

FINDING GOD IN ALL THINGS

Christian Contemplation and the Ignatian Exercises

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IN HIS IMPORTANT ESSAY, 'The Contemplative Phase of the Ignatian Exercises', Franz Jalics is trying to connect Ignatius' pedagogy with the habitual practice of contemplation. In doing so, he is touching not only on a major concern running through the *Spiritual Exercises*, but also on a central theme of Christian spirituality. At the outset of his article, Jalics refers to the importance of ongoing reflection and discussion. This present article is therefore offered as a response to his. It expresses reservations, not about what Jalics does but about how he understands and describes what he does. It is written in the conviction, shared by both of us, that this kind of critical work is more than mere scholarly pedantry. Such reflection enhances the very experience of the Exercises, and thus enriches both classical and modern interpretations of the text.

The Book of the Exercises

Jalics sees the final part of the Fourth Week as not just a preparation for life afterwards, but effectively as a Fifth Week. On a number of counts, however, this claim goes against Ignatius' text.

We need to be clear that 'contemplation', from the very sense of the word ('con' derives from the Latin *cum*—with), and in accord with the whole of Christian tradition is not some kind of resting in the self, a state without an object, but rather an intuitive looking *at*, meeting *with*. Often, prayer and meditation begin discursively, proceeding through different features of some holy reality or text. They become contemplative when they stay with just one feature, intuitively.

Jalics is also right to insist that the Contemplation to Attain Love and the Three Methods of Prayer are not merely appendices to the Exercises, but integral moments within Ignatius' process. However, their use is not confined to the Fourth Week: they shape the whole process, drawing out what is already implicit in the Principle and Foundation. In all 'the other things on the face of the earth' (Exx 23), the human person should feel God's love; they should prayerfully draw

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these things into the praise of God. These attitudes, expressed in the Contemplation to Attain Love and the Three Methods of Prayer, are in no way specific to the Fourth Week, as we can see from the simple fact that they are followed immediately by the strikingly low-key Mysteries of the Life of Jesus, which certainly are intended for use throughout the whole process. Ignatius, following the understanding of the Bible current at his time, confines himself to the earthly Jesus, from the Annunciation to the Ascension—he refrains from going on to the Pentecost experience, which is intended to take place within the exercitants themselves. Here too he is articulating what is central to the Exercises as a whole: Jesus Christ in his humanity.

It is also a mistake to see the Contemplation to Attain Love as a final phase in which the senses and the mental faculties recede so as to make space for deeper contemplation. On the contrary, this contemplation aims to find God with every faculty and in all things. The exercitant's whole self is engaged: 'to bring to memory' (Exx 234.1), 'to look' (Exx 235.1), deliberately 'to consider how God works and labours for me in all things created on the face of the earth . . . as in the heavens, elements, plants, fruits, cattle etc.' (Exx 236). There is something deeply contemplative here, and Ignatius wants to lead us into it—but he is not doing so by offering a style of prayer that moves us away from 'all things' and lets the mental faculties recede. In the 'Take, Lord, receive', Ignatius indeed surrenders his faculties to God—not, however, by bringing them to stillness, but rather by actively setting them to work for God. There is no question, therefore, of our directing our regard simply on to God, rather than on to holy or divine things.

Similar points can be made about the Three Methods of Prayer. Jalics is wrong to see the text as implying a three-stage process of growth, paralleling the Three Classes of Person or the Three Modes of Humility. All three methods can be used throughout the four weeks of the Exercises. Moreover, the third method, corresponding to the Eastern church's Jesus prayer, is not centred simply on the divine reality, but also on the meanings of the words a person might take from a particular prayer. Thoughts of one's own baseness (Exx 258.4) can therefore be understood, *pace* Jalics, in terms of the First Week. In short, one cannot legitimately read Ignatius as putting forward any kind of 'contemplative phase' in a sort of Fifth Week, in the way Jalics suggests.

The Contemplative Life

For Jalics, Ignatius' text refers to a contemplative existence: one in which our attention is directed fully to God's presence, in which our faculties, and even divine things, recede. After the transition, the retreatant is supposed to be looking only at the divine person, letting all their faculties come to stillness, and even to be forgetting about consolation and desolation. Contemplation is understood as passivity, as letting one's own activity become transparent so that God is doing everything. Even Scripture would be a disturbance at this stage.

The theology implied here is problematic. It seems to be making a disjunction between meditative effort under grace and a pure experience of God. Our effort prepares us for a subsequent grace of contemplation, in which nothing else remains but pure awareness, an awareness in which God's presence can take root. Any activity proper to ourselves disturbs this experience.

The implication is that that divine activity increases as human activity diminishes. The mystical high point Ignatius refers to—'your grace is enough'—is somehow split into two elements: active preparation and passive receptivity. Contrast this with Eckhart's second sermon on Martha and Mary, in which he sees Martha's activity as nearer to God than Mary's contemplation. Or with Karl Rahner, for whom a human being acting responsibly is one with God. Or with Teilhard, who could find God in the nib of his fountain-pen.

This kind of split was common in neo-scholastic theology: to find God, you had to leave the things of the world behind. It is precisely against this style of thought that Ignatius' 'finding God in all things'—not 'alongside' things or 'behind' things or 'above' things—is directed. Even the third method of prayer incorporates, quite consciously and deliberately, human activity—the rhythms of breathing and of the body—into an approach to God.

Rooted Misunderstandings

There is nothing new about the kind of conflict I am pointing to: the conflict between Ignatius' true concern (which, it seems to me, is also Jalics's) and the artificial way in which Jalics is expressing it. The difficulties are long-standing and perennial. How does one properly articulate the experience of God? How can one express truly a Christian understanding of human life under God? What is involved in the phrase of Ignatius' disciple, Jerónimo Nadal: 'at the same time contemplative and in action'? Sylvie Robert comments that this phrase 'invites us to understand that God can be known even without our

focusing on God, and indeed even when we are not thinking about God'.¹ 'Knowing God but not thinking about God': it is not that divine action comes after or alongside human action, or that our experience of God comes after or alongside that of the other things on the earth, but rather that the two interpenetrate.

Uncertainties on this issue threatened the very existence of the early Society of Jesus. Robert refers to what has become a famous observation of Karl Rahner's, to the effect that even today we have hardly begun to understand what Ignatius tells us about the relationship between God and humanity.² We remember that Ignatius himself was repeatedly accused of illuminism, and indeed imprisoned for it. But it is not just the Ignatian tradition which illustrates the conflict.³ Many mystical writers have been condemned by Church authority, and misunderstood by later scholars, in ways that betray a scandalous misunderstanding—sometimes on both sides—of the reality we call contemplation. The Messalians, an early monastic group, were attacked as early as 431 at the Council of Ephesus, on the ground that they were teaching a 'permanent prayer', in which the demon was driven out, God's presence was definitively and permanently in consciousness, and human activity excluded. Evagrius was condemned on similar grounds at the Council of Constantinople in 553, and even Hans Urs von Balthasar and Karl Rahner believed he had overstepped the limits of Christianity by teaching a form of meditation that went beyond all created realities.⁴ Marguerite Porete's teaching about an experience in which 'the soul bothers itself about nothing, neither itself nor its neighbour, nor even God' was wilfully and over-dogmatically misunderstood, and she was burnt at the stake in 1310. Some centuries later, in Spain, Miguel de Molinos (1628-1696) wrote for his part of what was condemned as 'quietism': 'a contemplation in a state where spirit and heart have come perfectly to rest'. Highly regarded in Spain and in Rome as a spiritual director, he was nevertheless for some

¹ Sylvie Robert, *Une autre connaissance de Dieu: Le discernement chez Ignace de Loyola* (Paris: Cerf, 1997), p. 474.

² Robert, *Une autre connaissance de Dieu*, p. 23. In English, see also Philip Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), especially pp. 68-98, 260.

³ For what follows, see Joseph de Guibert's collection, *Documenta ecclesiastica christianae perfectionis stadium spectantia* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1931), and my own *Christliche Mystik: Texte aus zwei Jahrtausenden* (Würzburg: Echter, 1989).

⁴ Hans Urs von Balthasar, 'The Metaphysics and Mystical Theology of Evagrius', *Monastic Studies*, 3 (1965), pp. 183-195; on Rahner and Evagrius, see Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 16 (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1979), pp. 97-100 (in the course of an essay on Origen), as well as Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, pp. 22-24. More recent scholars are more positive; see for example Gabriel Bunge, 'The "Spiritual Prayer": On the Trinitarian Mysticism of Evagrius of Pontus', *Monastic Studies*, 17 (1987), 191-208.

reason condemned in 1685. Under torture, he recanted, but remained in prison a further nine years till his death. In the nineteenth century, Antonio Rosmini-Serbati was condemned for 'ontologism', for his teaching about how human beings can behold God directly, even on this earth—now, however, there is talk of his being beatified.

These few examples are enough to show that there is nothing new in the questions raised by Jalics. The idea of a contemplative life under God, in which God's reality is so close to human experience that other things—one's own interests, meditative effort, whatever is not God, even Scripture—recede, has been part of Christian spirituality from the beginning. The imprecise ways in which friends and foes alike have formulated this reality have given rise to some of the most scandalous episodes in the history of the Church. The issues raised, however, remain crucial; they require careful thought.

The Jesus Prayer

Before addressing these issues directly, we need to deal briefly with the method of prayer that Jalics presents in terms of the Eastern Church's Jesus prayer. Jalics's account differs markedly from post-Christian writing such as the following:

Here, the human person, beyond all forms and names, is one with the infinity of the Mystery itself. The mantra leads to an experience in which contrasts and differences are dissolved into an undifferentiated unity of consciousness. This can be designated both as absolute Being and as absolute Nothingness. The word's content is here insignificant. It works on a psycho-spiritual level, beyond the control of our discursive thinking. The mantra links us to powers and currents that are always flowing through the body, but which are strengthened through this exercise of repetitive prayer. It sets us on an inward path, and leads us to the real sources of being.

For Jalics, by contrast, the reality of Jesus Christ is central. His account resembles that given by Kallistos Ware, the Orthodox Archbishop based in Oxford. Ware identifies four essential elements in the prayer of the heart: the invocation of Jesus' holy name; a prayer, accompanied by a feeling of guilt for sin, for God's mercy; regular repetitions which are at least frequent if not constant; and a yearning for non-discursive or apophatic prayer.⁵ The rhythmic repetition

⁵ Kallistos Ware and Emmanuel Jungclaussen, *Hinführung ins Herzensgebet* (Freiburg: Herder, 1982).

prepares an inward space for stillness and awareness, just as in autogenic training or in the 'transcendental meditation' taught by the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Within this bodily and psychic stillness the Christian meditator can set a 'dialogical relationship' with Jesus Christ. If the Jesus prayer is authentic, its dynamic then leads the one praying to a sense of their sinfulness, a sense of how far they are from the holiness of God, or indeed of their being 'nothing'—to echo both Meister Eckhart and Thérèse of Lisieux. That is why the Jesus prayer in its classical form runs, 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, be merciful to me, a sinner'. This radically dialogical experience—'I am a sinner; you are my Jesus!'—is central to the authentic practice of the Jesus prayer and to the Exercises, even if it is not always explicit in our awareness.

Interreligious Dialogue

A reader who has lived many years in India has commented as follows on Jalics's article:

Jalics says nothing about the links between what he says and the East, but they are nevertheless very obvious. His method is very close to *Vipassana*, which is practised very successfully in India. Hundreds of Christians come regularly to *Vipassana* exercises. There is clearly some kind of dependence here. However, I am delighted to see that in Jalics the content and the atmosphere are radically Christian.⁶

Vipassana is a Buddhist meditation practice, aiming at 'direct experiential insight into reality' on the basis of the discipline of 'constant awareness':

Understanding of the specific nature and interconnectedness of mental and material phenomena will lead the meditator eventually to experience the three general characteristics: impermanence (*Anicca*), unsatisfactoriness (*Dukkha*), and insubstantiality (*Anatta*).⁷

The echoes of the 'nothing' we find in Western mystical figures such as Eckhart or Thérèse are obvious. Jalics has probably come to this method through the development of Buddhism known as Zen Buddhism.

⁶ Fr Josef Neuner, in private correspondence.

⁷ *The Penguin Dictionary of Religions*, edited by John R. Hinnells (London: Penguin, 1997 [1984]), pp. 549-550.

This sort of emptying of consciousness—often helped by breathing control and bodily posture—is to be found in all religions. Oriental mantra meditation is its classic expression, and the Eastern Church's Jesus prayer works on the same psychosomatic principles. These methods lead a person to break through all the presuppositions and biases inherent in everyday awareness, and approach the source of all their capacities, the place where they can be themselves, free from the restrictions of images, unconscious ideas, and linguistic mechanisms. They are in what the German mystics called the *Seelengrund*: the ground of the soul.

However, there are dangers. There is some reserve even today in the Eastern Church regarding the more radical, hesychastic practices of the Jesus prayer, as we can see from the writings of Theophan the Recluse. A Zen master has also been quoted as saying, 'Zen meditation without religion is useless, indeed dangerous'. The Zen-master should accompany the pupil like a good psychologist. If a person uses these methods without some kind of connection—*religio* in the root sense—to a source of values, then they can be led to a self-sufficiency that is almost diabolical. The evil Samurai in Japanese tradition are all trained in Zen, and there was an unholy alliance between almost the entire Zen elite of Japan and Japanese fascism.⁸ Klaus Engel has shown that the experience of pure 'emptiness' linked to meditation can also be brought about by mechanical, chemical or electrical manipulation.⁹ It can be manufactured by subhuman factors. For Zen experience to be genuinely Christian, it must involve an element of free decision.

If, however, a person is steeped in a religious tradition, then this kind of meditation method deepens their awareness of God and their attentiveness. If these exercises are undertaken in a Christian context and out of Christian conviction, they can strengthen that conviction, and become a truly apophatic, mystical experience of God. They touch on a level of consciousness that breaks through our everyday constrictions, and help us approach the sphere where we are truly ourselves. Christian mysticism thus sees the way of self-awareness as a royal road to God.

Quite clearly, Jalics's approach to the *Spiritual Exercises* is Christian, decisively so. In this context, meditation or contemplation has a deep Christian significance, even when it does not involve explicit references to Christian realities. The process of awakening to one's own interiority—even if this seems to be 'without content'—is

⁸ Brian (Daizen) A. Victoria, *Zen at War* (New York: Weatherhill, 1997).

⁹ Klaus Engel, *Meditation*, 2 volumes (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1997 [1995]).

fundamentally an awakening to one's Christian interiority, and as such an essential moment in the dynamic of the Exercises.

Two provisos, however, remain. Firstly, and more importantly: given that these days there is so much misuse of the idea of 'inner experience', we need to insist carefully on what it is that makes contemplative prayer or meditation Christian. Secondly, and less importantly: there is more to the dynamic of the Exercises than simply a 'contemplative attitude'.

Christianity and Contemplation: Three Witnesses

The question of what makes contemplation Christian is not one on which I can be systematic, or at least not here. Instead, I shall simply make reference to some classic texts from the tradition. Such writing is closer to the actual experience than statements articulated in theological concepts.

Ruusbroec

The writings of Jan van Ruusbroec (1293-1381) are widely admired today: they have a freshness, and a sense of careful discrimination, which are truly astounding. They have been used fruitfully for inter-faith dialogue.¹⁰ In his *Spiritual Espousals*, Ruusbroec analyses experiences of a kind very close to what is offered in many modern meditation classes:

Now consider: when a person is bare and unassailed by images with respect to their senses, and empty, without activity, with respect to their higher faculties, then they enter into rest by mere nature. And all people can find and possess this rest in themselves in mere nature, without the grace of God, if only they can empty themselves of images and of all works. . . . But now consider the manner in which a person surrenders themselves to this natural rest. It is a sitting-still, without any practice within or without, in emptiness, so that rest may be found and may abide unhindered. But rest practised in this way is not lawful, for it produces blindness in a person, in ignorance, and a sinking down into themselves without activity. And this rest is nothing but an emptiness into which a person falls and they forget themselves and God and everything, with respect to any activity. . . . In itself, this rest is no sin, for it is in all people by nature, if they could but empty themselves.

¹⁰ Paul Mommaers and Jan van Bragt, *Mysticism Buddhist and Christian: Encounters with Jan van Ruusbroec* (New York: Crossroad, 1995).

Ruusbroec contrasts this stillness with a specifically Christian experience:

This rest is contrary to the supernatural rest which one possesses in God, for that is a loving transport, with a simple inner beholding, into incomprehensible brightness. This rest in God is always sought actively with inner yearning, and is found in enjoyable inclination, and is possessed in the transport of love, and when it is possessed, it is nevertheless being sought: this rest is exalted above natural rest, as high as God is exalted above all creatures.¹¹

We are dealing here, in other words, with a stillness, a presence to oneself, that is also at the same time an experience of encounter in love. Ruusbroec calls this the 'common life' (*ghemeyne leven*), a reflection of the life of God's Trinity that is at once 'a fathomless good without mode' and 'outflowing generous commonness'.¹² It is in terms of this that any experience of self or of God must be measured: it should be an experience of being centred in one's true self with God that yet leads one on beyond the self—in Ignatian terms to the God who is ever greater. Moreover, this transition intrinsically involves a move outwards to other people, in a love marked by activity—activity, however, that does not disturb the integration within, but rather embodies it. Teilhard de Chardin put the point in a different idiom: 'True union does not dissolve into each other the beings it unites, but rather differentiates them more fully'.¹³

Merton

Thomas Merton (1915-1968), who died tragically during an inter-faith meeting in Bangkok, became increasingly, as his life developed, a pioneer in the struggle for unity between the world's religions. He was particularly struck by Zen meditation. After his death, a manuscript on which he had been working intensively was found on his desk: 'The Inner Experience'.¹⁴ Here he begins by stressing the need for a person to come to themselves, and to find the 'inner self':

The first thing that you have to do, before you start thinking about such a thing as contemplation, is to try to recover your basic

¹¹ Jan van Ruusbroec, *The Spiritual Espousals*, translated by Helen Rolfson (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1995), p. 108, lines b.1979-1998.

¹² Ruusbroec, *Spiritual Espousals*, pp. 81, 82, lines b.897-898, b.932-933.

¹³ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, 'The Salvation of Mankind' (1936), in *Science and Christ*, translated by René Hague (London: Collins, 1968), pp. 128-150, here p. 137.

¹⁴ Published in instalments in *Cistercian Studies*, vols. 18-19 (1983-1984). The quotations below come from vol. 18 (1983), pp. 3, 9-10, 14.

natural unity, to reintegrate your compartmentalized being into a coordinated and simple whole, and learn to live as a unified human person.

Only this kind of personality can lead us to contemplation.

But then, on this basis, he articulates the specifically Christian experience of God: 'The Zen writers might perhaps contend that they were interested exclusively in what is actually "given" in their experience, and that Christianity is superadding a theological interpretation and extrapolation on top of the experience itself'. However, Merton, as a Christian, knows that the matter is different. Christianity is not an extraneous interpretation, but the full reality of the human:

For us, there is an infinite metaphysical gulf between the being of God and the being of the soul, between the 'I' of the Almighty and our own inner 'I'. Yet paradoxically our inmost 'I' exists in God and God dwells in it. But it is nevertheless necessary to distinguish between the experience of one's own inmost being and the awareness that God has revealed Himself to us in and through our inner self.

Like Tauler and John of the Cross, Merton explores this paradox of the Christian experience of God in a variety of ways: it is at once unity with oneself and unity with God; though the earth should shatter, the soul's bond with God remains, bridging the infinite abyss between God and humanity. Merton writes of how 'this journey of faith and love . . . brings us into the depths of our own being, and releases us that we may voyage beyond ourselves to God'. In Christian contemplation, we are at once aware of union with God and of our enormous separation from God. 'Finding God in all things' is a reality shaped by this truth, only expressible in paradox.

The Early Monks and their Modern Interpreters

A brief look at an episode in the research of Christian spirituality can bring home to us the difficulties involved in this paradox of a God who is at once within us and above us. The Alsatian Jesuit, Irénée Hausherr, had a very high reputation among specialists in early Christian monasticism, and his work also expressed his own spiritual commitment. In a study of how the early monks understood the biblical injunction to pray constantly, he uncovered two different lines of

interpretation.¹⁵ One stressed the good intention with which the day's work is done: the good monk places the day's work under God's protection, and then strives to keep the commandments and live the life of virtue. The other interpretation, which he found in the Messalians and in Evagrius, Hausherr called 'heretical': for these writers, a person needed to have God constantly in their awareness as they went through their daily life.

Later researchers, such as Jean Leclercq and Gabriel Bunge, have shown that Hausherr, despite his love for monastic spirituality, misread it radically—the mentality of his time was too rationalist and narrow. Clearly the monastic writers were not commending an irresponsible quietism, a resting in God that simply ignored earthly reality. But the crassly rationalist theology conditioning Hausherr's reading of the material seemed to leave him with only two other possible interpretations, neither of which was attractive: either a person beheld God directly, and everything else fell to one side; or a person would look, perhaps devoutly, at what was not God, and then God would recede. Further research revealed, however, that monastic spirituality had got beyond this rationalistic dilemma. There is also an awareness of God, a 'life in God's presence', which does not focus directly on God, but nevertheless holds God within consciousness. Robert's account of Ignatius is not far from this.

This version of experiencing God does not involve the extraordinary. A child can have this experience—just as they can play confidently in the assurance of their parents' protection, and be sustained by this even while their direct attention is elsewhere. The psychologist Erik Erikson speaks of a 'basic trust', a reality very much in consciousness, but not focused on a particular object.¹⁶ Jesus' way of putting the matter was the command, 'do not worry' (Matthew 6:25). It was in this way that the early monks understood the biblical teaching about praying at all times.

The Exercises as an Initiation into the Contemplative Life

It is in these terms that we must interpret the idea of contemplation and the contemplative life. The old debate about whether the Exercises aimed at union or at a practical choice rested on a failure to see what Ignatius meant by 'finding God in all things'.¹⁷ God is not merely a

¹⁵ Irénée Hausherr, 'La prière perpétuelle du chrétien', in *Hésychasme et prière* (Rome: Oriental Institute, 1966), 255-306.

¹⁶ Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (New York: Norton, 1963 [1950]), pp. 247-249.

¹⁷ This point is developed in the article by Sylvie Robert that follows.

distant goal; God is present precisely to and in the process of making a choice. Conversely, contemplation does not make—as some of the Missal prayers would suggest—everything other than God stale; still less does it mean that objects disappear. What is at stake, rather, is a sense of how God can be known without our thoughts being explicitly directed to God..

Contemplation, on this account, lends a quality of significance to the whole process; it does not refer primarily to a particular method of prayer and meditation such as the Jesus prayer. Ignatius' methods of meditation bring us quite deliberately into the presence of Jesus as he lived in history—the exegesis of Ignatius' time had no problem with such an idea. Today we can demythologize this, and make links between different kinds of devotion to Jesus and different stages of human development. But for Ignatius this sort of interpretation could only ever be secondary, something that flowed from the simple looking at the Jesus of history. He obviously believed that the figure of the historical Jesus, divine and human, is powerful enough to transform the one meditating here and now, and lead them into an experience of the 'Spirit of Jesus'. Anyone who has worked along this path, and made a decision for Jesus, has been formed by a dialogue with God, and is living the reality of contemplation. This is the message of the four points of the Contemplation to Attain Love.

Final Reflections

There are a few other simple points to be made in order to help us understand properly the valuable things Fr Jalics does. Firstly, as we have seen, Ignatius' Exercises presuppose a sophisticated image of God—they move beyond the naive rationalism for which God and the creation are two realities one alongside the other. In doing so, they are only repeating standard Christian wisdom. Clearly, Ignatius does not explicitly reflect on this complex image of God. However, his own experience (fortunately not distorted by theological speculation) leads us to find God in all things, especially in the ground of our own souls, and at the same time to be constantly turning to God, the Lord of all, in petition and in lament. Indeed, the formulations of trinitarian dogma are only attempts to 'word'—as Eckhart and Hopkins would say—the irreducible complexity of God; they express God through paradoxical formulas. Christian mysticism goes deeper than our powers of reflection.

From here, we can return to Jalics's 'contemplative Exercises'. Is it really the case that an Ignatian exercitant in contemplation breaks

through the reality of the world, and arrives at God, the transcendent ground of the world? Surely it is much better to talk of an experience of God in God's spiritual truth, living in the depths of consciousness. God can indeed be found through awareness exercises and stillness prayer, but, as Paul stresses, it is also the case that only the spirit that says 'Jesus is Lord' is the true Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3). That is why Ignatius directs our meditation towards this Jesus, in his specific historical situation. Ignatius does not teach any 'higher stage' of the experience of God; the whole process, rather, stands within the polarities of the Trinity. The God within me (Spirit) gives me the power to look at and listen to God (Jesus), and thus to encounter God (Father), who is ever greater, eternal mystery.

A similar point applies, all the more strongly, to Scripture. Ignatian gospel prayer centres on the life of Christ, on a God in history confronting me. Ignatius does not give meditations on Pentecost, on God's presence in the Church and in our own hearts: for him, this interiority is meant to unfold in confrontation with God made flesh. Obviously, during the Exercises, a person can legitimately focus on God as present in all things or in their own heart. Nevertheless, the Jesus of Holy Scripture reveals to us a reality that is foundational for any proper account of 'God in all things'. It is in accord with how the Scripture shows us Jesus, 'the glory as of a Father's only Son, full of grace and truth' (John 1:14) that we must learn to experience the God who is *in* all things. It is in this way that the Exercises train us in what it is to lead a Christian life.

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