sins more deeply' (Exx 44). The First Exercise confronts us with the very essence of sin through the image of the angels who,

> … were created in grace and then, not wanting to better themselves by using their freedom to reverence and obey their Creator and Lord, they fell into pride, were changed from grace to malice, and were hurled from heaven into hell (Exx 50).

Then we look more specifically at our own history: the 'sins of my life' (Exx 56) and how heavily they weigh (see Exx 57). The repetition, which takes us back to the places of consolation and desolation, depends on these two exercises together. More deeply and in one single meditation, it leads us to internalise both the essence of sin and the precise forms it takes in our own lives. It is then that, in the colloquy, one can ask for 'an interior knowledge of my sins' (Exx 65) in order to feel horror at them.

The graces being asked for are closely linked to discernment. Thus, discernment helps us to understand clearly what is being sought in this First Week, and above all to judge whether or not it has been reached: 'tears, consolation, and the like' (Exx 89). If they have not been received, then discernment points us to an appropriate practice of penance (Exx 82, 87).

Discernment's Lessons and Purification

Discernment thus opens up deep significances in the First Week. But it also provides precious *lecciónes* on the path of purification.

The first lesson it teaches is that the purgative life is entirely orientated towards openness to consolation. It is consolation that is sought, in the graces that are asked for as well as in the Additions. And the Discernment Rules teach us to discover, even through the experience of desolation, that consolation is 'a gift and grace from God our Lord' (Exx 322). The purgative life is not simply about purifying oneself of past sins. It is also about resisting the movements that can lead to further sin. Thus Ignatius insists on the manoeuvres of the tempter, and on following the path that consolation indicates: a reorientation of one's whole being towards the Creator and Lord.

What, in fact, is consolation? Ignatius defines it not primarily in terms of its perceptible effects but in terms of the relationship with the Creator and Lord: 'to be inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord

[and] love no created thing on the face of the earth in itself, but only in the Creator of them all'; 'this consolation is experienced when the soul sheds tears which move it to love for its Lord'; 'Finally, under the word consolation I include every increase in hope, faith, and charity [which gives] tranquillity and peace in its Creator and Lord' (Exx 316). There are obvious echoes here of the Principle and Foundation (Exx 23).

Consolation and sin can only be understood theologically, in terms of relation to God. Sin is 'committed against my Creator and Lord' and in this consists its 'gravity and malice' (Exx 52). Consolation and sin are discovered through the Principle and Foundation: consolation is the sense of well-being received from this orientation, and a relish grounded in it. Conversely, sin is the refusal to commit one's freedom in line with the Principle and Foundation (compare Exx 50). As for the response to both consolation and desolation it consists always in returning to the Creator (Exx 319, 320, 321, 324) by remembering the divine gifts, by prayer, by penance, by being confident in God's presence, by recognising that God alone is the Giver.

Freedom Restored

This reorientation restores the exercitant's true freedom. Desolation can make us discover that 'everything is 'a gift and grace from God our Lord' (Exx 322); in consolation, it is appropriate 'to humble and abase herself or himself as much as possible, and reflect how little she or he is worth in time of desolation when that grace or consolation is absent' (Exx 324). In the same way, the First Week opens us up so that we can receive the Lord's movement—'from eternal life to death here in time, and to die in this way for my sins?' (Exx 53). From there it has us work on our place as creatures and on recognising the uniqueness of the Creator, and thus,

> … consider who God is against whom I have sinned, by going through his attributes and comparing them with their opposites in myself: God's wisdom with my ignorance; God's omnipotence with my weakness; God's justice with my iniquity; God's goodness with my malice (Exx 59).

At the end one is lead to recognise the fact that one is still alive, a creature among creatures, as a gift to be received (see Exx 60).

But it is this movement of the Creator towards sinful humanity that makes the subject free. Faced with Christ on the Cross, who has entered into our condition, sinners are restored to the positive use of their freedom. Under Christ's gaze, you can 'reflect on yourself and ask:

What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I to do for Christ?' (Exx 53) The action of the tempter is the direct opposite: to hinder freedom by putting obstacles in the way, 'aimed at preventing their progress' (Exx 315); 'By following his counsels we can never find the way to a right decision.' (Exx 318). His goal is to trap the one he is attacking within their own perspective (Exx 325–326), and ultimately 'to take us away' (Exx 327), and deprive us of our freedom.

The ideas of amendment and correction appear only rarely in the First Week, and not at all in the Rules for Discernment.[4] 'Proposing, with his grace, amendment for the future' happens only after the exercitant has tasted mercy (Exx 61) and lived the repetition of the first two exercises, which allows for a greater interiorisation by stopping on 'those points where I felt greater consolation or desolation' (Exx 62). The transformation that occupies us here is not a moral resolve, but rather a restored freedom: the effect of a return to one's rightful position as a creature, and of having relished the well-being this entails. But it has been Christ who has made the sinner pass from isolation and confinement—witness the composition of place of nearly all the Exercises in this week where we are invited to see ourselves without relationships, the 'soul as imprisoned', and 'an exile … among brute animals' (Exx 47)—to a real exchange with Christ. We pass from a dumbness in which communication is impossible, and through our colloquy rediscover the Word.

Discernment in the Following of Christ

We thus recover our freedom after the First Week. But discernment continues. Ignatius offers a second set of rules for discernment 'more suitable for the Second Week' (Exx 328). And the rhythm of prayer which now predominates depends even more on the repetitions, whose relationship with discernment we have already seen in relation to the First Week. Now the desire centres on the following of Christ, as is indicated by the sequence of graces asked for: 'that I may not be deaf to his call, but ready and diligent to accomplish his most holy will' (Exx 91); ' an interior knowledge of Our Lord, who became human for me, that I may love him more intensely and follow him more closely'

[4] We do find these two expressions in the Examination of Conscience and in Exx 189. But in this latter paragraph there is no Election to be made. The Exercises are aimed at the amendment and reforming of the person's life.

(Exx 104); 'insight into the genuine life which the supreme and truthful commander sets forth, and grace to imitate him' (Exx 139). The colloquies of the meditation on the Two Standards and the consideration of the Three Humilities are sustained by the desire to 'be received under his standard' (Exx 147), 'to become lovingly attached to the genuine teaching of Christ our Lord' (Exx 164), even to the point of being 'regarded as a useless fool for Christ, who before me was regarded as such, rather than as a wise or prudent person in this world' (Exx 167).

Discernment here takes on another form but remains necessary—one more confirmation that its aim is not conversion in the sense of the reform of morals, but attachment to Christ.

The Second Set of Rules

But why, then, do we need a new set of discernment rules? This second series does not replace the first. Ignatius' account of consolation remains valid. He simply specifies that these rules are 'more suitable' for the Second Week (Exx 328). This second set also presupposes that even after the First Week one can still be going 'from good to better' or 'from bad to worse' and have a disposition 'similar to or different from' the bad angel or the good angel (Exx 335)—a point that suggests that the First Week process is not ended, but rather opens out on to a new phase in which the Lord's mercy continues to be offered to those who remain sinners.

The title of the second series speaks of 'a more probing discernment of spirits' (Exx 328). How can we characterize, at least broadly, the deepening in question here? Annotations 9 and 10 indicate a contrast between the first series, which is beneficial for a 'spiritually inexperienced' exercitant who 'may be tempted grossly and openly', and these new rules which are useful when 'being assailed and tempted under the appearance of good'.

The content of the second series illustrates and confirms this contrast. Deception can now come through a consolation given by 'the evil angel, who takes on the appearance of an angel of light' (Exx 332), Discernment needs to become subtler, so as to unmask Lucifer, the angel of darkness, hidden under his appearance of light. But there is also now a question of the immediate action of God, to whom it belongs 'alone to enter the soul, depart from it, and cause a motion in it which draws the whole person into love of His Divine Majesty' (Exx 330). Moreover, these rules invite us to be more attentive to what comes from God, as opposed to what comes from the angels or from ourselves, who 'through our own reasoning … form various projects and convictions which are not coming

immediately from God our Lord' (Exx 336). We can also note a new stress here on the 'genuine happiness and spiritual joy' given by God and the angels, a joy against which the enemy is fighting (Exx 329).

All this suggests that the refinements in this second set of discernment rules are not to be explained solely by the fact that a process of election may be maturing during the Second Week. They are primarily connected to the contemplation of Christ. There is no third or fourth series as the contemplation continues until we attain union with Lord in his paschal mystery. Discernment becomes more refined primarily because one is now contemplating Christ.

The Encounter with Christ and the Deepening of Discernment

The contemplation of Christ at once requires a more refined discernment and itself brings about that refinement. The fact that one now desires to follow Christ does not remove the struggle—quite the contrary. The whole tradition since the Desert Fathers has been clear:

> Abba Agathon's abba, Abraham, asked Abba Poemen, 'Why are the demons battling me so?' and Abba Poemen said to him, 'Are the demons battling you? The demons do not battle with us as long as we are doing their wills, for our wills have become demons; it is they that afflict us so that we fulfill them. Do you want to see with whom the demons do battle? With Moses and those like him.'[5]

The battle does not end with the First Week. We need to be able to distinguish Christ from Lucifer. Just as Christ was tempted to perverted expressions of his divine Sonship as revealed at his baptism, so his disciple can be 'assailed and tempted under the appearance of good' (Exx 10), by a consolation caused by the enemy. The second series of rules focus our attention on this point.

But the contemplation of Christ does not just require subtler discernment; it also facilitates that refinement. The meditation on Two Standards is the exercise closest to the Rules for Discernment, both in its theme and in the binary contrasts shaping its structure. This exercise is done not in the First Week, but only after one has begun to know Christ interiorly, to contemplate him to the point of allowing his face, his person, his words and his gestures to be reflected in oneself. Only then does it become possible to ask for, 'insight into the deceits of

[5] *The Book of the Elders: Sayings of the Desert Fathers*: *The Systematic Collection*, translated by John Wortley (Collegeville: Cistercian, 2018), 10.91.

the evil leader, and for help to guard myself against them; and further, for insight into the genuine life which the supreme and truthful commander sets forth, and grace to imitate him' (Exx 139).

In this meditation, Christ appears as the one who teaches us how to resist Lucifer, since his weapons—poverty, contempt and humility—are presented as the opposite of Lucifer's seductions. The exercise, in which Lucifer is imagined as horrible and Christ as humble and gracious, leads to the realisation that the seductive ways of wealth, honour and pride are in fact deceptive. Conversely, the ways of Christ, even if of themselves they are undesirable, are indeed those of 'the genuine life'. At the end of the exercise, Lucifer's banner has disappeared: Christ is truly victorious.

Thus, here as in the discernment rules, Lucifer, the 'mortal enemy of our human nature' (Exx 136), seeks to present himself as a partner, an inspiring model. But he is merely spurious. The only creative and inspiring model is Christ. He is the master of discernment. The point is confirmed in the Fourth Week, when we are invited to 'consider the office of consoler which Christ our Lord carries out' (Exx 224).

It is when we contemplate Christ in the paschal mystery, indeed, that the true nature of consolation is fully revealed: as union with him. The petition of the Third Week concerns 'sorrow with Christ in sorrow; a broken spirit with Christ so broken; tears; and interior suffering because of the great suffering which Christ endured for me' (Exx 203); that of the Fourth Week is 'to rejoice intensely because of the great glory and joy of Christ our Lord' (Exx 221). As we contemplate Christ and receive his work of mediation, we experience that 'it is the prerogative of the Creator alone to enter the soul, depart from it, and cause a motion in it which draws the whole person into love of His Divine Majesty' (Exx 330).

The deepening of discernment lies in this 'increase of hope, faith and charity' which then allows exercitants to live Christ's own love within themselves. When the risen Christ consoles, he enables us to receive the effects of the resurrection and to live out of them. The fundamental form of consolation is more than what we immediately feel. It is a participation in the reality of God, accompanied by an 'interior joy' (Exx 316), very close to that asked for in the Fourth Week, and by a peace resembling the gift of the Risen Christ to those to whom he appeared. If the Election can take place, it is because 'God our Lord moves and attracts the will' (Exx 175). At the end of the Exercises, in the Contemplation to Attain Love, the retreatant recognises and accepts that God's very life is at work within them: 'how 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' (Exx 237). We are not far from St Paul: 'is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me' (Galatians 2:20).

We are now in a sphere far beyond any moral transformation arising from a subject's will or initiative. There may indeed be reciprocity. In the Third Week, the contemplation of Christ in his passion leads one to 'consider how he suffers all this for my sins, and so on; and also ask: What ought I to do and suffer for him?' (Exx 197) But the exchange is driven by the gift received, not by any unspecified quest for personal perfection.

From his discovery at Loyola, Ignatius acquired 'no small clarity', which gradually reveals itself and unfolds during the weeks given over to the contemplation of Christ—weeks which begin with an entry into the 'illuminative life' (Exx 10). Discernment is a matter of receiving and accepting the clarity given by God in order to let oneself be guided by it.

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As we come to an end, we can return to our initial question: is discernment a path of conversion? Clearly, Ignatius' first experience of discernment turns him towards God and sets him on a pathway. This path of repentance requires a particular sort of discernment. Moreover, this discernment, far from disappearing once the First Week is over, is refined and deepened as the contemplation of Christ unfolds.

But is it right to speak of 'conversion'? Yes, if it is in the sense in which Ignatius uses this term: that of a movement or orientation, accompanied by a transformation, a journey of interiorisation.[6] Ignatius is not concerned with people changing their religion, or moral reform, or even sinners repenting. The *conversion* of the Exercises is a matter of an 'orientation towards', a movement. This movement is based in 'interior feeling', as indicated by the graces asked for and their relationship to consolation. There are affinities between Ignatius and the use of the term 'conversion' by his contemporary Calvin: *converti[r] nos yeux au*

[6] Ignatius uses the word *conversion* very rarely, only four times in the book of the Exercises, two of which are in the Mysteries of the Life of Jesus: to indicate at Cana the water changing into wine (Exx 276) and the conversion of 'Magdalene', centred on her hearing that her sins have been forgiven (Exx 282). Negatively, the fallen angels 'were changed from grace to malice [*fueron convertidos de gracia en malicia*] and were hurled from heaven into hell' (Exx 50). More positively, in the Second Method of Prayer, 'one should turn to the person to whom [the prayer] is directed [*convertiéndose a la persona a quien ha orado*] and ask for the virtues or graces for which greater need is felt' (Exx 257)

but auquel le Sainct Esprit dirige ses parolles—a turning of the eyes 'to the purpose to which the Spirit addresses his words'. Or more simply, *convertir les yeux en Christ*—turn one's eyes directly to Christ.[7]

Discernment works with motions: not simply feelings, but movements; not simply movements in the soul, but movements that go in a particular direction. As such, discernment makes us more attentive to our orientation towards our Creator and Lord. It enables us to recognise what leads us away from that goal. It helps us resist the attractions of the enemy. It helps us to see that true happiness lies in our orientation towards God, and to reorientate our lives accordingly. It is not just a regulation of inner balance and comfort. It is intimately linked to the 'interior knowledge of our Lord' (Exx 104), of the one who overcomes the enemy.

We can understand both discernment and conversion more deeply and more precisely if we take them together in this way. If we see discernment as involving conversion, then we highlight its essential connection with God's own presence in the self, its deep links to Christ, and its importance for the constant work of reordering our lives towards God. If we see conversion as linked to discernment, then this brings out that conversion too is fundamentally God's own initiative. It is not just a matter of dramatic struggle with evil. It also involves a dynamic of divine consolation. It essentially involves a choice for the one who alone is the source of truth and creativity. With both concepts, it is the relationship with Christ, both saviour and true master of discernment, that is decisive.

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translated by Philip Endean SJ

[7] Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.18.6, 2.6.4. Quoted in the lemma 'convertir' in Edmond Huguet, *Dictionnaire de la langue française au XVIème siècle* (Paris: Champion, 1925).

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