

Religion and the Environment

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The Creation Spirituality of Ignatius of Loyola

Still Pertinent for Life on the Fragile Planet

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Introduction

[1] For a Christian in touch with the mainstream Catholic tradition on creation, the relationship between religion and environmental concerns should be a “no-brainer.” That the goods of the earth are understood as gifts of the Creator, meant to serve the needs of all persons, present and future, has been part of the Christian vision from the start (see Catechism: pars. 2415-18; Pontifical Council: 197-212). Indeed, it is part of our Jewish legacy, embedded in the creation accounts, the Psalms, the prophets, and the wisdom literature of the Hebrew Scriptures. At the same time, one has to admit that this vision has informed Christian behavior imperfectly, to say the least. Historian Lynn White, Jr., has famously blamed Genesis 1:28 for misdirecting the Christian West into its environmentally devastating exploitation of the environment. While the authors of the first page of Genesis, in the larger literary and social context of their writing, can be defended against that charge, White is probably right to accuse Christian entrepreneurs of often *using* Genesis 1:28 to warrant their exploitation of the earth’s resources. This state of affairs has led some authors to characterize the Christian tradition as a deterrent to environmental welfare and recovery. Others, e.g. Richard Clifford, S.J., have argued that this exploitive reading of Genesis 1-2 is not faithful to the vision of the implied biblical authors, designated J and P in the

commentaries; my point here is to note that a strong tradition within mainstream Christian theology has read the biblical creation traditions in a more Earth-friendly way.

[2] In this essay, I will argue for the Christian tradition as a resource for “green” thought and action by exploring the worldview of an influential Christian figure rarely invoked as an exponent of creation spirituality, Ignatius of Loyola. It is my conviction that Ignatius articulated an understanding of humanity’s relationship to a creating God and to the rest of creation that, despite the vast changes in our contemporary view of self, world, and God, is still pertinent for us in this moment of climate change, fossil fuel depletion, industrialized agriculture, and fresh water scarcity. This essay has three movements: a brief introduction to the life and thought of Ignatius of Loyola, an examination of the creation spirituality embedded in his most influential text, the *Spiritual Exercises*, and a reflection on the pertinence of his vision for us today.

Ignatius of Loyola and His Exercises: The Interface of a Tradition and an Individual Talent

[3] The story of Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), founder of the Society of Jesus (“the Jesuits”), has been told thousands of times and is familiar to many. Briefly, the story is this. The eleventh and last child of a large Basque family, of noble blood but relatively poor, his early life was that of a conventional Catholic, a competitive climber and playboy within the Spanish courtly circles. In a quixotic battle against the French at Pamplona, he took a cannonball in the knee. Orthopedic surgery being what it was in the early sixteenth century – he called it “a butchery” – the young would-be soldier and courtier was confined to a long convalescence, during which his only entertainment was the reading of a lives of the saints and a Spanish translation of Ludolph of Saxony’s four-volume *Vita Christi*. His usual reading fare, romances, was unavailable. And the Bible, available only in Latin with vernacular versions still in the future, was beyond his linguistic reach. As his imagination toggled between imitation of the saints and of Christ and indulging in his usual romantic fantasies, his confinement and solitude led him to reflect on his interior responses to these excursions of the imagination. Immature though they were, his fantasies about imitating Christ and the saints resulted in a peaceful spirit, whereas the more romantic fantasies issued in spiritual unrest. Eventually, this process of imagination and reflection led him to a conversion from his rather conventional Catholicism to a deep personal desire to serve Christ in a more radical way.

[4] When his strength returned, Ignatius began a personal odyssey expressed in a kind of early “hippie” lifestyle of wandering, accompanied by a slacking off in personal hygiene (untrimmed hair and nails). Eventually he settled down to a period of prayer and discipline – first, briefly, at the Benedictine monastery at Montserrat, in northeastern Spain, and then for nearly a year, in a cave near the town of Manresa. There, he meditated on the life of Christ and on his own situation in ways that took him through periods of desolation, consolation, and illumination. At one point, he experienced a transformation of his sense of self, God, and the world that informed the rest of his life and work. He wrote about this with tantalizing brevity. Dictating his memoirs years later to Luis da Câmara, Ignatius speaks about his experiences in the third person. At one point, he presents five examples of ways God was treating him “as a schoolmaster treats a child whom he is teaching”:

SECOND. Once, the manner in which God had created the world was presented to his understanding with great spiritual joy. He seemed to see something white, from which some rays were coming, and God made light from this. But he did not know how to explain these things, nor did he remember too well the spiritual enlightenment that God was imprinting on his soul at the time. . . FIFTH. Once he was going out of devotion to a church situated in a little more than a mile from Manresa; I believe it is called St. Paul's, and the road goes by the river. As he went along occupied with his devotions, he sat down for a little while with his face toward the river, which ran down below. While he was seated there, the eyes of understanding began to be opened; not that he saw any vision, but he understood and learnt many things, both spiritual matters and matters of faith and of scholarship, and this with so great an enlightenment that everything seemed new to him. [Cámara's annotation: This left his understanding so very enlightened that he felt as if he were another man with another mind] (*Autobiography*, pars. 29-30, cited in Ganss).

Ignatius' reference to understanding matters of faith and scholarship must pertain to a deeper understanding of such matters as he was already acquainted with. And given that his Christian education up to this time had been perfunctory, he is likely referring to what he had learned from his convalescent pondering of the tomes of Ludolph of Saxony – especially, it would seem from his subsequent writing, Ludolph's elaboration on the Prologue of John.

[5] During that year in Manresa, Ignatius became convinced that this process that led to his own personal transformation, this new sense of himself as creature related to other creatures – his sense of a “purpose-driven life,” to borrow a contemporary phrase – was something he could share with other seekers. And so he began to make notes on his experience of meditation and prayer in a concrete and practical format in order to guide others into this experience of God. Eventually, these notes would become a little book published some twenty-five years later, entitled *Spiritual Exercises*. Never meant to be “spiritual reading” (e.g. like the reflections of Thomas à Kempis), the *Exercises* are more like what the *Canadian Air Force Exercises* are for those seeking physical fitness. The difference in these exercises – for *spiritual* fitness, if you will – is that the book is for the coach, not for the exerciser. Like a cookbook for the cook, the *Spiritual Exercises* are not for learning but for doing – or, better, helping another do something. Nevertheless, these instructions do convey content: Christian doctrine about divine and human nature, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and, in the midst of it all, a process for decision-making. Altogether, these practices embody a vision. Not least, they embody a vision about divine presence in creation and the relationship between human creatures, the goods of the earth, and the Creator.

A Quick Tour of the Creation Theme in the *Spiritual Exercises*

The Contemplatio ad Amorem

[6] The exercise that most explicitly evokes Ignatius' sense of creation is the final one, called in Latin the *Contemplatio ad amorem*.¹ Ignatius' instructions for this exercise comprise eight paragraphs that take up two short pages. I shall simply quote George Ganss' English rendering of the Autograph text (i.e., Ignatius' own Spanish version) and interrupt the text where I think helpful with my own commentary, leaning heavily on Ganss' notes. Where it seems instructive, I shall supply Spanish words in brackets (citing Calveras). I shall retain the conventional paragraph numbering. First, the title:

230. Contemplation to Attain Love [*Contemplación para alcanzar amor*]

The ambiguity of the title calls for clarification. Is the "love" to be attained that of the contemplator for God or is it God's love for the contemplator? The Vulgate (the Latin version) resolves the ambiguity by rendering the Spanish title by "Contemplation to Stir Up Spiritual Love of God in Ourselves."

Note. Two preliminary observations should be made.

First. Love ought to manifest itself more by deeds than by words.

231. Second. Love consists in a mutual communication between the two persons. That is, the one who loves gives and communicates to the beloved what he or she has, or a part of what one has or can have; and the beloved in return does the same to the lover. Thus, if the one has knowledge, one gives it to the other who does not; and similarly in regard to honors or riches. Each shares with the other.

[7] This truism may seem a bland and obvious statement. But here Ignatius is nudging the retreatant to reflect on these experiences of the human love between friends to prepare him or her to receive the profound insight that they will be invited to receive in the points to come – namely, that all of creation, including one's own existence, is a *gift* of a loving God.

The usual Preparatory Prayer.

[8] Acutely aware of the ways the mind and imagination can focus (or not!), he recommends this prayer as an habitual practice. He spells it out, for the first and only time, before the first exercise, a meditation on sin, where he says: "*The Preparatory Prayer* is to ask God our Lord for the grace that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be ordered purely to the service and praise of the Divine Majesty" (46).

¹ The linguistic issues here are richly complex. Ignatius, whose mother-tongue was the Basque language, wrote his first full draft of the *Exercises* in his second language, Spanish (a version known as the Autograph). When, in his 30s, he finally learned Latin to attend universities and to operate in the larger European world of the church and civic life, he produced a Latin version for his own use as well as for others (the version known as the Vulgate). Thus most translators work with the Autograph and consult the Vulgate version for clarification where necessary.

232. *The First Prelude*. A composition. Here it is to see myself as standing before God our Lord, and also before the angels and saints, who are interceding for me.

[9] Ignatius includes in the format of each exercise two mental acts he calls “preludes” or “foreplays.” The first prelude is what he calls a *composición*, by which he means a way of “putting things together,” what people mean by the expression, “to compose myself.” This typically entails the use of the imagination to focus on the matter to be considered. In the present case, the imagination is summoned to focus on “the big picture” of faith – one’s place in the communion of saints, the network of all personal beings – uncreated and created in conscious relationship with God, with all parties attending to what is good for me.

[10] The second prelude always specifies “what I want or desire.” In the present contemplation, that prelude takes the following form:

233. *The Second Prelude* is to ask for what I desire. Here it will be to ask for interior knowledge [*cognocimiento interno*] of all the great good I have received, in order that, stirred to profound gratitude, I may become able to love and serve the Divine Majesty in all things.

Here is the point of it all. The ambiguity of the title is resolved. The purpose of the contemplation is to become more fully aware of the *gift* of the Creator – “the great good that I have received.” And the point of that is to stir up gratitude so that I am enabled to respond to the gift by returning the love “in all things” – that is, in all the situations of my daily life. Now four points follow.

234. *The First Point*. I will call back into my memory the gifts I have received – my creation, redemption, and other gifts particular to myself. I will ponder with deep affection how much God our Lord has done for me, and how much he has given me of what he possesses, and consequently how he, the same Lord, desires to give me even his very self, in accordance with his divine design [*su ordenación divina*].

Then I will reflect on myself, and consider what I on my part ought in all reason and justice to offer and give to the Divine Majesty, namely, all my possessions, and myself along with them. I will speak as one making an offering with deep affection, and say:

“Take [*Suscipe* in the Latin version], Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and all my will – all that I have and possess. You, Lord, have given all that to me. I now give it back to you, O Lord. All of it is yours. Dispose of it according to your will. *Give me love of yourself* along with your grace, for that is enough for me.”

[11] This first point begins to unpack the meaning of “all the great good I have received” mentioned in the second prelude. It is a summons to let the memory fondle anything and everything that the retreatant can acknowledge as a gift of God and as evidence of the divine Lover’s desire to give more, even God’s self. Here the language of the *preliminary* note regarding the human-to-human experience of love expressed in acts of giving (230-31) is

applied to the divine-human relationship, interpreting all as gift. Moreover, the gift is to be taken personally. Appreciation of the gift elicits a desire to give in return – everything. Here is where Ignatius expresses what he considers the appropriate response in what has become his famous *Suscipe*, named from the first word of the prayer in Latin. The meaning of the prayer is obvious: You have given me everything I am and have; in gratitude I return it all to you. The initial clause of the final sentence, however, contains an ambiguity worth resolving. *Dadme vestro amor y gracia*, reads the Autograph, “Give only your love and grace.” It seems odd, after contemplation on God’s ongoing gifts of creation and redemption, to then *ask* for God’s love. Has it not been there for the taking all along? The author of the Vulgate appears to have noticed this, for the Latin version asks for *amorem tui solum cum gratia tua*, “Give only love *of yourself* along with your grace” (Ganss: 184 n. 122). That this is what Ignatius meant is confirmed by the previous paragraph, that Second Prelude, where the retreatant was instructed to pray for “interior knowledge of all the great good I have received, *in order that, stirred to profound gratitude, I may become able to love and serve the Divine Majesty in all things.*” Ignatius acknowledges that even the response of grateful love to the Creator’s signs of love is itself a gift of God.

[12] Having called the retreatant to consider the *gifts* in a global kind of way, Ignatius now brings the focus on the *Giver*. The three points that follow (separate exercises, really) instruct the retreatant to contemplate three ways that the creating Giver shows himself in creatures – as displaying divine presence, power, and essence.²

235. *The Second Point.* I will consider how God dwells in creatures; in the elements, giving them existence; in the plants, giving them life; in the animals, giving them sensation; in human beings, giving them intelligence; and finally, how in this way he dwells also in myself, giving me existence, life, sensation, and intelligence; and even further, making me his temple, since I am created as a likeness and image of the Divine Majesty. Then once again I will reflect on myself, in the manner described in the first point, or in any other way I feel to be better. This same procedure will be used in each of the following points.

This is all about reverencing creation as revelatory of God – oneself as creature among creatures, the human person as the signal embodiment of the ways the Creator is present to and in his creation. The language suggests that Ignatius is inviting the retreatant to reflect on one’s experience of creatures as recollected. But it is obvious that such reflection on remembrances can move easily into direct contemplation of things – that solid rock, this white rose, that spotted cat, these great oaks, that graceful woman – and me, with all the

² This triad of abstract words for describing three modes of God’s presence in creatures is something that Ignatius surely met in his reading during the convalescence at Loyola, in Ludolph of Saxony? *Vita Jesu Christi*, 1:35: [*Deus est*] *tecum non tantum per essentiam, potentiam, and praesentiam, qualiter est in omnibus rebus; nec solum per gratiam, eo modo quo est sanctis hominibus; sed etiam per carnis assumptionem*” [“God is with you not only through essence, power, and presence (as God is with all things); and not only through grace (as God is to those who are sanctified); but also through the taking on of our flesh.”] (quoted in Tetlow: 11). Tetlow comments, “. . . Inigo’s Spiritual Exercises are a long consideration of how God our Creator and Lord keeps coming into our flesh” (11). The three points that follow take those abstractions – *essentia, potentia, and praesentia* – and, in reverse order, allow them to be lenses of contemplation of creation in very concrete exercises.

ways those modes of divine presence show up in me. Even if one begins in the house of memory, when one is led to reflect on God's presence to, for, and *in myself*, one is thrust from memory into the here and now of my being – vegetating, feeling, smelling, seeing, hearing, and thinking, willing, and understanding.³

[13] When Ignatius says, “Then once again I will reflect on myself, in the manner described in the first point, or in any other way I feel to be better,” he is returning the retreatant to the context of that introductory note on the gift giving of lovers. The gifts of creation, in everything, and in me – existence, growth and healing, sensation, memory, understanding, willing – are understood as gifts prompting me to give myself to the Giver in return.

236. *The Third Point.* I will consider how God labors and works for me in all the creatures on the face of the earth; that is, he acts in the manner of one who is laboring [he goes into Latin here: *habet se ad laborantis*]. For example, he is working in the heavens, elements, plants fruits, cattle, and all the rest – giving them their existence, conserving them, concurring with their vegetative and sensitive activities, and so forth. Then I will reflect on myself.

[14] Notice that this is a repetition of point two, working through the Chain of Being, but now from the aspect of God's *laboring for me*. It is no longer simply a matter of wondering at the variety and degrees of God's presence but that these ways of being present in creatures are *por mi* – for me! Again, it is a matter of taking creation and creatures personally.

237. *The Fourth Point.* I will consider how all good things and gifts descend from above [*de arriba*]; for example, my limited power from the Supreme and Infinite Power above; and so of justice, goodness, piety, mercy, and so forth – just as the rays come down from the sun, or the rains from their source. Then I will finish by reflecting on myself, as has been explained. I will conclude with a colloquy and an Our Father.

[15] The summary nature of his treatment of this fourth approach suggests that Ignatius is recalling to the retreatant a way of thinking about God that is traditional and familiar. Indeed, this brief résumé reflects the language of St. Thomas' “fourth way” of demonstrating the reasonableness of faith in God, i.e. the way of reflecting on the gradation to be found in this finite creature as requiring the full possession of those qualities in their Source, God.⁴ Notice that here the thought goes straight to the experience of limited

³ Ignatius here conflates some biblical images in an interesting way: “. . . [God] dwells also in myself, giving *me* existence, life, sensation, and intelligence, and even further, making me his temple, since I am created as a likeness and image of the Divine Majesty.” Ignatius moves from the language of Genesis 1 – humanity made in the image and likeness of God – to the language of Paul (the individual as temple of God, as in 1 Cor 6:19, the only place where Paul uses the temple for the individual instead of his more typical use of temple as a metaphor for the Christian community, as in 1 Cor 3:16-17). Ignatius seems to connect the temple image with simply being a creature, made in the “image and likeness” of the Divine Majesty.

⁴ “The fourth way is taken from the gradation to be founding things. Among beings there are some more and some less good, true, noble, and the like. But ‘more’ and ‘less’ are predicated of different things, according as they resemble in their different ways something which is the maximum, as a thing is said to be hotter according as it more nearly resembles that which is hottest. There is then, something which is truest, something best, something noblest, and, consequently, something which is most being; for those things that are greatest in truth

qualities in *myself*, and moves from the limited qualities in the self to their necessary existence in fullest form in the Giver of those qualities to creatures. While the movement still begins with attention to the gifts, the focus here is even more on the Giver as revealed in the gifts.

Creation in the Rest of the Exercises

[16] Having examined the exercise in which Ignatius is most explicit about his vision of the relationship between God, human beings and the rest of creation – the Contemplation for Love – we are in a good place to appreciate other parts of the *Exercises* that advert to these relationships. I find six passages especially pertinent in this regard. Some of them clarify the language of the Contemplation for Love; in other passages, it is the *Contemplatio* that throws light on the earlier passage.

[17] *The Creator deals directly with the devout soul.* The book of the *Exercises* begins with twenty Introductory Explanations [*anotaciones*] intended to help both the guide and the doer of the Spiritual Exercises. Two “annotations” in particular, the fifteenth and the sixteenth, are revealing. Annotation 15 shows that Ignatius understands that “the Creator and Lord himself” can *deal directly* with “the devout soul, embracing it in love and praise, and disposing it for the way which will enable the soul to serve him better in the future.” So the director is advised “to allow the Creator to *deal immediately with the creature and the creature with its Creator and Lord.*” Annotation 16 describes the purpose of the Exercises as “that the Creator and Lord may with greater certainty be *the one working in his creature.*” In context, this implies that one’s desires can be the work of the Creator. This language envisions an intimate relationship between the Creator and the human creature, which the exercises are intended to strengthen and order by facilitating the loving response of the creature to God precisely as Creator.

[18] *The Principle and Foundation.* Very early in the *Exercises*, we meet a passage, paragraph 23, entitled “Principle and Foundation.” It is a stark set of statements about the situation of a human being as a creature among creatures, blessed and challenged by the gifts of intelligence and freewill. It has often been treated as a bald, dry articulation of Christian truth, meant to remind the retreatant of what should be obvious to a Christian before he or she moves on to the more engaging business of the meditations that follow. In fact, we know from Ignatius’ own comments that this material is to be presented to the retreatant as a genuine challenge to think of their existential situation.⁵ Here it is in full:

Human beings are created to praise, reverence [*hacer reverencia*], and serve God our Lord, and by means of doing this to save their souls.

are greatest in being, as it is written in the *Metaphysics* [of Aristotle]. Now the maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus; as fire, which is the maximum of heat, is the cause of all hot things as is said in the same book. Therefore there must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection. And this we call God” (Aquinas: First Part, Quest. 2, art. 3).

⁵ Tetlow finds evidence of the mind of Ignatius regarding the Fundamentum in the testimony of Juan Alfonso de Vitoria. Vitoria made detailed notes during the time Ignatius supervised his giving of a retreat to a young man in 1555. Ignatius’ advice was that Vitoria challenge the young man with the Fundamentum to “find his desire,” which is going to be the true indicator of how God is creating him and how, among the variables of created means, he is to find what is his way of life to meet the end for which he is being created (30-35).

The other things on the face of the earth are created for the human beings, to help them in pursuit of the end for which they are created.

From this it follows that we ought to use these things to the extent that they help us toward our end, and free ourselves from them to the extent that they hinder us from it.

To attain this it is necessary to make ourselves indifferent to all created things, in regard to everything which is left to our free will and is not forbidden. Consequently, on our own part we ought not to seek health rather than sickness, wealth rather than poverty, honor rather than dishonor, a long life rather than a short one, and so on in all other matters. Rather, we ought to desire and choose only that which is more conducive to the end for which we are created.

Having already familiarized ourselves with the *Contemplatio ad amorem*, we have a sense of the vision underlying the first assertion in the present passage – especially the meaning of *reverence*. Joined frequently with *acatamiento* (“respect”), the word implies an attitude sprung from the kind of awareness of divine presence sought in the exercise of the Contemplation for Love.⁶

[19] The second assertion (that other things are created for the human beings) appears to be open to the modern critique of anthropocentrism, the privileging of the human species above all other members of the biotic community. The statement does appear vulnerable to that critique; Ignatius does hold to the biblical vision that humanity is the apex of visible creation. In that sense, one can say that *within the context of nature* (which includes human beings) human beings do have a special status and role. But Ignatius’ larger picture holds that nature, including the human part of nature, must be considered *theocentrically*. Understood in that sense, the Ignatian vision actually turns anthropocentrism on its head. All comes from and finds its purpose in the creating God. And within that theocentric context, humanity has a privileged place of responsibility for ordering human life to a use of other creatures that will praise, reverence, and serve the Source of all. The third assertion draws that conclusion.

[20] The call to become “indifferent to all created things” could sound like a summons to a dangerous withdrawal from a healthy involvement with other creatures. But the larger

⁶ O’Neill discusses the meaning in these words: “Acatamiento’ is a word rich in meaning. Derived from ‘captare,’ the frequentative of ‘capere,’ the Spanish verb ‘catar’ first meant ‘to seek to take hold of’ and then subsequently ‘to seek to perceive with the senses.’ With prefix support from the Latin ‘ad,’ the verb ‘acatar’ evolved from the twelfth-century sense of ‘to look at with attention’ to the fourteenth-century sense of ‘to show submissive homage.’ The noun ‘acatamiento,’ born not long before Ignatius, signifies ‘the reverent manifestation of veneration.’ Contemplative perception leading to deeply felt reverence sensibly conveyed – all of this is in the pregnant ‘acatamiento.’ . . . ‘Acatamiento’ and awe are close in meaning. In Ignatius ‘acatamiento’ is a happy consciousness of divine presence, an awe suffused with warm attractiveness and resulting in love. In this communing presence submission flows from an awareness of utter gratuity of creation and redemption. . . The idea he is conveying is that of a consciousness. His ‘reverencia’ and ‘acatamiento’ signify a heightened awareness of the transcendental personal presence of God. It is a felt mood of mind and heart, which can be enhanced and expressed by some physical posture or gesture” (3-4).

context of a retreat setting in which one is called to an important decision, it becomes clear that the indifference describes not an enduring disengagement from creatures but the necessary detachment required in the process of deciding how best to use one's talents in the service of the Creator. Recall that the Second Prelude of each exercise in the *Spiritual Exercises* is a prayer in which the retreatant is to "ask for what you want." This particular moment of Ignatian indifference is not a Buddhist's *apatheia*.

[21] *The Contemplatio ad amorem as a regular practice.* That Ignatius means the last exercise, the *Contemplatio ad amorem*, which we examined first in this study, to be a regular practice, and not just a one-time retreat experience, is confirmed in a surprising place: the passage where he discusses "swearing correctly." Early in the *Exercises*, Ignatius takes up the traditional exercise of the "General Examination of Conscience" (32-41). Here, he discusses oath-taking at some length. He acknowledges that swearing by God or by a creature *can* be sinless if done with truth, necessity, and reverence. He says, however, that swearing by a *creature* has certain risks. He observes:

When we swear by a creature, it is not as easy to maintain reverence and respect [*acatamiento*] for the Creator as it is when we swear by the name of the Creator and Lord himself. For our very desire to name God our Lord carries with it greater respect [*acatamiento*] and reverence than desire to name a creature. Consequently, to swear by a creature is more permissible to persons spiritually far advanced [*los perfectos*] than for those less advanced [*los imperfectos*]. *The perfect, through constant contemplation and enlightenment of their understanding, more readily consider, meditate, and contemplate God our Lord as being present in every creature by his essence, presence, and power.* Thus when they swear by a creature, they are more able and better disposed than the imperfect to render respect [*acatamiento*] and reverence to their Creator and Lord (39:4-7).

The italicized statement clearly refers to the grace of the *Contemplatio ad amorem*, even alluding to the last three points with the description of God present in every creature "by his *essence, presence, and power*" – the triad he had met in his convalescent reading of Ludolph at Loyola. And so this way of perceiving and sensing God's presence in creation as cultivated by the *Contemplatio* is for Ignatius not some "added value" but the very touchstone of Christian maturity. His reference to this sense of the presence in creatures as coming through "constant contemplation" indicates that he understands the exercises of the *Contemplatio ad amorem* as a *regular practice*.

[22] *Prayer to the crucified Creator (53).* While it is unusual today to speak of Jesus Christ as Creator (a title usually reserved for the Father), speaking of the Eternal Son and Logos (Word) *through whom all come to be* pervades the New Testament (see for example John 1:18; Hebrews 1:2; Revelation 3:14; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16-17). Ignatius is at home with this high christology.

[23] The first exercise of the first week is a meditation on the rebellion of the angels, the rebellion of Adam and Eve, and one's own rebellion against our Creator and Lord. In the prayer scenario that Ignatius presents at the end of that meditation, he asks the retreatant:

Imagine Christ our Lord suspended on the cross before you, and converse with him in a colloquy: How is it that he, *although he is the Creator*, has come to make himself a human being? How is it that he has passed from eternal life to death here in time, and to die in this way for my sins?

In a similar way, reflect on yourself and ask: What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I to do for Christ?

In this way, too, gazing on him in so pitiful a state as he hangs on the cross, speak out whatever comes to your mind (53).

In this meditation about the rebellion of creatures (oneself definitely included) against the Creator, Ignatius moves immediately to speak of the response of the Creator in Jesus (“Christ our Lord”), indicating that for him “Creator and Lord” (50:4) is the triune Godhead. Throughout the *Exercises*, it is the Trinity acting, even when the focus is on Jesus. And now, in paragraph 53, we encounter the Godhead present in the crucified Christ pouring himself out in love unto death for the retreatant. He does not spell it out in those terms just yet, but the question he raises points in that direction – “*How is it that the Creator has come to make himself a human being . . . to die in this way for my sins?*” This way of characterizing Jesus Christ as Creator likely derives from his pondering of Ludolph’s meditation on the Prologue of John. That “high christology” pervades the theology expressed in the *Exercises* and is evoked immediately before the *Contemplatio ad amorem*, in the Fourth Note for the Fourth Week: “I will avail myself of light or the pleasant features of the seasons, such as the refreshing coolness in summer or the sun or heat in winter, as far as I think or conjecture that this will help me *to rejoice in Christ my Creator and Redeemer*” (229:4).

[24] *A cry of wonder (60-61)*. The second exercise, “A Meditation on Our Own Sins,” culminates in an exclamation of wonder as the retreatant reflects on all creatures and wonders “how they have allowed me to live and have preserved me in life.”

The angels: How is it that, although they are the swords of God’s justice, they have borne with me, protect me, and prayed for me? The saints: how is it that they have interceded and prayed for me? *Likewise, the heavens, the sun, the moon, the stars, and the elements; the fruits, birds, fishes, and animals. And the earth: How is it that it has not opened up and swallowed me, creating new hells for me to suffer in forever?* (60).

[25] A reader acquainted with the Contemplation for Love will recognize here the network of support evoked in the First Prelude of that exercise, the “composition of place” that includes the presence of God our Lord and the interceding angles and saints (232). Further, the inclusion of elements of the physical universe in the cry of wonder here – “the heavens, the sun, the moon the stars, elements, fruits, birds fishes and animals, the earth itself” – anticipates the Third Point of the Contemplation for Love – “I will consider how God labors and works for me in all the creatures on the face of the earth . . . in the heavens, elements, plants, fruits, cattle, and all the rest” (236). He ends this meditation with a nudge toward thanksgiving:

I will conclude with a colloquy of mercy – conversing with God our Lord and thanking him for granting me life until now, and proposing, with his grace, amendment for the future. Our Father (61).

[26] *The incarnation, life, and death of Christ: the ultimate labor of God within creation (116)*. In the contemplations on Incarnation and the Nativity (101-17), we see what Ignatius means with the single word “redemption” among “the gifts I have received” that the retreatant is asked to contemplate in the first point of the Contemplation for Love (234:1). The language here resonates with the *Contemplatio* in that the redemption is the collaborative work of the Trinity. The contemplation on what the persons do in the nativity, considered in continuity with the whole life and death of Jesus, is described in language that anticipates the language of the Contemplation for Love. In the Third Point of the contemplation on the Nativity, Ignatius says,

This is to behold and consider what they are doing; for example, journeying and toiling [*el caminar y trabajar*], in order that the Lord may be born in greatest poverty; and that after so many hardships of hunger, thirst, heat, cold, injuries, and insults, he may die on the cross! And all this for me [*y todo esto por mí*] (116).

The *laboring* of Christ is like the description of God working in all creatures in the Third Point of the *Contemplatio*: “I will consider how God *labors and works for me* [*trabaja y labora por mí*] in all the creatures on the face of the earth; that is, he acts in the manner of one who is laboring” (236:1). Indeed, the incarnation, the life and the death of Jesus is the ultimate expression of the love of the Creating Trinity. (He saves mention of the resurrection for the Fourth Week of the Exercises.)

[27] *Three more references to one’s life as creature among creatures in the service of the Creator*. In the movement from the exercises on the Incarnation and the Nativity to the Contemplation for Love, Ignatius treats one’s life as creature among creatures in three places worth considering.

[28] First, when Ignatius describes the first way of being humble (“the first degree of humility”), he can describe the strongest temptation he can imagine in terms of being in charge of all creation: “Consequently, even though others would make me lord of all the creatures in this world, or even to save my temporal life, never would I reach a decision to violate a commandment either human or divine which binds me under mortal sin” (165:2). This is a way of understanding humility in terms of the “Principle and Foundation,” i.e. using creatures insofar as God is served and revered, behavior understood as required for salvation.

[29] Second, when Ignatius writes a note “Toward Amending and Reforming One’s Own Life and State” (189), he challenges the retreatant to measure his/her lifestyle against the criteria of the *fundamentum*, i.e. the framework of being a creature amidst creatures. It turns out to be a challenge to simplicity through divestment.

To make progress toward this end and attain to it, one ought to consider and work out in detail, during the Exercises and by means of the Methods of Making an Election explained above [pars. 175-188], how large a house and how many persons in it one ought to maintain, how one ought to direct and

govern its members, and how to teach them by word and example. So too persons such as these should examine their resources, how much they ought to assign for the house and household, and how much for the poor and other good works. In all this and by it, each one should desire and seek nothing except the greater praise and glory of God and our Lord (189:6-9).

[30] Finally, at the end of the Third Week of the *Exercises*, which is on the Passion of Christ, Ignatius introduces eight paragraphs entitled “Rules to Order Oneself henceforth in the Taking of Food” (210-17). He advises, for example, “To rid oneself of disordered excess it is very profitable, after dinner or supper or at some other hour when the appetite to eat or drink is not strong, to settle with oneself how much food is to be taken at the next dinner or supper, and further, to do this every day” (217). Any desire to eat more food or less than one has decided at the next meal is to be considered a temptation.⁷

Ignatius’ Creation Spirituality

[31] Before suggesting the pertinence of Ignatius’ creation spirituality for our day, I have three observations about what we have found in this review of his *Exercises*.

[32] First, Ignatius surely *has* a creation spirituality. He has a vision of the self understood as a creature among creatures beloved of a creating God. To our best knowledge, the human person has pride of place in visible creation, but that eminence does not entitle human persons to a life of exploitation and domination but rather to a life of grateful service of the Source of all, the God who has revealed himself in all things, especially in the created humanity of Jesus Christ. While his vision of creation is most explicit in the exercise at the end, the *Contemplatio ad amorem*, where creation is viewed as a manifestation of the presence and love of God for his creatures (especially the one contemplating), the role of the free human creature among other creatures is exposed starkly at the beginning, in the Principle and Foundation. Throughout the *Exercises*, one glimpses an understanding of the triune Christian divinity intimately present and engaged with creatures, sustaining, communicating, facilitating, and laboring. For him, as for the biblical tradition (see especially Isaiah 40-55), the divine activities of creation and redemption are not competing themes but aspects of a single continuity in the mutual relationships of Creator to creature and of creatures to their Creator.

⁷ Scanning the *Exercises* for Ignatius’ creation theology, one could easily pass over these rules for eating as a simple matter of ascetical discipline rather than a revelation of his view of Creator and creation, but this would be to overlook the obvious. A simple reflection on one’s own experience as an eater is enough to bring home the reality that taking nourishment is one of the most regular and intimate ways that human beings interact with the rest of creation. That awareness is the reason why people who pray with any regularity at all apart from sacramental worship, offer some kind of table prayer – grace before (and sometimes after) meals. It is also the arena where appetite for a necessary good can easily run to excess. It is the arena where habit and choice constantly interact. In a letter of Father Adrian Adrianssens (Rome, May 12, 1556) Ignatius gives some prudent advice on eating and drinking. Acknowledging that special diets may be required to address ailing bodies, he advises, “Care should be taken, however, lest what is merely superfluous should be allowed to slip in under the guise of necessity, and things that merely flatter the senses as conducive to health, thus turning a praiseworthy practice into an abuse. . . Decide what is to be done in each case after weighing all the circumstances. May our Lord give us the light of holy discretion to make use of creatures in the light of the Creator” (cited in Young: 421).

[33] Second, the content of Ignatius' vision of creation is thoroughly conventional. He is heir of a robust medieval tradition, expressed especially in the theology of Thomas Aquinas. The language of the *Contemplatio* derives from his reading, during his post-battle convalescence at Loyola, of the *Vita Christi*, written by the onetime Dominican Ludolph of Saxony, especially from that author's meditation on the Prologue of the Gospel of John. The ideas of the Principle and Foundation about the "use of creatures" echoes remarkably the language of the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard (d. 1158), one of Ignatius' textbooks at the University of Paris. Another witness to the mainstream Christian tradition regarding creation, and a person whose writings were available to Ignatius, is Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536, thus a near contemporary of Ignatius, Erasmus' junior by 25 years). Ganss cites a passage from Erasmus' *Handbook of the Christian Soldier* (1504) that resonates remarkably with Ignatius' "Principle and Foundation" (23):

Take this as your Fourth Rule: Set before you Christ as the only goal of your whole life, and direct all your efforts, all your activities, all of your business in his direction. . .

For one who is pressing straight forward toward the goal of the supreme good, whatever things turn up along the way should be rejected or accepted to the extent that (*eatenus . . . quatenus*) they further or obstruct one's progress. Of such things there are three categories.

Some of them are so base that they can never be upright. . . Other things . . . are so good that they can never be base. . .

Still others are midway between these two: for example, health, good looks, strength, eloquence, learning, and the like. In this category of things nothing should be sought for itself alone, and such things should not be used in greater or less measure except to the extent that (*eatenus . . . quatenus*) they are conducive to the final goal (221).

[34] Third, Ignatius' contribution was not the *content* of the vision but *a way of appropriating* (i.e. taking personally) that vision. Thus, the Principle and Foundation is not a text for spiritual reading but a tool to be used by the director of the Exercises to confront the retreatant with the "big picture" of his/her situation as a free creature in relation to the Creator and other creatures. And the four "weeks" of the program of the *Exercises* are meant to enable the retreatant to get a clearer understanding of his/her past life as creature (who has likely rebelled against his/her role as creature among other creatures) – the business of the First Week; and then to contemplate the life and passion of Jesus (modeling God's ultimate loving presence among creatures) – the content of Weeks Two and Three; and finally rejoicing in the Resurrection, the fullness of divine revelation, capped by the *Contemplatio ad amorem* – mentoring a way of seeing *the way things are* in the light of Christian faith. What Ignatius had learned in that cave at Manresa, where he experienced God teaching him "as a schoolmaster deals with a student," he now tutors the retreatant in this format of personal appropriation of mainstream Christian creation theology.

Ignatius and the Environmental Crisis

[35] First, while we can not claim that sixteenth-century Ignatius of Loyola had some early awareness of our environmental crisis, the Christian vision of creation that he mediates surely supports a respect for the resources of the earth and human behavior that uses those resources in a sustainable way. His identifying the first step of the rebellion of the human creature against the Creator as “riches” – that is, self-aggrandizement through material possessions – is an insight into the folly of individual (or national) domination of earthly resources. If environmental sensitivity in the contemporary sense is not a stated goal in the text of the *Exercises*, it is surely a predictable “side effect” of those Exercises in our day.

[36] At a time when an increasingly urbanized and technologized European Christianity could think of human beings as somehow “other” than nature, Ignatius recovered the biblical vision of human persons as *part* of nature, in solidarity with other creatures. He did this by presenting a way of accessing the presence of God in all creatures, and in the human person as creature among creatures.

[37] Second, the creation tradition that Ignatius mediates still works within contemporary cosmology. While the Ignatian implementation of the mainstream Christian vision of creation was inevitably spelled out within the cosmology of his day (earth-centered, Ptolemaic), it need not be tied to that cosmology. It is true that he shared the geocentric worldview of a Europe that had not yet assimilated the emerging heliocentric model of Copernicus. But, as challenging as that shift was for the culture of the West, it would not finally disrupt the view of creation embodied in the *Exercises*.

[38] What the creation vision of the *Exercises* would do, three centuries later, to the imagination of the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-89) presents a fascinating demonstration of the durability of Ignatian creation spirituality. Flourishing in the 1880s and 1890s, Hopkins wrote during a great moment of paradigm shift in the European worldview. Copernicus had de-centered the sense of self in the universe; Isaac Newton (1642-1727), explaining all physical motion and change as a matter of mechanics and gravity, had in a sense mechanized us; and Charles Darwin (1809-92), claiming that we had evolved from less complicated forms of life through a process of random mutation and natural selection of the fittest, had dethroned us. Yet, once his way of thinking was sensitized through the Ignatian *Exercises* to a sense of the Creator mediated in his creatures, Hopkins was able to perceive and express that biblical and medieval sense of divine presence in creation in poetry that still speaks to readers in the twenty-first century. Read, for example, “God’s Grandeur,” “The Sea and the Skylark” (contrasted with Arnold’s God-empty vision of “Dover Beach”), and the sonnet “In Honor of Alphonsus Rodriguez.”

[39] Much has happened, of course, since the mid-nineteenth century. We now share sense of the cosmos shaped by the discovery of Edwin Hubble, who in 1928 organized the data that made it clear that we live in an expanding universe – indeed, a universe that has been expanding for close to 14 billion years. We have come to see that not only has life on planet Earth evolved (for some 3 billion years) but *matter itself* has evolved from simple to more complex elements in the course of the cosmos’ 14-billion-year story. Not only is our planet not the center of the universe, neither is our star, the sun. Nor is our galaxy the center of

anything. Indeed, we cannot locate a physical center of the cosmos as we are now getting to know it.

[40] And yet, in terms of consciousness and complexity, the human person remains the most complex structure in the physical universe. A contemporary cosmologist like physicist Brian Swimme can insist that the universe had to be as old and as large as it is to produce us. It had to be as old as it is because it took that long to “cook up” the elements necessary for carbon-based life, and, eventually, us. And it had to be as big as it is because the rate of expansion from the Big Bang forward had to be precisely what it has been all these millennia. A lesser rate of expansion would have led to a collapse; a greater rate of expansion would have led to an eventually dissipation. This phenomenon of the cosmos apparently “finely tuned” to produce life, and eventually humankind restores the human person to a privileged place once again. So the contemporary “cosmic story” makes it even easier than it was a century ago to have a sense of self among other creatures that resonates with the creation vision mediated by Ignatius (on the question of relating traditional Trinitarian theology with post-modern cosmology, see Anne Clifford).

[41] Third, the current discussions about a creation interpretation of the phenomena of the universe – e.g. “Intelligent Design” advocates *versus* the atheism of some neo-Darwinians – do not, at the end of the day, trump the validity of the vision of Christian creation spirituality meditated by Ignatius. When we hear Ignatius’ texts against the current background of fundamentalist Christian response to neo-Darwinian attacks, it becomes evident that Ignatius was not focused on issues of origins – nor on a reading of Genesis 1-2 as accounts of the *mechanics* of cosmic beginnings. His concerns were more existential, having to do with the mystery of *Why is there anything at all?* His response to that question flowed from his personal (tutored) experience of grateful wonder at the gift of his personal existence, his sense of utter dependency, indeed, his experience of everything – all things, persons, and situations – as fundamentally a *gift* from a Source that his tradition had taught him to know as Lover and Giver. If he had learned Aquinas’ understanding of Aristotle’s First Cause as a way of thinking about the Jewish and Christian sense of God, it was First Cause in the metaphysical sense of *sustaining source of being here and now*. When he spoke of the purpose of things and persons, his interest was not anthropocentric but always *theocentric*. If he had a cosmology, it did not entail an Intelligent Designer who intervenes occasionally to tinker with some of the details; his was the traditional, biblically based cosmology that pointed to a God who was both *other* than creation and, at the same time, immanently present and collaborating within it. However mechanics and survival of the fittest might fit in the process, for him cosmology was ultimately best understood as a love affair in which the data of science was instructive but not fully explanatory. Data (“givens”), after all, imply a Donor (“Giver”). And such love demands a response. Whatever we in the current century discover to be required of us to reverse the degradation of our environment, this kind of creation spirituality can only serve to motivate that action as a way of loving God and neighbor.

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