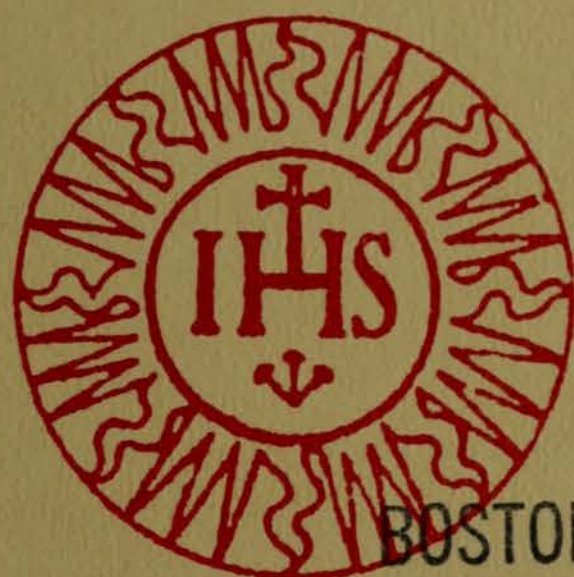


STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS



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**Foundational Issues
in
Jesuit Spirituality**

Roger Haight, S.J.

19/4

SEPTEMBER 1987

88X

THE SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

A group of Jesuits appointed from their provinces in the United States.

The Seminar studies topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially American Jesuits, and communicates the results to the members of the provinces. This is done in the spirit of Vatican II's recommendation to religious institutes to recapture the original inspiration of their founders and to adapt it to the circumstances of modern times. The Seminar welcomes reactions or comments in regard to the material which it publishes.

The Seminar focuses its direct attention on the life and work of the Jesuits of the United States. The issues treated may be common also to Jesuits of other regions, to other priests, religious, laity, men and/or women. Hence the *Studies*, while meant especially for American Jesuits, are not exclusively for them. Others who may find them helpful are cordially welcome to read them.

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Roger Haight, S.J.

FOUNDATIONAL ISSUES

IN

JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

Studies
in the Spirituality of Jesuits
19/4
September 1987

For Your Information . . .

These remarks will continue to carry out the promise made in earlier issues of *Studies* "to describe how the Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality works and how it produces *Studies*." Previously I had briefly told how members of the Seminar are chosen and what happens at a typical Seminar weekend meeting. I would here like to tell where papers for *Studies* come from, how we carry on a discussion of them and how we decide which ones we shall publish.

Don't worry; we shall later report the results of our readership survey. (One out of every five recipients of *Studies*, chosen completely at random, received a questionnaire.) The tabulations and analysis have not yet been completed, but we hope for them in time for the November issue.

Back to the papers. Most of the prospective issues of *Studies* come, as might be expected, from members of the Seminar itself. They arise from our ongoing discussions on Jesuit spirituality and from particular interests and talents of Seminar members. Initially a member proposes a topic. We talk at some length about it. If the topic seems suitable, the member volunteers (or "is volunteered") to write a first draft which goes to all of us for reading and comments, a lot of them, and discussion. The author is always present at and participates in the discussion. If the paper seems to be going somewhere, the author receives every encouragement to proceed with it.

The paper comes to all of us again as a revised version and again comment and discussion ensue. This may happen several times. (The record is probably four times; it took real courage for the author to persevere with that topic but it finally did result in an issue of *Studies*.)

When all of us are satisfied that we have thought and said everything necessary and helpful, we ask the author to absent himself while we vote on what to do with the paper. There are five possibilities: simply to reject the paper; to affirm the topic and to suggest another try at it with a different paper, but

with no commitment by the Seminar; to accept for publication on condition of certain changes; to accept for publication with suggestions for revision that the author is free to accept or not; simply to accept for publication "as is" (with the usual editorial work on consistency of style, proofreading, and so forth).

If a paper comes unsolicited from a non-Seminar-member, a committee of three members gives it a preliminary screening. If the committee recommends further consideration, all of us then read the paper. If we agree that it should be further discussed, it goes through all the steps described above, with the author invited to be present and to participate in all the discussions of his work.

Do we reject papers? Yes. Even when written, and perhaps rewritten, by members? Yes. Does every Seminar member always agree with and subscribe to everything in an accepted paper or in an issue of *Studies*? No. Do you, our readers, always agree? I hope not. The Seminar members have no monopoly on truth or insight. We do have the desire to make available to the readers of *Studies* essays which provoke thought, nourish the spiritual life, and provide opportunities for the kind of discussion in which we ourselves engage.

John W. Padberg, S.J.

Editor

Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits

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FOUNDATIONAL ISSUES IN JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

by

Roger Haight, S.J.*

INTRODUCTION

A Jesuit with whom I am acquainted made a thirty-day retreat during the middle seventies. At that time the movement of historical research into the sources of Jesuit spirituality was underway and bearing fruit. Jesuits were beginning to understand both the *Constitutions* and the *Exercises* in their context; we began to distinguish the initial intention and genuine charism of Ignatius as distinct from both his predecessors and the layers of tradition that had been added to it and sometimes distorted it. The original experience, language, directives, and intentions of Ignatius in fashioning the Exercises controlled the imagination of directors of retreats much more than in the past. Moreover, some retreat directors had also internalized basic principles of modern exegesis, so that their interpretation of Scripture was informed by the biblical theology of the synoptic writers or the Johannine community. It should have made for a stimulating retreat. But when asked whether the retreat had been a profitable experience, the man in question was ambivalent. "I'm not sure," he said. "I feel like I was exposed to a very solid sixteenth-century spirituality, coupled with first-century theology. It was interesting, but not very helpful for my life today."

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The problem is a familiar one, and everyone knows its terms.¹ Born in the fifteenth century, Ignatius, however revolutionary he became, was a medieval person.² Because of the differences between his worldview and ours, we must adapt his values and intentions into our own cultural context. This requires interpretation, the intention of which is not to change the fundamental principles and values of the founder, but precisely to preserve them by adjusting them to new suppositions and making them operative in a new situation. The process of interpretation, however, is fraught with difficulties. One cannot not interpret, because traditional words and phrases take on new ambiguous meanings; yet no mechanical method exists to ensure agreement that a particular reinterpretation is faithful. Moreover, no single reinterpretation by itself can claim to be final. For the point in time that marks the beginning of Jesuit spirituality must continually open up to different temporal periods and distinct cultural situations at any given time. Like different Christian communities appealing to the same New Testament, interpretations of Ignatian spirituality cannot not be pluralistic.³

What follows is an essay at interpretation. It seeks to inculcate certain Ignatian principles and axioms, especially as they appear in the *Exercises*, into a modern philosophical and theological framework. As resources I shall bring to bear a philosophy of action, current theological insight, and an appeal to common experience today. The essay deals primarily with Ignatian spirituality, but insofar as the *Exercises* nurture this spirituality, I will use key considera-

¹ See Avery Dulles, "The Contemporary Relevance of the Ignatian Vision," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 4/4 (October 1972), 145-154.

² Ignatius was an innovator, and many of his principles from the *Exercises* and the *Constitutions* seem perennial if not modern. But he was not as innovative as the Reformers of the same century. And when we look back to the sixteenth century from our side of the great divide of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and its nineteenth- and twentieth-century aftermath, the sixteenth century including the Reformers appears much more continuous with the middle and late medieval period than is frequently imagined. Ignatius was certainly closer to Francis, Dominic, Aquinas, the Nominalists, and A Kempis than to us today.

³ Stephen Sykes, *The Identity of Christianity: Theologians and the Essence of Christianity from Schleiermacher to Barth* (London: SPCK, 1984), pp. 11-34.

tions from them to set up the areas for reinterpretation. These are the First Principle and Foundation, Sin, the Kingdom of Christ, the Election, the Discernment of Spirits, and the Contemplation to Attain the Love of God. Taken together these considerations may be looked upon as a kind of synopsis of the Christian spiritual life. They represent the purpose of existence, sin, salvation, and intentional committed life in the Spirit in imitation of Christ. On the whole, then, I wish not to probe this or that element in Ignatian spirituality, but to offer a foundational interpretation of the very meaning of Christian existence in Ignatian terms.

Two general issues lie in the background of this essay as a kind of foil, and it may be helpful to bring them forward at the outset. In moving to anthropology as a lever for interpretation, I want to transcend a therapeutic interpretation of spirituality generally and Ignatian spirituality in particular. By a therapeutic interpretation I mean one which heavily depends on psychology and seeks in one way or another to cure. Such Christian reflection presupposes that the subject is sick, or in pain, or somehow interiorly torn and suffering. Spiritual resources are thus brought to bear upon the disintegration to help reestablish health, integration, and wholeness. It is true that as long as he remains "sick," and unless some sort of strength is restored, a person cannot be expected to address reality in a realistic way. But in contrast to a prevailing therapeutic tendency today, the reflections here begin on the other side of therapy. They presuppose health and strength. I do not by this call into question the value of therapeutic spirituality when therapy is needed; nor should these remarks impugn the contribution of psychology to an understanding of human existence itself. But a psychological interpretation of spirituality that remains exclusively therapeutic tends to turn the Christian vision of human life back in upon the human person in a private individualistic way. It is not necessary to expand this analysis in considerations of how holiness has been reduced to "wholeness" and the development of my personality. Psychological anthropocentrism gradually undermines the transcendence of God's will

by tending to reduce it to the individual's personal needs.⁴ All of this seems alien to the testimony of Scripture which maintains that God's will is precisely not our will.

Secondly, the linkage between faith and a concern for social justice also lies in the background of this essay. It is written from the broad perspective of a liberation theology whose language has spread far beyond Latin America. This binding of our Christian faith in God with a concern for society, especially with a concern for praxis or action in the world, has still not found a proper apology on the level of foundational thinking. The telling point in this issue lies in spirituality. Until one can establish a viewpoint in spirituality where these two concerns can be seen to coincide, the theological language of faith's intrinsic concern for social justice will never be persuasive. I do not claim to succeed here, but only to set up a framework for further discussion.

It must be obvious that such an ambitious project can only be accomplished in a short space in the most schematic and foundational way. I am concerned here with basic principles. I will begin by posing the problems which some Ignatian formulae from the *Exercises* run up against today. Then, in the second part of the essay I introduce elements of an anthropology of action that will be helpful in resolving the problem areas. This anthropology is based on an interpretation of the early thought of Maurice Blondel. Because of the complexity of his categories, however, I have recast some of Blondel's key distinctions descriptively and presented a fuller interpretation more faithful to his language in an appendix. The third and final part of the essay returns to the issues that were raised in Part I and offers an interpretation of how they might be reconceived in the light of the theoretical framework of Part II.

⁴ James Gustafson, by assuming a rigorously theocentric point of view in his *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective: I. Theology and Ethics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), has unmasked this "triumph of the therapeutic" in Christian spirituality. See esp. pp. 19-20.

PART I. THE PROBLEM: THE NEED FOR NEW FOUNDATIONS

While Ignatius was alive the Council of Trent never considered a Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. No synod of bishops declared that a concern for social justice is a constitutive dimension of the gospel. Jesuits in the sixteenth century never formulated their mission as "the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement."⁵ Ignatius did not live in a period that viewed the reality of the universe and our world in an evolutionary framework. Ignatius did not have a post-Enlightenment historical consciousness that has become aware of the vast differences between the conditions, ideas, and values of groups of peoples across earthly time and space. Ignatius did not experience pluralism the way we do today. As confusing as it inevitably must be, we still have to admit that pluralism remains not only necessary but also a value. Reality confronts us as so deeply rich and mysterious that no one way of conceiving it suffices. In a strange way Ignatius, along with the philosophy and theology of his time, knew far more than we do today. Ironically, the knowledge explosion which expands by geometrical progression has rendered us more humble and modest. His world was simpler, his suppositions more secure. Those suppositions, those basic preconceptions and values, enter into, color, and determine everything he says. We cannot accept at face value even his most obvious statements of principle. Let us examine some of them.⁶

⁵ 32nd General Congregation, par. 48.

⁶ Let me clarify the method by which I am raising these issues. First, I am not an historian of the Exercises and have not engaged in historical source criticism or exegesis of Ignatian texts. The logic of these questions, therefore, rests on the assumption that as a sixteenth-century figure Ignatius did not have and could not have had a twentieth-century horizon of consciousness. Secondly, however, all Jesuits today in some measure have internalized the Exercises and drawn from them insight and solution to their own and their retreatants' *current* questions. In so doing we are implicitly reinterpreting Ignatius for our own time. One cannot avoid reading twentieth-century meaning into sixteenth-century texts. Thus the method here consists in highlighting the distance between ourselves and Ignatius in order to create the freedom to make the reappropriation consciously and explicitly. At some

One of the most solid pillars supporting the Spiritual Exercises is the "First Principle and Foundation: The human person is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his or her soul."⁷ At first glance, the formula is so basic that it appears to be beyond reproach. But a closer analysis betrays suppositions not universally accepted today. The formula appears individualistic; it can be construed to view each individual discretely as having the task of saving his or her soul. Is that why we were created? The means by which we are to save our soul is by praising, reverencing, and serving God, so that these activities become the very reason for our existing in this world. Is this the way we as Christians should conceive our task in the world today? More importantly, one might question the purely eschatological notion of salvation implied in the formula. Salvation means final salvation; it refers to the salvation that awaits us at the end of life. The meditations during the First Week depict salvation as union with God for eternity in opposition to damnation in hell. The First Principle and Foundation sets the ultimate stakes for the Spiritual Exercises: eternal life with God or eternal damnation for me as an individual. But today more and more people want to know about this life and the meaning that Christian salvation has in and for life in this world here and now. Ignatius understood salvation in too limited a framework for our world today.

Having raised these questions, and before continuing with more problems with other principles, let me clarify the point of view from which they come. I am assuming that the people making the Exercises today are Christians, perhaps, like Jesuits, educated Christians. If such persons are attuned to our culture and contemporary theology in a more or less critical way, they may have no sympathy whatever for Ignatius's formulation of the First Principle and Foundation. Since

points this distance may be overdrawn. But appreciation of the necessity and validity of the reinterpretation rests on a sympathetic entertainment of a really new cultural sensibility and set of questions.

⁷ *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, trans. by Louis J. Puhl (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1951), 23. The reference is to the now standard paragraph numbers of the *Exercises*.

they have faith in a God revealed through Jesus, they may not worry excessively about their final salvation; in fact, they may rest in the hope for the salvation of all people despite their sin. They simply do not live in any urgent personal dilemma between the paths to heaven and hell. Their main concern presupposes and transcends the personal eschatological issue. Their question about salvation narrows in on its bearing on life in our world and society today. Having made a commitment to God in faith, they ask what this entails for the exercise of their freedom within this world. They seek no therapy. They feel no anguish, are not torn apart by guilt or rent by personal crisis; they are healthy. They seek light for further vision and meaning for deeper commitment in the active lives they now lead. They do not experience any exigency to spend their day in direct praise, reverence, and service of God; they may feel that God put them in the world for something more important in God's eyes than that; they want to know what God wants them to do with their lives in such a way that they contribute to other people, society, and the world.

But certainly all the people who make the Exercises are not like this. Indeed, many who approach the Exercises may be just like the neoconvert Ignatius; and the First Principle and Foundation as he articulates it may hit exactly home. Ignatius's formula does have a point, and it bears a universal relevance; we cannot escape the question of our personal eschatological destiny. Or they may be experiencing a fundamental spiritual crisis and need healing. In that case spiritual therapy is in order. If any principle underlying the Exercises is universal, it is the demand that they should be adapted to their audience. Thus I wish to underline clearly that the questions and problems raised here may not be universal in their applicability to individuals any more than the reinterpretation that tries to meet them. Once and for all, then, the point of departure for these reflections lies on the other side of therapy. It presupposes a healthy and integrated faith and responds to the question of the Christian meaning of action in the world.

A second problem with the Spiritual Exercises given in our culture becomes manifest in the person who does not experience with anxiety his or her sin. The theme of the First Week, one on which

Ignatius dwells with almost excruciating intensity, unfolds in a dialectic between, on one hand, a sense of horror, fear, and confusion at my personal sin and, on the other hand, God's boundless love and mercy and God's forgiveness and acceptance of me the sinner. The dialectic is such that the opposing realizations feed each other; the more the intensity, the more the profit. This dynamic approaches the core of Luther's interpretation of Paul, and it is one of the most profound in the history of Christian theology. But it is also simply true that many people today do not live in this tension, so that, when they approach this First Week, the only confusion they feel is the lack of shame and confusion over their personal sin. One might challenge this attitude with the charge that "That's the sin!"--the lack of a sense of the intrinsic egoism that marks us all and the easy feeling that "You're OK, and I'm OK, and God's OK." But often those who lack feelings of personal shame may have a deeply disorienting sense of original sin, a sin of the world, and a social sin from which they cannot escape. The world of many people today is not a nice place in which to live, and they are part of it. This sin in the way that it is analyzed by current theology escapes the individualism of a medieval Ignatius.

Third, the meditation the Kingdom of Christ is another pivotal Ignatian consideration, introducing as it does consideration of the life of the Person who focuses Christian faith in God and is the living symbol revealing the nature of God.⁸ Once again, salvation lies at the bottom of this consideration, and it becomes evident that Ignatius had a restricted view of the extent of that salvation. The Council of Florence had made clear that salvation was somewhat rare since it was reserved to those in the Roman Church. Recall the themes of militancy in which the meditation is cast; they hark back to the crusades and reflect the enormous struggle in which the nascent Jesuit order would take the lead, namely, to beat back the inroads of the heretics of the Reformation and extend Christian faith to the vast new worlds of the infidel.

⁸ *Exercises*, 91-100.

I put it this way to underline the degree that the underlying vision clashes with current sensibility in several crucial ways. Current christology has taken an historical turn; it begins with and focuses on the historical Jesus. The divine must be found within the life and preaching of this man. But Jesus did not preach himself as king and most probably explicitly rejected the idea. Jesus preached the kingdom of God, and that kingdom, according to Vatican II and current theology, extends beyond the Christian sphere. We live in the age of an ecumenical movement, where any projected unity will include recognition of the values underlying the Reform; we live in a missionary age in which dialogue with other religions presupposes that we take them seriously as God-given and God-willed vehicles of salvation. The theme of urgency and even militancy in mission carries a value in the Christian life, and particularly in Jesuit life, but it needs a new focus than the one the sixteenth-century Ignatius gave it.

Fourth, an election about how to lead one's life stands at the center of the Spiritual Exercises.⁹ According to the interpretation of Fessard and Pousset, the whole logic of the Exercises turns on this point.¹⁰ The logic concerns the question of being or nonbeing. In the election of a way of life that renounces the nonbeing of contingency and sin and chooses life in God, a person seals his or her destiny in Absolute Being; in the remaining considerations of the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus, one confirms the initial decision made in a moment with a dynamic way of life that leads through death to new life. That logic seems indisputably valid, but when one considers the subject matter of the election in specific terms, one also raises the question of the meaning of the will of God for the individual. Ignatius does not directly say that God has a special will for each individual because he addresses choices in life "as far as depends on us." But the language of "a vocation from God" and God moving the will suggests a notion of providence in which God exercises absolute

⁹ *Exercises*, 169-189.

¹⁰ Edouard Pousset, *Life in Faith and Freedom: An Essay Presenting Gaston Fessard's Analysis of the Dialectic of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, trans. and ed. by Eugene L. Donahue (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1980), pp. 20-28.

oversight over history and has an intention for each individual in it. Does God have a specific will or plan for my individual life?

Some contemporary process theology, as well as theologies of providence and history, call into question the idea of God having a specific will for the future of this world in this world, and consequently a will for each individual in it. A new concern for the value of human freedom and its genuine creativity lends reason to these conceptions. The power of Ignatius's concern seems perennial; it appeals to a universal human desire that one's individual life conform with ultimate and transcendent truth. But our modern sensibilities require more than an adjustment of language in the question of seeking God's will. Reinterpretation at this point will have a subtle but real impact on the general rhetoric of Jesuits, especially in our exercise of authority. We should be clear about whose will we are conveying or obeying, and how it is known.

Fifth, somewhat related to the issue of God's will lies the question of the process of discerning the spirits.¹¹ What worldview and epistemology underlie the discernment of spirits? By what mechanism should one sort out a proper course of action? Roland Bainton offers the following reflection about Luther that can equally be applied to Ignatius.¹² We might be tempted to think that, in comparison with our own time in which God appears absent or at least distant from social affairs, the late medieval period was blessed by the nearness of God and God's myriad interventions into one's life. Not so. For Luther and Ignatius believed in the spirits, angels and demons; they were real and always at hand. And the terrifying fact was that the evil spirits employed the tactic of deceit; the angel of darkness always posed as the angel of light. The only way to win in this world bordering on the superstitious involved complex rules and countertactics to meet the enemy. Today, of course, we psychologize the demons, but that may not be enough for modern retreatants. They may be confused by the language and elaborate rules and put off by

¹¹ *Exercises*, 313-336.

¹² Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (Nashville/New York: Abingdon Press, 1950), pp. 25-28.

the introspection. Much more profoundly, they may not accept the lingering supposition that the Holy Spirit directs human life or that human beings could know it if the Spirit did.

Sixth and last, I wish to point to some issues implicit in the Contemplation to Attain the Love of God,¹³ such as the Ignatian axiom of finding God in all things and the aphorism *in actione contemplativus*.¹⁴ The early Society was torn over the issue of the relation between prayer and action, especially in terms of the amount of time to be accorded to formal prayer. Ignatius appears as an innovator here when we compare the Society he founded with other religious orders. And the genius that allowed for his new departures comes to light in the virtualities of such ideas as the use of creatures according to God's appointed ends,¹⁵ finding God in creatures, and especially the simple yet paradoxical formula of a contemplative in action. Yet these notions will never completely resolve the problem of a necessary and inner tension between these two dimensions of Christian and Jesuit life. In these latest years the only priority that Jesuit leadership has stressed more forcefully than a concern for justice is renewal in a life of prayer. Is there a way of conceiving these two areas of spiritual life as not simply on the same level and in dialectical tension which each other? When viewed on the same level they sustain and increase each other by their mutual demands, but also produce at times tensions of anxiety and guilt. Can their relation be clarified? It may be that the key here lies in the axiom of Ignatius taken from the gospels, one which underlies a great deal of the current theology of our response to God, namely, "that love ought to manifest itself in deeds rather than in words."¹⁶

At this point let me summarize this initial stage of the discussion. I have tried to show that the obvious need to adjust the Exer-

¹³ *Exercises*, 230-237.

¹⁴ This axiom is the main theme of the study of Joseph F. Conwell, *Contemplation in Action: A Study in Ignatian Prayer* (Spokane, WA: Gonzaga University, 1957).

¹⁵ *Exercises*, 23.

¹⁶ *Exercises*, 230.

cises and Jesuit spirituality to our contemporary situation is no surface issue; it reaches down to foundations. This can be seen in six problematic areas in the Exercises which may be considered fundamental: the notion of personal and predominantly eschatological salvation that constitutes their point of departure and underlies the whole, the individualistic conception of sin, the narrow breadth of salvation implicit in the historically unauthentic idea that Jesus was a king, the questionable notion that God has a specific providential will for each individual life, the supernaturalism implied in the discernment of spirits, and the perennial tension between prayer and action in the Christian life. These are I believe crucial issues for Jesuit spirituality in our world today. I put them forward on the basis of a conviction that Jesuit sources contain powerful resources for a spirituality in our day. The objections raised against the letter of the *Exercises* touch not the substance of Ignatian spirituality but the sixteenth-century form of its presentation. The point of this questioning, then, is not to undermine Jesuit principles and axioms, but to reinterpret them anew for our age. But since the questions raised here are foundational, one needs to bring to bear a consistent modern anthropological framework.

PART II. AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF ACTION

In this section I shall describe some elements of an understanding of human existence in terms of a philosophy of action. This anthropology will then serve as a framework for reinterpreting the critical areas of Ignatian spirituality that have just been considered. This anthropological interlude, therefore, grounds the understanding of the dynamics of Ignatian spirituality put forward in Part III. These reflections are inspired by Maurice Blondel, and a fuller account of his thought appears in the Appendix. I am not aiming at systematic coherence in this presentation. I have simply chosen those distinctions which will become operative in adjusting the sixteenth-century Ignatian language of spirituality to our current context, and I present them in an order that corresponds to those points of the Exercises under consideration.

As a point of departure let me clarify the central category of the discussion, namely, action. Action is used analogously, and this means that in different contexts it has a meaning that is partly similar and partly different. For example, in its deepest sense, action refers to human existence itself. To say that the human person is action highlights the dynamic quality of human existence. At this deep level too the term includes all dimensions of human life. Knowing is action. Human affectivity and feeling insofar as they are responses are action. But action may also refer to concrete behaviors. Doing is action, so that action may be used to designate specific concrete actions that people perform.

It should be clear from the beginning then that the discussion of action that follows may not be construed in any reductionist way. Action is never mere doing. At bottom this discussion of action deals with human existence itself in its most general and at the same time most concrete sense. Action embraces within a dynamic realism every aspect of concrete human life. Action is the name of our existence as well as what we do.

One is what one does

From this rich meaning of action, it follows that one is what one does. If action refers to dynamic existence itself, what is the self other than a person's action? Human action is free. Thus by our action, in the sense of the decisions we make and the actions we perform, we also fashion ourselves to be this or that. Human beings constitute themselves by action. On a practical level, we form basic attitudes through action; ideas emerge out of responsive action; we focus our values through action; we fashion our concrete desires in action; through action we forge who we are in relation to the reality to which we respond. Beneath what we think we are and beyond who we say we are, who we really are is revealed in action because it is constituted by our action. We are what we do. Action then represents the intentional and dynamic process by which human beings constitute themselves as unique persons. This aspect of action will be relevant to our conception of spirituality.

Action has eternal value

Action has an eternal value. This thesis affirms several aspects of the value of human action. First of all, once posited, action exists and cannot not have existed. It has the ontic reality and value that pertains to being itself. Secondly, actions continue in their effects. They cannot be called back, but continue indefinitely through unknown chains of causality to influence the world irreversibly. Our action perdures as long as time itself. But, thirdly, human action has a certain eternal value that transcends time. This affirmation of faith stands against the view that finite reality is not really real because God as infinite reality already contains and possesses all that really is within God's own self. Such a view really negates the ultimate reality of action because the infinite immensity of God's being swallows up limited and finite human action.

In reaction to this view of things, the thesis that human action has an eternal value begins with a conviction of faith that God created human freedom for a purpose. Human action is in some measure free with a freedom that transcends antecedent causes and allows it to be creative. Human action out of itself creates novelty in the world; it fashions new forms and structures of being. These products of human action can have ultimate eternal value through the power of the God who creates and sustains human action. God the bestower of creative freedom must be seen as the guarantor of its eternal value. The logic of this faith can be demonstrated negatively. Were this not the case, neither could one affirm the ultimate worth of human life in this world. The ultimate value of human action, therefore, can be inferred as implied in faith in God the creator. This quality of human action will have a bearing on our construal of the First Principle and Foundation of the *Exercises*.

The social structure of action

Up to this point I have been addressing human action from a personalist point of view. I have considered action as emerging from the human person and entering the world. I now wish to shift to a perspective that allows reflection on human action from the perspective of the world and society.

The human person and his or her action can never be understood adequately as an isolated phenomenon. Personal human action forms part of the world and thus always interacts with the world. What appears as autonomous action from a personalist point of view appears as response from the broader perspective of the world and society. The human person who is a free initiator of action is also fashioned by the world and by society. As long as one holds firmly to the autonomous value of personal human freedom, one cannot exaggerate the determining influence of the world on human action. We are also genuinely constituted by the world and society. The way the objective social institution of language shapes our power even to think demonstrates the degree of influence which the objective social world exerts upon individual action.

Action then may also be seen as that which constitutes society; action is the bond that holds social reality together. But in this case action refers to patterned behavior, routine actions that have been developed over the years to form objective social structures into which personal human action is absorbed. These social structures of action range from the most basic and universal to the most temporary and intentional. Ideas and values lie embedded in human patterns of speech and they are learned and internalized; work in a corporation participates in organic patterned behavior to produce goods and generate the profit on which its very existence depends. In both cases structured social action fashions the person whose action fits into these institutions, even as personally initiated action helps to fashion the social world in which it participates. These aspects of human action will expand our notion of sin.

Action can participate in God's action

Human action not only coacts in and with the world and society; it may also participate in the action of God in the world. Human action is not absolutely autonomous because the infinite power of God's creating grounds and sustains the very existence of action itself. But I would like to reflect beyond the level of creation on the significance of the doctrine of cooperative grace that has marked

the theological tradition from Augustine through Aquinas and has been so influential in Roman Catholic spirituality.

The doctrine of original sin symbolizes our experience that human existence is intrinsically infected with a tendency to sin. One may understand this sin as at least an eradicable egocentrism that entraps freedom within itself so that the expansive reaching out of action into the world always includes at the same time an effort to draw the world into the self for the increment of its own being. A doctrine of cooperative grace makes sense only in the light of this doctrine of sin. In the Christian view, if sin so pervades human action, the only way to account for genuine love in the world lies in the power of a God who is love at work within human action itself. The doctrine of cooperative grace depicts God's Spirit, that is, God as personally present and immanent to God's creatures, at work drawing human freedom out of itself and into creative loving relationships in the world. This action of God within, as Karl Rahner has shown, need not be explicitly conscious. Nor need we think that it is rare. But at the same time neither does Christian theology merely postulate this idea of God's power of love at work within us. It does not lie beyond all experience. The work of God's Spirit in human life can be experienced indirectly. This experience comes to expression in exclamations such as Paul's when he writes that his action for the good is due not to himself but the grace of Christ within him (Gal 2:20; Rm 7:13 - 8:17).

In this view, then, human action may be action that cooperates with God's action in the world. Or viewing the same coaction from the opposite direction, God may be considered as working in the world within and through human action. Creative loving action, action that intends and builds positive value in the world, may thus be called theandric action or theergy, action that participates in God's saving power in the world. In this action human existence itself becomes united with God. This vision of human action could have a determining influence on our conception of Jesus' central message of the kingdom of God and our role in it.

Three levels of intentional action

Human action involves the will, and willing presupposes some form of knowledge. When I call human action intentional, I am simply underlining the fact that human beings do not act blindly. Reflective awareness undergirds the will, and human action always flows in some measure from a conscious human intention. At this point I want to distinguish three levels at which the will can be seen as structuring human action.

The most obvious level of the operation of the will in human action occurs in human choice. In the clearest case, this level of willing involves a decision directed towards a specific object. In this exercise of free will, human action becomes determined by a concrete object or the specific direction that it chooses. Human life may be seen as made up of a whole series of such concrete choices. These encompass the routine choices of an ordinary day. They also include the momentous decisions that will shape the future significantly. Actually every decision shapes our future and the future of the world. But the point here is that the exercise of free choice constitutes merely one level of the intentional activity of human action.

A deeper level of willed action can be discovered beneath all the human choices that make up human life. I call this level of the will "the dynamic of willing itself." This dynamic of willing itself really describes the expansive character of action in its most fundamental sense. In response to the question of why human beings will anything at all, why they necessarily act, one finds a dynamism beneath every specific action of the will that inevitably goes out of and beyond the self. Aquinas recognized this dynamic quality of human action as a necessary reaching out that ultimately has as its implicit object "the good" or being itself. This corresponds to the restlessness that Augustine spoke of and which will not be quieted or content with any finite object. This dynamic of willing itself forms a universal drive that is constitutive of human existence itself. Unlike human choice the intentionality at this level is a determinism. All human beings are constituted by a dynamism with a necessary logic, namely, an expansive

and outgoing willing and acting that tends towards its implicit goal, whether reflectively known or not, namely, absolute being itself.

Yet another level or dimension of the human will has been called "a fundamental option." Many are familiar with this distinction from their study of moral philosophy or theology. This fundamental option should not be confused with the deepest law of the will, the dynamic of willing itself. The fundamental option of a person is determined by the whole series of specific choices that make up one's life up to and at any given point. A fundamental option in this understanding is not any single choice, nor could it be. Conscious freedom never has the ability to encompass totally and dispose of the self in a moment. To think that one can fails to appreciate both the finite historical nature of the person and its radical depth and mystery. It was said earlier that we constituted ourselves by our action. Here we see another aspect of this self-constitution. A person's concrete choices taken as a whole fashion and fix at any given moment his or her fundamental option. This fundamental option is like the center of gravity which defines the actual direction which a person's life has taken. It may be hidden from the self, but it can be ferreted out by an examination of the choices that in fact have governed one's life.

These three levels of intentional action interrelate with each other. The fundamental law of dynamic expansive action, that is, the dynamic of willing itself, becomes concrete in an actual life of specific choices and decisions. Ideally these concrete choices should be directed towards the goal of the dynamic of willing itself. From a point of view of sheer coherence, there should be a correspondence between one's fundamental option and the dynamic of willing itself. Without such a correspondence, a radical division and conflict would rule a person's life. The self as constituted by one's fundamental option would be at odds with the purpose of human existence and the dynamic of willing itself. These distinctions concerning the inner structure of human action, then, will be very helpful for understanding what is going on in an election and the discernment of the spirits.

Possessive knowledge

Action, finally, mediates possessive knowledge. This last thesis concerning action has to do with the quality of knowledge that action generates. Knowledge, conscious awareness of reality, may exist at many different levels, from vaguely conscious feelings to the vivid presence provided by sight. Moreover knowledge may exist in a variety of differentiated forms, from poetic intuition to the abstract clarity of mathematical definition. Possessive knowledge mediated by action does not relate to an increment of awareness of reality, but precisely to possession of it. Action negotiates a kind of knowing that, as it were, internalizes through the body of one's action that which is known. Action causes and results in a form of possession of the reality that is known. The knower and the known become wedded in action; action overcomes the separation and unites the knower with the known. The engagement of action allows one to know something from the inside, to possess it and be possessed by it. Action thus becomes as it were the reality principle that binds the known to the knower, who can otherwise still remain at a distance from the object of his or her knowledge. The student of war does not know it in the same way as the soldier, whether private or general. The veterans of Viet Nam possess and are possessed by the reality of war. This category of the possessive knowledge mediated by action has everything to do with the union with God that Ignatius aims at in the exercise of the Contemplation for Obtaining Divine Love.

As a conclusion to this section and before moving to an analysis of the Ignatian spirituality that is portrayed in the *Exercises*, let me summarize the anthropology of action that will serve as a basis for reinterpretation. Action offers a viewpoint for understanding ourselves and human existence itself in a dynamic, existential, and realistic way. Because of its depth and richness on the one hand, and its sheer practicality on the other, it binds together a metaphysical vision of human reality and reflections on concrete behavior in an integrated and coherent way. From a personal point of view, human beings are centers of action and any given person is what he or she does. Secondly, in an evolutionary and historical world the freedom that intrinsically constitutes action appears as creative. We help

fashion the world. This necessarily entails responsibility, a responsibility in and for the world that cannot be escaped. In the light of the doctrine of an evolutionary creation, one must ask about the permanent value and the proper use of one's free action. If action here and now has an eternal value, precisely because of final salvation, then this salvation reorients the purpose of human freedom and action back towards construction in the world.

Thirdly, when action reaches out into the world, it appears as interaction or coaction with the world and others in objective society. The horizon of action thus expands so that human action, especially in its patterned and socially constructed institutions, reappears as the very stuff of personal existence and action. In a dialogic relationship, then, personal human action fashions society even as it is determined by the world and society. Purely individual action simply does not exist. Fourthly, within a religious framework and the tradition of the theology of cooperative grace, human action does not appear absolutely autonomous. Behavior that overcomes the inherent tendency of human action to be *incurvata in se* cooperates with God's own initiative or action in history.

Fifthly, returning to the personalist perspective, human action insofar as it is intentional is highly complex. But the distinctions between the underlying dynamic of human willing itself, basic human choices of specific objects, and the fundamental option that is fashioned in those very choices help to sort out the logic and goal of the human phenomenon. This in turn provides a framework for understanding the process of decision making. And sixthly, decision and action that cooperate with God's intention and action in the world bind a person in a symbiotic and possessive relationship with God.

These distinctions from a philosophy of action will have significant consequences in the reinterpretation of spirituality generally and in particular Ignatius's first principle and his notions of sin, the kingdom of God, the election, the discernment of spirits, and finding God in all things.

PART III. IGNATIAN PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUALITY IN THE LIGHT OF ACTION

In this third part I wish to take up again the key areas of Jesuit spirituality illustrated by the *Exercises* that were mentioned in the first part of this essay and which may encounter resistance in some people because they live in a different world than that of Ignatius. The reinterpretation in each case will be positive and constructive and will try to preserve not what was consciously in Ignatius's mind, but the question behind each meditation and how its logic might be reappropriated today. In each case the formulation will be fashioned in a language of a philosophy and theology of action. I shall begin with a general characterization of spirituality as it appears in this framework.

Spirituality

In Part II it was said that one is what one does. By action the human person constitutes himself or herself. From this it can be shown that, at bottom, the term spirituality refers to the way a person leads his or her life. The term spirituality is properly Christian. But rather than view that to which it refers as limited to Christians, it is reasonable to think that every human being has a spirituality. All human beings lead their lives in a certain way. The concrete way of life of individuals and groups make up their spirituality. This conception of things prevents from the outset every notion of spirituality that cuts it off from life in the world.

This view of spirituality reaches more deeply than the question of "lifestyle." Since human existence is intentional and willed action, a spirituality reaches below the surface of this or that pattern of action to the fundamental option of a person. The multiple specific actions of a person fix and define the deepest commitment of that person's will, and ultimately of his or her being. One fashions the being of the self through action. In order to assign spirituality the

profound significance it should have in the whole of life, there is no better way than to conceive it as embodied in human action itself.

The term spirituality can be understood on at least two distinct levels, the one existential and the other reflective and explicitly conscious. On the first and deepest level of action, spirituality is constituted by the conscious decisions and actions that make the person to be who he or she is; spirituality is the continuous line of action that fashions a person's identity. On the second reflective level, spirituality refers to a theory or theoretical vision of human life in terms of the ideas, ideals, and ultimate values that should shape it. These two levels constantly interact in the thinking person. For example, in Christian spirituality one has a vision of God and reality mediated through the person of Jesus which supplies the ideas and values which in turn should shape a Christian's life. So too, various schools of spirituality within the Christian sphere, such as eremitical or Franciscan or Ignatian spirituality, supply variations and refinements of the Christian vision.

Looking at spirituality as action does not result in a limiting or exclusive definition. Indeed, this approach intends the very opposite. Action includes and integrates dimensions of the spiritual life that frequently go overlooked. For example, all aspects of secular life in the world are drawn into the sphere of one's spiritual life. Moreover the category of action helps to clarify the interrelationships of some of the elements of spirituality that are often dealt with separately. For example, faith and spirituality can be understood reductively to be synonymous. On the existential level of personal and subjective appropriation, faith and spirituality are identical because both refer to the fundamental option and commitment of a person that is actually lived out in his or her action. The more theoretical sense of faith, which appears when one addresses it objectively as "the faith," coincides with the understanding of the world and human life in it that in turn provides the vision for human action or underlies it. Spirituality, when recognized as grounded in human action, appears as nothing less than the living out of a vision of faith. Action is the actuality of the internalized vision.

The issue underlying spirituality, that which is at stake in it, is in every case union with God. This is true even in the case of the atheist or the person not religiously inclined. For just as the question of one's destiny cannot be escaped, neither can the correlative question of whether or not my action and hence my being in this world correspond to the ultimate reason of things. The question of whether or not one's action unfolds within the context of the all-encompassing truth of reality itself logically cannot be avoided. The "dynamic of willing itself" that underlies all human action is rooted in a love of being and an implicit demand for absolute being. In the Christian vision of things, this desire to be conformed with reality itself and thus affirmed in and by being itself takes the form of union with the personal God whom Jesus called Father. Christian spirituality is the living out of this vision in action.

The First Principle and Foundation

With this conception of spirituality as a background, let us move to the issues raised by the sixteenth-century *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius. In the first part of this essay I pointed to a certain individualistic framework and an eschatological bias underlying the Ignatian formula. The formula characterizes the fundamental reason for being of human beings predominantly in terms of the final salvation of each one of us. Reflection on the goal of the salvation of one's soul in the end might be a fitting point of departure for some Christians, but it hardly does justice to the demands of the spiritual life today. Without negating the perennial validity of dimensions that the Ignatian formula stresses, it must be reinterpreted to respond to the spiritual questions that are being asked today. The idea that action has an eternal value will be the key to this reinterpretation.

Some Christians who come to the Exercises do not worry about their own personal salvation. This lack of anxiety may not stem from a tacit Pelagian pride, but simply a deep internalization once and for all of the Christian vision of things mediated by the person of Jesus. The God of the universe, and thus the principle governing the inner logic of reality itself and hence of my being, is personal,

benevolent, and dedicated to summoning back into God's own personal life all of creation. Having internalized this, some may want more in a spirituality than the Ignatian groundwork provides. For example, a much more vital question for many people may concern the significance of Christian salvation for their lives here and now. They want the salvation mediated by Jesus Christ to bestow a present value on their world, an intrinsic meaning on their action in it, not simply an eschatological salvation. It is simply not apparent today that the reason for our being in this world is to "praise, reverence, and serve God" in any direct fashion. Ignatius's formula correctly captures the idea that God is the ground of our being and salvation, so that gratitude, praise, reverence, and service should be the context of all our action. But ninety-nine percent of our active lives unavoidably consists in doing other things. The issue, then, concerns the way these attitudes can be subsumed into the framework of the concrete things that we do in the world. Does the First Principle and Foundation say anything about the use and value of the freedom and action that Christians invest in the world? Through what kinds of action should the praise, reverence, and service of God in this world be rendered?

The first principle and foundation today should include some statement concerning human responsibility to this world and the eternal value of human action in this world and for this world. The first principle and foundation ought to illumine how human action in this world even now is saved, and that the exercise of my freedom and the creativity of my action count. Human work can have a validity now that will last in the end time. The formula should also be made to address the question of the ultimate value of my action in more than the purely individual and eschatological terms of the final salvation of my soul. It must assert that the reason for one's being in this world includes a responsibility for the world and that the exercise of that responsibility will not go for nought. Human freedom and its creative action is a form of being in the world and for the world. The first principle and foundation should show how biblical symbols affirm the absolute and everlasting value of everything positive, everything done in love, that is posited by human action. At this point an

anthropology of action can draw out of the biblical symbolism of creation, covenant, prophetic criticism, and the New Testament's reduction of the Law to an identification of the love of God with the love of neighbor, a much fuller and more adequate statement of the reason of our being and action.

The first principle and foundation might look something like this: God the Creator bestowed on human beings the gift freedom which, as a real power to fashion new being, carries with it responsibility. Each person, therefore, has a God-given responsibility and opportunity to exercise that freedom in creative achievement in and for the world. God's final or eschatological act will be patient of what our personal and corporate freedom presents back to God. Our final salvation, then, cannot be conceived in abstraction from our creative action in and for the world which God has in large measure placed in our corporate and personal hands. Jesus' parable of the talents, which forms a part of the explanation of his central message of the kingdom of God, points to the rationale of creation and the logic of salvation that unfolds within the framework of human existence conceived as action. In the light of this formula, the Ignatian expression "to save one's soul" could be construed as an individualist temptation contrary to the will of God if it elicited an egocentric desire for my salvation that bypassed the responsibility implicit in God's very creation of human freedom. But the formula could also be reinterpreted as a religious framework for a much fuller consideration of the Christian vision of the ultimate value of human freedom and action in and for the ongoing creation of the world.

The Consideration of Sin

How are we to deal with the extensive amount of time that Ignatius gives over to the consideration of one's personal sin, that is, when it appears that a retreatant may not have the inward sensibility to which it appeals? Would it be right to awaken that sensibility? At what point does the introspection that this entails shade into spiritual masochism, which ironically becomes a secret form of narcissism? Are we to bemoan the contemporary loss of an agonized sense of personal sin and guilt that underlies the apparent lack of a

need for personal confession? Is there a theology of sin today that can make sense out of the evident evolution that has taken place in our culture? What is the sin that threatens the very meaningfulness of our whole life in the world?

It is not my intention to respond to all these questions adequately, but only to point the direction for a certain strategy. A point of departure for understanding a new sense of sin in which we all participate lies in the social structure of my personal action, a topic developed in Part II. The social world of which every individual forms a part is constructed of patterns of action that in large measure corrode human values when they do not actually destroy human life. Human beings cannot avoid participation in these social structures. Relative to each person these structures are objective. They stand over against the individual and defy every individual will that seeks to change them. More than this, they fashion and shape individual action into their own image and likeness. No one can escape social sin because everyone participates in the social mechanisms that injure and dehumanize the marginalized victims of society and corrupt the values of all.

In reality, a sense of sin in the world is not decreasing but increasing. But it is not merely personal sin that ultimately dominates our consciousness, but what is symbolized by original sin and has come to be known as the sin of the world. This sin is constantly being identified for us in specific social structures of behavior, and we hate to hear about it. Consciousness of this sin, even when only implicit, does not cause personal confusion and anxiety but a general disorientation and a sense of entrapment. It can lead to cynicism and through cynicism to the mortal threat to freedom that resides in boredom or indifference. It saps one's courage and leads one to doubt the value of good action because it is drawn up into the vortex of social systems and their consequences that rob any good that the individual does of any significant effect.

Of course the seeds of sin lie in each individual; sin would not appear in society were it not for the innate egoism that is part of the very constitution of everyone's freedom. Surely one must wrestle with inner concupiscence in the attempt to be open to the power of the

gracious Spirit that will alone overcome it. But there is another hidden level of subjective sin. The objective sin of the world, in its concrete manifestations as social sin, does not remain objective. Sinful patterns of human action are out-there-real only because they are also introjected and internalized to become part of our own subjectivity. The experience of entrapment thus has both objective and subjective dimensions; social participation qualifies the very motives of our action. Our action merges with the world and society; the world is part of us even as we are part of the world; we cannot escape willing participation in the evil structures which make up our world. We are consumers in a consumer society; we tacitly support aggressive economic and political foreign policy; we use a language the carries sexist and racist values.

The examination of this sin should begin outside the self with an analysis of the social environment in which we live; it can only be approached through objective analysis. At the same time, however, this objective analysis includes self-analysis. But this meditation does not end within the self; it opens out towards the world. We should meditate on the dehumanizing effects of the social patterns of our corporate action on concrete groups of people. Self-examination here deals with the way we have unconsciously bought into the cultural systems of sinful disvalue and allowed them to shape our consciousness. We should examine the measure in which we cooperate in aggressive death-dealing practices or have accepted them in a passive escape from freedom. In particular, we have to become aware of the subtlety and ambiguous character of all our accustomed social behavior. The real scandal of sin lies here; here too resides the potential to experience an urgency that sin be resisted. Unless one faces up to this sin, one will not be able to accept critically and honestly the first principle and foundation, that my action has ultimate value.

In sum, the meditations on sin should be objective. Anyone who looks at the world critically cannot not have a sense of sin. But it is not a sense of sin that crushes the person with personal guilt so that he or she may be saved by a sheerly personal salvation. Rather it is a sense of sin that undermines the first principle and foundation of the positive and constructive direction of my action with a

global sense of futility. The response to this sin and its effects is not merely forgiveness. Of course one could go nowhere without that forgiveness; the acceptance by God of the person precisely as a sinner provides the very foundation for any further freedom. But after this forgiveness, what? After the healing grace of forgiveness one needs a positive direction for one's freedom and action in the world. The response to the new sense of sin lies in the meditation on the kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God

We have seen that Ignatius's casting of the meditation on the Kingdom of Christ is dated on at least two counts. Jesus did not proclaim himself as a king. What little we can know of the historical Jesus acts as a negative norm for what we should proclaim about Jesus. On this basis, Jesus' refusal of this title means that it is theologically inappropriate. But we may build on the kind of "king" that Ignatius presents us with, for it is no typical king. Also the presuppositions concerning the breadth of salvation that lie behind this meditation no longer correspond to a current theological view. In his first prelude to the consideration of the Incarnation, Ignatius depicts the "Three Divine Persons" looking down upon the world and seeing "that all are going down to hell."¹⁷ If one accepts the theological doctrine of Vatican II that grace is universally available, and if one judges that God's universal salvific will and grace are effective, then the bias here seems unduly pessimistic about the ultimate destiny of the race. One could make distinctions to justify the Ignatian contemplation as a thought-experiment. The point remains, however, that the whole line of thought misses today's target. Can this consideration, so absolutely central to the logic of Christianity and Christian life, be realigned to confirm the Foundation against the problem of sin in our new context?¹⁸ The thesis that human action

¹⁷ *Exercises*, 102.

¹⁸ What is said here will also shed light on the Meditation on Two Standards. *Exercises*, 136-148.

can participate in God's action opens up the meaning of the kingdom of God in response to today's experience of sin.

Jesus himself preached the kingdom of God. Much of that preaching took the form of parable and example. It also appeared against a background of multiple traditions of interpretation of what the very phrase "kingdom of God" meant. As a result, the phrase so abounds in richness and complexity of meaning that it remains impossible to determine with complete precision exactly what Jesus intended by the kingdom of God. However, despite these difficulties, one can say with confidence that it implies at least the following for our own Christian imagination: that God is sovereign, the transcendent God of the universe; that God's will, often at odds with human values, is to be done in this world; that God wills justice among people and nations in this world, so that the humanity of people is not trampled here and now even as it will not be in the final reign of God. The meditations of the Second Week, if they keep close to the synoptics, will bear this out.

This Jesus who bears this message is the focal point for the imagination of the Christian's faith in God. Prescinding from the christological question, because the issue here is prior to it, Christian faith always has Jesus as the center of its relationship to God. This man, in his teaching and the way he lived his life, all of which make up his person, defines for Christians the very revelation of God. Therefore, of all the possible vehicles in the world that may lead a person to God, for the Christian Jesus remains the privileged and normative "way" to God.¹⁹ This basic consideration opens up the essential logic of the rest of the Exercises which focus on Jesus.

What formality does a consideration of the kingdom of God open up for meditations on the life of Jesus? What specific light does the

¹⁹ The idea that Jesus is the "way" to God is a fundamental theme in the whole christology of Jon Sobrino. See his *Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach*, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1978). This same volume contains an application of his christology to the Spiritual Exercises. In this regard, an important contribution is that of J. Peter Schineller, "The Newer Approaches to Christology and Their Use in the Spiritual Exercises," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 12/4-5 (September-November 1980).

consideration of "the kingdom of God as preached by Jesus" throw upon the reflections of the Second and Third Weeks? And how does this relate to the newly interpreted logic of the foundation and the threat of sin? The following four general guidelines may be helpful in responding to these questions.

First of all, the humanity of Jesus should dominate one's considerations. One should view Jesus as a human being. Of course, the Christian doctrine of Jesus' divinity must remain intact, but it is essential to see how it functions here. The doctrine of Jesus' divinity explains why one attends to him in order to understand oneself, the world, and God. But it should not dominate in the functional process of looking to Jesus in order to shape one's spirituality. The essential nature of Christian spirituality from a christological point of view has always been some form of *imitatio Christi*, of discipleship. But we do not and cannot imitate or follow Jesus insofar as he is divine. In other words, the more one maximizes the divinity of Jesus in a consideration of his life, the less directly relevant he becomes as a revelation for the meaning of human existence that can be imitated and followed. As a first guideline, then, one should fix attention on the person of Jesus under the aspect of his being truly a human being, consubstantial with us and like us in all things except sin.

Secondly, one should attend to the human logic of his preaching and action. Since the essence of spirituality consists in a way of life, the logic of one's behavior and action, one should attend to the parts and the whole of Jesus' life. What are the values that controlled his commitment? What fundamental option shaped his whole life? Through what specific decisions and actions did his commitment to the kingdom of God play itself out? Or, vice versa, how did his action measure up to what he preached as his fundamental ideal? At this point the historical and social conflicts that Jesus encountered, the choices he made and for whom he made them, the convictions for which he was willing to die, all take on enormous importance. Where did Jesus locate sin, and how did he deal with his adversaries? In other words, Jesus was killed because of his spirituality, because of what he did. His spirituality was countercultural and in fact, on the

level of history, his going around doing good was swallowed up in the larger world of social rejection. But despite the tragic end, the concrete actions of Jesus and their overall logic still constitute for Christians a revelation of the meaning of human existence and how human life should be led.

Thirdly, our action may participate in the action of God in history. The New Testament, especially Luke, portrays Jesus' mission as animated by the Spirit of God. The phrase, "the Spirit of God" symbolizes the immanence of God in the world, especially within human life, inspiring and empowering human action. In terms of christology, the Spirit is one way in which the New Testament writers explain the divine dimension of the life of Jesus. Jesus was "possessed" by the Spirit of God; the Spirit of God was within him. This Spirit christology opens up the analogy between Jesus' life and the doctrine of cooperative grace in the history of Christian anthropology. Insofar as human action may participate in the immanent action of God in history, Jesus becomes a genuine revealer of the real possibilities of our action. In discipleship, then, the same kingdom of God that so intimately controlled Jesus' person and action can also become the fundamental option of Christian life. Identification with Jesus, then, means internalizing his message in such a way that it allows our action in our world to participate in the action of God in history.

Fourthly, the resurrection of Jesus attests to the ultimate and eternal value of his actions. A person is constituted by his or her actions, so that the actuality of any person should not be considered independently of what he or she does. Jesus has to be looked upon as just such a concrete human person. Historically, his actions were as discrete, particular, and limited as those of any other human being. Yet the resurrection confirms that *this* life of his was not only meaningful, but was also eternally valuable and valid. In other words, God raised Jesus because he lived the life that he lived. Revelation of the resurrection of Jesus carries the affirmation that precisely his kind of life has been ratified and guaranteed by God as having eternal value. It was not some interior principle or substance that was raised, but Jesus, and Jesus was his vision and his actions. That

these count is attested to by their being drawn up into the very life of God.

These four principles, then, set a context in which the kingdom of God as preached by Jesus and exemplified in his life reasserts the first principle and foundation against the background and threat of sin. The premise is that in the Exercises we approach Jesus to nurture spirituality, our way of life in the world. The doctrine of Jesus' divinity signifies that in the life of Jesus we have an embodiment of God, of God's will for human life, and thus a revelatory lived parable of the logic of a human life according to God's will. Thus in the stories about Jesus we contemplate primarily the logic of his action, what it is based on and where it leads. For spirituality consists in a way of life that follows Jesus' vision of the Kingdom in ever new situations in history.

Election and the will of God

We move now to the area of the election and making a decision that corresponds to God's will. In the first part of this essay I pointed out that modern cultural experience and some theologians call into question the idea that God has a specific plan for history and thus a concrete or specific will for individuals in it. In this section I wish to develop this point and introduce a distinction that may clarify the implications of this experience for spirituality. I shall not demonstrate the correctness of the principle, for I am not clear how that could be done. I simply propose another way of looking at things.

Many people today find it difficult to imagine that God *directly* governs history, or that God has a specific will for the way each individual should lead his or her life. Quite simply, when one takes a critical look at the condition of the human race today, it would be scandalous to assign responsibility for what we see to God. If God tolerates the actual unfolding of history that we witness, if God allows the personal and collective decisions that make up the reality of history, it seems to follow that God has no predetermined plan for the development of human history nor for anyone's personal history. In other words, the present sense not only of the seriousness of

human free action but also of the reality of its creative effects leads to a corresponding sense that God has really left human history in human hands. This experience raises in a new way the long tradition of cosmic speculation on the relation between divine omnipotence, providence, and governance on the one hand and human freedom on the other. But there are current theological systems that deal with this and allow for the reality of the creativity of human action.²⁰

In addressing this problem on the level of spirituality, one may distinguish between a general will and a specific will of God. On the one hand, Christians have ample witness to the general will of God in the Scriptures, especially in the New Testament as mediated by the person of Jesus. God's general will objectively for social history is communicated in Jesus' message of the kingdom of God. God wills that justice characterize the structure of our common public life as well as personal relations. God's will for every person may be generalized in the command that love be the fundamental motive and character of all human actions. But God has no special or specific will that governs the concrete decisions of people's lives or how that love is to be effected. This does not mean that God is unconcerned about individuals and their behavior, but rather that God does not have a concrete plan or intention for each person's life. Like a mature parent who totally wishes his or her children good fortune, God has not chosen the particulars of their careers.

Thus what is at stake in the election, that which is to be decided, is not God's will but my will. All concrete human choices, whether they be decisions that encompass a lifelong commitment or ones that are more routine, are my decisions. They can never be equated with the will of God, nor can we evade full responsibility for them by transcendent claims. The best one can do is try to reason why this or that decision more closely corresponds to the general will of God for all people, given this concrete situation. The insistence on this single point, because it is so fundamental, has significant implications for the way we view our Christian and religious

²⁰ See Appendix and notes 34, 35, and 36.

life. In many ways decisions concerning the Christian life are scarcely distinct from the elections made by men and women generally. From another point of view, however, Christians are guided by the revelation of God's general will in Jesus, and this amounts to a world of difference.

This view of the will of God and an election relative to it does not undermine the language of vocation, but it does modify it. The general will of God constitutes the vocation of every human person taken singly. All Christians who pattern their lives on Jesus internalize the same vocation. But each one must decide how that general vocation will come to fruition in one's own life, given one's specific talents and historical situation. One need not conceive of God as having a special plan for the course of one's personal life in order to sanctify it in some extraordinary way as a particular way of life. The sacred character of every single way of life can only be measured by the degree in which one actually lives it in conformity to God's exigency revealed in the symbol of the kingdom of God. An election of a state of life is serious business. But a particular decision should never be simply equated with a specific will of God. It is my decision, which may conform to the general will of God in a greater or lesser degree.

The status of even the most serious of life decisions can be clarified in terms of the different levels of the human will analyzed in Part II. Whatever the decision, it is a concrete historically limited choice of the will. Once every specific choice of the will is seen in its historical perspective, as a moment in my history situated in a changing social history, it can never be seen as fully embracing the goal of "the dynamic of willing itself" or as fully constituting one's fundamental option. Action always unfolds in a continuum over time, a duration, so that every moment cannot be other than a part of the whole. For example, some decisions or elections are so basic and decisive that they may in fact, as it turns out, give a permanent shape to our fundamental option. But even such decisions require a constant and continuous series of historical choices and actions that may, in another context, seem to contradict the initial decision. At the same time, these seeming reversals in new circumstances may still

be in conformity with one's vision of the goal of "the dynamic of willing itself." They may also be consistent with and fortify constructively the fundamental option which the initial decision helped to fashion. Due to finitude and sin, we can really but only partially identify our concrete choices and action with the goal of "the dynamic of willing itself." The end of human existence, specified by the life of Jesus, becomes equivalent to the will of God and the goal toward which we hope to direct our own fundamental option through our successive decisions and actions.

The recognition that objectively God has not laid out a specific path for the freedom of a person can be of great help in the spiritual life of action. The recognition of finitude releases people from the anxious quest for certainty about God's specific will that is unavailable because, in this view of things, it does not exist. At the same time, God's general will provides a vision and norm for the whole of life. This view also bestows on human decision a responsibility and seriousness that can energize human action. What we do not do to further the kingdom of God will not be done. God values human action.

The Discernment of Spirits

We come now to the question of the discernment of spirits. Few other areas in religious life generally and in Jesuit life in particular seem more clouded in an aura of mystification. Who has not experienced patently wrong and destructive decisions made in religious life that are simultaneously justified by a language of "prayer," "discernment," and "the will of God"? What is going on in the language of discernment? The analysis of the workings of different levels of human willing will also help to clarify the process of discernment.

We have seen that Ignatius believed in the "spirits," invisible but out-there-real. These spirits have been largely demythologized today. Especially through psychology, whether it be depth psychology that allows us to analyze the subconscious complexity of our motivations, or a more popular sensitivity to the dynamics of personality, the spirits have become internalized. They are the intricate movements of our needs and desires. While this has been a salutary development, because sound psychology can certainly help clarify our inten-

tions, it has also had some less healthy side effects. The worst of these, when it occurs, is the impression often suggested by the language of "discernment" that, in sorting out the psychological spirits of one's personality, one is at the same time "getting in touch with," or even directly "experiencing," either God's Spirit or the specific will of God. It is sometimes subtly suggested that one can have or indeed does have a religious experience of God's specific will for a concrete situation. In other words, what has happened is that the absoluteness of the transcendent object of the dynamic of willing itself and the object of choice have become confused, so that suddenly one is hearing the voice of God.

If one does not experience the spirits, surely one experiences the Spirit in one's life. What does it mean to "experience" grace? This question too should be placed against the background of the traditional tension between human freedom and grace, and especially the direction in which the Spirit of God may be said to lead one. The Spirit or working of grace does not dictate specifically this or that historical decision or action. The tension in the human spirit and will is between sin and love, between a constraining egoism and an expansive self-transcending charity. In the traditional view grace is posited over against an elementary tendency to sin which is part of the human condition. The work of the Spirit or grace, then, cannot be experienced as it were objectively in itself; it is always mediated in specific historical terms. But the very variety of its possible mediations militates against any single mediated experience being equated with God's Spirit. God's grace, then, operates on the level of the opening up of the freedom of choice to the transcendent good that corresponds to the dynamic of willing itself. But it does not prescribe this or that specific action. One cannot experience grace or God's Spirit categorically; or better, God's Spirit remains transcendent to every categorical or historically mediated experience of it.²¹

²¹ In certain situations of a clear choice between good and evil, the general will of God may function in a way that makes it appear as though this specific decision were the particular will of God. In other words, those cases in which one seems to experience the specific will of God here and now can be

Demythologization of the spirits helps overcome and guard against the tendency of the language of discernment to fall into the illusion that God's specific will can be revealed to a person. But after they are demythologized the spirits should be projected again outside of the self and objectified in the world. The good and evil spirits are in the world; they are in the culture and society that shape our lives because we have internalized them. The discernment of the spirits is a discernment of the world, for which one needs, if not a critical social theory, at least a critical attitude that brings objective reason and analysis to bear on the objects of choice and their consequences in the objective order. An analysis of motives alone is completely insufficient for deciding what my action should be against the horizon of the general will of God for the world as manifested in Jesus. To free the language of discernment from the mystification that surrounds it, it should be closely related to the objective moral and ethical reasoning performed by any conscientious human being in his or her given context, culture, and value system.²²

The distinctions of levels of the human will can go far to explain what is going on in the discernment of the direction Christian action should take. We have seen that beneath all concrete choices of the will lies the dynamic of willing itself. This absolute love for being reaches out toward God. In religious conversion the dynamic of willing itself becomes focused in a particular vision of absolute

accommodated by what is actually the general will of God as revealed in Jesus. In short, this language still explains that experience.

²² Let me qualify this sharp statement by explaining more clearly what I do not mean by it. I do not mean to suggest that God remains distant from human beings. In the doctrine of grace I subscribe to Rahner's view that the Spirit is God's personal presence intimately at work in every individual as accepting and affirming love. Moreover, this presence affects the totality of the person. On the human side, then, religious and moral discernment involves every facet of the whole person's response to reality. Thus not only mind but one's feelings, emotions, intuitions, and general sensitivity mediate to us moral and religious values. The dynamic of willing itself can be seen as the total impulse of human affectivity for being; it is a love of being. Thus the thesis here can be reduced to two points: (1) God's Spirit cannot be experienced directly as if God were communicating to us a specific will; (2) because moral discernment involves affectivity, especially feelings and emotions, these must be carefully monitored by critical, objective, analytic, social reasoning.

being. For the Christian the goal of willing itself is revealed as the God whom Jesus called Father. Through Christian revelation the goal of human action is also nurtured and developed by attachment to the ideals and values that are mediated to us by the life of Jesus. Thus the general will of God for the race and for each person becomes integral to the object of the dynamic of willing itself. This general will of God is the horizon of Christian decision making, the vision that informs and structures the deepest part of our being and the dynamic of willing itself that underlies all our human action. God's general will as revealed in Jesus correlates with and informs the dynamic of willing itself of the Christian.

When we consider the discernment of spirits and the rules for making concrete decisions, it is crucial to see the distinction and unity between the revealed goal of the dynamic of our willing itself and the concrete choices of our will. Our human decisions and actions are ours; God does not prescribe concrete human behavior. But our desire should be to make our decisions against the horizon of our appreciation of God's general will and to make them correspond to the values and ideals implied there in the closest possible way. Against this horizon, the series of our decisions and actions together, including our limitations and failures, fashions our fundamental option or decision and thus realizes our actual relationship with God.

In sum, the point of these reflections on election and discernment is quite simple but also quite basic. Discernment concerns our own will and action, and the most solid means for discovering what this should be in the light of Christian faith involves an analytical consideration of the world around us and ourselves in relation to that world. One cannot base one's Christian commitment, one's life and the concrete actions that fashion who we are, on immediate religious experiences, that is, on emotional or psychologically conscious religious feelings and momentary enthusiasm. Given the pluralism of religious experiences, their variability and eccentricity, common human sense dictates that such is the perfect formula for grounding one's life on illusion. In contrast to this, discernment of what Christian action is to be, in common with the rest of the race, should be an objective and reasonable process based on objective data and a

response to it guided by basic values. As Christians these values are objectively presented to us in the life of Jesus. This process, then, unfolds against the horizon of a general vision of God and human life, given us through Jesus and experienced religiously as the absolute goal of the very dynamism of human life and action.

Finding God in action

Finally, we arrive at the question of the tension between prayer and action. The issue is reflected in the final consideration of the *Exercises*, the Contemplation to Attain the Love of God, insofar as one of its themes is the finding of God in creation, in the world and our action in the world.²³ What can be said of the mutual relation between prayer and action? The key to the solution to this tension lies in the reality of possessive knowledge described in Part II.

The problem really resides in the fact that both prayer and doing things in the world are discrete actions. Prayer is a specific action, just as knowing and doing are forms of action. Because they are distinct forms of action, they can compete for our attention, energy, and time. Ignatius was well aware of this, and the dialectical tension-filled axiom about the Jesuit as *simul in actione contemplativus* seems to represent his mind. The solution to the question presented by Joseph Conwell, in which he retrieves the Ignatian ideal through a study of Nadal, seems to me to be eminently sound. It consists precisely in a tension: Apostolic work that responds to God directly nurtures prayer; and formal prayer directly leads or impels to apostolic work. The "times spent" in this tension mutually enhance each other. And for this very reason Ignatius could and did minimize time spent in formal prayer.

Without seeking to undermine the dialectical relation between prayer and action in the conscious life of the Jesuit, I think, nevertheless, that Blondelian language can shed more light on the subject of the mutual relation between prayer and action in the sense of practice. The two forms of action are not equal partners. This can be shown by a simple contrast. In the end, prayer alone does not and

²³ *Exercises*, 230-237.

cannot constitute a real union with God. But, in the end, action alone, in the sense of doing or practice, can and does constitute a real union with or separation from God.

Given this stark difference, how would one analytically account for the relationship between prayer and practice? An explanation for this difference can be found in the distinction between knowledge or awareness that exists without practice and that which is mediated through practice. It is true that both prayer and practice are generically forms of action. But the specifically different kind of action that is practice mediates a qualitatively different kind of union and possession between the knower and the known that surpasses the action of prayer itself. Practice acts as a bond that seals union with God in actuality. Action in the sense of practice serves as a "reality principle"; practice *constitutes* the unity of the human with God. This accounts for the typically Johannine truisms: Action, not words; do the truth; love of God is realized in doing God's will.

As was said, both prayer and doing are forms of categorical action. But the direct object and *telos* (end) of prayer differ from those of action in the world. Prayer is directed to God. Because it is intentionally directed to God, this form of action is quite distinct from action pointed outward to objects in the world. Its function in anthropological terms is to nurture the vision that surrounds the object of our dynamic of willing itself. In Christian prayer one is in dialogue with a God of love whose love is also, in the words of Luther, *pro me*; that is, God's love encompasses me as an individual. In this personal dialogue, our dynamic of willing itself is transformed by being brought into the context of a personal relationship.

Action in the sense of practice in this world is quite distinct in its intentional object; it is precisely oriented not to God but to this world. But this action constitutes our relationship to God, and if it is performed within the context of the Christian vision, it aims at nothing less than making the relationship with God that is nurtured in prayer a real and actual relationship. The effect of action is this: Through successive actions persons forge their fundamental option so that it more and more closely approaches the desire of their dynamic of willing itself. Concrete practice binds

together in actual fact God's general will and our specific will. And finally, insofar as all human action is theandric action, a union between God's action and our action is fused according to God's will. As Blondel says of knowledge and action in relation to being, although both may reflect a true relationship, there can be all the difference between them that obtains between privation and possession. Union with God, which is the point of all spirituality, becomes real through action in the sense of doing.

From this point of view, prayer may be characterized as relatively important for our spirituality when spirituality is conceived as a way of life. I should stress here that to say that something is relatively important does not mean that it is unimportant. The point is not to minimize prayer, but to define its place in the whole spiritual life. It is crucial that the vision out of which action proceeds be clear, that it be a conscious horizon for behavior. This conscious horizon has the character of a personal relationship with God and all that this implies. But on the other hand, that vision may be so deep and controlling that it does not need a great deal of explicit nurture. Thus the amount of formal prayer among a variety of Jesuits may in turn vary greatly. But what is absolutely important, because in the end it determines union with God, is the kind and quality of action in the sense of practice that makes up the whole of a Jesuit life. This view, I think, corresponds to the "mind" of Ignatius, who was extremely reticent to dictate time spent in formal prayer, but rather left this kind of decision to the discretion of individual Jesuits according to their personal needs. And as far as I can see, nothing in the New Testament contradicts this view, while everything that we know of Jesus supports it. Jesus' prayer was completely subordinated to his mission: Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, even as it will be in the final kingdom (see Mt 6:10).

At this point the elements of a spirituality that has at its very center action in the world that promotes social justice fall into place. Earlier I showed how faith in God and spirituality can be seen as reductively identical because one's deepest and real faith lies embedded in one's action. When that action merges with the general will of God revealed in Jesus as the reign of God, a person becomes

united with God. The objectification of God's will for the Kingdom must be structured by social justice; God wills social justice. When a person engages in activity that promotes this justice, he or she becomes one with God in three ways: morally, by a union of wills; contemplatively, by possessive knowledge of the God who wills justice; ontologically, by cooperative response to the intimate presence of God's personal Spirit. In this spirituality a person does not dwell passively in the truth of God, but becomes mystically bound in ontic union with God through cooperating in God's action in the world.

This visionary action has as its ultimate goal the creation of social justice. But it is important to see why this social dimension bears such crucial weight. We saw how precisely the social sin that dominates today's complex world threatens to crush human beings not only materially by its concrete effects but also spiritually. It saps the energy out of human freedom itself. The way to resist this sin, after therapy, lies in the effort to attack and change the very structures that cause the damage. Moreover, this has to be done corporately, through group behavior, or the individual will scarcely survive the discouragement of constant defeat. Individuals alone cannot resist institutional sin. We must function as groups which themselves become public institutions of grace. And these societies must act in solidarity through corporate planning of their goals and strategies. Concretely, although much has been gained by the movement toward individually directed retreats, much too may be lost when this individual direction does not unfold in the context of groups making the Exercises together. In this common project different roles have to be played; a corporate effort demands a division of labor. The movement for social justice cannot simply go on at the barricades. There has to be mutual support in a differentiated common cause. Those employed in other roles of leadership in the community such as education are just as vital in the project to create a more just society as those who engage in more direct social projects.

CONCLUSION

The effort here has been to demythologize some of the sixteenth-century aspects of Ignatian language and to reinterpret some of the fundamental themes of Jesuit spirituality in terms more congenial to late-twentieth-century experience. Obviously there must be *some* adjustment between the sixteenth and the twentieth centuries. The mediating framework that I have used consists of distinctions borrowed from Blondel's philosophy of action, which are most congenial to an apostolic order of religious whose tradition has led its members to every sort of action in the world. The use of these transcendental anthropological categories has this advantage: It transposes the issue underlying spirituality out of the domain of psychology and explicitly conscious religious experience to a deeper level of religious experience, one that can be understood through the transcendental dynamics of human existence and its destiny.

In this context I have proposed the following interpretations: First of all, the core of what we mean by spirituality lies in action. Human existence itself is free spiritual action in the world. Reflective spirituality concerns the theological vision of created reality and how human actions correspond to the ultimate truth of reality itself. In this light, the first principle and foundation embraces the absolute worth of human action in and for the world. Human action counts because God has shared with human beings responsibility in participating in God's own creative activity in the world over time. This intrinsic reason for being will lead to a final salvation that incorporates human creativity. This is the groundwork.

The most serious menace of sin comes from the vast sin of the world that seems to undermine the value of human action. Social sin attacks the groundwork. In its aggressive form the sin of the world corrupts human action by funneling it into mechanisms that destroy human lives. In a subtle form it undermines the groundwork by fostering an escape from freedom itself. But in Christ and the kingdom he lived and died for, the Christian finds revealed an empowering ideal

that stands directly opposed to sin. In other words, the value of human action finds confirmation in the kingdom of God that Jesus preached and especially from his action in accordance with that kingdom which has been raised up into the very life of God.

People make the Exercises in order to adjust their own will in the major and minor decisions that make up their lives to the general will of God revealed in Jesus. This will of God is not a preset plan which we anxiously seek to discover. It is rather an open invitation and an exhilarating challenge to our freedom. These decisions are our decisions, and our action is our action, upon which God bestows an eternal reality and value when action cooperates with God's impulse of love. We are responsible *to* God but *for* the world,²⁴ and *to* God *through* that responsibility for the world, for this is the will of God manifested in Jesus. Prayer, then, is subsidiary to this human project. For the Christian it keeps alive and nurtures the vision of the principle and foundation in an interpersonal context. The union with God that it looks for, however, is fashioned in this world by action for God's kingdom.

Let me conclude this discussion in terms of another Ignatian phrase: The Jesuit should be an *instrumentum conjunctum Deo* (an instrument united with God).²⁵ The phrase *conjunctum Deo* expresses well the dynamic that I have described. The instrument here is not a lifeless and dead tool, but a human person whose action is free and genuinely creative. We exercise this freedom in a secular world, and we must respond to this world like everyone else in a secular way in planning our categorical actions. But for Christians this transpires against an horizon and within a context of a transcendent faith vision. Our action is responsive to a personal God revealed in Jesus. That God is immanent to the world by creative power and by the per-

²⁴ H. Richard Niebuhr, "The Responsibility of the Church for Society," *The Gospel, the Church and the World*, ed. by Kenneth Scott Latourette (New York / London: Harper & Brothers, 1946), pp. 111-133.

²⁵ The phrase, one which carried considerable weight in Ignatius's understanding of apostolic Jesuits, is taken from the Jesuit *Constitutions*. Ignatius of Loyola, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, trans., intro., and commentary by George E. Ganss (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970), nos. 813-814, pp. 332-333.

sonal self-presence to each individual by grace or God's Spirit. Thus our action in the world is not only coaction with the world and other human beings, but also as Blondel says *the-ergy*, work with God, a notion completely in line with tradition of the notion of cooperative grace. In this framework the language of "building the kingdom of God" makes complete sense. And in this framework, too, one can see that the key document of the 32nd General Congregation, "Our Mission Today," is a faithful translation of Ignatian spirituality for today's world.

APPENDIX: SOME ASPECTS OF BLONDEL'S ANTHROPOLOGY OF ACTION

In this appendix I wish to present some aspects of Blondel's philosophy of action as it appears in his major work, his doctoral thesis, entitled *L'Action*.²⁶ This anthropology of action represents the substratum upon which the preceding interpretation of Ignatian spirituality rests. Although I shall consistently appeal to this work, my intention is not simply to represent with historical accuracy his thought, which unfolded in its own special context of the philosophical world in France at the end of the nineteenth century. It will be apparent that at times I go beyond Blondel. In general, Blondel may be likened to Karl Rahner in the sense that Blondel was at the head of a tradition in Catholic thought that centered on the human subject as the starting point for philosophical inquiry. But unlike Rahner, who remained in the intellectualist tradition of Aquinas, Blondel focused his attention on human action and the will, both of which are categories more directly congenial to the area of Christian life and spirituality.

²⁶ Maurice Blondel, *Action* (1893): *Essay on a Critique of Life and a Science of Practice*, trans. by Oliva Blanchette (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984). Page references to this work will be placed in parentheses in the text.

Action

Several reasons make it difficult to initially define the term "action" in a precise way. "Action" is an analogous term; like "being" or "existence" in classical philosophy, the term is at the same time the most abstract and general and the most concrete of notions. "Action" refers to human existence on a variety of levels and thus has different specific meanings in a variety of contexts. One must always be aware of the context in which the term action is being discussed and the level of the discussion. Action can range in meaning from the sheer existence of a human being to the concrete practices and behaviors a person performs. To begin, therefore, it may be helpful to characterize the richness of the term as it will be used here.

In its deepest and most fundamental level, action is existence itself. Action refers to human existence, but in a dynamic active sense. Human existence is action. On this level of generality and abstraction, action points to human existence prior to the exercise of the will that fixes on this or that object; action refers of a level of dynamic existing beneath all forms of knowledge; it embraces human existing more deeply than conscious reflective motivation that leads it to this or that specific practice. Action is the sheer datum of dynamic human existence itself.²⁷ The value of assuming this category, then, lies in the fact that it orients us to think of the human person as dynamic existence in the world. We are in a general thought-world similar to the existentialism that stretches from Kierkegaard to Sartre.

But the very dynamism of human existence is exercised in manifold ways, and action is inclusive of all of them. Knowing is a form of action; willing and choosing are actions; doing is acting and acting is action. The analogous character of the category of action opens it

²⁷ The following text, although cited out of context, indicates the deepest level of human existence to which the term action applies: "[T]he question is resolved [in action] prior to the dialectical interplay of ideas, in a region where the most hyperbolic doubt does not reach, underneath the realm of the understanding, before the intervention of discursive thoughts, more deeply than the intellectual necessities can press down their yoke, at the very principle of our personal adherence to our nature, at the point where we will our very selves. . . ." *Action*, p. 395.

up to all forms of concrete behavior, from the most speculative contemplation of reality to the most practical task we perform. Thus action can also refer to practice, to sheer doing, from the performance of high ethical duty to the execution of the practical demands of human life.

Action in Blondel's philosophy is very closely aligned with willing; human action is willed action. And as will be seen further on, a dialectic of action, that is, a phenomenological tracing of its impulse and direction within consciousness, is at the same time a dialectic of the will. Action ascends to the surface of human consciousness as willing through the mediation of intelligence, the reflectivity of which accounts for its freedom.

Human action is free. The first quality or characteristic that attends the notion of human existence as action is its freedom. This freedom is not something that has to be proved deductively or on the basis of outside or objective data. It is immediately apparent from within the conscious appropriation of action itself. The quality of freedom is so closely tied to action that at certain points the terms almost appear as identical. All efforts to disprove freedom, to reduce human action to mere function of deterministic forces or laws, presuppose and therefore establish the quality itself. For freedom is contained in and mediated by the reflectivity of action to itself in critical intelligence. The sheer datum of action reflecting back on itself and proposing before itself distinct objective data illustrates that action is freedom. Action is an autonomous freedom in the world whose very awareness of itself is its first freedom.

So basic is the category of action that the term may be conceived to refer to the principle of the unity and identity of the human person. Here we get at the heart of Blondel's existentialism, for action tends to replace the ideas of substance and individuation by matter that characterize the classical philosophy of Aristotle. As he puts it: "The idea of substance has been discussed at length: reduced to what our analysis disclosed about it here, the substance of man is action, he is what he does. . . . We are, we know, we live, only *sub specie actionis*" (191). In other words, the unity and identity of this person is the unity of its knowing, willing, doing, and being,

and this is contained in its action. Action is the substantial bond between soul and body, between one's elementary intention and the whole organism; it makes the whole a whole. The one person subsists in action. "Action is the cement with which we are fashioned; we exist only to the extent that we act" (178; 178-182).

This metaphysical concept is correlative to and merely reflects a more phenomenological description of the unity of personality. The human person is an organism made up of multiple physical and spiritual forces. Action pulls these multiple elements and forces together to constitute the personality. Action is also centrifugal; it necessarily transcends the self into the world. Action unites the person by forming an organic synthesis between its physical and spiritual forces and by focusing them in a centrifugal expansion into the world of objects; it then bends back and returns to the self by centripetally bringing the outer world into the self. Action thus constitutes the person in itself and in its relation to the world (175-177).

Ascending still further to the surface of conscious intention, action can be seen as constituting the character of a person. It pulls together, organizes, and fixes the multiplicity of indifferent and sometimes contrary interior states and fashions out of them a solid center that "becomes like the core of our character" (183-4). "It is because action manifests, fixes, confirms and even produces the will, that it serves as a guaranty for promises and that it is like the substance of irrevocable commitments" (184). This power of action is demonstrated by its ability to define the self at a level prior to and more determinative than conscious intelligence, design, and willing. Through acting we can come to will that which was not really consciously willed before the sheer decision to action; action itself forges the will (184). And here one has the deepest logic for the Ignatian principle of *agere contra*; one can defeat hostile and subversive tendencies and conscious impulses by forging a will against them by action (187). Practice is thus stronger than the conscious will, more powerful than the agile speculative mind, which can jump to myriad objects and possibilities, to synthesize and constitute the personality. For action "is a systematic concentration of the diffuse life in us; it is a taking possession of oneself" (188).

It is therefore the place to look for self-knowledge. "As long as we do not act, we do not know ourselves" (183). But since it is impossible not to act, it is in action that one can observe the real self. Action that constitutes the self is what reveals the self; in it one finds the secret of the self. "Hence it is by observing our acts more than our thoughts that we must hope to see ourselves as we are and make ourselves as we will" (183).

Up to this point we have been speaking of action as it is revealed to consciousness in a personal and almost individualistic sense. Blondel's action is conceived in the philosophical context of transcendental phenomenology, and does not begin with human beings as social beings. And yet his conception of action opens out to the social sphere and is not hostile to a social anthropology. Action is always self-transcending and expansive; it emerges out of the self to go beyond the self and into the world. Always in quest of further growth, the secret ambition of willed action is to penetrate the world with its intentions and to dominate it by absorbing it. It is as if human will and action seek to prolong its own body and enrich it with the body of the world, to make the world docile to human thought and action so that the forces of nature seem to become an instrument of action itself (202-204).

Thus all action is necessarily coaction; action unfolds not simply alongside of other actions, but is intricately bound up with them. The point is illustrated simply enough: All action is action upon some object; but that which is acted upon also acts and enters into the product. Thus, what is usually considered a material cause in classical philosophy, Blondel sees as another efficient cause because all being has an interior "subjectivity," a way of being that is distinct and must be respected. Every action then is a kind of synthesis, a unity of actions, a coaction, a concurrence, an interaction (207-217).

Herein lies the ground for a social anthropology: The constitution of all human action is coaction, and the constitution of the self occurs through the interaction of self, world, and other selves. An act posited becomes objective and independent of the actor; it

takes on an impersonal objective life of its own in its effects. It becomes public, or simply *there* with a relative independence of its own, and influences others. It so surpasses the actors and their intention that they cannot restrict its consequences and effects. In fact, all action tends to have a universal effect, for it produces something which changes the world. Thus action is cooperative; it is always action and response at the same time; the effects of other actions influence my action even as my actions influence theirs. "By drawing us out of ourselves, action is for others, so that, in return, others may be for us; it gives them our thought; it is the social cement; it is the soul of common life" (221). Human beings are not isolated selves, but are constituted as well by coaction, and cooperation, the action of the world and other selves on our self. At this point Blondel's analysis from a transcendental philosophical perspective agrees nicely with a general theory of action from a social scientific perspective. Beneath the common values and ideas and their symbolic representations, cultures and societies are bound together most fundamentally by common action, the structures of actions and the patterns of behavior.

Knowledge, being, and action

Let us return now to a personalist perspective and describe the interrelationships of knowledge, being, and action. Generally speaking, Blondel's work on action is a philosophy of life, as its subtitle indicates. And action is a category that is more fundamental or basic than knowledge. Knowledge emerges out of action in its most primary sense of the sheer datum of human existence. Itself a special form of action, knowing in turn essentially relates back to action as a guide. Reflective intelligence is what constitutes action as freedom; it provides the will with its discrete objects and informs motives and intentions. Knowledge, then, functions in relation to will, and decision is the channel of action. Knowledge is for life and action. All forms of knowledge find their common reason for being in practice (434). Given this perspective, it was natural for Blondel to characterize his philosophy as a form of pragmatism, although it is quite distinct from the American variety.

When knowledge is considered as a discrete form of action in contrast to doing or practice, the relation between knowing and action in this sense is reciprocal. There is mutual influence between thought and practice, but practice is always the basis. "[T]hought starts from action to go to action" (277). On the one hand, knowledge illumines action and acts as its guide. Speculative knowledge, indeed, objective knowledge of any kind, is for action in the sense of doing and living (427). But on the other hand, action is primary in the sense of always being prior to knowledge and the goal to which it tends. For speculative and indeed all knowledge follows the forward movement of action. Thought does not construct its knowledge prior to practice; knowledge itself is a form of action that synthesizes and tries to capture and sum up life and experience. In short, thought follows practice. Thus it is not possible to hold that one must wait for a complete knowledge of anything before one can act. By a *reductio ad absurdum*, such a view would stymie all action, since a complete knowledge of anything is impossible. Ordinarily people act upon what they do in fact know, and that knowledge is the assimilation of what has been learned by reflection on the basis of action in the sense of practice (430-433).

Blondel makes a significant distinction between a speculative knowledge and what might be called "possessive" knowledge, which in some respects appears to be similar to Newman's distinction between notional and real assent but is really quite different from it. Speculative or notional knowledge resembles what Newman calls notional apprehension and assent, but possessive knowledge is mediated by action in the sense of practice. Action mediates and "contains the real presence of what, without it, knowledge can simply represent, but of what, with it and through it, is vivifying truth" (434). The difference between merely objective knowledge and possessive knowledge might be illustrated crudely by the example of the contrast between one who has studied mechanical physics and knows all there is to know about the automobile engine, and the knowledge of the mechanic. The latter, through the practice of taking apart and putting together, has a kind of symbiotic relationship to the object of the trade. The difference, then, is not truth, but the kind of truth that is media-

ted. Notional knowledge may indeed be objectively true; it may represent reality. But the difference between merely objective knowledge and possessive knowledge is "all the difference that may separate possession from privation" (441).

The idea of possessive knowledge leads to the relation between knowledge and being and the mediational role of action. In brief, action constitutes the being or the reality of the thing known within the knowing subject. Action creates the reality of the object known for the subject. Action fashions a real relationship of being between the self and the object known. As Blondel puts it: "The objective reality of beings is therefore tied to the action of a being who, in seeing, makes what he sees be, and who, in willing, becomes himself what he knows" (419). The discrete activities of knowing and willing are tied to being through action in the concrete sense of practice. Action in the sense of doing actualizes being. "The role of action, then, is to develop being and to constitute it" (425).

The relation between action and God

The very point of Blondel's philosophy of action as it is articulated in his first work is to define the relationship between human action and God. The work is an extended rigorous phenomenology of action, and a dialectical argument charting the expansive character of human action towards an unlimited horizon which will only be satisfied by God. The question that introduces the work concerns human destiny, a question that cannot be resisted because it is raised by action itself, and which will find its human resolution only in action. In a sense, the thesis of the whole work is very similar to that expressed by Augustine in his *De libero arbitrio*: "If you begin by wishing to exist, and add a desire for fuller and fuller existence, you rise in the scale, and are furnished for life that supremely is. . . . If you wish more and more to exist, you will draw near to him who exists supremely."²⁸ In other words, the dynamism of action is such that from within itself it reaches out for absolute existence and hence an

²⁸ Augustine, *On Free Will*, in Augustine, *Earlier Writings*, trans. and ed. by John H. S. Burleigh (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), III, vii, 21; p. 183.

"object" that will bestow that upon it. In order to show that this is the case, Blondel makes a key distinction between two aspects of human willed action, a distinction which serves as the motor for the whole argument.

The terms of this distinction are usually referred to as "the willing will" and "the willed will." Beginning with the latter, on the one hand it is obvious enough that willing is always a willing of something. The phrase "the willed will" thus refers to the will insofar as it is directed towards an object. In the text of the essay I have referred to this category of Blondel as simply "free choice" or a choice of a specific object. It is the willing of this or that, the willing of something that is objective, and thus particular or defined, and which consequently determines or specifies the will. The willed will refers to specific acts of the will which are always directed to a specific object.

On the other hand, one might ask why the will wills at all. And this sort of question opens up another dimension of the will that accounts for all willing. Beneath all its choices and decisions, beneath every exercise of the will, one can find by analysis a fundamental desire that is constitutive of action itself in its most fundamental sense. In the essay on Ignatian spirituality I have called Blondel's "the willing will" "the dynamic of willing itself." This desire most radically is a love of being or a desire to be that cannot be denied, for its very denial in radical pessimism or nihilism, and every effort to escape it by dilettantism or aestheticism, is based on the very thing that is denied and implicitly affirms it. This desire or love for being is not the same as the formal object of the will as seen in Aquinas, which defines the object of the will as the good, so that every act of the will implicitly affirms the good. Rather, what is being affirmed here is much closer to the Plotinian-Augustinian radical, active and dynamic desire that constitutes human action itself and is the very source and structure of its being-as-action.

Since many are familiar with the theological language of Karl Rahner, it may be helpful to label these two aspects of the will with terms that he applies to the cognitive dimension of the human spirit.

What Rahner calls transcendental and categorical knowing applies in almost exact parallel fashion to the distinction made by Blondel. Thus the categorical will refers to human willing insofar as it is concretely determined by a specific object, a willing of this or that, which of course it always is and cannot not be. However, within and beneath every act of the will is its transcendental dimension. The transcendental will in Blondel shares the same two qualities assigned to the cognitive human spirit by Rahner:²⁹ It refers to a universal a-priori structure of human existence as such. That is, it does not simply refer to my subjective willing, but transcends what is found in any individual to be postulated as an anthropological structure, a constitutive dimension of the human as such. And secondly, it is transcendent in the sense that its dynamism reaches out for that which is absolutely transcendent. The desire underlying all willing is teleological, and it reaches out in a love for permanent and infinite being in such a way that it will not be satisfied until it rests secure in this absolute "object."

Given this distinction, one can easily grasp the overall structure of Blondel's thesis in *Action*. The grand lines of the argument are utterly simple even though the unfolding of it is tortuously complex. A phenomenological analysis of human willed action reveals that it is dynamically expansive, reaching out as it does in an ever expanding field of objects: The categorical will reaches out into the world, through the formation of family and society, in dedication to country and humanity, and in the construction of morality, metaphysics, and religion. The motive force of this unlimited categorical willing is the transcendental will, and at every ascending or at least broadened horizon of dedication, there is always a contradiction between these two dimensions of the will. No finite object or range of objects, especially the fabricated deities that merely ratify the autonomous self-sufficiency of the human subject, can satisfy its

²⁹ "We shall call *transcendental experience* the subjective, unthematic, necessary and unfailing consciousness of the knowing subject that is co-present in every spiritual act of knowledge, and the subject's openness to the unlimited expanse of all possible reality." Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. by William V. Dych (New York: A Crossroad Book, The Seabury Press, 1978), p. 20.

transcendental love for infinite being. Thus the internal and autonomous force and logic of human action itself demands an absolutely transcendent other as its goal. Blondel the philosopher has demonstrated in a secular philosophical atmosphere that a strictly immanent dialectic of human action forces one to admit the philosophical necessity of the religious question. But ultimately the solution to the religious problem can only be found in action, by an option or decision that accepts and attaches itself to the Transcendent.³⁰

In the light of his whole thesis, I wish now to underline four aspects of the categorical will that are relevant for a discussion of spirituality. The first point is dialectical and paradoxical. From one point of view, one can say that one can complete the equation of our categorical and transcendental wills with an act of faith. That is to say, by the option or decision of faith in the transcendent God, one has made a conscious choice which unites the categorical will with the "object" of its transcendental desire. This is the view taken by Blondel, as well as Fessard and Pousset, whose whole point is to show that the two wills can be reconciled in the categorical option of faith, or an election, that attaches itself to a revealing God. But from another point of view, it must be said that the categorical will is never really equal to the transcendent object of transcendental willing. The two wills can never be equated in this world; our categorical will always falls short of the *telos* of the transcendental will. With this aspect of the tension, I wish to stress the finitude of human choices, actions, and commitments. Granted that the infinite condescension of God's grace raises our will to infinite potentiality, still, as Trent said, the problem is not God's but ours; we can never be absolutely sure of our faith, our union with God, and our salvation.³¹ Our categorical willing is always in a dialectical relation-

³⁰ Blondel also discusses, but on an a-priori level, what he called the "supernatural," the conditions of a possible revelation, the meaning of doctrines as principles of action, and the value of religious practices. All of this was particularly disconcerting to the philosophy faculty of the Sorbonne.

³¹ The issue at stake here is implicit in the debate over the nature of our union with God in faith between Lutheran and Catholic theology that unfolded during Ignatius's lifetime. In answer to the question of whether one could be sure of his or her personal salvation, Luther answered Yes. The reason

ship with our transcendent longing for God and God's will, even when that transcendent desire has been made explicit by an act or attitude of faith. All categorical willing falls short of its transcendent object, even though that transcendent object is contained in it.³²

Actually, a closer examination of the dynamics of human willing and action will show that there are really three wills, or three dimensions of the will, that come into play. Besides the transcendental *eros* of the will for being and its categorical exercise in relation to specific objects, one can distinguish a third dimension which is often called one's fundamental option.³³ Our fundamental option is ultimately hidden from ourselves, for it consists in the sum total of our categorical decisions. One's fundamental option is the interior logic of all of one's action; it is the actual drift and direction of our life that both lies beneath and is constituted by all the action that we perform; it is our deepest faith. Its hidden character is

for his affirmative response is that he assumes an existential perspective of subjectivity actually clinging to God in Christ. For Luther, this existential union excluded doubt; the stress is on God's infallible grace. Trent in contrast responded No. The reason for this is that the theologians writing the Decree on Justification assume an objective point of view and notice the finite character of the human option of faith and the temptations against it across the span of human life; the stress is on the finitude and changeability of human response. I would hold that both of these positions are tenable, and that they should be held in such a way that each is in tension with the other. For the position of Trent, see the Council of Trent's Decree on Justification, chapter 9, and canon 13, in *The Church Teaches* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1955), pp. 235-236, 243. For the contrast between Luther and Catholic theology on this point, see Otto H. Pesch, "Existential and Sapiential Theology--The Theological Confrontation between Luther and Thomas Aquinas," in Jared Wicks, ed., *Catholic Scholars Dialogue with Luther* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1970), pp. 66-67.

³² A comparison with transcendental and categorical knowledge of God will illustrate the point being made here about human willing and action. No conceptual or linguistic form of knowledge of God can be equal to the reality of God. It is simply impossible and unthinkable that the human mind could encompass the absolute and transcendent mystery of God. Yet within all our knowledge of God, God is really "known" through the transcending "ascent" of the mind to the unlimited or infinite mystery that at the same time is present to it. These are two dimensions of one act of faith-knowledge which interpenetrate and interact with each other.

³³ The concept of a "fundamental option" is well known from the recent tradition of Catholic moral theology. See Louis Monden, *Sin, Liberty and Law*, trans. by Joseph Donceel (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965), pp. 30-33.

immediately evident when one asks oneself what exactly the content of one's deepest faith is. All people live by faith, for one cannot not live by some commitment to an absolute ideal. But if one is asked what exactly the object of one's faith is, one cannot be absolutely sure, so deeply is this real option constituted in the logic of one's whole life. The dynamics of religiously motivated life, then, can be characterized in the following way: The categorical will is nurtured by the "revealed" object of the transcendental will which is the *telos* of human action; by its action the categorical will cumulatively fashions the self in the direction of its final goal.

Ultimately, it is the sum total of our acts of the will, *in all spheres of life*, that fashions what our fundamental and then final option will be. And that fundamental option in this world can at best asymptotically approach the final commitment that a "face to face" encounter would allow.

Secondly, in a characteristically obscure passage in *Action* on the relation between action and being, Blondel suggests that for things in this world to be really real, God must not only sustain them in creation but must also be passive before their action (419). Whatever Blondel's full intention might have been at this point, I wish to develop the thought. Modern sensibility has underscored a certain logical demand that the creativity of human freedom in this world must have intrinsic value and reality. This conviction has sharply affected some traditional concepts of the end-time and of God. Thus in eschatology there is a new confidence that human actions count, that the language of "building the kingdom of God" has ontological merit, and that one must affirm a "continuous" eschatology in which what human beings do contributes to what lastingly is and will be. And in the theology of God, one is much more free to speak of a "suffering" God,³⁴ of a God who is related, dependent on the world, temporal, passive, and becoming,³⁵ or at least of a "self-

³⁴ The idea of a "suffering God" has been made current by Jurgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1974).

³⁵ Speaking out of the context of process theology, Schubert M. Ogden, *The Reality of God and Other Essays*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), especially

limiting" God,³⁶ in an effort to guarantee the internal conviction that human freedom is real and its works do not in the end, or even now, count for nothing. Thus the infinity and absoluteness of God is not such that it contains completely in itself what God has created human freedom to accomplish. In Rahner's language, God has created a semiautonomous human freedom that can enter into a genuine dialogue with God. In sum, God is passive before the categorical will of human beings and patient now and in the end time of what we accomplish with our action.

Thirdly, and in this light, we can establish in two fundamental points the value of our categorical will and its finite action. On the one hand, our human action through the finite choices of the categorical will constitutes our union with God. "It is here," writes Blondel, "once again and especially, that the sovereign efficaciousness and the mediating power of action makes itself manifest. For, on the one hand, it is through the channel of action that the revealed truth penetrates deep into thought without losing anything of its supernatural integrity; and, on the other hand, if believing thought, as obscure as it remains amid the rays that faith fans out from its inaccessible center, has any meaning and value, it is because it ends up in action and finds in literal practice its commentary and its living reality" (368). But the issue here is much more than simply subjective appropriation. In the end, union with God is not a matter of knowledge, not even religious experiential knowledge; it is a matter of action. We are not dealing here with a moral union of two wills, the will of God and our own, but a union of being in action. In terms of knowledge, real union with God is effected when true but privative knowledge of God and God's will passes to possessive knowledge that forges through action a unity of being. The union is a unity of being in "theandric" action. In terms of grace, union with God is effected in action when, as Blondel says appropriating the dictum of Bernard of Clairvaux, our action and the impulse of God as

pp. 1-70.

³⁶ This paradoxical notion is developed by Langdon Gilkey, *Reaping the Whirlwind: A Christian Interpretation of History* (New York: A Crossroad Book, The Seabury Press, 1976), pp. 248-249, 279-281, 296, 307.

Spirit become one, "mixed together, not singly, simultaneously, not successively, they act through every single step" (371).³⁷ In sum, categorical action, and nothing less than that, constitutes the relation of any human being with God because it alone fashions a real response to God's grace.

On the other hand, and fourthly, categorical action constitutes the world and its relation to God. It is easy enough to realize today that the world has become "self-conscious" with the evolution of the human species, so that intentional human action now bends back upon the very stuff out of which it emerged. In ever greater degrees, the human race has taken on a real responsibility for the earth and itself in it. This increasingly evident fact must influence our conception of the reason for our existence. If one accepts the *reality* of human freedom and its creativity, and concedes the passivity of God before its action, one must also take the New Testament's view of stewardship with much greater seriousness than in the past. According to this view, the language current in liberation theology of "building the kingdom of God" is no mere appendage to the Christian message. Outside of Latin America this language is often considered a merely cultural emphasis, at best a possible *consequence* of Christian faith, but extrinsic to its kernel of union with God by grace and through faith. In a Christian anthropology which finds its focus in action, the notion of building the kingdom of God represents the very purpose of creating and the teleology of the salvific grace that redeems. Currently our world is not a very hospitable place for more than half of its inhabitants. And the instinctive response to this tragedy, a kind of defense mechanism that we need lest the suffering of the world be allowed to overwhelm us, is to take solace in the little difference

³⁷ The whole text, which Blondel cites in a footnote, is illuminating as a classical expression of the doctrine of cooperative grace: "What was begun by grace alone, is completed by grace and free choice together, in such a way that they contribute to each new achievement not singly but jointly; not by turns, but simultaneously. It is not as if grace did one half of the work and free choice the other; but each does the whole work, according to its own peculiar contribution. Grace does the whole work, and so does free choice—with this one qualification: that whereas the whole is done *in* free choice, so is the whole done *of* grace." Bernard of Clairvaux, *Treatises III: On Grace and Free Choice*, trans. by Daniel O'Donovan, intro. by Bernard McGinn (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications Inc., 1977), XIV, 47; p. 106.

that our personal action can make in redress. But in the anthropology presented here all action makes a difference, and according to Blondel an eternal difference, for once posited it cannot be undone. All human action shapes the world and makes it different. The ultimate *objective* value of categorical human action is that it reworks the world and re-presents it to God.

Let me summarize the salient points of the anthropological foundations that have been presented here. Our standpoint is an existential view of human existence in which the human person appears dynamically as action. The human person is conscious, semiautonomous, and self-directing free action. The *telos* of the action that we are is God, but that end is not simply outside us; it is an active intention and a moving force that constitutes human existence itself and operates within as a driving love for absolute Being. The way to that goal can only be negotiated by action through the categorical will, by the concrete options that we make and the actions we perform in this world. The first value of categorical action in the sense of the concrete actions of our daily life, when seen from a subjective and personal point of view, lies in their mediational role of constituting our relation to God, the ultimate end of our existence. But this existentialism is no individualism; human action is always coaction so that we, our world, and other human beings are constituted in solidarity. Moreover, despite God's agency in creating, sustaining in existence and influence through the gracious Spirit, God remains patient to human action in the fashioning of God's own will in the world. The second value of action, then, lies in its being the medium of the first principle and foundation of creating itself: Human beings are created to build a world of love through their action in the world.

In conclusion, Blondel presents us with a modern Christian philosophy of action. Like Rahner's transcendental analysis it is conceived in personalist categories. But also like Rahner's thought it at the same time remains entirely open to social categories of thought and even demands them. Moreover it explicitly includes a social conception of human existence where action is always action in and upon the world while at the same time influenced by the world. Human exis-

tence is depicted as autonomous, as radically in solidarity with others in society, and as fashioned by the objective patterns of human behavior that make up social institutions. Although liberation theologians have noted the appropriateness of Blondel's categories to liberation theology and spirituality, they have not developed this correlation. That correlation rests in an anthropological groundwork for a spirituality of praxis. In Blondelian language, action in the world that contributes to building liberating social structures is action that really contributes to the kingdom of God and at the same time unites the practitioner to God in a real relationship of possessive love.

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THE AUTHOR

As a young Jesuit priest, Cándido de Dalmases became a member of the Jesuit Historical Institute in Rome in 1938, where he is still active. His chief work soon became the editing of critical editions of primary sources about St. Ignatius—notably the four volumes of *Fontes narrativi de Sancto Ignatio* (1943-1965), *Exercitia Spiritualia: Textus* (1969), and *Fontes Documentales* (1977). He has also published many other books and articles.

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