

# IGNATIAN EXERCISES AGAINST A BUDDHIST BACKGROUND

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## *Presuppositions*

THE OCEAN CAN BE COMPARED only to the Ocean, the Sky only to the Sky. So runs an old Sanskrit proverb. Buddhism and Christianity are so unique, each stamped by its own irrepeatable identity, that they truly defy comparison. Nevertheless, like the Ocean and the Sky, they are not only compatible in their incomparable distinctiveness, but are even complementary. In what sense they complete each other, has been discussed in detail elsewhere<sup>1</sup> and here I can do no more than indicate a few salient points of that discussion as they form the background against which this article is written.

The two religions are complementary in that they respond to two different but mutually corrective instincts of the human spirit. Buddhism satisfies our innate thirst to *know* the liberating truth in its metapersonal ultimacy. Christianity fulfils our need to *love* the redemptive source of all beings in interpersonal intimacy. Buddhism is predominantly gnostic but not unilaterally so. For it has evolved from its inception an 'affective' spirituality which moves in contrapuntal harmony with its 'sapiential' soteriology. Conversely, Christianity is not exclusively agapeic. There has been a gnostic current of mysticism that received a strong impetus from Hellenism and stayed within the confines of orthodoxy; without it Christianity would be greatly diminished.

This general observation hides two crucial axioms. The first is that *gnosis* and *agape* are two languages of liberation which the spirit speaks within each one of us and therefore no religion can spur us to the fullness of the *humanum* without educating us to be fluent in both of them. The implication is that what the Buddhist speaks in each of us, in the sapiential idiom, the Christian in each of us must understand and respond in the language of love. And *vice*

*versa*. The second axiom is that only a person accustomed to monitor this interior dialogue introspectively is qualified to participate in the rewarding encounter between the two irreducibly distinct cultural moods which these religions have created in societies they animate.

The twofold principle is eminently valid also where a particular stream of Christianity—in this case, the Ignatian spirituality—seeks to be at home in a culture shaped by one particular branch of Buddhism, say the *Theravada* tradition, such as we encounter in Sri Lanka. A Jesuit working in such a context is called to be an ‘integrated person’, familiar with both spiritualities, rooted in two soils, so to say. This, obviously, is far from easy. An unguided zeal for personal integration, however, might expose him to two temptations. One would be to mix up the two idioms to form a kind of hybrid spirituality, a sort of a cocktail in which we taste both components though not in the purity of their individual flavours. We call this ‘syncretism’. The other is more sophisticated: the creation of a *tertium quid* in which neither one nor the other retains its identity even in a mixed form. This is known as ‘synthesis’. Neither of these methods is ecumenically helpful or spiritually fruitful.

Our option is for ‘symbiosis’, a cultivated form of reciprocal pro-existence whereby each idiom sharpens its identity in the face of the other. For their mutual exposure reveals the authentic character of each in such a way that it is possible to recognize that which is not genuine in either of them. Hence the most significant outcome of the symbiotic approach is the discovery and the consequent elimination of that which is spurious in each tradition.

In the course of retreats and recollections which I have been conducting for mixed groups of Buddhists and Christians, I have been able to collect many such inauthentic elements from both traditions. As for Ignatian spirituality—the main focus of this article—I have a rather long list from which I have selected only the following three items for our discussion here:

- 1) the theological framework of the Ignatian Exercises,
- 2) the concept of ‘contemplation’,
- 3) the notion of ‘self’ in Ignatian anthropology.

#### *A theology of Ignatian Exercises*

Praxis is the first formulation of its own theory. Regrettably, the theory implicit in the Ignatian theopraxis has not evolved into a

theology commensurate with the transforming power of the Exercises. One reason, I suspect, is that Ignatius himself was a victim of decadent scholasticism taught in his day in Paris. The study of this theology left his spiritual health so weakened that he needed much time and prayer to have it restored. It was this experience that he institutionalized into what is called 'tertianship', also known as the *scola affectus*. It is a period of rehabilitation offered to the Jesuits, an opportunity for recuperating from the ravages of scholastic studies.

The Exercises themselves contain the suffocating effects of this theological method. The Principle and Foundation (Exx 23), the quintessence of the affective spirituality fostered during the four weeks of exercises, is distorted by the scholastic formula it is cramped into. The pernicious doctrine of using creatures to go to God (the instrumental theory of creation) advocated here—the polar opposite of the ecological approach of the Buddhists—also comes from decadent scholasticism, and contrasts with the sacramental theory of creation that emerges clearly in the climactic exercise, the Contemplation to Obtain Love (Exx 230-237)—notwithstanding the use of a few terms borrowed from the schoolmen. Even in the key exercises of the First Week the exercitant with a Buddhist sensitivity tends to be confused by the forensic theology of the Latins, which places the accent on guilt and justification.

The early Jesuits allowed the Exercises to stagnate as a mere manual of spirituality, while they overdeveloped scholastic theology to its abstract extremes. Even such eminent men like Bellarmine contributed to this dichotomy. Hence the incompatibility with the Buddhist spirituality, in most instances, springs from an incongruous theology surrounding the Exercises rather than from the essence of the Ignatian praxis. The theological idiom of the Exercises does not always resonate with their affective content.

Its interaction with Buddhist spirituality may suggest one possible direction along which to look for an appropriate Ignatian theology. Though not entirely uncontaminated by scholasticism, the *Theravada* spirituality has retained its original *therapeutic* framework. The Buddha is the physician who diagnoses the human predicament (what Christians call 'fallenness') as a chronically fatal 'dis-ease': *dukkha* (pain); and its cause as *taṇhā* (greed). These are the first two noble truths. The third declares that the disease cannot be cured without removing its cause; for it is in greedlessness that

health and wholeness are to be found! The fourth is the remedy; the prescription is known as the eightfold noble path; it is the sum and substance of Buddhist spirituality. It is the way to eradicate greed or self-centredness.

It is wrong to perceive this therapeutic framework as supportive of an individualistic spirituality. Lay Buddhists as well as monks involved in liberation struggles today exploit to the maximum the explosive social doctrine concealed in the Buddha's prescription. Greed they rightly diagnose as the cause of social illness, in the sense that this perverse psychological urge is ideologically organized into a dehumanizing socio-economic system so that its removal too cannot be left to individual initiatives alone. A 'correct analysis and understanding of things as they are' (*yathābhūtaññāna*, to use the Buddha's favourite phrase), demands collective and organized effort to remove this institutionalized greed.

The ideology behind this interpretation is that greedlessness or *alpeccatā* (literally, 'seeking the bare necessities of life without any surplus') should serve as the ethical principle governing every form of social organization if we wish to eradicate the misery of the 'oppressed masses', or *daliddā* (a word and a concept which the Buddhist scriptures seem to have introduced into the Indic languages<sup>2</sup> presumably because the Buddhists were among the first in India to recognize mass-poverty as a social evil).

This principle is also the basis of emergent liberation theologies in Asia: the practice of evangelical poverty (*alpeccatā*) and the removal of forced poverty (*daridratā*) are inseparably linked,<sup>3</sup> as eradication of the cause of illness is to the healing of that illness. After all, was not the coming of the Kingdom, too, presented by the first evangelizers as God's healing mission in Jesus? Is not the entire gospel permeated with the message of human wholeness guaranteed in the resurrection and anticipated here and now through the *via crucis* of selfless love and greedless sharing?

In fact Ignatius appropriates this language in the very idea of 'Exercises' in that they are intended as a means for keeping our spiritual muscles fit for action (Exx 1). Iparraguirre observes that, among the binomials Ignatius resorts to when expressing the key ideas in the Exercises, the word 'salvation' (Exx 1) is coupled with *salud*, 'health'.<sup>4</sup> One is, therefore, curious to know whether a non-scholastic theology using the therapeutic idiom was ever available to Ignatius. History seems to have an answer.

Though by no means a professional theologian, Ignatius was practical enough to have recognized, both in the Exercises (Exx 363) and in the Constitutions,<sup>5</sup> the need for a 'positive theology' complementing 'scholastic theology'. The former is a kind of theology tending to excite 'affections', claims Ignatius, while the latter is for defining, explaining, and defending the truths against heterodoxy (Exx 363). His followers, however, showed excessive zeal for this rational, apologetical type of theology and neglected the former.

It is true that Jesuits like Petau, the 'father of positive theology', and the even more creative Montoya tried to restore the positive method, but by that time 'positive theology' had degenerated into a mere function of the scholastic method. Congar says that Ignatius (together with Juan Mair who is said to have made the first ever reference to this twofold method in his commentary on the *Sentences*, [Paris 1509]) offers us the earlier notion of 'positive theology'.<sup>6</sup> It is a theology or a method of doing theology which reflects a spiritual praxis rather than a concern for a rational justification of dogmas. Or should we say, it is a theology in the practice of human liberation? Could theology ever be anything else?

At the Council of Trent there were two voices crying in the wilderness, pleading for a return to a kind of theology which we, following Ignatius, would like to recognize as 'positive' and non-scholastic. These voices, unfortunately, were not those of the two Jesuits who served the Council as papal theologians, and who were hailed as champions of the *status quo*. Rather, they were those of the Italian Benedictines, Chiari and Ottoni, who wished that the Roman Church obviate the imminent western schism by abandoning its forensic paradigm of guilt, punishment and justification, and adopting a biblico-patristic approach, such as, for instance, the Antiochean model developed by Chrysostom, which employed the therapeutic idiom. They charged that the whole controversy on faith and good works originated from the Latin forensic theology in which not only the Roman theologians but even the Reformers were imprisoned.

These two men were virtually shouted down by the scholastics! Were the two Jesuits among those who accused them of 'Protestantism'? The followers of Ignatius would do well to ponder over this episode as narrated by Barry Collett.<sup>7</sup> The Antiochean theology preserved by the Benedictines of the *Congregazione Casinese* which extended from Messina to Provence, taught that what we inherited

was not the guilt of Adam, but mortality, and therefore it was eternal death that Christ's grace delivered us from. But the healing process by which our fatally wounded nature is restored to wholeness is left to our faith and good works.

Had Ignatius been there, and understood Latin well enough, he would have recognized a type of positive theology that his Exercises needed. If this theology disappeared after the Council,<sup>8</sup> was it because there was no Ignatius to appropriate it? After all, both the *devotio moderna* (which he absorbed from the *Imitation of Christ*) and the structure of the *Ejercitatorio* of Cisneros (which he seems to have picked up at Montserrat) were radically transformed in the laboratory of his own personal experience into a new medium of spiritual renewal in the Church. His Benedictine connection, which lasted only a few days at Montserrat, may not have put him in contact with the 'positive theology' of the *Congregazione Casinese* which certainly extended its influence over that little monastery. Had he chanced upon such a theology, he could have been the initiator of a theological renewal as he certainly was of a spiritual movement.

Though this critical observation was inspired by my Buddhist experience, it deserves to be treated also as an Ignatian critique of the Jesuit theological tradition. It is not too late to allow the Exercises to evolve into a positive theology, at least where it has to meet the challenge of Buddhist soteriology.

*'Contemplation' or 'awareness'?*

A certain unchecked tendency, as I shall explain a little later, has allowed the word 'contemplation' to function as a blanket term for the spiritual. Contemplation, accordingly, is identified as that which gives spiritual value to everything else: action without it is activism; liturgy without it is ritualism. In fact a theory is gaining ground among certain ashramite theologians in South Asia that 'the universal call to holiness' is in fact a universal call to 'contemplation'! Evidently, the word has become a synonym for God-experience.

Now, the occurrence of the term in Christian literature reveals at least three semantic variants. The Exercises often employ the term 'contemplation' to indicate a manner of using the imagination to evoke *affective* sentiments, which by the very fact of their being affective, do not remain in the speculative regions of the mind but sink gradually into the very depths of the *heart*, the locus where the

person is touched fundamentally and totally. The contemplations on the life, events and the person of Jesus in the Second, Third and the Fourth Weeks of the Exercises (Exx 101 ff) come under this category. The visual image dominates in these exercises, but other interior senses are also employed. In fact, using the gustatory idiom, Ignatius alludes to this affective experience as 'interior relishing' to be preferred to mere accumulation of (intellectual) knowledge (Exx 1).

This species of contemplation corresponds to what Buddhists call *anussati*, profound awareness, or *anupassanā*, interiorized vision of various objects of meditation such as the person of the Buddha, or even a decomposing body.

Secondly, 'contemplation' is also a technical term for the most elevated and the climactic mystical state of infused prayer. But a theology that has grown around this meaning of contemplation regards mysticism (or 'immediate experience of God') as something that really happens only in contemplative prayer. Action is spiritual only when it leads to or overflows from contemplation. This meaning determines our definition of spirituality today.

The Buddhist equivalent of this ultimate state of mysticism is *paññā*, the highest form of *gnosis* leading to nirvanic freedom. It is often referred to with expressions that use the visual idiom: e.g., *vipassanā*, *vidassanā*, which can be paraphrased as the liberative 'insight' into the ultimate truth.

What concerns us here is yet another, a typically Ignatian, understanding of contemplation, not dissociated completely from the previous two variants, and indicated by the phrase '*seeking* God in all things and all things in God', or as '*finding* God in all things'. The Buddhist terms given above do not correspond to this notion at all. Nor is it quite the same as the 'infused prayer' of the traditional mystics. Rather it denotes an abidingly affective *awareness* of God—preferably accompanied by consolation—in the midst of and through the mediation of apostolic labours undertaken in charity and obedience. The phrase 'contemplative in action', I believe, was coined by one of the early Jesuits to describe a person endowed with this habitual state of heart and mind.

Unfortunately the word 'contemplative' in that phrase cannot prevent the intrusion of the second meaning given above; hence it runs the risk of misrepresenting the Ignatian mind. Any implication that apostolic action or works of charity and justice would receive the character of a God-experience secondarily and indirectly from

the experience of God given in contemplative prayer must be removed from that phrase. From a valuable clue found in the *Memoirs* (n 129) of Blessed Pierre Favre, a reliable interpreter of the Ignatian mind, we can infer that the *actual* encounter with God ('possessing Christ' as he calls it) is in doing God's will, in obedience, in getting involved in the mission of Jesus on earth, in apostolic activity, in works of love and justice; whereas, contemplation, if that word has to be used, must mean the *affective* encounter with God in prayer. To sum up, 'contemplation' is the affective awareness of the actual God-experience mediated by works of charity and justice. This is the spirituality that social activists all over the world are hungering for.

It is clear that the visual idiom employed in the words 'contemplation' or *anupassanā*, *vipassanā* etc., does not adequately express the notion of God-consciousness implied in the Ignatian mysticism of service. *Seeking* God in all things is more than just *seeing* God. Perhaps we should look in the direction of the Buddhist practice of *sati*, an uninterrupted 'awareness' or 'mindfulness' accompanying day-to-day activity. The most pervasive spiritual exercise in *Theravada* Buddhism is known as *sati-patthāna*, establishment of mindfulness, training in constant attentiveness.

The cardinal concepts of Buddhist spirituality—*appamāda*, *amoha*, *bodhi*—all refer to this habitual state of alertness and wakefulness, or full awareness. It is the Buddhist counterpart of *nepsis* (vigilance) and *diakrisis* (discernment) of Hellenistic Christians. The pilgrim on the eightfold path discovered by the Buddha, too, adopts a permanent posture of attention to what is conducive to liberation (wholeness) and what is not.

May I suggest, here, that the auditory idiom might succeed in bringing out this dimension of vigilance more than the visual does? *Theravada* Buddhism is essentially a religion of the word and not of sacraments. The technical term for the disciple is *sāvaka*, 'the hearer' (of the salvific word, *dhamma*), also a synonym for the 'saint'. In fact in the Indian tradition, revelation is primarily *shruti*, an act of hearing rather than of seeing.

Now, the Ignatian concept of Jesuit ministry, too, was essentially one of prophetic service to the Word more than a cultic one revolving round the administration of sacraments,<sup>9</sup> and the axis of Ignatian spirituality is 'obedience' or 'listening' (*obaudire*), being ever open to God revealing the divine plan for us. This posture of alertness to the Word coincides with that much misunderstood



term 'indifference' which really connotes a trained proneness to hear and execute God's word, a positive attitude of love which regards everything else secondary to what 'the divine Majesty' commands for our salvation and for the salvation of our people (Exx 23). It is the habitual *awareness* of the goal—the wholeness and wholesomeness to be attained (for oneself and for all creation) by *doing* what one hears God say (Exx 1). This is the dynamic sense of 'discernment' or 'discerning love'—which is summed up as a 'mysticism of service'. This is why the daily examination of consciousness plays such a central role in Ignatian spirituality.

The word and the concept of contemplation not only fail to bring out this rich meaning common to both traditions, but can also be misleading even within the Ignatian spirituality. Let me insist that the reason is not to be located merely in the visual idiom it employs, but in the fact that in its early history the occurrence of this word reveals two dangerous shifts in emphasis. The first is the Hellenistic manner of 'seeing' God as supreme beauty to be contemplated, and of relegating all action as secondary and preparatory to that beatific vision. This is unbiblical. By contrast, the prayerful activists Ignatius wanted his sons to be are expected to regard (apostolic) action as the context and the purpose of prayer.<sup>10</sup>

The second is the cultural shift from *orality* to *literacy*; from the Word proclaimed and heard in the present historical moment in the midst of a people, to the written word of the scriptures read in private and reflected upon. In the *lectio divina*, the Word could cease to speak through history and community, and thus distance itself away as an ahistorical object of contemplation! The dynamism and the immediacy of the Word demanding response through action could be compromised; the alertness, the awareness, the vigilance and all the urgency of attention to the *hic et nunc* which both *Theravada* and the Ignatian spirituality inculcate tend to be replaced by a self-hypnotic trance.

Should, then, the word contemplation be allowed to play the dominant role that tradition has assigned to it in determining the very notion of spirituality by entering into its definition? A change of paradigm, I submit, will ensure a rediscovery of the authentic. This is true at least where Ignatian and *Theravada* spiritualities have to meet and interact. For, in both these traditions, the focal point of spirituality is self-denial, not contemplation as such, though the latter is an 'exercise' that is useful and even necessary.

*A self without self*

The most challenging experience in a Buddhist-Christian encounter is the discovery of the pivotal role that 'self-denial' plays in the *Theravada* as well as Ignatian spirituality. For self-love is as much a hindrance to Buddhist *gnosis* as it is a rejection of Christian *agape*.

The contemporary emphasis on self-assertion and self-fulfilment—an understandable reaction against certain masochistic spiritualities of the past—does not create a comfortable climate to discuss this question. Yet the spiritual journeys of the founder of Buddhism and the founder of the Jesuits bear a striking similarity in the way they led to the discovery of this basic truth. Each of them a warrior hailing from a noble family, became intensely aware of an impulse to change his course of life radically, and embarked on a path of excessive asceticism that bordered on self-torture (*atta-kilamatha*) before each of them discovered that true freedom lay in the middle path of 'self-realization through self-negation.'

I am aware that this doctrine has to vindicate its validity against criticism coming from three different directions: from liberal theologians, from liberation theologians and from feminist theologians.

In the framework of western liberal theology, its emphasis on the 'dignity of the human person' as well as its theological discourse on human rights—at least in the way it is generally propounded by contemporary writers—makes the sovereignty of the individual self the basis, centre and apex of a just society. Hence self-realization receives more than due emphasis in this scheme. It is not surprising that an unqualified demand for self-abnegation is viewed with suspicion.

Here two remarks are in order. First, the liberal theologian's perception of the self does not seem to withstand the devastating critique of Latin American liberation theologians.<sup>11</sup> Second, we pose the whole question here from the perspective of the *other* rather than of the self, of duties rather than rights. The Jewish scriptures, for instance, situate the problem in the covenantal scheme of 'obligations' to the others, specially to the weak.<sup>12</sup> In the Indic cultural paradigm implicitly accepted by Buddhists, self-abnegation is a corollary to the thesis that self's innate orientation towards *others* in terms of a prior existence of obligations (*dharmāh*), makes it impossible to realize one's own self except with self-restraint. Also in the Ignatian scheme the 'otherward' orientation enters the

very definition of self so that its 'realization' cannot take place except as an 'eccentric' movement towards the self's innermost centre which is, in fact, situated outside the self i.e. in the *Totally Other*.

As for the liberation theologians, we endorse their suspicion that this doctrine of 'self-abnegation for the sake of self-realization' could lead to a self-centred, antisocial manner of defining spirituality. Note, however, that in the vast project of human liberation, person and society are interlaced. Our study here is only a 'close-up' on one aspect, and in no way implies a denial of the other. Furthermore, the debate among the tricontinental third world theologians has confirmed that social analysis is not by itself adequate in the context of liberative struggles. Introspective analysis of the self is the other face of class analysis, as we have argued in the course of that debate.<sup>13</sup>

We, too, join the feminists in declaring that the way this doctrine has been misused in the past to build an aggressive male-dominated Church and society on the graves of female egos is to be condemned as deplorable and intolerable. However, instead of questioning the validity of the doctrine of self-abnegation, as a few of them do, I would rather demand that the males begin to practise it with the same zeal with which they had earlier imposed it on the other half of humanity. The abuse of a good thing is no reason to abandon it.

Whoever, guided by Ignatius, has made the First Week's 'journey to the hell of self-knowledge', to borrow Balthasar's powerful expression,<sup>14</sup> does not hesitate to confess that self is self's only enemy. Hence the rather common teaching that other creatures could be a hindrance to our encounter with God—as insinuated in the scholastics' 'instrumental theory of creation', that has crept into the Principle and Foundation (Exx 23)—is a misreading of what goes on in the hidden corners of the human psyche. The only agent that keeps God away from us is our own self. It is the self as self's own creature that resists the Creator and *uses* other creatures as tools for self-gratification or greed. In fact to *use* creatures *tantum quantum* even to arrive at God, is a sinful exercise that can never be a God-experience. Self-centredness in whatever form is a sin against others, besides being self-destructive.

However, the Ignatian Exercises, where they are less tied to scholastic theology, persuade us that love shows itself in deeds of self-giving (Ex 231). Love compels the isolated self to die that it

may rise as a related self. This growth of the individual to the fulness of personhood through communion involves the most central message of Christ: that the freedom of my own *self* essentially revolves round that of *others* who, as the proxy of the Supreme Other, are both the recipients and the agents of that freedom (Mt 25,34-46).

This is why Ignatius was mulishly stubborn in maintaining, against all currents to the contrary both within and outside the Order, that the real index of spiritual maturity is not formal prayer, not even contemplative prayer, but self-abnegation (see Exx 189). By self-abnegation he specially meant the hardships and trials that our apostolic action undertaken in obedience and charity necessarily brings with it, and which we embrace cheerfully for love of God and neighbour.<sup>15</sup> Hence Ignatius defines the goal of the Exercises not as perfection in prayer but as freeing the self of selfish tendencies *and* seeking/finding God's will (Exx 1); while elsewhere he simply says that the purpose of the Exercises is self-conquest (Exx 21). There is no contradiction here. Called by God to assume any role God would assign to us in Jesus' mission on earth (apostolic spirituality as radical obedience), we are also summoned to sacrifice all, even our own self, for that apostolic end (spirituality as 'indifference'). The essence of the Ignatian doctrine is that 'continuous self-abnegation' accompanying our apostolic involvement is precisely what facilitates prayer and makes our action mystical.

The Buddha's concept of self-abnegation, however, is more than ascetical, it is ontological, as the Theravadins interpret it; and therefore, more radical than the Ignatian version of it. So it appears at first sight. That the human person is soul-less (*anatta*), that is to say, a series of fluctuating psychophysical moments with no permanent immortal substratum, is the liberating truth realized through *gnosis*. There is no 'I' or 'me' or 'mine' is the Buddhist claim, in contrast with the Vedantin's 'You are That'!

The Buddha's denial of the self, accompanied by his insistence that self is one's only refuge (*atta-sarana*) and the only island (*atta-dīpa*) in this ocean of existence, has led to much speculation among contemporary scholars, some postulating the existence of two selves, one to be noughted and the other to be cultivated.<sup>16</sup> I would refrain from reducing the mystery of the self to numerical terms. The paradox must remain: there is one self in me, and 'in reality' (*paramatthato*) it does not exist.

If this doctrine sounds nihilistic, could it be because, like Ignatius, we have subscribed to the Hellenistic belief in the existence of an immortal and incorruptible soul, instead of working within the biblical anthropology which, to put it mildly, does not cling to such a belief?<sup>17</sup> Ignatius' image of our fallen nature, as a 'soul imprisoned in this corruptible body' (Exx 47) projects a theory that is not essential to Christian spirituality. The Buddhists' absolute denial of an unchanging, undying spiritual substance in humans is the most articulate extrabiblical approximation to the biblical teaching about our creatureliness, our dustiness, i.e., our absolutely indebted existence. Who are we but breakable pots made of clay? Are we not mere mud sustained as living beings by the gratuitous infusion of divine breath but for which we would crumble back to the dust whence we came?<sup>18</sup>

This anthropology, totally absent in the Ignatian Exercises, does, nevertheless, emerge faintly from the 'Christology' of the Second and Third Weeks. One, of course, needs a bit of imagination and creativity to educe the true nature of the human person from what is revealed there of the person of Jesus. Here, Ignatius shows he had truly *known* Jesus, by *following* him. (Has anyone found another way to know him?) It is the Jesus of positive theology, not of the scholastics.

This Ignatian image of Jesus can be brought into sharper focus with the aid of a 'Spirit-Christology' that would tilt more towards the Fathers than the scholastics. Such a Christology sees Jesus to be empty of all self. In taking our human form, he became, like us, a brittle earthen pot kept in one piece by our maternal Father's life-giving breath of love, the Spirit. He is the fragile container of this Spirit, *pneumatophor*—what by sin we refuse to be. Like us he too had no self, an *attā* of his own, so to say, save that of God.

According to an accepted version of 'Spirit Christology', Jesus is 'sheer obedience' and 'perfect availability', a perpetual 'yes to the Father', 'not an end in himself' (Balthasar), but 'an indebted existence pure and simple' (Kasper), so that, as the Spirit-bearing pot of clay, he was destined to crash on the cross of failure and break to bits, spilling out the healing waters of the Spirit on all the world.<sup>19</sup> Jesus is God's way of pouring out God's love which is God's self. Jesus is God's 'eccentric' act of seeking God's centre outside the divine circle, in the human other: *propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem descendit de caelis*.

This Jesus who reveals himself to anyone who is prepared to follow him in the 'third degree of humility' (Exx 167) on the *suññatā* (*kenosis*) of the cross, is the giver of the Spirit, the true Self who holds us from succumbing irreversibly to the dustward pull of our mortal nature; who breathes upon us the name by which each of us is gratuitously suspended in his or her fragile identity. To know one's true self as utterly non-existent except in relation to the Other is the wisdom that comes from the cross; *gnosis* born of *agape*.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Pieris, A.: *Love meets wisdom* (Orbis Books, New York, 1988), pp 9-12, 111-119.

<sup>2</sup> Chakravarty, U.: 'The social philosophy of Buddhism and the problem of inequality', *Social compass*, XXXIII/2-3 (1986), p 205.

<sup>3</sup> See Pieris, A.: *An Asian theology of liberation* (Orbis Books, New York, 1988), pp 20-23, 38-50, 75-76, 121 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Iparraguirre, I.: *A key to the study of the Spiritual Exercises* (St Paul's Publications, Alahabad, second edition, 1960), p 35.

<sup>5</sup> *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* (ed and trans George E. Ganss, The Institute of Jesuit Sources, St Louis, Missouri, 1970), Nos 351, 446, 464.

<sup>6</sup> Congar, Y.: *A history of theology* (Doubleday and Co, Inc., New York, 1968), pp 171-174.

<sup>7</sup> Collett, B.: *Italian Benedictine scholars and the Reformation* (Oxford, 1985), chapters 4-8, as referred to, in *art. infra cit.*, p 17.

<sup>8</sup> Collett, B.: 'The Benedictine origins of a mid-sixteenth-century heresy', *The journal of religious history* (Sydney), 14/1 (June 1986), pp 17-18.

<sup>9</sup> See Buckley, M. J.: 'Jesuit priesthood: its meaning and commitments', *Studies in the spirituality of Jesuits*, viii/5 (December 1976), p 138 and *passim*.

<sup>10</sup> Cf de Guibert, J.: *The Jesuits, their spiritual doctrine and practice, a historical study* (St Louis, Missouri, 1972), p 585.

<sup>11</sup> See my 'Human Rights language and liberation theology' in Marc H. Ellis and Otto Maduro (editors): *The future of liberation theology: essays in honour of Gustavo Gutierrez* (Orbis Books, New York, 1989), pp 299-310.

<sup>12</sup> See Sieghart, P.: 'Christianity and human rights', *The month* (February 1949), p 49.

<sup>13</sup> See Pieris, A.: *An Asian theology of liberation*, p 80-81 and *passim*. See also the discussion on personal poverty, *ibid.*, pp 15-20.

<sup>14</sup> von Balthasar, H. U.: *Church and world* (Herder and Herder, New York, 1967), p 104.

<sup>15</sup> Stierli, J.: 'Ignatian prayer "Seek God in all things"', *Woodstock letters*, Spring 1965 (Reprint, New Jersey, no date), *passim*.

<sup>16</sup> For a more detailed study on this, see Pieris, A.: '*Citta, atta and attabhava* in Pali exegetical writings', *Buddhist studies in honour of Walpola Rahula* (AA.VV., Gordon Fraser, London, 1980), pp 213-222.

<sup>17</sup> de Silva, L. A.: *The problem of the self in Buddhism and Christianity* (Study Centre for Religion and Society, Colombo, 1975), pp 72-84.

<sup>18</sup> See Pieris, A.: 'The Spirit dimension of change', *The Way*, 28/1 (January 1988), pp 34-41.

<sup>19</sup> O'Donnell, J.: 'In him and over him: the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus', *Gregorianum* 70/1 (1989), pp 28, 34, 36, and *passim*.