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## The *Spiritual Exercises* in a Religiously Pluralistic World<sup>1</sup>

WILLIAM REISER, S.J.

In recent years there has been considerable discussion in Jesuit circles about non-Catholics and even non-Christians making the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius.<sup>2</sup> Fr. Adolfo Nicolás, interviewed in February 2007, about a year before being elected superior general of the Society of Jesus, and having spent many years in Japan, spoke to this point:

“The question is how to give the Ignatian experience to a Buddhist,” he says. “Not maybe formulated in Christian terms, which is what Ignatius asked, but to go to the core of the experience. What happens to a person that goes through a number of exercises that really turn a person inside-out. This is still for us a big challenge.”<sup>3</sup>

Fr. Nicolás’ language is careful. He speaks of the “Ignatian experience,” particularly with its emphasis on each person’s being led by God; he does not refer to the determinate Christian experience that lies beneath the *Exercises*.

Every effort to think theologically about the relationship among the world’s religions has to travel, sooner or later, the route of experience. Such is the lesson taught to us by Louis Massignon (1883–1962) in his exploration of Islamic spirituality, the Benedictines Henri Le Saux [known as Abhishiktananda (1910–1973)] and Bede Griffiths (1906–1993) with their immersion in the world of the Hindu ashram, and the Cistercian Thomas Merton (1915–1968) in his exploration of monasticism in Asia. Inter-religious dialogue presupposes that the partners to the conversation understand their own spiritual identities before they start to engage the religious other, and they generally discover that listening to the religious other refines their spiritual identity even further.<sup>4</sup> Jesuits have certainly been eager for such conversation, and the experiential basis or spiritual identity from which they begin can be traced to the *Exercises*. Unlike a Bede Griffiths or Thomas Merton, Jesuits do not come at religious experience from the perspective of monasticism. Thus their engagement with other religions takes on a different character.<sup>5</sup> Although Ignatius was clearly familiar with monastic spiritual traditions, the *Exercises* aim at an engagement with the world that is simultaneously active and contemplative, because such was the Jesus of Ignatius’ imagination.<sup>6</sup>

The category “experience” is a bit tricky, and so some clarification may be in order at the outset. I do not take religious experience to be primarily a matter of feelings, affections, and desiring, although the data of our senses are certainly important for the process of understanding. Experience is a function of imagination, and religious experience is above all a matter of relationship; it is about how individuals and communities relate to the mystery of God. This relationship to the divine mystery is evident in, and finds expression in, ritual, devotional practices and prayer forms, narratives of faith, music and art. By means of ritual and devotional practice, through praying and storytelling, we develop a way of interpreting the everyday world and investing it with meaning. Experience, then, always contains a cognitive component. Furthermore, knowing relates us both to other persons and to objects, that is, towards reality—toward the “not-I.”

Experience and doctrine inform each other. Doctrine—the language and rhetoric used to articulate religious truth; the meaning behind the Christian community’s symbolic language—frames the way we think about and thereby relate to God. Nevertheless, experience holds a certain priority over conceptualization, that is, over doctrinal formulations, for several reasons. First, the process of understanding often starts at a pre-conceptual level. Secondly, human language has its limitations—limits that become particularly evident when talking about God. This means that the interpretation of texts, as an ongoing challenge and responsibility for the church, constantly brings us back to the experience that gave rise to them in the first place. And thirdly, the religious truths that we profess need to be confirmed in terms of what happens in our daily lives; in other words, through practice or “experience.” Otherwise beliefs remain at the level of abstraction and the assent we give to them remains merely cerebral or notional.<sup>7</sup>

The *Exercises* represent a major spiritual resource from which Jesuits and others have drawn in order to share the richness of Ignatius’ experience and insight, and if there is one characteristic people associate with the making of the *Exercises* it is their adaptability. When it comes to Ignatian spirituality, there is no one-size-fits-all approach.<sup>8</sup> The *Exercises* are divided into four weeks, but a week can be seven days, or fewer, or more. While normally made over the course of a month, there are circumstances that merit their being made over the course of six months, or more. They are usually made in a retreat house, but sometimes in one’s own home. The setting might be urban, it could be the countryside, in the mountains, or by the sea. This adaptability with respect to the mechanics of the retreat is pretty evident in the Annotations that introduce Ignatius’ text.<sup>9</sup> The text of the *Exercises* clearly envisions some diversity when it comes to the practice and giving of the *Exercises*.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, when viewed as a strategy for reforming one’s life or as a religious preparation for making an important decision about its direction, the

*Exercises* invite people to consider the necessary ingredients for spiritual development: a sense of moral inadequacy and a corresponding desire for wholeness, an awareness of divine goodness, knowing how to sort through conflicting interior movements—our desires and attractions, fears and resistance. The First Principle and Foundation (Exx 23), the examination of consciousness (Exx 24–43) as well as the second and third methods of prayer (Exx 249–260) have potential application to a wide audience. Within the *Exercises*, spiritual seekers will find a utopian vision, the struggle and suffering required if that vision is to be implemented, a conviction about the triumph of love and hope over hatred and despair, and a mysticism summed up in terms of finding God in all things and all things in God.<sup>11</sup>

At the same time, however, the text of the *Exercises* bears an indelible Christological imprint, and this deep imprint, reflecting the Christological character of the gospels themselves, needs always to be recognized. This imprint throws into relief major elements of the Christian religious experience—elements that define what is distinctive about the way Christians know the mystery of God. Looked at in this way, the practice of the *Exercises* can make an important contribution to inter-religious conversation. The Vatican declaration *Dominus Iesus* (2000) was concerned about relativism with respect to beliefs, doctrines, and truth claims. Beneath doctrines and truth claims, however, there lies experience. The *Exercises* direct our attention not to doctrines as such but to Christian religious experience and what makes it distinctive. The phrasing deserves to be emphasized. In the measure that we fail to appreciate what is distinctive—not so much “unique” as “distinctive”—about our experience of God, we bring less to any conversation at the inter-religious table.<sup>12</sup>

In its Decree 5, the 34<sup>th</sup> General Congregation of the Society of Jesus addressed the topic of inter-religious dialogue and distinguished, among other things, the “dialogue of religious experience” from “the dialogue of theological exchange.”<sup>13</sup> Just as the *Exercises* can be a resource for the first dialogue, they can also contribute to the second. Individuals who have made the full *Exercises* are likely to have achieved the degree of spiritual freedom that makes it possible to meet the religious “other” without becoming defensive or threatened in the face of religious difference. Again, this grace does not derive from the Ignatian *Exercises* as such but from a thorough appropriation of the gospel. In other words, not being threatened by difference is a grace of sharing in the spiritual freedom of Jesus. One receives, we might say, “a charism for dialog.”<sup>14</sup> Perhaps it is precisely this charism that lies behind the presupposition Ignatius spelled out in Exx 22:

So that the director and the exercitant may collaborate better and with greater profit, it must be presupposed that any good Christian has to be more ready to justify than to condemn a neighbour’s statement. If no justification can be

found, one should ask the neighbour in what sense it is to be taken, and if that sense is wrong he or she should be corrected lovingly. Should this not be sufficient, one should seek all suitable means to justify it by understanding it in a good sense.

Being more ready to justify than to condemn is an attitude that should extend beyond the way one Christian listens to another to the way Christians hear and interpret the religious other. One should not judge difference before one understands it, and understanding the other requires entering into conversation. In addition to this fundamental cognitive openness we should add the theological consequence of the heart's anticipation that God can be found "in all created things on the face of the earth" (Exx 236) and of the conviction about "how all that is good and every gift descends from on high" (Exx 237). Having a charism for theological dialogue means anticipating that other religions belong to "all that is good" and, as such, that they come "from on high."<sup>15</sup>

This essay, then, is making three claims. First, that the *Spiritual Exercises* have clear and pronounced Christological parameters, and presuppose a certain level of incorporation into the Christian community. Second, that the *Exercises* set into relief distinctive elements of a Christian's relationship with the divine mystery. And third, that the *Exercises*, when fully made, can shape a religious consciousness prepared and eager for inter-religious dialogue. By "fully making the *Exercises*" I mean a thoroughgoing appropriation of the gospel—an immersion in the gospel narratives that leads to "a fundamental and momentous change in the human reality" that a believer is.<sup>16</sup>

### FRAMING THE QUESTION

As encounters with the religious other become more frequent,<sup>17</sup> an important question to keep in front of us is what makes Christian religious experience, not "better" or "higher," but distinctive. Cardinal Walter Kasper, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, writes: "Thus there is no way of ignoring this observation: within the mentality of ideological pluralism, religious pluralism is *the* challenge today for Christianity and for the Church."<sup>18</sup> Yet while the etiquette of dialogue requires us to avoid sounding either absolutist or condescending on the one hand, our Christian faith-commitment demands that we not succumb to religious relativism on the other. In its attempt to correct a misunderstanding of religious pluralism, *Dominus Iesus* might have been more happily received if it had paid greater attention to what gives Christian religious experience its particular character and form.<sup>19</sup>

Central to the Christian experience of the divine mystery is the gospel narrative of Jesus. This narrative imprints a pattern on how Christians inter-

pret, think about, and relate to the mystery of God. With their stories and images, their depictions of Jesus crossing the lake with his disciples, journeying throughout Galilee, or sitting at table, the everydayness, the humanness, and the sheer physicality of Jesus appear on every page of the gospels. These pages speak above all to our imagination; and imagination, drawn by affection, re-creates the humanity of Jesus.<sup>20</sup>

Christians are not the only ones on the planet who are searching for God and ways to develop their interior life, and making the discovery that human spirituality transcends religious and cultural boundaries is a graced consolation: we are not alone in our thirst for the divine. For those who have made this discovery, inter-religious dialogue is likely to be regarded as one of the promising signs of our times. The world's religions have something to learn from one another; each has something to contribute to our common vocation to care for one another and to look after our planet. The mystery of God is not revealed in the same way or to the same effect in every religion; that much seems clear from a study of the world's religions.

But I think we must go one step further. Religions mediate distinctive experiences and thus distinctive understandings of the mystery of God. The differences among religions are not like so many accidents (to adopt scholastic terminology for a moment) inhering in a common essence or substance. Viewing things this way makes all religions relative: one God, many names. To propose that the mystery of God exists as some absolute Truth, which each of the world's religions approximates in a more or less adequate fashion—like many “ways” converging at the top of a mountain—would ultimately lead to a devaluation of cultural and religious difference and a theological implosion. How could such a claim ever be authenticated? To believe that there might be easy passage from the way we know and experience to the way things are—to reality as it is in itself—is probably an illusion.<sup>21</sup> The problem is not going to disappear by appealing to the possibility of a revelation “from above,” like Moses hearing directly from God on Mount Sinai. Such stories may be attractive, but divine self-disclosure does not override the mind's own circuitry. Revelation starts on the ground, in the everyday life of communities and cultures, not in the clouds; the pathway to God begins with experience and imagination. Moreover, the very concept of religion that lies behind the phrase “world religions” may stand in need of critique. It has been argued that employing the word “religion” to describe and classify the phenomena of spiritual belief and practice throughout the world may be squeezing those phenomena into a nineteenth century, Western conceptual mold.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps “religion” ought not to be thought of as a genus of which the individual religions are each a species.

As noted earlier, Ignatius envisioned that the giving of the *Exercises* would be adapted according to the background of the one making them, following

Annotation 18.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, there are parameters. For instance, Ignatius' singular focus on the mystery of God in Christ shapes the meditative strategy of the First Week and its understanding of what sin consists of. Granted that every human being needs to come to terms with personal moral failure, the First Week grace reveals its precise Christological focus in the colloquy before Christ crucified (Exx 53).<sup>24</sup> Or again, while it is true that reflective human beings engage in processes of discernment, Ignatius' rules for discernment are crafted against the backdrop of the dynamics unleashed by the desire and the effort to follow and imitate Jesus. I suspect that the limits of the *Exercises*' theological adaptability will be put to the test as the experience of "multiple religious belonging"—or being a "multiple religious reader"—grows more frequent.<sup>25</sup>

For Ignatius, the will of God for humanity took definitive expression in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. And the quintessential form of "life according to the Gospel," for Ignatius, consists of the highest spiritual poverty (*summa pobreza spiritual*), which could well lead to actual poverty, and to the desire for insults and contempt, which issues in humility, as exemplified or "practiced" by Jesus (Exx 146). The *historical* reason for Jesus' poverty and humility arises from his solidarity with human beings in their poverty, as Paul reminded the Corinthians (2 Cor 8:9); poverty and humility, like dying to self, are not mere timeless, universal religious ideals to be embraced in the pursuit of spiritual perfection. What they mean, for Christians, starts with the story of Jesus.

In the case of poverty, however, Ignatius went beyond the gospels. For him the practice of poverty—if we follow what he reveals to us about begging in his *Autobiography* (or *Reminiscences*)—was the indispensable experiment in which he learned to trust divine providence. Yet as important as this lesson was to his learning how to depend upon God in all things, such practice was not exactly the poverty exemplified by Jesus. Jesus' poverty manifested his oneness with his people; it does not appear to have been an exercise for mastering a universal spiritual truth about dependence upon God. Nevertheless, the retreatant's internalizing of Jesus' practice—his life as both teacher and prophet—is pivotal to the election, even if one realizes that God is not calling her or him to embrace "evangelical perfection," which in Jesus' case consisted of "*puro servicio* [complete, exclusive, single-minded service] *de su Padre eternal*"—symbolized by his remaining in the Temple (Exx 135; Lk 2:41ff.).<sup>26</sup> Whatever is life-giving and redemptive, the divine will for the world, the criteria by which one determines what is for God's glory and honor: all of this is revealed through the gospel narrative.<sup>27</sup> As important as the election is to the dynamic of the *Exercises*, establishing the foundation upon which the election is to be based is even more important. Head and heart have to be grounded in

the gospel narrative—“*juntamente contemplando su vida*” (Exx 135), since the world of the gospel furnishes the imaginative resonance in which the divine call is to be heard now and in the future. Unless we knew the gospel story, we would be unable to pin down what Ignatius meant by the divine glory and service. The will of God is that we should respond to the divine call; what that call means comes to fullest expression in Jesus—the one “sent” by God for our salvation. For Ignatius, human beings give God glory and serve the divine majesty by joining Jesus in his mission. The idea is implicit in the Principle and Foundation (Exx 23).

Since not all Christians who make the *Exercises* are Catholic, a high degree of ecumenical sensitivity is called for on the part of directors. Protestants share the narrative of faith in Jesus contained in our common Scripture, although they might not subscribe to the same ecclesial line within that narrative. A director might take into account Protestant theological sensibilities when presenting certain meditations (for example, a director might steer clear of the story of the primacy of Peter), or with respect to the intermediary thrust of the colloquies.<sup>28</sup> Today we would also contextualize the words of the earthly king about conquering all the land of “the infidels” (Exx 93), in the same way that the church contextualizes references to “the Jews” in John’s passion narrative.<sup>29</sup>

Yet the impulse to adapt the *Exercises* to different audiences poses certain challenges. The triple colloquy could run against the grain of some religious sensibilities and ought not to be considered essential to the way a Christian should pray. But are the Eucharistic overtones in the stories of the loaves and fishes or at the Last Supper to be ignored? Ignatius refers to Jesus as “Creator and Lord.” Do we play down such language in order to accommodate retreatants with “low” Christologies? The point is not that we might do a disservice to the book of the *Exercises*; adaptations, after all, are anticipated. The point, rather, is that we would run the risk of reinventing the Jefferson Bible—cutting and pasting scriptural texts in order to avoid an overtly Catholic way of reading the gospels themselves.<sup>30</sup>

The central dynamic of the *Exercises* concerns the dynamics of discipleship, not the identity of Jesus as Son of God. In this respect, the gospels and the *Exercises* are not congruent. What happens interiorly when Jesus calls disciples? What inner changes must take place before men and women achieve the freedom to follow him, and in what mission does he call them to join him? Clearly, if it were not for the gospels, the *Exercises* would never have come into existence. At nearly every point, the *Exercises* depend upon the gospel narratives and have in mind the broader narrative of the Hebrew Scriptures that the gospels themselves presume. The first disciples knew and experienced the God of Israel long before they ever laid eyes on Jesus; but they came to know this



God differently after becoming involved, irreversibly, in the life, death, and resurrection of the carpenter-turned-rabbi from Nazareth. The *Exercises*, we might say, represent Ignatius' appropriation of the determinative experience that lies behind Matthew 11:27—"All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."<sup>31</sup> Writing nearly some sixty years ago, Joseph de Guibert observed:

From the text of the *Exercises* too has come the gospel form of the Jesuits' contemplation of the events in Christ's life. Taken as a whole, these writings have remained in close contact with the inspired text itself, with its concrete details and simple expressions which are within the reach of all.<sup>32</sup>

In an article that appeared in 1996, Thomas Michel presented an Ignatian meditation that looked at the men and women of the world at worship from the platform of the splendid diversity of the world's religions.<sup>33</sup> He then asks, "Is God pleased with this diversity, or would God prefer to have us all worshipping with the same rites, calling God by the same name, studying God's word from the same texts?"<sup>34</sup> The answer, he implies, is that God is surely more pleased with diversity than with uniformity. Diversity—empirical religious pluralism—is a fact of life, which suggests that the divine mystery has, by intention or design, revealed and communicated itself to the peoples of the world in diverse yet complementary ways. But is this an example of sliding too easily from the way we know—the way we experience the world—into a claim that the way things appear to us corresponds to God's creative plan? Does the *de facto* diversity we observe in the religious world justify such an inference about divine intention?

He notes that Decree 5 of GC 34 "Our Mission and Interreligious Dialogue" (to which we referred earlier) makes a further point:

When God sees believers of so many religions approaching Him in faith, God's role is not that of a passive observer. God's own Spirit is active in the lives and in the life of faith of all these people. It is the Divine Spirit that motivates their various acts of faith, it is the Spirit that communicates with them in the very act of their prayer.<sup>35</sup>

And again:

When we praise God for the action of the Spirit in forming and supporting Muslims, Buddhists, and the followers of indigenous religions in a genuine commitment to prayer, to the poor, to justice, to respect for the natural world, we are not compromising our Christian faith but rather pursuing its deeper implications.<sup>36</sup>

I agree with each of these points; whatever cultural or religious energies promote, protect, and cultivate an ethic of life should be recognized and welcomed. And yet more needs to be said. Religion is not coterminous with morality; the “cash value” or spiritual measure of ascetical practice and contemplation is not simply higher ethical standards and noble, humanitarian actions. This is not to underestimate the moral power that resides in the world’s religions, but spirituality is ultimately about the human being’s living more deeply in God and experiencing divine life in our communities and our common humanity. While spiritual people are expected to be moral, spirituality touches first, not on morality, but on what happens as the mystery of God penetrates one’s life. It is about relationship.

Still, theology and spirituality obviously relate to each other, since theology has to be grounded in human experience, and the Christian experience of being human is mediated above all through scriptural narratives. A major task of theology then becomes that of clarifying—and even purifying—the biblical picture of God. And here we reach delicate ground. To purify some aspects of the biblical portrayal of God, does a theologian need to move outside the biblical tradition and adopt non-scriptural criteria? Do we turn to philosophy and metaphysics? Do we turn to humanity’s wider religious experience? Or are the resources we need for such discernment already within Scripture, which means that we must take sides with one part of the Bible against another? While I do not yet know how to answer these questions, I think there is a salutary way to approach them. We start by listening to and owning the life-changing question Jesus asked his first two followers, “What are you looking for?” (Jn 1:38). That moment, too, has imprinted itself on Christian religious experience.

## **FIVE EXPERIENTIAL IMPRINTS**

Once we understand the *Exercises* as the characteristically Ignatian appropriation of the gospel, we obviously cannot separate the mystery of Christ from the *Exercises* any more than we could scissor Jesus from the gospels, preserving only his ethical vision.<sup>37</sup> As noted earlier, even the discerning of spirits is Christological, since a person discerns his or her calling—the will of God—against the background of the life of Jesus. Whatever is holy and divine, whatever is attractive and good, whatever is true or false, is measured by the one criterion which is Christ. The gospel’s call is not a generic summons to obey universal imperatives about being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible, generous, and so on. The gospel’s call is far more specific; it involves responding to Jesus as the disciples do in the gospel narrative, dedicating oneself to the kingdom through, with, and alongside him. This, for Ignatius, is what God “wants” for us. There is almost certainly a mysticism involved here, a deepening of one’s union with God in Christ; yet this mysticism arises, not so much

from the *Exercises* as such, but from the heart of the gospel itself. Contemplative oneness with Jesus is basically the fruit of prayer and living the gospel, for which “making the *Exercises*” is one expression. And running through the entire *Exercises*, just as through the gospels, is the paschal experience. Easter faith, perhaps more than Ignatius’ grasp of the creature’s call to serve the Divine Majesty, confers a certain theological and spiritual coherence on the *Exercises*.

The gospels do not exhaust human spirituality, any more than the *Exercises* exhaust the whole of Christian spirituality; neither text provides the last word about prayer, contemplation, ascetical practice, and so on. The gospels are rooted, after all, in a non-Christian religious tradition. They are incomprehensible apart from the religious experience of Israel, from which they were born. Because of that Old Testament matrix, the Jesus who emerges from the gospels is recognized above all as “prophet.”<sup>38</sup> Thus to understand who Jesus is, one needs to understand the function and profile of Jewish prophets, since Christian faith is forever stamped with the prophet’s experience of God—an experience all the more intense insofar as the prophet shares and feels the historical fortunes of God’s people. Yet the gospel enlarges that experience, above all because the cross and resurrection open onto the mystery of God—and the possibility of our union with that mystery—beyond what the prophets imagined. The God disclosed in and through Jesus is both humble and self-emptying, which are not the attributes one ordinarily thinks of while reading, say, Exodus or Psalms or Job.

The first and major Christian imprint within the *Exercises* comes from the mystery of God itself. “God” in the *Exercises* is the Creator; God is “three-personed,” and each of the divine Persons can be known and addressed. God is “one,” yet the divine mystery is not solitary. The Creator enters into conversation with human beings and “calls” them to mission with his Son. Following the theological impulse of biblical narratives, for Ignatius it is God who takes the initiative and approaches us first, and the relationship of each human being with this God is its own unique story. Human history is thus governed by divine providence. God never ceases “working directly” (Exx 15) with human beings. And, finally, this God raises the dead. The divine mystery, as *Christians have experienced it* since New Testament times, runs through the *Exercises* and stamps them indelibly.<sup>39</sup>

The second Christian imprint is the Incarnation. The theological perspective governing the *Exercises* is that the divine Word has become visible, human, historical. The incarnate Word’s visibility to imagination enables those making the *Exercises* to accompany Jesus even though they belong to a very different time and place. A relationship with the God of Christian experience is impossible without the use of imagination because so much of the Bible con-

sists of narrative. In view of the everydayness of the gospel story—its geography, physicality, and humanness—the Creator and Lord has not only joined the human world but remains profoundly connected with it, working and laboring in all things on the face of the earth, on our behalf (Exx 236; see also Exx 93), as one who has breathed the same air, drunk the same water, and walked the same earth.

The third imprint is the paschal mystery. Only one Jesus exists, namely, the crucified and risen Lord; the risen Jesus is being addressed in Exx 53, even though the image Ignatius presents there is that of Jesus on the cross. As historical imagination makes its way through scenes and episodes within the ministry of Jesus, the Jesus to whom one prays in each exercise is the risen Christ. The imagination may be directed to picture the road from Bethany to Jerusalem (Exx 192), or the road from Mount Sion to the valley of Josaphat (Exx 202); but the Jesus with whom one actually speaks remains the Jesus of the church's faith, even though the note of Easter glory is not heard until the Fourth Week. The dying of Jesus discloses divine vulnerability: poverty, humility, and service properly describe what divinity is. His rising unveils where creation itself is headed—the ultimate triumph of life, justice, and love.

A fourth imprint is ecclesial existence. This stamp shows itself explicitly in Ignatius' references to the church and to its sacramental life; but it also appears implicitly throughout the *Exercises* both in the written text (as bearer of a religious tradition) and in the actual making of the *Exercises*. The Jesus to whom one prays is the ecclesial Christ. The Scriptures one prays from have been preserved and transmitted by a believing community and have no enduring vitality apart from that community. The service one is called to render presupposes church. For Ignatius, the one who follows Jesus should never act outside the framework of a community of faith.<sup>40</sup> Jesus is not a stand-alone prophet and redeemer: he is inseparable from the community of disciples. One's companionship with the risen Lord is personal, but it cannot be solitary, even for hermits.

The fifth imprint is the kingdom of God. The message and healing ministry of Jesus can be summed up in terms of this phrase, so rich with resonance from the prophets and the psalms. Kingdom of God represents what the world would look like if human beings were fully open to God's word. To labor for the reconfiguring of the human world along the lines of the kingdom, to think and act each day from the conviction that the kingdom is a real possibility for this world despite every setback, disappointment and betrayal: this is what it means to join Jesus on his mission. The place in the *Exercises* where we find this imprint most clearly is the meditation on the two standards: the Lord of all the world "selects" (*escoge*) so many persons and "sends them" (*los envía*) to all the world (Exx 145). Christ "sends" (*envía*) them to help everyone (*que*

*a todos quieran ayudar*) by drawing them (*en traerlos*) to the highest spiritual poverty (*summa pobreza spiritual*) and by drawing all people to the desire to be insulted and disesteemed (*a deseo de opprobios y menosprecios*), since from poverty and contempt humility is born (Exx 146). First comes the desire, and then if God wills it, the full reality (Exx 147).

The content of this exercise is significant not only because it reflects much of Ignatius' own experience of being known, singled out, and called, but also because it draws our attention to a distinctively Christian experience of salvation. On one level, the *Exercises* work with a straightforward understanding of salvation as being saved from sin and attaining eternal life. But at a second, deeper level, a very real transformation unfolds within the believer who comes to know and follow Jesus. The *Exercises*, in other words, mediate an experience of coming to wholeness.

At the religiously naïve level, Ignatius portrays salvation as being rescued from eternal damnation. Consider these lines: “Next I look at what the people on the face of the earth are doing, for example wounding, killing, and going to hell” (Exx 108). The three divine Persons “look down on the whole round world and on all its peoples living in such great blindness, and dying and going down to hell” (Exx 106). We consider “the numberless other people who have gone to hell for fewer sins than I have committed” (Exx 52). By portraying salvation in this fashion, however, Ignatius may be disconnecting it from Jesus' insistence on the nearness of the kingdom of God. The biblical notion of the reign of God, after all, is more centered on this life and the transformation of this world in the direction of God's justice and freedom, than on making it into heaven or escaping the fires of hell.

To conceive salvation as being *saved from* hell, however, is to think of it negatively. What, we might ask, are we being *saved for*? The answer is that *being saved for* translates into becoming a very different kind of person from the man or woman we presently are, and this brings us to the second level. Being saved, in the *making* of the *Exercises*, means imitating and actually being more like Jesus (*por imitar y parecer más actualmente a Christo nuestro Señor*); it means poverty (*pobreza*), ridicule (*opprobios*), and to be considered foolish and crazy for Christ (*ser estimado por vano y loco por Christo*)—(Exx 167). To be saved means imitating and serving Our Lord (Exx 168). When Ignatius writes, “To sum up, nothing ought to induce me to take up or reject such means except the service and praise of God Our Lord and the eternal salvation of my soul,”<sup>41</sup> he is probably abbreviating and resorting to formula [*salvar su ánima* (Exx 23); *salvación de mi ánima* (Exx 169)]. Eternal salvation, for the one making the *Exercises*, is contingent upon following and imitating Jesus—something Ignatius could not conceive apart from poverty, humiliation, and rejection. Once again, it is important to bear in mind that poverty, humiliation,

and rejection are never abstract spiritual ideals. Rather, they are the concrete “signs” of one’s solidarity with the people of God, especially those whom poverty and powerlessness have forced to the margins of civic and social life. To appreciate the mystery of the Incarnation, we have to press beyond abstract “flesh”—human nature—to think about the social, cultural, economic, and political coordinates that make “flesh” determinate and historical. Being joined to God’s people by being joined to Jesus in his experience of being poor, humiliated, and rejected, casts salvation in a very different light.<sup>42</sup>

We have, therefore, at least five elementary experiences embedded in the *Exercises*: an experience of God as creating and revealing; an experience, by means of a sacramental imagination, of the divine mystery incarnate within our humanity; an experience of hope, power, and life coming through humiliation, poverty, powerlessness, and death; an experience of belonging to a community of those who hear the word of Jesus and put it into practice; and an experience of coming to wholeness as a result of one’s relationship with Jesus and living in solidarity with his people. Together, these religious moments shape and determine the distinctively Christian way of knowing and relating to God.

## FIVE LIMITATIONS

The *Spiritual Exercises* understandably have their limitations, given their 16<sup>th</sup>-century provenance. In at least five areas they seem to call for some re-framing, not on account of the background and needs of individual retreatants (Ignatius anticipated this sort of adaptation), but because of the changed circumstances in which the church of today finds itself.<sup>43</sup>

First, while Ignatius understood what the Ten Commandments and the gospel required for Christian living, it never would have occurred to him to link faith and justice the way the contemporary church has done. His guidelines for almsgiving are admirable—for instance, “it will always be better and more secure in what touches our person and standard of living the more we cut down and reduce expenses, and the closer we come to our High Priest”<sup>44</sup> (Exx 344)—but today we realize that between selfishness and almsgiving there stands justice. Within that middle terrain the prophets challenge us to examine unearned privilege and the economic forces that produce scandalous inequality.<sup>45</sup>

Second, Ignatius’ understanding of the “history” of the mysteries being contemplated would have been enlarged considerably if he had been writing today. Certainly, the imagination can always roam freely inside the gospel scenes and recreate the settings and encounters, listen to the figures and smell the background. But the gospels are not works of fiction, and so the imagination needs to learn how to respect the texts. That is, we have to read and

interpret the gospels in light of contemporary biblical criticism. What Ignatius wrote in Exx 363 should apply equally to 21<sup>st</sup>-century believers:

so it is more characteristic of the scholastics like St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, the Master of the Sentences, etc, to define or explain *for our times* what is necessary for eternal salvation and for more effectively combating and exposing all errors and fallacies. This is because the scholastic doctors, *being more recent*, not only have the benefit both of the true understanding of Sacred Scripture and of the holy positive Doctors, but while being themselves enlightened and illuminated by divine grace, they can avail themselves of the councils, canons and decrees of our holy mother Church.<sup>46</sup>

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In other words, history and the advancement of scholarship gave the scholastics a certain advantage—and (following Ignatius’ language) we should praise or celebrate (*alabar*) their contribution to theology! But since scholarship did not come to a standstill in the sixteenth century, we have even more grounds than Ignatius to celebrate the biblical and theological developments of our own era, not to mention the Council of 1962–65, the synods, the development of Catholic social teaching, and so on. Modern biblical scholarship has furnished us with enormous insight into the social, cultural, and historical context of the gospels and other New Testament writings, and together with this insight has come a richer comprehension of the humanity of Jesus.

Third (following upon the point just made), we have a clearer and fuller understanding of the Easter narratives than Ignatius did. I do not mean that we enjoy a closer relationship with the risen Jesus, because that relationship has always been a function of personal faith. Yet a strong case can be made for the possibility of understanding the grace of the Fourth Week that goes beyond what Ignatius left us in the *Exercises*, precisely because we have a more theologically developed grasp of the resurrection narratives.<sup>47</sup> How we conceive the nature and fruit of the Fourth Week, in other words, depends upon how we understand the role and message of the Easter stories. The richer our understanding of those stories, the better we appreciate what sort of God the gospels give us access to. The theological reason for the raising of Jesus from the dead goes beyond the personal vindication of Jesus. Resurrection confirms the divine solidarity with victims that runs through the whole of Jesus’ ministry; the risen Jesus never loses the marks of crucifixion.

Fourth, Ignatius tends to focus salvation in terms of the individual alone before God. Ignatian salvation sounds as if it were a solitary affair between the individual and God—saving one’s soul—even though in the meditation on the Incarnation the Trinity is portrayed as wanting to save “the human race” (Exx 102, 107) and in the meditation on two standards Christ sends his followers to everyone on the face of the earth (Exx 145 and 146). Since the *Exercises* envi-

sion the retreatant (singular) in his or her relationship with God, Ignatius' way of presenting salvation as the redemption of the individual is understandable. Nevertheless, human salvation necessarily includes a corporate dimension; indeed, the corporate dimension may be the weightier one, both theologically and spiritually. Paul puts it nicely:

Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. (Rom 5:18–19)

To be sure, Ignatius presumes that discipleship unfolds communally, in the church; for how could someone be a Christian and not belong to a church which is both visible and hierarchical? Furthermore, we know what a vital role the experience of being “friends in the Lord” played in the birth of the Society.<sup>48</sup> We know, too, how earnestly the companions commended others to the Lord and that they believed in the communion of saints. Still, today we would insist that the idea of the individual making or not making it into heaven oversimplifies the process of salvation. Either we are saved together or we are lost together. The social grace that is at work to help us create a worldwide community should fittingly have its eschatological counterpart. Just as in this world the quality of life is enhanced to the degree that each of us learns to live for others and allows the circle of “the others” to grow ever more inclusive, so also we reach eternity, not as solo travelers or pilgrims, but as collaborators, fellow workers, companions—ultimately, as sisters and brothers.

Eventually, the one making the *Exercises* undergoes a profound spiritual transformation in the direction of solidarity; the gospel itself orients us this way. The freedom and life of the many frequently depend upon the selflessness of the few, but more to the point is that we exist in history as a single human race and not as a massive collection of individuals. Thus the platform from which Christian contemplation starts is not just, for example, that God creates and loves *me*, but that God creates and loves *us*; not just that *I* am a sinner before God, but that *we* are a sinful people; not just that Christ died *for me* but that Christ died *for us*; not just that the Lord calls *me*, but that the Lord calls *us*; not just that God will raise *me* from the dead, but that God will raise *us*.

The final limitation I find in the *Exercises*—again, through no fault of Ignatius—comes from the missionary perspective shared by Christians of the sixteenth century. At the outset of the Second Week, the eternal King speaks of his will “to conquer the whole world and every enemy” (Exx 95), and as part of the additional material for Fourth Week meditations Ignatius has in mind the apostolic commission of Matthew 28:16–20 (Exx 307). He would have also known Mark 16:16 (“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but



whoever does not believe will be condemned”). The firmness of this theological *a priori* with respect to salvation stands in some tension with the often-cited Annotation 15 in which Ignatius comes down strongly on the side of the individual’s own experience of God. “Hence the giver of the *Exercises*,” he writes, “should leave the Creator to work directly with the creature, and the creature with the Creator and Lord” (Exx 15). Ignatius hit upon a principle of the spiritual life that in his view was non-negotiable, although his insistence was framed by two things. First, the individual is in the process of making the *Spiritual Exercises* and should be left free of outside influence, such as the director suggesting, however subtly, that to embrace religious life is to opt for the perfect following of Jesus. Second, Ignatius believed that the life of the vows, in itself, was indeed the evangelically perfect way, for this is what the church taught (Exx 356). But a director has to bracket that belief while giving the *Exercises* since “it is more opportune and much better that the Creator and Lord communicate Himself to the faithful soul in search for the will of God” (Exx 15).

What we have in Annotation 15, therefore, appears to be an instance of the priority of experience over doctrine. Ignatius is Christ-centered to the core, but he learned (because, he tells us, God had taught him<sup>49</sup>) that there is a relationship between the human being and the Creator that precedes every *particular* understanding of the life of faith and every *particular* or determinate understanding of how best to serve the Divine Majesty. It is this insight, however undeveloped by Ignatius himself, that enables those who have made the *Exercises* to face a religiously pluralistic world without succumbing to an attitude that is fundamentalist and fearful, and who can approach, without dogmatic preconceptions, those who are sincerely seeking God.

In the end, what we have to pay attention to, in order to understand what makes Christian experience distinctive, is not the five imprints or elements I have listed taken individually (and there may well be others), but the entire narrative from Genesis to Revelation, as the church has imagined it, of God’s dealing with a particular people in particular times and places. This story is not reducible to any other story, although other religious narratives might exhibit similar structures or analogous themes, any more than one human being could ever be reduced to another, even though we share the same “nature.”

Narrative configures imagination, and imagination forms and shapes the particular instance of humanity that each of us is. For Christians, the chief narrative line determining our religious identity is the gospel story about Jesus. It is fair to wonder what happens, therefore, when believers begin exploring narrative lines from another religious tradition, meditating on the texts of that tradition and praying with them. Does the merging of narrative lines in their imaginations lead to a revision of the way people think about and relate to the divine mystery? As the reader may have guessed, this is the major religious

question prompting the present essay. All of us need to learn the regional or local histories of which we are a part. We need to learn about the origins of the nation to which we belong, our family roots, and so on, if we are to understand who we are individually and as a people. Yet we also know that there is a world history: not the geological history of our planet but the stories of other peoples who share it with us. I am not Tibetan or Palestinian or Andean, for example; but it is important to be acquainted with their histories because, ultimately, there is but a single human race and (at least from the vantage point of the Creator) just one grand story about life on the planet earth, a universal history to which each of us belongs.<sup>50</sup> In studying other regional histories, I do not become Andean or Palestinian, for I can only be born in a particular place and time. Our national, familial or tribal roots may be diffuse; yet however diffuse those roots might be, there is a cultural and social particularity about each of us.

People can be Christian within any culture. Jesus can have an Asian face, or a Latino one, or an African one or a Polynesian one. Nevertheless, some elements of the gospel story are irreducible. Jesus himself was born and raised in Palestine, and so the gospels imagine a particular topography and first-century agrarian society becomes their backdrop. His imagination took on definition within the narrative lines of the Hebrew Bible. A good storyteller might get us wondering what a meeting between Jesus and the Buddha would have been like; the evangelists, after all, imagined Jesus in conversation with Moses and Elijah.<sup>51</sup> Yet in the end, Jesus is not the Buddha—and not Moses or Elijah or Adam or John the Baptist. No one else can be Son of God the way he was.

The fact that the Exercises have their limitations and the fact that the Christian experience of God is delimited by a narrative history might make us look at what Ignatius says about poverty in a different light. The *Spiritual Exercises* are not a universal instrument any more than the gospel is a universal message that is going to satisfy absolutely everybody's spiritual quest. In other words, Christians cannot lay sole claim to humanity's spiritual riches; the aesthetics of the Christian story are not universally compelling; and the gospel story does not address every single spiritual need. The desert Christians of the third and fourth centuries are a case in point. Jesus was not a monk or a recluse, and yet many of his followers have elected precisely that path to live out their search for God. Some disciples walked away (John 6:66). Perhaps the parable of the sower reflects a moment of poverty, a moment when Jesus realized that his efforts would not bear all the fruit he was hoping for (Mark 4:3–9). The poverty that Jesus embodied—the one who, though rich, became poor for our sake (2 Cor 8:9)—touches the words and symbols we use to invite one another more deeply into the mystery of God.

Ignatius explains at the outset that

‘spiritual exercises’ is the name given to every way of preparing and disposing one’s soul to rid herself of all disordered attachments, so that once rid of them one might seek and find the divine will in regard to the disposition of one’s life for the good of the soul (Exx 1).

This description sounds generic enough to include practically everyone, Christians and non-Christians alike. But as the *Exercises* unfold their Christological center becomes abundantly and decisively clear; by no means are they an instrument for proselytizing. At their core the *Spiritual Exercises* are intended to take people deeper into the mystery of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Their contribution to inter-religious dialogue, it seems to me, has to do with the foundational reality that a committed and self-reflective believer is. Those who have appropriated the gospel by means of the *Exercises* can enter into that conversation with an awareness of Christian distinctiveness, an ability to listen without becoming defensive, and a grateful realization that the world has spiritual riches beyond our religious tradition. At the same time, from a Christian perspective, there are some accommodations to human sensibilities that the divine mystery does not make. The Word did not just become flesh; it became poor. There is no route to wholeness that bypasses those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

## NOTES

1. This article developed from a paper delivered at a conference in Loyola, Spain, devoted to the history and practice of the Spiritual Exercises. The conference was held in August 2006.
2. “Jesuit circles” includes more than Jesuits themselves. The 2009 Directory of Centres of Spirituality and Retreat Houses published by the *Review of Ignatian Spirituality* lists 280 locations in 78 countries. In these centers and retreat houses, Jesuits are working with lay men and women, as well as with other religious.
3. The interview can be found in the newsletter of the Australian Jesuits at [www.express.org.au/article.aspx?aeid=2305](http://www.express.org.au/article.aspx?aeid=2305). See also “Conversation with Adolfo Nicolás” in *The Way* 47:3 (2008), 9–29.
4. Those engaged in such dialogue may find themselves facing real cognitive limits. Jeanine Hill Fletcher writes: “The persistent unknowability of our neighbors of other faiths reminds us of the limits of the human project in coming-to-know-God. Real disagreements, then, can be allowed as a reminder of our collective unknowing. God is beyond all human words, concepts, and affirmations. Through the continued alterity of the other, we glimpse the overabundance of God that surpasses all we can understand.” See “As Long as We Wonder: Possibilities in the Impossibility of Interreligious Dialogue,” *Theological Studies* 68:3 (2007), 553.
5. Here I have in mind the work of Jesuits like Aloysius Pieris (Sri Lanka), Michael Amaladoss (India), and Jacques Dupuis (who spent many years in India)—as well as Christian Troll and Francis Clooney, both of whom likewise have extensive experience in India. Xavier Albó, an anthropologist, has studied, extensively and sympathetically, Aymara culture and indigenous religious practices throughout the Andean region.
6. On “contemplative in action,” see William Barry and Robert Doherty, *Contemplatives in Action: The Jesuit Way* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2002). Also, Anton Witwer,

- “Contemplativo en la acción,” *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaciana*, 2 vols. (Bilbao and Santander, Spain: Ediciones Mensajero and Sal Terrae, 2007), I:457–465.
7. See the entry by Carlos Palacio “Experiencia de Dios” in *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaciana*, I:855. He notes an obvious yet helpful distinction between the experience of Ignatius (as found in the Autobiography or Reminiscences) and the Ignatian experience (which is found in the *Exercises*).
  8. Although Ignatian spirituality is rooted in the *Exercises*, it is not frozen there. For one thing, Ignatius wrote the Society’s *Constitutions* and an extraordinary number of letters. In addition, however, subsequent generations of Jesuits have carried some of Ignatius’ insight into the human being’s relationship with God beyond what Ignatius himself may have envisioned. Ignatian spirituality involves a tradition, and an important feature of a spiritual tradition is development. Nevertheless, the *Exercises* remain an important theological text for the light they shed on Christian religious experience.
  9. Evidence of how early Jesuits adapted the *Exercises* can be found in *On Giving the Spiritual Exercises: The Early Jesuit Manuscript Directories and the Official Directory of 1599*, Martin E. Palmer, S.J., trans. and ed. (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996). Quotations from the *Spiritual Exercises* are taken from *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, eds. Joseph Munitiz and Philip Endean (New York: Penguin Books, 1996). References to the *Exercises* are abbreviated as Exx.
  10. With respect to early Jesuit practice of giving the *Exercises*, see John W. O’Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 37–50 and 127–133.
  11. The Official Directory of 1599 states that the *Exercises* are for everyone since all people in the world need God’s grace. But “the full and complete *Exercises*” should be given “only to a select few who appear fit for greater things” (Palmer, 293–94). Although my democratic sensibilities make me wince at such differentiation, the Directory is being realistic: not everyone wants or is ready to swim in deep water when it comes to religion. Throughout this article when speaking of the *Exercises* I have in mind that “the full and complete *Exercises*” are what illuminate Christian religious experience.
  12. I use the word “distinctiveness” instead of “uniqueness” because claims about uniqueness can lead to an exclusivist way of thinking and behaving in the face of the religious other. I owe this usage to the British scripture scholar James D. G. Dunn. See *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), 26 and 366 (n. 71).
  13. See John W. Padberg, S.J., ed., *Jesuit Life & Mission Today: The Decrees of the 31<sup>st</sup>–35<sup>th</sup> General Congregations of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009), 548.
  14. Francis X. Clooney, “A Charism for Dialog: Advice from the Early Jesuit Missionaries in Our World of Religious Pluralism,” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 34:2 (2002). See also Francesco Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue: The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church* (1963–1995), from the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1997; Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994).
  15. Jesuit sensitivity to the goodness in Eastern religious traditions with respect to contemplative practice is evident in the writings of William Johnston [for example, *Christian Zen: A Way of Meditation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1997) and *The Still Point: Reflections on Zen and Christian Mysticism* (Fordham University Press, 8<sup>th</sup> edition, 1989)], Hugo M. Enomiya-Lassalle [*The Practice of Zen Meditation* (San Francisco: Thorsons, 1995)], and J. K. Kadowaki [*Zen and the Bible* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002)].
  16. Here I am adapting a point Bernard Lonergan made with respect to foundational reality and the theologian. See *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972), 270.

17. See, for example, Catherine Cornille, ed., *Many Mansions?: Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002). Also, the articles in *New Theology Review* 22:2 (2009).
18. Walter Kasper, *That They All May Be One: The Call to Unity* (London and New York: Burns & Oates, 2004), 182. He distinguishes ideological pluralism (which he critiques) from empirical religious pluralism (which the Church “does not question” [185]).
19. The Declaration on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church (*Dominus Iesus*) was issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on August 6, 2000, and immediately provoked considerable worldwide discussion. See, for example, the articles by Francis A. Sullivan (“The Impact of *Dominus Iesus* on Ecumenism”) and Francis X. Clooney (“*Dominus Iesus* and the New Millennium”) in the August 28, 2000 issue of *America Magazine*. For further comments on the declaration, see also *Origins* (CNS Documentary Service) 30:15 (Sept 21, 2000), 30:17 (Oct 5, 2000), and 30:19 (Oct 19, 2000); and the reactions of Martin Marty, Robert Imbelli, and Philip Kennedy in “Rome & Relativism: ‘Dominus Iesus’ & the CDF,” *Commonweal* (Oct 20, 2000). From the Sept 23, 2000 issue of *The Tablet*: “Cardinal König calls Vatican text provocative” (p. 1273); “Irish Protestants upset by *Dominus Iesus*” (23 Sept 2000, p. 1274); “Vatican declaration arouses disquiet in India” (p. 1275); from its Sept 30, 2000 issue: “Cardinal Cassidy’s reservations over *Dominus Iesus*” (p. 1311); from its Oct 7, 2000 issue: “Pope moves to defend *Dominus Iesus* text” (p. 1342); and from its Oct 21, 2000 issue: “Damage limitation needed” (p. 1403). Finally, Thomas P. Rausch, “Has the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith Exceeded Its Authority?,” *Theological Studies* 62:4 (2001), 802–810; and James Fredericks, “The Catholic Church and the Other Religious Paths: Rejecting Nothing That Is True and Holy,” *Theological Studies* 64:2 (2003), 225–254.
20. As Mara Brecht writes: “It is Jesus’ human actions as the Son of God, and not his self-understanding as the Son of God, that are purposive for his identity as Christ. . . . What has unique and salvific significance for us is the bond created between humankind and God—brought about definitively through the humanity of Jesus Christ.” See “The Humanity of Christ: Jacques Dupuis’ Christology and Religious Pluralism,” *Horizons* 35:1 (2008), 68.
21. Thus William Harmless, S.J. critiques “the widespread claim that ‘all religions are all the same at the top,’ that ‘mystics are all experiencing the same thing,’ that one can simply peel away a religion’s doctrine from a mystic’s writings, as though it were so much hardened crust, to reveal beneath it some pristine universal mystical experience.” He concludes that “such claims are simply nonsense, that those who make them have simply not done their homework.” See *Mystics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 222–23.
22. See Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); and also the review essays of this book in *The Council of Societies for the Study of Religion Bulletin* 35:1 (2006), 6–16.
23. Joseph de Guibert notes: “The writers of [the 1600’s and 1700’s] took far greater liberties in treating the themes furnished by Ignatius’ book, in fact liberties sometimes so great that hardly anything was left of the firm structure and the vital linkings which held all the parts of the original book together.” See *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice. A Historical Study* (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 3<sup>rd</sup> printing 1986), 540. In his article “The Limits of the Adaptability of the *Spiritual Exercises*” (*Review for Religious* 39:6 [1980], 906–915), Donald Reck observed that “there is no possibility of using the *Exercises* as Ignatius clearly intended them to be used, namely in view of a specific concrete existing retreatant, *without* adapting them” (915).
24. The view of Jerónimo Nadal, who so ably assisted Ignatius, is somewhat puzzling. John O’Malley writes: “in 1553, Nadal in his *Apologia* for [the *Exercises*] against their

- detractors advanced his ‘personal’ opinion that at least up to a certain point they could be adapted to heretics and even to pagans. His ultimate justification for this viewpoint was that the *Exercises* essentially taught nothing more than that human beings were ‘to love God above all things, with all their heart, all their mind, all their soul, and all their strength.’” See O’Malley, *The First Jesuits*, 38–39.
25. See, for example, Peter C. Phan, “Multiple Religious Belonging: Opportunities and Challenges for Theology and Church,” *Theological Studies* 64:3 (2003), 495–519. On the “inter-religious reader” see Francis X. Clooney, *Beyond Compare: St. Francis de Sales and Sri Vedanta Desika on Loving Surrender to God* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2008).
  26. Religious life was usually considered to be the highest “state” because it seemed to be the closest approximation to the way Jesus actually lived. Nevertheless, consecrated life represents an extrapolation of several notable features about Jesus’ life from the gospels; it does not capture all of them. Furthermore, “perfection” is an elusive notion. All Christians are called to a perfect following of Jesus—“the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity”—by virtue of their baptism, as the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) states (#40). Perfection, however, has an already/not-yet character; thus chapter 7 of the decree is entitled “The Eschatological Nature of the Pilgrim Church.”
  27. There are resources within the *Exercises* that non-Christians might find useful, resources outside the *Exercises* that Christians might find useful, and lines of convergence. In “Theological Issues in Meditative Technologies” (*The Way* Supplement 1993/78), Thomas Keating lists a number of “points of agreement,” “points of similarity and convergence” (56–57). Then he adds: “Whether or not the ultimate experience of God in this life is the same in the world religions, the spiritual paths to the experience of unity are clearly not the same” (59). In the same issue, Donald Mitchell (“A Revealing Dialogue”) speaks about a fourfold revelation: “First, one discovers a human kinship: that we are all brothers and sisters, children of God. Second, one discovers that we can be spiritual co-workers in the building of the reign of God. Third, one discovers that we are fellow travellers on a journey into the truth. And fourth, one discovers that we are fellow pilgrims in the spiritual life.” (52)
  28. See *Ignatian Spirituality in Ecumenical Context*, *The Way* Supplement, Number 68 (Summer 1990). Because of Christian faith’s rootedness in the Hebrew Bible, a major spiritual line runs through the Jewish and Christian experiences of God. Also, Barbara E. Breitman, “Reclaiming ‘Love’ and the *Song of Songs* as a Center of Jewish Theology: Implications for Spiritual Direction with Jews,” *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction* 10:3 (2004), 19–26.
  29. In some North American missalettes, the passion story read on Good Friday is accompanied by a note from the U.S. Bishops’ Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. See, for instance, the *Heritage Missal* for 2010, published by the Oregon Catholic Press, page 144.
  30. Ignatius’ description of the horrors of hell in Exx 65–70 is another place that requires some accommodation to the religious sensibilities of people today. One could suggest a way of meditating on the possibility of great loss—of losing one’s very “soul”—and its consequences without recourse to the imagery Ignatius uses. Similarly, Exx 363 and 365 require some updating if we wish to transpose their intent to the situation of theology and the church today. On the Jefferson Bible, see Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 24–26.
  31. I explored the distinctiveness of Christian experience, although not in terms of the *Spiritual Exercises*, in chapters 4 and 5 of *Seeking God in All Things: Theology and Spiritual Direction* (Collegetown, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2004).

32. Joseph de Guibert, *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*, 535.
33. Thomas Michel, "Crossing the Frontiers of Faith: GC34 and Interreligious Dialogue," *Review of Ignatian Spirituality* XXVII-3, Number 83 (1996), 19-24.
34. Michel, "Crossing the Frontiers of Faith: GC34 and Interreligious Dialogue," 20.
35. Michel, "Crossing the Frontiers of Faith: GC34 and Interreligious Dialogue," 21.
36. Michel, "Crossing the Frontiers of Faith: GC34 and Interreligious Dialogue," 21.
37. Javier Melloni writes: "The *Exercises* are directed towards the configuration of the exercitant to the image of Christ Jesus. This comes about in two simultaneous ways: on the one hand, through the contemplation of Christ's life, passion and resurrection, which imprints the image of Christ on the heart of the exercitant; and on the other, by discerning the concrete form of this Christian configuration in one's own life . . . through the interior movements aroused by contemplation." See Melloni, *The Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola in the Western Tradition* (Herefordshire, England: Gracewing, 2000), 51.
38. See Matt 21:11; Mark 6:4, 8:27-28; Luke 24:19; John 4:19, 4:44, 6:14, 7:40, 9:17.
39. Again, the emphasis upon the way Christians experience the divine mystery is important. After speaking of Jesus as "the personality of the Spirit," Dunn writes: "That is to say, Christians became aware that they stood at the base of a *triangular relationship*—in the Spirit, in sonship to the Father, in service to the Lord. Second, if such are indeed the roots of the Trinitarian doctrine, then it follows that the doctrine of the Trinity is grounded in *experience*—and in experience of the Spirit, Spirit as Spirit of sonship, Spirit as Spirit of the Son. To say that the first Christians 'experienced the Trinity' would be inaccurate; they experienced *Spirit*, who made them conscious of their dual relationship as men [sic] of Spirit" (*Jesus and the Spirit*, 326).
40. Interestingly, Ignatius also presumes that the retreatant will want to attend Mass and vespers each day (Exx 20). On the extent to which "church" is woven into the *Exercises*, see Michael J. Buckley, "Ecclesial Mysticism in the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius," *Theological Studies* 56:3 (1995), 441-463.
41. *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, 316.
42. See Jon Sobrino, "Spirituality and the Following of Jesus" in *Mysterium Liberations: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 677-701.
43. A sixth area might be the way Ignatius evaluates the traditional "states of life" in terms of a "more perfect" following of Christ. Contemporary understandings of vocation, the call to holiness, and sacramental marriage make us uncomfortable with the language of "evangelical perfection" (Exx 15, 135, 356 and 357), and rightly so. I do not find a theological basis for holding that life according to traditional religious vows is evangelically "higher" than life according to the marriage vows or that consecrated life is the fullest expression of Christian baptism. Yet an *intensification* of discipleship is always possible along the lines of the prophetic dimension of Jesus' life. This intensification of discipleship can be realized by someone who is married (like Franz Jägerstätter) or engaged (like Dietrich Bonhoeffer), someone in orders (like Oscar Romero), someone in religious life (like Dorothy Kazel or Rutilio Grande), or someone who chooses a single life in the world (like Dorothy Day). Thus we should transpose Ignatius' language into a different key to capture the attractiveness, for certain people, of the apostle on a journey and the prophet who accompanies and sometimes dies alongside God's people.
44. *Personal Writings*, 354.
45. See Mary Hobgood, *Dismantling Privilege: An Ethics of Accountability* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2000). Also, Jon Sobrino, "El seguimiento de Jesús pobre y humilde. Cómo bajar de la cruz a los pueblos crucificados," in Juan García M. Lomas, ed., *Ejercicios Espirituales y Mundo de Hoy, Congreso Internacional de Ejercicios (Loyola 20-26 set. 1991)* (Bilbao and Santander, Spain: Ediciones Mensajero and Ediciones Sal Terrae, n.d.), 77-94.

46. *Personal Writings*, 357. Emphasis added.
47. See, for example, N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), as well as his shorter work *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008). Also, W. Reiser, “The Grace of the Fourth Week: A Theological Inquiry,” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 38:3 (2006).
48. See Javier Osuna, S.J., *Friends in the Lord*, trans. Nicholas King, *The Way Series* 3 (1974).
49. See #27 of the Reminiscences in *Personal Writings*, 25.
50. The point about oneness is theological, not empirical. In its Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et spes*) Vatican II put it this way: “God has a parent’s care for every individual and has willed that all should constitute a single family treating each other as brothers and sisters” (#24). The same point is made in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (#13) and the Declaration on the Church’s Relation to Non-Christian Religions (*Ad gentes*), #1. See Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), vol. II:1083, 859, and 968.
51. See, for example, Ravi Zacharias, *The Lotus and the Cross: Jesus Talks with Buddha* (Multnomah Books, 2001).