

THE THIRD WEEK OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

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THE SPIRITUAL Exercises of Saint Ignatius is not a collection of meditations gathered together arbitrarily, but a unified whole with an inner coherence and a single dynamic. Its essential movement is carried on by the fruits of each week and even of individual meditations; its various rules, exercises and methods of prayer are meant to be selected and adapted with a view towards engaging the retreatant most effectively in that single forward movement. Thus the elucidation and articulation of this dynamic cannot but serve as an aid to those who direct and possibly to those who make the Exercises. This article seeks to cast some light on the portion of the dynamic proper to the third week.

Like most other articles on the third week, the present one is based necessarily on limited experience. Authentic experience of the third week is infrequent; for, while the Passion is often assigned as the subject matter for meditation, the kind of prayer in which the retreatant becomes involved, and the fruit gained from it, are often the prayer and fruit of the first two weeks. This article then is no final analysis, but a one intended to stimulate further thought, experimentation, comment and criticism.

The dynamic of the Exercises is usually seen as centring around an election prepared for by the first two weeks and confirmed by the last two. This general scheme is not accepted here in opposition to the 'school of prayer' view-point. In actual practice, however, the election may be merely an implicit or vague one of following Christ more faithfully. Hence, its centrality need not be strongly stressed, and its apparent absence should not prevent the exercitant from entering the dynamic shortly to be described.

This description will be in terms of the operative psychological mechanisms, since these are more susceptible to analysis than the action of grace, and are aspects of that nature on which grace builds; through them, as secondary causes, grace usually acts. To facilitate an understanding of these mechanisms, they are here elucidated to a point never encountered in actual experience.

In the first two weeks, the retreatant has considered and rejected

the negative path of sin that is opposed to Christ, the true Way that leads to life. He has experienced Christ as the manifestation of the love and mercy of God that saves from sin, and, during the course of the second week, has determined in an ever more concrete form the way in which he is called to follow him. But, since only the good as such is the proper object of the will, his imitation of Christ and his election has been viewed principally under its positive aspects.

The shadow of the Cross, however, and the negative side of the election have already begun to fall across the exercitant's reflections on the sickness, poverty, dishonour and short life of the Principle and Foundation, in the call of the King to labour and suffering, in the life of the Word Incarnate born in poverty and destined to a life of suffering, and especially in the Two Standards and the Three Kinds of Humility. To follow Christ in poverty is ultimately to follow him to death; the final and full expression of the Word's self-emptying and entrance into the poverty of our human condition. After the election, this negative side of the following of Christ must be dealt with in a different way.

The post-election situation

The retreatant has come to an awareness of his own sins and inordinate inclinations in a variety of ways: prayer for this grace (Exx 63), meditation on personal sin (Exx 56-57), personal adaptation of the enemy's tactics (Exx 142), aversion to certain aspects of Christ's call (Exx 157), and more subtly by contrast with the virtues of the Incarnate Word. He has escaped their influence long enough to make a good election, and has turned his conscious attention away from them. But he has not overthrown their influence and power within him; had he done so, there would be no reason to continue with the third week in view of the stated purpose of the Spiritual Exercises (Exx 21).

The election itself contributes to a recrudescence of these inordinate attachments. Attention to the chosen alternative brings the other alternatives to mind by an association of opposites. And these other alternatives also re-occur in accord with a mechanism of self-preservation. When a person undertakes a total fast, the initial hunger dies away after a short time; but once his body begins to feed on its own vital organs and death is imminent, the craving for food revivifies with extraordinary strength. In similar fashion, while the inordinate inclinations may have subsided during the process of election, the final firm resolve threatens their satisfaction to such an extent

that they rise again in a last-ditch attempt to overthrow the election. Since these passions stand a better chance of success if some time elapses after the election, this recrudescence may be only implicit and inchoate. But it is there in some form; and it is just as well that it is, for these passions must be dealt with, and the Passion provides a means of dealing with them immediately.

Until they are dealt with, the election is not a perfect one. 'Decision' derives from *de-caedere*, 'to cut off'; it involves a rejection as well as a commitment. That rejection extends beyond just the other alternative choices; it must be brought to bear as well on everything incompatible with what is chosen. In a decision intended as total and irrevocable, the retreatant should also reconcile himself in advance to the loss of any and all goods that may possibly conflict with his choice and commitment. Confirmation of the election thus means to make firm, to 'strengthen' internally as well as to 'ratify' externally through an experience of divine consolation. The experience of the third week allows the retreatant to proceed in his chosen state or style of life with some foreknowledge and acceptance of the cost of his discipleship. He will not later have to complain, 'I did not bargain for this hardship; had I known that this much would be demanded, I would not have chosen as I did'.

Such an internal confirmation of the election is the purpose of the third week. Through compassion with Christ, in the literal sense of 'suffering with', the quality of the retreatant's election is deepened beyond a point possible at the end of the second week. For, in attending to the positive good chosen, the election has left open the possibility of seeking, together with the service of the Lord, the satisfaction of other desires, normal as well as inordinate. Compromise is possible, and beyond that, renunciation of the original choice. The Passion involves the exercitant implicitly in a continuous and deepening choice of Christ, even though it may entail the loss of all other goods, life itself included; it brings him to that anterior affective renunciation characteristic of the third class of men, who have *en affecto* left all they desired (cf Exx 155). The last two weeks of the Exercises ground the election in the living Paschal mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ; they strengthen the exercitant through the experience that the loss of all things for him, and death with him, lead to a share in his risen life; and that, by following Christ in suffering, the retreatant shall follow him in glory as well (Exx 95).

Compassion, then, is not the empty sentimentality down-graded by

the authors of the Official Directory of 1599 as less useful in the spiritual life than other virtues. Properly understood, it is very useful towards the effectiveness of the election and the attainment of self-abnegation and a deeper love of Christ.

Sin and suffering

The attachments that revivify after the election are closely related to the sins considered in the first week, since the sins have been caused by these attachments, which remain relatively stable. The attachments have expressed themselves as excessive desires for some apparent good or fear of its loss, even though that good was in opposition to the known will of God. What those attachments are, and their relative strengths, can be ascertained by an analysis of the motivation underlying past sinfulness; the retreatant can refine this knowledge by establishing the weakest point in his defences where the enemy usually first attacks (Exx 327), by closely observing the manner in which he is led gradually on towards evil (Exx 142, 333-34), or, as will shortly be obvious, by noting the progression of the third week subject-matter.

These attachments affect the nature of the compassion experienced during the third week. They determine to some extent the kinds of suffering that will be meditated on as well as the order in which they are considered. For on these attachments depend most of the retreatant's previous experience of suffering, his present understanding of it, and the particular sufferings he is likely to encounter in carrying out the election. His past suffering, arising as it does mostly from desire and fear, has been strongest where that fear and desire have been most inordinate. His present understanding of suffering is conditioned by his past experience. And in the future, his adherence to the will of God will cause suffering in so far as it requires him to abandon what he wishes and to embrace what he dreads. Since a person perceives suffering, and is capable of empathizing with one who suffers, in terms of his own experience and knowledge, the retreatant will focus during the third week on those sufferings of Christ that correspond to his own inordinate attachments, and thus to the sufferings he himself will be likely to encounter in the future.

Subjective specification of suffering

A certain subjective specification, however, takes place in all perception, because of the subjective psychic dispositions of the observer. A man with a vested interest in something will notice it

upon its appearance, while others may not. A geologist, botanist, artist, climber and a mystic will look at the same mountain but see different things. As the philosophers put it, whatever is received is taken in according to the modality of the recipient. The subjective interpretation of the Exercises is far more subtle than the above examples, and accounts for the highly personal and different results which various retreatants will get from the same set of points.

This subjective quality, present in all the Exercises and all the activities of a person's life, is a positive good. The personal and human knowledge which it occasions penetrates into the affections and the will in a manner not possible to the non-personal, purely objective knowing more proper to a computer, and it permits an adaptation of the Exercises to the individual that the director and even the exercitant himself could not consciously effect.

Ignatius prepares for this subjective specification in five different ways. First, he directs that the one who gives the points should present them briefly rather than develop them at great length, so as to avoid influencing the retreatant by pushing his own interpretation of the material. Rather he is to leave the creature and Creator free to deal directly with each other (Exx 15).

Secondly, Ignatius intends that the retreatant will recall, at least in general fashion, his own sinfulness in connection with the sufferings of Christ. This is the third prelude of each contemplation (Exx 193, 203), and the sixth point of each is 'to consider that Christ suffers all this *for my sins*, and what I ought to do *and to suffer* for him' (Exx 197). This prepares for a subjective interpretation of the sufferings of Christ that corresponds with the sinfulness and therefore with the inordinate inclinations of the retreatant.

Thirdly, the format of this week is significantly different. In the other weeks, the title of each exercise specifies a distinct event; those of the third week, except for the Last Supper which serves as a third foundation, flow in a continual sequence from the Supper to the Burial. Each contemplation considers *los misterios* enacted in that segment of the Passion. This is partly rooted in the continuous nature of the gospel accounts, but it also provides a large variety of material, rather than a single event, for each exercise.

Fourthly, in addition to all this material, the exercitant is urged to permit his daily thoughts to review and dwell on all that Christ suffered from the time that he was born down to the mystery being contemplated (Exx 206); and a full day is scheduled to review the whole of the Passion (Exx 208).

Fifthly, the retreatant, despite this abundance of material, is to select and concentrate on one element as long as he finds fruit in it (Exx 76), and he is to return to those items which he has found most profitable (Exx 62, 118, 204). The third note of the fourth week is significantly applicable here: the retreatant should foresee and select beforehand the points on which he will dwell (Exx 228). The instructions that he is to think about the matter beforehand (Exx 73), and sleep for half a night on each of the new contemplations (Exx 190-99), give his subconscious mind ample opportunity to sort out what point will be most profitable for him on which to concentrate, what form of suffering he should select in such a variety of material.

These directives of Ignatius, then, urge non-interference from the director, provide the retreatant with too many forms of suffering for him to cover in a single exercise, stimulate a recollection of his sins and inordinate attachments which, as we have seen, influence his perception of suffering, and incline him to concentrate after appropriate psychological preparation on one particular point.

The Agony in the Garden, for example, might yield reflection on mental anguish, fear of physical suffering, the desire for the companionship of the apostles, betrayal by a friend, the apparently hostile will of God, sorrow caused by the sins of others, the pain of difficult prayer, the sense of failure in a life-mission, or perhaps just the loss of an hour's sleep and the physical discomfort involved in this. What any given retreatant actually takes as his focal point will depend on his own subjective dispositions; in each exercise he will be unconsciously selecting a form of suffering that arises out of his past experience, his present attachments, and his future expectations.

Union with Christ

A few corrective notes should be introduced at this point. Though little stress has been placed on the strong affective bond with Christ developed by the retreatant in the course of the second week, it is presupposed as an absolute necessity and essential of the third week. This deep love and dedication is the only quality that can keep the retreatant in union with Christ as he goes to his death. If any other love is stronger, he will not choose to lose it for Christ's sake; he will draw back, unable to go the whole way. This does not imply a lessening of love for created goods, but a love of Christ that surpasses all other loves.

Secondly, while there is a purgative quality to third week prayer, it is basically a unitive prayer. Hence the consideration of personal sin in the Passion is quite different from the first week colloquy before the crucified Lord. The third week looks principally at Christ and makes just a generic or implicit reference to sin; the first looks principally at self and calls one's sins consciously and explicitly to mind. The third aims at compassion and seeks *to suffer* for and with the Lord (Exx 197); the first week seeks amendment of life, service, and ultimately the election, as it demands what has been done, is being done, and ought to be done (Exx 53). Many books give points on the Passion that really find their place in the Exercises in the context of this first week colloquy. They attempt to draw a conscious and extrinsic relationship between sins and the sufferings of Christ — the crowning with thorns and impure thoughts, to use a common example — and they end with a resolution to act properly in the future. Third week prayer enters more subjectively into the person of Christ, shares affectively in the sufferings of his that have been selected unconsciously under the influence of a predominant passion, and perseveres with Christ despite those sufferings.

This more unitive type of prayer is probably another reason for the different format of the third week exercises. In the beginning of the retreat, aware of personal infidelity to and distance from the Lord, the retreatant approaches the Lord as an outsider and observer; he encounters Christ from time to time in the course of his public life, more closely identified with him, but still very much as an observer. During the Passion, united to Christ by compassion with his suffering, he perceives the events that transpire more through the eyes of Christ himself, who is most aware of the continuous nature of his own life and suffering. His experience in contemplation is one of continual going with the Lord rather than occasional and sporadic encounters. Fourth week prayer is also unitive, once attained; but the retreatant may approach the resurrection contemplations while his psychic state is still one of death and burial with Christ, and therefore as an outsider to the apparition event. Once the fruit of the fourth week is attained, there seems little need to continue contemplations of the historical apparitions of Jesus; it is more appropriate to proceed to the Contemplation to Attain Love of God, which in actuality is an ongoing contemplation of God's presence in all the situations of the retreatant's individual life.

Finally, despite all that has been mentioned about subjectivity, true compassion is not possible if suffering is totally subjective.

Compassion is itself unitive; there must be an objective side to what is experienced. Some meditations may suggest a possible future suffering that, because of dogma or traditional beliefs, cannot be ascribed to the Lord: the falls of Jesus might bring to mind personal moral failures that are foreseen as virtually inevitable and that will entail the suffering of guilt, a sense of weakness, and the struggle to arise again, continue on and submit to the nails at the end. Other meditations might suggest a self-doubt and uncertainty that some retreatants will be reluctant to ascribe to the Lord. In such cases, the retreatant will be aware of the highly personal nature of such suffering, and compassion will become more subjective; but, in general, the suffering will be seen as a real suffering of Christ. And properly so, for Christ has been tried in all sufferings and temptations (Heb 4, 14; 2, 17-18). On a deeper level, all the sufferings of the retreatant are also sufferings of the Body of Christ, of which he is a member; they make up and complete whatever may be lacking to the sufferings of the Body (Col 1, 24). Because of this correlation between objectivity and subjectivity, between member and Head, the retreatant enters into a suffering that is not merely his, nor just Christ's, but a suffering that is both his and Christ's at the same time.

Compassion as implicit choice

Each exercise of the third week concerns a subject-matter that arises out of a correlation between the dispositions of the individual retreatant and the suffering of Christ reported or founded in the gospel account; each unites the retreatant more closely with the Lord by compassionate suffering. This compassion is more than mere affective sentimentality; it reaches deeply into the volitional level of existence, and constitutes an implicit choice and commitment.

The third week, like the first two, presents the retreatant with two alternatives: the way of life and death, the ways of Christ and sin. But the negative and positive polarities involved in the choice have been reversed. The choice is now between temporal rather than eternal life and death; the Lord walks now the road to death, abandoning the path that leads to the goods of this life, to temporal happiness, comfort, popularity and success. Each exercise becomes a crossroads: to the one side is a particular good that is desired, but one that can be chosen only by abandoning the Lord; to the other is the Way of the Cross, apparent destruction, the loss of the desired good,

and suffering in compassion with Christ. At each crossroads the retreatant must make a choice among his various loves, and to follow Christ he must surrender affectively and abandon severally all other things.

This crossroads or election-structure of each exercise may frequently appear in the existence of a foil standing in opposition to Christ. Just as the shadow-side of a person may be made concrete in his dreams by one of the dream characters, so in contemplation the attachment of the exercitant may be embodied in one of the persons of the contemplation, who represents the alternative to a faithful following of the Lord. One might contrast, for example, the apostles sleeping in the garden to the vigilant Lord, his testimony to his own Messiahship with Peter's cowardly denial, his meekness and the brutality of the soldiers, his apparent failure and the gloating success of the high priests, or his final passage into the hopeless void of death with the lucky lot of his survivors.

If the retreatant identifies too much with the foil, it may indicate that he is still engaged in the first week dynamic, or that he has momentarily regressed to conclude a repentance that ought to have taken place earlier. His deep compassion with Christ, on the other hand, involves identification with him, an abandonment of the path symbolized by the foil, and an anterior affective renunciation of the particular good involved in the contemplation.

The progress of the third week

It may be clear at this point that in each of the exercises there is a partial death to some aspect of the old self brought about by an implicit commitment to suffer with Christ; and the general principles regarding the choice of sufferings to be considered have also been clarified. Now it is necessary to treat more explicitly of the dynamic element of the week, of the principles governing the specific form of suffering chosen in each contemplation, and the order in which these sufferings are chosen.

The chronological order of the Passion and the objective nature of the Lord's sufferings obviously have some influence. In the garden, death is a remote, if inevitable, possibility; the contemplation on the Agony may thus focus on the anticipatory fear of suffering and death or on the first beginnings of physical suffering. But when death is imminent, when judgment has already been passed and the sentence is in the process of being executed, the retreatant is unlikely to

concentrate on lesser pains and perils. Early in the week, the physical suffering of Christ may be seen as a pain of discomfort; but later it is interpreted as a dissolution of the body and of the self that renders ultimate dissolution ever more inevitable. The subject matter may also have a strong influence: the trials before the Sanhedrin may be associated with hatred and envy of others or opposition from religious authority; the trial before Herod with rejection as a fool, with mockery and with scorn; the abandonment on the cross with the absence of divine consolation.

Yet the order will also be determined by the dispositions of the exercitant. If an onion is peeled layer by layer until nothing is left, it is inevitable that the layers be removed in the order that existed before the process ever began. The order that exists in the retreatant is dependent on his self-determined existence as well as his human nature; thus, the order may vary from individual to individual while still showing a general similarity for all exercitants.

In the establishment of this order, several inter-related principles are apparently involved. What is most external, most conscious, easiest to cope with and the weakest attachment is first handled; and there seems to be sufficient congruence among these four that the retreatant will concentrate basically on one form of suffering first. By a gradual progression, the retreatant moves ever closer to the most personal, most repressed, most difficult and strongest attachment. The last barrier to fall is concern for one's own existence, the fear of death, the surrender of all things, and the instinct for self-preservation.

The exercitant comes to the beginning of each meditation seeking, amid the large variety of material available, some one point on which to concentrate where he may best enter into the sufferings of Christ. He comes prepared by the directives of Ignatius that have been indicated above; but he also comes with a sincerity and generosity that will not allow him to concentrate on what is not really suffering for him at that particular point in the retreat. He will not waste his time looking at the loss of a good he does not strongly desire, or one he has already reconciled himself to losing. He comes to the exercise with his repressions and weaknesses as well, with his inbuilt inclination to resist painful change and with the old man's instinct for survival. In the tension between salvaging as much of himself as he can, and sincerely entering into the Passion of Christ, he is engaged by a form of suffering that is serious and personal, but may not yet strike to the very core of his existence.

The unconscious knowledge of his own strength and weakness, of his ability to cope at that moment with his various attachments, also determines the matter of his choice. To choose too much below his strength is a defect of generosity that love and sincerity will not allow; to choose beyond his strength is also insincere, since it invites and intends failure. Having subconsciously chosen then a particular attachment, desire or form of suffering, he focusses on that part or aspect of the contemplation that best corresponds with it. He is drawn to that point, engaged by it, and concentrates on it fairly early in the exercise. And this is a point where there is similarity between the Passion of Christ and his own experience and understanding of suffering, where there is expectation of future suffering and difficulty in the execution of the election, and where there is serious work to be done that still is within his present ability under grace to accomplish.

If, during the course of prayer, he does not attain an anterior affective renunciation of this particular attachment, then that form of suffering remains a problem area; in fact, it is even more of a problem because of his refusal. When he returns to the contemplation, his attention will return to the same topic; and, granting the number of summaries and repetitions to be made each day, it is likely that he will return to the identical point, especially since Ignatius indicates that he should concentrate on points that gave consolation or desolation (Exx 118), and that if he feels repugnance to something, he should pray all the more insistently for it (Exx 157). Desolation may be expected from a refusal to follow Christ, and consolation is hardly to be expected in this circumstance.

The retreatant, however, is motivated by a deep love for Christ; and it is within his ability to cope with the area chosen. It is likely then that he will succeed eventually in accepting that form of suffering. In this case he will not be inclined to return to the same point in the following contemplation. Despite the consolation that might follow from his renunciation and compassion, the point is no longer a problem area; in sincerity he cannot just remain where he is while the Lord continues to his death. The retreatant, having gained the particular fruit that could be expected, is no longer engaged by the material, at least under the same aspect; he is inclined rather to move on to a more profound level.

This movement towards ever deeper 'strata' of his being is assisted by the relationship that tends to exist between adjacent levels. To illustrate this point, it will be necessary first to give some sketch of

a general scheme that seems to be followed. The movement that appears to be from an external, physical dimension to a social and finally to a personal dimension is probably accurate but too general. Each of these areas may be subdivided into possible component parts; but such a subdivision is too specific to be applicable to each retreatant. Nevertheless, the external may be composed of poverty which has already been handled during the second week: physical discomfort, actual pain in a variety of forms; the social into betrayal, desertion, hatred, the lack of acceptance or esteem, rejection by civil and religious authorities and by people in general, and positive scorn or mocking, insults and contempt; the personal into self-doubt, a sense of failure, fear and anxiety, the growing sense of impending destruction, apparent abandonment by God, and finally apparently total annihilation and hopelessness. This follows the general scheme of the Two Standards: poverty, insults and contempt, and deep humility (Exx 146); it also follows the same scheme indicated elsewhere by Ignatius (Exx 9, 23, 98, 116, 142, 147, 166-67). The experience of each retreatant will obviously specify this general scheme in various ways, and may even depart from it; yet this order appears to coincide generally with the historical progress of Christ's passion and the gospel accounts, with the Standard of the Cross (Exx 146), and with what in general constitutes the passage, in the structures of most personalities, towards the most repressed, most difficult, most personal and strongest attachment.

These levels are so related that the deeper ones often serve as supports when the lesser goods are lost; during the third week there is almost an understood retention of the deeper good at the very time when one is renouncing the lesser. Friendship is a consolation in times of sickness or suffering; general esteem will provide a prop in the absence of friends; self-esteem will even suffice in the case of general rejection, and so forth. In making one renunciation, the retreatant will fall back on the deeper support; but he thereby brings it more fully to his attention for consideration in the subsequent contemplation. The process is not usually reversible: there is no real comfort in possessions and ease for one who has lost friendship and esteem; no amount of reassurance by others suffices if a person lacks that basic self-acceptance that is the ground for believing in the reality of friendship.

The loss of lesser goods also threatens and brings into doubt the deeper ones. Depending more than ever before on the props that remain, the retreatant will seek a greater security from them but will

find no more security than he ever did; the loss rather reinforces the contingency of his whole being, and the line on which the battle is fought moves closer to his very self. Thus, external misfortunes will test and may weaken friendships, abandonment by friends tends to give the lie to the esteem strangers offer, rejection by people in general seriously challenges the validity of self-esteem and acceptance, and so on. This increased threat and anxiety also draws the attention of the retreatant in a more concentrated form to the next deepest level of his being.

Having successfully renounced the more superficial good, the exercitant comes to the deeper level of suffering more able to cope with it than previously. He is no longer trying to deal with two forms of suffering simultaneously; he has disposed of one totally and can now focus his attention and power entirely on the second. His previous renunciation has practised him in suffering and bound him closer in love and compassion to Christ; and it has more deeply revealed the contingency of the more radical good, and already begun an assault against its power. In dealing with the more superficial good, he may have been simultaneously relying upon and affirming the deeper one, a process that may momentarily have strengthened its power; but such is no longer the case. The process indicated above now repeats itself with this new form of suffering and with similar results. Thus gradually he is led on by little and little to die to himself and his world, until he has entered completely into the death of Christ by the end of the third week.

Key contemplations

In this process of dying to self and to those inclinations, normal as well as inordinate, that threaten the election, certain exercises have a key role.

The Last Supper functions as a general introduction to the third week. The institution of the Eucharist is the election of Christ himself that is the cause of the Passion which follows; it is his own decree of death and affective renunciation of this world. The prayer concerns Christ who is going to his suffering (Exx 193), and considers what Christ *desires to suffer* (Exx 195). Thus, what Christ does at the Supper and concludes in the Agony in the Garden in relationship to his own passion is analogous to what the retreatant does during the third week in relationship to the rest of his life. The future life and death of the retreatant has become substantiated and made actual in his election;

and from this election derives the passion and suffering that will be uniquely his.

The Abandonment on the Cross demands a reconciliation to the loss of divine consolation. Faith in the resurrection must remain faith with all the risk and uncertainty that faith involves, a pure trust in God's power and love, and a renunciation of all insurance policies that tend to make real death a mere momentary inconvenience that must be passed through. Fidelity to Christ must be motivated by love principally and not by the desire for reward.

The Death of Christ involves the final totality of renunciation that extends to any and all attachments that may remain, to any that have not been explicitly treated, to any remnants that endure. It ensures the completeness of the third week dynamic, and a death to all things except God in Christ, no matter how positively good they may be.

The Burial reinforces this death to the world and the total indifference to its pains and pleasures. Nothing from within can move Christ, nothing from without can affect him; having died to all, neither death nor anything else can move him from the will of God. Life for the retreatant is now the bare will of God and what it has brought him to; and for every person eventually that must lead to this same end, where all the contents of the fullest life must be surrendered. Claudel writes:

I have descended with You into the tomb. . . .
There have I lain without motion, and the confines of Your tomb
Have become the confines of the Universe.

It is to this utter stillness and motionlessness of death that the inexorable progression of the third week has brought the retreatant.

For the *Sixth Day* Ignatius does not indicate, as he did for the first five days of this week, that there should be two repetitions and a summary. He explicitly states that these are to be omitted on the seventh day. Perhaps any sort of formal meditation would be counter-productive to the stillness appropriate after the Burial; between the sorrow of death and the joy of resurrection must be imposed the sabbath rest of burial.

The *Seventh Day* begins with a general review of the whole Passion (Exx 208) should this prove necessary; and provision is made to spend even three additional days considering the Passion in general (Exx 209). This would seem, in the context of the dynamic that has been described here, to ensure the completeness of the renunciation

and to provide an opportunity to settle on and resolve any attachments that may still remain. The rest of the seventh day returns to the dead and buried Christ, and concentrates on his lifeless body, from which the soul and all its interior motions have departed. The purpose is not to meditate on the soul of Christ descending to Sheol, or on the way in which Joseph of Arimathea and others buried the body, but on the still body itself, and on the dark and silent condition of the tomb.

The other reflection for this day is the sorrow, weariness and desolation of Mary and the disciples. Its purpose is similar, for deep grief like deep water is still: they too are buried with Christ and go about their activities in a stupefied daze; for their hearts are with the Lord. This last day or two then are days of stillness in which, despite any activity, the retreatant lies thane-like beside his dead Lord.

The Fourth Week

Meditation on the Passion then can lead a person to psychic death with the Lord; and it is within this mystery of death that the wonder of resurrection is manifested. The fourth week does not occur because the director determines to give a different kind of points, or because the retreatant decides to move on. The third and fourth weeks are not adjacent rooms between which one may casually pass; they are deep pools that interconnect only in their depths. Only by entering totally into the death of Christ can one also enter into his risen life (Phil 3, 10-11). Good Friday and Easter Sunday constitute one event. The retreatant merely requires time to realize what it is he has entered into in being buried with Christ.

More often than not, before the fourth week meditations have even begun, the retreatant will pass into it and will announce to the director simply or exuberantly that Christ is risen indeed. And if this is the case, then the protracted contemplation of the sixth and seventh days is an appropriate occasion for it; for, like Zen *satori*, it rarely comes during a time of formal prayer. One is awakened to the power of the risen Lord, not while concentrating on his historical apparitions, but in attending to the reality of one's own daily life where the risen Lord is present.

If a retreatant does not pass spontaneously from the stillness of the end of the third week to the realization that Christ is risen, the contemplations of the fourth week provide a stimulus to this realization. Ignatius suggests a long list of them, even though the main

body of the Exercises mentions just one; but none of these are likely to have much effect if the third week dynamic has not been completed. There might be good reason to continue the fourth week meditations even after experiencing its essential fruit; but it would seem more appropriate to proceed at once to the Contemplation to Attain the Love of God. For to have died to all things is also to regain all things in a new way, in an appreciative rather than a possessive way. To encounter the risen Christ is also to be led back to the whole cosmos of which he is the centre, the source, and the final end.