

# **Expanding the Spiritual Exercises**

**Roger Haight, S.J.**

## THE SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

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# EXPANDING THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

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Roger Haight, S.J.

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STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

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*the first word . . .*

John Wayne, London Catholics, Hubble space telescope, the Tower of Babel, and the Spiritual Exercises. You're kidding. Well, maybe not.

A little over a year ago the *Catholic Herald*, the diocesan newspaper in London asked me to contribute to a feature that eventually appeared as "Revealed: Your Top 100 Films of All Time." It appeared in the middle of Lent 2009. Possibly the editors were looking for a light fluff piece in a dark season (liturgically and meteorologically in England). But perhaps they simply wanted to provide an additional bit of penance for their readership. As I remember the exchange of e-mails, the editors intended to contact a number of ecclesiastics, academics, critics, media types, and assorted persons of interest to solicit nominations from around the English-speaking world (a term broadly interpreted to include even the U.S.A. and Australia). Some of us were invited to include a paragraph or two supporting our choice. Who could resist? An international byline for one paragraph? Why not?

To borrow the famous line from *Casablanca*, the published list was for the most part a "round-up of the usual suspects." Too bad my copy of the issue vanished during some semiannual office-clearing frenzy, but as I recall, the list was heavy with religion-and-film war-horses, like Mel Gibson's sadomasochistic rendition of the Passion narratives, *Babette's Feast*, *The Shawshank Redemption*, and the wonderful documentary about monastic life, *Into Great Silence*. Their inclusion is quite understandable, given the nature of the publication and the contributors they selected. But the list went far beyond identifiably religious titles. For the art-house set they had a sprinkling of serious—I mean really "serious"—movies: Bergman, Fellini, Dreyer, Kieślowski, and Bresson, directors who have been known to show an interest in religious questions on occasion. Some "inspiring" films, like *Gandhi*, were on the list, as were a fair number of literary adaptations. No, comedies and musicals were not altogether excluded, but as is the case with the annual Academy Awards and all those lists put out by AFI (American Film Institute), the ponderous always seems to assume a place of privilege over the competent, or the merely entertaining.

Now the moment you've all been waiting for: the award for greatest film of all time, as selected by an obscure American reviewer with decidedly quirky tastes and subversive disposition. The envelope please. And the cast-iron crumpet goes to . . . *The Searchers*, a 1957 Western directed by John Ford and starring John Wayne. John Wayne? Even at the farthest reaches of the Empire, one could hear harrumphing at the editorial offices of the *Catholic Herald*. "A cowboy mov-

ie!" "Has he taken leave of his senses?" "Can we actually print this?" Oh, to be a fly on the Queen's portrait to observe the reaction at home office. No, forget the fly. It's much more amusing to reconstruct the whole scene in the imagination without any eyewitness evidence whatever. It's even more fun to compose an eloquent and persuasive defense of my choice, like Paul Scofield's Thomas More in *A Man for All Seasons*. Poor example that, considering what they did to him in the last reel.

Instead of a barrister's wig, I'd wear a Stetson and start my argument with "Hold on there, partner." John Ford stands right up there with the great American artists of the twentieth century. He's the equivalent of Copeland or Bernstein in music, De Mille or Robbins in dance, Pollock or Johns in painting, Hemingway and Fitzgerald in prose, Frost and Cummings in poetry, O'Neill or Williams in drama. Ford expressed himself in film, probably as well as anyone ever has. Unless one begins with the assumption that film does not deserve to be accorded the same consideration as the other arts, I'd argue that Ford belongs in any pantheon of American artists and, like them, he had a unique ability to capture the American experience.

Contemplate his magnificent landscapes of Monument Valley and discover the soul of America. Did Ansel Adams do any better? Watch his characters wrestle with personal integrity as they struggle to build community—on the battlefield, in the frontier settlement, on shipboard—and gain a sense of reverence for the people who built a nation out of a wilderness. Underlying all, rests an unshakeable moral structure, often explained as simply as "a man's got to do what a man's got to do," that defines personal values and makes common values possible. John Ford tells the story with full awareness of its ambiguities, and no where does his penetrating analysis show up more clearly than in *The Searchers*.

The story unfolds in the five-act structure of Shakespearean tragedy, each episode separated from the next by a return to the settlement in the desert where the film begins. Ethan Edwards (Wayne's finest creation) returns to his brother's ranch, embittered by his defeat during the Civil War. Before he has time to settle back into a normal peacetime life, a Comanche war party attacks the ranch while he and a posse pursue another band of marauders, not realizing that this first raid was merely a diversionary tactic. In his absence, the Comanche return and destroy the homestead, kill his brother and his wife—who may have been in love with Ethan before the war—and take his two young nieces into captivity. Ethan and his younger companion devote the next seven years of their lives to searching for the missing girls. As the seasons pass, Ethan reveals that his vengeance against the attackers includes murdering the nieces because presumably they have been violated during their captivity. His hatred drives him to the edge of madness, and he may well have fallen into the abyss.

The Western genre involves a set of specific rubrics. The larger-than-life hero, perfectly embodied by John Wayne, confronts the forces of the wilderness, in the form of rebellious Indians or brutal outlaws or even Nature itself. His near mythic skills with a six gun allow him to impose order on the frontier, but his very success in accomplishing his goals makes him a splendid anachronism. He

judgments are elusive, and that's all right because both critical data and interpretations abound. One view does not cancel another. Seeing the truth in a film like *The Searchers* might be compared to holding a fine crystal paperweight in the light and turning it slowly in the sunlight. Its beauty is refracted in a thousand facets, even as we might initially look upon it as a way to keep our notes from scattering every time someone opens the window. What do we ask of the object? The question often determines the response.

Impatient readers who have stayed with me up to this point can blame Roger Haight and this issue of *STUDIES* for loosing these reflections on a cowboy movie. I read Scripture and the *Spiritual Exercises* with the same complex perceptions that I bring to cowboy movies, and I'm not alone in this. Most contemporary people, it seems, go through these complicated evaluations and re-evaluations of texts and ideas on a fairly routine basis. We don't even think of it. Bundles of synapses fire off in different regions of our brain when we read history, listen to talk radio, and even watch movies. Like most Jesuits, and probably like most adults of any station, I've grown up in a scientific age and like to think of myself as a fairly modern thinker. I follow newspaper accounts of the Hubble telescope, genome mapping, and El Niño, and I may even understand some of it. Yet I can turn the page and read the funny paper, horoscope, and celebrity news without drawing an extra breath. Truth comes in many shapes. And I've got enough historical sense to understand why someone would pay ten cents for a Superman comic book in 1939 and over a million dollars for it in 2010. We perceive values differently as time passes. Concepts of genre, history, myth, science, and interpretation pack the intellectual tool kit of any modern person.

That's why most of us have grown comfortable with the varied types of texts that make up our Bible. They call for different types of readings. During an annual retreat I can, and have, meditated on the most fanciful narratives from the Old Testament, like Noah's ark and Jonah's fish story, and I'm not really bothered by the chronological inconsistencies of the Gospels. I wonder if St. Ignatius read Scripture with the same awareness of genres, historical contexts, and variant interpretations. I mean no disrespect to the Founder by suggesting that he most probably did not. As a man of the sixteenth century, how could he incorporate the scientific methods and mind-sets of the twenty-first? This observation leads to another. Surely he based his *Spiritual Exercises* on his own reading of the Bible, enriched as it manifestly was by his own mystical gifts. As a result he asked questions of the texts and drew conclusions that were at times inevitably different from ours. Without our understanding of global society, he would no doubt have serious reservations about our complex views of religious pluralism and mission to the ends of the earth. Similarly, our sense of democracy, personal freedom, systemic sin (as opposed to personal sin) would probably make him more than a bit uncomfortable. Were he writing his masterpiece today, as a man of this century, would it be much different from the text we've used through the past four centuries?

Of course we can never know the answer to that hypothetical question. The burden rests with us, not him. There's no going back to his age. We can't

pretend history hasn't changed us as readers of these privileged canonical and Ignatian texts. In the intervening centuries we have absorbed the collapse of colonial empires, evolution, the discovery of remote galaxies, the Holocaust, and the atom bomb. We've witnessed the creation of a global village through communication and jet travel, only to see it fragment into a crazy quilt of cultural and ideological microcosms through the development of personal electronics. We've had Vatican I and Vatican II, social-justice encyclicals, and General Congregations XXXI to XXXV—and, sadly, sex abuse and atonement.

In this challenging essay, Roger Haight forces his readers to look at some elements of the *Spiritual Exercises* as children of this young century. He invites us to expand our horizons by standing on the shoulders of the scientists, philosophers, theologians, and saints who have contributed to the modern world, our world, since the time of Ignatius at Manresa. As one whose intellectual and spiritual life grows out of literature and the arts, I'm much more comfortable dealing with metaphor, allusion, and analogy than with tight analytical reasoning. I can easily skip from one kind of reading of Scripture or the *Exercises* to the next without giving it a thought. That's the problem. I don't think about my methodology enough. This essay forced me to give the process some thought, a great deal of thought. I found the journey a slow, bumpy ride at times, but the effort was amply rewarded. All of us involved in the Seminar, board members and readers alike, can be grateful to Roger for expanding the *Spiritual Exercises* for us and at the same time expanding our own appreciation of Ignatius's original meditations.

*Richard A. Blake, S.J.*  
Editor



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# EXPANDING THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

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*Contemporary developments in science and theology continually influence our worldview and thus invite rethinking of some of the key meditations of St. Ignatius. These reflections attempt to situate the traditional Ignatian texts in a fresh and, in some ways, a wider context that incorporates current intellectual trends while preserving the original dynamics of the Exercises.*

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## I. Introduction

**T**his essay proposes a rationale for expanding the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius Loyola at both ends, the First Week and the Fourth Week.<sup>1</sup>

The First Week of the *Exercises* begins with The Principle and Foundation and from there moves forward to a consideration of sin and forgiveness. Between these two considerations I propose to insert contemplations that draw from the doctrine of creation, as that is depicted in various scriptural texts, in a way that broadens the First Week. The idea is to expand the Principle and Foundation by drawing in a contemplative consideration of the awesome new story of creation and thereby reflecting more fully the nature and purpose of human existence. At the other end, the Fourth Week is devoted to the resurrection via contemplations based on the appearance narratives and ends with the Contemplation to Attain Divine Love. I propose that the Fourth Week be expanded

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<sup>1</sup>Ignatius Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises*, trans. George E. Ganss, in *Ignatius of Loyola: Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works* (New York and Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1991), 113–214. References in the text are to paragraph numbers in the *Exercises*.

to include several contemplations beginning with the disciples' first resurrection faith, moving to the development of the Jesus movement, and leading to the formation of a church as these events are portrayed in the Acts of the Apostles. This expansion deepens our understanding of the church's mission and our mission in it as a part of an integral Christian spirituality. The week would end with the *Contemplatio*.

But the idea of "expanding" goes beyond the text of the *Spiritual Exercises* and reaches the Christian vision of reality. The Christian story extends from creation through Jesus Christ and the Spirit in the church to the end of history and reality itself. It is fitting that the scope of that vision, which the *Exercises* already includes, be made more prominent in today's theological terms.

No one likes meddling with a classic. Status as a classic seems to guarantee the integrity of a work. Publishing liberties taken with the text of the *Exercises* is risky. I would therefore like first to make clear what I am not doing. I am not raising the question or offering an explanation of why Ignatius did not extend the *Spiritual Exercises* to include formal contemplations on creation faith or the formation and spread of the church. This would be a relevant topic, but it is not raised here. Nor am I interested in a polemical argument saying that Ignatius should have considered the continuation of the story of the disciples after the resurrection leading to the formation of the church. I do not propose that the *Exercises* must be so expanded today. Such a stance would surely violate the principle that the *Exercises* should be adapted to their audience or the conditions of the retreatants who embark upon them. What I suggest, therefore, should be received only positively, not exclusively, and as a possibility for specific audiences.

A more positive rationale for what I propose can be understood by envisioning a set of people who might be interested in the *Spiritual Exercises* but would be offended or perhaps turned away by their current form. The people I imagine are those who have internalized a culture and framework of self-understanding that is broader than what was in place in the sixteenth century.<sup>2</sup> They make up a set of people, in the professions, the university, business, science, and industry who do

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<sup>2</sup>This culture consists in a broad range of ideas and values that include (1) historical consciousness, the sense that everything in place has developed or evolved from a historically particular location; (2) social consciousness, the awareness of how strongly society influences all perception and knowledge; (3) pluralist consciousness, beyond the recognition of differences the impression that diversity is a good thing; (4) scientific con-

not understand the doctrinal language of the church, may even be alienated from it, and yet, disenchanted as they are, declare a spiritual center that is looking for grounding. These people are comfortable with the new picture of the universe mediated by science, but cannot reconcile the language of the churches with it. They accept religious pluralism both as a given and a value, and cannot see how the language of the churches can be appropriated any longer. But in addressing this audience, not only should a response be theologically sound and compatible with the tradition, in this case it must be coherent within the framework of the

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*How can one imagine the size of the universe that began 13.8 billion years ago in an explosion that expanded in all directions at the speed of light or 670 million mph? The very attempt to imagine this size simultaneously destroys every kind of literal concept of God and leaves us unable to place God within our limited sphere of reference.*

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*Exercises* themselves. I have in another place developed how I believe a searching and narrative theology can help in the facilitation of this task.<sup>3</sup> Here I want to employ the perspective of a narrative and searching theology in a strategy to adapt the *Exercises* to a particular audience with its particular set of questions.

At the same time, this essay goes beyond adapting the language of the presentation of the *Exercises* to a particular audience. The expansions I suggest appear to be demanded not only by cultural changes but also by new knowledge gained across the centuries and shifts in theological understanding. Thus a good portion of this essay presents the theological reasons that motivate what appear to be simple insertions of a few scriptural contemplations into the stream of the *Exercises*. This theological reasoning, however, does not fully evoke the emotive power of these additions and will have to be drawn out further in the presentations of the scriptural passages by those who present them. For my part, I present this theology here because one would rightly question any addition to the *Exercises* that lacked theological grounding. More positive-

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sciousness, at least insofar as people recognize elements of the new picture of the universe, the planet, and the human race that has been proposed by science.

<sup>3</sup>Roger Haight, "A Theology for the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola," *Spiritus* (2010).

ly, however, each point in these theological reflections should affect the imagination and thus the way the *Exercises* are presented and received. I will follow Ignatius in showing how this transition can be made.

The essay is divided into the two main sections of the First and Fourth Weeks to which I urge expansions. I do not mean to suggest that the Second and Third Weeks need no attention at all for the same audience, but in those instances I would not prescribe expansions of the formal nature described here. But I do want to state plainly that what is being presented will appear truncated unless one clearly understands that what is envisioned are only expansions at each end of the Exercises. As for the two parts of the essay, each one has more or less the same structure of offering a theological rationale for the addition, how that rationale gets translated into the Ignatian strategy embodied in the *Exercises*, and a suggestion of some contemplations that would constitute actual exercises.

## II. Creation and Anthropology

One of the reasons for expanding the First Week revolves around the new picture of the universe that science has presented to our imaginations in the past half century. It should be clear that the doctrine of creation and the scientific account of the origin of the universe do not compete with each other. They represent different kinds of knowledge that do not conflict. But they interact in the human imagination and thus raise questions that influence the way each is appropriated. Ignatius's Principle and Foundation is straightforward and profound; it draws a person into a the fundamental premises of origins, existence, and destiny. But these premises need a new elaboration to accommodate the dramatic story provided by the scientific account of the universe, the planet, and the species.

I approach this first expansion in five stages. In the first I try to capture the impact of the scientific account of creation on our imagination. The second responds to the question of the origin of the religious doctrine of creation in the depths of human experience itself.<sup>4</sup> The third comments on the implications of the doctrine that God creates out of nothing and considers the complex and disputed area of how God may

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<sup>4</sup> Christian theology attributes the ultimate source of religious experience and faith to God's grace and revelation. This doctrine is presupposed in this descriptive account of the experience through which God works.

be construed as acting in history. The fourth part follows Ignatius in transposing the analytical doctrines of theology into a narrative framework. This move is crucial for understanding the relation between theology and spirituality and the way theology can be represented in a narrative form. Ignatius makes this shift to practical theology by representing the doctrines as “engaging” proposals: they represent God as reaching out and demanding a personal response. The very idea of God irritates and disrupts the one who thinks it, so that one cannot stand neutrally before it.<sup>5</sup> The chapter ends with some examples of contemplations that might fit within the context of these reflections.

### What Is God in the New Picture of the Universe?

One way to begin this discussion turns to the impact that the scientific account of the origins and status of the universe has on the imagination. Put bluntly, the human mind is first drawn towards imagining the size of the universe as it is indicated by mathematical units of time and space. It then struggles and gets lost as the imagination fails in the face of sheer magnitude. How can one imagine the size of the universe that began 13.8 billion years ago in an explosion that expanded in all directions at the speed of light or 670 million mph? The very attempt to imagine this size simultaneously destroys every kind of literal concept of God and leaves us unable to place God within our limited sphere of reference. As the new scientific view of the world seeps down and becomes broadly internalized, it frustrates the natural tendency to form a human image of God. The finite universe itself is too large for God to be an even bigger person or Father outside and above it all. Gradually the idea of a world driven by impersonal forces begins to attack cosmic personalism. We need new spontaneous images for what we mean by God.

John Haught has approached this issue with simplicity and depth that are compelling.<sup>6</sup> His first foray into what we might mean by “God” reaches for metaphors that reflect regions of human consciousness that are the deepest and thus most able to open up images for where God

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<sup>5</sup> Names and concepts such as “God,” “Jesus Christ,” “eternal life” are not merely objective. They affect those who entertain them by calling into question the relation of the person to the object to which they refer. Johann Baptist Metz calls this the “appellative and imperative” character of basic religious ideas. See his *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology*, trans. J. Matthew Ashley (New York: Crossroad, 2007), 62.

<sup>6</sup> John F. Haught, *What Is God: How to Think about the Divine* (New York/Mahwah: Paulist, 1986).

meets us. These generic aspects of our experience are its depth, the future, its freedom, a sense of beauty, and a respect for the truth. God correlates with the source and ground of our being; God is the whither toward which all reality is moving; God is the expansive liberty of unrestricted agency; God is the pure object of desire and attraction; God is that which guarantees the coherence and consistency of reality itself.

But Haught finds the idea that most ably gathers these signals of God together in Karl Rahner's phrase depicting God as "incomprehensible mystery." Mystery "functions as the silent horizon that makes all of our experience and knowledge possible in the first place. . . . We go through the course of our lives enabled by the horizon of mystery to think, to inquire, to adventure and discover, but we seldom become explicitly aware of its encompassing presence-in-absence or extend our gratitude to it for giving us the free space in which to live our lives."<sup>7</sup> Mystery makes its appearance not in problems to be solved but at the limits to where we can go. It appears when one finally asks whether there is a point in asking questions at all. What is the ultimate value of freedom? Does truth matter? Mystery appears in a recognition of the limited and contingent character of all problems and questions relative to an infinite horizon. Yet we move toward this mystery. "It is because of our capacity for mystery that we experience the uneasiness and anxiety that provoke us to move beyond the status quo and to seek more intense beauty and more depth of truth. In short, mystery is what makes a truly human life possible in the first place."<sup>8</sup>

Christian faith will never surrender its personalist language of God; God cannot be less than what the universe has generated in the human. But God is more than "a person," and we have to stay grounded in the essential, expansive empowerment of what God holds out to us. We live embraced by infinite power of being, which is gracious and loving, and, as a horizon, is always in front of us drawing us forward.

From this point of departure, I want to move to the notion of God as creator. Creation may be the action that is most closely and intrinsically associated with God.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>9</sup> The discussion of creation faith that follows relates directly to the Contemplation to Attain Love (*SpEx* 230–237). Although this appears at the end of the *Spiritual Exercises*, many directors introduce these ideas into the First Week to elicit gratitude for the

## Archeology of Creation Faith

I use the metaphor of archeology to direct attention to the underlying roots buried in human subjectivity that help nourish, or allow the possibility of, the experience expressed in the phrase “being created.” This experience comes out of a universal possibility lodged within human consciousness. This indicates that all human beings could have an analogous experience whether or not they actually do. Whenever such an experience occurs, however, it always forms part of a particular narrative. I appeal to three systematic theologians for their attempts to describe this structure out of which particular experiences of “being created” may arise.

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) relates the doctrine of creation to the experience of absolute dependence which can be unearthed in any human consciousness as a place where actual religious experience may occur. By an analysis of human subjectivity he shows how at a fundamental level of their consciousness of freedom human beings can become aware that they do not have within themselves power over their own being: we are ultimately dependent in our being.<sup>10</sup> This is essentially the experience of being created. It entails a consciousness of being absolutely dependent on a creative power of being we call God: it can also be called a consciousness of God. Moreover, Schleiermacher maintains that we then spontaneously go on to “postulate the feeling of absolute dependence as valid for everything without exception, because we apply it to our own existence in so far as we are a part of the world.”<sup>11</sup> Schleiermacher is getting close to the origins of the doctrine of creation in human consciousness.

Karl Rahner (1904–1984), also a post-Kantian theologian, describes the structure of the experience underlying the doctrine of creation in terms analogous to those of Schleiermacher. He too finds within the hu-

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gifts one has received from God that also define one’s existence as distinct from exclusively dwelling on one’s sins. This practice would support the present initiative. There are places where Ignatius himself inserts considerations of creation faith from the *Contemplatio* into the First Week. He writes, for example, “This is an exclamation of wonder and surging emotion, uttered as I reflect on all creatures and wonder how they have allowed me to live and have preserved me in life” (*SpEx* 60). In other words, one should not completely segregate the creation faith implicit at the beginning and the end of the *Exercises*.

<sup>10</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963), par. 3–5, pp. 5–18.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 46, 170.

man quest for knowledge an intimation of an infinite, absolute, incomprehensible mystery on the other side of the whole sum total of possible finite objects which we could possibly engage. Absolute or infinite being “appears” indirectly against the background of a recognition of the finitude of all we can possibly know in this world. Our knowing participates in or is part of reality itself. On the side of knowing, absolute incomprehensible reality silently surrounds and attends our quest for knowing the world. On the side of the reality which human subjectivity engages, God “appears” as that which absolutely transcends the whole of finite existence. “Conversely, the world must be radically dependent on God, without making [God] dependent on it.”<sup>12</sup> As in Schleiermacher, the roots of the religious idea of creation lie in a profound experience of being that must be appropriated interiorly. The notion of creation does not correspond with an imaginable event or an empirical object of knowledge but as the permanent whence of all finitude.

Edward Schillebeeckx (1914–2009) proposes another slant on a human experience that leads to a doctrine of creation and which he calls not a “transcendental” experience but an “anthropological constant.”<sup>13</sup> This faith or trust arises out of the negative experience of radical threats to the human that constantly arise in history: sickness, oppression, and ultimately death. But just as constant as these threats is the universal impulse to resist them and the positive conception of humanity and existence that grounds this impulse. “I regard these negative dialectics coming within a positive sphere of meaning which is, however, in its universality only implicit (it is a call to the *humanum*) as the universal pre-understanding not only of the pluralist answers that man gives to this call, but also of Christian talk about God, in other words, of the gospel.”<sup>14</sup> The resistance to negativity and suffering, especially when it is put into practice, reveals a subjective hope which also gives a glimpse of a possible object of hope. “All our negative experiences cannot brush aside the ‘nonetheless’ of the trust which is revealed in man’s critical re-

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<sup>12</sup> Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 78.

<sup>13</sup> Schillebeeckx writes that “‘faith,’ the ground for hope, is an anthropological constant throughout human history, a constant without which human life and action worthy of men and capable of realization becomes impossible” (Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord* [New York: Seabury Press, A Crossroad Book, 1980], 741).

<sup>14</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Understanding of Faith: Interpretation and Criticism* (N.Y.: Seabury Press, 1974), 92.

sistance and which prevents us from simply surrendering man, human society, and the world entirely to total meaninglessness. This trust in the ultimate meaning of human life seems to me to be the basic presupposition of man's action in history."<sup>15</sup> Thus the groundwork for the doctrine of creation in Schillebeeckx also lies in human subjectivity, with a definite bias towards ethical historical response to negativity on the basis of a positive ground that is sustained by basic trust. The creator God is the guarantor of the human.

This insistence by various examples on the deep historical-existential response to reality that grounds the religious doctrine of creation shows how distinct its origins are from the empirical study of the various sciences that allow a description of the beginning of our universe. These are different affirmations appealing to different kinds of evidence.<sup>16</sup> This deserves some more discussion.

## Creation out of Nothing

The Christian doctrine of creation says that God creates out of nothing. According to Barbour the strict idea of nothing "was forged in the fourth century in response to several hostile doctrines. Against a Gnostic view that matter was evil, the one God created all; against pre-existent matter, God is the source of all; against pantheism, the world is not God but quite distinct from God; against emanation theory, it asserts that God transcends all finitude."<sup>17</sup> The doctrine states that nothing lies outside of God's creating power; nothing has an existence independently of God. If there were a primal chaos or formless matter into which God introduced order and intelligibility, this could not have been uncreated by God; it too had to be absolutely dependent upon God. There

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 96–97.

<sup>16</sup> Ian Barbour sums up well the human source of the doctrine of creation: "The idea of creation can also be seen as an expression of enduring *human experiences*, such as: (1) a sense of dependence, finitude, and contingency; (2) a response of wonder, trust, gratitude for life, and affirmation of the world; and (3) a recognition of interdependence, order, and beauty in the world. The religious idea of creation starts from wonder and gratitude for life as a gift. Theological doctrines are an attempt to interpret such experiences within the context of a particular historical tradition. The theological meaning of creation can be combined with a variety of physical cosmologies, ancient and modern, and does not require any one cosmology" (Ian G. Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion* [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2000], 51).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 49.

is no appeal here to physical evidence or reference to a “before” the Big Bang: the mode of understanding is utterly different, and to make appeals across these epistemological bases engenders confusion. “Creation is not so much about chronological origins as about the world’s ontological dependence on a beneficent principle of being that exists independently of the cosmos.”<sup>18</sup>

Two elements of the doctrine of creation counter some equally fundamental errors. First, being a finite creature is not evil. Finitude is precisely what God created, and God created it good. The positivity of God’s absolute being and creative act negates the idea that finitude and contingency are themselves negative. This alone could have spiritual relevance for many people. Second, Schillebeeckx explains how creation means that God is immediately present to the cosmos and everything

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*Creation as a religious doctrine does not refer to a single event that occurred in the past. The doctrine of creation does not offer an explanation of the particular order of things that we see in the world today.*

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in it. Because God creates out of nothing, there is nothing between God and creatures. As transcendent creator and absolute being God is not distant and absent from God’s creation. Creation out of nothing means that there is no medium between God and creation, even though human consciousness requires some

earthly mediation in order to gain a positive conception of God. God is directly present to God’s creation as its cause and ground. Moreover, God creates out of love, because no other intention quite makes sense. Thus God is immanent and present to God’s creation, and all things exist within God’s creating energy, so that God in turn is the within of all creation. This closeness of a personal and creating God of love is foundational to Schillebeeckx’s theology. Creation as an idea represents a reflection upon consciousness of God’s immediate presence to the universe, our world, and human existence.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> John F. Haught, *Christianity and Science: Toward a Theology of Nature* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2007), 124.

<sup>19</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 804–821, esp. 809. Dorothy Jacko, in her “Salvation in the Context of Contemporary Secularized Historical Consciousness: The Later Theology of Edward Schillebeeckx” (Th.D. dissertation, Toronto: Regis College, University of Toronto, 1987), 83–136, lays out these ideas with great clarity.

The designation of panentheism, that all things exist in God and that God permeates all that exists and is not God, often accompanies the doctrine of creation. Schillebeeckx's position is a panentheism in which he holds the radical distinction in being between creator and creature, but the mutual interactive presence of creator and creatures to each other. In various forms, this position is shared by many theologians. "God is eternal, but it is an eternity that is inclusive of, rather than separate from, temporality. God takes in all the events of the world's temporality, including suffering, weaving them into the fabric of his own everlasting life and thereby preserving their value forever."<sup>20</sup>

The one doctrine of creation has two dimensions. First, creation is often thought of in terms of or in relation to the beginning of finite reality. But in what has already been said, it should be clear that the doctrine of creation has no explanatory value relative to actual beginnings. In whatever way finite reality first came into being, the absolute power of God was the source or ground of being that was being played out temporally. Second, the power sustaining all finite reality in being is ongoing and this elicits the doctrine of God's preservation of being across time. The logic of the affirmation of creation and preservation are the same and only differ with respect to an implied reference to being itself and being-in-time. Like creation, then, God's providence and governance do not refer to specific operations in history, nor does it operate in particular overt ways, that is, as an empirical, this-worldly cause.

But the question of ongoing preservation raises the standard question, particularly acute and contested in the area of the relation of theology and science, of how God acts in the world. Generally speaking, with respect to the hard sciences, theologians do not envision God as an actor in the world on the same level of finite causes. If God is God, God cannot quite be conceived as an empirical this-worldly causality. Nor do critical theologians fit God into the cracks of scientific unknowing, as, for example, opening up space for God's activity on the same level of other causes in what appears to us as indeterminacy and randomness. Rather the analysis of the archeology of the idea of creation shows precisely that God as creator operates on a different level than interdependent finite agents.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> David Toolan, *At Home in the Cosmos* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2001), 149.

<sup>21</sup> In her *Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 191–93, Elizabeth A. Johnson outlines six distinct ways in which theologians conceive how God acts in the world.

The distinction between primary (divine) causality and secondary (finite) causality, developed by Thomas Aquinas, affirms a semi-autonomy of being and acting on the level of finite causes, even while on the level of being they are dependent on primary creating causality. This difference in levels means that the two agencies are not in competition with each other; to assert the causality of finite causes does not subtract from the causality of God; there is no zero-sum game or competition between these two agencies; they actually enhance each other. "In this system of thought it is incoherent to think of God as working in the world apart from secondary causes, or beside them, or in addition to them, or even in competition with them."<sup>22</sup> At the same time, there is a concurrent causality, but it is unique and not a synergy between the same kinds of agency.<sup>23</sup> In the end, we have to admit that our conceptions do not catch up with the workings of God's creative power. But we can recognize that God does not act in history as a "secondary" or finite agent but as God creating.

Let me summarize this theological appropriation of the Christian doctrine of creation before moving forward. Creation as a religious doctrine does not refer to a single event that occurred in the past. The doctrine of creation does not offer an explanation of the particular order of things that we see in the world today. Creation is rather a conviction based on a religious experience that reality exists and continues to exist sustained by a power of being that transcends the whole finite universe. It is an error to confuse God's creating power with this or that worldly agency; these so called secondary causes are semi-autonomous determinants in and of a world that is other than God; they are studied by science. At the same time the universe and all the causality in it are created and sustained by a power of being called God. This makes God intimately close to creation, and one has to think that God creates

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<sup>22</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, "Does God Play Dice? Divine Providence and Chance," *Theological Studies* 57 (March, 1996): 11–12, at 12.

<sup>23</sup> Barbour describes the critique of this position as follows: "The active powers of human agents inescapably limit God's freedom. If some of the causal work is done by natural agents, it cannot *all* be done by God. There cannot be two sufficient causes for one event" (Barbour, *Science Meets Religion*, 161). He then goes on to note that the idea of the self-limitation of God responds to this objection. But the idea of the "self-limitation" of God has to be recognized as paradoxical relative to God and a concealment of our ignorance. Why should God's ongoing creating and empowering of being that is truly other than God's self and the gift of endowing it with a measure of creative autonomy be conceived negatively as limiting?

out of love. This vision of all reality being enfolded within the presence and power of a loving, creating God has direct bearing on how one approaches spiritual life.

But how does this theology get translated into language that can animate contemplation? One way this can happen is by following Ignatius as he transforms theological language into narrative discourse.

### **Creation Anthropology in Narrative Form**

I now want to shift this discussion of creation into a different key. We have considered the theological grounding of the doctrine of creation. This theological analysis may be transposed into a narrative framework. By a narrative form I mean the story of God addressing human beings and human beings responding across time. Entering into this story means hearing God's address to us and responding. This describes exactly what Ignatius Loyola does in his *Spiritual Exercises*. What follows interprets Ignatius's move to a practical creation spirituality and sets it in a modern context.

The theological doctrine of creation presupposes the world that is in place and how it came to be according to science. At the same time it proposes that God, the creator of all things, is the ultimate source of all that is. The universal consensus of Christian creation theology holds that God is good, that God is personal because surely not less than what has been created, that what God created, even in its finitude and imperfection, is also good, and that God who creates actively loves what God creates. This last reflection almost spontaneously follows, despite the existence of evil in the world, because no other motive can easily explain the fact of creation itself. That God creates out of love frequently goes without saying. Given the amount and the degree of human suffering in our world today, this Christian presupposition requires more critical defense than will be given here.

The previous discussion also showed how God is immediately present to creation as the very source and power of the being of whatever is. But the analysis of creation also showed that human beings have the capacity to be so reflectively conscious of their own being that they can discover within themselves the presence of God as the power of their being. This amounts to communication. This communication, however, always happens in a mediated way: because God is God, the infinite transcendent mystery, human beings have no ability whatsoever of knowing God directly or comprehending God in concepts and

language. Human beings more accurately may be said to have a sense of God, experience intimations of God, feel God's presence, project language about God that tries to bring God's reality to expression, intuit God, encounter God beneath or above all words, and so on. Although God may be so encountered and even "known" in various forms of religious experience, this knowledge does not conform to the logic by which we deal in a knowing way with the world around us. Rather God is known in a mediated way in the created world around us and within ourselves. This represents the basic structure of religious knowing: the things of this world and the words and concepts that we use to describe them mediate or make present to us and our consciousness the God that transcends us.

This economy of human knowledge of God can be transposed into a narrative form. Ignatius does this when he explicitly personalizes the doctrines of God, creation, and anthropology and reconfigures these analytical truths into personal issues. One can of course characterize the *Spiritual Exercises* in objective terms: they consist in meditative considerations of the life and ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus as presented in the gospels. These meditations have as their book ends, at their beginning and end, the Principle and Foundation and the Contemplation to Attain Love. But this statement about the *Spiritual Exercises*, which is accurate objectively speaking, completely misses the point of what is going on when one engages them. Actually, Ignatius's presentations of these truths are thoroughly transposed into personalized statements of what God has done for each individual person, out of love, and in such a way that the gift requires a personal response of gratitude. By resituating the doctrines in a framework of a personal dialogue between God and the retreatant, he likewise creates a narrative theology. In this way, with one stroke, Ignatius transforms religious doctrines into an invitation for an encounter-response that introduces them into the stories of each person who makes the Exercises and fuses their stories into these doctrines.

Ignatius begins his *Spiritual Exercises* with very basic considerations about the purpose of human existence as God created it (*SpEx* 23), and he ends them with reflections about God as creator and lover of the world (*SpEx* 230–237). In the *Spiritual Exercises* these two considerations are separated. But these doctrines mutually entail each other, and their reinforcement may be made operative from the beginning of the First Week. In what follows I try to bring out the narrative possibilities of the theology of creation that can provide the background for actual

presentations of the First Week of the *Spiritual Exercises*. I deal first with creation, then sin, and then the forgiveness that releases the potential of human existence in freedom.

## **Creation Spirituality**

God creating establishes a foundational, one could say metaphysical, forum of communication.<sup>24</sup> God is immediately present to all reality. And human existence has the capacity to become aware of God's presence, not directly, but precisely in and through created reality itself. Such is the archeology of the doctrine. When Ignatius deals with creation, however, he personifies God and imagines God personally engaged in the activity of creation itself. God creates, and what God creates becomes a medium or a real carrier of the presence of God; God becomes present to us in the action of creating and in what God creates. The creating action of God thus becomes addressed to each creature. This transposition in the framework for appreciating creation dramatically alters the meaning of this doctrine. The event of a subjective recognition of God in creation, which itself has a narrative before, during, and after, becomes transformed into an interpersonal dialogue and even an ongoing conversation. God is readily available and personally addressing each creature in the act of creating.

The whole personal story in which one encounters God shows God's love for each person and makes creation itself an outpouring of God's love.<sup>25</sup> God dwells in the world, in each creature, and God makes God's self present to each one. God gives to each one the gift of his or her existence with all its attendant gifts and talents. God communicates to each one his or her identity. God who continuously creates is continually working for the welfare of each single person. Each consideration of creation bends back on the one engaged in it, and the gifts that one has received from God become the media or channels of intercommunication. The whole meditation engenders an ontological gratitude that could result in an emotional encounter. But this emotion would hardly be ephemeral. The dialogue and the wider narrative could also be quite cool and incisive and draw into itself the power of the scientific picture of the universe. In either case, the consideration is embedded in one of

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<sup>24</sup>This paragraph is inspired by the Principle and Foundation and the Contemplation to Attain Love together.

<sup>25</sup>This paragraph paraphrases the Contemplation to Attain Love, in *SpEx* 230–237.

the most profound and central of all religious constructs and theological doctrines.

In Ignatius's imagination, the doctrine of creation becomes a cosmic principle and framework for God's massive, continuing dialogue with humanity. But, more particularly, creation grounds the personal story of each person, and this can come to consciousness and generate an explicit ongoing dialogue. Creation allows Ignatius to formulate the mystical principle of "finding God in all things," a formula that weds contemplative contact with God and everyday behavior in the secular world.<sup>26</sup> One who has appropriated this creation theology into his or her life becomes a contemplative in action. In sum, creation theology supplies the first foundational principle for the narrative theology that is going on in the *Spiritual Exercises*.

## Sin

In Genesis, the doctrine of sin accompanies the doctrine of creation because evil and sin seem to call into question the goodness of God and creation and yet describe something fundamental in the human itself. Human beings are prone to egoism and sin. The evolutionary account of the emergence of the human transforms the mythological notions that even today are shared by many Christians. The story of a temporal fall that intrinsically influenced the race may carry some insight, but even when its mythological character is appreciated, it causes far more confusion than light. In the new picture of the universe sin also appears much more like a natural condition of human nature in its continuity with various aspects of a violent natural world. The balance between a natural impulse toward the survival of the fittest and a call to self-transcending love in any specific case often requires a cool calculating moral reasoning. The doctrine of sin, both as a broad tendency and as human acts, in both its personal and social forms, is being reinterpreted today.<sup>27</sup> But sin still occupies a very real place in human existence, and it plays a major role in the way Ignatius sets up the *Spiritual Exercises* during the First Week.

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<sup>26</sup> More has to be said here about finding God in the negativities of human existence. The Second and Third Weeks, including a theology of the cross, will be important in this regard. It has to be recalled here that this is a not a full representation of the *Exercises*.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Tatha Wiley, *Original Sin* (New York: Paulist Press, 2002); Patrick J. Amer, *The Five Commandments of Jesus: A New Approach to Christianity* (New York / Bloomington: Universe, 2009), 54–67; Daryl P. Domning, "Evolution, Evil and Original Sin," *America* 185 (Nov. 12, 2001): 14–21.

One thus needs a theological reflection on sin. The considerations that follow correlate with Ignatius's meditations on the first sins which he presents in a mythological way.<sup>28</sup> These biblical and medieval accounts of Adam and Eve and heaven and hell depict something vital and fundamental in Christian self-understanding. But everyone presenting the *Exercises* tries to represent them in a way that is intelligible today. The question thus concerns the theological rationale of these doctrines within our contemporary worldview and how this gets translated into the rhetoric of the spiritual life.

Ignatius recommends an extensive attention to the consideration of each person's sin. But a retreatant may not have the inward sensibility to which he appeals. Would it be right to awaken that sensibility? At what point does the introspection that an examination of one's personal record of sin entails shade into spiritual masochism, which ironically can become a secret form of narcissism? Are we to bemoan the contemporary loss of an agonized sense of personal sin that figures so strongly in Luther's theology and spirituality? Does apparent lack of a need for personal confession in Catholicism mean that a sense of sin has been lost? Is there a theology of sin today that can make sense out of the evident changes that have taken place in our religious culture? What is the sin that threatens the very meaningfulness of our whole life in the world?

Without responding to all these questions adequately, I want to point out a possible direction for reappropriating the doctrine of sin into the *Spiritual Exercises*. A point of departure for understanding a new sense of sin in which we all participate lies in the social structure of one's personal action. The social world which shapes every individual consists in multiple patterns of behavior some of which corrode human values when they do not actually destroy human life. Human beings cannot avoid participation in these social structures. They are imbedded in the very languages we internalize and speak. Relative to each person these structures are objective. They stand over against the individual who is socialized into them; they defy every individual who seeks to change them. More than this, they fashion and shape individual action into their own image and likeness. No one can escape social sin because everyone participates in some social mechanisms that injure and dehu-

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<sup>28</sup>This theological construction pertains directly to *SpEx* 45–72. But it also has relevance for how one goes about an examination of conscience, both the daily particular examination (*SpEx* 24–31) and the general examination (*SpEx* 32–44).

manize the marginalized victims of society and in some measure corrupt the values of all.

In reality, a sense of sin in the world is not decreasing but increasing. But it is not merely personal sin that ultimately dominates our consciousness, but what is associated with original sin and has come to be known as the sin of the world. This sin is constantly being identified for us in specific social structures of behavior, and we hate to hear about it. Consciousness of this sin, even when only implicit, does not cause personal confusion and anxiety but a general disorientation and a sense of entrapment and frustration. It can lead to cynicism and through cynicism to the mortal threat to freedom that resides in boredom or indifference. It saps one's courage and leads one to doubt the value of good action because it is drawn up into the vortex of social systems and their consequences and robs the good that the individual does of any significant effect.

Of course the seeds of sin lie in each individual; sin would not appear in society were it not for the innate egoism that is part of the very constitution of everyone's freedom. Surely one must wrestle with inner concupiscence in the attempt to be open to the power of the gracious Spirit that alone will overcome it. But there is another hidden level of subjective sin. The objective sin of the world, in its concrete manifestations as social sin, does not remain objective. Sinful patterns of human action are out-there-real only because they are also introjected and internalized to become part of our own subjectivity. The experience of entrapment thus has both objective and subjective dimensions; social participation qualifies the very motives of our action. Our action merges with the world and society; the world is part of us even as we are part of the world; we cannot escape willing participation in the evil structures which make up our world. We are consumers in a consumer society; we tacitly support aggressive economic and political foreign policy; we use a language that carries sexist and racist values.

The examination of this sin should begin outside the self with an analysis of the social environment in which we live; it can only be approached through objective analysis. At the same time, however, this objective analysis includes self-analysis. But this meditation does not end within the self; it opens out towards the world. One should take account of the dehumanizing effects of the social patterns of our corporate action on concrete groups of people. Self-examination here deals with the way we have unconsciously bought into negative cultural systems

and allowed them to shape our consciousness. We should examine the measure in which we cooperate in aggressive death-dealing practices or have accepted them in a passive escape from freedom. In particular, we have to become aware of the subtlety and ambiguous character of all our accustomed social behavior. The real scandal of sin, the place where it pierces good intentions, lies here; here too resides the potential to experience an urgency that sin be resisted. Unless one faces up to this sin, one will not be able to accept critically and honestly what follows from the First Principle and Foundation, that personal action, one's life, has ultimate value.

In sum, the meditations on sin should begin objectively. Anyone who looks at the world critically cannot not have a sense of sin. But it is not a sense of sin that crush-

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*Creation faith also bears within it a critical and productive energy. Creation-faith recognizes the finitude and contingency of created reality; nothing created can be absolutized.*

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es the person with personal guilt so that he or she may be saved by a sheerly personal salvation. Rather it is a sense of sin that undermines the positive meaning of creation and a constructive direction of my action with a global sense of futility. The response to this sin and its effects is not merely forgiveness. Of course one could go nowhere without that forgiveness; the acceptance by God of the person precisely as a sinner provides the very foundation for any further freedom. But after this forgiveness, what? After the healing grace of forgiveness one needs a positive direction for one's freedom and action in the world.

As I understand the First Week of the *Exercises*, the series of meditations on sin come to a dramatic climax in the colloquy of the sinner with Christ on the cross. "Imagine Christ our Lord suspended on the cross before you" and reflect on what you have done, are doing, and will do for him (*SpEx* 53). This place to which Ignatius has led the retreatant has the potential of being a life-changing encounter. The situation embodies the full dialectical power of Luther's fundamental theology of sin and grace: an intense contrast of a person's sin and God's loving forgiveness that draws that whole person, sin and all, into itself and restores it. This in turn constitutes a profound, existential liberation, a release of freedom into gratitude and service. Nowhere is the axiom, "the more grace, the more genuine human freedom," better exempli-

fied. It is at precisely this point that the full potential of Christian anthropology should be drawn out further.

### Anthropology in the Light of Creation Theology

Ignatius sets out as a first Principle and Foundation for the Christian life the formula that human existence has been created to “praise, reverence, and serve God” and in this manner be brought to final salvation (*SpEx* 23). This is complemented by other principles based on this foundational teleology, such as always choosing the means that best moves us toward our goal. Ignatius’s principle is not far from Calvin on how we should engage the things of this world: they are God’s gifts and their use should be “referred to that end to which the Author himself created and destined them for us, since he created them for our good, not our ruin.”<sup>29</sup> This consideration has considerable weight and continually guides people along the route of the *Spiritual Exercises*; the principle frequently emerges explicitly or implicitly as a major piece of the logic that governs the whole. This principle, however, was formulated in the light of a medieval worldview, theology, and catechetics. This does not undermine its basic coherence, but it has to be restated in language that more closely fits a developed twenty-first-century culture. This is especially so because Ignatius personalizes the principle by addressing it to each person making the *Spiritual Exercises* so that it becomes internalized as a motivating factor in their lives. Because of its important role of becoming an active principle in people’s lives, it should be reworked in the light of our present worldview and creation theology.

The First Principle and Foundation might include four elements from a contemporary creation anthropology.

1. *Freedom as creativity.* God the creator bestowed on human beings the gift of freedom which, as a real power to fashion new being, carries with it responsibility. Freedom in contemporary culture suggests creativity; it is more than the power to choose; it transcends existentialist commitment; it is also the power to create new reality. As creator God created this human power. Therefore God desires that it be used. And God trusts it, has confidence in it.<sup>30</sup> Another principle from Calvin’s spirituality, the idea of stewardship, follows up on this and fits perfectly into the framework of the *Exercises*: the things of this world are “so des-

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<sup>29</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), III.10.2, p. 720. Relative to Ignatius, Calvin shifts the teleology from the actor to the creature being used. One can say that both are in play.

<sup>30</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report on the Books Jesus and Christ* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 106.

tined for our benefit, that they are, as it were, entrusted to us, and we must one day render account of them.”<sup>31</sup> But God has entrusted creation to human beings not merely as caretakers of a past condition, but as co-creators with God of the future. This formula corresponds with the realization that being is not static but in process, and that human beings were created by God not simply to enjoy creation but to work with the processes of evolution, to assume responsibility for its historical movement.<sup>32</sup> Creation of the human is not simply gift; it is also responsibility and task.

2. *An activist anthropology.* We have seen how Ignatius potentially aligns himself with a creation anthropology that integrates an activist anthropology into a contemplative spirituality. In Schillebeeckx’s creation anthropology, this sets up a tension between mysticism and politics, between contemplation and action for liberation. He strongly reacts against an anthropology that asserts that the telos of human existence lies primarily in rational knowing or mystical contemplation. Like Ignatius, Schillebeeckx finds a religious dimension (mysticism) in human action in the world (politics). Jesus’ parable of the talents, which forms a part of the explanation of his central message of the kingdom of God, points to a rationale of creation and a logic of salvation that unfolds within the framework of active freedom. In the light of this formula, the Ignatian expression “to save one’s soul” cannot be construed as an egocentric or individualist desire for salvation that bypasses the responsibility implicit in God’s creation of human freedom. Rather the formula suggests a religious framework (salvation) in which human creativity in the world will find meaning within the context of the destiny of creation itself.

3. *The critical-productive force of creation-faith.* Creation faith also bears within it a critical and productive energy. Creation-faith recognizes the finitude and contingency of created reality; nothing created can be absolutized. It exposes all idolatries: only God is God. Creation-faith thus criticizes the theories of history that are either pessimistic or optimistic. The one says all change is bad; the latter sees only progress in history. Neither is correct because created reality is precisely finite, contingent, and changeable. But this critique opens up to human freedom the possibility to fashion a new and better future in history, although still a lim-

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<sup>31</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III.10.5.

<sup>32</sup> Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s spirituality, as this is expressed in *The Divine Milieu: An Essay on the Interior Life* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1960), is an Ignatian-inspired statement that is most relevant at this precise point.

ited one.<sup>33</sup> Creation-faith, then, is sober and balances pessimism with cautious expectation. No theology after the twentieth century can credibly propose that process and human inventiveness necessarily engender progress or success. But Christians share a deep eschatological hope that does not translate into naiveté regarding human projects in this world but does energize creativity.

4. *The future as horizon.* The doctrine of creation cannot exist without a companion doctrine of the end time. And no one better than Jürgen Moltmann has formulated the intrinsic role of hope in the Christian response to reality. The biblical origins of Christian faith and the new picture of the universe both require that hope play a central role in Christian spirituality. The creator God is also a God of the future. This eschatological perspective places God always out in front of history and each person in it. For Moltmann the center and basis of Christian theology is the resurrection of Jesus because it points forward as a promise of an absolutely new future.<sup>34</sup> This view of God is not the view of most people. God is ordinarily the creator and guardian of order in the universe. In this new perspective God is also a principle of change and a ground motivating people to do new things and to alter the future in the direction of the kingdom of God. For Christians the grounds for this hope lie in the resurrection of Jesus: that Jesus was raised by God into an absolute future for us and for all reality represents the keystone of the Christian vision. This reorientation of Christianity fits well with the new scientific view of the cosmos, a creation theology, and a creation spirituality of freedom and creativity.

### Some Examples of Possible Contemplations

The following passages of scripture and brief indications of directions in which the contemplation might lead are meant only for the sake of illustration of how one might bring the “experience” of finitude and being created into the sphere of contemplation. Following Ignatius’s lead, I do not develop these scripture meditations at length. This task falls to the director or the one making the contemplation. The point is

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<sup>33</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, *God among Us: The Gospel Proclaimed* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 94, 97–98. See also Philip Kennedy, *Schillebeeckx* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1993), 89–90.

<sup>34</sup> “It is only on the ground of the revelation of God in the event of promise constituted by the raising of the crucified Christ that faith must seek and search for the universal and immediate revelation of God in all things and for all” (Jürgen Moltmann, *The Theology of Hope* [New York: Harper & Row, 1967], 282).

not to illustrate the theology, but the theology should provide resources for the imagination to interpret the passages more fully. The aim here is simply to suggest scriptural loci in which a new language of creation might stimulate one's affective contact with God. Introductions to these contemplations would situate them within a new scientific worldview and its accommodated theological language.

**1. Genesis 1:1—2:3: God, creator of heaven and earth**

*First Point.* God of power and might. Compare the story of Adam and Eve with today's story of creation for awesomeness.

*Second Point.* Other names for God: absolute incomprehensible mystery; ground of being; the field or matrix of all finite forces; serendipitous creativity. Yet God is personal.

**2. Psalm 104: God, creator and governor of the universe**

*First Point.* A hymn of praise to God for the design and harmony of nature and world. How to accommodate evolution, nature's intrinsic pattern of violence and negativity?

*Second Point.* Meditation in search of signals of God's intelligent and personal presence in creation.

**3. Job 38:1–38; 40:3–5: God the ground of the order of creation and human relations**

*First Point.* Imagine the sensibility of the writer of this passage, which comes as a response to Job's expostulation against God's seeming injustice.

*Second Point.* Consider the analogues of Job in the world today and their massive scale.

*Third Point.* Consider the analogies in one's own life.

**4. Wisdom 11:21-12:2: God the creator of me and others; the value of the human person**

*First Point.* God of power and might, who focuses loving attention to each creature: the logic of infinite altruistic love which loves all equally and each as though exclusively.

*Second Point.* Consider the personal relation of the creator to oneself and one's own response to the creator.

These proposed contemplations are simply examples of how creation theology in the light of the new story of the origins of the universe,

the planet, and the species can be drawn into an anthropology that is considerably different from what is presupposed in the text of Ignatius's First Week. But these expansions and revisions of form are proposed in a way that lies completely within Ignatius's intentions. They amplify the basic principles and foundations of the *Exercises* with a creation faith that is not threatened by the new narrative of our universe but draws spiritual power from it. It also integrates contemporary theological reflection on the doctrine of sin and includes a modern anthropology of freedom in history. The point of this first expansion is to take what is already present in the *Exercises* and release it for a contemporary worldview and imagination.

### III. Mission Ecclesiology and Spirituality

**W**ith the death and resurrection of Jesus, the historical drama of the origins of Christianity shifted from Jesus to his disciples. These disciples gradually formed a Jesus movement which evolved into an embryonic, a fledgling, an early primitive, and a gradually more organized church. This process extended into the second century. Despite its gradual developmental beginnings, however, the church may not be regarded as an addendum to Christianity and Christian self-understanding. It cannot be reduced to a necessary but not really essential element of Christian faith. The church, rather, constitutes the historical mechanism of the communication of Jesus and his mediation of God to the world. Understanding Jesus Christ and his message as universally relevant for humankind automatically entails a church which makes this possible. The same divine intentionality that is implicitly recognized by faith in Jesus Christ logically entails extension to the church as the necessary historical vehicle for communicating or mediating Jesus Christ to the world. In short the doctrine of the church represents an element intrinsic to Christian faith and the content of this doctrine correlates quite closely with christology. In this part I want to show why basic themes of ecclesiology may be integrated into the considerations of the Fourth Week.

Why this insertion into the *Exercises* is needed at this time, whereas it was not needed in Ignatius's time, requires an appreciation of the pressures on the church today among a large segment of critically conscious Christians. Two agendas are operating in this section. First, many people are abandoning the mainline Christian churches, including the Catholic Church. They are either remaining Christian without church

affiliation or they are moving to more free-form churches. We need a rationale for church membership today. Second, the large church, referring to the whole Christian movement, is growing so fragmented today that a common meaning for the word "church" is breaking down. To be a Christian is beginning to entail little more than a loose relationship with Jesus Christ. We need an ecumenically sensitive account of what is essential to "Christian church." One cannot speak about an ecclesial spirituality that is entailed in a Christian attachment to Jesus Christ without addressing these issues. For this reason, once again, what appears to be a simple addition of some contemplations into the Fourth Week actually requires a theological analysis that responds to the question of adhering to the church at all. In the large group of people that this essay envisages, one cannot take church for granted, even though it is an essential element in Christian faith itself.

The church referred to in this section is the whole Christian movement, the church in all the churches. This ecumenical approach tries to get at a commonly shared essential core of the Christian church. With this in mind, the discussion turns to three essential elements of the church that can elicit a common commitment and bear relevance for the *Exercises*. The first has to do with the relation of the church to Jesus of Nazareth and how the idea of "mission" binds the two together as one. The second idea draws out the relation between mission and the nature of the church. Third, the discussion then takes up the topic of ecclesial spirituality, something that could help bind the churches together. Ecclesial spirituality in its turn will lead to a concluding discussion of how understanding the church has a bearing upon an interpretation of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius.

## **Resurrection and Mission**

The resurrection holds a central place in Christian religious experience. But resurrection in the New Testament draws the theme of "mission" with it into primal Christian experience, especially relative to the formation and rationale of the church. The following analysis will show how Jesus' resurrection entails the idea of a mission of God. A call to mission accompanies the appearance stories and an imaginative reconstruction of the Easter experience of the original disciples. Indeed, the idea of mission emerged prior to the Easter experience and can be traced back to the ministry of Jesus.

The meaning of mission revolves around the ideas of sending and being sent. One way of determining the meaning of mission in the New

Testament is to study the words and the various nuances of the meaning in each context. This is especially relevant to the apostles who were conceived as more or less officially sent from the center to witness to the events of the whole Jesus affair. This approach generates solid results but it sometimes slides into a juridical approach that stresses institutional roles in a bureaucratic arrangement. The New Testament and other writings provide witness to such defined roles, but they may have had less stability than what present experience of church structures might read into them.

Another more promising but by no means antithetical approach lies in an imaginative and descriptive effort to project what the disciples of Jesus might have experienced relative to Jesus' public ministry and their participation in it. The "kingdom of God" formed a centerpiece of Jesus' teaching and action. Although it is hard to be precise and specific about the content of "the kingdom of God" as Jesus represented it, one can formally circumscribe this image as containing God's values and general intention for human existence in the world. Jesus displayed himself, whether as prophet, teacher, or exorcist, as one who mediated God's kingdom into the lives of those with whom he came in contact. The gospel stories of Jesus, especially by the time of John, bear ample witness to the idea that Jesus construed himself as being sent by God to be an agent for God's kingdom becoming effective in the world.

If Jesus operated out of a sense of calling and being sent by God, it would be natural for the disciples of Jesus during his public ministry to experience a sense of sharing in this mission. This idea gets formalized in the synoptics when Jesus is portrayed as sending the twelve on a mission essentially modeled on his own. "And he called to him the twelve, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits" (Mark 6:7; also Mark 3:14-15). Jon Sobrino makes a strong historical case that these sendings of the disciples on mission provide the deepest foundations for an emergent church.<sup>35</sup> But even apart from such actual sendings, whether they were historical or not, one has to imagine that the disciples of Jesus shared a sense of his "mission," his urgent sense of calling to follow the imperative of witnessing to the values of God's kingdom to Israel. In other words, a sense of mission lies at the essential core of the appearance of Jesus, his ministry, and the religious appreciation of him, so that from the begin-

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<sup>35</sup>Jon Sobrino, "Evangelization as Mission of the Church," in *The True Church and the Poor* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1984), 253-301, esp. 257-265.

ning “mission” represents a stimulus toward the formation of what will be called church. This missionary impulse also influences the character of the church.

This elemental recognition bears revolutionary potential for some standardized self-conceptions of especially established churches. In theological terms this insight may be called the priority of the mission to the identity of the church. Mission is the reason for the being of the church. Sobrino writes that “the church’s reality lies not in itself but in a mission it is to accomplish.”<sup>36</sup> Jürgen Moltmann states that it “is not that the church ‘has’ a mission, but the very reverse: that the mission of Christ creates its own church. Mission does not come from the church; it is from mission and in the light of mission that the church has to be understood.”<sup>37</sup> Theologians aware of the sociological payoff of this theological construct point out how all organizations preserve a healthy tension between the logic of mission and the logic of maintenance. Maintenance attends to the organization’s well-being; mission is the goal of maintenance.<sup>38</sup> The priorities have to be kept straight and the balance retained. Missionary activity of extending the gospel to the world defines the very purpose of the church. When a church gets settled into culture it tends to invest more energy in maintenance than mission. This may explain why today, for example, mainline churches are losing their members and around the world evangelical and pentecostal churches are surging.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 264. Also, “the church does not keep itself in existence through history by maintaining its structures but by constantly carrying out its mission” (ibid, 265).

<sup>37</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 10.

<sup>38</sup> “The logic of mission deals with the aim and function of an organization, the purpose for the sake of which it has been established; the logic of maintenance deals with the well-being of the organization itself, its upkeep, security, and perpetuation in the years to come. Both of these logics are essential” (Gregory Baum, “Contradictions in the Catholic Church,” in *Theology and Society* [New York / Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987], 234).

Hopes in Jesus' mission were crushed by his criminal execution, but some time afterwards in the light of the Easter experience Jesus' disciples were announcing that he had been raised by God. This new faith-hope was part of the very foundation of the Christian movement. It is not surprising that the theme of mission reasserts itself as an essential dimension of this new experience. The dimension of mission pervades the appearance stories. The appearance stories do not merely show that Jesus is alive; they are calling and mission narratives, sometimes implicitly, at other times in quite direct terms: "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (Jn 20:21). The climax comes in Matthew's account of Jesus' final appearance and his delivery of the "mission mandate" (Matt. 28:18–20).

What is being described here with the metaphor of "mission" represents a deep structure of what is going on in these narratives and in the history that they characterize. Subjectively the idea of mission represents what the disciples experienced as a call of God to something of divine import: the cause of the kingdom of God in history. It would not be wrong to describe the Easter experience itself as a recognition that Jesus' mission goes on and that one is being solicited to join it. Although the Easter experience should not be reduced to this,<sup>39</sup> it describes what is going on historically. It also correlates with an objective theological conception of God's being an active creative presence to human history. God as Spirit permeates history and this has come to the surface in Jesus of Nazareth and the movement he represented. The mission of God in history as represented by Jesus will go forward and the actualization and stabilization of that mission provide the reason for the becoming and thus the being of the church.

This theology finds its best expression in the two-volume work of Luke. In Luke the theology of the Spirit, God as the dynamic principle of the mission, links the two volumes about Jesus and the emergent church. Luke's Jesus is animated by the Spirit; Jesus promises the Spirit; the disciples receive the Spirit and become the Jesus movement; the Spirit animates the movement. In many respects the narrative details provided by Acts of how that post-resurrection mission got underway are being called into question. It is plausible that, on the one hand, Luke's theology governed his focus on Jerusalem as the place

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<sup>39</sup> I hold that Jesus of Nazareth is ontologically risen to new life with God beyond human history.

from which the disciples' mission emanated. On the other hand, Jesus movements might have more spontaneously begun in Galilee, where Jesus pursued his ministry. But these details do not impugn the theology: God as Spirit and the risen Jesus, now understood as Messiah, mediate the divine impulse of an expanding group of witnesses that we describe as mission. The religious concept of mission represents a theology that envelops the whole Jesus movement; Spirit stimulating mission empowered the movement toward becoming a church.<sup>40</sup>

## **The Mission Generates a Church**

The church is a product of historical development and it needs a narrative to explain it. This narrative will not be the short story of Jesus setting up a church all at once during his lifetime that seems to be implied by Matthew's gospel (Matt. 16:13-20). It is a long story that begins with Jesus and stretches well into the second century and, one might say, to the present day. A problem of perception on this point revolves around the tendency to project back into Jesus' lifetime imaginative conclusions about historical events that are derived from later theological interpretations of Jesus as the Christ. The text of Matthew that has Jesus saying, "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18) offers a good example of this. Scripture scholars generally agree that Jesus did not think of beginning a church and that this text expresses a later theological view representing things that emerged much later. All of this invites a coherent account of the relation between theology and history in this regard as well as a reconstruction of how the church developed. The two issues go together. A place to begin might be a narrative of church development.

The church emerged out of a single defining element of faith that united the disciples and spawned their group identity. Their common identity revolved around the experience of God's salvation in Jesus

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<sup>40</sup> I need to reiterate the limits of this presentation lest it generate misunderstanding. The point is to explain why a mission spirituality is entailed in resurrection faith. I do not develop the personal relationship with Jesus of Nazareth that the disciples developed and the retreatant would develop in the course of the Second and Third Weeks. Nor do I develop here the encounter with the risen Jesus that practically speaking absorbs all of Ignatius's attention in the Fourth Week. This essay is not an integral treatment of the four weeks of the *Exercises*. Therefore the shift to ecclesiology should not be read as a neglect of but as presupposing and enhancing Ignatius's focus on the personal relationship with Jesus Christ that is implied in the Easter experiences represented by the appearance narratives.

Christ. This was a bond that all Christians shared across increasing cultural and spatial distances. But this internal faith conviction was not enough to keep churches together. The church exists in a double relationship: to God and to history. It had to develop social structures that would help hold the whole church together when differences of culture threatened to drive the churches apart. This is the permanent condition of the church. The church can only be understood adequately in two languages. The relationship to God requires theological language. The relationship to history requires historical and sociological language. Neither analysis alone satisfies; only the two together can give a full account. A moment's reflection on Christian experience itself will confirm the two dimensions.<sup>41</sup>

On the premise of this dual relationship, reflection reveals the place of the two perspectives and methods of understanding and their relationship with each other. The sense of mission that lay embedded in the Easter experience gave rise to the preaching and public witness of the disciples that Jesus is risen: it inspired an expansive preaching of Jesus and the mission of the kingdom of God that was contained in his ministry. On the one hand, ministry could not continue forward without a group to sustain the effort, and it could not effect its passing to successive generations of disciples without some form of institution. In order to retain existence and identity across time, groups require institutionalization. On the other hand, this movement testified to the divine presence at work within itself as a movement mediated by Jesus of Nazareth, who gradually came to be recognized as the Messiah or Christ, and the Spirit of God as an internal empowering source of energy. The theological foundations of the church are Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God. In this way the two modes of understanding the church, theological and historical, mutually influence and complement each other; they are inseparable. But they are also distinct: one cannot project a theological conclusion on the basis of empirical evidence alone; and theological construals cannot generate knowledge of empirical facts.

When we pass from questions of how to approach an understanding of the development of the church to its actual historical genesis, it becomes almost as difficult to give specific details of how the church actually developed as it is to reconstruct the actual ministry of Jesus. Luke's

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<sup>41</sup> See Edward Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story of God* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 210–213.

Acts gives the most detailed account of the earliest history of the Jesus movement developing towards church. But the narrative is heavily influenced by a theological message; Acts does not offer a modern historical account. And no single New Testament source describes the whole Christian movement. For these reasons the historical account of the development of the church still remains somewhat murky in its detail.<sup>42</sup> But one can make several broad statements about this development that are enough to make sense of it in a way that has more theological power than the naïve picture of Jesus setting up a divinely sanctioned institution.

One way to offer an abbreviated statement of the complex picture of an emerging church would balance the standard picture with details that complexify it. Luke tells of a Pentecost experience that launched the movement in a supernatural way from Jerusalem. Yet that picture should be modified at two points. The scene can be read as a representative account, like a parable, of the broader general experience of the power of God as Spirit entailed in the Easter experience. In other words, the “event” of the Spirit’s initiating intervention may have been a protracted affair over a more or less extended period of time. And one might expect that the Jesus movement also took off in Galilee where Jesus actually performed his ministry. Once such a premise is factored in, the idea of a single grand narrative for the developing church originating in Jerusalem becomes replaced

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by a developing movement within and through many different particular communities. From the beginning, therefore, pluralism has to be factored into this process of development. This in turn entails unevenness in the developmental process itself. It was not the same in every community and did not follow a common timetable. Thus the significant event at Antioch, usually dated around 48 to 50, in which the Christian movement more or less “officially” opened up Christian member-

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<sup>42</sup> What we know of Christian origins is more than sufficient to ground some sense of its historical development. But at the same time few areas in the history of the church are more studied today than Christian origins.

ship while bypassing circumcision, had significant import for future development. But that influence was felt differently in different churches. For example, some new communities in the eastern Mediterranean may have been more Jewish in character, while others may have been more Greco-Roman, and still others mixed. The effects of the policy would differ according to circumstances. We are also becoming more aware of how deeply Hellenistic influences were already at work in Palestine in Jesus' own time. Thus while we can more or less distinguish strata of a developing church through dating and "placing" the writings of the New Testament that represent different communities, it is difficult to make generalizations about any single portrait of "the whole church" in the earliest years of its development. Perhaps the most important generalization of all that can be made is that the church developed: the church was not born with a stable organizational structure but developed several out of the resources of each community itself but not without common features.<sup>43</sup> In other words, the most important lesson about the church that can be learned from its development from Jesus' time into the second century is the fact of development itself.

Without pretending to define what these common features were in detail, one can get a sense of embryonic elements that will constitute all the churches. I would organize these around five structural elements found in all organizations. First, the nature and purpose of the church revolved around Jesus as the Christ, the Spirit of God that he released into history, and the salvation people experienced in their faith commitment to him. Second, the organizational plan of the churches drew from other associations or organizations of identity groups common in the Empire. It would be strange if associations of the Jews in the Diaspora did not strongly affect the Christian groups that emerged out of them. Third, the initial members of the Jesus movement were Jews and across the early centuries the ratio between Jews and gentiles in different regions and communities would vary considerably and evolve.<sup>44</sup> Fourth, the principal activities of the communities were religious: gathering for common meals to listen to the reading of the Jewish scriptures, hear commentary on them, have common prayer, read letters from other communities, hear and recite stories about Jesus, sing psalms or newly

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<sup>43</sup> Daniel J. Harrington, *The Church according to the New Testament: What the Wisdom and Witness of Early Christianity Teach Us Today* (Chicago: Sheed & Ward, 2001), 159-71.

<sup>44</sup> See Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

composed hymns. We are learning more about how the common meal or various adaptations of the Greco-Roman banquet may have been a principal vehicle for these activities to happen.<sup>45</sup> Fifth, the emergent churches related to the Empire like other religious associations, but they were also related to Judaism, which enjoyed official tolerance. This too entailed variations in different cities and provinces across the decades of the genesis of the church.

One of the main obstacles for church members to accept the historical reconstruction of a chaotic, uneven, and pluralistic development lies in a seeming lack of a criterion for distinguishing the value of various features. This very problem arose in the New Testament itself in the so-called pastoral epistles which promoted leadership and order. One way of addressing this issue today lies in what may be called the

principle of functionality. This principle means that the developing Christian movement appropriated or created those institutions which would serve the nature and purpose of the church. This is a dynamic principle that implicitly recognizes some essential nature or purpose of the church in its faith commitment to Jesus

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*Being a Christian challenges people to an activist, ecclesial, mission spirituality, and this expresses itself in service or ministry. The pattern of Jesus in the gospels inspires the qualities of this ministry.*

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Christ and faith's experience of empowerment in the Spirit identified by him. This principle also provides a norm and criterion for its "self-construction." Organizational elements were appropriated or created as needed to preserve identity and promote the mission. Today this principle allows one to both appreciate the pragmatic character of the historical dimensions that the church assumed and recognize that they are changeable expressions of a centering theological norm.

To sum up this discussion of the historical genesis of the church, I offer three general conclusions that characterize that development and are relevant to a diagnosis of its increasingly fragmented existence to-

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<sup>45</sup> Hal Taussig, in his *In the Beginning Was the Meal* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), summarizes the research done on the Greco-Roman banquet over the past few decades and the relevance the meal had in the assembly of associations within the Empire at this time. It provides a much more concrete way of historically imagining how actual Christian churches organized themselves and developed socially in ways that preserved communion despite being scattered communities. Needless to say, the Eucharist was deeply connected with this development.

day and thus an ecclesial spirituality. First, it has to be insisted that the church does not relate extrinsically to faith in Jesus Christ and the salvation he mediates. It is no add-on but an integral piece of the objective work of Jesus Christ and essential to faith in him despite the view that Jesus probably did not intentionally found the church which evolved. Jesus saves by revealing God and a mode of actively relating to God. This entails a church for without a church this message would cease to exist in history. Second, such a church, then, is essentially missionary: mission represents an element defining its nature and being. Wherever the church is, it is mission. This has particular relevance for established churches that seem to lack vitality and concern for the world around them.<sup>46</sup> Third, the church from its very beginning has always and essentially been pluralistic. Pluralism means unity amid difference or differences within a core of sameness. Authentic churches can never be so separated from others that they fail to recognize what they have in common with them. This pluralism is best exemplified in the very constitution of the church provided by the New Testament. There the books of the New Testament, which represent widely different conceptions of church across cities, cultures, and temporal problems, are held together between two covers in the book that unifies them all.

## Ecclesial Spirituality

How does this objective theological perspective get translated into a rhetoric that appeals to people's faith experience and the responsibility in their lives as Christians? In the case of creation faith we saw how Ignatius worked through creation faith: God creator becomes God revealer and communicator to each one through creation. Analogously, God communicates with each Christian through their faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus is precisely the revealer of God to the retreatant. This sets up this correlation: as his disciples related to Jesus in the past, so too, *mutatis mutandis*, should the Christian believer today relate to Jesus. Christian faith, nurtured by the texts of the New Testament, involves an analogy between how Jesus affected his disciples then and how he af-

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<sup>46</sup> This fundamental guiding principle was stated forcefully at Vatican II in the decree *Ad gentes* (Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity). This decree is often neglected as one dealing with a specialized interest and content. In reality it complements *Lumen gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) by defining the church as by its very nature missionary. It was more fully developed by Paul VI in his encyclical *On Evangelization in the Modern World* (December 8, 1975).

fects them today. Retelling the story of the emergence of the church in the first century invites a fusion of narratives, a deep comparison between that history and our history today. This correlating of one's Christian calling and life today with the patterns that led to the formation of the church consists in inserting one story into the other. Ignatius's own Rules for Thinking, Judging, and Feeling with the Church (*SpEx* 352–370) show that he was not unconscious of the need of an ecclesial context for Christian spirituality. This entails an interchange of rhetorics, a back and forth between objective analytical theology to a language of exhortation, challenge to one's Christian motivation, and appeal to Christian responsibility precisely for the church. I thus turn to ecclesial spirituality and what it entails for the church and for members who internalize the logic of mission that is part of Christian faith itself.

Spirituality encompasses the way people live their whole lives with respect to the transcendent ground of their being.<sup>47</sup> The phrase "ecclesial spirituality" refers to the way Christians live their lives as a group or a community. Ordinarily Christians belong to churches, and churches at root are nothing else than the corporate lives of their members bonded together in a community organized by institutional structures. Although in our culture many people with self-conscious religious spiritualities are estranged from religious institutions, more the institutions than the religions themselves, it has to be said that without structures spiritual traditions would die. When a spirituality remains religious but becomes separated from a community, it gives up the depth of a group's support, the coherence of corporate reflection, and the richness and solidity of a tradition. One can conclude that "the quest for God is too complex and too important to be reduced to a private enterprise."<sup>48</sup> However, this does not address the serious problems that affect religious institutions.

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<sup>47</sup> Spirituality may or may not be religious, on the supposition that religious in this context means belonging to a religious community. Sandra Schneiders is not optimistic about non-religious spirituality: "It is usually a privatized, idiosyncratic, personally satisfying stance and practice which makes no doctrinal claims, imposes no moral authority outside one's own conscience, creates no necessary personal relationships or social responsibilities, and can be changed or abandoned whenever it seems not to work for the practitioner. Commitment . . . is easily circumvented by a spirituality which has no institutional or community affiliation" (Sandra M. Schneiders, "Religion vs. Spirituality: A Contemporary Conundrum," *Spiritus* 3 [2003]: 173).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 176–77, at 177.

The purpose of the church as an institutional community could be well defined as housing and nurturing ecclesial spirituality.<sup>49</sup> Such a spirituality should be deeply personal: each person is an individual and the church is meant to resource the faith-life of each of its members. But this is accomplished precisely in community. The shared or corporate spirituality of the community differentiates an ecclesial spirituality from

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*In a manner analogous to ordained ministers, the "laity" are in the ordinary course of things more deeply engaged in society and "the world." They are frequently the ones who make actual contact with the world outside the church, who implement the impact of the church on society.*

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that of the private fellow-traveler. This corporate spirituality will be a mission spirituality for the reasons outlined earlier: the essential characteristic of Christian life comes from Jesus' life and ministry. Jesus reveals God and opens up a way of human life that leads to human fulfillment. Some form of relationship with Jesus Christ and following of Jesus lies at the bottom of every Christian

spirituality. Since the mission of the kingdom of God defined Jesus' own life and ministry, it also shapes the nature and purpose of the church. Ordinarily, when one joins and assumes membership in an organization, a person internalizes and participates in the nature and goal of that organization. So too here: to be a Christian entails participation in the mission of the church. In one way or another the Christian signs on to a mission spirituality, and it should spill over into his or her public social life.

Being a Christian challenges people to an activist, ecclesial, mission spirituality, and this expresses itself in service or ministry. The pattern of Jesus in the gospels inspires the qualities of this ministry. Originally, as this ministry took shape within a community developing more or less clear boundaries, it gradually became routinized and developed into an institutional structure that in turn more clearly defined the historical form of the community. The development of the church could be characterized as the diffuse activism of general Christian service and practice becoming routinized into offices of ministry. On the one hand this is a spontaneous process by which a community preserves itself in

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<sup>49</sup> The apologist for the church has to admit that, as self-evident as this may seem, it is not the usual way in which the church is described. Too often the churches as institutions behave as if the preservation of the institution is an end in itself.

history and tries to guarantee the availability of the kinds of ministry it needs. On the other hand the process surely consisted in borrowing institutional forms from other first-century associations, principally those of the Jews of the Diaspora. One can think of these ministerial roles as organized ways of channeling the active Christian spirituality of service within the community.

Ecclesial ministry points in two distinct directions relative to the church itself: ministries directed inside the church and those directed or reaching outward. The types of service they represent are frequently known as pastoral ministry that serves the maintenance of the church and missionary activity that serves the mission of the church. These public forms of ministry can also be considered as representative of the kinds of active service that characterize the lives of all church members. Ministries organize the common spiritual activity of the whole community. These two kinds of ministry should never be cleanly separated from each other. Distinguishing between them as two broad types of ministry helps to accent different dimensions of ecclesial activity and the spirituality that they represent. As long as Christian spirituality is ecclesial and not private, it will have within itself these two concerns and dimensions which should never be isolated or considered apart from each other.

In fact, a church needs an explicit consciousness of the tension between these two dimensions of Christian ecclesial existence in order to have a balanced ecclesial spirituality. When the balance and tension breaks down, when a church is either turned in on itself or diffused in social activism, the spirituality of the community suffers. For example, service within the community is frequently assigned to clergy. When a church becomes introverted and entirely concerned with maintenance, the role of clergy can become separated from the laity and authoritarian, so that clerical ideals of spirituality predominate. The differences between ministry inside and outside the community come to represent class distinctions among members. Clean distinctions among members define their relationships: those who teach and those who learn, those who lead and those who follow, those who have authority and those who are obedient. Many educated people find such distinctions in roles alienating. Questions of authority have become thoroughly ambiguous and troublesome in the culture of developed societies and especially in the church; religious authority has become even more complex in the present globalized and pluralistic context. These issues affect religion, religious freedom, and spiritual life in the ecclesial community. An ecclesial mission spirituality has to transcend clericalism and authoritari-

anism and yet be open to religious leadership. In the Western developed world, mature ecclesial spirituality has evolved to the point where authority has to appeal to freedom by holding up paths for Christian service that attract commitment.

Baptism, which initiates people into the church community, commissions them in a community of responsibility and ministry. This idea is called the priesthood of the faithful in doctrinal terms. Thus, in brief, the baptism that introduces one into the church as the community that extends Jesus Christ's presence in history makes all members of the church responsible members of the community. All are called to participate in helping specifically ordained ministers in building up the community. Given the relationship between the nature of the church and its mission, which gets translated into practical tasks of maintenance and mission within every church community, an ecclesial spirituality of service in and on behalf of the community will appeal to the criterion of practical effectiveness to measure the value of actual practices.

In a manner analogous to ordained ministers, the "laity" are in the ordinary course of things more deeply engaged in society and "the world."<sup>50</sup> They are frequently the ones who make actual contact with the world outside the church, who implement the impact of the church on society. The city on the hill is not unimportant, but at some point manifestation should become demonstration, and the concrete lives of members can be expected to carry the witness of the church into society. This should not be read as a minimization of the activism involved in public institutional stands but as an effort to raise up the significance of the everyday active lives of ordinary Christians. But in the end it is not effectiveness that unites the follower of the Crucified One with God but the participation in the historical movement guided by the values of the kingdom of God.

This opens space to say something about a mission spirituality in an interreligious world that is now self-consciously pluralistic. What sense does it make to talk of a mission spirituality today when the aggressive outreach of the churches in the past is often regarded as an embarrassing religious imperialism? How does an ecclesial mission spiri-

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<sup>50</sup> This distinction between clergy and laity is not acceptable in many churches that have reacted institutionally against various forms of clericalism. Even so, analogous tensions can always arise in any situation where an organization embodies offices of leadership.

tuality work in our contemporary situation? Two distinctions help to meet what is a serious problem in a context where many are simply ready to dismiss any idea of Christian mission. First, one should not confuse the foundational impulse of mission and the way it is implemented or carried forward. The desire to communicate the reality of the loving creator and savior God, something relevant for all human beings, does not have to be mediated in the ways it was before historical consciousness as we know it set in. Second, historical consciousness also imposes a certain humility that prevents any religion from claiming a total grasp of the whole truth. Thus a sharing of a partial perspective on truth in a pluralistic situation entails listening and insures a mission that involves two-way traffic. Christian mission has to recognize others with a mission to witness to the truth of their encounter with transcendent reality. Our pluralistic one-world context does not undermine mission but requires it all the more. But it cannot transpire in an imperialistic way. The model for mission in a world of global interchange looks more like a conversation than the simple proclamation of a message.

Ecclesiology from below, which traces the genesis of the church in its historical development, also provides a method for envisioning how the mission of the church can unfold in a pluralistic world. Take the stories of the ordinary faithful encountering other religious people as a paradigm for how the mission of Jesus Christ might be formally set to practice by the churches. Mrs. X of one faith meets Mrs. Y of another faith in the workplace or the neighborhood. They may become close friends, and in the course of their relationship they share their religious convictions. In so doing they communicate with and in some measure influence one another quite profoundly without ever feeling or suggesting a desire that the other convert. Such an event is interreligious dialogue at the grassroots level and it provides a picture for church policy to emulate. Today the mission is to enter into dialogue with the world of secular life and the religions, and a mission spirituality carries this forward according to the abilities and place of each one.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> In many respects the referential sphere of Christian mission has been altered during the course of the twentieth century. Up until then mission territory was looked upon as “non-Christian lands” and people. In today’s globalized world, and where church and the public sphere are differentiated, it is more cogently imagined as the “secular world.” This shifts its meaning, preserves its essential drive *ad extra*, and engages all.

## The Spiritual Exercises in the Church

All this provides the background to a rationale for expanding Ignatius's Fourth Week to include explicit contemplation and meditation on the formation of the church. Much of that rationale is implicit in the discussion itself. I hope to draw it to the surface with three ideas: the character of the salvation mediated by Jesus, the nature of the church as the existential historical playing out of that salvation, and the consequent mission spirituality that underlies the church in which the *Exercises* finds a home.

The first point has to do with christology and more pointedly soteriology. There is no doubt that the *Spiritual Exercises* is christocentric. More particularly the spirituality of the *Exercises* revolves around the idea of salvation, not only because all christology does, but also because from the Principle and Foundation onwards the themes of salvation pervade the text. In Ignatius's time it was more or less customary to think of salvation, insofar as it was an objective condition, as something already accomplished by Jesus Christ and as such already there to be appropriated through the mediation of the church. Since at least the nineteenth century, exegesis has gradually communicated a much more subtle and dynamic conception of salvation as something that is done or accomplished, and yet not done but promised, and also as continually being mediated in the power of the Spirit. These three conceptions are all considered true, and, in relationship with each other, they set up a dynamic view of salvation's economy.

Without being too simplistic about it, when these conceptions from New Testament biblical scholarship passed into the framework of a modern theological method that considers revealed religious truth from the perspective of how it resonates in the experience of the Christian community, this elicited a concept of salvation that is essentially existential and historical. Jesus is savior by revealing God; and that revelation, when truly appropriated, is salvation. This salvific being-intentionally-united-with-God was accomplished in its being revealed in history, and it is so in its appropriation by any given person. And yet it is patent that from another perspective the world is no more saved now than it was before Jesus appeared and each Christian remains *simul justus et peccator*. And this yields the conclusion that salvation points to the dynamic power of God as Spirit in history, incarnated in Jesus and appropriated by disciples, but whose fullness lies up ahead in an absolute future.

The role of the church constitutes a key element in this existential and historical conception of salvation. The appropriation of salvation mediated through Jesus Christ establishes the church. The church is precisely the community of those who have appropriated the salvation of God mediated through Jesus Christ. Thus in a new historical way the doctrine of no Christian salvation outside the church takes on fresh existential meaning. It does not imply or deny that salvation from God has always been available in human history and is mediated in myriad ways outside the church. But it does affirm that the salvation from God mediated by Jesus is carried forward in and by the church, and anyone who shares that salvation has a direct relationship with the church. The point being made here is a reiteration and underlining of what was said in the wider discussion: the salvation of God mediated by Jesus Christ in history intrinsically involves church as the community who appropriates this salvation.<sup>52</sup>

This sets up the third point that was developed in the last section regarding the mission spirituality that underlies and constitutes the church. Without repeating that discussion, I want to signal how it also locates the place of the *Spiritual Exercises* in the dynamic life of the church. The mission of the church defines what each member of the church appropriates on assuming membership. The *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius Loyola demonstrates ways of appropriating one's membership in the church and one's particular mission spirituality. This mission is a quality of the ongoing life of being a Christian, and the whole church comprises a dynamic, complex, social, and multi-denominational movement in history. How often do we hear that the church is not a body of doctrines but an existential way of being in the world? The very repetition of this cliché indicates how much that consciousness needs reinforcement. When the movement of the *Exercises* is interpreted through the logic of "The Call of the King," this opens them up to a dy-

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<sup>52</sup> A spontaneous objection may arise at this point to the effect that surely all those Christians who remain deeply committed to Jesus Christ apart from any church affiliation also enjoy Jesus Christ's mediation of salvation. This is surely true. But it should not be allowed to distract from the point that is being made, namely, that if there were no continual existence of the church, it would also be impossible to have any Christians who stand apart from it: the church keeps Christian salvation alive in history; without the church it would cease to exist. To put it bluntly, Christian existence apart from the church is intrinsically symbiotic with the church even when there may be good reasons for individuals to separate themselves from it.

namic spirituality of service in the church and, sustained by the church, in society.

In sum, the *Exercises* stimulates a Christian mission spirituality, which shapes the very foundation of the church, and should therefore be explicitly associated with and located within the framework of a basic understanding of the church. This can be parsed more finely in three conclusions. First the *Spiritual Exercises* is an appropriate possession of all the churches. It draws the person making them into the grounding mission of the church, which it extends out into history. Second, this is not just a spirituality contained *within* the church, but is one that constitutes the church and nurtures the extension of its mission out into the world. Third, this context also underscores the framework for the Election, an underlying theme that runs all through the *Exercises*. An ecclesial setting rescues a person's choice in life from any temptations to individualism and sets it within the context of the church's mission as a community.

## Some Examples of Possible Contemplations

As in the First Week, let me propose some examples of scriptural passages that would provide occasions for retreatants imaginatively to become part of the incipient Jesus movement that developed into the church. They follow upon contemplations of the disciples' Easter experiences and draw people into the mission spirituality that was and is latent in this recognition and faith. Again, I do not develop these reflections because each one will do that in a distinctive way. At the same time the extensive description of how the church gradually developed in the wake of Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection provide many leads for rhetorical expansion in dialogue with these and other scriptural texts.

### 1. *Acts 2:37–42: Formation of the Jesus Movement*

*First Point.* What shall we do? Repent and be baptized.

*Second Point.* They attended to the teaching of Jesus, to fellowship, to the Eucharist, and prayer in the temple.

### 2. *Acts 15:1–35: Opening of the Mission to the Gentiles*

*First Point.* The history: terms of the controversy.

*Second Point.* The decision.

*Third Point.* The consequences: our story; the mission generates a church.

### **3. Recapitulation: The Spirit of God in Luke's narrative of the Christ event**

*First Point.* Luke's narrative theology: the history of Jesus, within the history of the Spirit; within the story of creation.

*Second Point.* Ignatius's version of the Christian life within the Christian story: Jesus as revealer of God; Jesus as one to be followed; following Jesus is life in the Spirit.

*Third Point.* Our story within the Christian story: personal response to God who addresses us personally in love through creation and in Jesus Christ.

### **4. Contemplation to Attain Divine Love**

This contemplation as Ignatius designed it can play its traditional role of bringing the *Exercises* into an explicit consideration of a spirituality of contemplation in action and finding God in all things.

## **IV. Conclusion**

**T**he goal of this essay has been to show that the suggested expansions of the Spiritual Exercises do not violate their logic or integrity but would authentically fit their rhythm. As a matter of fact the Exercises are always being interpreted every time they are made. The expansions suggested here are dictated by certain imperatives that arise from the changes that have occurred in Western culture since the sixteenth century. It would be hard to argue that no adaptations were necessary. It is always difficult to define what shifts should be made. This proposal is that something like this is called for when we address people who live in a new historicist, socially conscious, pluralistic, and scientifically transformed culture. It meets two outstanding problems for Christian faith today. It seeks to integrate faith with the new scientific view of the universe and to stimulate members of the church to assume responsibility for churches that now seem to be disappointing many of their dynamic middle-class and thinking members.



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