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Our commemorations of St. Ignatius’s original “cannonball experience” in May 1521 have continued despite humanity’s own ongoing cannonball experiences during these months of the special Ignatian year. Pandemic, war, economic dislocation, forced migration, the threat of famine—to say nothing of our personal, quotidian disruptions—constantly disturb our accustomed ways of proceeding. Yet these interruptions also provide nearly constant opportunities for us to see and experience the world differently, for us to be distracted from our usual distractions, so that grace can break into our lives in the unexpected ways that God so often uses to bless us in spite of ourselves.

This number of *Ignaziana* explores dimensions of Ignatian spirituality from a number of different perspectives. The contribution of Rossano Zas Friz De Col S.J., of the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University, Berkeley is a Spanish translation of a paper he presented on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Institute of Psychology of the Pontifical Gregorian University. He focuses on the lifelong Christian transformation of Ignatius after his initial experience of conversion in 1521.

Jacques Scheuer, S.J., long connected with *Lumen Vitae* in Namur and Centre Sèvres in Paris, surveys numerous personal attempts by diverse authors to relate Ignatian spirituality to non-Christian traditions. Although neither he nor *Ignaziana* intend his extensive though not exhaustive bibliography to be the authoritative word about the topics introduced, it provides a helpful starting point for further reflection and investigation.

Giovanni Mascia focuses our attention on a hidden gem of 17th century painting conserved in a small convent church in Toro (Molise). The canvas brings together the five saints canonized five hundred years ago: Teresa of Avila, Ignatius Loyola, Isidore the Farmer, Francis Xavier, and Philip Neri. His analysis reminds that our experience of God is not limited to the so-called famous “centers” of artistic, intellectual, and economic activity.

Three previously published articles concentrate our attention on the pandemic. *The Way* has allowed us to reprint an article by Oscar Momanyi, S.J., a retreat and spiritual guide at Mwangaza Jesuit Spirituality Centre in Nairobi, entitled “The Ignatian Year and the Pandemic: Reflections from a Field Hospital.” Don Guglielmo Cazzulani, parish priest of the diocese of Lodi, is the director of the diocesan catechetical office as well as professor of spirituality at the Istituto Superiore di Scienze Religiose in Crema. His 2020 article from *Mysterion*, “Discernere questo tempo. Il cristiano di fronte

all'epidemia," is an early attempt to propose a Christian response to the pandemic. "Tercera Semana de Ejercicios y pandemia" originally appeared in Manresa. Luis María García Domínguez, S.J. proposes that we examine our response to the pandemic through the lens of the Third Week of the Spiritual Exercises.

Father Sosa proposed the special Ignatian anniversary year as a way to help us see all things new in Christ long before the pandemic or the war in Ukraine. The contributions provided in this number of *Ignaziana* can help us not only see all things in new ways but also enable us to act in new ways, more and more like the One who became what we are that we might become what He is.

La transformación cristiana de San Ignacio de Loyola

ROSSANO ZAS FRIZ DE COL S.J.*

El objeto de investigación de la espiritualidad cristiana es la transformación del creyente, un tema que ha recibido atención en los últimos años¹. Aprovechando esta orientación, se propone un itinerario que, en su primera parte, profundiza en el concepto de transformación y en el modo en que Ignacio de Loyola y Juan de la Cruz lo interpretan, aclarando con la ayuda de este último las implicaciones que se encuentran en *la Contemplación para alcanzar el amor* del primero. Se establece así claramente la orientación de la transformación cristiana. En la segunda parte, asumiendo esta perspectiva, se considera la transformación de Ignacio a través de algunas de las decisiones más importantes que tomó, estudiando cada una de ellas, para hacer después una interpretación diacrónica de las mismas. Se concluye, para evidenciar su transformación, comparando algunas de las dimensiones de su vivencia cristiana a lo largo del primer año y medio de su conversión, con las mismas dimensiones durante su etapa romana, cuando ya era un hombre maduro en el Espíritu.

1. Transformar, transformarse, transformación en Dios

El verbo *transformar*, en su uso transitivo, indica la acción que produce el cambio que se opera en una persona, cosa, sustancia o situación². La acción produce el cambio de un estado, forma, apariencia exterior o actitud interior a otra. La forma reflexiva (*transformarse*), cuando se trata de una persona, puede indicar que el cambio producido se causa por la persona misma, mientras que en la forma transitiva el cambio se produce como consecuencia de una variante externa al sujeto u objeto que cambia.

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¹ Cf. K. WAAIJMAN, *La espiritualidad. Formas, Fundamentos, Métodos*, Sígueme, Salamanca 2011, 496-562; R. ZAS FRIZ DE COL, *La presenza trasformante del Mistero*, G&B Press, 2015.

² Para esta parte utilizo, con algunas modificaciones, a R. ZAS FRIZ DE COL, *Teologia della vita cristiana. Contemplazione, vissuto teologico e trasformazione interiore*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2010, 130-134 y 137-139.

El sustantivo *transformación*, el resultado de la acción transformadora, se refiere al cambio o transición que se ha producido del estado A al estado B. En el caso de una persona, la mutación se produce por la conjunción de una acción externa con su aceptación o rechazo por parte del receptor. Así, las formas activa y pasiva del verbo son necesarias para una transformación que respete a la persona, y no sea una imposición. Envejecemos sin quererlo, pero amamos a quien queremos.

En cualquier caso, la transformación es siempre un cambio perceptible, aunque no sea necesariamente sensorial. De hecho, las variables que producen un cambio y el mecanismo que las ponen en marcha, pueden ser conocidos o no, mas, para constatar la transformación es necesario que ambos puedan comprobarse de alguna manera.

Aplicando este análisis al ámbito específico de la vida cristiana, se puede afirmar que la *transformación* cristiana se verifica gracias a una *acción transformadora* externa (la Presencia del Misterio santo) que, con la participación activa del creyente mediante su decisión, produce el efecto pasivo del verbo (el *transformarse*). De este modo, queda claro que la transformación cristiana se da como resultado de una acción que es a la vez activa y pasiva, externa e interna, pero que el creyente no puede producir arbitrariamente ni tampoco explicar, pues queda siempre en el ámbito del misterio inefable de la acción del Misterio santo. Ahora bien, aunque se trate de una transformación interior, espiritual, en cierto sentido inefable, debe poder observarse externamente, como le ocurrió a Ignacio: “Mas así su hermano como todos los demás de casa fueron conociendo por lo exterior la mudanza que se había hecho en su ánima interiormente” [Au 10]³.

A continuación se desarrolla el concepto de transformación en San Ignacio y en San Juan de la Cruz para establecer, más allá de las aparentes diferencias, cómo ambos coinciden en la orientación hacia la cual se dirige la transformación.

1.1. San Ignacio de Loyola

Transformar, transformarse y transformación son palabras desconocidas en la obra de Ignacio, al igual que los sinónimos *cambio* y *cambiar*. En su lugar aparece un sinónimo, *mudar, mudanza*⁴, que siempre tiene el significado de cambiar: “hacer mudanza [cambios] en el comer, en el dormir y en otros modos de hacer penitencia; [...] en las tales mudanzas [Dios] da a sentir a cada uno lo que le conviene” [Ej 89]; “En tiempo de desolación nunca hacer mudanza [cambios]” [Ej 318; cf. Co 626]. Como ya se ha dicho, en la *Autobiografía* [10], se afirma que el hermano conocía la *mudanza* que se estaba

³ Las citas de San Ignacio siguen la edición de: SAN IGNACIO DE LOYOLA, *Obras*, BAC, Madrid 2014. Se citan utilizando la abreviatura y el número de párrafo correspondiente: *Autobiografía* [Au]; *Constituciones* [Co]; *Diario Espiritual* [De]; *Ejercicios Espirituales* [Ej]; *La Fórmula del Instituto* [F] y las *Cartas* se citan con el número y página de la edición utilizada.

⁴ La forma pasiva del verbo aparece tres veces en los *Ejercicios*: en el n. 49, como sinónimo de no cambiar el contenido de la oración preparatoria [Ej 46], en el n. 133, con el mismo sentido, pero en positivo, es decir, permitiendo pasar (*mudarse*) del segundo día al tercero de la segunda semana, y en el n. 319 el que es tentado debe esforzarse por salir (*mudarse*) de la desolación.

produciendo en el alma de Ignacio. En los *Ejercicios*, el verbo mudar tiene principalmente el sentido de cambiar⁵, como también lo tiene en las *Constituciones*⁶ y en la única vez que aparece en la *Autobiografía* [27]. Sin embargo, en los *Ejercicios* se distinguen dos matices: el primero indica el esfuerzo por luchar contra la desolación: “mucho aprovecha el intenso mudarse contra la misma desolación” [Ej 319]; y el segundo, cambiar los afectos desordenados, pidiéndole a su divina majestad que ordene sus deseos, *mudando* Él la afección primera [cf. Ej 16]. El esfuerzo del cambio es en primera persona, pero debe ir acompañado de la acción de Dios. Obviamente, el resultado es la transformación.

Ignacio rara vez utiliza la palabra “conversión”⁷, mientras que el verbo “convertir” lo usa para significar la transformación interior⁸. Sin embargo, hay otras dos palabras que tienen una relación más explícita con transformar y transformación: *ordenar* y *orden*.

Ordenar es la acción que dispone algo en una sucesión no arbitraria, siguiendo un criterio determinado⁹. Dios ordena los deseos [Ej 16], y así el ejercitante puede superarse y *ordenar* su vida sin dejarse determinar por los afectos desordenados [Ej 21]. *Ordenarse* es la gracia que se pide a lo largo del retiro ignaciano: “pedir gracia a Dios nuestro Señor para que todas mis intenciones, acciones y actividades sean puramente ordenadas al servicio y alabanza de su divina majestad” [Ej 46]. En los *Ejercicios* el orden es el efecto de la acción de ordenar, como cuando el que dirige los ejercicios tiene que dar *orden* de meditar y contemplar¹⁰. Pero *el orden* también se refiere a la perfectísima e infinita Sabiduría de Dios, que es el principio de todo orden [Ej 324; Co 136.814].

En la *Contemplación para alcanzar amor* [Ej 230ss] confluye en el ejercitante la acción de *mudar* y *ordenar*, y su efecto, la *mudanza* y el *orden*, con el objeto de que reconozca el don divino recibido en la vida y durante los *Ejercicios*, y lo agradezca. Esta es la actitud que la contemplación busca aflorar en el ejercitante al final de los *Ejercicios*, para que alcance el puro amor a Dios en la entrega de sí mismo.

En efecto, Ignacio, después de haber partido de la premisa de que el amor debe ponerse más en las obras que en las palabras [cf. Ej 230], añade: “el amor consiste en comunicación de las dos partes, es a saber, en dar y comunicar del amante al amado lo que tiene o de lo que tiene o puede, y así, por el contrario, el amado al amante; de manera que, si el uno tiene sciencia, dar al que no la tiene, si honores, si riquezas, y así el otro al otro” [Ej 231]. Sobre esta base, Ignacio invita al ejercitante a “pedir cognoscimiento interno de tanto bien recibido, para que yo, enteramente reconociendo, pueda en todo amar y servir a su divina majestad” [Ej 233]. Luego, en el primer punto de la contemplación [Ej 234], el ejercitante debe “recordar los beneficios recibidos de creación, redención y dones especiales” reflexionando “con mucho afecto” sobre lo que

⁵ [Ej 20.49.89.101.105.119.130.133.206.229.244.247.319].

⁶ [Ej 19.122.245.270. 304.343.382.421.424.429.435.491.554.709.739].

⁷ Cf. [Ej 257, 282; Au 86; Co 326.330.763.816; De 102].

⁸ Cf. [Ej 50; Co 61].

⁹ En la forma pasiva aparece una vez en los *Ejercicios*, en el 210, bajo el título de las reglas para *ordenarse* en el comer.

¹⁰ [Ej 2; Co 321; cf.]

Dios ha hecho por él, dándole lo que tiene. Para Ignacio, por tanto, Dios mismo desea y quiere darse al ejercitante. Por ello, éste debe reflexionar “con mucha razón y justicia” lo que debe ofrecer de su parte, es decir, cómo debe corresponder a este don amoroso: ofreciéndose y dándose todo a Dios, con todo lo que tiene y posee, pidiendo sólo que no le falte su amor y su gracia.

El propósito de presentar Juan de la Cruz en la siguiente sección es revelar, desde su perspectiva, las implicaciones de la *Contemplación alcanzar el amor*. Con ello, se espera mostrar hasta qué punto estos dos autores armonizan entre sí, más que acentuar sus diferencias personales.

1.2. Juan de la Cruz

En este autor sucede lo contrario que en Ignacio: la transformación del creyente está en función de la unión con Dios, al punto que en el Diccionario de San Juan de la Cruz no se desarrolla con voz propia, se la incluye en *unión*¹¹. El creyente conoce a Dios uniéndose a Él, transformándose en Él¹². En cambio, en Ignacio la palabra *transformación*, como se ha visto, no aparece. Cuando usa *unión*, lo hace únicamente en las *Constituciones* para referirse a la unión entre los miembros de la Compañía¹³.

Para San Juan, la transformación se realiza mediante la unión de la voluntad amorosa del creyente con la de Dios, por medio de la renuncia (purificadora) a todo lo que no es Dios. El amor es la fuerza, la virtud que transforma y une a Dios, igualando los amantes, reduciéndolos a la unidad, produciendo lo que él llama una transformación *participativa*. A través de ella Dios

comunica su ser sobrenatural, de tal manera, que [el alma, el creyente] parece el mismo Dios y tiene lo que tiene el mismo Dios. Y se hace tal unión cuando Dios hace al alma esta sobrenatural merced, que todas las cosas de Dios y el alma son unas en transformación participativa. Y el alma más parece Dios que alma, y aun es Dios por participación; aunque es verdad que su ser naturalmente tan distinto se le tiene del de Dios como antes, aunque está transformada, como también la vidriera le tiene distinto del rayo, estando de él clarificada.¹⁴

¹¹ Cf. A. ALVÁREZ-SUÁREZ, “Unión con Dios”, en *Diccionario de San Juan de la Cruz*. E. PACHO (ed.). Monte Carmelo, Burgos 2000, 1498-1505.

¹² Cf. L. BORRIELLO, L'unione trasformante secondo S. Giovanni della Croce, en *Angelicum* 68 (1991) 383; Cf. E. DE SAN JUAN DE LA CRUZ, *La Transformación del alma en Dios según San Juan de la Cruz*, Editorial de Espiritualidad, Madrid 1963; G. DE SANTA MARIA MADDALENA, *L'unione con Dios secondo San Giovanni della Croce*, Salani, Firenze 1951; MIELESI, *La Trasformazione d'amore in San Giovanni della Croce*, Dimensione Umana, Milano 1981.

¹³ Cf. [Co 135,273,280,424,655,657,659,661,662,666,671,672677,709,821]

¹⁴ *Subida* 2,5,7; cf. SAN JUAN DE LA CRUZ, *Obras Completas*. Sexta edición preparada por Eulogio Pacho, Monte Carmelo, Burgos 1998; abreviado: *Cántico espiritual* B, *Cántico* B; *Llama viva del amor* B, *Llama* B; *Subida del Monte Carmelo*, S. La abreviatura de la *Subida* va seguida de un número que indica el libro, el capítulo y el párrafo; en el caso del *Cántico* B y la *Llama* B, tras la abreviatura se indica el número del versículo y del párrafo.

En cuanto a la unión, San Juan distingue entre la unión esencial (o sustancial) y la unión por semejanza: la primera corresponde a la unión natural permanente entre el Creador y la criatura; la segunda, en cambio, “no está siempre hecha, sino sólo cuando viene a haber semejanza de amor”. Es una unión de *semejanza*, “cuando las dos voluntades, conviene a saber, la del alma y la de Dios, están en uno conformes, no habiendo en la una cosa que repugne a la otra. Y así, cuando el alma quitare de sí totalmente lo que repugna y no conforma con la voluntad divina, quedará transformada en Dios por amor” (*Subida* 2,5,3).

El amor transformador une a Dios, porque elimina todo lo que no se ajusta a Él, para que sólo quede Él y su voluntad, de modo que el creyente que se ha conformado y asemejado a ella, está unido y transformado en ella sobrenaturalmente (cf. *Subida* 2,5,4).

La transformación así experimentada coincide con la perfección espiritual del alma, el matrimonio espiritual. Éste, para San Juan es “una transformación total en el Amado, en que se entregan ambas las partes por total posesión de la una a la otra, con cierta consumación de unión de amor, en que está el alma hecha divina y Dios por participación, cuanto se puede en esta vida” (*Cántico* B 22,3). Así, el creyente se convierte en una “sombra de Dios”, llegando a ser capaz de actuar como Dios. En efecto:

hace ella [el alma] en Dios por Dios lo que él hace en ella por sí mismo, al modo que lo hace; porque la voluntad de los dos es una, y así la operación de Dio y de ella es una. De donde, como Dios se le está dando con libre y graciosa voluntad, así también ella, teniendo la voluntad tanto más libre y generosa cuanto más unida en Dios, está dando a Dios al mismo Dios en Dios, y es verdadera y entera dádiva del alma a Dios” (*Llama* B 378).

En otras palabras del mismo autor:

cuando hay unión de amor, que es verdad decir que el Amado vive en el amante, y el amante en el Amado, y tal manera de semejanza hace el amor en la transformación de los amados, que se puede decir que cada uno es el otro y que entrambos son uno. La razón es porque en la unión y transformación de amor el uno da posesión de sí al otro, y cada uno se deja y da y trueca por el otro; y así, cada uno vive en el otro, y el uno es el otro y entrambos son uno por transformación de amor” (*Cántico* B 12, 7).

1.3. Síntesis conclusiva

En la relación de amor entre Dios y el creyente se produce un intercambio tal, que se puede hablar de un proceso de transformación en el que uno se convierte en el otro y viceversa, un proceso que lleva a la unidad entre ambos. La aventura de los *Ejercicios* se condensa en el abandono del ejercitante al amor mutuo con Dios, donde, por la donación de su libertad, memoria, inteligencia, voluntad y de todo lo que tiene y posee, sólo pide a cambio el amor y la gracia de Dios, porque sólo eso basta [cf. *Ej* 234]. En este sentido, Juan afirma que

no hay que tener por imposible que el alma pueda una cosa tan alta que el alma aspire en Dios como Dios aspira en ella por modo participado; porque, dado que Dios le haga merced de unirla en la Santísima Trinidad, en que el alma se hace deiforme y Dios por participación ¿qué increíble cosa es que obre ella también su obra de entendimiento, noticia y amor,

o, por mejor decir, la tenga obrada en la Trinidad juntamente con ella como la misma Trinidad, pero por modo comunicada y participado, obrándolo Dios en la misma alma? Porque esto es estar transformada en las tres Personas en potencia y sabiduría y amor, y en esto es semejante el alma a Dios, y para que pudiese venir a esto *la crió a su imagen y semejanza* (Gn 1,26-27) (*Cántico B 39,4.*).

La ignaciana *comunicación mutua de los amantes* coincide con la *transformación participativa* de San Juan. El amor a Dios transforma, diviniza, por lo que se puede decir que el horizonte de la vida cristiana, y no sólo de los Ejercicios, es la comunicación mutua entre Dios y el creyente, al fin de que éste se transforme en Él por consumación de amor. De este modo, por participación, se diviniza, es decir, se hace Dios.

En la tradición ignaciana, la mística se suele adjetivar como de servicio. Ésta mística se distingue, por ejemplo, de la carmelita, que es “nupcial”, o de la 'metafísica' de la escuela dominicana. A la luz de cuanto se ha expuesto, es preferible no hacer distinciones entre una mística del servicio, otra nupcial u otra metafísica, sin mencionar primero la comunicación mutua común en la transformación participativa. Sólo hay una mística, la del amor, entendida como relación ordenada a la recíproca comunicación de bienes; es decir, la divinización del creyente y la de su prójimo. Obviamente, hay diferencias en la experiencia personalizada del encuentro con Dios, pero la dinámica común es la del amor, compartida por todos, más allá de las diferencias.

La siguiente sección, teniendo en cuenta lo expuesto, analiza la transformación cristiana de Ignacio a través del análisis e interpretación de las más importantes decisiones que hizo en su vida.

2. El proceso de transformación de San Ignacio a través de sus decisiones

Una vez establecida la finalidad de la vida cristiana, es decir, la transformación para la *deificación*, el método por el que se analizará la transformación de Ignacio será el del análisis de la toma de decisiones.

Tomar una decisión significa escoger una opción entre las posibilidades existentes y así asumir una orientación determinada en función de una preferencia. Una elección concluye una deliberación, un discernimiento, mediante el cual se juzga y evalúa una situación, en orden a obtener un resultado. Cualquier elección establece un nuevo orden, reordena el anterior.

En la dinámica de la toma de decisiones se pueden identificar seis pasos¹⁵: en una ocasión determinada se percibe algo, cognitiva y afectivamente, que se hace objeto de reflexión hasta la elaboración de un juicio, que lleva a optar por una decisión, para asumir responsablemente sus consecuencias. Es decir, toda decisión:

¹⁵ R. ZAS FRIZ DE COL (ed.), *Il vissuto di Santa Teresa di Lisieux alla luce del Metodo Teologico-Decisionale*, G&B Press, Roma 2020, 11-20.

tiene una preparación y se da en una ocasión precisa (prep/oc) en la que primero se presenta una moción (moc), de la que se toma conciencia por el contenido cognitivo y el efecto afectivo que deja (con/cog+afe), a la que sigue después una reflexión para emitir un juicio (refl/jui) que precede propiamente la toma de decisión (dec) como respuesta a la moción recibida, para asumir responsablemente las consecuencias de la decisión tomada (cons).

En la vida cristiana, la transformación divina depende del progreso de las decisiones del creyente, en respuesta a las mociones que recibe. El crecimiento responsable en la relación con Dios llevará a una reflexión cada vez más atenta de la percepción de los movimientos internos y de los acontecimientos externos, y por ello, conducirá a juicios y decisiones más lúcidas que consoliden la actitud teológica, motor de la transformación participativa a la que se refiere Juan de la Cruz.

En efecto, la transformación del creyente se produce mediante las decisiones que toma, que pueden ir en el sentido de su divinización o bien en sentido contrario. Sus opciones lo auto-determinan ante Dios, pudiéndose identificar con Él de forma responsable y exigente, aunque no siempre sus opciones sean lineales. La posibilidad de la desidentificación está siempre presente.

Con este marco de referencia, se analizan en dos etapas, sincrónica y diacrónicamente, seis de las decisiones más importantes tomadas por San Ignacio, según consta en su *Autobiografía*¹⁶.

2.1. Análisis sincrónico

La primera decisión que consideramos es mientras Ignacio convalece de una herida de guerra (primavera de 1521). La decisión se prepara (prep/oc) mientras está acostado en la cama y pide libros de caballería, pero sólo se le facilitan un libro sobre la vida de Jesús y otro sobre la vida de los santos (moc). Mientras lee, admira las penitencias de los ascetas y comienza a imaginar y desear hacerlas también, aunque, al mismo tiempo, imagina realizar actos heroicos para ganar el amor de una mujer noble. En un momento dado se da cuenta de la diversidad que estos dos pensamientos producen en su estado de ánimo: es la ocasión por la que Ignacio se da cuenta de las diferentes mociones que actúan en su alma (con/cog+afe) y reflexiona sobre ellas (refl/jui). Así, llega a la decisión (dec) de ir a Tierra Santa, para mejor imitar la vida de los santos que estaba leyendo. Esta decisión lo inicia, de forma algo inconsciente, en la vida teológica (cons). Es el comienzo de su conversión y de su vida cristiana.

Una segunda decisión importante la toma Ignacio cuando está en Tierra Santa. Quiere quedarse allí (prep/oc), pero ocurre algo inesperado que estropea sus planes. El padre provincial de los franciscanos no le permite quedarse (moc). Ignacio toma conciencia de esa intervención (con/cog+afe) y reflexiona sobre el hecho, hasta llegar a la convic-

¹⁶ Cf. R. ZAS FRIZ DE COL, “Analisi del vissuto cristiano di Ignazio di Loyola. Saggio metodologico”, en *Ignaziana* (www.ignaziana.org) 22 (2016) 137-165.

ción de que no es voluntad de Dios permanecer en Tierra Santa (refl/jui); entonces decide abandonarla (dec), porque así se ha manifestado la voluntad de Dios; por tanto, al someterse a ella, Ignacio obedece a Dios (cons).

Esta decisión prepara y es la ocasión (prep/oc) para una tercera decisión. Ello sucede cuando Ignacio abandona Jerusalén y emprende el camino de vuelta a Venecia en el invierno de 1524: el Peregrino “entendió que no estuviese en Jerusalén (moc y consap/cog+afe), siempre vino consigo pensando qué haría [*quid agendum*] (refl/jui). Al final se inclinaba más a estudiar algún tiempo para poder ayudar a las almas, y se determinaba (dec) ir a Barcelona; y así se partió de Venecia para Génova (cons)” [Au 50].

Ignacio permanece en Barcelona durante un año y medio, y luego se traslada a la Universidad de Alcalá de Henares para continuar sus estudios. Pero aquí debe sufrir dos procesos por parte de la Inquisición. Esta situación es la ocasión que prepara la cuarta decisión (prep/oc). Después de que la Inquisición dicta su sentencia (moc), absolviendo a Ignacio de toda sospecha (con/cog+afe). Éste sigue perplejo sobre el camino a seguir (refl/jui), motivo por el cual decide (dec) pedir consejo al arzobispo de Toledo, para seguir así la voluntad de Dios. El prelado le sugiere que se traslade a Salamanca (cons), adonde llega en julio de 1527.

En su nueva sede sigue teniendo problemas con las autoridades de la Inquisición, lo cual prepara y da la ocasión (prep/oc) para una nueva decisión, la quinta. Ignacio acaba en la cárcel y después de veintidós días recibe una sentencia (moc). No lo condenan, sino que le imponen condiciones que, en su opinión, le impiden hacer el bien al prójimo (con/cog+afe). Reflexiona sobre ello (refl/jui) y decide (dec) ir a estudiar a París, buscando siempre la voluntad divina y el bien de las almas (cons). Deja Salamanca en septiembre de ese mismo año.

Ignacio llega a París en febrero de 1528 y permanece allí durante algo más de siete años, hasta abril de 1535. La oportunidad de salir de la ciudad llega por motivos de salud, pero en realidad era el primer paso de un proyecto en el que había trabajado con un grupo de estudiantes (prep/oc). De hecho, la sexta decisión está ligada a la experiencia de Ignacio y sus compañeros en París, que a través de la práctica de los Ejercicios Espirituales (moc) han despertado a una intensa forma de vida cristiana, que les ha dado una nueva conciencia (con/cog+afe) y llevado a una nueva forma de entender la vida. En consecuencia, reflexionan sobre cómo invertir sus vidas en el futuro (refl/jui), por lo que deciden (dec) ir a Tierra Santa. Si esto no fuera posible al cabo de un año de espera, irían a Roma, donde el Papa, para ser distribuidos por él en la viña del Señor y dedicarse al mayor servicio de las almas (cons).

Ignacio se encuentra en Venecia con sus compañeros en enero de 1537. Después de esperar el tiempo determinado para realizar la travesía, y quedando claro que no podían embarcarse hacia oriente, llevan a cabo lo acordado en París: acuden al Papa, en Roma, interpretando el hecho como voluntad divina.

2.2. Análisis diacrónico

Siguiendo el camino de las decisiones, podemos clarificar el proceso transformador de Ignacio a través de la identificación de diferentes etapas de su desarrollo espiritual, siguiendo la propuesta de Federico Ruiz o.c.d. Según el autor,

Para crecer, el organismo elimina, pasa por fases sucesivas, sufre varias crisis que son siempre diferentes, sin dejar de ser las mismas. El crecimiento no se produce por simple acumulación, sino por un proceso de pérdidas y adquisiciones. Lo mismo ocurre en el proceso espiritual, que no es un proceso gradual ni armonioso: está hecho de contradicciones, conflictos, tensiones, rupturas del equilibrio, que abren el horizonte a síntesis más ricas.¹⁷

En esta línea, Ruiz identifica seis etapas en el desarrollo transformador de la vida cristiana: iniciación, personalización, interiorización, crisis, madurez y glorificación¹⁸. La vida cristiana responsable (1) comienza con una decisión radical de seguir la propia conciencia ante la Presencia de Dios, la conversión. (2) A esto le sigue la personalización de la relación teológica, donde el creyente se compromete a “integrar los contenidos objetivos y subjetivos de la vida cristiana en el proceso de afirmación de la personalidad humana, y en el conjunto de su existencia individual y social”¹⁹. (3) El desarrollo de esta actitud conduce a la interiorización teológica, que implica una creciente implicación con Dios en la vida cotidiana. Luego, puede ocurrir o no, (4) que tras esta etapa se produzca una crisis profunda, las *noches de los sentidos* y del *espíritu*, con el fin de purificar la actitud teológica. (5) Esta crisis puede preceder a una relativa madurez en la relación con Dios, (6) previa a la consumación de la transformación participativa, ya que tiene lugar en un horizonte escatológico que no alcanza su plenitud en la historia, sino más allá.

Interpretando el análisis sincrónico desde una perspectiva diacrónica, la iniciación de Ignacio en la vida cristiana consciente y responsable comienza prácticamente sin darse cuenta, mientras está convaleciente en Loyola, y continúa hasta que acepta renunciar a su deseo de permanecer en Tierra Santa. Entonces tiene que encontrar una motivación más personal para progresar en el camino del servicio divino a las almas, y la encuentra decidiéndose a estudiar. Desde 1524, cuando regresa de Tierra Santa, hasta septiembre de 1527, cuando llega a París, Ignacio persevera en su compromiso con el estudio, personalizando así su relación con Dios.

Durante los siete años que pasó en París, Ignacio interioriza progresivamente su relación con Dios. Es importante señalar que no experimenta un período de crisis como se refiere la tradición carmelita, y que Ruiz indica como una noche de los sentidos y del espíritu. A modo de hipótesis de trabajo, el hecho podría explicarse por la práctica constante y cada vez más refinada de discernimiento de espíritus. Éste, vivido por Igna-

¹⁷ F. RUIZ, “Diventare personalmente adulti in Cristo”, en *Problemi e prospettive di Spiritualità*, Queriniiana, Brescia 1983, 277-301, aquí 292.

¹⁸ Cf. F. RUIZ, “L'uomo adulto in Cristo”, en *Antropologia Cristiana*, B. MORICONI (ed.), Citta Nuova, Roma 2001, 536-545.

¹⁹ F. RUIZ, “L'uomo adulto in Cristo”, 538.

cio como un ejercicio continuo de purificación de las motivaciones, le evita pasar por tales oscuridades. También debió influir en ello el efecto de purificación que tuvieron las enfermedades que padeció continuamente²⁰.

Cuando Ignacio entró en Roma en 1537 era ya un hombre maduro en el Espíritu y podía dedicarse a la organización de la Compañía. Mirando hacia atrás en las decisiones que tomó, Dios le movió a establecerse en Roma después de su deseo inicial y tardío de echar raíces en Tierra Santa. Y en la Ciudad Eterna espera el cumplimiento escatológico de las promesas cristianas, que tendrá lugar después del 31 de julio de 1556.

2.3. Ejemplos de la transformación de Ignacio

Las seis decisiones consideradas marcan la transformación de Ignacio en su relación con el misterio de Dios. Sin embargo, para ilustrar cómo se transformó concretamente, es posible comparar algunas dimensiones de su experiencia cristiana en dos momentos diferentes de su vida: por ejemplo, el periodo de Loyola, Manresa y Tierra Santa con el periodo de su madurez en Roma. Así se puede apreciar mejor la evolución de su proceso personal.

Durante su primer año y medio de neo-converso, Ignacio (1) se inicia en el combate espiritual y en el discernimiento; (2) lee libros religiosos; (3) se determina a peregrinar a Tierra Santa, que considera su misión como converso; (4) crece en su deseo de perfección; (5) imita a los santos; (6) se convierte en devoto de María; (7) toma la decisión de permanecer casto; (8) reza diaria y continuamente y desea ayudar a las ‘almas’ mediante la conversación espiritual; (9) disfruta de una fe iluminada; (10) ama muy concretamente la pobreza en medio de los pobres de los hospitales; (11) asiste a los sacramentos de la confesión y de la Eucaristía; (12) practica la abnegación, la penitencia y la mortificación continua; (13) tiene una clara conciencia de ser pecador; (14) busca un guía espiritual y practica la cuenta de conciencia; (15) crece en el ejercicio de las virtudes; (16) desea siempre obedecer a Dios, obedeciendo a la Iglesia.²¹

Dado que no es posible desarrollar una comparación de todas estas las dimensiones entre los dos momentos de la vida de Ignacio, presentaremos algunas a modo de ejemplo.

²⁰ “Porque lo que en definitiva Dios operó, pero no ya como resultado exclusivo de la enfermedad, fue una verdadera conversión a la gratuidad, el tránsito del universo ególatra del deseo no integrado por y desde el amor, a la relación gratuita de quien todo lo espera sólo de Dios (o experiencia espiritual de la justificación); a la humilde recepción agradecida de la iniciativa libre y salvífica como puro don inmerecido y de ahí a un nuevo modo de relación con Dios y con los demás; a contar humildemente con la realidad, incluso empobrecida, y desde ella dar la mayor gloria aquí y ahora posible, circunstanciada, a Dios en el servicio a los demás” (S. ARZUBILADE, “Enfermedad”, en *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaziana*, J. GARCÍA DE CASTRO (ed.), Mensajero-Sal Terrae, Madrid-Bilbao² 2007, 750-759, aquí 753).

²¹ Cf. R. ZAS FRIZ DE COL, “Radicalarsi in Dio. La trasformazione mistica di San Ignazio di Loyola”, en *Ignaziana* (www.ignaziana.org) 12 (2011) 162-302.

2.3.1. Discernimiento

Pasado el tiempo de su convalecencia en Loyola, en febrero de 1522, Ignacio salió de casa “montado en una mula” [Au 13]. Los que vivían con él, especialmente su hermano, se fueron dando cuenta por lo que hacía, de que ya no era el mismo [cf. Au 10]. De hecho, cuando Ignacio recuerda este tiempo, afirma que “nuestro Señor se había con esta ánima que aún estaba ciega, aunque con grandes deseos de servirle en todo lo que conociese” [Au 14]. Practicaba las penitencias para imitar a los santos y aún sobre pasarlos: “Y en estos pensamiento tenía toda su consolación, no mirando a cosa ninguna interior, ni sabiendo que cosa era humildad, ni caridad, ni paciencia, ni discreción para reglar ni medir estar virtudes, sino toda su intención era hacer destas obras grandes exteriores, porque así las habían hecho los santos para gloria de Dios, sin mirar otra ninguna más particular circunstancias” [Au 14].

Sin embargo, cuando Ignacio reside en Roma, adonde llega en 1537, quince años después de haber dejado la casa paterna, la transformación que se había iniciado en Loyola, se había consumado. Es un maestro en el discernimiento. Así lo demuestra en el libro de los *Ejercicios* las anotaciones [Ex 1-20], con las diferentes series de reglas de discernimiento: ordenarse en el comer [Ej 210-217], la primera y segunda semana [Ej 313-336], distribución de limosnas [Ej 337-344], sentir y comprender los escrúpulos [Ej 345-351], y por último, para sentir auténticamente en la Iglesia [Ej 352-370]. También lo atestigua su *Diario Espiritual* en la primera parte.

Un ejemplo de la madurez de Ignacio en el ejercicio del discernimiento, en comparación con el período de Loyola, lo encontramos en la carta escrita a los estudiantes de Coimbra, datada el 7 de mayo de 1547, conocida como la *carta de la perfección*. Ignacio los estimula a la vida interior, pero los pone también en guardia ante el fervor indiscreto, pues “no solamente vienen las enfermedades espirituales de causas frías, como es la tibieza, pero aun de calientes, como es el demasiado fervor”. La falta de moderación en el fervor puede llevar a

muchos inconvenientes contrarios a la intención del que así camina. El primero, que no puede servir a Dios a la larga; como suele no acabar el camino el caballo muy fatigado en las primeras jornadas, antes suele ser menester que otros se ocupen en servirle a él. El 2.º, que no suele conservarse lo que así se gana con demasiado apresuramiento [...]. El 3.º, que no se curan de evitar el peligro de cargar mucho la barca; y es así que, aunque es cosa peligrosa llevarla vacía, porque andará fluctuando con tentaciones, más lo es cargarla tanto, que se hunda. 4.º Acaece que, por crucificar el hombre viejo, se crucifica el nuevo, no pudiendo por la flaqueza ejercitar las virtudes [...] [Cartas, 36, pp. 729-730].

2.3.2. Misión

Durante su convalecencia, Ignacio se imagina yendo a Jerusalén descalzo [cf. Au 8], y lo hace en cuanto se restablece [cf. Au 9]. Se convierte en peregrino para cumplir con su misión: llegar a Tierra Santa para quedarse allí y ayudar a las almas. El fracaso de este intento no le disuade de su propósito, al descubrir que va más allá de permanecer en la

tierra de Jesús. Once años después, en París, él y sus compañeros decidieron un segundo intento, que también fracasó. Sin embargo, encontró en Roma el lugar para cumplir su misión, el servicio al prójimo.

En los *Ejercicios*, esta concepción de la misión está representada en el envío que el buen capitán Jesús hace de sus hombres en la meditación de las dos banderas [cf. *Ej* 143-146] y a ella se puede asimilar la vocación personal en la Iglesia. El título de la séptima parte de las *Constituciones* está dedicado a las misiones: “De lo que toca a los ya admittidos en el cuerpo de la Compañía para con los próximos, repartiéndose en la viña de Cristo nuestro Señor”.

En el primer capítulo de esta séptima parte, “De las misiones de Su Santidad”, se trata de la dispersión de los jesuitas “para trabajar en la parte y obras de la que les fuere commettida; ahora sea imbiados por orden del Vicario Summo de Cristo nuestro Señor por unos lugares y otros, ahora por los Superiores de la Compañía, que así mesmo les están en lugar de su divina Magestad, ahora ellos mesmos escojan dónde y en qué trabajar [...]” [*Co* 603].

El Padre General tiene plenos poderes para enviar en misión:

El mesmo General tendrá auctoridad entera en las misiones, no contraveniendo en ningún caso a las de la Sede Apostólica, como se dice en la 7ª Parte, imbiando todos los que le pareciere de los que están a su obediencia, Professos o no Professos, a qualesquiera partes del mundo, para el tiempo que le pareciesse, determinado o no determinado, para exercitar qualquiera medio de los que usa la Compañía para ayudar los próximos [*Co* 749].

La *misión* tiene una raíz divina, como se desprende de la entrada del 11 de febrero de 1544 del *Diario espiritual* de Ignacio, mientras discierne sobre el estado de pobreza de las casas profesas: “cómo el Hijo primero envió en pobreza a predicar a los apóstoles, y después el Espíritu Santo, dando su espíritu y *lenguas* los confirmó, y así el Padre y el Hijo, inviando el Espíritu Santo, todas tres persona confirmaron la tal misión” [*De* 15, cursivas del texto].

La misión se cumple peregrinando por la viña del Señor para el servicio de las almas, pero también en un trabajo estable. Así, en el mes de febrero de 1551, los jesuitas abrieron en Roma una escuela gratuita, que con el tiempo sería el Colegio Romano. Se conserva una especie de circular dirigida a los benefactores datada en 1553, en la cual se pide ayuda para la fundación económica del proyecto, motivándola así:

aquí se instruirán a muchos de Alemania y de todas aquellas partes septentrionales dañadas de herejías, que se podrán después enviar a ellas como operarios fieles, que con ejemplo y doctrina procuren reducir al gremio de la santa madre Iglesia aquella sus naciones. También se instruirá mucho número de operarios de nuestra mesma Compañía, cuyas letra se enderezan solamente a este fin del bien común; y de aquí se han de enviar a todas partes de la cristiandad donde hubiere necesidad, y entre heréticos y cismáticos, moros y gentiles; que, aunque sea de nuestro Instituto en todas partes, lo que se instituyeren aquí, delante los ojos del Sumo Pontífice y Sede Apostólica, serán por razón más adoperados en lo dicho que los otros. Así que este colegio será un seminario continuo de ministros desta Sede Apostólica para servicio de la Santa Iglesia y bien de las ánimas (*Cartas*, n. 106, p. 885).

2.3.3. Deseo de perfección

En el primer período de su conversión, Ignacio pasó del “gran y vano deseo de obtener fama” [Au 1] al deseo de “seguir el camino de la perfección y de lo que traería mayor gloria a Dios...” [Au 36]. A lo largo de los años profundizó en su comprensión de la perfección cristiana.

Así, por ejemplo, en el *Preámbulo a la Consideración de los estados de vida* [Ej 135] San Ignacio afirma que “debemos disponernos a llegar a la perfección en cualquier estado o género de vida que Dios nuestro Señor nos dé a elegir”. Desear la perfección e imitar al Señor es un mismo deseo que se realiza en la respuesta a la llamada del Señor. En el tercer número de las *Constituciones* se lee: “El fin de la Compañía no es sólo esperar, por la gracia de Dios, la salvación y perfección de nuestras propias almas, sino, por esa misma gracia, esforzarnos con todas nuestras fuerzas en ser de ayuda a la salvación y perfección de las almas de nuestro prójimo”.

En el capítulo quinto de las *Constituciones*, San Ignacio no obliga a pecado mortal o venial el cumplimiento de las constituciones porque “en lugar del temor de la ofensa suceda el amor y desseo de toda perfección y de que mayor gloria y alabanza de Cristo nuestro Criador y Señor se siga” [Co 602].

Un último ejemplo se encuentra en la ya citada carta *de la perfección* dirigida a los estudiantes de Coimbra. Ignacio afirma que no duda que la bondad divina quiere comunicar sus bienes para hacerlos perfectos, teniendo Dios más deseos de donarla que ellos de recibirla. Razona así: “que si así no fuese no nos animaría Jesucristo a lo que de sola su [mano podemos haber, diciendo:] *Sed, pues, vosotros perfectos, como vuestro Padre celestial es perfecto* (Mt 5,48). Así que de su parte cierto es que él está presto, con que de la nuestra haya vaso de humildad y deseo para recibir sus gracias, y con que él nos vea bien usar de los dones recibidos y rogar industriosa y diligentemente a su gracia [Cartas 36, p. 724].

2.3.4. Oración

Ignacio, nada más salir de la casa de Loyola, se dirigió al santuario de Nuestra Señora de Aránzazu: “Allí pasó la noche en oración para obtener nuevas energías para su viaje” [Au 13]. Rezaba antes de confesarse [cf. Au 17] y en Manresa “oía cada día la Misa mayor y las Vísperas y Completas, todo cantado, sintiendo en ello grande consolación” [Au 20]; “[...] y perseveraba en sus siete horas de oración de rodillas, levantándose a media noche continuamente, y en todos los más ejercicios ya dichos” [Au 23]. Pero “ultra de sus siete horas de oración, se ocupaba en ayudar algunas almas que allí le venían a buscar, en cosas espirituales, y todo lo más del día que le vacaba daba a pensar en cosas de Dios, de lo que había aquel día meditado o leído” [Au 26].

En su madurez, Ignacio se presenta no sólo como un maestro del discernimiento, sino como un maestro de oración. El librito de los *Ejercicios* lo atestigua ampliamente no sólo por la indicación explícita de los diferentes modos de orar [Ej 238-260], sino por la manera de estructurar durante el mes de ejercicios cada semana, cada día y cada momento de oración.

En cuanto su oración personal, el *Diario espiritual* da un impresionante testimonio de sus experiencias interiores antes, durante y después de la celebración de la misa:

Al preparar el altar, y después de vestido, y en la misa, con muy grandes mociones interiores, y *muchas y muy intensas* lágrimas y sollozos; perdiendo muchas veces la habla, y así después de acabada la misa, *en muchas parte desde tiempo* de la misa, del preparar, y después, con mucho sentir y ver a nuestra Señora mucho propicia *delante del Padre*, a tanto, que en las oraciones al Padre, al Hijo, y al consagrar suyo, no podía que a ella no sentiese o viese, como quien es parte o puerta de *tanta gracias, que en espíritu sentía* [De 31; cursivas del texto].

En las *Constituicones* se dan las siguientes indicaciones sobre la oración personal a los jesuitas formados:

Porque según el tiempo y aprobación de vida que se spera para admittir a profesión y también para Coadjutores formados los que se admitten en la Compañía, se presupone serán personas espirituales y aprovechadas para correr por la vía de Cristo nuestro Señor, quanto la disposición corporal y ocupaciones exteriores de caridad y obediencia permiten; no parece darles otra regla en lo que toca a la oración, meditación, y studio, como ni en la corporal exercitación de ayunos, vigiliás, y otras asperezas o penitencias, sino aquella que la discreta caridad, les dictare, con que siempre el Confessor, y hubiendolo dubio en lo que conviene, el Superior también, sea informado. Solo esto se dirá en general, que se tenga advertencia que ni el uso demasiado destas cosas, tanto debilite las fuerzas corporales y ocupe el tiempo, que para la espiritual ayuda de los próximos, según nuestro Instituto, no basten; ni tampoco por el contrario haya tanta remisión en ellas, que se resfríe el espíritu, y las passiones humanas y baxas se calienten [Co 582].

Ignacio escribe a Urbano Fernández, a través de su secretario Polanco el 1 de junio de 1551 en estos términos:

Cuanto a la oración y meditación, no hubiendolo necesidad especial por tentaciones, como dije, molestas o peligrosas, veo que más aprueba [Ignacio] procurar en todas cosas que hombre hace hallar a Dios, que dar mucho tiempo junto a ella. Y este espíritu desea ver en los de la Compañía: que no hallen (si es posible) menos devoción en cualquier obra de caridad y obediencia que en la oración o meditación; pues no deben hacer cosa alguna sino por amor y servicio de Dios N. S., y en aquello se debe hallar cada uno más contento que le es mandado, pues entonces no puede dudar que se conforma con la voluntad de Dios Nuestro Señor (*Cartas*, 68, p. 812).

2.3.5. *Imitación de los santos y de Cristo*

La lectura de las vidas de los santos y de Cristo impactó a Ignacio durante su estancia en Loyola, “aquí se le ofrecían los deseos de imitar los santos, no mirando más circunstancias que prometerse así con la gracia de Dios de hacerlo como ellos lo había hecho” [Au 9].

En Roma, Ignacio ya no imitaba a los santos exteriormente, sino interiormente, imitando al Señor: “yo quiero y deseo y es mi determinación deliberada, sólo que sea vuestro mayor servicio y alabanza, de imitaros en pasar todas injurias y todo vituperio y toda pobreza, así actual como espiritual, queriéndome vuestra sanctísima majestad elegir y rescibir en tal vida y estado [Ej 98].

Son muchas las citas que se pueden hacer a este respecto en los *Ejercicios*: en el coloquio de la contemplación de la Encarnación se pide “para más seguir e imitar al Señor nuestro, así nuevamente encarnado” [Ej 109]; también se pide “conocimiento de la vida verdadera que muestra el summo y verdadero capitán, y la gracia de imitarle” en las Dos Banderas [Ej 139] así como “en pasar oprobios y injurias por más en ellas le imitar” [Ej 147]. Imitación que llega a su punto culminante con el tercer grado de humildad: “por imitar y parecer más actualmente a Cristo nuestro Señor, quiero y elijo más pobreza con Cristo pobre que riqueza, oprobios con Cristo lleno dellos que honores, y desear más de ser estimado por vano y loco por Cristo, que primero fue tenido por tal, que por sabio ni prudente en este mundo” [Ej 167].

Con esa lógica se hace el examen general al candidato de la Compañía: “Para mejor venir a este tal grado de perfección tan precioso en la vida spiritual, su mayor y más intenso officio debe ser buscar en el Señor nuestro su mayor abnegación y continua mortificación en todas cosas posibles; y el nuestro ayudarle en ellas quanto el Señor nuestro nos administrare su gratia para mayor alabanza y gloria suya” [Co 103].

2.3.6. Ignacio, de Peregrino a General

Donde quizá resulta más evidente la transformación experimentada por Ignacio, es al comparar al neo-converso que sale de la casa paterna al lomo de una mula, dejándole tomar la decisión de ir o no ir a matar al moro que ha cuestionado la honorabilidad de María, con el Ignacio que describe las cualidades que debe tener el General, en el capítulo segundo de la novena parte de las *Constituciones*: “Quál haya de ser el Prepósito General” [Co 723-735]. En los números 723-735 se describen las seis cualidades que deben caracterizar al Superior General “*pues en ellas consiste la perfección del Prepósito para con Dios, y lo que perficciona su affecto y entendimiento y execución; y también lo que le ayuda de los bienes del cuerpo y externos; y según la orden con que se ponen, así se estima la importancia dellas*” [Co 724, cursivo del texto]. Se recuerdan la dos primeras:

La primera es que sea muy unido con Dios nuestro Señor y familiar en la oración y todas sus operaciones, para que tanto mejor dél como de fuente de todo bien, impetre a todo el cuerpo de la Compañía mucha participación de sus dones y gracias, y mucho valor y efficacia a todos los medios que se usaren para la ayuda de las ánimas.

La 2.^a, que sea persona cuyo exemplo en todas virtudes ayude a los demás de la Compañía, y en special debe resplandecer en él la caridad para con todos próximos, y señaladamente para con la Compañía, y la humildad verdadera, que de Dios nuestro Señor y de los hombres le hagan muy amable. Debe también ser libre de todas passiones, teniéndolas domadas y mortificadas, porque interiormente no le perturben el juicio de la razón, y exteriormente sea tan compuesto, y en el hablar specialmente tan concertado, que ninguno pueda notar en él cosa o palabra que no le edifique, así de los de la Compañía, que le han de tener como espejo y dechado, como de los de fuera. Con esto sepa mezclar de tal manera la rectitud y severidad necessaria con la benignidad y mansedumbre, que ni se dexé declinar de lo que juzgare más agradar a Dios nuestro Señor, ni dexé de tener la compassión que conviene a sus hijos; en manera que aun los reprehendidos o castigados reconozcan que procede rectamente en el Señor nuestro y con caridad en lo que hace, bien que contra su gusto fuese

según el hombre inferior. Y así mesmo la magnanimidad y fortaleza de ánimo le es muy necesaria para sufrir las flaquezas de muchos, y para comenzar cosas grandes en servicio de Dios nuestro Señor, y perseverar constantemente en ellas quanto conviene, sin perder ánimo con las contradicciones (aunque fuesen de personas grandes y potentes), ni dexarse apartar de lo que pide la razón y el divino servicio por ruegos o amenazas dellos, siendo Superior a todos casos, sin dexarse levantar con los prósperos ni abatirse de ánimo con los adversos, estando muy aparejado para rescibir, quando menester fuesse, la muerte por el bien de la Compañía en servicio de Iesu Cristo Dios y Señor nuestro [Co 723-726.727-728].

3. Conclusión

La transformación, no sólo la de Ignacio, sino la de todo cristiano, es el resultado de la interacción de las mociones divinas, percibidas como procedentes directamente de Dios o a través de mediaciones históricas, con las decisiones del creyente como respuesta a ellas. En el juego de las diferentes mociones y decisiones que se desarrollan durante la vida de Ignacio, se revela su perseverante decisión de ser transformado por Dios después de su conversión en Loyola.

En toda moción se manifiesta, más o menos claramente, una decisión divina que exige una respuesta por parte de quien la recibe. Las grandes o pequeñas mociones desencadenan grandes o pequeñas decisiones: es siempre a través de éstas que se produce la transformación de la vida cristiana, pues son los puntos fijos que la marcan como hitos. Hacer la voluntad divina, presuponiendo la indiferencia ignaciana como pureza de corazón frente a los afectos desordenados, significa discernir y decidir lo que Dios ha decidido para el creyente individual, “para mí”.

Así, a través de las decisiones es como se verifica la transformación participativa que lleva tanto a Dios como al creyente a una donación recíproca, en una consumación de la unión amorosa, en la que el creyente se diviniza por participación, gracias a la comunicación mutua entre ambos, en la que los amantes se entregan el uno al otro, porque tienen una sola voluntad.

The Ignatian Spiritual Exercises and non-Christian traditions

by JACQUES SCHEUER S.J.*

Foreword

In the following pages the reader will find an attempt to gather information and elements of reflection about the relationship between the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola and non-Christian spiritual traditions. This area may be considered as a small corner in the field of history of religions or comparative religion and also in the more practical field of interreligious relations and of inculturation of this particular Christian tradition in non-Christian cultural and spiritual contexts. The debates about sharing the practice of the Spiritual Exercises with members of other religions are also taken into account.

On the other hand, studies and essays concerned more broadly with Ignatian spirituality and non-Christian traditions are usually not included, even if the borderline may sometimes be less than obvious. More general studies and essays about Eastern ways of meditation or contemplation, such as Yoga and Zen, compared or contrasted with Christian faith or spirituality are not taken into consideration, even when penned by well-known Jesuit authors.

It will appear that most of the entries refer to Hinduism and Buddhism, more specifically to the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ* and to Zen. But other Asian traditions are mentioned when relevant. A few entries are concerned with Islam and a couple more with Judaism and with African traditions. The 'Western' world (Europe and the Americas) is beyond the scope of this survey. To the best of my knowledge, writings by non-Christians about the Spiritual Exercises are very few.

The documentation presented here is divided into two complementary parts. The first section offers a presentation of about twenty more significant and innovative or more extended and detailed contributions. The second section is a bibliography listed in alphabetical order of the authors; brief annotations and a short index to a few selected themes are provided.

This tentative and provisional bibliography is certainly not exhaustive. Very short and/or unsubstantial items have been left out. I have unfortunately not been able to include publications in Asian (Japanese, Vietnamese, Tamil...) or African languages. Translations of the same item in several languages have usually not been listed. Additions and corrections will be gratefully received.

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1. Reading notes

A Bunch of Historical Jottings

The practice of the Spiritual Exercises in the mission fields, particularly in Asia, is rather poorly documented. It is not our intention here to venture on an investigation of this practice from the sixteenth century on. About a dozen studies are mentioned in the bibliography below. Let us be satisfied here with a couple of instances showing some connection with the cultures and spiritual traditions of India and the Far East.

Jesuit missionaries of course used to set apart a full week for a yearly retreat based on the Ignatian Exercises. But, according to Fr. Léon Besse in his booklet on the practice of the SpEx in the ancient “Mission du Maduré”, in South-East India, retreats were being preached according to the Ignatian Exercises to groups of Catholic lay people. He found a first (and rather late) mention of such retreats in a letter addressed in 1719 to Fr. General by Fr. Charles-Michel Bertoldi. It seems that the small number of the missionaries, the rather poor education of many converts as well as the frequent bouts of famine and local wars had hampered for a long time the organization of such group retreats. [see BESSE 1910]

In another booklet published in the same series, Fr. Hosten reports a rather curious development. When preaching popular retreats in Brittany in the 17th century, Fr. Vincent Huby used to display symbolic images depicting the moral or immoral dispositions of the heart or the soul. These came to be used by Protestants as well and adapted to German or Dutch audiences. Later, in the 19th century, “in the Indies, the Protestants acquired a sort of monopoly on Huby’s *Miroir du Cœur...* They translated it or had it translated into a number of native languages and in some of them it went through several printings”. Fr. Hosten provides bibliographical notices about translations in no less than seventeen Indian languages! [see HOSTEN 1911]

A more ancient and rather well documented practice comes to us from seventeenth-century China. The Western Christian tradition of meditation or contemplation on Gospel scenes plays a central role in the Ignatian Exercises. It was soon transmitted, among other mission fields, to China. Chinese literati who had learned from Italian Jesuit Giulio Aleni (1582-1649) the art of prayerful consideration of the mysteries of Jesus’ life were finding precious help in the illustrations of a famous book published on the initiative of Jerome Nadal: *Adnotationes et meditationes in evangelia* (Antwerp 1595) and by later Chinese reprints and adaptations. The reception and prayerful appropriation of these images and their commentaries was probably facilitated by the existence of comparable Buddhist and especially Daoist practices. [see STANDAERT 2015]

SpEx = Spiritual Exercises

BbG or Gîta = *Bhagavad-Gîta*

The Spiritual Exercises and Hinduism

Varghese MALPAN s.j., *A Comparative Study of the Bhagavad-Gîtâ and the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola on the Process of Spiritual Liberation*, (= Documenta Missionalia 22), Rome, Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1992, 442 p.

In this doctoral dissertation at the Gregorian University Institute of Spirituality (Rome), Varghese Malpan picks up an interesting red thread for his comparative analysis of the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ* [*BhG*] and the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises [*SpEx*]: he chooses to consider both texts as descriptive of processes of spiritual liberation. This dynamic perspective helps him to uncover and analyse parallels and similarities as well as contrasts. Obviously these two booklets – the short *BhG* should however be read and interpreted as but one section within the huge *Mahâbhârata* ‘epic’ – are vastly different in their literary style but they converge in their scope of leading into and guiding along a concrete spiritual itinerary. In both of them “the process of spiritual liberation is interwoven with the vision of *action*, the *consciousness* of God and his ways, and the experience of the *love* of God. The study therefore seeks to bring out the relationship and distinctness of this process in our sources.” (24). Although both the *BhG* and the *SpEx* have of course been the subject of a vast number of enquiries, a close comparative study, to the best of the author’s knowledge, was still missing.

The first two-thirds of the dissertation and of the published book provide a separate treatment of the text and, to some extent, the context of the *BhG* and of the *SpEx*. Even if the text of the *BhG*, as we now have it, remains the focus of the enquiry, it has to be examined against the background of the Vedic and Upanishadic literature. Whether composed by one or several authors during a shorter or longer span of time, the *BhG* lacks the tighter unity and internal coherence of the single-authored *SpEx*. The *Gîtâ* is an impressive attempt to synthesize the teachings and the terminologies of several spiritual and philosophical (especially Sâmkhya) traditions. The diversity of its sources of inspiration is manifest in the treatment of the teachings about God, the Self, and Nature or the world. In spite of the fact that these diverse contributions are marshalled at the service of a single spiritual and practical vision, it is no wonder that the *Gîtâ* teachings became across the centuries the object of diverging interpretations.

While sticking as much as possible to the text, V. Malpan intends above all to show how the process of spiritual liberation taps the resources of three distinct but complementary ‘ways’ (*mârگا*): acts or action (*karma*), knowledge or wisdom (*jñâna*), and loving devotion (*bhakti*). “The author of the *Gîtâ* tries to combine and harmonise the Vedic and Upanishadic teachings into an original and unique synthesis which is a hymn of God’s love for man and man’s love for God. The nerve centre of this hitherto unheard of synthesis is to be traced in an integral vision of the three somewhat distinct but interdependent *yogas* (ways)” (97). As a process and as a goal, the ‘*Gîtâ-Yoga*’ may be defined as “an act of self-integration which finds its threefold expression in action, knowledge and love, and which seeks its final fulfilment in union with the personal God” (101).

The second part of Malpan’s dissertation offers a similarly detailed and thoughtful examination of the text of the *SpEx*. In this case however, our knowledge of the genesis

of the booklet benefits from what we know about the life and inner experience of its author. After a brief survey of the world-view of Ignatius (God, Man, the created World, Sin), the study focuses on the “dynamics of the process of spiritual liberation”, the process of “deepening inner freedom aimed at decision making and/or reforming one’s life for creative growth in Christ our Lord” (231). The structure of the four ‘Weeks’ “is not that of a linear continuity or development, but of spiral depth and growth” (232). The regular meditative practices of ‘repetition’ and ‘application of the senses’ here play a significant role. Particular attention is given to three ‘Unitive Exercises’: the Principle and Foundation, the Call of an Earthly King, and the Contemplation for attaining love.

In Parts One and Two, the *BhG* and the *SpEx* benefit from a detailed separate treatment. Readers are thus equipped with a rich baggage of information and analysis about the world-views and the development of both booklets. The last third of Malpan’s study is dedicated to a formal and more explicit comparison: we move on from a ‘latent’ phase to an ‘active’ phase (335), pointing out “the elements of convergence and the underlying differences” (336), particularly in relation to God (immanence and transcendence, incarnation). Coming back to the “process of spiritual liberation” and the role of the three ways or disciplines of action, knowledge and loving devotion, the author offers valuable insights about ‘yoga as equanimity’ (*samatva*) and Ignatian ‘indifference’.

However, rather than straightforward comparisons, we have here more than once Christian appreciations or evaluations of Hindu doctrines. We are shown more clearly what is ‘lacking’ on the *Gîtâ* side when compared with the *SpEx*. Fair enough. But the reader could have been warned that similar though obviously different ‘lacks’ could be pinpointed in the *SpEx* when compared with the *Gîtâ*. Some of the author’s evaluations are well taken while others may seem a bit rash (and sometimes corrected or nuanced in other parts of this section), for instance when he declares: “In the *Gîtâ*, action as participation in God’s own mission of saving the whole of humanity is conspicuous by its absence” (371). This is rather strange if one considers the *Gîtâ* teachings about the *avatâra*’s action for the restoration of the *dharma*, the right order and cohesion of the world (*lokasangraha*), as well as Arjuna’s becoming an instrument in the hands of the Lord.

In spite of the overall valuable emphasis on the ‘process of liberation’, this Third and last Part of the dissertation may leave the reader with the impression of a rather static comparison. This is probably due above all to the different literary styles of our two sources. While the *SpEx* are built as a simple guide for the practice of the retreatant (and of the person who provides guidance), the *BhG*, while offering teachings and motivation for action, does not, in the present form of the text, provide a linear (or even a spiral) itinerary with equivalent clarity of design.

Having followed the author in his exploration of the *Gîtâ*, the Christian reader may feel that quite a number of its teachings, exhortations and suggestions could be relevant and helpful in a Christian process of spiritual liberation.

In a short conclusion, V. Malpan broaches the question of a possible integration in what he labels (after Xavier Irudayaraj’s group? See IRUDAYARAJ) a “Indo-Ignatian” perspective. Is there a basis for such an integration? “Do the authors of the *Gîtâ* and the *Spiritual Exercises* speak... on their own authority, or do we have to look elsewhere for

an answer?” (403) Actually, the initiative belongs to God: the *Gîtâ* and the Exercises “can meet in the only one and true God who is the sole author of every religious experience... This meeting takes place at the horizon of ‘unthematic’ religious experience or ‘common theological’ life since it is common to all theistic religions” (404). At this level, however, the integration “will, as we can very well presume, remain rather indistinct”. Beyond this point, the author, as a Christian theologian, quite rightly states that attempts at (Christian) integration “should pass from the theocentric to the Trinitarian and Christocentric focus” (404): “Christ is the one Who integrates” (405). Such integrative enterprises belong however outside the span of the present dissertation.

Pavulraj MICHAEL s.j., *Search and Find the Will of God. A Dialogue between the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius and the Bhagavad Gîtâ* (estratto), Rome, 2012, ii-230 p.

About twenty years later, a similar comparative project was undertaken as a doctoral dissertation submitted to the same Institute of Spirituality at the Gregorian University. The red thread now is the search for the will of God. And ‘comparison’ is substituted by ‘dialogue’ or ‘dialogical encounter’. Although this does not seem to actually make a lot of difference, the dialogue label makes clear the spirit and requirement of the endeavour: “openness to the *Bhagavad Gîtâ* with a willingness not only to speak but also to respond to what the text says” (187). If we compare with Malpan’s work, much of the same ground is being covered although one might consider that searching and finding the will of God has a narrower focus than ‘spiritual liberation’. ‘Discernment’ here will be at the centre of the stage; a definition is provided right from the start: it is a process or “a complex, multi-layered experience in which, intentionally, decision and action are interpreted in terms of movement toward or away from God” (1). An Indian and Hindu equivalent would be ‘*viveka*’ or ‘yogic consciousness’ (6). Searching and finding the will of God will be considered throughout at the level of the “individual person” (9).

The comparative endeavour aims at clarifying similarities and differences as well as “identifying patterns of interrelation” between the SpEx and the *BhG* (7) and sometimes, more broadly, between Christianity and Hinduism: commentators and interpreters such as, on the Hindu side, Śankara and Râmânuja, Vivekânanda, Gandhi or Aurobindo are quoted quite frequently.

As might be expected, the dissertation is divided in three Parts. The first one, dedicated to the Spiritual Exercises, provides a detailed examination of the “Ignatian key meditations”: Principle and Foundation, Kingdom of Christ, Two Standards, Three Classes of Men, Three Kinds of Humility, Contemplation for Attaining Love; it concludes with a chapter on the rules for the discernment of the spirits. On the *Gîtâ* side, three ‘paths’ or ‘*yogas*’ are considered in the perspective of searching and finding the will of the Lord: action (*karma*), knowledge (*jñâna*), and loving devotion (*bhakti*). A last chapter is devoted to the *Gîtâ* symbols of the chariot and the battlefield and their spiritual significance.

The Third and last Part provides the ‘dialogue’ between our two sources. Dedicated to particular themes, twelve short sections follow more or less the same pattern: separate and parallel surveys of the relevant matter drawn from the SpEx as well as from the

BhG, followed and concluded by comparative observations drawn and formulated from a Christian and Ignatian point of view. Let us pinpoint some more remarkable items.

Roughly, to begin with, the main steps in the process of discernment include: prayer, the “gathering of evidence” (reading the signs of the times) and the help of a guide, and “finding confirmation”. Searching and finding the will of God obviously presupposes traditionally given representations and understandings of God (transcendence and immanence; Incarnation and *avatâra*) and of the human being (dual or triple constitution: spirit / soul / body). At times, however, it is difficult to make precise comparisons because Ignatius’ anthropology is often closer to biblical and Pauline categories than to those of the Schoolmen while the *Gîtâ* does not exactly follow the strict dual categories of the Sâmkhya philosophical treatises.

Although grace plays no or little part in some Hindu schools, it is a significant dimension of the *Gîtâ* teachings. Another major point of convergence is finding or seeing God in all things and all things in God. Further on, P. Michael addresses the theme of “spiritual motions”, particularly desolation and consolation, but the *Gîtâ* “procedures for the training of the mind” here adduced emphasize concentration and one-pointedness, self-control and motionlessness rather than interpretation of inner movements. Perhaps more relevant material might have been drawn from Arjuna’s moods and queries in his interactions with Krishna, his charioteer, friend and guide. The next section is entitled “Controlling and Application of the Senses”: the first exercise seems to be more present in the yoga of the *Gîtâ* while the second one is characteristic of the Ignatian booklet. Of course, the application of the senses, in spite of quite some uncertainties and debates about its exact nature and procedure, would likely find closer parallels in other Hindu traditions, for instance in later *bhakti* schools or in tantric movements.

The next two sections provide a rich material for parallel study and spiritual convergences: first, active indifference and desireless or selfless action (*nishkâma karma*); secondly, the spirit of contemplation in action and service compared with the *BhG* ideal of cooperation with the Lord for the welfare and harmonious maintenance of world and society (*loka-sangraha*). The last two sections are devoted to the themes of interior knowledge (*conocimiento interno / jñâna*) and love (*amor / paramabhakti*).

The printed *estratto* leaves the reader practically without conclusion (187-188) although the original dissertation had a twenty-page one. No attempt is made here to outline or even suggest ways of integrating *Gîtâ* materials and themes, let alone procedures, into the practice of the Exercises. We are left, prudently and perhaps wisely, with parallel expositions and the light these comparisons mutually throw on the understanding of both booklets. As we observed apropos Malpan’s dissertation and book, this is partly due, no doubt, to the different literary styles of the SpEx and the *BhG*.

[May we be allowed here a short observation? Many modern authors – Gandhi would be a clear example – are prone to explain that the warlike scenario of the *Gîtâ* should be interpreted as an allegory of a purely internal or spiritual struggle. This may be due, on the Hindu side, to the rising importance of non-violence (*a-himsâ*) and to the devotional and even emotional colouring of *bhakti*. On the side of Christian interpreters of the *BhG*, particularly in comparisons with the Ignatian Exercises or other classics

of spirituality, there is also an emphasis on interiority and individual endeavour. The danger is to neglect the social and even cosmic dimensions of the *Gîtâ* understanding of *dhârma*, especially when read in the broader context of the *Mahâbhârata* war. It is then somewhat ironical that some Western and/or Christian authors criticize Hindu spirituality for its lack of realism and of social or political relevance.]

Jacques SCHEUER s.j., “The Bhagavad Gîtâ as ‘Spiritual Exercises’” in Catherine CORNILLE (ed.), *Song Divine. Christian Commentaries on the Bhagavad Gîtâ* (= Christian Commentaries on Non-Christian Sacred Texts 1), Leuven, Peeters / Dudley, Eerdmans, 2006, pp. 113-129.

Rather than a detailed comparison of teachings and worldviews, this short essay proposes to follow in a parallel way the development or sequence of the *Gîtâ* and the Exercises from the point of view of the person who ‘receives’ them (*SpEx* §§ 1; 5): Arjuna or the exercitant. The *BhG* is a dialogue aimed at helping prince Arjuna (and the reader as well) “to escape from the dilemma and distress where he is plunged, to grow step by step in the understanding of the meaning and import of his responsibility towards the society and the world, to perceive more clearly the various options open to him, in such a way that he becomes able to make a ‘choice’ or to achieve a ‘discernment’” (115). Standing on the battlefield, Arjuna, a warrior and a prince, finds himself between the horns of a dilemma. His duty (*dhârma*) is to fight and he is not a coward. But the prospect of the slaughter anguishes him and he discovers that *dhârma* is complex and conflict ridden. Scruple, doubt and desolation assail him. The first chapter of the *Gîtâ* gives a long account of the movements of his soul.

The instructions and pieces of advice proffered by Krishna, the divine charioteer and trusted friend, do not follow a smooth, linear way. Nevertheless, the overall thrust may be interpreted as a process of internal transformation: “from haziness to bright light, from dispersion to inner unity, from lack of motivation to an engagement integrating the multiple dimensions of reality” (120). A knight’s duty and mundane sense of honour will not do. Arjuna needs to be schooled in indifference or equanimity and non-attachment: “Yoga means ‘sameness-and-indifference’” (*BhG* 2.48). Willpower will not do. Arjuna is invited to look at the Lord, the ‘bountiful dispenser’ (*Bhagavân*), the model and source of selfless action for the weal of the world, the model of untiring yogic activity: “Yoga is skill in works” (*BhG* 2.51).

We thus proceed from the consideration of an earthly king to the contemplation of the eternal king. And lo and behold! Krishna grants Arjuna a “divine eye” enabling him to contemplate the Lord in his cosmic dimension and glory. This manifestation may be considered as a consolation without any preceding cause or as an election in the ‘first time’, comparable to what happened to Paul on the road to Damascus (*SpEx* § 175). However, the fruit of such an experience has to be lived in one’s daily routine. Arjuna learns to see everything in the Lord and the Lord’s presence in everything. Several images and phrases resonate with the Contemplation for attaining love.

The personal link with Lord Krishna develops into an inclusive spirit of *bhakti*: more than ‘devotion’ (the usual translation), it means sharing and participation, a personal

bond based on loyalty, trust and affection: “Giving up all things of law (*dharmā!*), turn to Me, your only refuge” (*BhG* 18.66). The disciple, an instrument in the hand of his Lord, is then able to act in a free and spontaneous way: “Ponder this wisdom in all its amplitude, then do whatever you will” (18.63). We are not far from “*ama et quod vis, fac*”.

Francis X. CLOONEY s.j., “God for us. Multiple Religious Identities as a Human and Divine Prospect”, in Catherine CORNILLE (ed.), *Many Mansions? Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 2002, pp. 44-60.

We remain here in the universe of *bhakti*, but with more affective and cultic overtones in both individual and collective devotion. A powerful *bhakti* current developed in the Tamil language area of South India. The supreme Lord – Śiva or, in this case, Vishnu Nârâyana – makes himself present in many ways: in ancient myths telling his salvific deeds for the sake of the world, in stories about his wonderful dealings with saints and devotees of past centuries, in his images everywhere in temples and pilgrimage sites, in practices of contemplative meditation and visualization. Both devotees and theologians never tire of celebrating the proximity of Nârâyana making himself accessible to simple but trustful devotion and praise. Under endless forms and guises, the Lord is near and accessible. He allows himself to be dependent upon the desires and imagination of each faithful:

Whichever form pleases his people, that is his form;
 Whichever name pleases his people, that is his name;
 Whichever way pleases his people who meditate without ceasing, that is his way.

Similarly, in the course of the Spiritual Exercises, particularly during the second, third and fourth Weeks, we find the “practice of applying the imagination to scenes from the life of Christ, composing such scenes so as to encourage the active engagement of the meditator” (52). In Preambles and Points suggested for daily prayer, the text of the *Exercises* provides concrete examples of such a practice. Now, the exercitant is not provided with ready-made images nor explanations “at great length” (*SpEx* § 2); he is rather invited to consider, observe and contemplate by himself (§§ 111-112, 114-116). Constructive, “personal engagement in the contemplative process is given maximum opportunity” (55). “Although the forms are understood as rooted in historical fact, Ignatius presumes that God is willing to accommodate the images generated by the person who contemplates the history now. The great energy behind imaginative practice in the *Exercises* is rooted in Ignatius’s expectation that there can be an immediate relationship between God and the person who meditates, by way of the vehicle of the meditator’s honest use of the imagination” (53).

In connection with the main topic of the volume where his contribution appears, Francis Clooney observes that nowadays not a few people, including exercitants, may find themselves at the crossroad of two or several religious traditions and imaginaries. “We ourselves begin to belong to those multiple traditions in new and complex ways. In a sense we are ‘intertexted’ in our spiritual practice” (57). But, “even when our imaginations have become religiously more complicated and diverse, it is still the same God who is seeking us out, accommodating us where we are” (59).

Ignatius PUTHIADAM s.j. & Martin KÄMPCHEN, *Geist der Wahrheit. Christliche Exerzitien im Dialog mit dem Hinduismus. Ein Lese- und Übungsbuch* (= Reihe Engagement), Kevelaer, Butzon & Bercker, 1980, 226 p.

In aim and structure, this older publication is vastly different. It is a self-help book containing all the necessary material for individuals intending to make an eight-day retreat in the spirit and according to the pattern of the Spiritual Exercises. It is more specifically adapted to Western (here German-speaking European) Christians. In the mind of Ignatius Puthiadam, its main author, exploring spiritual resources from Eastern religions, especially Hinduism, in a spirit of dialogue and in a prayerful and contemplative way, could help Christians renovate and deepen the understanding of their own faith as well. Provided they are ready to discover unfamiliar landscapes, not out of sheer curiosity but with the genuine desire to learn from authentic spiritual traditions, Christian retreatants might appropriate and integrate to their own life useful resources (teachings, methods and practices).

Like many others before, this book follows, in a shortened and simplified way, the structure and itinerary of the SpEx and their four 'Weeks': creation and Principle and Foundation, sin and conversion, following Christ according to the Gospels, presence of Christ in the eucharist and the sacraments, passion and resurrection, gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church and Contemplation *ad amorem*. The daily suggestions for reflection, meditation and contemplative prayer do not follow literally the Ignatian text but are adapted to the environment, culture and style of late twentieth-century simple believers.

The matter for each day is divided into three unequal sections. The first and more developed one usually starts with short anthropological reflections (f. i., what is the meaning of life?), followed by explicitly Christian themes; it ends with food for thought and prayer drawn from the Hindu heritage. This Hindu material is presented in an accessible way, without technicalities or academic preoccupations, but with the expertise of an author fully at home in Indian thought and spirituality. Besides biblical references, the brief second section usually provides three to four short texts taken from the Hindu Scriptures (Veda, Upanishad, *Bhagavad-Gîtâ*...) or later traditional authors (up to Vivekananda, Tagore and Gandhi); these quotations may be used for prayerful reflection.

The last section contains practical indications for each meditation period: bodily posture (sitting, lying, walking...), use of light or darkness, use of images, symbols and gestures, singing or prayerful repetition of divine Names (*nâma-japa*), fasting and concluding feast meal... For each day of the week, particular instructions are given about 'exercises' meant to foster concentration and peaceful awareness by way of mindful focusing on in- and outbreath, on the body, on sounds or sights etc. The body and the imagination play throughout a big part. From all this, it appears that the Indian and Hindu resources presented here are not restricted to doctrinal baggage but include a broad range of yogic exercises and devotional practices that may be helpful to Christian and other retreatants everywhere.

As it stands, this 'reading and practice' book is meant to provide everything a Christian needs for a full eight-day individual retreat, at home or elsewhere, although it may also be adapted for a group retreat. While the author states that the occasional help

from a spiritual guide or wise advisor is important, the permanent presence of such a person is clearly not mandatory.

Michael AMALADOSS s.j., *Iñigo in India. Reflections on the Ignatian Exercises by an Indian disciple*, Anand, Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1992, xviii-120 p.

In the Introduction, the author clearly states what his little book is not. Twenty years earlier, he had been considering Christianity as the crown of Hinduism. As of 1991, 500th anniversary of the birth of Ignatius of Loyola, he considers himself as heir to two traditions, a situation and a process of ‘interior dialogue’ where the Christian and the Indian heritages meet in a creative and mutually enriching way. What the author intends in these pages is not a scholarly, ‘objective’ comparison, not two separate expositions followed by a comparative study: “This is a process of development, not comparison. A comparison may have been useful at a certain stage. But now that stage is being transcended” (xiv). The time is ripe for a freer, hermeneutical approach, an attempt at integration, a search for an ‘Indo-Ignatian’ spirituality.

These ‘reflections’ do not strictly follow the order of the text of the Exercises although the general outline of their development is recognizable throughout the first half of *Iñigo in India*. Twelve short chapters are distributed into two parts: general perspectives and orientations, more practical and concrete suggestions. We highlight here in particular what the ‘Indian disciple’ has to say about the Exercises in their Hindu context.

In Indian traditional terms, ‘spiritual exercises’ may conveniently be considered as ‘*sâdhana*’, an active quest including “all the practices helpful to attain spiritual experience”, or as ‘*mârga*’, both a way and a method (69). Beyond this question of terminology, Indian spiritual traditions carry a rich diversity of practices related to breathing, to sitting and other postures, to methods of concentration, to the use of images, sounds and movements. These and similar methods can be approached in two ways. In the context of the Exercises, they may be used simply as techniques, “in so far as they are useful” (*tantum quantum*): see for instance the slow meditation proceeding word by word, praying by rhythm, praying mentally with each breath or respiration (*SpEx* §§ 258-260). But they may also be used in a more integrated way and become “elements in our spirituality” (73). “Yogic techniques and awareness exercises” may be of great help in order to “rediscover and experience the integrality of our being” (78). A deep awareness of God’s presence or of “our rootedness in God” (79) is not just a preparatory step but already a prayerful experience.

Michael Amaladoss feels however that many yogic and concentration methods are better suited to those who follow a purely contemplative path, for instance in an ashram environment; moreover, such methods are likely to encourage individualistic trends already so common nowadays. What contemporary India needs most and what comes closer to the Ignatian spirituality of contemplation in action would be the way of *karma-yoga* (30; 112), in the line of the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ* and of Gandhi: “The contribution of Ignatian spirituality to Indian tradition will be to encourage the emergence of a large number of *karma yogis* and thus stabilize this trend both in the Church and in the country” (54). Of course, this spirituality in action should not be narrowed down in an exclu-

sive way but rather lived in complementarity with the other *mârga*-s or *yoga*-s: knowledge and loving devotion.

In the traditional understanding and practice of the SpEx the collective or social dimension is not sufficiently developed in spite of the fact that they foster a spirituality of service. And a similar lack is to be deplored in much of the Hindu traditions. For instance, “both Hinduism and Christianity seem to focus on the individual sinner. They were not unaware of unjust structures or of *adhharma*. But they did not reflect too much on them” (34). Similarly, there is little attention to the socio-political conditions or environment in the process of discernment and ‘election’: “Neither Ignatius nor the Indian tradition may have spelt out the concrete consequences in the socio-structural sphere of the ongoing struggle between good and evil. But the basic principles are there to inspire and guide us” (38).

Granted that the SpEx are meant to help and orientate believers towards a life of service, “a common search for the will of God will certainly facilitate common commitment and common action” (53). A particular chapter, “Transformation and Communion”, is dedicated to this question. It is true that “individually directed retreats are becoming the norm today” (91). At the same time, “we need a social movement. Can the *Exercises* be used to form, shape and animate a group?” (92) “In recent years we have developed ways of discerning in common. We could extend the same perspective to the whole of the *Exercises*. The *Exercises* then are done as a group” (100).

We shall not go further into this question here, except to take note of a possible or even probable consequence in multireligious countries like India: it will be “a challenge for us to adapt and create *a new set of Exercises* that are suitable for a multi-religious group. (...) I think that such a task will not be a difficult one” (100-101). Michael Amaladoss does not elaborate further. He had however, in connection with the meditations on the mysteries of the life of Jesus, made the following observation: “I wonder whether, without in any way weakening our commitment to Jesus and our attachment to the mysteries of his life, passion, death and resurrection as a model and as a way, we could not also take into account other manifestations of God, as reported whether in the Old Testament or in other religious traditions” (30; cf. 53).

Javier MELLONI s.j., *The Exercises of St Ignatius and Traditions of the East* (= Inigo Text Series 14), Leominster, Gracewing / New Malden, Inigo Enterprises, 2013, vii-66 p.

As announced in the title, the scope of this little book (originally published in Spanish) is not limited to Hinduism. It covers both Hindu and Buddhist matters, more specifically Yoga (in a broad sense) and Zen, in continuous comparison with the SpEx (see the 3-column tables on pages 5 and 50). In many ways, Hinduism appears here to occupy an intermediate or more inclusive (and also more complex and differentiated) position between the other two. Select Hindu, Buddhist and Christian traditions are considered here as spiritual pathways: “Above all, what certainly unites the three ways is that they are not speculative, but initiatory or mystagogical. Their objective is the transformation of the person” (1).

A first chapter presents fundamental features or key elements of each tradition in a rather analytic and static way: the (human and divine) persons or subjects involved, the ultimate goal, the main practices and tools, the inner dispositions expected from the participant, the obstacles on the way, and so on. These items appear somehow as separate building blocks but they provide the basic information required for further inquiries. In the second chapter, entitled “Dynamisms”, convergences and divergences acquire greater visibility when the key elements are taken up in the practice and the dynamic process of each pathway.

The Exercises are first compared with two distinct forms of Indian Yoga: the eight ‘members’ or steps described in the classical *Yoga-Sûtras* of Patañjali (note however the author’s tendency to interpret Yoga in the light of Advaita Vedânta) and the three paths or ‘yoga-s’ taught by Krishna in the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ*: disinterested action and service, inner knowledge, loving devotion. On the Buddhist side, the Exercises are confronted with the famous poems and pictures illustrating the Search of the Bull, the stages of the quest for enlightenment and true Self according to the Zen school. At each step, the author suggests parallels with elements taken from the SpEx: annotations, stages of meditation, rules for the discernment of spirits... Some are illuminating, others may be less convincing. Comparison is a tricky task, particularly in the case of the Chinese Chan and Japanese Zen schools where the graduated exercises of other Buddhist branches are left aside and enlightenment is conceived as sudden and unforeseeable.

The great advantage and merit of this essay is the constant attention to the dynamic progress on each of the three paths without neglecting, for that matter, essential differences in the doctrines which they presuppose. The confrontation of three (or even four) different traditions allows fresh insights but at the risk of complexity and impaired visibility. The Conclusions nevertheless clearly highlight some of the main differences: the specific proposal of the SpEx is “to sustain an election, a commitment, a concrete act of liberty in history. By contrast, Yoga and Zen enter into the non-temporality of the present moment, through non-discursivity, and seek reintegration into the primordial Unity” (60). To be fair, this contrast should not be overemphasized: as clearly stated by the author, the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ* has a message of selfless action while the last image in the Search of the Bull shows the peasant coming back to the market place and “mingling with the people of the world”.

Finally, about the compatibility of Yoga or Zen with Christian spiritual life, the author proposes a useful distinction: such practices do not have the same meaning and import when resorted to before the SpEx, as a sort of preparation, or after them and taking their experience and their fruit into account (61-62).

The Spiritual Exercises and Buddhism

By way of a prelude to this section on the SpEx and Buddhism, let us remember a significant turn in the life and spiritual itinerary of Ignatius of Loyola. After the 1521 battle at Pamplona, during a long convalescence in his family castle of Loyola, Ignatius read and read again two books about the life of Christ and the lives of the saints (*Leyen-*

da de los santos or *Flos sanctorum* by Iácopo da Varazze or VoráGINE). This popular illustrated compilation included the edifying story of Barlaam and Josaphat. This is actually a story about the Buddha (Josaphat = Bodhisattva) that underwent several translations and retellings on its way from India to the Middle East and Europe. Under the name of Josaphat, the Buddha became incognito a saint with his own feast day in the Christian calendar! Some details in this story seem to have left their imprint on the prayer Ignatius later composed for the Meditation on the call of a king (*SpEx* §§ 93ff). [see GISPERT-SAUCH 2008]

Hugo M. ENOMIYA-LASSALLE s.j. (1898-1990), *Zazen und die Exerzitien des heiligen Ignatius. Einübung in das wahre Dasein*, Köln, Bachem, 1975, 86 p.

Widely acknowledged as a pioneer in the practice of Zen meditation and its spread among Christians in Japan and particularly in the West, Fr Enomiya-Lassalle published a number of books, pamphlets and articles to offer basic information about *zazen* (seated meditation) and to help Christians, lay people as well as priests and religious, reflect upon the relationship between the practice of Zen and their own faith. A specific consideration of Ignatian spirituality and the Spiritual Exercises in relation to Zen is however mostly restricted to occasional remarks. The main and perhaps only significant exception is a little book published in German in 1975. The subtitle “*Einübung in das wahre Dasein*” (or “*wahre Sein*”, p. 76) signals the predominantly practical approach.

First come presentations of the full program of the Exercises and of a *Zen sesshin*, a period of retreat and intensive meditation. The description of the latter is much shorter since no matter is prescribed for Zen meditation (with the possible exception of *kôan-s*): unlike in the *SpEx*, the practice of *zazen* does not change from day to day or week to week. After these necessary pieces of information, the little book surveys differences and common points between the two types of exercises.

Fr Lassalle first offers comments on some points of divergence. These are the consequences of the main purpose: while typically the *SpEx* provide a method to discover and follow the will of God in the disposition of one’s life, *zazen*’s essential and only aim is to reach enlightenment, that is to become aware of our Buddha nature or to see the true nature of oneself and everything. The Ignatian exercitant is given every day food for meditation or contemplation and is invited to make full use of his faculties of memory, intellect and will as well as imagination; *zazen* is an exercise in non-thinking: even *kôan-s*, if and when they are used, are not exactly an object for thought. In this sense, it would not be wrong to state that “where the Exercises cease, *zazen* begins” (41).

As a consequence, to the extent that the Exercises are geared to an ‘election’, to making and taking important decisions, they can hardly be repeated year after year; *zazen*, on the contrary, is an always unfinished task, to be pursued day after day, year after year. To put it in terms of space: the election process in the *SpEx* is like a horizontal movement towards and up to a given aim; *zazen* is a silent vertical movement digging deeper and deeper without limit (42). The Ignatian exercitant needs to submit the inner movements of the soul to a discernment of spirits (good/bad, divine/demoniac) while the *zazen* meditator, following the instructions of the retreat master, should seek what-

ever is helpful and, as a rule, rather ignore both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ mental images. A fundamental difference is, of course, the absence, on the Buddhist side, of a relation to the Buddha comparable with the growth of a personal relation to Christ in the Exercises; in *zazen* and during the *sesshin*, there is thus no parallel to prayer and in particular to the Ignatian ‘colloquies’.

Next to these divergences, similarities are equally important and significant: staying away from home and the usual business, keeping a strict silence, a stable body posture, long periods of meditation, regular contact with the retreat master or guide... We are referred here several times to the Annotations Ignatius offers as advice for the person who gives the SpEx. Lassalle then provides a rather detailed commentary on the rules of discernment for the first and the second Weeks. Although Zen masters have no comparable formal set of directives and while their style may often be rude, it will be found that their spiritual pedagogy in times of consolation or desolation is not very different. In Buddhist perspective, awakening or enlightenment may be considered as a consolation without any preceding cause.

What is required above all from those who follow the path of the Exercises or the path of Zen is an ever more rigorous detachment, the key to true liberation or inner freedom. One should note that Ignatius has in mind inordinate attachments and tendencies while Buddhists usually are invited to shun all types of attachments and desires. Significant at the doctrinal level, this difference however may not have the same weight in the practice of both paths (75-76).

Throughout, whether about divergences or common points, Fr Lassalle introduces many nuances that cannot be taken into account in a very short space. Our brief and dry summary obviously fails to communicate the gist of many concrete and lively notes based on the author’s experience and observations in both Buddhist and Christian environments.

In a brief concluding section, Fr Lassalle explores areas where the Zen *sesshin* and the SpEx may be mutually complementary “even if a true synthesis is hardly possible” (77). A few Christians have started making attempts in that direction. One obstacle to genuine mutuality on the Buddhist side is that the very existence of the Ignatian Exercises is hardly known in Zen circles. According to Fr Lassalle (writing in 1975) the demand for *sesshin* is declining in Japan and there is little effort to adapt Zen to modern culture and ways of life. Some Japanese masters even feel that Zen, after a successful transplantation in the West, may one day come back to Japan in another garb. Underway, will it find helpful to take a leaf from the Ignatian book? Can that happen without losing something essential?

Daniel J. O’HANLON s.j. (1919-1992), “Zen and the Spiritual Exercises: A Dialogue Between Faiths”, *Theological Studies* 39 / 4, 1978, 737-768.

A professor at the Berkeley Jesuit School of Theology, Daniel O’Hanlon spent a full sabbatical year in India, South-East and East Asia in order to get acquainted with various spiritual traditions of the East. He had been “making, giving, and studying the Spiritual Exercises over a period of almost forty years” and involved in Zen practice for

five or six years, including a few *sesshin*-s (738 n. 5). His long and dense article is also the fruit of a course he taught at Berkeley on Zen and the SpEx. The intention is “not simply to compare the experiences in order to understanding them better, but for the purpose of deepening and enriching the tradition of the Spiritual Exercises” (738). We are warned that this is a study of two very particular traditional disciplines: “If, for instance, we were to make a comparative study of a certain form of Tibetan Buddhist spiritual discipline, with its intricate visualizations and strong emphasis on discursive reasoning, and the apophatic mysticism of the *Cloud of Unknowing*, much of what we have to say about Zen and the Spiritual Exercises would be reversed” (739).

As this contribution covers much of the same ground as Fr Lassalle’s little book, we shall not give a full summary but rather highlight a few significant observations.

Goal or Purpose – There is some debate about the goal of the SpEx: election and/or union with God? The purpose of Zen is enlightenment together with the will to save all sentient beings. There is nevertheless some overlap between these two programs. And there is “something to be learned about detachment in the goallessness of Zen... In some paradoxical sense, goallessness is the goal, and desirelessness is what we should desire” (744).

Means – Zazen excludes any object of meditation or contemplation. It is silent sitting, ‘just sitting’ (*shikan-taza*) or perhaps grappling with a *kôan* prescribed by the meditation master (*rôshi*). Reporting the fact that, when teaching Trappist monks, a Japanese master gives them the cross as their *kôan*, Fr O’Hanlon adds: “Could we not regard Ignatius’ third degree of humility as a *kôan*?” (747 n. 55) The manifestation of visions or other ‘diabolical phenomena’ (*makyo*) is taken in Zen as “a sign of progress, just as in the Exercises the experience of consolation and desolation shows that the process is under way”. Such visions however are not interpreted as signs or messages suggesting an orientation; they should rather be disregarded. Quiet sitting, watching the breath and other Eastern methods of stilling the mind obviously may be helpful for Ignatian exercitants. The question is: should they be used as simple preliminaries or could they occupy “a more central position in the Exercises” without interfering with their particular dynamism? (748)

Director or Rôshi – A Zen meditation master should have had some experience of enlightenment and got a formal seal of approval; he is then pretty much left on his own. In Zen “the principal resource for discernment... is the enlightened and compassionate *rôshi*” (758). A director of the Exercises, on the other hand, finds more detailed instructions in the Ignatian booklet. Perhaps the main lesson he can learn from Zen is that “the degree of helpful insight and illumination he can bring to the exercitant is very closely related to his own holiness” (751).

Discursive vs. Intuitive Modes – This is a “key issue”. The goal of Zen is “to cease discursive thinking and arrive at a direct intuition of one’s nature. Discursive methods are not only not cultivated but actively discouraged” (751). Clearly, discursive reasoning is present in the SpEx but has frequently been given too much weight in the last centuries. What Ignatius calls ‘*sentire*’, ‘feeling’ the things of God, particularly in connection with the process of the election, “is certainly higher than discursive reasoning and must

be ranked among the ‘spiritual senses’” (752). The Application of the Senses too operates at a more intuitive level. The Zen emphasis on this dimension may thus “challenge to rediscover what lies at the heart of the Ignatian process” (754).

Personal / Impersonal – The doctrine of ‘no self’ or ‘no person’ is fundamental in Buddhism. And this has deep consequences for the understanding of freedom and relationships, history, sin and forgiveness, grace and so on. However, this contrast between Zen and the Exercises should not be reduced to a simple yes or no. “Let us be modest in our claims to understand just what is meant by referring to reality as personal or impersonal” (766).

William JOHNSTON s.j. (1925-2010), *Mystical Journey. An Autobiography*, Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 2006, x-230 p.

An Irish Jesuit missionary to Japan, William Johnston is the author of a number of widely-read books on spiritual life and mysticism, including *The Still Point: Reflections on Zen and Christian Mysticism* (1970) and *Christian Zen* (1971). He developed a deep interest in Far Eastern traditions of contemplative prayer but was equally anxious to meet various forms of spiritual quest in the contemporary West, not excluding advances in psychology or the recovery of symbolic language. However, his own experience with *zazen* was rather short-lived: “Now I see that my interest was not really in Zen as such but in deepening my own life of prayer” (134). And, on the Christian side, he quotes far more frequently from the *Cloud of Unknowing* or John of the Cross than from the Ignatian *Exercises*. There is thus in his oeuvre hardly any sustained treatment of the SpEx in the light of Zen or other Asian traditions. His observations and queries are rather to be found in his *Autobiography*.

His bittersweet experience with the SpEx started with his 30-day retreat as a novice: “I confess that it is not easy for me to speak about the Exercises, since I have been fighting with them all through my Jesuit life, always searching for authentic Jesuit spirituality. (...) These Exercises, practiced once in the noviceship, were a great grace for me. The problem was that after a short time in the noviciate and a few subsequent years I felt drawn to a new and different form of prayer. I felt called, in a way I could scarcely resist, to recite an ejaculation or a mantra such as the word ‘Jesus’ or... ‘Come, Holy Spirit’. (...) I would sometimes feel drawn into a deep silence or emptiness without any words at all.” (31)

The dryness and cerebral character of the philosophical studies did not help: “For me personally the problem with scholasticism was that it was too wordy, whereas my life of prayer was going beyond words and reasoning and thinking into silence. (...) Nor was I satisfied with the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius as they were given in our yearly retreat. They also were wordy and encouraged wordy prayer. (...) The Exercises, as I received them at that time, were on the top level of consciousness.” (51)

During a period of study in Rome (1958) and with the benefit of his first years in Japan, he observes: “I have found it helpful to make a distinction between what I call horizontal prayer and vertical prayer. The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, as I had learned them in my noviceship, had taught me horizontal prayer. That is to say, they had

drawn me through a series of meditations at the top level of consciousness, encouraging me to reflect (...). Vertical prayer, on the other hand, draws one down into the deeper, unconscious levels of the personality. It leads one into the cloud of unknowing where one is frequently silent, in love with God. (...) I found that I was distancing myself from standard Jesuit spirituality. (...) Ignatius was himself a mystic. He did not spend his life going through the Spiritual Exercises.” (87)

These reflections obviously modify the way he preaches retreats and gives the Exercises. About his spiritual ministries in the 1970s he writes: “In Japan I have given ‘contemplative retreats,’ encouraging my listeners to repeat the mantra of their choice and to enter into contemplative silence. I have done this also in the United States. (...) I always suggest that people pray in a contemplative way, repeating their mantra or becoming aware of their breathing or entering into silence, and I do not talk about the so-called ‘exercises’ which can sometimes sound like mental gymnastics.” (138) William Johnston is convinced that, beyond his personal style of prayer, such deep trends are the sign of a new spiritual era: “I am still wary of directing everyone at the top level of consciousness, that is to say, at the level of discursive prayer. I believe that today we are seeing a step forward in evolution. People everywhere are looking for vertical meditation whereby they can experience the deeper levels of awareness and look into their unconscious. That is why so many look to the East...” (141)

Looking to the East, we may be better aware that the spirituality of Ignatius should not be restricted to the booklet of the Exercises: “Both John of the Cross and Ignatius of Loyola entered into mystical prayer, one to be united with God in silence, the other to work for the salvation of the world. It is at this mystical level that Ignatius will dialogue with the East and get new insights. The Exercises may have some value for beginners, but eventually one must move beyond them into contemplation.” (142)

The urge to practice silent contemplation leads him to a different way of balancing text (the SpEx, the Bible) and silence, even when giving the Exercises to a group of Jesuits doing their tertianship in the Philippines in the early 1980s: “Some tertians wanted to give up all thinking and to enter into the great wordless silence. I encouraged them, suggesting that they read the text of the Exercises outside the time of prayer, just as the Zen Buddhists chant the sutras and then enter into silence. Above all, I told them – as I tell all Christians who enter into silent prayer – to read sacred scripture as a jumping off ground for contemplation.” (170)

J. K. [Kakichi] KADOWAKI s.j. (1926-2017), *Zen and the Bible. A Priest's Experience*, London / Boston, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980, xii-180 p.

Kakichi Kadowaki received his education, particularly at high school, in a Zen Buddhist atmosphere and spirit. He discovered the Christian faith during his university studies, was baptized and soon applied to become a member of the Society of Jesus. Towards the end of his period of formation and study as a Jesuit, he became again more and more interested in the practice of Zen meditation, in particular under Master Ômori Sôgen. His sitting practice was in the line of the Rinzai school, with due emphasis on chewing the *kôan*-s and regularly confronting his experience and understanding in pri-

vate interviews (*dokusan*) with the meditation master. He discovered that *zazen* unexpectedly allowed him fresh insights into the reading of the Bible. Unsatisfied with mental or cerebral approaches to theology and spirituality, he became aware of the importance of the ‘body’, that is the global and dynamic unity of all dimensions of the individual person, including one’s relation to all living beings.

Picking up a tradition going back to Dôgen and Nichiren, two 13th-century Japanese Buddhist masters, Kadowaki developed a method of ‘body-reading’ applied to both Zen *kôan*-s and Bible excerpts (“Body-Reading Kôans and the Bible” was the original title of his 1977 Japanese-language book). The central and longer part of *Zen and the Bible* provides illustrations of this joint ‘reading’ of a traditional Zen ‘case’ (*kôan*) – or sometimes a quotation from Dôgen’s *Shôbôgenzô* – and an excerpt from the New Testament, mostly from the gospels. Particularly striking is his “Silence speaks” chapter offering a contemplation of Jesus and the adulterous woman (John 8) in the light of the famous case “Master Gutei holds up a finger”. Considered together, these two stories manifest the forceful compassion of both masters and their skilful use of body language as well as the importance of silence.

The last third of the book (six chapters) examines similarities between the Ignatian Exercises and a Zen *sesshin*. The reader may be taken aback by the fact that, most of the times, the Buddhist story quoted and commented upon seems, at first sight, to have no connection with the Ignatian exercise. Indeed, the similarities are not superficial ones. And they operate at the level of practise during a *sesshin* or an Ignatian retreat rather than in terms of doctrinal comparisons. The similarities are rather structural ones in the dynamic unfolding and spiritual process of the Christian and the Buddhist exercises. “Now then, what if we compare the existential orientations that remain in Christianity and Zen after the practitioner has dispelled all concepts? Speaking from my own meagre experience, I would say that the two differ in a fine point regarding their ultimate aims, but that in regard to their overall framework and structure they are very similar” (89).

Following the thread of the Ignatian booklet, whether in meditations such as the Kingdom or the Three Kinds of Humility, in contemplation of gospel scenes such as the crucifixion, and even in the Rules as regards eating, the author highlights some fundamental laws governing spiritual life and growth both on the Christian and on the Buddhist path. Doctrinal or even anthropological differences are never brushed aside. The very text of the Christian Scripture and of the *kôan* with its traditional commentaries has to be carefully examined beforehand. But when the time comes for silent appropriation and personal transformation, a fundamental law of inner conversion operates, a dynamic law of death and resurrection, of ‘Great Death’ and ‘Great Life’. Through his intimate experience, the exercitant discovers that, in Christian terms, “the cross *is* the resurrection”.

Rooted in a prolonged and rigorous practice of Zen under Buddhist guides and in a refreshing ‘body-reading’ of the Bible and the Exercises, *Zen and the Bible*, in its simple if at times dense and exacting language, strikes a singularly original chord.

Ruben L.F. HABITO, *Zen and the Spiritual Exercises. Paths of Awakening and Transformation*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 2013, xxv-237 p.

A Filipino by birth, the author spent many years in Japan and later in the United States. He has a long experience both in the personal practice of these two spiritual ways and in the direction of retreats and *sesshin*-s. The Ignatian Exercises and Zen appear to be widely different in “their underlying religious worldviews, general orientations, practical prescriptions, and even stated outcomes” (xvii). To put it bluntly and more concretely: “the Exercises take a left-brained, discursive, analytical, purpose-oriented, thoroughly Christian approach, while Zen is a right-brained, nondiscursive, intuitive form of Buddhist spiritual practice that is nontheistic in its approach” (xix). The contrast is particularly striking in the process of discernment and election: where Ignatius, drawing lessons from his own experience, formulates a series of detailed guidelines preparatory to decision-making, Zen rather invites to “let go of our discriminating mind and let choices come in a spontaneous way” (124).

Should we conclude that Zen and the Exercises are incompatible? Ruben Habito formulates and suggests positive answers to a double question: “What can those who undertake the Spiritual Exercises learn from Zen practice in a way that may enhance and enrich their experience and appreciation of the Exercises? Conversely, what can Zen practitioners learn from the Exercises in a way that enhances their Zen path?” (xxiv) He notes profound mutual resonances and some parallelisms in the steps or main stages leading towards the goal: preparation of the way, purification, illumination, union (to put it in traditional Christian terms).

Both traditions propose a path of transformation leading from an ‘I-me-mine’ self-centred mentality to an awakening to interconnectedness, a mature practice of contemplation in action, a life of loving and compassionate service. All along, the book follows rather closely what the author considers as the key moments in the process of the 4-Week Exercises. The reader will find, in a modernized language, samples of suggestions for meditation and contemplation. Silent, wordless and imageless sitting, possibly combined with ‘bodily reading’ of Bible excerpts and/or the use of *kôan*-s or *kôan*-like paradoxes, may help the exercitant deepen and integrate the process of the SpEx.

So much for the fruit that a (Christian) exercitant may derive from some Buddhist teachings and, more to the point, from Zen practices. From time to time, while following the thread of the Exercises, Habito suggests some points where (Buddhist) Zen practitioners may find help and orientation from the Ignatian method and practices. He is however well aware that they may not easily be persuaded to take that path. Actually, the rather simple Buddhist / Christian divide may not depict anymore the spiritual situation of many people in countries like the United States, Europe and perhaps the Far East. Quite a large number of individuals in the West practice Zen (or some other Oriental) meditation without fully adhering to the doctrinal heritage of the Buddhist *dharma*. Conversely, Buddhists, or former Buddhists, or persons understanding themselves as agnostics or ‘spiritual but not religious’, are willing to explore the riches of particular Christian traditions, including the Ignatian Exercises.

Running through the book as a red thread, the question – or one significant and relatively new question – then becomes: is it possible, is it meaningful to give the Ignatian Exercises to such persons? “Can non-Christians undertake the Ignatian Exercises in a way that leads them to the spiritual transformation that the Exercises intend?” (13) And how should one proceed about it? Habito suggests “an approach that brackets or sets aside the doctrinal and theological issues around the identity of Jesus”; he invites “Christian and non-Christian seekers of the Way to open their minds, hearts, and entire being to simply immerse themselves in what is presented in the scriptural texts: to be one with Jesus”. The suggestion is to enter the contemplative exercises “only keeping in mind that we are fixing our gaze on Jesus as manifesting and embodying what we earnestly seek: the Way” (15). This thread will be picked up again below when presenting the essays by Roger Haight and Erin Cline.

Yves RAGUIN s.j. (1912-1998), « Les techniques orientales de méditation et les Exercices de saint Ignace », *Cahiers de spiritualité ignatienne* VII / 28 (oct.-déc. 1983) 227-251.

Oriental types of meditation seem nowadays to draw larger audiences than Christian proposals. Is it just the latest fad? Or should we read there a sign of our times? How far could these Eastern methods be integrated in the practice of the Ignatian Exercises? The first and fundamental challenge is to pinpoint the essentials of the Ignatian way – from the Principle and Foundation up to the Meditation to obtain love –, the main steps and indispensable articulations without which the specific character of the SpEx would be lost.

However, according to the Annotations and other indications to be found in Ignatius’ booklet, the goal can be reached with the help of several different methods: meditation according to the three powers (memory, intellect, will), contemplation based on Gospel texts, repetition, application of the senses, three other ways of praying (§§ 238-260), and so on. These methods should be adapted to the situation of each exercitant. For instance, the rhythm of each retreat day is meant to gradually foster more simple types of prayer. The value of these methods appears thus to be relative and should be appreciated in connection with the Ignatian essentials and the final goal: the union with God and the conformity to Christ.

In their symbolic language and their theological or spiritual perspectives, the SpEx bear the marks of sixteenth-century Western conceptions: divine transcendence, human praise, and service. According to those worldviews, everything comes down from above. During the latest decades, however, psychology, existential philosophies and Eastern religions have modified our perceptions. “The source is not above anymore, but below. The Spirit itself does not descend upon us as on the day of Pentecost, but rises from the depth of our hearts. From a theology of transcendence we move towards a theology of immanence... and interiority” (237).

According to Yves Raguin, “without altering the essential dynamics of the *Exercises*, it is possible to look at the Principle and Foundation, indifference, sin, and so on from a perspective of origin or source rather than in terms of human activity and the goal to be reached, as formulated in Ignatius’ text” (238). Such a perspective from below, from the inner source, would bring us closer to Eastern spiritualities, particularly to Daoism

and Buddhism. It would at the same time coincide with Christ's attitude: he does not submit himself to the will of God in an act of external obedience but fully receives himself from the Father, the source and root of his very existence. Similarly, indifference is not so much a series of acts of detachment but, at the root, an inner disposition of adherence to God's design inscribed at the bottom of our being. We may draw here some inspiration from the Buddhist practice of no-thought, non-possession, silence and openness. Again, sin may be seen first of all as a disruption or a misuse of the energies we receive from God. This way of proceeding through the Exercises would be an excellent preparation for the Contemplation to obtain love.

Broaching then the question of practical methods, it would be plainly insufficient to rest content with such analogies as praying according to the rhythm of the breath (*SpEx* §§ 258-260). The question is rather: how can persons familiar with Zen or Yoga go through the Exercises? In the third and last section of his article, Yves Raguin examines two different methods. The first one, explained and advocated by Anthony de Mello in his *Sâdhana*, is an adaptation of the Buddhist practice of *vipassanâ* based on the *Satipatthâna Sûtra*, a method of pure and simple awareness. The second one draws its inspiration mainly from the Zen tradition. No single affirmation can be adequate to the mystery of things, the mystery of my own self, and even less to the mystery of God. Chan or Zen, it is true, recommends a radical version of voidness, no-thought and objectless meditation (although the term "meditation" may not be adequate anymore). But great Christian mystics too remind us that God cannot be an object of our thinking. When we seek the image of God in ourselves, or even when we seek God, it is rather God himself who desires to make himself known. The practice of Zen may thus prove helpful to Christians. It has brought some of them to the rediscovery of the *Cloud of Unknowing* and similar Christian mystical writings. It may also inspire a simpler and deeper way to proceed along the path of the Exercises.

At this point, a last question has to be tackled: what is the place of Christ in the practice of simple awareness or objectless meditation? Will he be pushed aside? Will he tacitly fade out of the picture? Most Christians tend to see Christ as a bridge on the road to God or as an intermediary. Christ is and should remain at the centre. But in the practice of no-thought or objectless meditation, He is no more the 'object' of my attention. Invisible to my eyes, but present in my very own centre, He unifies all my activities and, with the power of His Spirit, makes me look at the Father as He looks at the Father. Eastern methods of meditation may help us rediscover this interior divine presence, a leitmotiv of the *SpEx* from the second Annotation ("intimate feeling and relishing of things") till the Contemplation for obtaining love.

Bernard SENÉCAL s.j., *Jésus le Christ à la rencontre de Gautama le Bouddha. Identité chrétienne et bouddhisme*, Paris, Cerf, 1998, 252 p.

The sub-title, "Christian Identity and Buddhism", probably best describes the main focus and challenge of this complex, multi-layered book. A French Canadian by birth, the author went to France for medical studies. At the age of about twenty-five, he rediscovered his Christian identity, became a Jesuit and later joined the Korean province

where he taught history of religions, especially Buddhism, gave retreats and developed interreligious relationships. Although this essay is not first of all about the SpEx, Ignatian spirituality and the Exercises are present as one of the main threads.

Daily life in the Far East, advanced studies of Buddhism and the Korean religions, apostolic work in multireligious societies where ‘multiple religious belonging’ is quite common, and above all the frequent practice of Buddhist meditation: these combined factors triggered a severe and prolonged ‘christological crisis’ as well as spiritual impasse. The Ignatian Exercises had been very helpful at the time of Bernard’s reappropriation of the Christian faith and his first years as a Jesuit. They then progressively appeared as irrelevant due to their Christological garb, their ecclesiological perspective (or ecclesial ‘imaginaire’) and their spiritual pedagogy (43).

At a deeper level, the regular practice of Buddhist meditation, in the distinct but rather similar (78) traditions of (Korean) Son/Zen and (South Asian) Vipassanâ, left the impression that the way of Christ might be just one among many: other spiritual paths seemed equally able to lead towards an experience of the Absolute (63). Buddhist meditation seems to have the power to dissolve the mystery of Christ, to make it so to say irrelevant. One may then feel like a frog leaping out of its well and discovering the vast expanse of the ocean. Will it still make sense to speak of a Christocentric history of salvation? And is the very idea of God still a universal one? Some Christians may feel drawn towards a ‘Buddha-centric’ way. At the doctrinal level, this challenge will inspire the search for a renewed theology of the plurality of religions (this is developed in the third and last part of the book). Another important issue broached in this essay is the relation between the spiritual experience and the concepts and words we use to express it and reflect on it.

But the crisis has first of all to be addressed at the personal and spiritual level. One of the issues more closely connected with the SpEx is the way they prescribe meditation on the mysteries of the life, death and resurrection of Christ. When small ‘slices’ of gospel stories – or rather their summary or paraphrase – are taken out of their context and read as if they belonged to one single text, the particular approach and dynamics of each of the four gospels taken as a whole is lost sight of. The danger is that materials taken from the gospels are formatted and put at the service of the Exercises and their own dynamics rather than the other way round! Nowadays, we do not and cannot read the Scriptures the way Christians did it in the sixteenth century and in the context of the Counter-Reformation.

Learning to read (and meditate or contemplate) one gospel at a time as a single and coherent whole, from beginning to end, was for the author a discovery that helped him retrieve the figure of Christ in a more dynamic and challenging way. This experience of the transforming power of each gospel played a significant role in his personal relation to Christ and towards a new and freer understanding of the encounter between the Christ and the Buddha, even if, as he notes by way of parenthesis, “the question of the mutual relation between the Christ and the Buddha still awaited its solution” (116; see 163).

The decisive factor or rather decisive event that helped him out of the impasse belongs however to the realm of direct experience. He refers, with some hesitation lest it

appears as a lack of discretion, to two experiences that he labels ‘consolation without cause’. The first one, a “sudden breach in the wall”, took place at Loyola, during a retreat in preparation for the priesthood. In Bernard’s practice, the prescribed Ignatian exercises alternated with periods of Vipassanâ meditation. During one of these, he unexpectedly received the gift to “taste the perfect integration of this form of meditation with the Ignatian contemplation theme for the day: the passion of Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Ignatian prayer and Vipassanâ meditation melted into a single movement elevating the soul. It was no more the one or the other, but both together without the least trace of opposition or incompatibility, in the full respect of the original identity of each. (...) The mystery of Christ, that had been blurred for about a year, was given anew.” (69)

The author interpreted this experience of consolation as an opening of horizon for his future task: to enter deeper into the world of Zen, to examine his (Ignatian) spirituality of reference, to delve further into the mystery of Christ and his Church in the light of the gospels, and to attempt a theological interpretation of this integration (70; see also 162; 182).

A second consolation without preceding cause was granted about three years later, during a meditation session at a Korean Buddhist monastery. It came as a confirmation or accomplishment. “Very quietly and in the space of what seemed just one second, I felt that deep inside me the painful tension between the Buddha and the Christ that had torn me during the last few years had dissolved once for all” (220). Bernard perceived a paradoxical correspondence between strenuous efforts at reaching the Absolute in the steps of the Buddha and the fully gratuitous gift of God revealing himself in his Word becoming flesh. A radically Christocentric as well as broadly universal vision.

Bernard Senécal is convinced that, with due adaptations, the Ignatian Exercises provide a fit anchorage for the encounter between the Buddhist and Christian traditions (140). Among pioneers in this venture he mentions H.M. Enomiya-Lassalle, J.K. Kadowaki and W. Johnston. Bernard regularly offers retreat programs (*sesshin*) where the dynamics of Zen and the Ignatian one are put at the service of a continuous reading of gospel text, during the session or in regular group meetings throughout the year (146-152). Such programs “mean, of course, that there is a christianization of Zen” (153). They meet the expectations of a number of Christians, particularly in the West, who started practising Buddhist types of meditation.

AMA SAMY s.j., “Ignatianische Exerzitien und Zen-Meditation (Geistliche Ansprachen vor indischen Ordensleuten)”, *Geist und Leben* 79 / 5 (2006) 360-374 [I]; 79 / 6 (2006) 440-457 [II].

In this two-part article, based on addresses given in 2002-2003 to Indian Christian religious, the author does not attempt a detailed comparison between themes or methods of Zen meditation and the Spiritual Exercises. He intends rather to highlight their differences and above all to show that they can complement each other.

[I] Ama Samy first sketches some of the significant crises and challenges of today. Many people, including Christians and Christian priests and religious, experience a dark night in their spiritual life. The inherited words, images and symbols do not reveal God

anymore. Is God merely the projection of our needs? Can He still be a ‘Thou’ for us? Should we denounce our religious thoughts and institutions as self-serving dualistic objectifications? In our post-modern world, we have no ground to stand on. We need a radical awakening from our native illusions and absence of genuine knowledge.

Zen is one possible way out of our contemporary dilemma. The SpEx, it is true, open a way of conversion of the self and identification with Christ, but they leave us inside a traditional world of meaning and values. Zen shows a way to letting go of all images and confronting darkness and doubt, life and death. In the SpEx we die *with* Christ; in Zen we die *to* Christ: the ‘Great Death’ means we have to die to the world, to the self, to God. We experience the bottomless Void. Zen is a path of awakening to emptiness or to the ‘Formless Self’. In a non-dual perspective, we should awaken to God as “not-one and not-two”.

The SpEx and Zen could however complement each other, provided Zen be considered not as a mere preliminary method but respectfully approached with due consideration of its Buddhist roots. It is a matter of actually ‘passing over’ to Zen and ‘coming back’ to our own (Christian, Ignatian) tradition. A matter of experiencing the tension of “standing in the in-between”. The voidness or vacuity of our world and our life, the unitive experience of non-duality of self and universe: these are central aspects of Zen practice and spirituality that can enrich, deepen, challenge and transform the Ignatian prayer and spirituality. Zen is a path of detachment and equanimity or holy indifference, a path of letting go. Zen stresses the importance of no-thought, of emptying the mind, of leaving aside representations, feelings, concepts and all the discursive operations at work not only in daily life but in the practice of the SpEx.

In a Zen perspective, the Ultimate is nothing but the finite realities: *samsâra* is *nirvâna*, and *nirvâna* is *samsâra*. The Ultimate may never be made into an object. Just let everything be as it is. Just be open and allow the spontaneous manifestation of the world. Enlightenment and compassion are but the two sides of the same coin. Zen invites to be both detached and engaged. It is true however that, while Zen is great in the discernment in matters of awakening, it is often poor in the discernment in matters of social relationships and compassionate action in daily life. Here again Zen and Ignatian spirituality can deepen and transform each other.

[II] The SpEx do not suit all Christians. They also suffer from limitations pertaining to the individual psychology of Ignatius and limitations due to the culture and mindset of his own century. If we want to avoid any Ignatian fundamentalism or literalism, we should make here a distinction between spirituality and method. ‘Self-transformation’ seems to belong nowadays to the ‘signs of the times’. Many people experience a “rupture of the immediacy of belief and totalizing homogeneity”. Many, in the West but even among the Indian Christians, suffer from the dualistic limitations of their theological thinking but are afraid of the perilous jump into non-duality.

That is where Eastern ways and methods, among them Vipassanâ and Zen, may be helpful (our Indian author seems to have more reservations where Hinduism is concerned). They offer a much-needed and clearly delineated praxis of meditation. But, to repeat, these ways should not be adopted and adapted in a shallow way by hastily trans-

forming them into, for instance, some sort of secure ‘Christian Zen’. Genuine Zen (as much as the SpEx) is a way through death (the ‘Great Death’) into a new life. It opens a path towards a mystical process too long neglected in the usual practice of giving the Exercises. Is such an opening not the vocation or *raison d’être* of priests and religious? For those, Jesuits and others, who suffer nowadays from the insufficiencies of the SpEx, Zen and other Eastern ways should be considered as providing opportunities. If practised with due respect for their differences and their peculiar characteristics, Zen and the SpEx may well prove to be complementary. “I consider Buddhism and Zen as our [Jesuit] best travel companions” (457).

Edgar W. HARNACK, “Vom fernen Nächsten lernen. Ignatianische Exerzitien und tibetisches Tantra im Vergleich”, *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 132 / 2 (1974) 182-199.

While the Zen schools, particularly in Japan and Korea, received a lot of attention, the Tantric schools belonging to the Buddhist Vajrayâna tradition, whether in Tibet or in Japan (Shingon), have been rather neglected in connection with the Spiritual Exercises. A psychotherapist working in the line of transpersonal behaviour therapy and a onetime editor of the *Jahrbuch für Spiritualität und Transzendente Psychologie*, E. Harnack is convinced that the aim and design of the Spiritual Exercises are still valid but, after about five centuries, their methods are no longer well adapted to our contemporary culture and mental setup. We could learn a lot “from distant neighbours”.

Contrary to the Zen objectless and immobile sitting, Tibetan tantric meditations make abundant use of symbols, images and visualizations, sonic and bodily practices. These methods and their graduated program are systematically described in manuals that have no counterpart in the Western and Christian world, with the exception, up to a point, of the Spiritual Exercises. The Tibetan symbolical world is too complex and too distant to be adopted as such, but significant features of the tantric methods and practices could be useful for an innovative renewal of the Exercises.

Both Tibetan and Ignatian practices have a strong cataphatic dimension perceptible in their active use of imagination, even if the timeless archetypal content (in C.G. Jung’s terms) is more obvious in the first case while the Ignatian images and scenes are more closely connected with ‘historical’ data drawn from biblical accounts. Both however are designed to operate a lasting inner transformation of the meditator. In the tantric exercises, the images or visualizations of Buddhas and other religious figures, rather than being objects of prayer or ‘colloquy’, symbolize what the meditator has to become: they aim not only at a psychological or affective identification but ultimately at an ontological fusion between the meditator and the Buddhahood already present in germ (*tathâgata-garbha*). For Ignatius of course, there cannot be any substantial final identity: God remains the ‘Other’. This also means that the relation between personal effort and supernal ‘grace’ is not identical in Buddhism and Christianity.

Compared with Tibetan (and other Oriental) traditions, most Christian spiritual paths show an “astonishing lack” of systematicity and didactic concern (192). Again, this is less obvious in the case of the Ignatian methodology. Nevertheless, useful lessons may be

drawn from the Tibetan Buddhist methods designed to guarantee continuity and progress along the path. In many ways, they have a function similar to the frequent ‘Repetitions’ in the Ignatian Exercises. To close on a rather tricky point: the dualistic conception of good vs. bad, virtue vs. sin, and the scenario of a king enrolling soldiers under his banner to conquer the enemy are much less meaningful nowadays, both from a psychological and ethical as well as spiritual point of view. Tantric teachings and practices suggest better ways, ways of transformation and integration rather than rejection and exclusion.

The author does not advocate a literal integration of Tibetan tantric practices into the SpEx. Such a cut and paste method would result in theological difficulties and be ill adapted to our own (Western) culture and arguably to many others. The form of the Exercises has to change in ways that preserve their spirit. “Mistakenly ignored by Christians, the methodical repertoire of Tibetan Buddhism is an appropriate source of inspiration” (199).

Steven SHIPPEE, “Buddhist Generation and Ignatian Contemplation: Skillful Use of the Imagination in Interreligious Contemplative Dialogue”, *Dilatato Corde* (www.dimmid.org) 8 / 1 (2018) 1-20.

Even today, more than forty years after Harnack’s paper, many Christians (and others as well) share the impression that Buddhist meditation is imageless or even contentless. In the Tibetan tradition of meditation however, particularly in the so-called “generation”, “development”, or “creation stage” (*kyerim*), as distinguished from the “completion stage” (*dzogrim*), imagination plays an important part. Similarly, most Buddhist practitioners are unaware of comparable “generation stage” practices in some Christian traditions, particularly in the Ignatian Exercises. Rather than advocating some form of dual belonging or dual practice, Shippee intends only to draw a comparison between two skilful uses of the imagination in spiritual practice in spite of essential differences in their doctrinal conceptions.

For this purpose, he selects first a particular *sādhana* (exercise) attributed to Thangtong Gyalpo (15th century) and analyses its different stages. Visualization of *yidam* or ‘deities’ plays a decisive role in this type of Tibetan Buddhist practice. This should not be understood as “merely mentally picturing” something; it has nothing to do with “pretending”: “Generation practice happens as much with heart and affect as with mind and images. Thus, while nontheistic, generation practice is indeed relational” (8). “The deities are not understood as *merely* representational but as buddhas compassionately helping sentient beings” (8). The object of this Tibetan practice (and of the Ignatian contemplation as well) “is never understood as fictional. Said differently, while ‘imagined’, it is never merely imaginary” (17).

As a concrete illustration of Ignatian contemplation practices, the author then considers the first one of the first day of the third week, namely Christ’s journey from Bethany to Jerusalem for the Last Supper (*SpEx* §§ 190-199). The retreatant is invited to imagine or ‘compose’ (*composición*) the place where the story occurs: one ‘sees’ the road to Jerusalem, the room of the Last Supper, the persons present during the meal; one ‘listens’ to what they are saying.

A “notable difference is that while a *sâdhana* provides the very words to be recited..., Ignatius, with the exception of the concluding Our Father, leaves the choice of words to the retreatant” (12). But, from a close reading of both texts it appears, differences notwithstanding, that there are “rather striking parallels” not only in the specific practices and their transformative aims but in the “very ordering of the elements into a form useful for deep training” (15-16), as shown in a chart provided by the author:

- [1] Setting one’s intention: Refuge and Bodhicitta vows / Ignatian preparatory prayer;
- [2] Entering in through imagination: Generating the Deity / First (*historia*) and second (*composición*) Preludes or Preambles;
- [3] Connecting affectively: Invoking and Supplicating / Petition;
- [4] The main part: Union with the Truth: practicing the Deity Yoga / the Ignatian Points;
- [5] Determining to follow-through: Implementing the practice in daily life / Colloquy;
- [6] Returning to the intention to tread the path or way: Dedicating the roots of virtue and making aspirations / the Our Father. (19)

William REHG s.j., “Christian Mindfulness: A Path to Finding God in All Things”, *Studies in the Spirituality of the Jesuits* 34 / 3 (May 2002) 1-32.

Considering the potential breadth of mindfulness, Jesuit philosopher William Rehg intends to examine the “familiar Catholic and Jesuit traditions as providing us with specifically Christian practices of mindfulness”. Indeed, it is possible to look at a number of traditional Catholic prayer forms in connection with mindfulness. But, as a first step, this central Buddhist notion and its practices have to be briefly examined. Mindfulness goes back to the Buddha’s teachings on the “four foundations of mindfulness”. Continuous Vipassanâ or Insight meditation fosters the realization of impermanence and of our interdependence with all of reality. These are broad features that “promise to hold true of certain Christian practices in a way that does not simply assimilate these practices to Buddhism” (4).

William Rehg assumes that we can “meaningfully describe certain Christian practices in terms of a Christian notion of mindfulness that is both distinctive yet sufficiently similar at a more generic level to the Buddhist notion” (4). Indeed, there are distinctively Christian ways of attending to the moment-by-moment reality: a loving responsiveness to God’s creative and redeeming presence, a type of prayer that promotes a “discerning charity appropriate to each situation” (12). In connection with mindfulness, particular mention may be made of the Jesus prayer according to the *Philokalia* tradition and of the recently promoted “centering prayer”.

If we now turn to specific traits of Jesuit spirituality, we shall be well-advised to have a look at the Rules for discerning the spirits: being to a large extent descriptive of interior movements, they are the “most striking example of Christian mindfulness in the Exercises” (20); they provide “concrete ways of attending to God’s action in us and distinguishing that action from counterfeits”. According to the *Official Directory* of 1599, discernment primarily involves listening: “Simply listen to the voice of God and dispose [yourself] as best [you] can to hear that voice and receive the movements.” This exer-

cise of receptivity in the present moment induces practical engagement, something comparable to the Buddhist link between mindfulness, wisdom and compassion.

In the last section of his essay, the author explores the broader implications of a mindful application of the Rules for discerning the spirits to processes of collective and even corporate or institutional decisions and engagements. This brings us to such notions as “reciprocal, intersubjective mindfulness” and “corporate mindfulness”. It would be interesting to check whether the Buddhist traditions (or the recent trends of ‘engaged Buddhism’) know any such broader understandings of mindfulness.

Even while drawing inspiration from Buddhist conceptions and practices of mindfulness, the author is well aware that many of his reflections and proposals have a singular Christian and even Ignatian ring: the “distinctively Ignatian form of mindfulness emphasizes explicit evaluation and judgment, an emphasis that sharply contrasts with the disclaimers we find in the Buddhist approach” (24).

Other Far Eastern Traditions

Luke SIM Jong-Hyeok s.j., *The Christological Vision of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola and the Hermeneutical Principle of Sincerity (Ch’eng) in the Confucian Tradition*, Rome, Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1992, xi-311 p.

In this doctoral dissertation submitted to the Faculty of theology, the aim of the Korean author is inculturation: “In order to develop a hermeneutical basis for an inculturated Christology in the Confucian context of Korea, one suggested approach is to study the notion of *ch’eng* [*cheng*] (‘Sincerity’) against the backdrop of Confucian tradition, and then to develop a hermeneutical system upon the investigation” (39). Among the Confucian Classics, the *Great Learning* (*Ta Hsüeh* [*Daxue*]) and the *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Chung Yung* [*Zhongyong*]) are the “two pivotal points” where the notion of Sincerity determines what it means to be a sage. Since the historical development of Chinese thought shows that this notion “provided a bridge between virtue-centered ancient Confucianism and metaphysically oriented Neo-Confucianism”, both phases need to be studied in depth. Sincerity, truthfulness, authenticity, honesty, reality: ‘*ch’eng*’ has cosmic and ethical, ontological and educational, epistemological and social-relational dimensions. Sincerity contributes to both balance and harmony; it includes self-knowledge, self-cultivation and the realization of Man’s unity with Heaven.

This cultural-historical survey ends with a study of the role played by Sincerity, at the end of the 18th century, when a few Korean scholars, through their contacts at the Chinese court and capital city, discovered the Christian message and tried to interpret it. This encounter provides the transition to the second part of the dissertation.

The theologian’s task is now to interpret anew the event of Jesus Christ in and for our contemporary situation. It is the author’s conviction and challenge that “the development of the hermeneutic principle of Sincerity can serve this very purpose” and thus can be seen as “the basis for an Inculturated Christology” (162). ‘Sincerity’ implies that, in a dynamic way, the Word is understood as event, as realization. God’s creative and salvific action is fully and dynamically manifested in the event of Christ – or what the

author calls the ‘rhythm of Christ’ – yesterday and today (132-133): everything comes from God in Christ, everything returns to God through Christ. The complete coming of the Kingdom of God is the full actualization of Sincerity (163).

These christological and theological perspectives are briefly outlined in the third chapter of the dissertation (121-163). In a fourth and longer one (164-219), the book of the *Spiritual Exercises*, with its formative pedagogy and its Christ-centred dynamism, has been selected as a testing ground to check the validity of *ch’eng* for a christology. “In fact, the originality of the *Spiritual Exercises* is found in its dynamic form, rather than in its content” (164). “We will focus on one specific aspect, the Christ-centered dynamism (‘rhythm of Christ’), as it pertains both to each Week and the whole process of the Exercises” (164).

As a preamble, the Ignatian ‘indifference’ is examined in the light of the Confucian ‘mean’, that is “the state and quality of the human heart to be receptive to the Mandate of Heaven” (170-174), while the Ignatian formative prayer pedagogy is compared with the Confucian steps of learning. A short quotation from Mencius may give a hint of the way the full process of the four-week Exercises is then examined step by step: “He who exerts his mind to the utmost knows his nature. He who knows his nature knows Heaven. To preserve one’s mind and to nourish one’s nature is the way to serve Heaven” (187). Or, in the author’s own words and in connection with the discernment of spirits: “In many ways, the language of Sincerity is the language of discernment of the movement of heart. In some sense, the notion of consolation or desolation has to do with one’s sincerity of heart. What combines these two aspects of one’s affectivity is the sincere intention to follow God’s Will (Mandate of Heaven)” (210).

Jerome Emmanuel Dayrit GUEVARA, “A Daoist-Christian Integration of Physical, Mental, and Spiritual Exercises: *Tài jí* exercises of the Sword and the Ignatian Consciousness Examen”, *Ignaziana* [www.ignaziana.org] 14 (2012) 191-276.

From among the many Far Eastern martial arts, this essay concentrates on the Daoist-inspired sword exercises, leaving aside Buddhist-inspired disciplines since their origin is less purely Chinese. Could these *Tài jí* exercises help in the daily practice of the Ignatian Consciousness Examen and its five steps? Serious engagement with *Tài jí* exercises would of course include rigorous training in their successive stages: the external physical forms, the ‘inner life force’ and the ‘spirit’.

The first chapter explores the traditional meaning of *Tài jí* in terms of the *Yîn / Yáng* polarity. Literally, *Tài jí* means Great Ultimate or Supreme Polarity; the author’s preferred translation, ‘Extreme Polarity’, emphasizes “the importance of understanding polarities always in terms of pairs, that is, as paradoxes” (200). To quote from the classical scripture *Dào dé jīng* (§ 42): “The *Dào* generates the One, the One generates the Two, the Two generates the Three, the Three generates the Ten Thousand beings which bear the *Yîn*, yet all embrace the *Yáng*”. Aside from being an exercise of the ‘fist’ (*quán*), *Tài jí* “is actually also a form of moving meditation on the *Dào* by experiencing the alternating roles of *Yîn* and *Yáng* in the body, mind and spirit” (202), this principle of *Yîn* and *Yáng* being “most obviously experienced in terms of emptiness and fullness

respectively” (202). Different schools propose particular routines or sets of exercises. In Ancient China, the practice of the sword (*Tài jí jiàn*) probably had “deep spiritual implications involving some form of spiritual warfare” within the spirit world and against the demons (204).

Chapter 2 attempts a Christian theological approach by first probing the various meanings of the sword in both the OT and the NT (more than 400 verses!), including its transformation or conversion, according to some messianic oracles, from violent death-dealing weapon to peaceful life-giving instrument. In the NT, while Jesus refuses to be defended by the sword, the double-edged sword becomes the symbol of the Word of God, a spiritual sword of discernment. Now, for Chinese Christians, there are good reasons suggesting to bring closer to each other the NT *Logos* and the *Dào* (some even translate the Johannine ‘*logos*’ with the Chinese word ‘*dào*’).

“Using *Tài jí* exercises as body prayer is an effective method for silencing and self-emptying. (...) After having emptied the mind and spirit of all distractions and focusing on God’s presence, one proceeds to be filled by the Divine Word, the *Dào-Logos*” (234). After practicing for some time the *Tài jí* sets of movements to the accompaniment of scriptural (biblical) passages, one should be able to stop reciting them aloud and start meditating them in deep silence. *Tài jí quán* moves may thus be adapted or converted into new forms of Christian body prayer.

Coming back, in chapter 3, to the sword of the Word of God as an instrument for the discernment of spirits, the author connects *Tài jí* exercises and the examination of conscience. As explained in the *SpEx* (§ 43), the method for the examination of conscience includes five steps: giving thanks, asking the grace, giving an account of my soul, asking pardon, resolving to amend my faults. To foster sharper attention and awareness, particularly in group retreats, the five steps may be executed to the accompaniment of five chants. With or without chants, *Tài jí* moves may be selected and adapted to the five steps of the daily Ignatian Consciousness Examen: gratitude, petition of grace, review, contrition, action. After providing detailed examples, the author concludes that further studies could “explore the possibility of using other *Tài jí* exercises or other oriental prayer methods with other spiritual exercises, such as the full hour of meditation or contemplation” (249). – Several appendices include lists of Chinese terms, description of *Tài jí* moves and suggestions of Christian chants.

Sharing the Exercises with non-Christians?

Roger HAIGHT s.j., *Christian Spirituality for Seekers. Reflections on the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola*, Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 2012, xxvii-291 p.

Besides comparisons between the world-views and teachings of the *SpEx* and those of the religious traditions of the East, besides the parallel or combined practice by Christians of the Ignatian methods of prayer and of Asian ways such as Yoga or Zen, there looms now and then another question. Whether in countries where Christians and indeed Catholics are a small minority or in (mostly Western) countries where many people have drifted away from a living Christian faith and not unfrequently feel attracted to

Eastern teachings and modes of meditation, a rather new phenomenon requires our attention: non-Christians or persons with no formal link to the Catholic Church are desirous to follow the path of the SpEx.

With the fast increasing geographical and cultural mobility and with the fluidity of unforeseeable and tentative personal itineraries, new types of persons may knock at the door of Ignatian spiritual centres. Roger Haight distinguishes several groups among those ‘seekers’, a term chosen for its “deliberate vagueness” (xvii). On the one hand, “people whose Christian faith has been eroded by post-modern culture”. On the other hand, people who are not Christian “but are looking for... a source of enlightenment on the meaning of human life” (xxii). These may be “thoroughly secular” persons who have “never been exposed to religious sensibilities” or they may be members of other religious traditions: “today, Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims living as neighbors in a large urban setting and approaching Jesus is as plausible as a Christian entering a Buddhist temple or a Hindu ashram” (xxiii).

Obviously, these situations differ widely and require appropriate responses from the persons who give the Exercises. The common point, however, is that “at any given time the desire for integral meaning may stimulate people to investigate or deepen their spirituality, understood as responsibility for one’s life in the light of ultimacy” (xxiv). For those who have no faith commitment to Christ acknowledged as the Word of God, the strong point of the SpEx is the weight they give to meditating and contemplating the deeds and words of Jesus of Nazareth: a deep personal discovery of Jesus in his humanity, of Jesus as a teacher, a leader and guide or even a “fellow human traveler” (89), can operate a genuine spiritual transformation.

The same Jesus will “stimulate different receptions. Jesus of Nazareth is available to all as a spiritual teacher; but not all who approach him share the Christian narrative” (28). Without negating or excluding other dimensions, “the Christian spirituality professed in this book appeals primarily to Jesus of Nazareth and secondarily to the Christian religion” (xxii). Haight’s book thus tries to sail between the Scylla of the seeker and the Charybdis of the Christian (91). Appropriate adaptations are suggested, for instance, in connection with the Principle and Foundation (*SpEx* §§ 48-50), the Call of the earthly king (§§ 53-55), and particularly the Colloquy: “At this point certain spiritual seekers may hit a wall. How can seekers who have had no encounter with a personal God entertain such a colloquy?” (§ 95)

Roger Haight’s ‘Reflections’ are mainly based on his experience of proposing the Exercises to Protestant Christians and in a secularized context. We quoted mostly from his Introduction since, in the body of his book, he has little to say specifically about exercitants coming forward from Hinduism, Buddhism or Islam.

Erin M. CLINE, *A World on Fire. Sharing the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises with Other Religions*, Washington, The Catholic University of America Press, 2018, xi-284 p.

The specific question of opening the Ignatian Exercises to persons of other religions is taken up by Erin Cline, a scholar of Chinese culture and religions, a philosopher and theologian at Georgetown University, a Protestant lady whose “life had been changed

by the profound experience [she] had with the Exercises” (ix). The focus is on persons making the “full and complete” four-week Exercises. And the method is not descriptive or sociological but rather both normative and practical: “Which elements of the Exercises can be fruitfully appropriated by non-Christians and in what ways...? What would it mean for non-Christians to ‘share’ the Exercises or to make particular dynamics of the Exercises their own?” (5)

More precisely, one would be well-advised to start from the first Annotation and the Principle and Foundation: “Is the kind of indifference that is central to the Exercises something that members of other religious traditions can embrace? Is the idea of seeking God’s will for the ultimate end of salvation something that members of other traditions could affirm?” (29) There should be no problem for monotheists such as Jews or Muslims and even part of the Hindus. Buddhists of course and probably Daoists and others may not be comfortable with the idea of ‘God’. Besides, Buddhists and some Hindus may be committed to eliminating desires completely while Ignatius believed that “God speaks to us through our desires” (35).

“Which members of other traditions should be chosen to make the Exercises? What should their motives and aims be? And *how* should the Exercises be given to them; that is, what kinds of adaptations should be made to the Exercises for members of other faiths?” (74) The challenge will be to maintain a double coherence. On the one hand, to fully respect the intention of persons who, without being or becoming Christian, expect from the experience of the SpEx a deepening of their own commitment. On the other hand, to fully respect the integrity of the global unfolding of the Exercises lest their specificity be watered down: on this point, Erin Cline has strong reservations concerning the essays by Roger Haight (42-50) as well as Ruben Habito (160, 181-183). Candidates should be “open to encountering God and exploring who Jesus Christ is” (82): being open of course does not mean being fully committed.

The SpEx booklet recommends adaptation to each single retreatant. In the case of non-Christians, new and more radical types of adaptation should be considered. But the temptation would be to proceed by way of subtraction, for instance dropping some meditations and other exercises or replacing them by material taken from the exercitant’s own religious tradition: what benefit would he draw from that? One should avoid as much as possible this type of heavier adaptations. Instead of subtraction or substitution, the basic principle should be to offer supplemental resources drawn from the retreatant’s own spiritual heritage. “Such a practice openly engages and seeks to address the exercitant’s questions about and inevitable comparisons between her own tradition and that of Ignatius. (...) Careful comparative work can be an excellent resource here, for it provides signposts or markers that are designed to help exercitants of other faiths to better understand their own tradition as well as Christianity, and in the process, to deepen their faith” (105). Comparative theologians should be invited to prepare such supplemental resources. Their selection and use will be left at the discretion of the person who gives the Exercises. Care should be taken to avoid purely intellectual study or comparison.

In the better half of her book Erin Cline proceeds to apply those principles for exercitants of various religious origins. Leaving Judaism and Islam to better qualified

persons, she devotes two substantial chapters to Hinduism and Buddhism. Going through the full program of the four-week Exercises, she formulates recommendations and suggestions that take into account, as far as possible, the diversity of schools, teachings and practices. These chapters survey probable stumbling blocks on the way of the exercitants as well as points of easier understanding and resources intended to bridge the gaps. In the case of Hinduism, most of the themes and texts are taken from the Upanishads and the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ*: these scriptures may be taken as the hardcore of much of classical Hinduism.

Where Buddhism is concerned, the author has a separate treatment for more philosophical or purely non-theistic forms (Zen in particular) and another for more popular and devotional practices or beliefs which she boldly labels 'theistic'. The major hurdle is definitely the absence of 'God'. One should find out whether the Buddhist retreatant "is searching for an opportunity to contemplate, and even encounter, God and the life of Jesus deeply, for a considerable period of time. I stress here the importance of not just being *comfortable* with God and Jesus, but of *searching for an opportunity* to get acquainted with and even encounter God and Jesus; such a distinction is especially critical here, because there are no analogues to God in either philosophical or theistic forms of Buddhism." (175) In the absence of such a desire, a Buddhist retreat will probably be more useful than the Exercises.

In the last chapter – a survey of the Chinese cultural area – the author adopts a modified approach since most people share various syncretical forms of Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist traditions without identifying strictly with any of those.

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Autore Ignoto, *La Pietà, tra i santi Agostino e Giovanni Battista e, in basso, i Cinque Santi*, Olio su tela, 1630 circa, (cm. 320x212), Toro, Chiesa del Convento di Santa Maria di Loreto

La pala d'altare con i Cinque Santi nel convento di Toro (Molise)

di GIOVANNI MASCIA*

Sono diversi i motivi per cui riteniamo che possa essere d'interesse la tela dei *Cinque Santi*, la seicentesca pala di altare, conservata a Toro¹, presso la chiesa del convento francescano di Santa Maria di Loreto². Tanto più in vista della ricorrenza del 4° Centenario della Canonizzazione degli stessi cinque santi effigiati nella metà inferiore della tela torese.

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¹ Come altri comuni del versante sud occidentale della regione Molise, anche Toro (centro agricolo di 1270 abitanti, ubicato alle porte e in provincia di Campobasso) ricadeva nel dominio spirituale dell'arcivescovo di Benevento. Tale dominio si può far risalire alla fondazione del paese attorno all'Anno Mille. E si è protratto secolo dopo secolo, per circa un millennio, fino al 1983 quando, ritenendo di dover adeguare i confini delle diocesi ai confini amministrativi delle province e delle regioni nelle quali sono ubicate, la Sacra Congregazione dei Vescovi ha reciso il cordone ombelicale che legava Toro all'arcidiocesi beneventana assegnando l'unica parrocchia di questo comune e quelle degli altri omologhi comuni molisani all'arcidiocesi di Campobasso. Non solo legami spirituali quelli che stringevano Toro a Benevento, anche feudali. Nell'XI secolo, per donazione di Roberto di Tristayno, signore di Limosano, il centro, con tutte le pertinenze, era passato alla Badia di Santa Sofia di Benevento, rimanendo feudo ecclesiastico da allora sino al 1785, quando fu incamerato al Regio Demanio. La circostanza spiega il forte e perdurante radicamento in paese di istituzioni e tradizioni religiose. Cfr. GIOVANNI MASCIA, *Affreschi per il Papa. Arte, fede e storia nel chiostro e nel convento di Toro*, Campobasso, Palladino Editore, 2008.

² Fondato nel 1592 a spese della popolazione, il complesso monastico fu affidato ai Frati Minori Francescani, che lo reggono ancora oggi. Nella chiesa sono conservati statue (quali il settecentesco crocifisso ligneo di Carmine Latessa e la quattrocentesca *Madonna della tenerezza* di autore ignoto) e dipinti di valore, tra i quali la pala di altare oggetto della presente segnalazione nonché quella di *San Nicola e altri Santi* (1657) del pittore campobassano Nicola Felice, la *Madonna del Rosario* (1721) di Nicola Boraglia, la *Madonna della Misericordia* di Ciriacò Bunetti (1764). Interessante anche la settecentesca *Madonna delle Grazie tra San Francesco e il cardinale Orsini*. In omaggio allo stesso cardinale Orsini (poi papa Benedetto XIII), il pittore Bartolomeo Mastropietro da Cercemaggiore affrescò, nel 1726, le diciannove lunette del chiostro, che rappresentano un notevole ciclo devozionale a edificazione di San Francesco e l'ordine francescano. Va ricordato che Vincenzo Maria Orsini, arcivescovo di Benevento e abate della Badia di Santa Sofia, era stato il padrone spirituale e feudale di Toro e che il futuro papa amava soggiornare nel convento, dove aveva posto la sua "prediletta stanza". Non per nulla, probabilmente a titolo di ringraziamento per il ciclo degli affreschi in suo onore, il papa commissionava per il convento di Toro a un pittore rimasto anonimo la imponente tela della *Traslazione della Santa Casa a Loreto*, che oltre allo stemma papale accoglie il cartiglio con la scritta a caratteri capitali "Ex Amore / Benedicti XIII / Pontif. Max. / An. MDCCXXVIII". Cfr. GIOVANNI MASCIA, *Affreschi...* cit., nonché IDEM, *Toro, "prediletta stanza" del cardinale V.M. Orsini, arcivescovo di Benevento e papa Benedetto XIII: testimonianze artistiche e documentarie*, in «Sammium» (1997) pp. 79-114.

Quattro secoli fa, infatti, il 12 marzo 1622, per la prima volta la Chiesa provvide a proclamare cinque santi contemporaneamente, di cui quattro spagnoli, Teresa d'Avila, Isidoro l'Agricoltore, Ignazio di Loyola e Francesco Saverio. Quinto, il fiorentino ma romano d'adozione, Filippo Neri. Quattro spagnoli e un santo, se si vuole stare al celebre motto che la sagacia dei romani conìò nell'occasione³. In realtà, si trattò di un avvenimento che fece epoca e che è stato degnamente rievocato il 12 marzo 2022 in occasione del centenario, che vede sul trono di San Pietro papa Francesco, il primo papa gesuita della storia, devoto e assai legato ai "maggiori sui" della Compagnia di Gesù: Ignazio e Francesco Saverio, entrambi canonizzati da Gregorio XV, che a sua volta è stato il primo papa ad avere studiato presso i gesuiti. La cerimonia di canonizzazione rappresentò un grande trionfo della cattolicità, che i gesuiti rilanciarono con festeggiamenti solenni in tutte le dimore sparse in Europa, in Asia e nelle Americhe⁴.

Dell'avvenimento, tuttavia, non sono rimaste molte tracce artistiche, almeno in Italia. Di qui l'interesse per la tela dei *Cinque Santi*, che proprio per le peculiarità ricordate è stata segnalata otto anni fa, nella primavera del 2014, in occasione della festività di sant'Isidoro l'Agricoltore, patrono dei contadini e in questa veste non del tutto sconosciuto in Molise⁵.

In quella circostanza, ci si accontentò di fornire qualche scarna informazione sulla imponente tela (circa cm. 320x212), conservata nel convento francescano di Toro, il prezioso contenitore d'opere d'arte e di documenti storici, molti dei quali rimandano al cardinale Vincenzo Maria Orsini (1649-1730), arcivescovo di Benevento e abate di Santa Sofia, quindi padrone spirituale e feudale del paese, salito poi al soglio pontificio con il nome di Benedetto XIII (1724-1730)⁶.

³ ALESSANDRO SERRA, *Confraternite e culti nella Roma di Sei-Settecento*, in RENÉ MILLAR e ROBERTO RUSCONI [a cura di], *Devozioni, pratiche e immaginario religioso. Espressioni del cattolicesimo tra 1400 e 1850*, Viella, Roma 2011, p. 74.

⁴ Documenti e notizie interessanti sull'avvenimento si leggono nel volume, *La canonizzazione dei Santi Ignazio di Lojola fondatore della Compagnia di Gesù e Francesco Saverio Apostolo dell'Oriente*, Ricordo del Terzo Centenario, XII marzo MCMXXII, a cura del Comitato romano-ispiano per le centinarie onoranze, con il concorso di ottimi scrittori, in gran parte appartenenti alla Compagnia.

⁵ Cfr. l'articolo pubblicato in Internet sul sito Toroweb online (www.toro.molise.it) il 15 maggio 2014, ***Un santo dimenticato nel convento di Toro: Isidoro l'Agricoltore***.

⁶ La bibliografia orsiniana è nota ed estesa, in linea generale basterà richiamare la voce *Benedetto XIII* a cura di GASPARE DE CARO nel *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* – Volume 8 (1966). Per i riflessi più specificatamente beneventani sono da consultare ANGELOMICHELE DE SPIRITO [a cura di], *Visite pastorali di Vincenzo Maria Orsini nella diocesi di Benevento (1686-1730)*, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Roma 2003, e i contributi comparsi sulla prestigiosa rivista beneventana «Samnium»: A. BELLUCCI, *Di una inedita ed ignota corrispondenza del cardinale V.M. Orsini Arcivescovo di Benevento e poi Papa Benedetto XIII (1680-1717)*, in «Samnium», (1929), (1930), (1931), (1932) e (1933); S. DE LUCIA, *Fra Vincenzo Maria Orsini e le sue opere sociali*, in «Samnium», (1929) e (1930); IDEM, *Benedetto XIII a Benevento nel 1727 e 1729 (Diario Inedito)*, in «Samnium», (1937), (1938), (1939), (1940), (1941), (1943-1945), (1946) e (1947); A. ZAZO, *Due lettere inedite del cardinale V.M. Orsini (1698-1700)*, in «Samnium», (1940) 110-112; IDEM, *Per la venuta di Benedetto XIII a Benevento*, in «Samnium», (1965) 95-96; IDEM, *Restauri nella Cattedrale di Benevento e residui sulla tomba dell'Arcivescovo Gaspare Colonna (1697)*, in «Samnium», (1976) 231-234. Infine, per i legami dell'Orsini con Toro, cfr. GIOVANNI MASCIA, *Affre-*

Il quadro di autore ignoto, posizionato a ridosso dell'altare maggiore, *in cornu evangelii*, in precario stato di conservazione, ad onta del restauro subito qualche decennio addietro, presenta diffuse lacune per le perdite di colore avvenute nel corso dei secoli. La descrizione è trascritta dall'inventario delle opere d'arte presenti nella chiesa del convento, compilato nel 1840, su istanza del governo borbonico, dal sindaco Domenico Trotta, che annotava le dimensioni del dipinto e le caratteristiche della metà superiore, prima di elencare i cinque santi raffigurati nella metà inferiore in uno con il ritratto del committente. Questa la nota dell'inventario:

Quadro a tela lungo palmi dodici, largo otto, in cui è dipinta l'immagine della Madonna della Pietà col figlio tra le braccia, a fianco S. Giovanni Battista, e S. Agostino, con serafini d'intorno e con vari stromenti della passione. Tutti veggonsi poggiati sopra nubi. Al di sotto vi sono dipinti S. Filippo Neri, S. Teresa, S. Ignazio Lojola, S. Francesco Saverio, e S. Isidoro. Sotto vi è il ritratto del quondam D. Antonio Antonacci fondatore della Cappella⁷.

Coerente con la canonizzazione è il riferimento a D. Antonio Antonacci. Del notaio Antonacci, l'Archivio di Stato di Campobasso conserva in sette buste i repertori che vanno dall'anno 1596 al 1633, benché attivo anche dopo tale data⁸. Dal 1600 al 1602 fu procuratore della Confraternita di San Mercurio, della quale redasse nel 1607 la lista del confratelli, includendo se stesso tra i 137 maschi elencati a fronte di almeno altrettante donne⁹. Tra l'altro, fu a capo dell'amministrazione comunale di Toro con il titolo di giudice (corrispondente all'odierno sindaco, ma con carica annuale) nel 1629/1630 e nel 1639¹⁰.

L'ipotesi che il committente effigiato ai piedi dei Cinque Santi possa essere proprio Antonio Antonacci, come annotato dal Trotta, è avvalorata dalla circostanza che indica nello stesso notaio Antonacci il fondatore della Cappella, a tenore dell'inventario disposto dal Cardinale Orsini, redatto nel 1713 e conservato in volume con altri inventari coevi, presso l'archivio del Convento di San Giovanni dei Gelsi a Campobasso¹¹. Vi è annotato a proposito "Della Cappella seù Altare de Cinque Santi":

schi... op. cit., nonché IDEM, *Toro, "prediletta stanza" del cardinale V.M. Orsini...* op. cit., e ancora IDEM, *Appunti d'arte e di storia a San Giovanni in Galdo. Sulle tracce del cardinale Orsini, arcivescovo di Benevento, abate di santa Sofia e papa Benedetto XIII*, Palladino editore, Campobasso 2017.

⁷ Archivio di Stato di Campobasso, Fondo Intendenza, Busta 1001, f. 109, *Oggetti di belle arti. Monumenti storici*. In particolare, *Inventario descrittivo e consegna dei monumenti storici, e di arte esistenti nella chiesa del Monistero*, redatto il 10 febbraio 1840 da Domenico Trotta, sindaco di Toro pro tempore.

⁸ Archivio di Stato di Campobasso, Fondo Notai, Piazza Toro.

⁹ Archivio Comunale di Toro, Fondo Luoghi Pii, busta 7, fascicolo 21, *Libro de' conti e nota de' Confrati della Chiesa di S. Mercurio; dall'anno 1571 all'anno 1635*.

¹⁰ Archivio Comunale di Toro, Fondo Luoghi Pii, busta 7, fascicolo 24, *Della Cappella della Santissima Concezione*, nonché Archivio di Stato di Campobasso, Fondo Notai, Piazza Toro, Notaio GIACOMO NAZZARIO, atto 9 luglio 1629: *Università / L. Pantano (Pio Ospedale)*.

¹¹ Biblioteca del Convento dei Frati Minori di San Giovanni dei Gelsi a Campobasso, *Inventario delle Venerabili Cappelle sotto i titolo di S. Maria della Misericordia, de cinque Santi, di Sant'Antonio di Padova, di S. Nicasio, S. Maria della Pietà, e del Santissimo Rosario erette dentro la Chiesa di S. Maria di Loreto de P.P. Minori Osservanti della Terra di Toro – 1713*, volume manoscritto. Precisata l'attuale ubicazione dell'inventario, non si capisce a quale titolo, un documento storico di pertinenza specifica del

Stava la suddetta Cappella seù Altare eretta dentro la Chiesa sotto il titolo di S. Maria dello Reto dalla parte del Corno dell'Epistola, fù d'ordine dell'Ecc.mo sig. Cardinale Orsini Arcivescovo demolito nella p[ri]ma S. Visita, e trasferito il peso all'Altare Maggiore.

Fu questo Altare fondato e dotato dal q[uonda]m Antonio Antonaccio, ed essendo morto d[etto]. q.m Notar Antonio ab intestato il Dr. Fisico Agostino Mascillo genero di d. N. Antonio cedé tutta l'eredità a d. Altare per i dispareri e discordie, che vertevano fra i parenti a pretendere detta eredità...¹²

Stando così le cose, si capisce perché oggi la pala, esposta nel presbiterio, si veda priva dell'altare di riferimento e perché la sua datazione possa essere ricondotta alla prima metà del Seicento, con ogni probabilità a distanza di tempo non eccessiva dalla canonizzazione multipla. A suffragare questa ipotesi, l'esigenza avvertita dall'ignoto artista di annotare il nome latino ai piedi di ognuno dei cinque santi, la cui iconografia era ancora sconosciuta alla massa dei fedeli in quell'angolo del Contado di Molise, essendo stati da poco canonizzati. Nell'ordine, da sinistra: S. Teresia, S. Ignatius, S. Isidorus, S. Franciscus Xaverius e S. Philippus Neri. E che non può essere andata altrimenti lo prova anche il fatto che la casata degli Antonacci venne ad estinguersi in paese con la morte del notaio, avvenuta il 23 novembre del 1640¹³, senza peraltro impedire al cognome di sopravvivere nel toponimo "Piana Antonacci" (in dialetto contratto in *Chiantenacce*), con il quale ancora oggi è designata la popolare contrada posta al di là del Tappino, che un tempo accoglieva presumibilmente i poderi di famiglia.

Eccoci dunque ai Cinque Santi canonizzati nel 1622, effigiati in piedi, in posizione grossomodo frontale, allineati secondo lo schema fisso accolto in stampe e in molte medaglie devozionali coniate a ricordo dell'avvenimento. L'artista Dante Gentile Lorusso¹⁴, in occasione del restauro conservativo, da lui operato qualche decennio orsono, stilò il seguente giudizio critico della tela di Toro, riferito in modo esclusivo alla parte inferiore dell'opera, quella che accoglie la schiera dei Cinque Santi:

La tela è riconducibile a un pittore di matrice napoletana che opera nell'ambito strettamente meridionale in quella fase attardata della stagione tardomanierista presente ancora nei primi decenni del Seicento, che non risente dell'improvvisa e travolgente esperienza della pittura del "vero naturale" sopraggiunta con l'arrivo nel 1606 a Napoli di Caravaggio, situazione che indusse un gruppo di artisti del Viceregno ad una sorprendente revisione del proprio linguaggio.

convento torese o, se si vuole, dell'Archivio Parrocchiale di Toro, i cui volumi antichi sono conservati presso l'Archivio Comunale della stessa località, sia conservato invece presso la biblioteca conventuale campobassana, dove comunque è esposto in una bacheca sotto vetro.

¹² Ivi.

¹³ A tenore del foglio 168 a fronte, del libro manoscritto dei defunti di Toro, redatto per famiglie da fine Cinquecento a inizio Settecento, conservato impropriamente presso l'Archivio del Convento Santa Maria di Loreto. Il volume reca sul dorso in pergamena la dicitura *Vol. 4 [o 40] Memoria e Testam. delle Famiglie*, mentre in copertina si riesce a decifrare solo le parole *Libro e Defunti* da una scritta pressoché illeggibile posta su quattro righe.

¹⁴ Dante Gentile Lorusso, artista, restauratore, ricercatore e profondo conoscitore della produzione artistica molisana nei secoli, nato a Oratino nel 1957, risiede a Toro.

L'inedita opera, asciutta e monumentale, si caratterizza per la gamma cromatica estremamente semplificata, costruita su iconografie tardo-cinquecentesche. Un soggetto insolito nei repertori iconografici devozionali controriformati diffusi nel corso del XVII secolo, nonostante i severi precetti negativi emanati dal Concilio tridentino in materia di rappresentazione di temi e storie desunte dai Vangeli apocrifi e dalle agiografiche leggende riguardanti la vita dei santi.

L'impaginazione verticale della composizione, dominata quasi interamente dai cinque santi schierati in primo piano, risolti a tutta figura, risulta pervasa da un'atmosfera di pacato naturalismo qualitativamente sostenuto da una trama pittorica che accentua i cromatismi e le invenzioni luministiche.

La risoluzione sintetica ma umanissima dei volti, l'atteggiamento non ostentato dei gesti e il modulato fulgore dei panneggi rivendicano al dipinto la sicura matrice stilistica che trova nei valori della cultura partenopea.

L'originalità iconografica, che rende davvero interessante l'opera, è forse spiegabile grazie ad una colta committenza, magari dovuta proprio al committente raffigurato nella parte bassa della tela¹⁵.

Dicevamo dello schema fisso ripetuto in stampe e medaglie devozionali che nella tela di Toro si struttura in una formazione a cuneo, con Sant'Isidoro l'Agricoltore o Isidoro Agricola (1080 circa - 1130 circa), laico, Patrono di Madrid, al centro, in primo piano. Il santo con il nimbo, i capelli e la barba neri e fluenti a incorniciare il viso giovanile, le brache al ginocchio ricoperte da una vesticciola rossa, legata alla cinta con un fascia bianca, e i gambali di cuoio, è intento a percuotere il terreno con un lungo bastone, la cui terminazione metallica fa scaturire uno zampillo d'acqua¹⁶.

Va ricordato che a Sant'Isidoro, come protettore dei contadini, doveva essere tributato un culto cordiale nella vicina Campobasso, se tuttora gli è dedicato il primo "mistero", ossia il quadro vivente che, portato a spalla al pari degli altri dodici quadri con scene tratte dal vecchio e nuovo Testamento e dalla vita dei Santi, apre la plurisecolare sfilata dei Misteri del Corpus Domini. Come nel quadro di Toro, anche nella rappresentazione popolare campobassana del mistero di Sant'Isidoro, altrimenti detto il mistero della Face, per via di una grossa fiaccola che lo caratterizza, il santo contadino batte con il bastone il terreno perché ne zampilli l'acqua, in questo caso più precisamente per placare la sete (fisica e spirituale) del suo padrone, il cavaliere spagnolo Giovanni de Vergas, presente anch'egli nella scena.

*Sant'Isidore figlie de la Spagna
 prutiegge le cafune e la campagna,
 batte la terra mè che ssu bastone
 arijgneme la votte e lu cascione.*

¹⁵ DANTE GENTILE LORUSSO, *Tela dei Cinque Santi del Convento di Toro*, Scheda tecnica del restauro conservativo operato nell'anno 1995.

¹⁶ Cfr. la scheda, con allegata bibliografia, TOMÁS PUÑAL FERNÁNDEZ, *San Isidro Labrador*, in *Diccionario biográfico español*, Real Academia de la Historia, consultabile online: <https://dbe.rah.es/biografias/13120/san-isidro-labrador>.

(Sant'Isidoro figlio della Spagna / proteggi i contadini e la campagna, /
 batti la terra mia con quel bastone / riempiami la botte e il cassone).

Così è invocato il santo in un poemetto di Michele Buldrini dedicato ai “Misteri” campobassani¹⁷.

Viceversa a Toro, a parte il quadro del Convento, non rimane nessuna traccia, ammesso che ce ne sia mai stata una, di un culto popolare per il santo, benché tra le sue gambe divaricate si intraveda un lembo di paesaggio caratterizzato da un villaggio situato in una vallata e sormontato da un abitato arroccato su un'altura.

Il degrado della tela non permette una precisa valutazione del dettaglio, che nel villaggio a monte potrebbe presentare un'antica raffigurazione dell'abitato di Toro. Dove, tuttavia, neppure il nome del santo ha goduto di maggior fortuna essendo stato registrato sporadicamente lungo l'arco dei secoli nelle famiglie Cutrone, Marcucci, Simonelli..., e ancora più sporadicamente, per esempio nella famiglia Quicquaro, si è rinnovato nei discendenti, in omaggio alla figura del sacerdote Isidoro Quicquaro scomparso a 71 anni nel 1797¹⁸.

Immediatamente a ridosso di Sant'Isidoro, alle sue spalle, sono ritratti i due santi gesuiti: Ignazio di Loyola (1491-1556), sacerdote e fondatore della Compagnia di Gesù, da un lato, e Francesco Saverio (1506-1552), sacerdote e missionario, dall'altro. Rivestiti entrambi della tunica nera dell'ordine, sono contraddistinti dall'aureola e dalla barba nera che rende austeri i loro visi.

Sant'Ignazio, effigiato con la tipica, pronunciata calvizie, mostra il volume normativo della Compagnia aperto sulla pagina su cui è impresso il motto AD MAIOREM DEI GLORIAM, mentre della probabile scritta della pagina a fronte *Regulae Societatis Iesu* è possibile decifrare solo REGULAE. Sicuramente per Sant'Ignazio e San Francesco Saverio, e probabilmente per gli altri tre, l'ignoto artista mostra di essersi rifatto a precise fonti iconografiche: in particolare ai quadri che a Roma adornavano provvisoriamente gli altari dei due santi presso la Chiesa del Gesù e al “gonfalone con le immagini dei nuovi Santi che da San Pietro veniva portato processionalmente alle rispettive chiese dopo la canonizzazione... bandieron [che] fissavano, per così dire, ufficialmente il tipo iconografico del Santo stesso per i fedeli e per le opere d'arte”¹⁹.

¹⁷ Il poemetto di MICHELE BULDRINI, *Le Musterie de Campuasce* è pubblicato in ARNALDO BRUNALE, *Campusciane assélute. Aneddoti, battute, canti del popolo di Campobasso [...]*, Enzo Nocera editor, Campobasso 2007, pag. 154. I Misteri campobassani, in generale, godono di una bibliografia piuttosto estesa, che qui riassumiamo in due titoli: RENATO LALLI, *La sagra dei Misteri a Campobasso. Storia e tradizione*, Enzo Nocera Editore, Campobasso 1976, e LETIZIA BINDI, *Volatili mistero. Festa e città a Campobasso e altre divagazioni immateriali*, Armando, Roma 2009.

¹⁸ In questo e nei casi successivi, la ricerca onomastica è stata effettuata presso l'Archivio Parrocchiale di Toro, consultando in particolare i registri dei battezzati e dei morti, a far data dal 1686 ad oggi.

¹⁹ DEOCLECIO REDIG DE CAMPOS, *Intorno a due quadri d'altare del Van Dyck per il Gesù di Roma ritrovati in Vaticano*, «Bollettino d'Arte», Ministero della Educazione Nazionale Direzione Generale delle Antichità e Belle Arti, 1936 - IV (Ottobre - Anno XXX), pp. 150-165.

Naturalmente questo non significa che i quadri o i gonfaloni l'artista li abbia dovuti per forza vedere di persona, potendo essere stato sufficiente averne avuto conoscenza a mezzo stampe e incisioni. Certo è che è davvero notevole la somiglianza iconografica, la postura, e finanche l'orientamento del corpo e dello sguardo dei due santi gesuiti della tela torese con i due "quadretti" romani del Gesù, dei quali abbiamo foto, valutazione e notizie specifiche, a cominciare dalla loro collocazione, "nei magazzini della Pinacoteca Vaticana",

... dove si conservano coi numeri 756 (*S. Ignazio*) e 766 (*S. Francesco Saverio*). Ambedue misurano m. 2,10 x 1,45, e provengono dal Palazzo Pontificio di Castelgandolfo [...] Sono opera d'un maestro secondario, ma lo stile della fine del Cinquecento vi si manifesta chiaramente [...]

S. Ignazio è rappresentato in piedi, volto di tre quarti a destra, con il libro delle Costituzioni in mano [...]

Il *S. Francesco Saverio* è ugualmente in piedi, volto verso sinistra di tre quarti; le mani aprono la tunica nel gesto tradizionale, il giglio della sinistra sembra aggiunto posteriormente [...]. Sebbene abbiano solo uno scarso valore artistico, questi quadretti sono peraltro degni di venerazione per essere stati i primi esposti pubblicamente al culto [...]

L'atteggiamento e gli attributi essenziali dei due Santi – libro di Sant'Ignazio e gesto delle mani di San Francesco Saverio – [...] si sono dappoi sempre considerati come i segni iconografici che li distinguono²⁰.

A parte la tela del Convento, a Toro non si conservano altre immagini di Sant'Ignazio né tracce di culto a lui tributato. Pressoché sconosciuto anche il nome, a parte rarissimi casi tra cui un p. Ignazio da Toro (al secolo Giovannangelo Ferrara, 1817-1897), frate minore e rettore del Convento di Santa Maria di Loreto a Toro, il quale negli anni bui della soppressione degli ordini mendicanti decretata all'indomani dell'Unità d'Italia fu chiamato prima alla carica di custode provinciale (1874-1884) e quindi di ministro della Provincia Monastica di San Ferdinando del Molise (1884-1891)²¹.

Il ritratto di San Francesco Saverio, più giovane rispetto al confratello, è allineato anch'esso alla fonte iconografica romana, pur risultando caratterizzato da una chierica che si indovina vistosa, comunque non visibile nel quadro di riferimento, e da uno stelo di giglio bianco impugnato con la mano destra, e non con la sinistra come nel quadro romano, dove il fiore forse è stato aggiunto in un secondo momento²². L'immagine del giovane sacerdote bene si addice all'immagine di un santo popolare in paese, dove specialmente a cavallo tra Sette e Ottocento furono numerosi i toresi, maschi e femmine, battezzati con i nomi di Saverio (popolarmente abbreviato in Viuccio) e Saveria o anche Saverina o Severina.

²⁰ Ivi, pp. 161-162.

²¹ P. DOROTEO FORTE, *Con San Francesco in Puglia e Molise*, Curia Provinciale Frati Minori Puglia e Molise, Foggia 1999, p. 123.

²² DEOCLECIO REDIG DE CAMPOS, *Intorno a due quadri d'altare...* op. cit., p. 162.

Non a caso, la Chiesa Madre del Santissimo Salvatore ne conservava un ritratto ovale, inventariato nel 1840²³ e poi andato perduto, nonché la bella statua lignea, settecentesca, riconducibile allo scultore Silverio Giovannitti da Oratino, statua che si ammira ancora oggi nella nicchia posta a capo dell'altare laterale fatto costruire nel 1876 *in cornu evangelii*, dalla famiglia Cardillo. Rivestito di tunica, cotta e stola, il santo gesuita è rappresentato nell'atto di predicare, mostrando ai fedeli il crocifisso impugnato con la sinistra. Nel 1923, estinti i Cardillo, l'erede Francesco D'Amico, fece murare al di sopra della nicchia la targa marmorea che ricordava e raccomandava a sé e a i suoi familiari la devozione degli avi.

Alle spalle di San Francesco Saverio, è raffigurato San Filippo Neri (1515-1595), fondatore della Congregazione dell'Oratorio²⁴, con la barba e i capelli bianchi, gli occhi rivolti al cielo e il libro nella mano destra. L'anziano sacerdote è rivestito dei paramenti liturgici, in questo caso verdi, non rossi come nella celebre *Visione* di Guido Reni, né tantomeno d'oro, come di solito rappresentati. A Toro e in tutte le parrocchie molisane e campane dell'arcidiocesi beneventana retta dal citato Cardinale Orsini, San Filippo divenne assai noto e venerato per impulso del cardinale stesso, che ritenendo di essere uscito illeso per intercessione del santo dal crollo dell'episcopio beneventano causato dal terremoto del 1688, ne promosse il culto, raccomandando che ogni parrocchia custodisse almeno un ritratto del santo da esporre alla devozione dei fedeli²⁵. Nel circondario sono ben conosciuti il quadro realizzato da Giuseppe Castellano nel 1705 presso la chiesa di Faifoli a Montagano, con San Filippo raffigurato insieme a San Domenico e altri santi ai piedi della Vergine nonché la tela del *Rosario* di Nicola Boraglia, conservata nella chiesa di San Bonaventura a Campodipietra, dove un ritratto ovale del santo è esposto anche nella Chiesa Madre dedicata a San Martino. A San Giovanni in Galdo, un'altra tela del Castellano mostra San Filippo insieme a San Sebastiano ai piedi de *La Madonna del Carmine*, presso la chiesa conventuale omonima, mentre in un affresco del soffitto di una sala del Palazzo Abbaziale il santo è ritratto in paramenti viola. A Toro, infine, oltre che nella pala dei *Cinque Santi*, è raffigurato nella *Madonna del Rosario* del Boraglia, la bella tela commissionata dallo stesso Orsini nel 1721 a beneficio dell'altare omonimo eretto nella stessa chiesa del Convento, e quindi nella *Madonna del Rosario* di

²³ Archivio di Stato di Campobasso, Fondo Intendenza, Busta 1001, f. 109, *Oggetti di belle arti. Monumenti storici*. In particolare, *Inventario descrittivo e consegna dei monumenti storici, e di arte esistenti nella Chiesa Matrice*, redatto l'11 febbraio 1840 da Domenico Trotta, sindaco di Toro pro tempore.

²⁴ L. PONNELLE – L. BORDET, *Filippo Neri e la società romana del suo tempo (1515-1595)*, traduzione italiana a cura di T. Casini, Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, Firenze 1931; edizione anastatica con appendice, 1987; l'edizione originale in francese, Librairie Clouet & Gay, Paris 1928.

²⁵ A testimonianza dello scampato pericolo, l'Orsini che fu rinvenuto con il capo poggiato su una immaginetta del santo caduta da un armadio, ne diffuse ovunque il culto, stampando nello stesso anno e firmandola di suo pugno la *Narrazione de' prodigi operati dal glorioso S. Filippo Neri nella persona dell'Eminentissimo Signor Cardinale Orsini Arcivescovo di Benevento. in occasione, che rimase sotto le rouine delle sue stanze nel Tremuoto, che distrusse quella Città a' 5 di giugno 1688*, In Napoli, per Novello de Bonisi, e di nuovo per Michele Monaco 1688.

Giuseppe Castellano, nella chiesa parrocchiale del San Salvatore²⁶. Con tutto ciò il nome del santo ha goduto in passato di una diffusione discreta, non di più, e appare a mal partito contro le abitudini onomastiche delle nuove generazioni.

Tornando alla tela dei *Cinque Santi*, e precisamente alle spalle di Sant'Ignazio, e quindi dall'altra parte della tela, a sinistra di chi guarda, troviamo raffigurata l'unica donna della schiera dei canonizzati del 12 marzo 1622: Santa Teresa d'Avila, o di Gesù (1515-1582), mistica, suora carmelitana, scrittrice e fondatrice delle monache e dei frati Carmelitani Scalzi²⁷, che sarà annoverata, prima donna della cristianità, tra i dottori della Chiesa nel 1970 da Paolo VI, insieme a Caterina da Siena. Santa Teresa – della quale non si conoscono altre effigi in paese né riferimenti devozionali specifici, sebbene il suo nome sia stato e resti popolare e diffuso tra la popolazione – appare piuttosto giovane, naturalmente a piedi scalzi, rivestita di tunica marrone, copritunica bianca, soggolo bianco e velo nero. Nella mano destra regge un crocifisso ligneo.

Ma c'è un particolare della raffigurazione, che va rilevato e sottolineato ed è l'angelo che dall'alto delle nubi indirizza una freccia verso Santa Teresa, oltrepassandone l'aureola. Il dettaglio allude al celebre caso di transverberazione vissuto e raccontato nella autobiografia della santa²⁸, il cui cuore sarebbe stato trafitto durante un'estasi da un angelo con una freccia infuocata, come rappresentato nella celebre scultura del Bernini, in linea con l'autopsia che accertò nel suo cuore la presenza della cicatrice di una ferita grande e profonda. In ogni caso è forte la suggestione della festa della transverberazione di Santa Teresa di Gesù che si celebra il 26 agosto, nella stessa data in cui a Toro si festeggia solennemente il patrono veneratissimo, San Mercurio Martire²⁹.

²⁶ GIOVANNI MASCIA, *Toro, "prediletta stanza" del cardinale V.M. Orsini...* op. cit., IDEM, ancora IDEM, *Appunti d'arte e di storia a San Giovanni in Galdo...* op. cit. pp. 16-19 e 52-62, nonché DORA CATALANO, "Ex amore Benedicti XIII". *Azioni, interventi e committenze orsiniane in Molise*, in *Oltre Longhi: ai confini dell'Arte. Scritti per gli ottant'anni di Francesco Abbate*, a cura di N. CLEOPAZZO e M. PANARELLO, Centro Studi sulla civiltà artistica dell'Italia meridionale "Giovanni Previtali", Portici 2019, pp. 271-282.

²⁷ Cfr. la scheda, con allegata bibliografia, OTGER STEGGINK, OCARM., *Santa Teresa de Jesús*, in *Diccionario biográfico español*, Real Academia de la Historia, consultabile online: <https://dbe.rah.es/biografias/8619/santa-teresa-de-jesus>

²⁸ SANTA TERESA D'AVILA, *Il libro della mia vita*, a cura di LUIGI BORRIELLO e GIOVANNA DELLA CROCE, Edizioni Paoline, Milano 2006, Cap. XXIX, 13, p. 256.

²⁹ San Mercurio, è un soldato martire sciita del Terzo Secolo, che la Chiesa ricorda il 25 novembre, ma a Toro è festeggiato grandiosamente il 26 agosto. A trapiantarne il culto dalle nostre parti fu l'incosapevole imperatore bizantino Costante II che nel 663 d.C. venne a guerreggiare nell'Italia meridionale contro i Longobardi, portando con sé i resti di San Mercurio e di altri santi perché gli propiziassero la vittoria, che arrise invece ai suoi avversari. Dopo aver assediato invano Benevento, Costante fu costretto precipitosamente a riprendere il mare e a lasciare le sacre spoglie a Quintodecimo (Av). Centocinque anni dopo, Arechi II rinvenne il corpo del martire, ne ordinò la traslazione a Benevento, avvenuta il 26 agosto del 768 (di qui la festività solenne a Toro in ossequio all'ufficio liturgico beneventano), e tumulandolo nell'altare maggiore della chiesa di Santa Sofia lo elevò a patrono della città e della bellicosa nazione longobarda. Non è chiaro quando al santo martire fu assegnato il patronato di Toro, probabilmente subito dopo la donazione (1092) del paese all'Abbazia beneventana di Santa Sofia, che ne custodiva le spoglie e aveva l'effigie del santo sulle proprie bandiere poste a presidio dei possedimenti feudali. Cfr.

Il dettaglio della freccia dall'angelo funge anche da fondamentale grado di raccordo tra la scena terrena dei cinque santi consacrati nel marzo di quattro secoli fa e la visione celeste raffigurata, oltre la cortina di nuvole, nella parte superiore della tela. Fulcro della scena ultraterrena, in un nugolo di cherubini e angeli dotati degli strumenti della Passione, è la Madonna abbracciata al corpo del figlio morto, che fuoriesce dal sarcofago di marmo dalla cintola in su, per usare un'espressione famosa; alle loro spalle incombe la croce, mentre i lati sono presidiati da un santo vescovo a sinistra e, con il cartiglio che in qualche modo rimanda all'*Agnus Dei*, dal Battista a destra. San Giovanni, che a Toro è molto popolare, anche nell'onomastica cittadina, è presente anche nella settecentesca pala dell'altare posizionato accanto a quella dei Cinque Santi, con Santa Lucia e la Vergine che intercede presso Cristo, opera di Ciriaco Brunetti da Oratino, probabilmente da mettere in relazione con la tremenda carestia del 1764, che afflisse l'intero Molise. Inoltre, nella chiesa parrocchiale, una statua di Crescenzo Ranallo, firmata e datata 1850, è posta a capo dell'altare dedicato a San Giovanni, *in cornu epistolae*. Al contrario, scarso favore onomastico e nessun culto riscuote Sant'Agostino vescovo, raffigurato alla sinistra della Pietà. La sua identità, in uno con quella del Battista, è svelata dai precisi riferimenti della iscrizione, leggibile solo in parte sul frontespizio del sepolcro, che per quanto riguarda la Pietà rimanda a una immagine miracolosa rivenuta a Napoli proprio in quegli anni: "VERO RITRATTO DI SANTA MARIA DELLA CONSOLATIONE / PA [...] DELLA CHIESA DI [...] SAN GIOVANNI?...] A CARBON / DELL'ORDINE DI SANTO AGOSTINO".

Di che si tratta? Nel 1620, quindi appena due anni prima della canonizzazione dei Cinque Santi, i Padri Agostiniani avevano intitolato a Santa Maria della Consolazione o altrimenti detta Consolatrice degli Afflitti la chiesa ricavata nella cripta della chiesa del monastero di San Giovanni a Carbonara, per accogliervi un'immagine della Vergine che era stata ritrovata sotto uno strato d'intonaco nella bottega di un falegname, la cui figlia cieca aveva riacquistato miracolosamente la vista in quella occasione. Divulgatosi la notizia del miracolo, per ordine del Cardinale Decio Carafa, arcivescovo di Napoli, l'immagine fu trasferita sull'altare maggiore nella nuova chiesa eretta in suo onore³⁰. Dovette trattarsi di un avvenimento di grande risonanza, se aveva comportato la costruzione di una nuova chiesa, alla cui degna sistemazione concorreranno in seguito anche le tele di Nicola Vaccaro e l'altare monumentale che lo scultore Francesco Pagano realizzerà su disegno del noto architetto Ferdinando Sanfelice, mentre il celeberrimo Giuseppe Sammartino, l'autore del *Cristo velato*, lo adorerà con statue preziose. Grande risonanza ulteriormente amplificata dalle grazie riconducibili alla intercessione della Santa Vergine che, stando a una lapide posta all'ingresso della chiesa, operò:

GIOVANNI MASCIA, *San Mercurio, chi era costui? Alcuni aspetti del declino di uno dei santi più famosi della cristianità...*, in «Il Bene Comune», maggio 2011.

³⁰ CARLO CELANO, *Notizie del bello dell'antico e del curioso della città di Napoli*, Vol. II, Stamperia Floriana, Napoli 1856, p. 594.

a favore dei suoi devoti / Contro tempeste, naufragi, fuoco, carceri, torture, patiboli, malattie / Morte, demoni, peccati, ed ogni altro sinistro accidente / Delle quali grazie pendevano da queste pareti voti in gran numero / Onde fu da' fedeli chiamata col titolo di / CONSOLATRICE DEGLI AFFLITTI / Per mezzo di lei Napoli fu liberata più volte da tremuoti, e da sanguinose sedizioni del popolo / Per lo che gli Ecc. Eletti / [...] / a nome della fedelissima Città vennero con pompa solenne, e ricchi donativi / A riconoscerla particolare Protettrice della medesima...³¹

Vero è che già nella seconda metà dell'Ottocento cronisti e storici napoletani segnalavano che era andata perduta l'immagine della Consolazione, della Vergine che un tempo era stata riconosciuta come "particolare Protettrice della fedelissima Città di Napoli", sebbene restassero una copia in marmo a rilievo, presso la porta interna della chiesa, e un'altra nella chiesa superiore di San Giovanni a Carbonara³². Restava e resta anche la precisa descrizione, lasciataci in pieno Seicento da Carlo De Lellis, della "divotissima imagine" della Vergine, che "ne' tempi del suo ritrovamento" aveva accordato "innumerevoli grazie a coloro che, nelle loro afflizioni, alla sua intercessione ricorrevano". Ragion per cui

con titolo di Consolazione degli Afflitti ne fu chiamata; se pure dir non vogliamo che tal nome imposto li fusse per alludere alla stessa figura nella quale vedesi il Redentor del mondo, dentro di una urna marmorea, tutto afflitto et appassionato, gronnante dalle sue piaghe abundantissimo sangue, e da uno de' lati la sua Madre santissima, che abbracciandolo dimostra di consolarlo, posti in mezzo de' gloriosi sant'Agostino e di san Giovanni il Battista³³.

I cronisti e gli storici napoletani non potevano saperlo, ma di quell'antica immagine perduta, segnaliamo oggi che resta in copia anche *La Madonna della Consolazione* di Toro, opera alla quale la descrizione citata si attaglia alla perfezione, essendo stata realizzata da un artista ignoto ma comunque dal talento non disprezzabile, in epoca che ipotizziamo a ridosso del ritrovamento napoletano e dalla canonizzazione a San Pietro dei *Cinque Santi*, effigiati nella stessa tela, su commissione del notaio Antonio Antonacci, anch'egli convenientemente raffigurato. Ne discende che, al contrario di quanto spesso si crede e si vorrebbe far credere, in quei tempi lontani anche le piccole, insignificanti realtà rurali e periferiche erano inserite a modo loro in circuiti culturali, artistici e socio-religiosi, non costrette inesorabilmente ai margini o estromesse addirittura da ciò che avveniva nel mondo, in questo caso rappresentato sia dalla capitale del regno sia dalla capitale della cristianità.

³¹ Ivi, pp. 594-595.

³² GENNARO ASPRENO GALANTE, *Guida alla città di Napoli*, Stamperia del Fibreno, Napoli 1872, pp. 57-58.

³³ ELISABETTA SCIROCCO, MICHELA TARALLO E STEFANO DE MIERI [a cura di], *Carlo de Lellis, Aggiunta alla Napoli sacra dell'Engenio Caracciolo, tomo II* (edizione digitale del ms. X.B.21 della Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli)_maggio 2013, p. 18, on line in Academia.edu https://www.academia.edu/3563957/Carlo_de_Lellis_Aggiunta_alla_Napoli_sacra_dell'Engenio_Caracciolo_tomo_II_edizione_digitale_del_ms_X_B_21_della_Biblioteca_Nazionale_di_Napoli_maggio_2013

Così oggi, a quattro secoli di distanza, nel piccolo paese di Toro, alle porte di Campobasso, una comunità che è fiera delle proprie radici e della tradizione storica, artistica, culturale e religiosa, lancia questo modesto ma significativo segnale di esistenza in vita, comunicando *in primis e ante omnia* a papa Francesco e, quindi, a tutti quelli che possano essere interessati e compartecipi, dell'esistenza della tela seicentesca dei *Cinque Santi e della Madonna della Consolazione* in un contesto, quale quello del pur cospicuo patrimonio artistico nazionale, che in questo caso non pare aver conservato altri esempi di pari oggetto.

THE IGNATIAN YEAR AND THE PANDEMIC

Reflections from a Field Hospital

Oscar Momanyi

'There are no mistakes, no coincidences. All events are blessings given to us to learn from.' (Elizabeth Kübler-Ross)¹

A Virus in a Faraway Land

WHEN THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK started, there was a general sense in my neighbourhood that it was a faraway disease that would never come to us. After all, many other viral diseases, such as Ebola, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV-1), H1N1 and 'swine flu' have in the past reared their ugly heads in many parts of the world, but they never reached us. So I continued to live in the oblivious conviction that I was safe and that this new virus would pass me by as the others had done. I live and work in the Mwangaza Jesuit Spirituality Centre, a retreat house linked to an infirmary for elderly Jesuits of the Eastern Africa Province in the outskirts of Nairobi, Kenya. I work as a retreat-giver and spiritual guide, together with other Jesuits and lay collaborators. I also have responsibility for taking care of the elderly community members as Prefect of Health in the infirmary.² The area has lush gardens with beautiful flowers and trees on the foothills of the Ngong Hills. It is a little Garden of Eden.³

How could a virus originating thousands of miles away come to this serene and secluded corner of the world? But when the first case of COVID-19 was reported in Kenya in March 2020, I realised that my naïveté was over. I started to think seriously about the possibility of myself or people I knew getting infected with the virus. Eventually, to our shock, the virus began spreading among the community. The drama of infection among us unfolded as we were preparing to celebrate the

¹ Quoted in Lennie Kronisch, 'Elizabeth Kübler-Ross: Messenger of Love', *Yoga Journal* (November/December 1976), 20.

² See *Constitutions* III.2.6 [303] and III.2.G [304] on the role of a Prefect of Health.

³ *Mwangaza* is a Swahili word meaning *light*.



Mwangaza Jesuit Spirituality Centre

Ignatian Year (20 May 2021 to 31 July 2022), marking the 500th anniversary of the conversion of St Ignatius of Loyola.

The pandemic did not stop us from making plans to reach out to people in the Ignatian Year; it was not going to undermine us in our mission of bringing Good News to the people of God. We battled the virus together knowing that St Ignatius was with us and interceding for us. He too, in his time, went through this experience. In his *Autobiography* he describes a plague and a lockdown on his pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1523. After a voyage of five days and nights, the vessel in which he had set out from Barcelona reached Gaeta, and Iñigo disembarked and started for Rome, although there was danger there on account of the plague. He writes:

... arriving at a town [Fondi] that was nearby, they found it shut up. Not being able to enter, they spent that night, all three of them, in a church just there; it was raining. In the morning they wouldn't open the town to them (n.39)

The situation was an opportunity for us to undergo deeper conversion as we continued with our mission of bringing Christ's message to the people of God, even in challenging times.

What follows is a reflection on the lessons learnt as I, my Jesuit companions and our lay collaborators struggled to live amid the pandemic in our quest to find God. What lessons did we learn that would enable us to be better ministers in the vineyard of the Lord?

Finding God in the Midst of a Pandemic

We had planned to offer a thematic day of prayer at the retreat house on the first weekend of January 2021, to a group of laypeople and some religious, titled *Finding God in the Midst of a Pandemic*. The coronavirus had by that time been spreading around the world for a year with devastating effects. We thought that it would be good to help people reflect on their experience and try to find meaning in it, despite the challenges. Little did we know that shortly before that day of recollection the virus would have arrived at our home.

Months before the day of prayer we had a meeting to plan how it would unfold. We knew the dangers, but we had a naïve sense that the virus was something *out there*, about which we could talk in a detached way. I had prepared my presentation and I felt content that I would be able to help people pray and give them hope amid the pandemic. My companion with whom I was to facilitate the day of prayer was the first to be diagnosed, a few days before it was due to take place. I decided that I would give the recollection by myself. A few hours later we identified another case, and so we had to cancel the day of prayer altogether, not knowing the extent of the infection among us. We did not want to expose other people to the virus unintentionally.

Where the Rubber Meets the Road

Just before we had the first case of COVID-19 in our community, I had the privilege of listening to a conversation between an elderly community member and a nurse who was taking care of him. The conversation was about the virus and the possibility of death after contracting it. The community member elegantly explained to the nurse the Principle and Foundation, with a special focus on Ignatian indifference and interior freedom—especially concerning a long life over a short one.⁴ I was impressed by the explanation. I had never heard such a lucid account of that foundational statement of Ignatian spirituality.

A few weeks later, this elderly companion contracted the coronavirus. He was visibly shaken, and he realised that he was not ready to let go of his life. That led him to a deeper reflection on indifference, once he was out of danger. His experience helped me, too, to reflect on Ignatian indifference in a new way. I had prayed with the Principle and Foundation

⁴ St Ignatius places this profound prayer at the beginning of the *Spiritual Exercises* and invites the exercitant to pray for the grace of interior freedom or indifference.

many times in my life but I continued to realise that I was still learning new things about myself, God and others. We may desire to be indifferent and accept a short rather than a long life, and to be free in front of God, but we may still be on the way to achieving it. Thus, we are invited to remain humble and keep asking for the grace to be truly indifferent even into our sunset years.

A Field Hospital

The experience of coronavirus made Pope Francis's image of the Church as field hospital real for me.⁵ It was no longer an abstract idea but a lived reality. We had to turn part of the community house into a quarantine zone for the confrères who had contracted the virus. We also hired two nurses to look after them. Our family doctor was gracious enough to come to check on them from time to time. Seeing our nurses and doctor wearing full Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) before entering the rooms of those infected was quite a scary experience. Our house had become a hospital. What we had only seen on television screens for many months was now a reality at home.

As the Prefect of Health, I had to work closely with the nurses and the doctor. In a way, I joined the medics as a kind of 'first responder'. Sometimes I had to wear PPE myself and visit the patients in their rooms for different reasons. The idea of putting the other's welfare first and not my own gained a new meaning for me. One day, a patient wanted some help while the nurses had stepped out for a break. I carefully put on my PPE suit and went into the room. After a couple of minutes, I noticed that my suit was partly torn. I was very scared, but I could not leave the room since I was already exposed. I continued helping my confrère, which I believe was the right thing to do. I was lucky that I did not get the virus that day. Reflecting on the experience, I was happy to receive confirmation in my prayer that Jesus would have done the same thing; he would not have put his own safety first but the life and needs of a desperate brother or sister.

Finding God in Our Rooms

At the beginning of the pandemic in the community, we stopped celebrating Mass in common. Everyone was encouraged to pray in his

⁵ Pope Francis first used this image in an interview with Antonio Spadaro of *La Civiltà Cattolica* in September 2013. See *A Big Heart Open to God: An Interview with Pope Francis* (New York: HarperOne, 2013), 30–33.

room. The curtains, the altar linens, the purificators in our chapels were all taken out. The chapels were then closed altogether and the Blessed Sacrament was relocated. It was Good Friday in January! However, Jesus continued to hang on the cross; even the virus could not bring Jesus down. He continued to suffer with us in that crisis as a people loved by God whose faith was being put to a test.

The Ignatian invitation to ‘find God in all things’ took on a new and radical meaning for us. We had to find God in our rooms. With all the normal liturgies of the community suspended, we had to find God in isolation. The reality of losing community life was hard for some of us who find the support we need in it. Mask-wearing was recommended for everyone who ventured out of his room, just in case someone he met on the corridors was infected. The most vulnerable had their food brought to them in their rooms, while the healthier members had to sit one per table in the dining room. This went on for months, and I could feel the pain of the companions who longed to share community life again. Owing to the alienating situation of physical distancing, meals were often eaten in silence, or else we would have to shout to be heard—bearing in mind most of our senior members have hearing problems. One day, I joked: ‘how’s the retreat going?’ The community experience of our three-week lockdown was similar to that of making a thirty-day retreat. God’s grace of interior silence was coming to us in ways that we did not expect. We learnt to be closer to one another even in silent isolation.

Luckily, even though physically distancing was painful, it paid off. One companion got infected weeks after all the previously infected confrères had tested negative. However, since we were physically distanced, we were able to isolate him when we noticed the symptoms, before the virus could spread again. During that second cycle of infection there was less panic in the community because we knew what to do. We had befriended the virus and we knew how to live with it. By that time we had become less afraid of death; we were even experiencing a sense of freedom in the way we lived our lives. We did not prefer a long life to a short one, we had grown to another level of indifference as a community.

At one point, I developed the symptoms of the virus myself: loss of the ability to taste and smell, shortness of breath and body aches. I had to self-isolate for some days; but when I was tested, I was negative. That was when I realised that maybe the crisis had taken such a huge psychological toll on me that I was experiencing COVID-like symptoms. When I described this to a friend, she told me that I must have been seriously

fatigued by all the extra care work brought by the virus, and I had been considerably weakened both physically and psychologically. I realised that I needed to care for myself or else I could experience burnout.

Befriending Our Fears

Even after all the infected companions tested negative—including the oldest member of the community, who was 98 years old—we still had to deal with the aftermath of the infections. One of us, our beloved resident nurse, Sr Teresa Brancalione, died of post-COVID complications: the virus had caused severe lung damage and, after many days in the intensive care unit, she passed away. It was a big blow for us: we were so happy when all the COVID-positive confrères tested negative; we thought we had conquered the virus. A sense of loss and confusion pervaded the house after her death. Companions felt broken-hearted and shocked. God was inviting us to continue to trust in God's providence and kindness, and not in our own strength and medical care. Even in death, God continued to strengthen us and to give us hope in the resurrection.

The words of Mawlānā Rumi, a Farsi poet, were a consolation in bearing that loss:

Through Love, all that is bitter will be sweet,
 Through Love, all that is copper will be gold,
 Through Love, all dregs will turn to purest wine,
 Through Love, all pain will turn to medicine.⁶

It is only love that can make us understand and feel the pain of the death of a loved one. The love that person showed us in caring for us makes him or her 'the unlosable', who continues to abide with us.⁷ Even though Sr Teresa is not with us physically any more, we know she is with us spiritually, guiding and supporting us along the way. The memories of her loving presence carry us on. In *Death the Final Stage of Growth* Elizabeth Kübler-Ross tells us:

The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion,

⁶ Look! *This Is Love: Poems of Rumi*, translated by Annemarie Schimmel (Boston: Shambhala, 1991), 31.

⁷ For 'the unlosable', see William Ernest Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization* (New York: Harper, 1956), 49–50.

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gentleness, and deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen.⁸

The pain of loss that we experienced at the death of one of us was teaching us to be more appreciative of life and more compassionate to one another, and that all was not lost.

Death was not the only consequence of the coronavirus pandemic in our little bubble. Many people were traumatized by the thought of getting infected or reinfected, to the point that they became alienated, losing the human contact that they needed. One community member stayed in total isolation in his room for several months after he recovered from the infection. This took a mental and physical toll on him, but efforts to convince him to stop his regime of self-isolation yielded no results. Another confrère suffered from Long COVID. The symptoms of infection persisted for many months even after he had tested negative for the virus. They included shortness of breath, general bodily weakness, brain fog and changes in the senses of taste and smell. The psychological and physical effects of the virus on us as a community continued to be felt for a long time after the real crisis had passed.

Being present and ministering to my companions became one of my primary tasks. That is when the idea of community life as a mission made more sense to me. The Thirty-Fifth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus had emphasized that ‘community is not just for mission:



The Mwangaza Community

⁸ Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, *Death: The Final Stage of Growth* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1975), 175.

it is itself mission'.⁹ Previously, this just sounded like a slogan to me, but it became a reality in a practical way during the pandemic. In the first half of 2021 and the following months, we as a community were learning to find God amid the pandemic. What we had theoretically envisioned for our day of prayer at the beginning of the year, we lived practically, for months, as the reality of the virus came home to us in sometimes surprising ways. Our faith in God was tested, our normal life disrupted, but our hope was made steadfast.

A Common Fate Holds Us Here

The pandemic has taught me that my first naïve feeling that the virus was a faraway reality was dangerous. Another person's problem is my problem too; what affects other people should ultimately affect me and so I should always show concern for their well-being. A common fate binds us together here on earth: we are all interconnected brothers and sisters sharing a common humanity. Pope Francis affirms this in *Fratelli tutti* and *Laudato si'*. He invites us to realise the reality that 'everything is interconnected, and that genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others'.¹⁰

Perhaps one of the greatest lessons to be learnt from the pandemic is the invitation to develop a genuine freedom that can help us grow in fraternal friendship as members of a global and interconnected village. Pope Francis beautifully says that 'the process of building fraternity, be it local or universal, can only be undertaken by spirits that are free and open to authentic encounters'.¹¹ Naïvely thinking that what happens in a faraway part of the world cannot affect us is a sad illusion.

Hopeful Imagination

As the pandemic unfolded in our community, I felt that this was a crisis moment that could turn into a *kairos* moment, a time of God's grace for me, the community and the Church, so long as we viewed it with eyes of faith. Everything starts with personal conversion. Fundamentally, the pandemic is a crisis that calls all of us to conversion as a human family.

The pandemic has been a form of exile. We as a people have been exiled, from our work, schools, churches and places of recreation.

⁹ GC 35, decree 3, n. 41.

¹⁰ Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, n. 70.

¹¹ Pope Francis, *Fratelli tutti*, n. 50.

Fundamentally, we have been alienated from one another; a crisis of relationships has unfolded that no vaccine can cure. When the mandate for mask-wearing was in place in various parts of the world, people could not show their smiles to one another; it was hard to know what other people were feeling. Walter Brueggemann writes in *Hopeful Imagination* that exile 'is not simply a geographical fact, but also a theological decision'.¹² Our exile, I believe, provided us with space, as people of faith, to make a theological-spiritual decision: to remain hopeful. To be a people who have been given 'the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word' (Isaiah 50:4). The prophet Isaiah enthusiastically proclaims his mission in the Third Song of the Servant of God: to be a messenger of hope to the weary. Yet he quickly notes that it involves suffering too: 'I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting' (50:6). We are likewise called to that prophetic mission.

I believe the prophetic message for us during the pandemic is to remain hopeful in our exile of isolation: to be a people with open ears (Isaiah 50:5), who listen to the voice of God within us and proclaim hope and words of comfort to God's people amid the despair, pain and weariness brought by the virus. We are called to be discerners of God's will in these difficult times. The pandemic as an exile also invites us to grieve. It is out of our grief that we experience newness. This is a 'season of grief', in which we groan inwardly for newness in our lives in the same way as the exiles who sat and wept by the rivers of Babylon (Psalm 137:1).¹³ It is out of the pain of grief that we will learn to do things differently in the future. What are we learning from our tears?

Brueggemann uses the image of homecoming to signal the end of exile. Homecoming for us will come at the end of the pandemic just as it came to the exiles in Babylon. The reality of the pandemic invites us to imagine a future where the lessons learnt from this crisis can lead to the emergence of a better world in which love, compassion, solidarity and reconciliation will triumph. Brueggemann argues that 'the homecoming metaphor makes sense only where the metaphor of exile has been accepted as true'.¹⁴ How we live and learn in the exile of the coronavirus pandemic will enable us to imagine a better post-COVID future. We shall emerge

¹² Walter Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1986), 93.

¹³ Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination*, 33.

¹⁴ Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination*, 94.

stronger from the pandemic if we let the crisis move us to ask deeper questions about ourselves, God and others. We shall not stay this way forever. However, as we look forward to homecoming, we are invited not to ignore the opportunities for growth during this time of darkness itself.

How does the current crisis move us to be prophetic in our different contexts? Stories of hope abound: around the world nurses and doctors (we witnessed this at first hand in our community) continually put their lives on the line to save others; friends, family and neighbours reach out to one another in different ways. The most striking inspiration for me was 99-year-old Captain Sir Thomas More who raised over £30 million for the National Health Service in Britain through his daily walks in his back yard.¹⁵ There are many more inspirational stories of heroic actions during the pandemic. Where do we fit in with these stories?

We all have something we can share to bring hope in the darkness of the pandemic. It is in small prophetic deeds and words shared that we can help to uplift ourselves and other people who feel isolated, are weary and are in fear. We need to make the theological decision to remain hopeful and to witness. That decision will help us believe that this exile too shall pass: a new post-COVID world will emerge, a world that is more loving, and a world that stops from time to time to reflect on the effects of our human activities on the planet.

A Laudato si' Moment

Even though a clear origin for COVID-19 has not been established, it is almost certain that the virus jumped from wild animals to humans.¹⁶ Other zoonotic diseases, such as Ebola, which has been found in various areas of Africa over the years, and localised epidemics in other parts of the world, invite us to reflect on how we care for our common home in the quest to avert future pandemics. It is, I believe, a *Laudato si'* moment. The pandemic is, ultimately, our common home crying out; our environment has been destroyed; our ecosystem has been tampered with.

The pandemic has invited me to ask: what can I do concretely to care for our common home? What have I been doing? Years ago, when Pope Francis published *Laudato si'*, a friend came up with a list of things

¹⁵ See 'Captain Sir Tom Moore: "National Inspiration" Dies with Covid-19', at <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-55881753>.

¹⁶ See World Health Organization, 'WHO-Convended Global Study of Origins of SARS-CoV-2: China Part. Joint WHO-China Study, 14 January–10 February 2021', available at https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/final-joint-report_origins-studies-6-april-201.pdf.

that community members should avoid doing, in order not to hurt one another and our common home. He called his list: 'Laudato No!' What are the things we will avoid doing in future to protect and preserve our common home? Most importantly, what are our positive choices in response to *Laudato si'*?

We now know better than ever that one thing we needed to do was to slow down. And the virus has slowed us down, stopped us in our tracks and woken us up to thinking carefully about caring more for one another and the environment. What we are called to do in these times is a question for our discernment and prayer. There are no black-and-white answers. Each person in his or her context is invited to discern what to do. How do we reach out to the less fortunate at this time? What I am called to do in the community or the Church during the current pandemic is a question that I will always bring to my prayer, making discerned choices to help make the world a better place.

Months after the virus first arrived in our community, we had the privilege of being vaccinated. We had an opportunity to receive two doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine. The relief that came to the whole community was visible. The chance to access needed medication in an unequal society invited us as a community to be more vigilant and to be in solidarity with people who do not have such opportunities. It is our duty not to be selfish and turn a blind eye to the reality of those



A nurse in Ghana prepares to administer the AstraZeneca vaccine

who cannot afford or cannot access medical care, and may die if they do not. I am invited to ask: what I am called to do in the face of vaccine inequity, when the poorest and most vulnerable are left out?

One thing that comes to my mind is the call to be an ambassador who spreads the message that the vaccines are safe to use. A lot of misinformation is being peddled online and elsewhere, and it was sad to hear that some countries have had to destroy thousands of doses of life-saving vaccines which had expired—for reasons that included people being hesitant to get vaccinated.¹⁷ I feel challenged in this uncertain and confusing time to be a messenger of the right information, Good News, life-giving messages rather than propaganda.

The pandemic has brought new urgency to familiar social justice issues: how the vulnerable are being treated, the accessibility of vaccines for the less fortunate, keeping people safe. When lockdowns are put in place, it is the most vulnerable—those who live from hand to mouth on less than a dollar a day—who suffer most. Such people fear lockdowns more than the coronavirus itself! How do we reach out to ease the misfortunes of such people?

Towards a Post-COVID World

Compassion and the common good should be the driving force for us as we move towards a post-COVID world. In the words of Pope Francis, compassion ‘means to suffer with, to suffer together, to not remain indifferent to the pain and suffering of others’.¹⁸ How we suffer with others is a question for discernment for all of us in the particular situation where we find ourselves. What would Jesus do in the varied contexts in which we live? We are invited to go and do likewise (Luke 10:37)!

For Pope Francis there are several crises linked to the pandemic: a health crisis, an environmental crisis, an economic and social crisis, a crisis of politics and ‘perhaps the most serious of all: the crisis of human relationships’. The Pope argues that there are ‘opportunities’ these crises ‘offer for the building of a more humane, just, supportive and peaceful world’. The pandemic ‘set before us a choice: either to continue on the road we have followed until now or to set out on a new path’.¹⁹

¹⁷ See Sara Jarvin, ‘African Nations Have Destroyed 450,000 Expired Covid-19 Vaccine Doses’, at <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus/origins-of-the-virus>, accessed 19 July 2021.

¹⁸ Pope Francis, *The Name of God Is Mercy*, translated by Oonagh Stransky (New York: Random House, 2016), 87; see also Pope Francis, *Life after the Pandemic* (Vatican City: Editrice Vaticana, 2020).

¹⁹ Pope Francis, address to members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See, 21 February 2021.

What can we do in these times, as we prepare for life after the pandemic, to restore our human relationships? I believe we are continually called to be people of hope looking at the world with eyes of faith and continuing to work for the Reign of God here and now.

We decided, as the Mwangaza Jesuit Spirituality Centre community, to continue with our mission of guiding retreats, offering spiritual direction, training spiritual guides and retreat directors, and offering days of prayer to people hungering and thirsting for spiritual relief. The only alternative would have been to close down the retreat house and sit in our comfort zone of vaccinated people, a vaccinated island if you like, and not have contact with the people outside. I also received a personal invitation, springing from my prayer, to resume my Sunday pastoral ministry in a nearby parish in the informal settlement of Gataka, close to Mwangaza. Most people there are poor, living on less than a dollar a day. At the beginning of the vaccine rollout in Kenya, I may have been the only vaccinated person in that area, and the threat of being infected with the virus was real. But I was glad to be in solidarity with the people of Gataka, the *anawim* of God, through the whole drama of the pandemic. In such situations, it is discernment and trust in God that should be our guide rather than selfish focus on self-preservation.

I believe that St Ignatius invites us, in this Ignatian Year and amid the pandemic, to stand in solidarity with the people, as the first Jesuit companions did five hundred years ago with the victims of plagues and other disasters that faced the world at the time. The Jesuits at Mwangaza have learnt about solidarity from first-hand experience of living under the shadow of coronavirus. The experience of the virus has taught us as a community to be what Henri Nouwen calls 'wounded healers', sent out on a mission to bring the Good News of Christ to all people of good will in the field hospital.²⁰ We are called to embody the vision of Pope Francis who prefers 'a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security'.²¹

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²⁰ For more on being a wounded healer, see Henri Nouwen, *Wounded Healer: Ministry in the Contemporary World* (Garden City, NY: Image, 1979).

²¹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 49.

Discernere questo tempo. Il cristiano di fronte all'epidemia

di Guglielmo Cazzulani⁵²

Abito a Lodi, a pochi chilometri da quello che è stato l'epicentro occidentale della pandemia. Codogno è stata la mia prima parrocchia d'impegno pastorale, la comunità parrocchiale che mi ha accolto appena terminato il percorso di formazione in seminario. Lì ci sono rimasto per due anni, che ricordo ancora con grande piacere.

Poco dopo la metà di febbraio, da quella città hanno cominciato ad affluire notizie cariche di angoscia e di paura, che all'inizio un po' tutti minimizzavamo. La nostra generazione, per lo meno nel ricco e sicuro Occidente, aveva smarrito la memoria a lungo termine di tragedie del genere, tragedie che erano ricorrenti nella storia dell'uomo fino ad un secolo fa. Tra tutte le epidemie recenti, forse solo l'influenza spagnola degli anni 1918-20 è paragonabile a quella del Covid-19 per estensione planetaria e per impatto sullo sviluppo economico e sociale.

Pochi giorni dopo la creazione della prima zona rossa italiana, ho scorto nella mia chiesa parrocchiale, raccolto in preghiera, un medico virologo che lavora presso l'ospedale cittadino. Piangeva. La sera prima si era formata una lunga processione di ambulanze che dovevano entrare in pronto soccorso. Personalmente in quell'istante ho cominciato a realizzare che stava avvenendo, prima in Italia e poi nel mondo, qualcosa a cui nessuno, fuorché qualche medico e scienziato più avveduto, era preparato non solo ad affrontare ma anche a prevedere⁵³. Un'epidemia di questa virulenza e contagiosità ci ributta all'indietro, e ci fa comprendere che in noi sopravvive qualcosa che non è troppo diverso dalle paure che sperimentava l'uomo antico e il contadino del medioevo. Le stesse paure che troviamo rappresentate nelle "Danze macabre" che i pittori hanno raffigurato nelle chiese del medioevo, che tratteggiano la Morte con la sua falce, che si erge signora su tutto e su tutti, su Papi e Re e su semplici popolani. Nel nostro mondo, a guardarlo con uno sguardo ristretto, alla fine è sempre lei la signora.

Certo, la scienza è l'unica arma che abbiamo per affrontare situazioni del genere, per disinnescare la pericolosità, per reperire rimedi, vaccini e medicine. Ma alla scienza non si può chiedere tutto. La scienza resta sempre uno strumento umile, espressione della ragione dell'uomo, che è sempre una ragione limitata, consapevole dell'enormità di misteri di cui non possiamo avere possesso.

⁵² Guglielmo Cazzulani: Docente di Teologia spirituale presso gli Studi teologici riuniti Crema, Cremona, Lodi, Vigevano e presso l'Istituto Superiore di Scienze religiose Sant'Agostino. donguglielmo@alice.it.

⁵³ Ricordiamo solo il testo che in questo è stato miglior profeta: D. QUAMMEN, *Spillover. L'evoluzione delle pandemie*, Adelphi, Milano 2017.



Alla scienza soprattutto non si può chiedere il senso di tutto quanto avviene e presenta una dimensione misteriosa ed imprevedibile. Restiamo afoni quando si tratta di investigare il perché dell'umano soffrire, l'esperienza della precarietà umana e della morte. Solo i demoni hanno una risposta pronta su tutto: è ciò che lascia supporre il libro di Giobbe, che ridicolizza la teodicea dei tre amici che vanno a consolarlo. Uno di essi, Eliù, il più agguerrito di tutti, secondo un racconto midrashico, altri non sarebbe che Satana tornato sotto mentite spoglie, per terminare la sua tortura contro il povero Giobbe⁵⁴.

1. Riscrivere la soteriologia

Non è la prima volta che uomini e cristiani attraversano un'epidemia. Che il pericolo potesse in qualche misura riproporsi, o per lo meno che la memoria di giorni difficili sopravvivesse nella coscienza dell'uomo, lo si può riscontrare in una semplice analisi delle preghiere del cristiano, che non sono state del tutto cancellate dalla modernità. Fino a poco tempo fa era ancora abituale sentir echeggiare tra le volte delle nostre chiese l'invocazione: "A peste, fame, et bello, libera nos Domine!", "Dalla peste, dalla fame e dalla guerra, liberaci Signore!". L'espressione faceva parte di una lunga litania, ormai parecchio sforbiciata, che elencava i numerosi pericoli tesi al cammino dell'uomo, pericoli o evenienze che lo riportavano alla sua drammatica creaturelità: liberaci, Signore, dalla morte improvvisa, dall'ira e dall'odio, dai terremoti e dalle insidie del nemico, dalla folgore e dalla tempesta... Ecco dunque che cosa è un uomo: un animale che trema, non troppo diverso da quello che riscontriamo nei salmi che sono in larga misura un'invocazione di aiuto davanti ai pericoli e alle difficoltà che la vita continuamente ci propina.

Nessuno sa se, in seguito a questa epidemia, crescerà nel cuore degli uomini il bisogno di affidarsi e di fede. Di certo andrà ripensata la soteriologia, che tra le discipline teologiche, nella modernità, appariva in questi ultimi anni come la più stinta. Il predicatore medio di questi ultimi decenni era sempre un po' in imbarazzo a parlare di Gesù "salvatore". Salvezza di che cosa e da che cosa? L'uomo contemporaneo dava l'impressione di non sentire più il bisogno di essere salvato da niente. Tutto sotto controllo: nessuna crepa che si allarga nella vita. Tutti impegnati a costruire un mondo efficientissimo, consumistico, tecnologico, iperconnesso, una prospettiva di futuro e di benessere che appare illimitata. Solo la coscienza ecologica, cresciuta in questi ultimi tempi, ha posto il problema di un limite da mettere a questa idea di progresso dissennato che sta rapidamente esaurendo le risorse del pianeta. Per non citare poi la grande rimozione collettiva, l'argomento che raramente viene sfiorato nella cultura contemporanea, perché sconveniente e impossibile da decifrare: la morte⁵⁵. Essa non compare nella riflessione dell'uomo, viene continuamente rimandata, viene narcotizzata con il silenzio, l'argomento è accerchiato da un filo spinato di tabù.

⁵⁴ E. WIESEL- J. EISENBERG, *Giobbe o Dio nella tempesta*, SEI, Torino, 1989, 297.

⁵⁵ Cfr. A. MATTEO, *Tutti muoiono troppo giovani. Come la longevità sta cambiando la nostra vita e la nostra fede*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2017; N. ELIAS, *La solitudine del morente*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1985.



Che il castello di sicurezze umane era in realtà un castello di carte da gioco, non è stato un cataclisma a farlo crollare, ma qualcosa di molto più subdolo e minuto, un essere primordiale. Un soffio. Un virus. Piccolo segnale che potenzialmente la nostra esistenza non ha alcun diritto assoluto da accampare su questo pianeta, che la nostra specie è comparsa pochi milioni di anni fa, al termine di una storia lunghissima, che ha visto, prima di noi, il nascere crescere e tramontare di milioni di altre specie viventi. Nulla garantisce la sopravvivenza dell'uomo in eterno⁵⁶. I paleontologi hanno evidenziato cinque grandi estinzioni di massa sul pianeta terra, che hanno ridotto la ricchezza della vita ad un lumicino, fin quasi a farla scomparire del tutto. Che questi fatti non contrastano con la fede biblica lo possiamo credere leggendo la letteratura apocalittica, così presente nelle visioni vetero e neotestamentarie. Non sono scritti di rivelazioni possibili, di un ipotetico futuro remoto, lontanissimo dalla vita presente che stiamo conducendo, sono invece il racconto del nostro drammatico presente. Ogni uomo, l'uomo di ogni secolo e tempo, cammina sospeso su di un filo affilatissimo. Nulla è più incerto e miracoloso di questa fragilissima vita. E nulla è più sicuro che un giorno tutto verrà travolto e salvato. "Cieli e terra nuova": dunque nel domani c'è una cesura, c'è il tramonto di un mondo per la nascita di un altro. In quella nuova patria la fede racconta che ci sarà tutto il nostro mondo, non un altro, nella grazia però della salvezza.

Eccoci dunque riportati tutti, collettivamente, globalmente, alla pochezza della vita umana. Pochi altri avvenimenti nella storia recente sono diventati storia di tutti, planetaria, come la tragedia legata alla diffusione del coronavirus.

Si diceva che non è la prima volta che capita un avvenimento del genere. I cristiani lo hanno attraversato più volte e, per quanto io sappia, nessuno si è dato fino ad ora animo di sintetizzare questo cammino che si distende su una ventina di secoli di storia. L'argomento sarebbe interessante, perché in esso probabilmente vi troveremmo non un solo discernimento, ma la presenza di tante letture dello stesso fenomeno. Per esempio, vi troveremmo quella lettura sadica, secondo cui i mali che subiamo sono tutte punizioni: lettura che difficilmente è conciliabile con il nucleo più vivo del messaggio evangelico. In questi giorni qualcuno ha anche tentato di riesumare un'argomentazione del genere, dimenticando che nelle scritture il Male resta un mistero anche per Dio. Il male non è una sua creatura, eppure è presente nella creazione. Non è un essere divino, contro cui l'Ente buono lotta, in un dualismo cosmico che troviamo per esempio in altre filosofie e religioni. Insomma, nessuno sa bene che cosa sia il Male. L'unica cosa che sappiamo dalla rivelazione è che esso è nemico di Dio e che il senso della vita dell'uomo è di lottare con Dio contro il Male.

2. I cristiani e le epidemie del II e del III secolo

Tra gli studi che si addentrano nella storia delle epidemie, ne segnalo uno compiuto da uno storico americano che si è appassionato alle epidemie che svuotarono demogra-

⁵⁶ Cfr. E. KOLBERT, *La sesta estinzione*. Beat, Milano 2016. Si veda anche il discusso best seller: Y.N. HARARI, *Sapiens. Da animali a dèi: Breve storia dell'umanità*, Bompiani, Milano 2019.



ficamente il grande Impero romano, nel corso del II e del III secolo della nostra era⁵⁷.

Lo studio nasce da una interrogazione elementare, eppure curiosissima, a cui il ricercatore cerca di rispondere senza ottiche di fede, partendo dalla nuda e cruda sociologia. La domanda da cui tutto si origina è perché il cristianesimo, dall'essere una religione trascurabilissima, ancora sconosciuta ai più all'inizio del II secolo, improvvisamente dilaga, diventando nell'arco di pochi decenni un attore di primo piano della scena sociale e religiosa, un fenomeno talmente radicato nella coscienza degli uomini da sopravvivere perfino alla caduta dell'Impero che sarebbe avvenuta di lì a qualche secolo.

La risposta dello storico è complessa, ma un certo interesse destano le sue analisi sulle epidemie. La "peste antonina" del II secolo e l'epidemia che imperversò nei territori dell'Impero tra il 250 e il 270 furono un dramma sociale che mise sulle ginocchia filosofie e istituzioni che si pensavano granitiche. Da questo sfacelo si salvarono però i cristiani, i quali videro accrescersi rapidamente le file dei fedeli proprio in quei decenni. Come mai? Lo storico rileva soprattutto tre grandi motivi.

Il primo: le pestilenze del II e III secolo rappresentarono il capolinea di tante visioni filosofiche ottimistiche che non riuscirono più a rispondere ai bisogni dell'uomo, alla sua sete di speranza. Una filosofia intramondana, senza alcuna escatologia, senza nessuna apertura ad un oltre, davanti a quegli avvenimenti nefasti non riuscì a trovare alcuna risposta di significato per la vita dell'uomo. Per dirla con una battuta, quelle epidemie furono la pietra tombale di ogni discorso sull'uomo privo di soteriologia. Che senso può avere l'esistenza, se su tutto impera il naufragio? Nessuno. I cristiani, al contrario, furono portatori di un messaggio che faceva della resurrezione di Gesù il suo fulcro e il suo grimaldello. Non erano predicatori di una morale (anche se l'etica aveva una grande parte nella loro vita) ma soprattutto di una teologia, di un'azione salvifica di Dio nei confronti dell'uomo. La relazione instaurata dal cristiano con il mistero della morte sarà uno degli aspetti che maggiormente colpì l'uomo antico. La fine del cammino terreno non era la fine di tutto. Nelle forme più estreme, i cristiani furono capaci di disprezzare la morte, di continuare ad assistere gli ammalati anche se sapevano che questo poteva essere pericoloso per la propria incolumità. Cosa che non riuscì a tanti medici pagani i quali, davanti all'esplosione della malattia, non riuscirono a fare altro che il darsi alla fuga. Sotto questo aspetto, il silenzio del medico romano Galeno circa il diffondersi dell'epidemia risulta sospetto, e qualche studioso sostiene che nel momento del pericolo si sia dato alla latitanza.

Secondo motivo per cui i cristiani, dopo il diffondersi delle epidemie, guadagnarono in prestigio e stima sociale: la capacità di attivare un'etica solidaristica, aperta a tutti, tanto ai cristiani quanto ai pagani. In un mondo straziato, privo di certezze riguardo al futuro, i cristiani furono gli unici a stabilire una rete di aiuto paragonabile all'azione di uno stato sociale. A rendere possibile questa etica non fu tanto un patto sociale mutualistico, che sanciva l'opportunità del bene e della generosità. L'etica della compagine religiosa che si era da poco affacciata sullo scenario del mondo aveva una precisa origine teologica, discendeva dall'alto, partiva da una particolare concezione del Divino, giudicava l'incontro con il povero non un atto di sola "pietas", ma un'esperienza sacra a tutti

⁵⁷ R. STARK, *Ascesa e affermazione del Cristianesimo. Come un movimento oscuro e marginale è diventato in pochi secoli la religione dominante dell'Occidente*, Lindau, Torino 2007, 105-133.



gli effetti. In sostanza nell'esperienza credente vi erano quegli anticorpi che permettevano, in un'epoca di mestizia diffusa, di sopraffare l'istinto di sopravvivenza, che alla fine ci rende tutti quanti egoisti, per mirare ad un bene collettivo, che fosse partecipato al maggior numero possibile di persone.

Un terzo elemento rese la Chiesa dei primi secoli capace di rivitalizzare la società ferita del II e del III secolo: la custodia del legame. In un modo diroccato, dove il concetto di cittadinanza entrava sempre più in crisi, la Chiesa fu in grado di non interrompere i legami tra i suoi fedeli e di essere accogliente anche davanti a nuovi soggetti, di altre provenienze, che domandavano di essere ospitati. Un uomo senza legami non incide nella società: con il buon esempio si fa poco, specialmente quando intorno a sé si allarga il disastro. I legami tra le persone, che la Chiesa difendeva, permisero invece di avere un bene condiviso e un'azione sociale che andava ben oltre la generosità del singolo individuo. La custodia del legame, il desiderio di agire nella collaborazione continua, la preoccupazione per tutti i membri della società, e una meta comune a cui tendere, permisero alla Chiesa minuscola del primo secolo di diventare luogo di speranza e di solidarietà, potenzialmente disponibile ad accogliere e ad integrare ogni diversità.

3. Raccontare la sensatezza della vita

Slittando di qualche secolo in avanti, e venendo fino a noi, la recente esperienza della pandemia, quali discernimenti chiede alla coscienza credente? Qui il dibattito è aperto, e ciascuno può integrare con suggestioni nuove. Mi permetto di esprimere qualche nota velocissima.

La prima è una rielaborazione del comportamento avuto dai cristiani del II e del III secolo. La loro lezione è ancora valida, e in qualche misura deve essere ripetuta. Negli anni che verranno avremo bisogno di profeti e di maestri che sappiano predicare, in un mondo segnato da lutti e da esperienze negative, anzitutto il significato e la sensatezza del vivere. È forse il nucleo centrale di speranza che ha permesso ai cristiani del passato di stare a galla e di attivare un comportamento resiliente. C'è una cocciutaggine del positivo che è tipica dell'esperienza cristiana⁵⁸. Qualcuno ha notato come quella frase tanto ripetuta in questo tempo di sofferenza – “andrà tutto bene” – sia una frase presente nelle rivelazioni di quella mistica estremamente ottimista che è Giuliana di Norwich⁵⁹. Inutile polemizzare con le persone realiste, le quali sostengono che non va tutto bene, e che la prova della pandemia lascia sul campo parecchi morti e una paralisi dei processi economici senza eguali. In realtà tutti sentiamo il bisogno di aggrapparci all'idea che il domani sarà migliore dell'oggi. Tutti abbiamo bisogno di essere rassicurati: sentirci ripetere che la nostra esistenza su questa terra non è inutile. Oggi il mondo ha bisogno di tanta buona teologia, e di una filosofia del positivo che sappia intuire qualcosa di bello nel domani che verrà. I profeti di speranza, quelli che parlano del sole anche quando il cielo è total-

⁵⁸ È il “peccato” che Plinio il Giovane, incaricato di indagare il “nuovo fenomeno” cristiano riconosce nei suoi adepti. Cfr. R.L. WILKEN, *I cristiani visti dai romani*, Paideia, Brescia 2007.

⁵⁹ Cfr. GIULIANA DI NORWICH, *Libro delle rivelazioni*, Ancora, Milano 1997.



mente coperto di nubi, sono gli uomini più preziosi, sono i profeti dell'esilio che per una volta tacciono sulle evidenti colpe del passato, e molto discorrono sulla nostalgia della patria, quasi a smuovere braci incandescenti che ancora ardono sotto cumuli di grigia cenere. È il significato a tenere in piedi gli uomini, a reggere le loro speranze, a far loro intraprendere cammini anche quando sono impervi. La solidarietà dei cristiani della prima ora, la loro capacità di mantenere vivi i legami, non nasce da qualche forma di patto sociale, da qualche accordo da ripassare ogni tanto meditando sulla carta, ma da una precisa interpretazione del mondo, dove la misericordia di Dio e la sua provvidenza nel condurre tutto verso il bene, danno la forza di riprendere ogni giorno il cammino.

4. Il Cristo medico delle anime de i corpi

Una seconda idea per vivere il tempo che verrà. Forse la teologia non ha sufficientemente riflettuto su un dato evidente dei vangeli: che cioè Gesù abbia fatto della cura delle persone malate e dei sofferenti il centro della sua azione profetica⁶⁰. Non è un elemento scontato: nessuno dei profeti dell'antico testamento ha fatto dell'azione taumaturgica il focus della sua missione. Nei profeti, i miracoli e le guarigioni sono un'azione sussidiaria, episodica, molto laterale rispetto al grosso dell'iniziativa che è sicuramente la predicazione. Di Giovanni Battista ricordiamo i sermoni ferventi, i lunghi digiuni e l'ascesi estenuante, ma mai una guarigione: è sempre l'uomo che ha qualcosa da offrire a Dio, e non il contrario. In Gesù questo modello viene ribaltato. È Dio che si prende cura dell'uomo. È Dio ad avere un cuore tanto misericordioso che davanti all'uomo sofferente non si trattiene, non riesce a frenarsi. Anche a Nazareth, dove Gesù viene respinto, e la sua persona rifiutata, l'evangelista commenta che non poté fare prodigi in mezzo a loro a causa della loro incredulità; per poi subito correggersi: "solo impose le mani a pochi ammalati e li guarì" (Mc 6,5). La fede è premessa e miracolo; però in qualche situazione Gesù non sembra nemmeno imporre la condizione della fede per elargire il suo bene nei confronti dell'uomo: basta la sua pietà, basta la sua filantropia. Fino al caso più clamoroso ed eclatante che è la guarigione del lebbroso, dove Gesù viene meno a tutte le leggi di prudenza medica e religiosa del suo tempo. Non si limitò a guarire una persona, ma arrivò fino a toccarla. Come a spiegare che non esiste guarigione dell'uomo che non comporti la compromissione di Dio e il suo contagio.

Eppure, questo aspetto caratteristico dell'azione di Gesù appare in subordine nella storia della Chiesa. Quando san Cipriano coniò la formula "alter Christus" non pensò di legarla al solo sacerdote, come sarebbe capitato poi in seguito, ma riteneva riguardasse ogni semplice cristiano. Il cristiano non è Gesù Cristo, è "altro" rispetto a lui, però in qualche misura ne rappresenta la riproposizione e la continuazione. Da queste semplici osservazioni, appare il rischio che la figura di Cristo si sia forse un po' troppo clericalizzata nella vita della Chiesa, la si sia vista ansimare solo nel ministero ordinato, ma non in

⁶⁰ Cfr. H.C. KEE, *Medicina, miracolo e magia nei tempi del Nuovo Testamento*, Paideia, Brescia 1993; G. Segalla, *Gesù e i malati*, Gregoriana, Padova 1987; J.P. MEIER, *Un ebreo marginale. Ripensare il Gesù storico. II. Mentore, messaggio e miracoli*, Brescia 2002.



altri luoghi, come nella vocazione medica, dove pure la Chiesa annovera tra i suoi figli uomini e santi che si sono presi cura dei malati⁶¹. Nelle corsie d'ospedale, nei laboratori di ricerca, nelle fatiche della analisi scientifica, molto sopravvive del Cristo mistico, ancora in cammino tra di noi. A nessuno dei suoi malati Gesù sciorinò un'argomentazione stoica, tutta improntata sull'accettazione del male, sul rassegnarsi dell'uomo all'inevitabile destino. Mai una volta che Gesù si arrese. Il male era il mostro, la Bestia, il suo nemico, e per questo andava combattuto, vinto, estirpato. Come quando, quella volta a Betania, Gesù scoprì che la malattia si era portata via Lazzaro, il suo amico carissimo. I vangeli registrano in questo episodio una delle reazioni più veementi del Maestro, un impasto di pianto e di collera, tanto che Gesù costringe i presenti stupefatti a spalancare nuovamente la porta del sepolcro. Non c'è pagina di vangelo dove umano e divino siano così vicini da apparire un tutt'uno. E non c'è pagina di vangelo, come questa, che non sia in grado di trasmettere speranza.

5. Conclusione

Secondo lo scrittore francese Michel Houellebecq la crisi del Coronavirus non si risolverà che in una spinta ad accelerare alcune tendenze negative, già in atto nel nostro mondo⁶². Cita l'assenza di legami, di contatti fisici: le connessioni tra gli uomini, per via delle tecnologie, già da tempo si erano "virtualizzate": ora lo saranno sempre di più. E poi cita l'occultamento della morte, che in questo periodo terribile è dilagata in maniera penosa, senza liturgia, senza abbracci, senza carezze. La morte ridotta ad un atto di burocrazia.

Lo scenario che prospetta lo scrittore francese non è entusiasmante.

Per concludere, se non disturba, permettete un ricordo personale. Sono nato e cresciuto in una cascina lombarda. Su di un vecchio muro affiorava una scritta che si leggeva appena: "Gratia Dei nos salvati sumus" e una data dalle cifre confuse. Per tanto tempo non capii la genesi di quella scritta, che cosa volesse mai significare. Anni dopo, però, mi capitò di passare qualche giorno a spulciare i registri antichi della parrocchia, e scoprii, che proprio nell'anno della scritta incriminata un morbo si era portato via le persone a grappoli, riempiendo pagine e pagine del registro dei morti. Ho collegato così i due avvenimenti.

Per un istante non pensai bene degli antichi abitanti della vecchia cascina: ringraziavano Dio perché erano ancora in vita. Che fede è, una fede che dimentica i morti, e inneggia alla propria sopravvivenza? Poi però ho cominciato a leggerla in maniera differente, ad immaginarmi quei lontani contadini immersi in un mondo ferito da ricostruire. L'esistenza è una missione e un compito. E se una persona ha il dono dell'esistenza, deve preoccuparsi che nel suo mondo non manchi la "grazia", cioè la bellezza di Dio. Non scegliamo il futuro che ci aspetta, però non è nemmeno vero che esso incombe, senza che noi possiamo farci nulla. Decidere della "grazia" del domani, dipende sicuramente da noi.

⁶¹ Cfr. J.M. LABOA, *Atlante storico della carità*, Jaca Book, Milano 2014.

⁶² Cfr *Corriere della sera*, 5 maggio 2020.



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RESUMEN

La pandemia del Covid-19 ha supuesto una situación inesperada para toda la humanidad, como tiempo de amenaza y de muerte. En estas páginas queremos ver si puede venir alguna iluminación a esta situación desde la Tercera semana de los Ejercicios ignacianos. Esta semana nos enseña a tener una determinada disposición, resultado del proceso en las semanas anteriores; nos ofrece orar contemplando y dejándose interpelar por el misterio contemplado; y permite recibir un fruto escatológico, aunque no es tan cercano ni tan universal como quisieran nuestros parámetros inmediatistas de resultados constatables.

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PALABRAS CLAVE: Tercera semana, Virus Covid-19, Contemplación, Cambio.

En estas páginas se revisa la Tercera semana de los Ejercicios en el contexto de una pandemia por el coronavirus Covid-19 que, cuando se redactan estas páginas (finales de mayo de 2020), y con más de seis millones de casos detectados, se ha cobrado ya la muerte de más de 370.000 personas (contabilizadas) en todo el mundo, con países especialmente afectados, por el número absoluto de fallecimientos (Estados Unidos, Reino Unido, Italia, Brasil, España) o por su alta proporción respecto al número de habitantes (Estados Unidos, Perú, Bélgica, España, Irlanda, Bielorrusia, Reino Unido, Italia...). Y todos los indicios señalan que estas cifras seguirán subiendo, pues ni hay constancia de que se hagan registros fiables en todos los países, ni existirán vacunas y tratamientos eficaces y disponibles de modo universal en un corto plazo de tiempo.

¿Pueden los Ejercicios ignacianos ayudarnos a vivir un poco mejor esta situación, que está teniendo unas repercusiones humanas y económicas de muy notables dimensiones? ¿Puede la espiritualidad ignaciana enseñarnos algo para el futuro? Lo intentamos en estas páginas recordan-

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do la propuesta ignaciana de la Tercera semana de los Ejercicios espirituales [Ej 190-217].

1. El contexto: la pandemia como muerte

Es evidente que la pandemia ha afectado la vida de la inmensa mayoría de los ciudadanos del mundo pues cada país (con éxito muy distinto) ha introducido restricciones muy severas para la movilidad de las personas, mediante confinamiento domiciliario, limitando severamente la capacidad de viajar y reunirse, lo que ha supuesto el cierre de muchos centros de trabajo y la imposibilidad de proseguir con actividades ordinarias en el comercio, la industria, el turismo, la cultura o el ocio. Estas restricciones afectan doblemente a quienes ocupan viviendas pequeñas y a quienes viven al día con un trabajo precario que no pueden desempeñar.

Pero todavía hay experiencias muy distintas, según circunstancias de lugares y personas, puesto que algunos, por su trabajo o situación familiar, han experimentado más de cerca el miedo al contagio, otros han vivido el contagio mismo de una enfermedad desconocida, o han padecido el fallecimiento de miembros de su familia, a veces personas mayores que no pudieron utilizar una cama de cuidados intensivos o un imprescindible respirador, por dejar esa posibilidad a personas con menos edad.

Con todo, en muchas personas se han sucedido, en variable secuencia, etapas de incredulidad y negación, desconcierto y atolondramiento, miedo al contagio y a la muerte, desconfianza de la capacidad de reacción social y sanitaria, desánimo y hastío por el confinamiento, y también rabia y rebelión contra quien sea... Algún estudio psicológico realizado en España en las primeras semanas de la pandemia señala la alta incidencia de la ansiedad (en un 51% de la población), y porcentajes elevados de estrés (40,9%) y reacciones depresivas (40%).

Pero también se despiertan, ante la pandemia y en el confinamiento, los mejores sentimientos de muchos: la paciente colaboración con las autoridades de la mayoría de la población, solidaridad efectiva con los cercanos y los lejanos, valoración social de trabajos imprescindibles y poco reconocidos, estima de la vida sencilla y de las tareas domésticas, ingenio para ocupar el tiempo propio y compartirlo con los más allegados, dedicación a la lectura, la música y la cultura. Y, por supuesto, han surgido muchas iniciativas pastorales y caritativas de numerosas instancias eclesiales, tanto en proyectos de las organizaciones y las instituciones como de los miembros particulares de la Iglesia, tanto sacerdotes, religiosos y religiosas, como laicos y laicas.

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Interpretaciones y reacciones

Si la pandemia, en muchos sentidos, no supone la misma vivencia para todos, las interpretaciones y reflexiones que se hacen a propósito de ella llenan las páginas de los diarios y los comentarios en las redes. Si en las antiguas epidemias era utilizada muy frecuentemente la explicación religiosa (como castigo divino y/o como invitación a la conversión), en la actual situación se ofrecen otras reflexiones, de carácter más circunscrito o con pretensiones de interpretación global, sean estrictamente sanitarias, se refieran a las repercusiones económicas, intenten análisis sociales de largo alcance, o aventuren reflexiones antropológicas más o menos radicales.

Recordando de modo intuitivo estas reacciones, hemos podido ver la *negación* de la realidad de la pandemia, por algunas personas, grupos y hasta líderes importantes de algunas naciones desarrolladas; la *atribución conspirativa* a unos o a otros del origen intencionado del virus con el fin de debilitar a otros países o incluso a civilizaciones enteras; no han faltado tampoco tesis más *apocalípticas* o *revolucionarias* que presentan menos fundamento. Algunos han visto en esta enfermedad la *rebelión de una naturaleza* maltratada que reacciona de modo defensivo al abuso que sufre por parte de los humanos¹.

Con un sentido menos teórico y más utilitario, sabemos que no ha faltado la reacción de la *picardía* y la *delincuencia*, que se ha aprovechado del dolor y de la urgencia del momento para comerciar incluso con materiales sanitarios claramente inadecuados. En el otro extremo, numerosas personas particulares y organizaciones sociales, por inspiración religiosa o ética ciudadana, han querido responder al problema *ofreciéndose altruistamente* a colaborar con su preparación profesional o con sus medios, para reforzar la sanidad, apoyar a los profesionales más expuestos, facilitar la distribución de bienes a personas mayores, atender el servicio en comedores sociales y colaborar en otros muchos menesteres que aliviaran las situaciones más críticas.

¿Y qué *efectos* tendrá esta pandemia? En muchos surge la convicción de que después de este virus no seremos iguales, pues demasiadas cosas han cambiado en poco tiempo y aprenderemos mucho para la vida social y política, para la educación y la sanidad, para la vida familiar y de amistad, para valorar las cosas pequeñas y cotidianas que tenemos a la mano, para hacernos menos consumistas y más respetuosos con una naturaleza que ha reivindicado su potencia y su belleza cuando los humanos nos hemos quedado en casa.

¹ Una mentalidad que parece dar la vuelta a lo que se dice en el segundo ejercicio: «discurriendo por todas las criaturas, cómo me han dejado en vida y conservado en ella; [...] y los cielos, sol, luna, estrellas y elementos, frutos, aves, peces y animales; y la tierra, cómo no se ha abierto para sorberme, criando nuevos infiernos para siempre penar en ellos» [Ej 60].

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Con todo, en otros surge justamente la convicción contraria: que después de esta pandemia seremos tan irresponsables como antes, pues la humanidad aprende poco y tarde, como nos muestra la historia. Esta convicción se refuerza en algunos creyentes porque encuentran que el pecado original nos deja demasiado curvados hacia nosotros mismos, y cada uno tenderá a buscar en las nuevas coyunturas «su propio amor, querer e interés» [Ej 189], como siempre ha sucedido.

En este debate, y también buscando algún hueco en las páginas de los periódicos, aparecen las distintas miradas a esta *condición humana frágil* y expuesta, vulnerable y finita, que de vez en cuando se encuentra de bruces con los límites de su narcisismo original. Es la mirada que los Ejercicios nos traen en la Primera semana, reflejada en la tendencia de las criaturas a no reconocerse como tales y, por eso, a caer en la «crecida soberbia» [Ej 142], que es un pecado angélico [Ej 50], pero que comparte el ser humano frecuentemente, incluso cuando camina en la vida espiritual y se atribuye a sí mismo la consolación del buen espíritu, que siempre es un don de Dios [Ej 322]. ¿Podrá esta pandemia situar a la humanidad en el camino realista de la humildad, que es para san Ignacio una virtud «sólida y perfecta» [Co 813]?

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En este panorama simplificado apuntado, la Tercera semana podría aportar elementos para adquirir una adecuada disposición personal, un modo implicado de orar y una acogida del fruto espiritual que trae la Pasión de Cristo.

2. Disponerse²

Cada ejercitante es un sujeto distinto, que entra en Ejercicios con su historia personal de contacto con el dolor, la enfermedad o la soledad y con la mentalidad que su entorno y él mismo han propiciado o han ido configurando.

Pero si cada ejercitante es distinto, al llegar a la Tercera semana viene de un proceso espiritual de las semanas anteriores, que es un recorrido necesario para vivir el dolor corporal, el sufrimiento psíquico y la muerte de Jesús. Desde la comprensión de su propio pecado a la luz del amor de Dios, que siempre reconcilia [Ej 53, 61], el ejercitante contempla a la Trinidad que mira al mundo doliente («unos sanos, otros enfermos») y al Señor Jesús que se ofrece a hacer redención [Ej 101-109]. Y quiere seguir e imitar al Señor que nace «en suma pobreza... para morir en cruz; y todo esto por mí» [Ej 116]. Un seguimiento que le convence de que éste es el

² A. QUIJANO, «Disposición», voz en GRUPO DE ESPIRITUALIDAD IGNACIANA (Ed.), *Diccionario de espiritualidad ignaciana*, Mensajero – Sal Terrae, Bilbao Santander 2007², 645-649.

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estilo cristiano de vivir, pues «tanto se aprovechará en todas cosas espirituales cuanto saliere de su propio amor, querer e interés» [Ej 189].

Por lo tanto, el recorrido y el fruto de los ejercicios anteriores prepara y dispone a vivir la Tercera semana al modo como Ignacio la propone. Y, por el contrario, no vivir la mística específica del seguimiento del Señor pobre y humillado de la Segunda semana hará difícil entrar en la experiencia de la Pasión con la actitud adecuada.

Parece, por lo mismo, que vivir la pandemia en clave de Tercera semana requiere a los cristianos insertarse en la dinámica cristiana de quien desea tener los mismos sentimientos de Cristo Jesús, que se abajó hasta hacerse el último (ver *Filipenses 2,5-11*). Es un camino de seguimiento generoso y altruista, pero también humilde, que se reconoce en el servicio y la actividad, pero también en el sufrimiento y la pasividad. Esta disposición no es fácil para nadie, pues requiere experiencias sucesivas de aceptación de sí, de reconocimiento del propio pecado y una mirada a la «vida verdadera» que trae el estilo de vida del Señor en pobreza, humillación y humildad [Ej 139]. Este camino va transformando la disposición activa del que comienza los Ejercicios a ofrecerse, a trabajar y a cambiar [Ej 1, 213] en una disposición pasiva de dejarse hacer por Dios y dejarle que él disponga a su libre voluntad [Ej 15, 234].

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3. Orar pidiendo

Además de la disposición adecuada, algunos rasgos del modo de orar propio de esta Tercera semana pueden ayudar a vivir esta pandemia y, por extensión, todo tipo de experiencia de enfermedad, flaqueza, debilidad, indisposición o vejez³.

El ejercitante pide dos cosas principales en la Tercera semana: experimentar unos *sentimientos* espirituales determinados, pero unos sentimientos suscitados por un contenido mental claro, por un *conocimiento* concreto. En efecto, se pide «dolor, sentimiento y confusión», y de nuevo «dolor... quebranto... lágrimas, pena interna»; y ello, «porque por mis pecados va el Señor a la pasión», y por «tanta pena que Cristo pasó por mí» [Ej 193, 203]. Se trata de sentimientos producidos por el sufrimiento humano de Jesús, pero también suscitados por la verdad salvífica que su sufrimiento significa («por mis pecados»).

El fruto de la oración se pide y acoge, pero no se alcanza ni se logra por uno mismo. Es un don que no siempre se recibe cuando uno lo desea, sino que lo con-

³ La «enfermedad» tiene 35 recurrencias en la *Concordancia ignaziana*, a las que se pueden añadir «enfermar» [3 veces], «enfermo» [19 veces]; esas expresiones tienen sentido físico y sanitario, pero también psíquico y espiritual.

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cede Dios cuando quiere y, generalmente, cuando el sujeto se dispone adecuadamente [según *Ej* 322] o, al menos, cuando no pone especiales impedimentos. La oración de petición es una oración cristiana y muy ignaciana, pues Ignacio hace pedir continuamente al ejercitante⁴, como él mismo hace en su vida⁵.

En tiempo de pandemia, de enfermedad generalizada o particular, parece muy ignaciano el orar y pedir por los difuntos y por los enfermos, por los que los cuidan y por quienes facilitan la vida de todos atendiendo servicios esenciales (tantas veces ocultados socialmente) en la sanidad, el comercio y la distribución, en cuidar el orden público y atender la cultura o la enseñanza.

4. Orar contemplando

En Tercera semana se emplea la *contemplación* como modo ordinario de orar. La contemplación implica mirar, imaginar y hacerse presente en una realidad fuera de uno mismo. El ejercitante sale de sí mismo para contemplar al Señor que va de Betania al Cenáculo [*Ej* 190], y de allí al huerto [*Ej* 200, 290], desde donde «es llevado» a la casa de Anás [*Ej* 291], y luego a la de Caifás [*Ej* 292], después ante Pilato [*Ej* 293], y de éste a Herodes, y de Herodes a Pilato de nuevo [*Ej* 294-295], «hasta ser puesto en cruz» [*Ej* 296] y posteriormente llevado al sepulcro [*Ej* 298]. Se trata de una contemplación que impide el ensimismamiento, pues pone en movimiento al ejercitante, ya que debe seguir a Jesús en su viacrucis (el de todo cristiano) si quiere conocer, imitar y seguir al Señor en su Pasión. Todo ello, mirando a Jesús y «trayendo en memoria frecuente los trabajos, fatigas y dolores de Cristo nuestro Señor» [*Ej* 206].

Quien vive en clave de Tercera semana se ha hecho ya «esclavito indigno» para servir a Jesús en sus necesidades [*Ej* 114] y sigue viendo al Señor presente en quien sufre cualquier dolencia, sea hambre, sed, desarraigo, cárcel o enfermedad (según *Mateo* 25,31-46). Por lo mismo, reacciona de alguna manera a cualquier persona afectada por la pandemia, enfermos y sanos, tratando de servir según sus posibilidades y de aliviar dolores físicos y psíquicos de todos los afectados, incluyendo la oferta de «servicios» espirituales. La contemplación de la Pasión le mueve y dispone al servicio de los que sufren, viendo el rostro de Cristo en los atribulados y reconociendo también en el camino de la cruz un misterioso camino de salvación para quien lo vive como el Señor.

⁴ En los Ejercicios se manda *pedir* a Dios con muchísima frecuencia [*Ej* 6, 16, 25, 43, 46, 54, 55, 63, 65, 91, 109, 139, 147, 152, 157, 168, 180, 199, 221, 233, 240, 241, 243, 257]. La petición es uno de los pasos de toda oración ignaciana, pues hay que *demandar* [*Ej* 48, 55, 65, 91, 104, 135, 139, 152, 193, 203, 221, 240]. También se puede *suplicar* [*Ej* 175] o *rogar* [*Ej* 283].

⁵ La oración particular de Ignacio está llena de peticiones, como se refleja en el *Diario espiritual* [*De* 35, 36, 42, 78, 80, 383]. También *suplica* [*De* 73, 78, 80], *ruega* y *suplica* [*De* 46, 74], o simplemente *ruega* [*Au* 37; *De* 6, 14, 46, 74, 136].

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5. Un orar interpelado

La contemplación en Tercera semana no trata solamente de mirar hacia fuera y de experimentar fuertes emociones, sino que implica siempre *reflectir* y, muy específicamente en Tercera semana, también *considerar*.

En cada punto de la contemplación ignaciana siempre hay que *reflectir*⁶ para sacar algún provecho [*Ej* 193-194], de modo que la oración se refiera de alguna manera a la situación vital de la persona que ora y así llegue a transformar la vida concreta del ejercitante. Y eso se hace mirando a las personas, escuchando lo que hablan y observando lo que hacen. El *reflectir* puede llevarme a entenderme mejor a mí mismo a la vista de las personas de la pasión; o a comprender mejor mi entorno desde una perspectiva cristiana, en la que también hay dolor y sufrimiento; o puede moverme a cambiar de comportamiento, a imitar a alguno de los personajes que actúan en la Pasión o a responder de alguna manera a lo contemplado⁷.

El cristiano que «contempla» la pandemia y que pide por todos los afectados, también remite a su propia vida eso que contempla. Su vida no es ajena a lo que contempla, sino que puede (debe) dejarse interpelar de alguna manera. La realidad nos afecta siempre, y la realidad de las otras personas nos afecta doblemente, pues somos seres en relación, configurados antropológicamente por nuestra interacción con los demás. El dolor ajeno, la soledad que otros sufren, la muerte que afecta al difunto y a mucha gente de su entorno... son realidades que dicen algo a mi persona, aunque la «identificación» con esas realidades no conviene que sea inapropiada, como cuando nos implicamos tanto afectivamente que la distancia con el otro casi desaparece en una especie de fusión paralizante.

Pero en Tercera semana se propone otro modo de orar, que es «considerar»⁸. De hecho, la habitual contemplación ignaciana en tres puntos se completa en Tercera semana con otros tres puntos, que invitan al ejercitante explícitamente a *considerar*⁹, que es «una acción del entendimiento entre contemplativa y meditativa, no exenta también de un componente afectivo», que tiene que ver con el «ruminar» ignaciano [*Ej* 189], que es considerar despacio, pensar con reflexión y madurez alguna cosa.

⁶ Ver A. M^a CHÉRCOLES, «Reflectir», en *Diccionario de espiritualidad ignaciana*, o.c., 1544-1546.

⁷ Aparece *reflectir* en *Ej* 106, 107, 108, 114-116, 123-124, 194, 234-237. Parece que Ignacio no la utiliza fuera de los Ejercicios.

⁸ J. GARCÍA DE CASTRO, «Consideración», en *Diccionario de espiritualidad ignaciana*, o.c., 410-413.

⁹ *Considerar* aparece 47 veces a lo largo de todos los Ejercicios, y es distinto del meditar y contemplar [*Ej* 39]. «En definitiva, esta operación intelectual es la que más aparece en el texto ignaciano y la más propuesta como método de oración en los *Ejercicios*. Es la operación que con frecuencia concede operatividad y “eficacia” a los ejercicios de contemplación y meditación»: J. GARCÍA DE CASTRO, «Consideración», o.c., 413.

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En los ejercicios de la Tercera semana el *considerar* va creciendo en fuerza teológica y en implicación afectiva. Si el ejercitante considera que Cristo padece y quiere padecer, el ejercitante a su vez desea esforzarse en «doler, tristar y llorar, y así trabajando por los puntos que se siguen» de un modo explícitamente afectivo [Ej 195]. Si el ejercitante considera que la potencia de la divinidad se limita libremente sin defenderse ni reaccionar, y que esto lo hace por mis pecados, el ejercitante no podrá por menos de dejarse interpelar, pensando «qué debo yo hacer y padecer por él» [Ej 197] unido a esa pasividad redentora. De modo que el reflexionar y la consideración no solo suscitan afectos, sino que mueven a seguir e imitar al Señor en una vida (y en una pasión y en una muerte) como las suyas.

Se trata de la identificación del amor, de una imitación que no es mimetismo de unas conductas, sino estilo de entrega personal por amor y a ejemplo de Cristo. Así lo entendieron hombres y mujeres de todos los tiempos, que entregaron sus vidas (a veces de modo explícitamente martirial) como lo hizo Cristo. En la Tercera semana los ejercitantes concretan su seguimiento del Rey eterno, y experimentan que no basta con ofrecer voluntariamente «todas sus personas al trabajo», sino que antes o después el seguimiento implicará «oblaciones de mayor estima y mayor momento» y ofrecerse totalmente al Señor en «imitaros en pasar todas injurias y todo vituperio» que puedan acaecerles, permitiéndolo Dios [Ej 97-98].

De modo que este «hacer y padecer» ignaciano encierra una sabiduría teológica, no necesariamente deducido por lógica humana, que parece inevitable en la actual condición de este mundo caído: nuestra *acción* cristiana en favor de otros, para ayudar a quitar algunos efectos del pecado, antes o después nos llevará a alguna *pasión*, como a Cristo le sucedió en su camino misterioso de redención del género humano por amor. Si al maestro le ha sucedido así, al discípulo no le puede suceder de muy distinta manera¹⁰.

De modo que, si la Tercera semana nos invita a «hacer y padecer» por Cristo, nos anima también a implicarnos en sentimientos y en acciones en favor de aquellos por quienes muere el Señor, y a soportar los padecimientos no buscados que puedan sobrevenirnos por esa implicación.

6. El fruto difícil de la Tercera semana: todavía no

El fruto que se pide y se puede recibir al contemplar la pasión de Cristo al modo ignaciano nos puede permitir entender y vivir la enfermedad,

¹⁰ Según *Juan*, 15,20: «un siervo no es más que su amo; si a mí me han perseguido, a vosotros os perseguirán». También en *1 Pedro* 2,21: «también Cristo padeció por vosotros, dejándoos un ejemplo para que sigáis sus huellas»; ver también *1 Pedro* 3,17-18; 4,1-2.12.16.

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incluso en modo de pandemia, con un cierto estilo cristiano. Pero esto no es siempre fácil, pues, ciertamente, hay muchas reacciones ante una situación de este tipo que no son tan claramente cristianas, como hay ciertos riesgos en el modo de vivir la Tercera semana de los Ejercicios.

Uno de los riesgos proviene de la ambivalencia del sufrimiento. El que contempla la Pasión de Cristo, lo mismo que quien contempla la enfermedad o el dolor de otros, puede caer en el *dolorismo*, entendiendo que solo con una identificación afectiva (sentir lo mismo) manifiesta su cercanía y humanidad. Una actitud que a veces responde al buen deseo de reaccionar ante la propia insensibilidad, pero que también puede impedir la elaboración racional de las situaciones de sufrimiento del otro y, con ello, la respuesta más adecuada a esas situaciones. De hecho, el sentirme afectado por el dolor ajeno no debería suscitar una respuesta meramente emocional, que no siempre refleja la mejor calidad de la empatía con la otra persona¹¹.

Otra situación que Ignacio sabe que puede suceder en Tercera semana es la de experimentar *escrúpulos* inadecuados, por lo que parece que sitúa en esta semana sus «notas para sentir y entender escrúpulos y suasionés del enemigo» [Ej 345-351]. Unas notas que distinguen entre varios tipos de escrúpulos, señalando el camino de la libertad espiritual en la respuesta vital de la vida cristiana frente a las tentaciones bajo apariencia de bien como son los escrúpulos del mal espíritu.

Estos escrúpulos del mal espíritu pueden acechar a la persona de buena voluntad en un contexto de pandemia, de enfermedad o dolor ajeno, y de la injusticia que toca más a otros que a uno mismo. Malestar interior, eventualmente amplificado por el confinamiento, por no sufrir como otros, por no acertar a responder adecuadamente a una crisis masiva, por no aceptar quizá la enfermedad o un posible fallecimiento con paz cristiana; o quizá escrúpulos por contagiar involuntariamente a otros como afectado asintomático; o por la impaciencia mostrada con ocasión del confinamiento, derivada en quejas con las personas del entorno más cercano o críticas desproporcionadas a los responsables políticos de turno. Por un lado, o por otro, cualquier cristiano que sufre alguno de los efectos de la enfermedad en su persona o en su entorno es muy probable que se desmoralice, pierda la paciencia, muestre descontento hacia otros y hasta pueda maldecir a los cielos. No es fácil en modo alguno llevar la cruz como la llevó nuestro Señor, ni siquiera como hizo el Cireneo (*Lucas 23,26*).

¹¹ La *empatía* no consiste en la fusión afectiva con la persona que tengo delante, ni la búsqueda en mi interior de sentimientos parecidos a los que me expresan. La empatía consiste en entender por dentro a la otra persona, en comprender la «lógica» de sus reacciones, la fuerza de sus sentimientos y de sus palabras. La empatía permite y facilita la reacción libre y madura ante el sufrimiento.

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Ignacio también invita en Tercera semana a «ordenarse en el comer» [Ej 210-217] y en tantas actividades absolutamente imprescindibles en la vida. Contemplando el drama de la Pasión, nos sitúa en lo concretísimo de la vida cotidiana; pero el ejercitante sabe que no es fácil responder cada día a este nuevo «orden» derivado de la contemplación creyente de la Cruz. Es otra fuente de dificultad para vivir el fruto de la semana cuando las grandes experiencias existenciales y espirituales no afectan tanto como desearíamos a nuestra vida cotidiana.

Y es que el fruto de la Pasión es un don que alcanza al que lo desea, lo pide y se deja configurar por ella. Pero eso es algo que sucede lentamente en esta vida para el cristiano que se dispone adecuadamente y que tiene un cumplimiento solo escatológico para toda la humanidad. El fruto de la Pasión, y el de la Tercera semana, parece no alcanzar históricamente a tantos.

Es claro que en la última cena «Jesús señala un sentido salvífico de su muerte y del conjunto de su vida, como entrega sacrificial por sus discípulos y por toda la humanidad». El servicio de Jesús le lleva al sacrificio de su vida que termina (recitando el salmo 22) como acto de abandono confiado en manos del Padre. «La espiritualidad de Jesús nos marca, entonces, un camino nada sencillo, como tampoco lo fue para Él [...]. Nos anima a unirnos a Dios en medio del sufrimiento, a que el sufrimiento no sea motivo para negar a Dios, porque es posible vivirlo unido en unión con Él, ofreciéndoselo como medio de reconciliación y perdón, al estilo de Jesús»¹².

Pero en la Tercera semana (y en la oración desde la pandemia) se vive el «todavía no» de la Pascua. La eficacia de la entrega de Jesús se manifiesta escatológicamente en su resurrección, de que solamente son testigos los discípulos y que creemos los cristianos por su testimonio. Pero en este tiempo del «todavía no» una gran parte de la humanidad no entiende el modo que tiene Jesús de vivir el sufrimiento y el dolor, ni le da el sentido que el Señor nos ofrece. Parece, pues, que la salvación «todavía no» ha llegado a todos, y esa situación nos deja a los cristianos en minoría sociológica, aunque con la misión de anunciar y testimoniar el modo como Jesús afronta su Pasión, que nos introduce de ese modo en el «ya sí» de la salvación escatológica.

7. El fruto posible de la Tercera semana: ya sí

La vivencia cristiana de la enfermedad y el sufrimiento quiere reproducir el estilo y los sentimientos que Jesús vivió a lo largo de su vida toda y

¹² G. URÍBARRI BILBAO, *La mística de Jesús. Desafío y propuesta*, Sal Terrae [Presencia teológica 252], Santander 2016, 225-260; las citas, en 235 y 246.

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que culminaron en la Pasión. El camino no es fácil y el ideal de Jesús constituye un horizonte, no propiamente un modelo que es posible reproducir miméticamente. Vivir una vida como la suya ayuda a morir una muerte como la suya. Esa es la invitación que escucha todo cristiano en los evangelios y todo ejercitante en los Ejercicios espirituales.

Y creemos que muchos creyentes han vivido la enfermedad, el sufrimiento, la persecución y la muerte con ese horizonte, con un sentido profundo que admiramos y que les mantuvo, incluso ante la muerte, con una libertad total y una dignidad absolutas. Muchos mártires, antiguos y modernos, han vivido esa semejanza a Jesús. Muchas otras personas «confesaron» su fe ante los jueces a riesgo de perder los bienes y la vida, aunque no fueran martirizados hasta la muerte.

Benedicto XVI recordó en una ocasión la conversión de una mujer creyente, de tradición judía y corazón cristiano, que libremente afrontó la muerte con libertad por acompañar y servir a sus hermanos judíos perseguidos.

«Pienso también en la figura de Etty Hillesum, una joven neerlandesa de origen judío que morirá en Auschwitz. Inicialmente lejos de Dios, le descubre mirando profundamente dentro de ella misma [...]. En su vida dispersa e inquieta, encuentra a Dios precisamente en medio de la gran tragedia del siglo XX, la Shoah. Esta joven frágil e insatisfecha, transfigurada por la fe, se convierte en una mujer llena de amor y de paz interior, capaz de afirmar: “Vivo constantemente en intimidad con Dios”»¹³.

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Realmente, Etty Hillesum¹⁴ muestra una personalidad rica y compleja. Empieza a describir en su diario sus propias polaridades como parte de su terapia personal, con lo que logra equilibrar su psiquismo sumamente sensible; pero, poco a poco, ella interpreta esa terapia como un camino hacia Dios¹⁵; se reconoce como «la chica que no sabía arrodillarse y que, aún así, lo aprendió...»¹⁶. Y Dios aparece incluso ante las amenazas de deportación a un campo de exterminio: «Corren malos tiempos, Dios mío... Ahora estoy comenzando a estar un poco más tranquila, mi Señor, por esta conversación contigo. Mantendré en un futuro próximo muchísimas más conversaciones contigo y de esta manera impediré que huyas de mí...»¹⁷.

Esta mujer muy humana hace un trabajo de despojamiento interior en medio de las restricciones y amenazas que se dictan contra los judíos: «Día a

¹³ BENEDICTO XVI, en la Audiencia general del 13 de febrero de 2013, Miércoles de Ceniza, cuando ya había renunciado al Pontificado.

¹⁴ ETTY HILLESUM, *Una vida conmocionada. Diario 1941-1943*, edición de J. G. Gaalant, Anthropos, Barcelona 2007.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 169-170; escrito el 17 septiembre 1942.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, o.c., 58; escrito el 22 noviembre 1941.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 142-143; escrito el 12 julio 1942.

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día desaparecen de mí más deseos, anhelos y lazos con otras personas. Estoy dispuesta a todo, me iré a cualquier lugar del mundo, adonde Dios me envíe, y estoy dispuesta a testificar, en cada situación y hasta la muerte, que la vida es hermosa, que tiene sentido y que no es culpa de Dios, sino nuestra, que todo haya llegado hasta este punto... Dentro de mí hay una confianza en Dios que al principio casi me daba miedo por su rápido crecimiento, pero que ahora me pertenece». Y con esta disposición acepta voluntariamente el sacrificio de su vida, entendiéndolo con un sentido muy cercano al expresado por el salmo que reza Jesús en la cruz, aunque ella no lo cita: «Fieles del Señor, alabadlo... porque no ha sentido desprecio ni repugnancia hacia el pobre desgraciado; no le ha escondido su rostro; cuando pidió auxilio, lo escuchó» (*Salmo 22,24-25*).

A ningún creyente se nos ha ahorrado procesar interiormente esta inesperada situación de la pandemia, todavía muy alejada del horror de las víctimas de la *Shoah*. Como ejemplo nos pueden servir algunas propuestas del Papa Francisco en mitad del confinamiento. El Papa invita a todas las personas de buena voluntad a colaborar para que no «nos golpee un virus todavía peor: el del egoísmo indiferente»¹⁸. Y con ese ánimo recorre los retos de toda la humanidad pidiendo la justicia que afecta a la salud de todos, a las relaciones humanas y entre estados, y al cuidado de la casa común, invitando a repensar el actual sistema social y político en un mundo irreversiblemente interconectado y globalizado.

Pero el Papa también nos recuerda que «abrazar su Cruz es animarse a abrazar todas las contrariedades del tiempo presente, abandonando por un instante nuestro afán de omnipotencia y posesión para darle espacio a la creatividad que solo el Espíritu es capaz de suscitar. Es animarse a motivar espacios donde todos puedan sentirse convocados y permitir nuevas formas de hospitalidad, de fraternidad y de solidaridad. En su Cruz hemos sido salvados para hospedar la esperanza y dejar que sea ella quien fortalezca y sostenga todas las medidas y caminos posibles que nos ayuden a cuidarnos y a cuidar»¹⁹.

Pero la cruz del Señor y de la humanidad se ha de ver a la luz de la Pascua, que le ofrece todo su sentido. Y «no se trata de una fórmula mágica que hace desaparecer los problemas. No, no es eso la resurrección de Cristo, sino la victoria del amor sobre la raíz del mal, una victoria que no “pasa por encima” del sufrimiento y la muerte, sino que los traspasa, abriendo un camino en el abismo, transformando el mal en bien, signo distintivo del poder de Dios»²⁰.

¹⁸ PAPA FRANCISCO, «El egoísmo, un virus todavía peor», homilía del II Domingo de Pascua, 19 abril 2020, en *La vida después de la pandemia*, Librería Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2020, 9.

¹⁹ PAPA FRANCISCO, «Mensaje *Urbi et orbi* durante el momento extraordinario de oración en tiempos de pandemia», 27 marzo 2020, en *La vida después de la pandemia*, o.c., 25.

²⁰ PAPA FRANCISCO, «Mensaje *Urbi et orbi* en la Pascua 2020», 12 abril 2020, en *La vida después de la pandemia*, o.c., 29-30.

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