

PHILIPPIANS AND THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

By ROBERT MURRAY

IT HAS long seemed to the writer that the Epistle to the Philippians exemplifies in the highest degree the dispositions commended by St Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises*, and particularly in the Foundation, the meditation on the Call of Christ the King, and the Third Mode of humility. The purpose of the notes which follow is not so much to advance scholarly study either of the epistle or of the Exercises (though it is hoped not to offend against sound exegesis of either), as to help those who give or make Ignatian retreats to use Philippians fruitfully.

In the *Spiritual Exercises* there is a progress and a deepening, from the indifference (or cultivation of a certain equilibrium in face of all created things) commended in the Foundation, via the hint even there that we must 'desire and choose only whatever helps us more to the end for which we are created', through the contemplation of Christ's call to follow him with generosity and even heroism; till finally in the Third Mode of humility we are brought to the ideal of choosing the folly of the cross itself simply because it was Christ's way. Those who make the Exercises for the first time feel this deepening keenly, as a thrilling adventure in the following of Christ. In subsequent renewals of the experience, the process cannot be quite the same: not so much an advance from stage to stage. The deepening continues year after year, but one who has 'learned Christ' in the Ignatian school will inevitably begin to find the Third Mode much more immediately, even already in the indifference of the Foundation. It is, perhaps, for such as these that Philippians is most helpful, for there we find St Paul exemplifying all these stages: a sensible, balanced indifference before all created goods, a generous will to follow Christ wherever he leads, and indeed one sole pre-occupation and passion, to be with Christ in life or death. We can meditate fruitfully on Philippians in connection with any or all of these stages. Here it will suffice to draw attention quite simply to the striking coincidence in thought and experience between St Paul and St Ignatius.

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Of course, the epistle and the Exercises do not correspond exactly; it is elsewhere in St. Paul that we should turn to illustrate the themes of the First Week, while one of the chief themes of Philippians, the sharing of fellowship in love – *koinōnia*, finds its Ignatian echoes in his Constitutions and letters rather than the Exercises, which presuppose a withdrawal so as to be alone with God. Nevertheless, personal relationships ought to be considered in the Foundation. A human person, no less than the divine Persons, is a node in a complex of relationships, and is so dependent for his growth as a person on the love he receives and gives, that an adequate discussion of the attitude to ‘all created things’ commended in the Foundation, cannot either pass over personal relationships or (God forbid!) simply include them among things to be used or not. Therefore this aspect of Philippians, St Paul’s intense love both for those to whom he is writing and for his fellow-workers, will be brought into the discussion of indifference. That most Ignatian attitude does not and must not exclude intense and genuine affection; only it sets our relationships, side by side with all our endowments and possessions, on the scales before God, determined that nothing shall upset the balance of our hearts, a balance which consists in the supreme and unconditional intention of praise, reverence and service to God. If we keep right in this, a rightness which St Paul repeatedly in Philippians expresses in terms of right thinking – *phronein*, we cannot love too much.

PHILIPPIANS AND THE FOUNDATION

Exx 23. *Principle and Foundation*. Man has been created to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord and by so doing to save his soul. The other things on the face of the earth have been created for man in order to help him pursue the end for which he was created. It follows from this that man must use them in so far as they help towards his end, and free himself from them in so far as they are obstacles to his end. To do this we need to make ourselves indifferent to all created things, wherever this is left to the liberty of our free choice and is not forbidden it. So that, as far as we are concerned, we should not want health more than illness, wealth more than poverty, honour more than disgrace, a long life more than a short one and similarly for all the rest; but we should want and choose only what helps us more towards the end for which we have been created’.

Phil 1, 8. ‘I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus’. It is love as warm as this that co-exists with Paul’s indifference. This already

teaches us an important lesson about what the latter attitude should not be.

'So that you may approve what is excellent, and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ . . . to the glory and praise of God'. Phil 1, 10. The last phrase is the starting-point of the Foundation. The earlier part of the sentence¹ expresses the prudent weighing-up of things which is essential to Ignatian indifference. 'Pure and blameless':² Paul wishes his readers to be free of such attachments as would make them stumble in God's way.

Paul's attitude to his imprisonment is a heroic example of indifference. He does not consider his own desire for freedom, but only God's glory; this is proving to be served better by imprisonment, and therefore he is simply glad. Phil 1, 12-14.

Paul's attitude to the mixed motives of some who preach Christ 'out of partisanship, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment': Paul sees through these people but is not hurt by them, because he is quite detached from self-regard and his own feelings (a stage he seems not to have quite reached, for example, in 2 Corinthians). This detachment – exactly who does the job and how one is represented by others is irrelevant – is an example of indifference most difficult of attainment: the key is caring for nothing but God's glory. Phil 1, 15-18.

Paul's sole concern, 'That . . . Christ may be honoured in my body whether by life or by death', leads him to a degree of indifference to life or death surpassing St Ignatius's 'a long life or a short one'. Paul is in a perfect state of equilibrium: 'Which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, because that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account'. Since the basis of this equilibrium is Paul's desire to be with Christ wherever he leads, it rather exemplifies the Third Mode of humility. The result of Paul's dispositions is joy and confidence, both characteristics of the epistle. Phil 1, 20-26.

Note that Paul desires his own salvation unconditionally; this shows how far from selfishness such a desire is, being part of a right human intention of God's glory. Phil 1, 19-20.

¹ Knox translates 'Learn to prize what is of value', the New English Bible 'true discrimination'.

² Well paraphrased according to the meaning of the Greek words by Knox, 'may nothing cloud your conscience or hinder your progress'.

- Phil 2, 1-2. 'If there is any encouragement in Christ . . . complete my joy . . .'
Paul values consolation and asks for it; this also is not incompatible with true indifference. His intention is the spiritual good of his friends, and he commends it in the warmest terms of human affection.
- Phil 2, 3-4. Paul urges the same detachment from self which he has; (he may be alluding to the strained personal relations mentioned in 4, 2-3, or speaking in general). The key is to 'have the same mind (*phroneite*) as was in Christ Jesus', whose example Paul now contemplates.
- Phil 2, 6-8. The supreme example of indifference at one level, and of the Third Mode of humility at another: the Son of God did not prefer being equal to God to obedience and humiliation.
- Phil 2, 9-11. This led him to glorification; and, as the passage began with an exhortation to imitate Christ, it is implicit that through humility we too shall come to glory with him. The desire to share Christ's glory is not at variance with true indifference, since this glory is 'to the glory of God the Father'; and the way to it is obedience to God alone.
- Phil 2, 12-13. Yet this obedience is to be rendered in and through acceptance of the burden of free will; we must work out our own salvation with a deep sense of responsibility (and therefore 'fear and trembling'), yet also in calm trust that God's grace is at work in us and his Holy Spirit is guiding us. This exercise of responsibility, referring all to God and submitting to him, is certainly implicit in St Ignatius's Foundation.
- Phil 2, 14-15. 'Without grumbling or questioning', the attitude of those in true indifference. 'Blameless and innocent',¹ whereas the 'world' is 'crooked', wrongly attached to created things, trying to create patterns other than God's plan.
- Phil 2, 16-17. Again we see Paul's indifference to his own life if he can be sacrificed for those he loves, and again this thought renews his joy. But verse 16 raises what may seem one of the problems of Paul's humility: his frequent concern with boasting, with having something to be proud of. Even if his spirit is that of Galatians 6, 14: 'Far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ', the expression seems strange, especially in 2 Corinthians. The solution lies in what

¹ Knox, 'single-minded'.

we have already observed about the unconditional desire for our own salvation being neither selfish nor at variance with true indifference. Again, a Christian may rejoice, in all humility, in what he has become in Christ, recognising that all the good in it is the achievement of his grace.¹ Paul's matter for boasting is what the Catholic theology enshrined in the decrees of Trent speaks of as merit, an ugly word to many not of our communion; yet its use does not deny but presupposes that all is Christ's work and there could be no merit except through his all-embracing merit. In spite of our contrition for all our resistance to grace, it is never permitted to us to regret our existence or that we are the persons we have become, in God's merciful providence. If God's grace has enabled us to act as his instruments, however feebly and with however many backslidings, it would be blasphemy not to thank him, not to rejoice in his gifts of grace. This is what Paul means by boasting. Perhaps the word is not quite up to the attitude it is meant to express, but perhaps also it is Paul's humility that lets him use one of our earthy words of human emotional experience for this high acknowledgment of God's goodness, not worrying about the impression he may make on the censorious.

Paul gives rein to his love in speaking of his collaborators Timothy and Epaphroditus. While he laments the fundamental selfishness of others around him, all he says of these too is in a spirit of thoughtful, appreciative love. He is deeply consoled by their presence and would have suffered terribly by the loss of Epaphroditus, which God has spared him; yet he is ready to let them both go for the sake of the Philippians. In the whole passage we see warm human love controlled, not repressed nor excluded, by an over-riding concern for God's service and the good of others. It is a beautiful example of Ignatian indifference in the sphere not of things but of personal relationships.

Phil 2, 19-30.

Phil 2, 21.

Phil 2, 27.

As love co-exists with indifference, so can anger at those who teach false principles.

Phil 3, 2-3.

The false riches of the 'flesh', i.e. the values of fallen and undisciplined nature: even in the service of a high religious conception and the established order of what had been God's chosen dispensation, these values now prove to be simply part of 'the flesh' as Paul

Phil 3, 4-6.

¹ 'But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me was not in vain'.
1 Cor 15, 10.

habitually uses the expression.¹ In these values Paul had been richer than most, with grounds for pride in birth, in learning, in zeal, in legal righteousness.

Phil 3, 7-11. But now, on conversion to the values of Christ, who has become the principle, these riches become so much rubbish and even loss. In comparison with this uncompromising expression, the Foundation, while aiming at a no less complete conversion of values, does not suggest that such goods as benefits of birth and education should be rejected as meaningless; they should rather be converted to acceptance to the principle of indifference, and then used, or not used, in a controlled and constructive way, as God's service directs.

St Ignatius' *tantum quantum*, the principle of 'just so much as helps', is not present to Paul's mind in this passage; we must look elsewhere to remind ourselves that he was ready on occasion to claim the benefits of Roman citizenship,² to draw on his hellenistic education,³ or to appeal to his orthodoxy as a Pharisee.⁴ In Philippians Paul speaks only of the utter transcendence of the new values he has found in Christ.

The new aim, in the light of these new values, is to be 'found in Christ'.⁵ This phrase expresses a humble hope, in contrast with trust in legal righteousness, that at the judgment Jesus may recognise Paul and say 'Why yes, he is mine, I recognise him'. This passage is to be related more closely to the Call of Christ the King and the Third Mode of humility, and we shall consider it there.

Phil 3, 15-16. 'Let those of us who are mature be thus minded': again the key word, *phronômen*, used of holding values, of having a mentality or an attitude. This is the fundamental concern both of the epistle and of the Foundation, if not of the whole Exercises. If you have not got

Phil 3, 17. the right values, God is the source of light and human examples will help; Paul, with his awareness of Christ within him, is quite unselfconscious about any appearance of vanity.⁶

Phil 3, 18-19. Those with the opposite values, 'with minds set (*phronountes*) on earthly things', are also 'enemies of the cross of Christ'. The opposite to the values of the Foundation is also the opposite to the

¹ Cf Robinson, J. A. T., *The Body* (London, 1952), pp. 11-33.

² Cf Acts 17, 28.

³ Cf Acts 23, 6.

⁴ Cf Acts 16, 37.

⁵ New English Bible 'Finding myself incorporated in him'; Knox finds here a Greek financial idiom 'in him I would render my account', but less plausibly.

⁶ Cf Phil 4, 9.

Third Mode of humility. Nothing could show more clearly how the latter grows out of the former.

'But our commonwealth is in heaven'.¹ The figure is political, but also refers to a way of life: therefore again to values. We are committed to live by God's values, not those of the flesh. Chapter 4 contains practical and personal messages all in the same spirit, and all shot through with joy.² Phil 3, 20.

'To agree in the Lord': to '*phronein* the same'. Someone needs to see that according to Christ's values it is better to choose the lower place. Phil 4, 2.

To live according to the Foundation is to display to *epieikes*.³ No wonder that St Ignatius was so concerned with the worthy outward expression of this quality by his sons that he carefully wrote detailed descriptive rules for it.⁴ Phil 4, 5.

What sort of prayer befits one living according to the Foundation? Indifference most certainly does not teach us to give up prayer of petition! Phil 4, 6.

'Think about these things'. Not an invitation to put one's head in the sand and lose touch with reality, but to control the mind and to co-operate with grace in forming right values. Phil 4, 8.

'I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to be abased and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want'. This is a classic expression of exactly the disposition commended by St Ignatius in the Foundation, 'so that as far as we are concerned we should not want health more than illness, wealth more than poverty, honour more than disgrace, a long life more than a short one . . .' The secret is a total reliance on God's grace: 'I can do all things in him who strengthens me'. Through this disposition of indifference, Paul is enabled to appreciate sincerely good intentions even where they failed to bear fruit; he is grateful for sympathy shown, and gracefully reverts for Phil 4, 11-13.

¹ Knox, 'we find our true home in heaven', New English Bible, 'we are citizens of heaven'. The *Revised Standard Version* is cited throughout.

² Cf Phil 1, 4; 1, 10.

³ Various rendered modesty (Douai), forbearance (Revised Standard Version), courtesy (Knox), magnanimity (New English Bible). All these catch something of the quality, the sanity, balance, good-humour, gentleness and fairness of what Donne calls 'an harmonious soul'.

⁴ *Regulae Modestiae*.

- Phil 4, 14-16. the last time to his gratitude that the Philippians did give him something. But even here he is so dead to self that he rejoices more
- Phil 4, 17-18. in the reward his kindness will bring them than in the benefit he may have received from them.
- Phil 4, 20. Paul ends as he began, with a formal act of praise to God, whose glory is his supreme intention, as it is that proposed in St Ignatius's Foundation.

Summary of the main points of the Foundation in relation to Philippians

1. Praise, reverence to God: 1, 11; 1, 20; 2, 11; 4, 20.
Service, especially of Christ: 1, 12-18; 2, 21-22; 2, 25-30;
3, 7-14; 4, 3.
Christ's own service: 2, 7-8.
2. 'And by that means to save his own soul' - by serving in and through Christ: 1, 10-11; 1, 19; 2, 12; 3, 10-11, 14; 3, 20-21.
3. 'And the other things on the face of the earth are . . . to help man . . .' The principle of 'just so much as helps' is not so apparent here as it is, for example, in the discussion of food in 1 Corinthians 8-9 and Romans 14; but the essential is that Christ is now the sole criterion for evaluating all created things: 3, 7-14; 1, 20-24.
4. 'Therefore we must put ourselves in a state of equilibrium (indifference) with regard to all created things':
freedom or imprisonment: 1, 12-14.
whether I or another preach: 1, 15-18.
life or death: 1, 20-24.
presence or absence of friends: 2, 19-30.
personal endowments of birth, education and achievement: 3, 4-6.
plenty or want: 4, 11-13.
5. 'Seeking only that which helps us more to the end for which we were created': While it is only by this 'more' that the Foundation hints at the Third Mode of humility, the latter is the governing principle of Philippians, as we shall shortly see: 2, 5-8; 1, 20-24; 3, 7-14.

PHILIPPIANS AND THE FIRST WEEK

As already observed, Philippians is not the epistle of St Paul which will help us most here; one thinks naturally of Romans and Gala-

tians. But since Philippians is our present subject, anyone wishing to make it his chief help throughout a whole retreat might fruitfully note the following points of comparison:

Colloquy with Christ Crucified

Imagine Christ our Lord before me on the cross . . . how did he the Creator come to make himself man, and from eternal life come to temporal death, and to die for my sins. In the same way consider myself: what I have done for Christ, what I am doing for Christ, what I ought to do for Christ. Lastly, seeing him in that state, hanging on the cross, talk about whatever occurs to me (Exx 53).

Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Jesus Christ, who, though he was in the form of God, did not account equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross (Phil 2, 5-8).

Review of past life

The series of sins. That is, bring to mind all the sins of my life, as I look from year to year or from one period of time to another. Three things are helpful for this:

1. Seeing the place and house where I have lived.

(I was) circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews, as to the law a Pharisee, as to zeal, a persecutor of the Church, as to righteousness, under the law blameless.

2. The dealings I have had with others.

But whatever gain I had, I count it as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord (Phil 3, 5-7).

3. The occupation in which I have spent my life (Exx 56).

Colloquy of Mercy

Conclusion of the meditation on sins

Paul's grateful and humble conclusion to the review of his past life.

Talk to God our Lord and thank him for giving me life to this moment,

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

and to determine to do better in the future, with the help of his grace (Exx 61).

Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil 3, 12-14).

Prayer for Knowledge, of self and the world

That I may experience in myself an intense knowledge of my sins and a loathing of them.

Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

That I may experience in myself the disorder of my activities so that, loathing it, I may do better and put order into my life.

... let those of us who are mature be thus minded; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal that also to you.

Ask for knowledge of the world so that, loathing it, I may cut myself off from worldly and empty things (Exx 63).

For many ... live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their God is their belly and they glory in their shame, their minds set on earthly things. But our commonwealth is in heaven ... (Phil 2, 15; 3, 15; 3, 18-20).

Readiness to make reparation

... determine to do better in the future with the help of his grace (Exx 61).

... work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure (Phil 2, 13).

For the rest, the epistle is an outpouring of joy by one who has been freed from his earlier agonies and wrestling. But it may serve some equally well in their reviews of the First Week, in annual retreats, long after their first experience. It is hard to believe that St Ignatius ever envisaged people going through exactly the same motions in the First Week year after year.

THE CALL OF CHRIST THE KING

The grace for which Ignatius bids us pray in this contemplation, 'to ask our Lord for grace not to be deaf to his call, but ready to

fulfil with care his most holy will',¹ is the grace to be converted to a whole-hearted following of Christ. It is the grace which enables Paul to forget what lies behind and to press on towards the goal, 'the call of God in Christ Jesus': 'I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own'.² The pattern of life which the following of Christ entails is the mirror of Christ's own: in spreading the Kingdom, 'sharing his sufferings so as to enter with him into his glory'.³

He who wants to be my companion has to labour with me so that, following me in suffering, he may also follow me into glory (Exx 95).

That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead (Phil 3, 10-11).

The preaching of Paul in prison⁴ and of Epaphroditus 'My fellow-worker and fellow-soldier . . . who nearly died for the work of Christ'⁵ provide us with examples of this labouring with Christ. The manner of life of the Philippians will be worthy of the gospel of Christ even as Paul's is, because 'it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict which you saw and now hear to be mine'.⁶

'Not to be deaf to his call' will involve the same disregard of self, the same humility and submission summarised by Paul as 'the mind of Christ'; it takes up and carries further the indifference of the Foundation.

Those who want to be more devoted and distinguished in the total service of their King and Lord, will not only offer their persons for the task, but further, going against their own sensuality and against their carnal and worldly love, will make offerings of greater price and importance . . . (Exx 97).

. . . though he was in the form of God, (he) did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant . . . he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross (Phil 2, 6-8).

Eternal Lord of all things, I make my offering, with your favour and help, before your infinite goodness and

I count everything as loss, because of the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord. For his sake

¹ Exx 91.

² Phil 3, 13-14.

³ Exx. 95.

⁴ Phil 1, 12-14.

⁵ *Ibid* 2, 25-30.

⁶ *Ibid* 1, 29-30.

before your glorious Mother . . . I want and desire and it is my considered determination, but provided only that it be to your greater service and praise, to imitate you in enduring every outrage and all contempt and complete poverty both actual and spiritual if your most holy Majesty wants to choose me and receive me into that life and state (Exx 98).

I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ . . . (Phil 3, 8). . . . It is my eager expectation and hope that I shall not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honoured in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account (Phil 1, 20-24).

THE CONTEMPLATION ON THE INCARNATION

Only two passages from the epistle help particularly here, but they are most valuable. When Ignatius instructs us to ask for 'an interior knowledge of the Lord, who made himself man for me, so that I may love him more and follow him'¹ it is Paul who brings home to us the incomparable value of the knowledge.² The other passage is of course, Paul's reflection on the humility and obedience of the incarnate Christ, introduced by the exhortation to imitate him, which can also serve well for the petition of this meditation.³

THE TWO STANDARDS

Satan or the power of evil as such is not mentioned in Philippians. But the absolute nature of the opposition between Christ (and his servants) and the enemies of Christ's cross (his standard!) is equally firmly stated by Paul:

The enemies of Christ's cross

(tempt men to) covet riches so that then they may more easily come to the empty fame of the world and finally to swollen pride (Exx 142).

Destruction is their end, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things (Phil 3, 19).

¹ Exx 104.

² Phil 3, 4-11.

³ *Ibid* 2, 1-11.

This is the 'crooked and perverse generation',¹ the 'opponents' of the gospel and of Paul and his readers who 'are engaged in the same conflict'.² Ignatius's petition in the meditation is 'knowledge of the true life which the supreme and true captain teaches, and grace to imitate him'³ and the colloquy – 'grace . . . that I may be received under his standard'⁴ is Paul's own petition: 'that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith; that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death'.⁵

Christ's programme, then, is the object of Paul's contemplation and action which he proposes to the Philippians.

Consider the discourse which Christ our Lord makes to all his servants and friends, whom he is sending on this expedition. He recommends them to want to help everybody, first of all by leading them to contemplate poverty of spirit,

And to actual poverty as well if the divine Majesty is served by that and wishes to choose them.

Secondly, through the desire of ignominy and contempt because humility comes from these two things.

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus (Phil 1, 1).

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent and may be pure and blameless . . . (Phil 1, 9–10; cf Phil 2, 12–16).

Not that I complain of want; for I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content (Phil 4, 11–12). Do nothing, from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves (Phil 2, 3). Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus (Phil 2, 5). And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross (Phil 2, 8).

Likewise, possessions and personal endowments have become simply meaningless for Paul: 'I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord'.⁶ The third chapter of Philippians is perhaps the most perfect illustration of the

¹ *Ibid* 2, 15.

² *Ibid*, 1, 30.

³ Exx 139.

⁴ *Ibid* 147.

⁵ Phil 3, 8–10.

⁶ Phil 3, 8.

Third Mode that can be found, and the meditation could hardly be better made than with this. Yet the source which lies even deeper, the key to the Third Mode of humility, is also in this epistle.¹ Humility, stepping down willingly and sincerely 'counting others better than yourselves',² is commended not to avoid the sin of pride, or because it is better manners, or because with any luck someone will come and say 'friend, come up higher', or because humility is the fruit of a reasonable assessment of one's self as an individual member of the human race, but just because Christ 'did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped at but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant'. It is when one has seen this, when one has responded with Paul in chapter 3, that the Third Mode of humility as an ideal takes fire: 'I want and choose poverty with Christ poor rather than riches; insults with Christ heaped with them rather than honours, and to desire to be held a fool for the sake of Christ, who was thought such before me, rather than to be thought wise or prudent in this world'.³

THE FOURTH WEEK

The petition proposed for the meditations of the Fourth Week is 'grace to rejoice and be intensely happy in the great joy and glory of Christ our Lord'.⁴ It is clear from the most cursory reading of Philippians how closely this agrees with Paul's predominant disposition in this epistle. He starts with thanksgiving;⁵ he rejoices in the preaching of Christ, even when it is done by others with motives of hurting him,⁶ and so he continues with expressions of joy, 'eagerness' and hope.⁷ This joy of the Fourth Week is the fruit of the hope in the resurrection, which dominates chapter 3.

Phil 3, 10-11. 'That I may know him and the power of his resurrection . . . , that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead'.

Phil 3, 20-21. A great *sursum corda*: 'But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself'.

The fifth point in the Contemplation of Christ risen is 'to consider the office of Consoler which our Lord exercises, comparing it

¹ *Ibid* 2, 5-8.

² *Ibid* 2, 3.

³ Exx 167.

⁴ *Ibid* 221.

⁵ Phil 1, 3-5.

⁶ *Ibid* 1, 18.

⁷ *Ibid* 1, 19-20.

with the way in which friends are wont to console one another'. Exx 224.
 So Paul is eager to share the consolations of friendship – to console:
 'that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less Phil 2, 28–9.
 anxious. So receive him in the Lord with all joy; and honour such
 men' – and to be consoled: 'I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now Phil 4, 10.
 at length you have revived your concern for me'.
 'That you may rejoice at seeing (Epaphroditus) again and that Phil 2, 27–30.
 I may be less anxious. So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and
 honour such men'.

Chapter 4 is an overflowing of joy, peace and love all through; it is fittingly made the source of the epistle for Gaudete Sunday. It is hardly necessary to quote the passage again here. Let us rather conclude this study with a consideration of the light thrown by Philip-pians on the meditation which is the crown of the Fourth Week and of the whole *Spiritual Exercises*.

THE CONTEMPLATION TO OBTAIN LOVE¹

As we have seen, St Ignatius in the Exercises has less to say about personal relationships between ourselves, because the exercises in question are precisely means of confrontation with God under conditions of at least temporary withdrawal from all company other than that of the spiritual director. Yet, as we have also seen, all who make a retreat are persons whose relationships are of the very fibre of their personal existence – indeed, growth as a person is precisely a matter of becoming more and more 'relational'. Even if St Ignatius does not dwell on this explicitly as we meditate on the Foundation, on our reasons for contrition in the First Week, on the matter for an election, and in our review of God's blessings to us in the Contemplation to obtain Love,² we must inevitably and rightly give much of our thought to our personal relationships. And now, as we give our minds and hearts directly to thinking of and longing for the love of God, we cannot leave out whatever true love we have known and know here on earth. 'Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love, does not know God; for God is love'.³

True as this is for all Christians, for none is it more true and relevant than for those who are married in Christ and who enact in

¹ Exx 230–237.

² *Ibid* 234.

³ 1 Jn 4,7.

their union, spiritual and 'in one flesh' at the same time, the mystery of personal communion which is not only the supreme figure of the Church's union with Christ, but also as a true sacrament, an 'effective' symbol, helps to actualise and build up on earth that which it represents. Those who are married in Christ have something quite special to say about divine love, about the love St Ignatius speaks of in the Contemplation. It is one of the most exciting aspects of the present renewal of the Church that this witness of married people is beginning to find expression (almost, perhaps, for the first time in Christian history) as an irreplaceable contribution to theology, to our understanding of the Church.

This thought has led us away somewhat from St Paul in his self-revelation in Philippians (though not from his thought in Ephesians), he himself being, as is traditionally understood,¹ committed to seeking God's love in consecrated celibacy. But my intention is to stress that, in Christ, human love belongs to our understanding of divine love, and there is no conflict. St Paul's expression of intense affection in Philippians should commend the epistle to every kind of retreatant for use with the Contemplation to obtain Love.

'Love consists in sharing' says St Ignatius.² This brings us to consider one of the key ideas of Philippians, *koinônia*, communion or fellowship. The epistle is punctuated every few verses by this word or related words, or by words (some of them coined by Paul) compounded with *sun-*, again expressing fellowship and loving co-operation.

- Phil 1, 5. Thankful for your partnership (*koinônia*) in the gospel'.
- Phil 1, 7. 'I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me (*sun-koinônoi*) of grace'.
- Phil 1, 8. Paul's affection for the Philippians overflows into a prayer that they may share the graces he is enjoying.
- Phil 1, 19. He is aware of the support of their prayers, and it is for their sake,
- Phil 1, 25. 'for your progress and joy in the faith', that he is willing to go on living.
- Phil 1, 27. Paul rejoices in the Philippians 'standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side (*sunathlountes*) for the faith of the gospel';
- Phil 1, 30. 'engaged in the same conflict which you saw and now hear to be mine'.
- Phil 2, 1-5. Paul appeals warmly for union in spirit and in love: 'If there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation

¹ Cf 1 Cor 7.

² Exx 231.

(*koinōnia*) in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord (*sunpsuchoi*) and of one mind'. Such union requires humility and means truly sharing the mind of Christ; thus Paul agrees with the doctrine of John's first epistle, that divine love is revealed among us through human love.

'I am glad and rejoice with you all': *sunchairō*, a sharing in joy. Phil 2, 17.

Paul's 'fellowship' compound-words pile up to express his relationship with Timothy 'as a son with a Father he has served with me (*sunedouleusen*) and Epaphroditus, 'my brother and fellow-worker (*sunergos*) and fellow soldier (*sunstratiōtēs*), and your messenger and minister to my need'. Paul's love for Epaphroditus will not stop him sharing this dear friend with others and sending him to Philippi. Phil 2, 19-30.

All this sharing in love finds its spring in the passage where Paul turns to his longing to share Christ's sufferings and so his glory; here we come to a more explicit parallel with St Ignatius's theme: 'That I may share (have *koinōnia*) his sufferings, become like him (*summorphizomenos*) in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead'. Phil 3, 11.

'Brethren, join in imitating me (be *sun-mimētai* of mine)'. Phil 3, 17.

In chapter 4 Paul's love makes him simply overflow with '*sun*' - words, four of them in a single verse. Phil 4, 1-3.

Paul rejoices in the Philippians, generosity to him in the past and their good will now: 'It was kind of you to share my trouble (*sunkoinōnēsantes*)'. Paul repays their love by warm gratitude and a blessing. Phil 4, 10 ff. Phil 4, 14.

This rich vein of shared love in Philippians can be used to help offset any impression that is ever given, however wrongly, that the *Spiritual Exercises* encourage an isolationist and even subtly self-regarding spirituality.

The review of God's benefits in the Contemplation to obtain Love finds its parallels in the gratitude with which the epistle both begins and ends, above all the climax of Paul's review of his own life in chapter 3, where he acknowledges that he has been granted 'the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord';¹ this makes him press on to make the final prize his own, 'because Christ Jesus has made me his own'.² The same passage is St Paul's 'Take and

¹ Phil 3, 8.

² Phil 3, 12.

receive',¹ but the whole epistle echoes the same self-offering.

'Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty': Paul rejoices in his imprisonment because it is for Christ's service.

'Take my memory, my understanding and my will': recall once more Paul's utter self-consecration in life or death and his invitation to his readers to consecrate all their mental powers to Christ to 'have this mind among yourselves which you have in Christ Jesus', and to think about 'whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely . . .'; 'and the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus'.

'Whatever I have and possess': 'But whatever gain I had, I count as loss for the sake of Christ'.

'Give me thy love and thy grace for this is enough for me':

'For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ'; 'I can do all things in him who strengthens me'.

St Ignatius's contemplation proceeds, viewing our relationship with God from ever new angles, to evoke new responses of grateful love. It is to 1 Corinthians that we look, of course, to illustrate the reference to God 'making me his temple'; but the vision of God at work in all things for man's sake in the next point is well illustrated in Philippians:

'I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ'.

'God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure'.

'By the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself'.

'I can do all things in him who strengthens me'.

The last point of the contemplation, how all good things descend from God, while it suggests St James² more closely, has parallels in Philippians, which can give it a more explicitly christocentric character, typical of St. Paul. Thus the blessings at the beginning and the end are from Jesus Christ as well as the Father, and the peace of God is to 'keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus'.

Similarly 'The fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ', and 'The righteousness from God that depends on faith in Christ'.

¹ Cf Exx 234.

² Jas 1, 17.

Likewise it is implicit in Paul's hope at 'attaining the resurrection' Phil 4, 19. that this is God's gift through Christ. And to sum up this point 'my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus'.

Still more could be drawn out of this short yet infinitely rich epistle to illustrate the *Spiritual Exercises*; we have not paused at all the dozen or so expressions of Paul's concern for right values in Christ, which is equally a principal concern of the little book which begins with the title 'Spiritual exercises to overcome one's self and set one's life in order without being determined by any ill-ordered affection' and ends with the Rules for thinking with the Church. But enough has been said to show that it will be fruitful to make or give the *Spiritual Exercises*, especially in later repetitions, with Philippians in our hand. Some may feel that in this article a concern with love and personal relationships has been read into the Exercises which is not there, at least not explicitly. It was not done out of perversity or riding a hobby-horse, but because Philippians led in that direction. The reader may judge if it is a happy development.