

The background of the cover features a large, faint, brown-toned seal of the Society of Jesus. The seal is circular and contains a central figure of a man with arms outstretched, surrounded by a sunburst and a crown. The Latin text 'SOCIETAS IESU' is visible around the inner edge of the seal.

# STUDIES

IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

ST. IGNATIUS IN THE AFFECTIVE SCHOOL  
OF LUDOLPH OF SAXONY

EMILY A. RANSOM, PhD

53/3    AUTUMN 2021

## THE SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

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SCHOOL OF LUDOLPH OF SAXONY**

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**53/3 • AUTUMN 2021**

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## *a word from the editor...*

According to legend, the Italian artist Michelangelo (1475–1564), a contemporary of St. Ignatius, was asked how he created such exquisite sculptures. He responded, “I imagine that the sculpture is already inside the stone, and then I simply brush away the extraneous material.”

Whether or not the story is true, it sticks in the popular imagination for a reason. In the modern West, we equate intelligence with the creation of something new, from scratch, *ex nihilo*. The idea that genius might be as “simple” as a capacity to recognize a gem amid the rubble comes as a shock and perhaps even a disappointment.

A perfect case in point is the Rule of St. Benedict, one of the most influential and beloved spiritual texts in the Catholic West. For centuries, monks and scholars were aware of a second rule by an anonymous author called the *Regula Magistri*, or “Rule of the Master.” It was three times longer than the Rule of St. Benedict and inferior in many respects, including a slavish attention to detail. It was generally assumed that the Master had used the Benedictine Rule as his basis, and then elaborated upon it. But in the early twentieth century, a scholar proved that the reverse was true: the Master’s work was older. Benedict lifted extracts and then rearranged them for his own rule.

Many Benedictines were disheartened as they believed that it impugned upon the creative genius of their founder. But did it? Benedict had the brilliance to see the sculpture in the stone. And what is more, he had the humility to accept that others before him had something to say, even if perhaps they had not said it well.

To be sure, Benedict brought innovative ideas to his rule that were absent from the Master, such as sanctity being found as much in a monk’s “horizontal” relationships with other monks as with his or her “vertical” relationship with God. In that sense, Benedict was perfectly faithful to Jesus’s words that “every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old” (Mt 13:52 NABRE).

He also anticipated by 1,300 years the invitation of the Second Vatican Council to all religious congregations to find their own gems amid the rubble by studying and recovering the essence of their original charisms but in ways that make all due adaptations for the present.<sup>1</sup>

With that in mind, I would like to draw readers' attention to two writers. The first is the Italian Jesuit Fr. Francesco Sacchini (1570–1625), a renowned historian, biographer, and educator. He was deeply convinced of the value and dignity of teaching children, as forming them at such an impressionable time stood to make a relatively greater impact on the universal good. But Sacchini also knew that many companions would bypass this ministry in favor of more prestigious and intellectually stimulating university work. The Companions were concerned about the same thing, for which reason Ignatius added in the vow formula for the professed that they should place special value on the teaching of children, but he did not strictly require it.<sup>2</sup>

To that end, Sacchini left behind two beautiful essays on the art of instructing youth, entitled the *Protepticon* ("Exhortation") and *Paraenesis* ("Advice"). They drew from his own experiences of teaching as well as the classical tradition. He explicitly expressed his hope that future generations of Jesuits would turn to them for encouragement, consolation, and instruction. And that is what happened. His works became a beloved resource for Jesuit educators for centuries.

Now, Fr. Claude Pavor (ucs) and lay scholar Dr. Cristiano Casalini have made Sacchini's works available in English in the conviction that they still contain gems for Jesuit education.<sup>3</sup> For me, one of the most moving passages is at the very beginning, where Sacchini reaches out to educators today as if from beyond the grave, asking us to continue to find value in his work. I can imagine St. Benedict saying the same to modern Benedictines, and St. Ignatius to modern Jesuits and friends:

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<sup>1</sup> *Perfectae Caritatis* (October 28, 1965).

<sup>2</sup> *Constitutions* 527, 528.

<sup>3</sup> Francesco Sacchini, SJ, *Exhortation and Advice for the Teachers of Young Students in Jesuit Schools*, eds. Cristiano Casalini and Claude Pavor, SJ (Boston College: Institute of Jesuit Sources [IJS], 2021).

Of course, I would much prefer to join you as a colleague than as a supporter, but since I am not worthy to lend a hand along with you, I will have the consolation of accompanying you at least with my voice. Please remember me not only in your holy prayers but also in your productive labors. Best wishes to you in the Lord.<sup>4</sup>

The second work that I recommend highly is the following essay by Dr. Emily Ransom of Holy Cross College. It is well-known that the *Life of Christ* by Ludolph of Saxony (ca. 1295–1378) played a role in Ignatius’s conversion. But Dr. Ransom makes a compelling argument that he also exerted great influence on fundamental dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises, especially regarding the role of the affections. She goes so far as to suggest that the Exercises might be called “a systematization of the affective method that Ignatius encountered in the *Vita*.”<sup>5</sup>

Her thesis will come as a surprise to many. Not unlike Benedictines a century ago, today’s Jesuits and colleagues have been shaped by a narrative that Ignatius developed his spirituality almost entirely from scratch, building upon his firsthand experiences of God. The narrative is due partly to the aforementioned bias to equate genius with novelty, and far more to the modern fixation on the primacy of personal experience. But it has prompted many writers to affirm, for example, that Ignatius invented the practice of discernment of spirits, which is as silly as saying that Ignatius invented prayer. The discernment of spirits dates to the ancient church, and innumerable writers from John Cassian (ca. 360–ca. 435) to Diadochos of Photike (ca. 400–ca. 486) to Jean Gerson (1363–1429) wrote their own rules for it.

On a side note that is not completely unrelated: Dr. Ransom repeatedly alludes to a long-standing debate in the Society about the place of the *Contemplatio* in the Spiritual Exercises. It is not clear whether Ignatius intended it specifically for the Fourth Week or whether he was including it with the other “Supplementary Material”

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<sup>4</sup> Sacchini, *Exhortation*, 49, §3.

<sup>5</sup> Emily A. Ransom, PhD, “Saint Ignatius in the Affective School of Ludolph of Saxony,” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 53, no. 3 (Autumn 2021): 20.

at the back of the book.<sup>6</sup> How one answers that question has weighty implications, not least of which is how to interpret the *Suscipe*. Is the *Contemplatio* the “conclusion and apt climax of the spiritual experience of the Exercises,” in which case everything else in the retreat points toward it?<sup>7</sup> The new mystical fruit, so to speak, of a month’s worth of personal experiences of God? Or is it something that can be given to retreatants at any point, even during the First Week? In that case, it represents more of a presupposition than conclusion—that is, a synopsis of the retreat’s basic values and dynamics.

Generally, Jesuits seem to prefer the first view. But Dr. Ransom suggests in the light of Ludolph that the second is more accurate. For what it’s worth, I believe that she is correct.

And if she is correct, it is another excellent illustration of new and old. Retreatants cultivate a new relationship with the Lord while never tiring of looking at an older idea—the *Contemplatio* or the *Life of Christ*—that continues to inform the beginning, middle, and end of their journeys.

It is said that jewelers have no more pleasing refreshment for the eyes than that of gazing upon an emerald, so pleasant in its shine and so wholesome its green. That is why, if anyone happens to be carving an emerald, his focus does not dull or tire his eyesight but it rather refreshes and delights it. This fuller happiness is just what you have—you who are carving heaven’s emeralds and fashioning in them the likeness of salvation. So your very work sweeps you along and renews you in such a way that you persevere in the effort without ever getting your fill of it.<sup>8</sup>

**Barton T. Geger, SJ**  
**General Editor**

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<sup>6</sup> See Michael Buckley, “The Contemplation to Attain Love,” *The Way Supplement* 24 (Spring 1975): 92–104; Ian Tomlinson, “The Contemplation to Attain Love,” *The Way* 50, no. 4 (October 2011): 65–76.

<sup>7</sup> *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius: A Translation and Commentary*, trans. and ed. George E. Ganss, SJ (St. Louis: IJS, 1992), 183n117.

<sup>8</sup> Sacchini, *Exhortation*, 49, §1.

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# St. Ignatius in the Affective School of Ludolph of Saxony

Emily A. Ransom, PhD

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*A medieval best seller and one of the two books that Ignatius read during his convalescence, Ludolph of Saxony's Vita Christi had a sustained impact on Ignatius's spirituality and offers a treasure trove of resources for directing the Spiritual Exercises, particularly in the positive cultivation of emotions. Specifically, the Vita suggests an application of the Contemplation to Attain Love across the entire retreat and sheds light upon the distinct purposes of the Third and Fourth Weeks. With love as the premise, the sufferings of the Third Week then become intimate consolations as love shares all things with the beloved, and the Fourth Week invites the exercitant to love with action in the friendship of the Resurrection.*

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## Introduction

The story is familiar to any student of St. Ignatius. While recovering in Castle Loyola from the injuries he sustained at the Battle of Pamplona and the brutal rebreaking and sawing of his leg bone in 1521, the young, dissolute courtier was given two medieval books to read: Spanish translations of the Dominican Jacobus de Voragine's (ca.1230–1298) *Legenda Sanctorum* and the Carthusian Ludolph of Saxony's (ca.1295–1378) *Vita Christi*. The former was a narration of the lives of the saints and the latter a compendium of meditations on the life of Christ, and both surprisingly appealed to the adventurous sensibilities of the romantic soldier. In the account commonly called the "Autobiography," written by Luís Gonçalves da Câmara (ca.1519–1575) from Ignatius's own narration, his conversion resulted directly from those readings. With keen psychological sensitivity, the convalescent noticed contrasting patterns of thoughts: when he daydreamed about exploits

that he might perform in service to a lady, the thoughts were temporarily pleasant but afterward left him dry and dissatisfied; whereas when he imagined following the examples of Christ and the saints, the thoughts left him with sustained satisfaction and joy. “Little by little,” Gonçalves continues, “he came to recognize the difference between the spirits that were stirring: one from the devil, the other from God,” and “the desire to imitate the saints came to him.”<sup>1</sup> By thus paying profound attention to the inner workings of his heart—emotional movements triggered by a fourteenth-century narration of the life of Christ—Ignatius stumbled upon the insight that would guide his articulation of the principles of discernment of spirits at the heart of Jesuit spirituality.

Despite its obvious importance to the somewhat homeschooled founder of the Jesuits, the influence of Ludolph’s *Vita Christi* on Ignatius is much more acknowledged than understood, particularly if the lens is limited to English-language scholarship. Paul Shore of Saint Louis University wrote a study on the topic in 1998, and Milton Walsh continued this in 2011 with an article focused specifically on the prologue; but as the *Vita* had not yet been translated into English, the majority of both articles was devoted to the necessary task of providing translations of the passages under investigation.<sup>2</sup> Normally when Ludolph’s name comes up in Jesuit scholarship it is in passing, in studies dealing with topics as wide-ranging as Ignatius’s approach to relationship with Christ, the Principle and Foundation, companionship, his three kinds of humility, the role of the imagination, and the Beloved Disciple.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, while scholarship on Ignatius abounds, only a

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<sup>1</sup> *Auto.* 8–9; Ignatius of Loyola, *A Pilgrim’s Testament: The Memoirs of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, ed. Barton T. Geger, SJ, trans. Parmananda Divarkar (Boston: Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies [IAJS], 2011), 29.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Shore, “The *Vita Christi* of Ludolph of Saxony and Its Influence on the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola,” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* [*Studies*] 30, no. 1 (January 1998); Milton Walsh, “‘To Always be Thinking Somehow about Jesus’: The Prologue to Ludolph’s *Vita Christi*,” *Studies* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Robert L. Schmitt, SJ, “The Christ-Experience and Relationship Fostered in the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola,” *Studies* 6, no. 5 (October 1974): 230; Michael J. Buckley, SJ, “Mission in Companionship: Of Jesuit Community and Communion,” *Studies* 11, no. 4 (September 1979): 13; Joseph A. Tetlow, SJ, “The Fundamentum: Creation in the Principle and Foundation,” *Studies* 21, no. 4 (September 1989): 11, 45; Brian E. Daley, SJ, “‘To Be More like Christ’: The Background and Implications of

few recent studies of Ludolph exist, and the only English monograph on him, written by Mary Immaculate Bodenstedt, SND (1897–1988), is now nearly eighty years old.

Nevertheless, existing scholarship provocatively suggests that there is more to be uncovered. Among the mere handful of articles on the Carthusian written in the past century, scholars have explicated his sacramental approach to historical thinking, his hermeneutical method of reading the life of Christ, his deep connection to broader movements of late medieval affective devotion, his influence on medieval art, and the prevalence of translations and editions for two centuries and beyond.<sup>4</sup> Contributing to this paucity of scholarship is the relative inaccessibility of the text itself, as there is no modern critical edition of the Latin, and only recently has anyone attempted a complete English translation.<sup>5</sup> Consequentially, for many scholars of Ignatius, the *Vita* has

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“Three Kinds of Humility,” *Studies* 27, no. 1 (January 1995): 16; Ernest C. Ferlita, SJ, “The Road to Bethlehem—Is It Level or Winding?: The Use of the Imagination in the *Spiritual Exercises*,” *Studies* 29, no. 5 (November 1997): 11–12; Henry J. Shea, SJ, “The Beloved Disciple and the *Spiritual Exercises*,” *Studies* 49, no. 2 (Summer 2017): 2.

<sup>4</sup> John J. Ryan, “Historical Thinking in Ludolph of Saxony’s *Life of Christ*,” *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 12, no. 1 (Spring 1982); Anthony J. Godzieba, “From ‘Vita Christi’ to ‘Marginal Jew’: The Life of Jesus as Criterion of Reform in Pre-critical and Post-critical Quests,” *Louvain Studies* 32 (2007); Charles Abbott Conway, “*The Vita Christi* of Ludolph of Saxony and Late Medieval Devotion Centred on the Incarnation: A Descriptive Analysis,” PhD diss. (University of Toronto, 1975); Tamytha Cameron Smith, “Personal Passions and Carthusian Influences Evident in Rogier van der Weyden’s *Crucified Christ Between the Virgin and Saint John* and *Diptych of the Crucifixion*,” Master’s thesis (University of North Texas, 2006); James Hogg, “A Medieval Bestseller in Translation: Ludolph of Saxony’s *Vita Christi*,” in *Bodily but meekly: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages in Honour of Roger Ellis*, ed. Catherine Batt and René Tixier (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2018).

<sup>5</sup> French translations have fared better, with at least ten editions printed in the nineteenth century. Spanish translations likewise continued into the nineteenth century, and Italian translations have been printed as recently as the early twentieth century. Nicholas Love’s (?–ca.1494) English translation of the Franciscan *Meditationes Vitae Christi* misattributed to St. Bonaventure (1221–1274) partially served the need in England, but Elizabeth Salter has also demonstrated that two English authors used and adapted Ludolph for their own meditations on Christ’s passion, including John Fewterer’s *Myrrou or Glasse of Christes Passion*. Hogg, “Medieval Bestseller,” 160, 162, 167; Elizabeth Salter, “Ludolphus of Saxony and His English Translators,” *Aevum* 33 (January 1964): 27.

remained mostly a nebulous footnote in passing among Ignatius's wide array of influences, both hidden and explicit, for the *Spiritual Exercises* and Ignatian spirituality.

Ludolph's importance in the development of late medieval and early modern devotion, however, is neither marginal nor minimal, and contemporary scholarship is well-positioned to illuminate his vitality. Walsh is currently finishing the monumental task of translating the four

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*Even the name "Jesuit" has its earliest recorded occurrence in the Vita.*

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volumes of the *Vita Christi* into English for the first time in its six-and-a-half-century existence, a feat that will prove vital for scholars not only of Jesuit studies, but also of late medieval and early modern hermeneutics, affective devotion, the history of the emotions, and the various divergent movements that took inspiration from his work.<sup>6</sup> The timing of this edition is particularly opportune here at the quincentennial of Ignatius's conversion. Beyond the growing interest in Jesuit studies, humanities scholars outside of theology have been probing the history of the emotions and its religious implications in "the religious turn" in new historicist research. Furthermore, as scholars are increasingly attentive to the blind spots resulting from staying within historical periodizations, a fresh edition of a benchmark text for late medieval affective devotion that directly influenced the fastest growing new religious order of the early modern period is poised for impact. The records show that Ludolph was inarguably important in the pivotal centuries that link the medieval and early modern periods, and scholars would do well to embrace the challenge to explore that significance.

This study takes up that challenge specifically in the way that the *Vita* first struck the young Ignatius: in the realm of the emotions or, in early modern terms, affections.<sup>7</sup> Indebted to prior scholarship,

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<sup>6</sup> The first two volumes appeared in in 2018 and 2019: *Ludolph of Saxony: The Life of Jesus Christ*, tr. Milton T. Walsh (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2018–). All quotations from the *Vita* are from this edition, cited parenthetically in the body of the article as VC by part, volume, chapter, and, for the first three volumes, page number. At the present moment the next two volumes are in various editorial stages, and I am deeply indebted to Fr. Walsh for sharing drafts of those editions with me.

<sup>7</sup> As Thomas Dixon shows, our term for *emotions* did not become prevalent until

I take the influence of Ludolph's affective spirituality on Ignatius as my premise and use the *Vita* as an interpretive lens for understanding Ignatius's own approach to human passions. This premise hardly needs defense. Whether the *Vita* directly inspired Ignatius's conversion, as Gonçalves narrates, supported his conversion, as Diego Laínez (ca.1512–1565) indicates, or was one of the first books requested by the freshly converted convalescent, as Juan Alfonso de Polanco (1517–1576) describes, all the earliest biographies concur that the *Vita* was crucial for Ignatius's nascent formation.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, this influence extended beyond his recuperation in Loyola. Ignatius's initial plans upon recovery were to take a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, doubtless inspired by Ludolph's evocative descriptions of the Holy Land and even potentially using his recollections of the *Vita* as a spiritual tour guide, and afterward to follow Ludolph as a Carthusian.<sup>9</sup> As Bodenstedt demonstrates with documented historical evidence, Ignatius's relationship with the Carthusians continued throughout his ministry, and even in the following generation the Society's 1580 Rules for the Master of Novices listed Ludolph's *Vita* among the twenty-nine books "which are in accord with our Institute" to be given to novices.<sup>10</sup>

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the nineteenth century, and early modern writers tended to use the terms *passions* and *affections* almost interchangeably for internal feelings. Though I often follow Dixon's lead in defaulting to the former, I lean toward the latter with Ignatius. See Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 26–61.

<sup>8</sup> Diego Laínez and Juan Polanco, *The First Biographies of St. Ignatius Loyola*, ed. Joseph A. Munitiz, SJ (Oxford: Way Books, 2019), 2–3, 42–43 (Laínez no. 3–4; Polanco no. 9–10).

<sup>9</sup> *Auto.* 8–9, 12. On the topic of the Holy Land, Ludolph writes, "We find it pleasing to think about these places, but it would be even more delightful to visit them in person, there to ponder in our hearts how the Lord labored for our salvation in each different locale. Who can describe how the many devout pilgrims in the Holy Land travel from site to site, and with burning zeal kiss the ground and embrace the places where they hear that Jesus sat or performed some deed? Beating their breasts, weeping, groaning, and sighing by turns, they express outwardly in their bodies the devotion they doubtless feel in their hearts, and their emotion moves many to tears, even among the Saracens" (*VC* 1.1.prol:18). In his meditation on the ascension, Ludolph describes Jesus's footprints that remain in a marble slab of the church built on that location, which Ignatius made a special point to visit during his pilgrimage (*VC* 2.2.82; *Auto.* 47).

<sup>10</sup> In 1535, Ignatius consulted a Carthusian about the establishment of the

Shore and Walsh both show many ways in which they are indeed in accord: the innovative methodology of the prologue, the hermeneutical approach to scripture, the emphasis on intimacy with Christ, the chivalric hero, the three-part method of meditation, the application of senses and imagination, and the theme of pilgrimage. Even the name “Jesuit” has its earliest recorded occurrence in the *Vita*.<sup>11</sup> While Ignatius had no way of foreseeing the earthquake of change that his era of church history was about to witness—Martin Luther’s (1483–1546) *Ninety-Five Theses* was written only four years before his conversion, and the pivotal Diet of Worms happened that same year—his encounter with the affective devotion of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries gave him a sensitivity to the inner workings of the heart and intimacy of prayer at a decisive historical moment when such concerns drove many away from Rome, and this sensitivity doubtless contributed to the Society’s rapid spread and resonance.<sup>12</sup> With the evidence of influence well-established, this study uses the *Vita* as an interpretive aid to Ignatius’s own affective spirituality. In a sense, then, this approach describes how Ludolph would have understood Ignatius—how the teacher would have interpreted his gifted though unconventional student a century-and-a-half later.

Using the *Vita* as an interpretive lens for the *Exercises*’s treatment of the passions highlights a spirituality built on a foundation of love in which affection leads to imitation or, in Latinate terms, where *affectus* is

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Society; a prior provided lodging at the charterhouse for the companions in Cologne in 1543 and later received a manuscript copy of the *Exercises* before it was printed; and the General Chapter of the Carthusians declared an association between the orders. On this point, see Mary Immaculate Bodenstedt, SND, *The Vita Christi of Ludolphus the Carthusian* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1944), 78; Joseph De Guibert, SJ, *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*, tr. William J. Young, SJ, ed. George E. Ganss, SJ (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources [IJS], 1986), 216.

<sup>11</sup> Emmerich Raitz von Frenzt, “Ludolphe, le Chartreux, et les Exercices de S. Ignace de Loyola,” *Revue d’ascétique et de mystique* 25 (1949): 375–88.

<sup>12</sup> I have argued elsewhere, for example, that it was particularly the redemptive approach to human passions that made the third-generation Jesuit St. Robert Southwell’s (ca.1561–1595) affective poetry highly popular among the English Protestants who martyred him. See “Complaint as Reconciliation in the Literary Mission of Robert Southwell,” in *Precarious Identities: Studies in the Work of Fulke Greville and Robert Southwell*, ed. Vassiliki Markidou and Afroditi-Maria Panaghis, 172–204 (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2020).

linked to *effectus*. After some preliminary history of Ludolph and the influence of the *Vita* on religious culture, my argument will focus on method, mechanics, material, and motive of meditation, all with particular attention to the affections. The first two of these sections demonstrate how the *Vita* builds its spirituality on a foundation of love, which Ignatius incorporates into his theoretical framework and organization. First, I focus on Ludolph's prologue, which articulates a sacramental approach to meditation that baptizes the senses and the entire material world with the incarnate life of Christ. This premise resonates in particular with Ignatius's concluding Contemplation to Attain the Love of God (*Contemplatio*), which suggests an application of that meditation to the whole Exercises rather than only to the Fourth Week. With love as the premise rather than the climax, my next section focuses on mechanics, the way Ignatius systematizes Ludolph's cultivation of affect throughout the *Exercises* in his overall structure and the specific components of meditation. While early Jesuits made clear that spiritual consolations were not an end in themselves, Ludolph directed the young Ignatius through a method of prayer that explicitly sought to cultivate affectionate love for the magnanimous Lord, and the Exercises are a training ground for the spiritual chivalric hero.<sup>13</sup>

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*Practically speaking, using the Vita as an interpretive lens for the Exercises has enormous payoff for several topics of debate in Jesuit scholarship.*

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The final two sections bring that theoretical framework and methodology into what is for both Ludolph and Ignatius the climax of meditation: Christ's passion and Resurrection. This is where the *Vita* is most valuable for interpreting the *Exercises*: while the passion and Resurrection are clearly important for Ignatius, comprising the entirety of the Third and Fourth Weeks, the *Exercises* is notably sparse in descriptions of these meditations and their purpose. Part of the reason for that paucity is undoubtedly that affective meditations on the passion

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<sup>13</sup> For example, Jerónimo Nadal's spiritual diary describes his own conviction that "perceptible consolation is not to be sought," unless it would "help promote the greater glory of God" (n. 150). Later he clarifies that "consolations are not to be sought just for their own sake, but as resources for helping one's neighbor" (n. 534). Jerónimo Nadal, "On Consolation," *The Way* 43, no. 3 (July 2004): 52, 54.

were widely flourishing in the sixteenth century, and Ignatius could assume some familiarity from his readers, especially since Christ's passion is the foundation for a theological valorization of human passion. Ludolph, however, could never be accused of being overly succinct, and in addition to his lengthy meditations he provides two introductions and two epilogues within the sequence of meditations comprising the Triduum, which in turn help elucidate Ignatius's implicit goals for the second half of the Exercises. As Ludolph lays out, the purpose of meditating on the passion (*passio*, suffering) is to cultivate compassion (*compassio*, suffering with). Likewise, in the Third Week of the Exercises, Ignatius directs the exercitant to move beyond the second degree of humility into the third, the desire to suffer with Christ as love desires to share all things with the beloved.

Finally, the concluding section demonstrates that for the contemplative Ludolph, and even more so for Ignatius, compassion leads to commission (co-suffering to co-mission), such that the life of Christ concludes with the apostles being sent into a life united to the resurrected Christ in imitation (*imitatio Christi*). Love ultimately desires union with the beloved, and the fires of affection kindled in meditation are aimed at uniting the will to Christ both affectively and effectively. Though Ludolph wrote from the cloister of the contemplative life, he insisted that this affective union was every bit as vital in the active life, and a century-and-a-half later, Ignatius would pioneer that path.

Practically speaking, using the *Vita* as an interpretive lens for the *Exercises* has enormous pay-off for several topics of debate in Jesuit scholarship. It not only corrects a modern misconception that Ignatius invented his spirituality from scratch, but it also reveals several interpretive and practical assumptions that Ignatius could expect from his sixteenth-century readers. Importantly, because of the close links to Ludolph's prologue, this reading allows the director to use the *Contemplatio* at any point of the retreat. When the *Contemplatio* undergirds the whole of the Exercises, Christ's incarnational love becomes everywhere evident where it was otherwise implicit. Crucially, this is vital for readers like me who find the Principle and Foundation to be on the surface disturbingly utilitarian, as well as for directors who paraphrase and often redefine it to identify the love that they claim is apparently implicit. On the contrary, if the *Contemplatio* undergirds the Exercises,

then Christ's incarnate love is in fact explicit. Similarly, this establishes love at the heart of the First Week with historical authenticity, saving directors from bending over backwards to explain away the emphasis on sin in order to rightly avoid a dangerously self-destructive scrupulosity. In other words, an encounter with any part of the retreat, even personal sin, is an encounter with Christ's love, full stop.

Furthermore, this approach has implications for the entire methodology of meditation, the definition of consolations themselves, and the distinct purposes of the later weeks. Specifically, consolations are not any interior movements that bring the soul closer to Christ, which could become a rationalization of painful experiences. Defined in their historical use, consolations are affective movements experienced as pleasant, and Ignatius boldly directs the exercitant to seek them actively and not simply to receive them if they happen to come. The purpose of the Third Week, which modern practice often diminishes by shortening and merging with the Fourth, is then the climactic intimacy in which love shares all things with its object. As the exercitant crucially progresses to the third degree of humility, the desire to share in the sufferings of Christ, it then is not an experience of masochistic suffering but of loving union. When the Third and Fourth Weeks are given their proper attention and distinction, the latter thus fulfills the *Contemplatio's* exhortation to love with action. The Fourth Week then commissions the exercitant from affect into effect—from the loving consolations of the Exercises into service. As such, emotions cannot be diminished in this reading: they are vital in each step toward the final end, and even for that end itself. Though Ludolph's own vocation was that of a contemplative, his incarnational aesthetic trained Ignatius in a method of prayer in which contemplation and action, pathos and praxis, and mysticism and service are united.

## I. The *Vita Christi* and Late Medieval Affective Devotion

Though James Hogg (1931–2018) calls the *Vita Christi* “a medieval bestseller,” its author was more obscure.<sup>14</sup> Ludolph, presumably from the province of Saxony, entered the Carthusian monastery in Strasbourg in 1340, and biographies written centuries later claim that he had been a Dominican friar for thirty years before that. The best documented evidence to support that assertion is that after being elected prior of Coblenz in 1343, he resigned five years later over a qualm of conscience, which many project is because the chapter of 1319 barred the office from former members of mendicant orders. Afterward, he spent the next thirty years in contemplative seclusion in the charterhouse of nearby Mainz and later Strasbourg, and died in 1378.<sup>15</sup> In those thirty years he wrote at least two major works, both the *Vita Christi* and his *Expositio in Psalterium Davidis*. His fame as a spiritual writer was such that many other works were attributed to him, including (incorrectly) the famed *Imitatio Christi*.<sup>16</sup> His magisterial meditation on the life of Christ is the work for which he is most celebrated, and it has been named among the four most influential works of German mysticism in the later Middle Ages.<sup>17</sup> The manuscript record supports

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<sup>14</sup> Hogg relates that, on the Iberian Peninsula, the term *Cartujano* was essentially a metonym for Ludolph’s *Vita* in the sixteenth century. His article is the most extensive account of manuscripts, editions, and translations of the *Vita* in English-language scholarship, consolidating information from a wide variety of bibliographic histories in German, French, Dutch, and Spanish. He attributes Walter Baier’s *Untersuchungen zu den Passionsbetrachtungen in der Vita Christi des Ludolf von Sachsen, Analecta Cartusiana*, 44, 3 vols. (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1977) as his most important source. Hogg, “Medieval Bestseller,” 167n45.

<sup>15</sup> Bodenstedt, *Vita Christi*, 1–8; Milton Walsh, “Introduction,” in *Ludolph of Saxony: The Life of Jesus Christ*, vol. 1, pt. 1 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2018), xxiii.

<sup>16</sup> There are inconclusive suggestions that he wrote a commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, the *Liber florum sacrae scripturae* that anthologized excerpts from various ascetics and mystics, a *Documenta bona et utilia circa missae officium pro sacerdotibus celebrare volentibus*, an exposition on the *Cantica ferialia*, and even the highly popular *Speculum humanae salvationis*. Bodenstedt, *Vita Christi*, 11–16.

<sup>17</sup> The other three are Henry Suso’s (1295–1366) *Horologium Sapientiae*, Thomas à Kempis’s *Meditationes de vita Christia*, and the latter’s most celebrated *De imitatione Christi*. Heinrich Boehmer (1869–1927) even suggests that the prayers in the *Vita* were

this accolade and attests to the popularity of the work in its first century.<sup>18</sup> It fared even better after the advent of print: it was printed as early 1470 in Augsburg, and vernacular translations immediately followed in Flemish, French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese.<sup>19</sup> Michael Sargent of Queens College notes wryly that with the influx of translations and editions, “the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were the great age of thirteenth and fourteenth century spirituality.”<sup>20</sup> By 1521, when Ignatius encountered it, the *Vita* had long been a hit.

The *Vita* was as popular as it was not because it was original, but for precisely the opposite reason. Ludolph was both a man of his time, participating in a growing trend of affective devotion centered around the life of Christ flourishing especially among Franciscans in the fourteenth century, and a man of sacramental time, in conversation with a wide range of patristic and early medieval Church Fathers and Mothers, for which he served more as editor than author, producing a “mosaic” of sources.<sup>21</sup> In the words of John J. Ryan (1925–2000), “He typifies the medieval desire not to innovate but to systematize and unify,” though not for the purpose “of knowledge but of love union [*sic*] with the divine,” a kind of *lectio divina* of patristic and medieval commentaries.<sup>22</sup> Walsh lists 135 works that Ludolph uses, with or without attribution.<sup>23</sup> In characteristic medieval style, indeed

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used more widely than those in the *Imitatio Christi*. See Heinrich Boehmer, *Loyola und die deutsche Mystik*, Berichte über die Verhandlungen der sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig (phil.-hist. Klasse), 73 (1921), 1 Heft, 5.

<sup>18</sup> Bodenstedt lists various catalogues showing more than twenty-five manuscripts in Munich, six in Mainz, eleven in libraries in France and Italy, and nineteen in France, Switzerland, England, and Portugal. *Vita Christi*, 18.

<sup>19</sup> Hogg, “Medieval Bestseller,” 156–67. Hogg points out that a Castilian Spanish translation was the first work to be printed in 1502–1503 in Alcalá, where Ignatius would later study.

<sup>20</sup> “Bonaventure English: A Survey of the Middle English Prose Translations of Early Franciscan Literature,” in James Hogg, *Analecta Cartusiana* 106 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1984), 176.

<sup>21</sup> Bodenstedt, *Vita Christi*, 24.

<sup>22</sup> Ryan, “Historical Thinking,” 68–69.

<sup>23</sup> He most commonly uses John Chrysostom (ca.347–407) and Augustine with a high frequency of citations from Sts. Jerome (ca.342–420), Bede (672–735), Gregory

a characteristic that continued into the Renaissance, he was aiming not for originality but for dialogue with the old.

However, the particular approach that he took did in fact breathe new life into the old in a way that was distinctive for his time. Among his near contemporaries, Ludolph shows familiarity with a number of lives of Christ and relied heavily on the pseudo-Bonaventure's *Meditationes vitae Christi*, a roughly contemporaneous Franciscan text even more

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*The Vita was as popular as it was not because it was original, but for precisely the opposite reason.*

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popular than the *Vita*, the entire prologue of which Ludolph appropriated in an adapted form.<sup>24</sup>

Both the *Vita* and the *Meditationes* were part of a broader enthusiasm that spread across Europe for

meditation that put oneself in scenes from the life of Christ, especially the passion, in order to encounter Christ personally and to be drawn to deeper affections. Here, meditating on Christ's suffering (*passio*) and suffering with him (*compassio*) were seen as the ideal way to cultivate love not only as a passion but also as the highest theological virtue. Ultimately, as love seeks union with its object, the will becomes united to Christ. In Walter Hilton's (ca.1340–1396) *Ladder of Perfection*, for example, the soul progresses from knowledge of God to affections and ultimately to a third stage of union that involves "both . . . knowing and affecting." In this final stage, the soul is "so perfectly . . . ravished with His love" that it becomes "reformed by the perfection of virtues to the image of Jesus."<sup>25</sup> To the extent that the will is affected, meditation thus ultimately leads to imitation—a theme that was emphasized especially as the *Vita* attracted the interest of the *devotio moderna*.

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(ca.540–604), Bernard (1090–1153), Anselm (1033–1109), and Theophylact of Ohrid (ca.1055–aft.1170). Walsh, "Introduction," xxxv.

<sup>24</sup> Bodenstedt, *Vita Christi*, 25. Walsh gives credence to the theory that the *Meditationes* was written by John de Caulibus for a Poor Clare. Sarah McNamer argues that it is actually a Franciscan correction of another text written by a nun and that the emendations toned down the original's affectivity. Walsh, "Introduction," xl–xli; Sarah McNamer, "The Origins of the *Meditationes vitae Christi*," *Speculum* 84, no. 4 (October 2009).

<sup>25</sup> Walter Hilton, *The Scale (or Ladder) of Perfection* (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1995), 43.

When the *devotio moderna* picked up the *Vita*, the Devout spread Ludolph's influence widely. The Modern Devotion or Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life was founded by Gerard Groote (1340–1384) in the fourteenth century, and spread from Deventer across the Netherlands and Germany throughout the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries with influence of its reform reaching into northern France, Spain, and Italy.<sup>26</sup> It was a movement of lay semi-monastic communities who lived together in poverty, chastity, prayer, and service without formal vows but with a simple devotion to the person of Jesus Christ, emphasizing self-examination, conversion, and interiority.<sup>27</sup> Affective meditation led to imitation, for Christ was not only a teacher but also a doer, and the Devout stressed affective movements leading to action more than scholastic inquiry.<sup>28</sup> On this note, the *Imitatio Christi*, which arose from this movement, likely written by Thomas à Kempis (ca.1380–1471), asserts that "I would rather feel deep sorrow [i.e. contrition] than be able to define it."<sup>29</sup> Feeling is central.

As the movement spread, so did its reforming influence, which by the sixteenth century had become so widespread that it becomes hard to trace. Some see it as a forerunner to modern Dutch Protestantism, typified by an interior piety kept within; others emphasize the proper training of emotions, used positively for the acquisition of virtue, and even

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<sup>26</sup> For more on Gerard Groote, see Albert Hyma, *The Christian Renaissance: A History of the "Devotio Moderna,"* (New York: The Century Co., 1924), 9–40; and the preface to *The Following of Christ: The Spiritual Diary of Gerard Groote (1340–1384)*, tr. Joseph Malaise, SJ (New York: America Press, 1937). Malaise points out, notably, that Groote's interior conversion happened under the spiritual guidance of a Carthusian prior, Hendrick Aegher van Kalkar (1328–1408), and thus from the beginning the connections between the Devout and the Carthusians were strong (xii).

<sup>27</sup> John Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life: The Devotio Moderna and the World of the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 294–304.

<sup>28</sup> C. Hugh Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages* (London: Longman, 1989), 236; David Freedburg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 174.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, tr. and ed. Robert Jeffery (London: Penguin Books, 2013), 5.

performative emotions.<sup>30</sup> Many humanists, both those who stayed with the Roman Church and those who left, were sympathetic to the whole-hearted devotion that the Devout espoused. Erasmus's early formation was at their most famous school in Deventer, and while he was critical of their rigid strictness he remained sympathetic to their affective, personal style of devotion that some have argued influenced his *philosophia Christi* and interiority.<sup>31</sup> Likewise, after his exposure to the Devout, the Spanish abbot García de Cisneros (1455–1510) instituted a number of reforms at Montserrat, Ignatius's first stop on pilgrimage after his conversion, emphasizing among other things mental prayer, the general confession, and frequent communion.<sup>32</sup> Farther afield, studies have suggested the influence of the Devout on later reform movements like those of Luther, John Calvin (1509–1564), and Anabaptism.<sup>33</sup> If these arguments have merit, then the fourteenth-century Ludolph is in some way connected to all of the major ecclesial movements of the turbulent sixteenth century. He laid out a series of spiritual exercises to cultivate the highest affections, and the spread of his influence over the next two centuries eventually would make its way into devotional practices of competing spiritualities. As such, Ignatius was one of many to appropriate it.

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<sup>30</sup> Mathilde van Dijk, "The Devotio Moderna, the Emotions and the Search for 'Dutchness,'" *Low Countries Historical Review* 129, no. 2 (2014).

<sup>31</sup> Richard L. DeMolen, *The Spirituality of Erasmus of Rotterdam* (Nieuwkoop, Netherlands: De Graff Publishers, 1987), 35–67; R. R. Post, *The Modern Devotion: Confrontation with Reformation and Humanism*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought, vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1968): 392–98. For more on the Devout as reformers, see Heiko Augustinus Oberman, *Masters of the Reformation: The Emergence of a New Intellectual Climate in Europe*, tr. Dennis Martin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 45–56.

<sup>32</sup> John W. O'Malley, SJ, *Saints or Devils Incarnate?: Studies in Jesuit History* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 168–68. Notably, Ludolph likewise recommends daily communion as long as "you know from experience that daily, fervent reception increases your love and does not lessen your reverence" (VC 2.1.56:816).

<sup>33</sup> Albert Hyma, "The Influence of the 'Devotio Moderna,'" *Dutch Review of Church History* 19 (1926); Joseph P. Murphy, *The Fountain of Life: John Calvin, the Devotio Moderna and Metaphorical Theology of Trinity, Word, and Sacrament* (Bethesda, MD: Academica Press, 2011); Kenneth Ronald Davis, *Anabaptism and Asceticism: A Study in Intellectual Origins* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1974), 243–66.

## II. Affections in Theory: The Method of the *Vita* and Ignatius's *Contemplatio*

Ludolph's influence on Ignatius is evident from his prologue, where he establishes love as the premise of meditation. He begins the *Vita Christi* by building a theoretical framework for the affective method of the whole four-volume work, which influenced Ignatius's purpose for the four-week retreat. The foundation of affective meditation is the Incarnation, which continues to the present day in human senses and the material world, and triggers an affective response with all the capacities of the human soul.

Just as Ignatius defines his purpose in terms of ridding the soul of "disordered affections," Ludolph begins with the importance of training the affections.<sup>34</sup> He lays out two primary benefits of meditation on the life of Christ: first, it draws the soul to lay down its burden of sin in heartfelt contrition, which connects to the First Week of Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*; and second, it inspires the reconciled soul to strive daily to draw closer to Christ, which connects to the Second Week. From the beginning he describes this process of transformative meditation as one with both personal and interpersonal benefits: it is a "sweet and lovely" way of life with "abundant pleasures," "consolation," "joy, comfort, and solace" that is "so agreeable and delicious that once a loving heart has tasted it, all other practices will seem bland"; and it also "makes the saints loving, solicitous, and disposed kindly to those who invoke them because of the joy we share with them" (*VC* 1.1.prol:5–6). Whether in the process of converting or as a fresh convert, Ignatius read in these words a calling not only to an affective contrition but also to the affective consolations that come from uniting one's soul to a loving Lord who in turn commissions his saints with a mission of love.

For Ludolph, the first pillar of affective meditation is Christ's incarnational presence to the human senses. This kind of meditation can be considered sacramental with a small *s*. Reading makes eternal real-

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<sup>34</sup> *Spiritual Exercises* 1, hereafter abbreviated *SpEx*; *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius: A Translation and Commentary*, trans. and ed. George E. Ganss, SJ (St. Louis, MO: IJS, 1992), 21. All quotations from the *SpEx* are from this edition and are cited parenthetically from here on with reference only to the paragraph number.

ities present to the senses—a kind of baptism of the imagination that he nearly makes explicit when saying that the five wounds of Christ allegorically demonstrate that his sufferings “restore our five senses, which had been corrupted by sin” (VC 2.2.58). Ludolph elaborates in his discussion of Jesus’s baptism.

The principal illness that afflicts humanity is original sin. While it is true that this sickness has its origin in the consent of reason, the point where the disease gains entrance is the doorways of our senses. If the remedy is to correspond to the illness, therefore, it cannot be simply spiritual but must also include signs perceptible to the senses. (VC 1.1.21:440)

Here, of course, he is speaking of the sacraments of the church; but the principle applies as well to meditation, which Ignatius affirms when he provides methods of prayer based on the five senses of the body in addition to the three powers of the soul (*SpEx* 248). As Christ is present to the imagination, the senses corrupted by sin become healed, and the proceeding understanding and will are likewise opened to redemption. The point here is crucial: affective meditation only works because the incarnate Christ is present to our bodily senses, to our spiritual understanding, and to our affective movements.

The second pillar of Ludolph’s affective meditation is Christ’s incarnational presence in the material world. Just as the Incarnation mysteriously links the material flesh of Christ to his divinity, it invites all of creation into that act of divine revelation. Walsh describes the *Vita* as “a course in training of our senses and imagination to enable everything to remind us of Christ, so that in time our meditation on him embraces all things.”<sup>35</sup> Indeed, Ludolph’s meditation on the Incarnation prefigures the Ignatian principle of “finding God in all things.”

Also, the light shines in the darkness of this world because the Creator appears in his creatures. In our heavenly homeland God is the mirror of his creatures: they all shine out in him, and we will see in him everything that brings us joy. In this life, on the other hand, creatures are the mirror of the Creator, and we see him in them. (VC 1.1.1:35)

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<sup>35</sup> Walsh, “Introduction,” xxix.

This sacramental understanding of the world is the theological foundation for imaginative meditation, based on the principle that creation declares the glory of God (Ps 19:1). It suggests not only that the events of Christ's life are redemptive to the senses but also that the very ground that his incarnate feet walked upon is transfigured. Ludolph urges the reader to "Put past deeds before your eyes as if they were present" in order that "you will experience them more deeply and more happily." He even explains the value of imagining specific locations of the Holy Land "where the good Jesus lived and which he illuminated by his preaching and consecrated by his precious blood" (VC 1.1.prol:18). Christ's incarnate body consecrated the ground he walked upon, and the material creation is filled with his presence as much as are our senses that perceive it.

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*Ludolph lays out the purpose of his meditations in the familiar terms of imagination, understanding, and will (for Ignatius, memoria, intellectus, and voluntas).*

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Furthermore, imaginative meditation triggers a response of the will, which in medieval terms is connected through the affections to both the senses and intellect. The Latin for *will* (*voluntas*) shares its roots with *volo*, to want, which can denote, as in English, both desire and cognitive choice. Traditionally, desire itself was understood as among the fundamental human passions, and thus the will serves as a link between the sensual and intellectual parts of the human soul. The movement of the will is both an emotional and a rational movement toward or away from the good.<sup>36</sup>

In Ludolph's prologue, the stirring of the will takes on the pathos and adventure of a medieval romance. Quickly he progresses from images of the ideal lady to the ideal companions at arms to

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<sup>36</sup> For particularly influential examples, Cicero (106–146 BCE), Augustine, and Aquinas each list desire among their four or eleven human passions, which they define as movements or disturbances within the soul. See Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Tuscan Disputations*, trans. J. E. King (Harvard, MA: 1927), 3.24–5; Augustine, *City of God*, ed. D. Knowles (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1972), 14.6; Thomas Aquinas, OP, *Summa Theologiae: Latin Text and English Translation, Introductions, Notes, Appendices, and Glossaries*, ed. Thomas Gilby et al., 61 vols (Cambridge: Blackfriars, 1964–1981), 1a.IIae. quest. 23, art. 4.

the ideal lord. As he has it, the Blessed Virgin will surely favor the reader “when she sees you take her son—whom she loves above all—into your arms and hold him close to your breast, and this not just once a day, but frequently.” So too with the saints, for whom the reader’s devotion “turns their clients into their companions,” as well as with “the apostles, his intimate companions, who persevered faithfully with him.” In addition to these friendships, the reader is ultimately invited to abide continually with Christ and to reign with him through service. “Do not abandon him,” he exhorts, “for to serve him is to reign” (VC 1.1.prol:6–7). This is the kind of magnanimous love that the heroic martyrs demonstrate when they “leap for joy and triumph even as their bodies are being mangled and the sword slashes their sides; they watch the holy blood stream from them not merely bravely, but joyfully.” Ludolph explains that such a miraculous feat can only happen when the will has already cultivated the fires of affections, for “[l]ack of feeling does not do this, love does; feelings are leashed, not lost; pain is not banished, but scorned” (VC 1.1.prol:11–12). The purpose of meditation is to cultivate a love that is heroically expressed.

A chivalric response thus involves all the capacities of the soul. Ludolph urges his reader to “throw yourself upon him like a child in its mother’s lap” in times of heaviness and to “imagine yourself reclining with John on Jesus’ breast” when laying down at night, even so far as to “nurse at that breast.” But all the while this intimacy is for the purpose of “striving to imitate him more closely or love him more deeply” and to “change your behavior to resemble his as you go about your business” (VC 1.1.prol:16). By the end of the prologue, Ludolph lays out the purpose of his meditations in the familiar terms of imagination, understanding, and will (for Ignatius, *memoria*, *intellectus*, and *voluntas*). “Study carefully Christ’s example: from his life, you will see that you *can* live rightly [imagination]; from his commandments, you will know *how* to live rightly [understanding]; from his promises, you will *desire* to live rightly [will].” The same meditations work through each capacity of the soul.

This holistic approach to meditation reaches its crescendo in the prologue’s final exhortation to the reader. Ultimately this battle-cry

calls on capacities of observing, pondering, feeling, and following, thus arousing the will with both passionate affections and courageous resolve.

So rouse yourself, O soul devoted to Christ! Be alert, Christian! Examine diligently, ponder attentively, tease out scrupulously every detail in the life of Jesus Christ, and follow in your Lord's footsteps. For your sake he came down to earth from his heavenly throne; for your own sake, flee earthly things and strive for those of heaven. If you find that the world is sweet, know that Christ is sweeter; if you find that the world is harsh, know that he endured all its pains for you. Arise and walk! Do not drag your feet on the path, lest you forfeit your place in your homeland. (VC 1.1.prol:24)

In this way, Ludolph establishes fundamental principles for affective meditation in his prologue: Christ's incarnate presence in the human person and the material world calls forth an affective response with all the powers of the soul.

For any student of Ignatius, of course, this kind of "finding God in all things" is familiar turf. But interpreting the *Exercises* through the lens of Ludolph's affective spirituality suggests a particular way of understanding the foundational Jesuit text. Indeed, while God's life-giving and sustaining presence in the material world and the human person is fundamental in Ignatian spirituality, in the *Exercises* it is most clearly articulated toward the end, in the *Contemplatio* that is sometimes interpreted as pertaining to the Fourth Week that it immediately follows.<sup>37</sup> But the *Contemplatio* harkens strongly to the theological foundation Ludolph provides in his introductory material in a way that none of the Ignatius's introductory Annotations do, not even the somewhat utilitarian Principle and Foundation (*SpEx* 23), and it is reasonable to surmise that this meditation allows the exercitant at any stage of the retreat to practice the fundamental principles

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<sup>37</sup> This engages a larger debate within Ignatian studies that lies beyond the scope of this essay. For examples, see Michael Buckley, SJ, "The Contemplation to Attain Love," *The Way Supplement* 24 (Spring 1975), 92–104; and Joseph Bracken, SJ, "The Contemplation to Attain Love as an Experience of Pentecost: Theological Implications," *The Way* 54, no. 2 (October 2013), 71–82.

of affective meditation. In that way, it can be seen as the principle and foundation of the meditative process.

Each of these fundamental elements that we have discussed in Ludolph's prologue are within the *Contemplatio*. First, Ignatius begins with the call to magnanimous service—"Love ought to manifest itself more by deeds than by words" (*SpEx* 230). He then moves in the *Suscipite* to the dedication of the three capacities of the soul—"Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and all my will" (*SpEx* 234). Finally, he concludes with the incarnate presence of the Creator in creation, both the material world and within the human person—"I will consider how God dwells in creatures; in the elements, giving them existence; in the plants, giving them life; in the animals, giving them sensation; in human beings, giving them intelligence; and finally, how in this way he dwells also in myself, giving me existence, life, sensation, and intelligence" (*SpEx* 235). This understanding of the sacramental nature of creation is for Ludolph and Ignatius not the final outcome of meditation but the premise, the reason that senses and affections can lead us to union with the divine. With that incarnational and affective premise established, any meditation from Jesus's life can be an encounter with Christ; in Ludolph's words, it can be a prayer that "your truth through knowledge, your virtue through deed, and your goodness through perseverance" may visit "the powers, the affections, and the thoughts of the soul" (VC 1.2.44:53).

### III. Affections in Practice: The Mechanics of the *Vita* and Ignatius's Consolations

Seen this way, the *Spiritual Exercises* is a systematization of the affective method Ignatius encountered in the *Vita*, and the choices he makes for organization and mechanics are aimed affectively to train the spiritual chivalric hero. Purportedly, after his transformative reading of the *Vita*, the convalescent followed the Carthusian's advice and wrote down in condensed form some of the events he found most significant, which he collected into a book of three hundred pages,

unfortunately lost to history.<sup>38</sup> We can reasonably project that the meditations he selected in that exercise have some corollary to the ones that eventually made their way into the *Exercises*, especially since the latter include extrabiblical details found in the *Vita*. Ignatius's selections are extremely condensed, emphasizing the Incarnation, the disciples' pilgrimage of love and knowledge of their Lord, and Christ's passion and Resurrection. He includes no healings, unless Lazarus qualifies, and only the Sermon on the Mount among Christ's many teachings. Miracles are sparse, and all have to do with Jesus's lordship over creation, his divinity, or his coming death and Resurrection, and for the most part the disciples are the main witnesses.<sup>39</sup> It is the life of Christ through the eyes of his faithful companions.

The descriptions within Ignatius's meditations are universally sparse, and only rarely does he add, embellish, or provide a particular interpretation of the biblical narrative. With few exceptions, these embellishments come from Ludolph, and for those who need assistance to meditate on extrabiblical stories, the *Vita* is a feast for the imagination.<sup>40</sup> Both authors begin with a meditation on the Trinity's decision for the Incarnation (*VC* 1.1.2; *SpEx* 101ff.). Both synchronize the gospel accounts such that Peter and Andrew receive three distinct callings.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *Auto.* 11; see also ed. Geger, 117n23. Ludolph describes both St. Bernard, who collected "bitter recollections from the life and sufferings of Christ" that "he pressed between his breasts" like a "bundle of myrrh" locked "in his affectionate heart," and St. Cecilia, who "always carried a copy of the gospels close to her heart" such that her "heart was so filled with the life of Christ that there was no room for trivial concerns" (*VC* 1.1.prol:8–11).

<sup>39</sup> He includes Peter and Andrew's miraculous catch of fish (Lk 5), the wedding at Cana (Jn 2), both the calming of the storm (Mt 8) and walking on the waves (Mt 14), the feeding of the five thousand (Mt 14), the transfiguration (Mt 17), and the raising of Lazarus (Jn 11).

<sup>40</sup> A rare example of an embellishment Ignatius did not get from Ludolph is in the nativity. While both authors add the traditional donkey to the scene, Ignatius also adds a maidservant, whereas Ludolph cites Chrysostom as specifying that the holy couple "had neither servants nor maids" (*VC* 1.1.9:163; *SpEx* 111). One interesting interpretative divergence Ignatius makes from Ludolph involves Judas. Ludolph goes with the ordering in Matthew and Mark that have Judas leaving before the institution of the Eucharist (*VC* 2.1.55–56), whereas Ignatius seems to follow Luke in having Judas leave afterward (*SpEx* 191).

<sup>41</sup> "The first is related by John: on that occasion, they were simply called to faith

Both identify the location of the agony in the garden as the Valley of Jehoshaphat and describe its proximity to Mt. Sion (VC 2.2.63; SpEx 201). Both begin the Easter sequence with a meditation on Christ's appearance to the Virgin Mary along with a defense of why it may be piously believed despite lack of scriptural evidence.<sup>42</sup> Both include

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*What is for Ludolph a prayer to begin the massive four-volume endeavor becomes for Ignatius a prayer to begin each individual exercise.*

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a full meditation on Christ's intimate appearance to Peter alone in the tomb, which could be inferred when the men on the road to Emmaus return to learn the Lord had appeared to Simon (VC 2.2.75; SpEx 302). Both include mostly extrabiblical appearances to Joseph of Arimathea, James the Lesser (1 Cor 15:6), and the souls of holy ancestors twice (1 Pt 3:19), once in limbo and again after his bodily Resurrection (VC 2.2.75; SpEx 309, 310, 311). The selections Ignatius maintains indicate his early fascination with a drama of a divine Lord who responds personally to the generous service of his companions with overwhelming, gratuitous magnanimity.

Beyond the overall structure of the *Exercises*, the *Vita* assisted Ignatius in systemizing the mechanics of meditation in his preludes

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and to gain some familiarity with Jesus. Luke describes the second call: then they began to follow him in spirit and to learn something of his doctrine, but they returned to their own homes. The third call is narrated by Matthew and Mark: then they came and stayed with him continuously, imitating his perfection" (VC 1.1.30:568). "It seems that St. Peter and St. Andrew were called three times; first, to some knowledge, as is evident from St. John; second, to follow Christ to some extent, but with an intention to return to the possession of what they had left behind, as St. Luke tells us; third, to follow Christ our Lord forever" (SpEx 275).

<sup>42</sup> The only explanation Ignatius offers is to say, "Scripture supposes that we have understanding, as it is written: 'Are even you without understanding?'" (SpEx 299). Ludolph is a little more helpful to the unimaginative. He mentions liturgical tradition, Sts. Ambrose (340–397), Ignatius of Antioch (2nd c.), and Sedulius (5th c.), among others. "It was certainly fitting that before appearing to anyone else," he explains, "the risen Christ should first visit his mother to share with her the joy of his resurrection, because her love for him was deeper than the others'. And, because of this love, she had suffered more than anyone else during his passion, and so looked forward more eagerly to his resurrection. Although the gospels say nothing about this event, it may certainly be piously believed" (VC 2.2.70). Following this defense, Ludolph offers some potential details from the scene.

and colloquies. Each of Ignatius's meditations begins with a standard prayer that consecrates the powers of the soul to the Divine Majesty. This prefatory prayer is another subtle appropriation from Ludolph's prologue. Ludolph concludes his overall introduction with a prayer as an entry into the *Vita* as a whole, acknowledging himself as a poor and weak sinner, asking for the grace to keep the eyes of his heart fixed on Christ in order that he may imitate him to the best of his ability, asking for the grace to please him in all things, and finally asking Christ "to direct all my thoughts, words, and deeds according to your law and your counsels; by doing your will in all things, may I deserve to be saved by you here and for all eternity" (VC 1.1.prol:25). It is not a great stretch to see Ignatius's preparatory prayer before each exercise as an adaptation of that, as he "ask[s] God our Lord for the grace that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be ordered purely to the service and praise of the Divine Majesty" (*SpEx* 46). What is for Ludolph a prayer to begin the massive four-volume endeavor becomes for Ignatius a prayer to begin each individual exercise, to open with a posture of whole-hearted generosity and to dedicate each capacity of the soul to the Divine Majesty.

Immediately following the prefatory prayer, each exercise continues with one of the most familiar traits of Ignatian meditation: the composition of place (*compositio loci*). This is the first prelude (*praeludium*) that begins each meditation: an act of imagination that recreates the scene and evokes bodily senses (*SpEx* 47, 50).<sup>43</sup> The method of inserting oneself into scenes from the life of Christ is fundamental for Ludolph, and his prologue describes it in detail. The entire incarnate life of Christ is in the present tense as Ludolph directs his reader to "[d]raw near to him who descends from the Father into the Virgin's womb" and to "[c]ome forward with pure faith as another witness with the angel to his holy conception."<sup>44</sup> As the prologue progresses, the exhortations

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<sup>43</sup> For more on the connection between Ludolph and Ignatius's composition of place, see Rhodes, "Prayers of the Passion," 29; and Christoph Strosetzki, "De lo exterior a lo interior: Las imágenes y la contemplación jesuita mística," *Hipogrifo* 7, no. 2 (2019): 607–8, 612.

<sup>44</sup> The scene of the nativity, notably, is the only biblical meditation in the *Spiritual Exercises* in which Ignatius explicitly directs the retreatant to imagine him/herself as a specific character in the scene, saying, "I will make myself a poor, little, and unworthy

that follow continue to assume an imaginative, present-tense entry into these historical scenes: “Rejoice,” “Be present,” “Go,” “adore,” “Help,” “follow,” “shar[e],” “consol[e],” “touch and caress,” “Marvel,” “stand[],” and “Sit” (VC 1.1.prol:7). He provides a(n albeit apocryphal) physical description of Jesus to aid his readers in the imagination (VC 1.1.prol:20–21) and elsewhere asserts that even vocal prayers should be said “as if you could see God, the Blessed Virgin, and all the angels and saints before you with your bodily eyes” (VC 2.1.6:98). Despite the importance of imagination, the bulk of the meditations are devoted to the following step of meditation using the understanding with all of the traditional “four senses” of medieval biblical interpretation; the task of imagination is given to the reader whom he constantly exhorts to be sensually present.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, both authors are keen to emphasize the necessary first step of imagination that makes the Incarnation present.

As another prelude, Ignatius makes the search for holy affections that saturates Ludolph’s prologue a formal part of each meditation in the *Exercises*. While this is not one of Ludolph’s explicit steps, its boldness harkens to his directive from his meditation on the Sermon on the Mount that we be insistent (*molesti*), anxious (*importune*), bothersome (*violenti*), and shameless (*improbi*) in our prayer (VC 1.1.39:747).<sup>46</sup> After the uniform prefatory prayer and the first prelude that composes the scene, each of Ignatius’s exercises continues with another prelude, a directive “to ask God our Lord for what I want and desire” (*id quod volo*). As he goes on to explain, this will be different depending on the exercise—“in a contemplation on the Resurrection, I will ask for joy with Christ in joy; in a contemplation on the Passion, I will ask for pain, tears, and suffering with Christ in suffering” —but it is always affective.<sup>47</sup>

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slave, gazing at them, contemplating them, and serving them in their needs, just as if I were there” (*SpEx* 114).

<sup>45</sup> As Walsh notes, the standard work for the four senses of biblical interpretation is Henri de Lubac, SJ, *Exégèse médiévale: Les quatre sens de l’écriture*, 4 vol. (Paris: Aubier, 1959–1963), partially translated into English as *The Four Senses of Scripture*, trans. E. M. Macierowski, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998–2009).

<sup>46</sup> Bodenstedt, *Vita Christi*, 118.

<sup>47</sup> In his initial meditation on sin, he desires “shame and confusion” (*SpEx* 48); in later exercises he desires “growing and intense sorrow and tears for my sins” (*SpEx* 55), “interior sense of the pain suffered by the damned” (*SpEx* 65), “grace from our Lord that

Explicitly, this is a request for spiritual consolations, which he defines as happening “when some interior motion is caused within the soul through which it comes to be inflamed with love its Creator and Lord,” which could be tears of love for Christ (contrition or compassion), increases of faith, hope, and charity, interior joy which is drawn to heavenly things, or tranquility and peace (*SpEx* 316).<sup>48</sup> Such a request does not oblige God to respond, of course, and like Ludolph Ignatius affirms the higher virtue of patience and fortitude in times of spiritual desolation. His rules for the discernment of spirits indicate reasons that a soul might be left in desolation through no fault of its own, including testing and self-knowledge (*SpEx* 322), and Ludolph likewise insists that if desolations are united to God’s will, “the more intense your inner affliction, the more you will resemble the Crucified, and as such you will be loved by his Father. This is in fact the way the most valiant soldiers in Christ’s army are tested” (*VC* 2.2.58). Nevertheless, Ignatius boldly establishes a system of naming the desired consolations and seeking them, which alarmed some of his contemporaries with its resemblance to illuminism.<sup>49</sup> Despite that potential criticism, affective meditation is for

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I may not be deaf to his call, but ready and diligent” (*SpEx* 91), “interior knowledge of Our Lord . . . that I may love him more intensely and follow him more closely” (*SpEx* 104), “insight into the genuine life which the supreme and truthful commander sets forth” (*SpEx* 139), “grace to choose that which is more to the glory of the Divine Majesty” (*SpEx* 152), “sorrow, regret, and confusion (*SpEx* 193), “sorrow . . . a broken spirit . . . tears; and interior suffering” (*SpEx* 203), “grace to be glad and to rejoice intensely” (*SpEx* 221), and “interior knowledge of all the great good I have received, in order that, stirred to profound gratitude, I may become able to love and serve the Divine Majesty in all things” (*SpEx* 233).

<sup>48</sup> For useful definitions of spiritual consolation and its relationship to emotions in the *Exercises*, specifically in the discernment of God’s will, see Brian O. McDermott, SJ, “Spiritual Consolation and Its Role in the Second Time of Election,” *Studies* 50, no. 4 (Winter 2018), especially 1–27. McDermott (UEA) makes several important distinctions, including that spiritual consolations properly understood are feelings rather than volitional acts (e.g., an act of faith) and that they are particularly pleasant, delightful, or peaceful feelings, not simply any feeling that draws one closer to Christ. On tears in particular, Maurice-Marie Martin identifies in Ignatius’s diaries three distinct kinds, all of them consolations: tears of devotion, tears of visitation, and tears of union. See “The Mysticism of St. Ignatius: A Study of the Gift of Tears in the *Spiritual Diary*,” in *The Spiritual Diary of St. Ignatius: Linguistic Analysis and Mystical Theology*, ed. Herbert Alphonso, SJ (Rome: Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis [CIS], 1991), 30–31.

<sup>49</sup> Aaron Pidel (ucs) has written usefully on one such controversy with the Dominican Melchor Cano (ca.1509–1560) over the value of consolations. As Pidel shows, in

both Ignatius and Ludolph an active exercise in cultivating the ground for the highest affections, should God choose to plant the seed.

While Ludolph does not begin each prose meditation with prayer, he does end them that way, offering highly affective prayers that express sorrow for sin or overwhelming love with great pathos.<sup>50</sup> Like Ignatius after him, he ends meditation with an act of the will, stirred by great affections, and the prayers involve spiritual warfare that potentially shows some early roots of Ignatian discernment of spirits.<sup>51</sup> Ludolph's prayers are individual to each meditation, but he establishes in the prologue that a particular method could suffice if the reader has difficulty entering the meditation.

Take it as a general rule that wherever you do not find material for reflection in following a narrative, it suffices to picture in your mind's eye something the Lord Jesus said or did, and simply talk with him so that you might become more familiar with him. For it seems that greater sweetness and more devotion is to be had in this way. (VC 1.1.prol:18)

With this "sweetness of devotion," the concluding prayers throughout the *Vita* are wide-ranging, but always have a sense of intimacy and affectivity. In his prayer on the annunciation, for example, Ludolph asks Christ, "may your grace eagerly descend upon me, your unworthy servant, so that I may yearn for you and conceive you within me by love" (VC 1.1.5:115). He makes similar requests for intimacy throughout: "Come to me, sweetest Jesus, and in your mercy give yourself to me, who longs for you with such great desire"

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defending Ignatius, Nadal does not "minimize the importance that the *Exercises* place on the interior and affective dispositions of the exercitant," even as he surrounds that affective mode of discernment with "a panoply of other means." See Aaron D. Pidel, SJ, "Jerome Nadal's Apology for the *Spiritual Exercises*: A Study in Balanced Spirituality," *Studies* 52, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 18, 35. See also Terence O'Reilly, "Melchor Cano and the Spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola: The *Censura y parecer contra el Instituto de los Padres Jesuitas*," *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 4 (2017): 377–78.

<sup>50</sup> Rhodes points out that this is a divergence from at least one of his major sources for the passion accounts, Jordan of Quedlinburg's (ca.1300–1380) *Meditationes de passione Christi*. See "Prayers of the Passion," 28.

<sup>51</sup> Gordon James Klingenschmitt, *How to See the Holy Spirit, Angels, and Demons: Ignatius of Loyola on the Gift of Discerning of Spirits* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 51–60.

(VC 1.1.12:263); “Grant that I, a poor sinner, will desire you, and in desiring seek you, and seeking, find you, and finding, love you” (VC 1.1.15:313).<sup>52</sup> The meditations are designed to be acted on, and the stirring of affections calls forth a response.

Likewise, each Ignatian meditation ends with a colloquy that is in some way a movement of the will: to love, to gratitude, to commitment. In the meditation proper, after using the imagination to create the scene and the understanding to reason about it, he arouses himself “to deeper emotions [*magis affectus*] by means of my will” (*SpEx* 50) before a concluding prayer. The general principle Ignatius gives in the first exercise provides some guidance that is reminiscent of Ludolph’s guidance about prayer from the prologue: “A colloquy is made, properly speaking in the way one friend speaks to another, or a servant to one in authority” (*SpEx* 54). The most memorable of these is the first, when a lengthy meditation on sin leads to Ignatius directing the exercitant to imagine Christ on the cross and speak to him in this familiar manner. This directive initially may seem jarring, but since it is built on the foundation of love it establishes even meditations on sin as an encounter with divine love and an invitation to respond.

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*Like Ignatius after him, he ends meditation with an act of the will, stirred by great affections.*

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The invitation to respond is, importantly, a continued movement of love. Ignatius’s suggested prayer for that meditation might again sound more utilitarian to modern readers, as he invites the exercitant to reflect, “What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I do for Christ” (*SpEx* 53). But it is in fact a loving dialogue as becomes clear in the early prayer of Ludolph that it closely reflects: “What

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<sup>52</sup> A few more for good measure: “I ask you to change my cold soul by the warmth of your charity, my insipid soul by the savor of your sweetness, my wavering and unsteady soul by the constancy of your virtue and grace” (VC 1.1.25:532); “I pray . . . that what I now meditate on according to my powers I may embrace with the arms of my soul and kiss” (VC 2.1.3:56); “You enjoin me to love you: give what you command, and command what you will” (VC 2.1.36:545); “Since you have made me ask, make me receive; since you have given me to seek, grant that I may find; since you have taught me to knock, open so that I may enter. My desire comes from you; so may its fulfillment” (VC 1.1.39:756).

can I do for you in return? How to fittingly to respond?" (VC 1.1.7:144–45). Like Ludolph, Ignatius provides guidance about what kinds of responses are most fitting for the exercises, but even then he allows some leeway. Indeed, he anticipates an exercitant who is growing in familiarity with Christ, who is encountering Christ affectively in meditation, and who desires to respond with devotion. After all, with the cultivation of love as its premise, the entire organization of the *Exercises* and mechanics of the prayers have been training this chivalric response.

#### IV. Affections in *Exemplum*: Christ's Model in the *Vita* and Ignatius's Third Degree of Humility

Because of the centrality of an affective response to love for the entire experience of the *Vita* and the *Exercises*, the passion of Christ holds a prominent place in both, and it is where Ludolph becomes most valuable to scholars of Ignatius. Awkwardly for modern readers, Ignatius provides very little description for the Third and Fourth Weeks, especially if the *Contemplatio* is applied broadly across the whole retreat, despite the fact that the passion and Resurrection together comprise twice as much "time" as the entire life of Christ before his final days.<sup>53</sup> Consequently in modern practice these weeks can get short shrift, and even the early directories are nebulous about their purpose.<sup>54</sup> Because Ignatius assumes his readers' familiarity with a wide array of experiential, affective devotions to Christ's passion, Ludolph's proclivity to leave no stone unturned in discussion is especially illuminating for interpretation of these weeks. The *Vita* includes an additional introduction to

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<sup>53</sup> Although the *Vita* gives more space to Christ's ministry, the second half still turns toward the passion and Resurrection, which the final volume exclusively treats. Ludolph begins part two by pointing this out: "Part One of this book made no explicit mention of Christ's passion," he opens; "It will be spoken of frequently in this second part, and indeed will be described in its entirety, along with all that followed it" (VC 2.1.1:3).

<sup>54</sup> Brian O'Leary, SJ, "Third and Fourth Weeks: What the Directories Say," *The Way Supplement* 58 (Spring 1987): 3–20. For some particular approaches to the Third Week, see Peter Edmonds, "The 'History' in Ignatian Contemplation: From the Last Supper to the Garden," *The Way* 44, no. 2 (April 2005): 21–36; Richard F. Copeland, "A Directory for the Second and Third Weeks: Contemplating Christ's Earthly Life," *The Way Supplement* 46 (1983): 11–55.

the Last Supper and passion (VC 2.1.51), a prologue to the passion (VC 2.2.58), an epilogue to the passion (VC 2.2.67), and an epilogue to the Resurrection (VC 2.2.81). Taken together, these depict the passion as the climax of affective meditation, the literal “suffering with Christ in suffering,” to use Ignatius’s phrase, an affective *imitatio Christi*. In Ignatian terms, after cultivating the indifference of the second degree of humility in the Second Week, the Third Week invites the retreatant into the third. When the retreat as a whole is understood as a cultivation of love for Christ in all things, the passion is the climax of that intimacy in the third degree of humility, and the Resurrection is its resolution.

Ignatius’s three degrees of humility, fittingly placed between the Second and Third Weeks, describe the growing maturity in love taking place throughout the thirty-day retreat.<sup>55</sup> In brief, the first degree of humility is the basic Christian duty to strive to avoid mortal sin (*SpEx* 165). While this is an assumed trait of those who enter in the Exercises and is strengthened in the First Week, in the Second Week the exercitant learns to hear and respond generously to the call of the king, potentially discerning a life-altering decision. Thus becomes crucial the second degree of humility, wherein the soul desires the greater glory of God so much that it becomes indifferent to concerns of health, wealth, or glory (*SpEx* 166). Afterward, at the center of the Exercises, the retreatant enters into the passion, which is an invitation to the third degree, the desire “to imitate Christ our Lord better and to be more like him here and now” such that one actually hopes that the greater glory of God will be served by one’s own “poverty with Christ poor rather than wealth; contempt with Christ laden with it rather than honors” (*SpEx* 167).

Without the foundation of the *Contemplatio*, this would seem to be a masochistic desire for suffering for its own sake; but building on the foundation that “[l]ove consists in a mutual communication between the

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<sup>55</sup> It is worth noting that Ludolph also lists three degrees of humility, though they are entirely different from Ignatius’s and sound much more like traits that the uninitiated would associate with humility: “There are three degrees of humility. The first is required of any just person and is sufficient: to submit to superiors for God’s sake and not to vaunt yourself over your equals. It is greater humility to submit yourself to your equals and not prefer yourself to your inferiors. Perfect humility is to submit to your inferiors and not give preference to yourself over anyone; this is what Christ did [in his baptism], and thus he fulfilled all humility” (VC 1.1.21:425–26).

two persons" (*SpEx* 231), Ignatius depicts this desire to share Christ's sufferings as a new stage of love for God. From this perspective, it is

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*The experience was moving enough that Ignatius briefly considered becoming a Carthusian himself so as to find that consummation—the "unitive way" of Christian perfection—in the cloister.*

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the sharing not only of goods but also of ills—or rather, it is a sharing that makes ills into goods. For Ludolph, this is the foundation of meditation on the passion. His introduction to the passion exhorts his reader to "strive to unite yourself to him with fervent love" and promises that "the more deeply you love him the more you will share in his sufferings, and

the more you share in his sufferings the more will your affection be enkindled. In this way love and compassion mutually increase until you reach perfection" (*VC* 2.2.58). Thus, as the retreatant is directed to desire and to ask for experiences of sadness, the Third Week of the *Exercises* is the training ground for cultivating compassion, understood as active desire to suffer with Christ.

If the desire for suffering seems like a high bar even for one who loves, Ludolph points to the same aid that has assisted the reader through the whole *Vita*: the Incarnation. We can desire to suffer with Christ in suffering because Christ himself desired to suffer with us in suffering in a preemptive *imitatio hominis*. In this way, Christ unites the full range of human passion—defined as suffering and emotion—to the incarnate God who chose to be not only mortal and material but also sensual and emotional. In his meditation on the raising of Lazarus, one of the few miracles from Christ's public ministry that Ignatius includes in the *Exercises*, Ludolph makes the point that when Jesus "groaned in the spirit and troubled himself," it was an act of the will, a deliberate choice. "He felt the weaknesses he experienced because he chose to," he explains, citing St. Augustine of Hippo (354–430) who said that "[i]t lay within his own power to be affected or not" (*VC* 2.1.17:276). The debate about whether or not Christ experienced human passions flourished in the Middle Ages, with St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) among others taking a firm stance in the affirmative, and it continued

into the early modern period, when Ignatius encountered the *Vita*.<sup>56</sup> For both Ludolph and Ignatius, Christ does experience human passions, as Christ's reason and will were united to his passion. For example, Ludolph insists in Gethsemane that "nothing was coerced in Christ, he did all things freely; therefore this sorrow, although natural, was at the same time voluntary and rational" (VC 2.2.59).<sup>57</sup> Likewise, Ignatius introduces the passion of Christ as something that Christ not only suffers but "desires to suffer" (*SpEx* 195). In this way, his passion redeems not only suffering itself but also the human faculties—the senses and affections—that experience suffering, and Christ's life becomes "the original text, the exemplar from which we copy and correct the manuscript of our lives" (VC 2.1.51:739). The passion of Christ thus functions as a training ground for human passion through compassion that desires to suffer with Christ just as Christ desires to suffer with us.

Importantly, the co-suffering affections that these meditations kindle are consolations, not unpleasant experiences used redemptively. "Nothing so inflames the human heart," Ludolph says, "as frequent and devout meditation on the Savior's humanity and passion." He goes on to promise his reader that "these reflections produce fresh compassion, love, and consolations—and consequently a new state of sweetness that will be both a presage of and a participation in glory." The suffering that the meditating soul experiences is thus felt as sweet—a loving intimacy with the Christ whom the soul desires above all—the treasure "to which I cling, and which I embrace with deep affection." Though

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<sup>56</sup> For a helpful summary of the debate in the Middle Ages and Aquinas's stance within it, see Paul Gondreau, *The Passions of Christ's Soul in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2002), 17–33. For an early modern example, in 1499 in Oxford, John Colet (1467–1519) and Erasmus (1466–1536) debated whether Christ's sweating like drops of blood in the garden indicated a human fear of death. Erasmus said yes, identifying "the frailty of our nature that he had accepted," while Colet argued that such a fear would be contrary to his love for humanity. Their mutual friend Thomas More (1478–1535), awaiting martyrdom in 1535, insisted that Christ actively chose to feel his sufferings. Notably, Erasmus was influenced by the *devotio moderna* and More was connected to the Carthusian charterhouse in London, so both could have encountered the *Vita*. See Desiderius Erasmus, *A Short Debate Concerning the Distress, Alarm, and Sorrow of Jesus*, in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 70 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 3; Thomas More, *De Tristitia Christi*, ed. Clarence H. Miller, vol. 14 of *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976).

<sup>57</sup> Here, Ludolph is quoting Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 15, a. 4.

this may sound to a modern reader like masochism, Ludolph is clear that this kind of suffering—this kind of passion—is a profound consolation that the loving soul actively desires as “a veritable storehouse of spiritual riches,” including glory, hope, joy, and delight. Furthermore, later he lists among its benefits the alleviation of inordinate sadness,

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*When Christ is in the midst of all his disciples, the language of contemplation and action are intermingled.*

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which means that, rather than being depressing, these meditations actually can serve as a treatment for depression (VC 2.2.58). Seen in this way, if as Ignatius’s *Contemplatio* asserts, “Love consists in a mutual communication between the two persons” (*SpEx* 231), then indeed

this “suffering with Christ in suffering” (*SpEx* 48) is itself an experience of love. For this, Ludolph even goes so far as to use the term *consummation* to characterize the mutual sharing of the passion by which the reader is led to the marriage-bed of the cross. In every way, the meditative journey that kindled love for the incarnate Christ from the beginning now reaches its climax.

As Ludolph continues through the passion, he emphasizes the redemptive function of this mutual compassion. Ignatius’s project of ridding the soul of “disordered affections” (*SpEx* 1) happens within the story to Christ’s disciples as much as to those who enter the narrative through the imagination. For example, in his meditation on John 13, Ludolph interprets the washing of the disciples’ feet as a purifying of their affections and disordered inclinations which must be repeatedly cleansed as long as their feet walk on dust. His closing prayer asks Christ to “purify my affections so that I may confidently approach you, the fountain of purity, with my two feet of love for God and neighbor washed, and aflame with ardor” (VC 2.1.54:786). Likewise, Peter’s tears after his third denial, when the Lord looked at him with “a glance of mercy and grace,” demonstrate that “the tears of devotion are so sweet that they can be thought of as food, as the psalmist says” (VC 2.2.60; Ps 41:4). In the same vein, Ludolph describes Christ’s outstretched arms on the cross as being “ready to receive us into his loving embrace.” As such, his Christ did not passively allow himself to be nailed to the Cross; rather Ludolph exclaims, “how willingly he ascended the cross . . . and how much joy

that obedience gave to his Father!" which leads Ludolph to muse, "O wonder and abyss of pity, O furnace of charity, O marvelous condescension of compassion for us, O unfathomable love!" In this spirit, he prays to Jesus that "the wood of your cross" may "become a pleasant bed for me, O Lord, on which I may die for you and so find sweet repose" and invites the reader to "share in his sufferings" with "any feelings of pity, of charity, or of compassion" that may "stir in the depths of your heart" (VC 2.2.63). In this way, Christ both models and cultivates in his followers, through his voluntary act of passion, ideal human passion.

Furthermore, Christ's passion continues to cultivate compassion even after his death. In the outpouring of blood and water from Christ's side, Ludolph writes that "Christ was pierced with a wound of love so that by reciprocal love we should enter his heart through the door in his side and unite all our love with his divine love; there glowing like iron in the fire, it may be rendered into love." In what appears to be a fourteenth-century iteration of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, which would become dear to generations of Jesuits, he exhorts his reader to enter into the pierced heart.

To conform yourself to this mystery, call to mind the exceeding love Christ showed to us in the opening of his side, by which he provided a spacious entrance to his heart. Hasten into Christ's heart, gather up all your own love and unite it to divine love.

Ludolph follows this intimate description with a meditation on Christ's wounds that uses some jarringly carnal imagery, saying that "through these fissures I can *suck honey out of the rock and oil out of the hardest stone* (Dt 32:13), that is, *taste and see that the Lord is sweet* (Ps 33:9)." The language is explicitly eucharistic, vaguely erotic, and pointedly affective. Furthermore, intimacy with Christ's wounds is fruitful because "[a]ccess to the secrets of his heart is gained through the wounds in his body, access to the great mystery of compassion" (VC 2.2.64). And the locations of Christ's wounds cover his entire body so that "by his bruises we might be completely healed." This includes his feet that we have already seen represent the affections, and thus Christ chose "to be wounded in the feet to heal our impure and

worldly attachments” and “to be wounded in the heart to heal our boastful and harmful thoughts” (VC 2.2.65). Through affective meditation and imitation, the soul thus has been united to Christ in his suffering to such an extent that, in the epilogue to the passion, Ludolph exhorts his soul to “examine the marriage-bed of your Spouse” (VC 2.2.67). Finally, Christ’s love is consummated as the soul, through a mutual sharing of goods, feels his passion in compassion.

## V. Affections in Effect: The Motive of the *Vita* and Ignatius’s Contemplative in Action

Ultimately, Ludolph guided the young Ignatius on an affective journey that used the powers of the soul to meditate on the passion and unite the soul to Christ in compassion—in suffering with Christ suffering. The experience was moving enough that Ignatius briefly considered becoming a Carthusian himself so as to find that consummation—the “unitive way” of Christian perfection—in the cloister. But the unitive way that he eventually would pioneer instead would look starkly different from the life of his Carthusian teacher, and his Ludolphian catechesis combined with his active vocation have led to a wide range of interpretations of the Fourth Week.<sup>58</sup> After the “marriage-bed” of the passion, Ludolph moves his reader to the “bridal chamber” of the Resurrection with affective language from the Song of Songs, while Ignatius’s Fourth Week is the shortest of all and sparing in its descriptions, even as it is exhaustive in its list of resurrection apparitions.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> For example, William Reiser (UEA) suggests the graces for the Fourth Week as a kind of experiential knowledge of the risen Christ. On this point, see William Reiser, SJ, “Locating the Grace of the Fourth Week: A Theological Inquiry,” *Studies* 38, no. 3 (Autumn 2006): 1–40. Philip Endean (BRI) connects those graces to a more mystical union as typified in the first exercise on the apparition to Our Lady. See Philip Endean, SJ, “Our Lady’ and the Graces of the Fourth Week,” *The Way Supplement* 99 (Autumn 2000): 44–60.

<sup>59</sup> Quoting Commianus (8th c.) without citation, Ludolph opens his meditation on the Resurrection exultantly: “Now let us sprinkle the book and the mind’s bridal chamber with fragrant spices in company with the bride and her attendants. Now the king leads us into his storerooms, now the friend Mary arises: *winter is now past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers have appeared in our land; the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land; the vines in flower yield their sweet smell* (Sg 2:11–13). The bridegroom returns from

For the contemplative Ludolph, that transformation has the poetic beauty of mystic union as “our hearts will be poured out into Christ,” “our whole being melts into our Lord Jesus Christ,” “I am truly being dissolved into Christ,” and “I am melted by love.” He writes:

The more I abandon myself because of this love and devotion, the more I cling to the Beloved and find my repose in the one who died for me. This attachment and affectionate love mutually increase in me until, entirely fainting away, I am drawn into the furnace of the Beloved’s passion. Then the Beloved, with his bride resting in my arms, cries out, *I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you stir not up nor awake my love till she pleases* (Sg 8:4). (VC 2.2.58)

On the other hand, Ignatius seems to aim at a very different kind of “perfect transformation into [Christ].” For the Jesuit who ultimately went on to form what Jerónimo Nadal (1507–1580) describes as “contemplatives in action,” this transformation is not spiritual but incarnate. Joseph de Guibert (1877–1942) designates it as “mysticism of service”—the union not only of spiritual faculties but also of “more material capacities, capacities for doing things, remembering, imagining—capacities which, in themselves and intrinsically, are thus tending not just towards union but also towards service.”<sup>60</sup> The Fourth Week is thus for Ignatius a “joy with Christ in joy” that commissions the apostles to labor with Christ laboring in the world where he is still incarnationally present. In this way, *compassion* leads to *commission*.

Despite the difference of vocation, however, the affective approach of the Carthusian was a fitting foundation to Ignatius’s active contemplation. Etymologically, *affectus*, as what moves within a person, is linked to *effectus*, as what moves out from a person. Ludolph himself puns on this connection in his meditation on Jesus’s resurrection apparition to Mary Magdalene, who wept with longing at the sepulcher and was rewarded with both reunion and mission as the

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the shade where he took his midday rest. The bitter root of the cross withers, the flower of life blossoms, heavy with fruit; the one struck down in death rises up in glory; sunrise follows sunset; the eagles gather around the body” (VC 2.2.69).

<sup>60</sup> *The Jesuits*, 55. For a critique of this position, see Philip Endean, “The Concept of Ignatian Mysticism: Beyond Rahner and de Guibert,” *The Way Supplement* 103 (2002).

Apostle to the Apostles. Here, he exhorts his reader to “imitate this holy woman’s disposition [*affectum*] so that we can reach her position [*effectum*]” (VC 2.2.72).<sup>61</sup> Contemplation and action are interdependent.

Thus, even for the contemplative, action pervades this bridal chamber as various resurrection apparitions depict a Christ who is materially present in the world, both accompanying and commissioning those who love him. For example, the story of the road to Emmaus reveals the risen Jesus as “a kind and devoted companion” whose “fervent love could not bear to have his own people so mistaken and sad”; a humble Lord who “walks alongside his disciples, as if he were just one of them”; and a kind teacher who “instructed his disciples, consoled them with his words, and restored them by leading them to belief” (VC 2.2.76). From this perspective, though Christ’s body is transfigured in the Resurrection, he still appears to the disciples as companion, Lord, and teacher.

As the Resurrection progresses, this friendship in turn leads to mission. When Christ eventually appears to the majority of the disciples in the locked room, Ludolph describes him in language that is both mystical and apostolic:

Christ *stood in the midst* of the disciples: like the sun among stars, so he could illuminate them; like a blossom among the lilies, so he could adorn them; like a leader among his troops, so he could rally them; like a teacher among his pupils, so he could instruct them; like a father among his children, so he could unite them; like a heart among the members of the body, so he could vivify them; and as the friend of all, so that he could unite himself with each of them.

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<sup>61</sup> Here, Ludolph is quoting a medieval sermon misattributed to Origen (ca.184–ca.253) and later printed among early modern editions of his works. The third-generation Jesuit St. Robert Southwell partially translated this sermon during his formation in Rome in the 1580s (Stonyhurst College, MS A v.4, ff. 56–61) and later used it as an inspiration for a highly popular prose meditation. We see here a sustained connection among the Jesuits between affect and effect or, in Southwell’s paraphrase, the invitation to “followe her affection that like effectes may follow thine.” See *Marie Magdalens Funerall Teares* (London: 1592), M2<sup>v</sup>.

Christ is the light that illumines, the blossom that adorns, and the heart that enlivens, and he is also the leader, teacher, father, and friend who rallies, instructs, and unites. Ludolph explains this commission again in incarnational terms, for “the Father sent his Son when he appointed him to become incarnate, and the Son sent the apostles when he commissioned them to proclaim this same incarnation throughout the whole world” (VC 2.2.77). When Christ is in the midst of all his disciples, the language of contemplation and action are intermingled.

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*First and crucially, the Contemplatio anchors the whole retreat as its premise, and spiritual directors may use it at any point when it might be needed.*

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Later in the narrative, Peter emerges as the figure of apostolic action. In the reinstating of Peter, the penitent denier is invited into love linked with service, to “[s]how in practice the fervent love you have always professed, and the life you promised to lay down for me, lay down now for my sheep.” Peter’s laying down his life is a form of union, Ludolph explains, “for to follow the Lord is to imitate him” (VC 2.2.79). Indeed, Christ’s Resurrection reveals his presence everywhere in the world, as Ludolph’s epilogue on the Resurrection asserts (VC 2.2.81). As Jesus’s own example indicates, as John’s epistle proclaims (1 Jn 3:18), and as Ludolph’s meditation on the Last Supper discourse describes, “Love is shown by deeds” (VC 2.1.57:832), and the story of Easter is one of action.<sup>62</sup> In the end, affective devotion commissions the contemplative to action.

In the end, Ludolph’s meditations on the Resurrection identify two distinct but complementary paths, and Ignatius’s active vocation traces the inverse path from his contemplative teacher. The contemplative led his student through an incarnational aesthetic that took Christ’s love as the premise and sought to cultivate affective consolations along the way, reaching its climax in the intimacy of sharing even suffering. In the Resurrection, their paths diverged like those of Peter and the Beloved Disciple in John 21, who for Ludolph are symbolic of

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<sup>62</sup> The context for Ludolph is an explication of the three ways Christ loves in the Last Supper: he “loves us gratuitously” in that “he anticipated us in love,” he “loves us efficaciously” in “laying down his life for us,” and he “loves us rightly, for his love is ordered for our benefit and to draw us to God” (VC 2.1.57:831–32).

active and contemplative vocations. As he explains, “The goal of each way is God, and both strive to reach him.” The Carthusian asserts that “God loves the contemplative way more” because it continues into the eschaton, but the active way reciprocates that love more fully in this life. As he affirms, “The active way loves more than the contemplative” and is “shaped and perfected by the example of Christ’s passion, following Christ and suffering for him in this time of probation” (VC 2.2.79). Presumably, Ignatius left out the mystical language of Ludolph’s resurrection meditations because his active mysticism, perfected in the loving intimacy of the passion, leads to commission. Here at the end, the *Contemplatio* that undergirds the whole of the Exercises reaches its final end as “[l]ove ought to manifest itself more by deeds than by words” (*SpEx* 230). In sum, following Christ in active service is the highest form of loving him in this life, and Ignatius charts a journey that expresses love as “a mutual communication between the two persons” (*SpEx* 231) through passion into mission.

## Conclusion

This essay has demonstrated that Ludolph offered Ignatius “a seedbed of meditations from which the fruit of the most abundant divine love may sprout and grow” (VC 2.2.89), and that Ignatius used this seedbed for his overall theoretical framework, methodology of prayer, imitation of Christ as the model for human passion, and final goal as affect leads to effect. Apart from showing the importance of Ludolph for understanding Ignatius, this reading offers several tips for those giving the Exercises. First and crucially, the *Contemplatio* anchors the whole retreat as its premise, and spiritual directors may use it at any point when it might be needed. With that meditation anchoring the retreat, an affective experience of love surfaces in all the places in which we might not otherwise identify it, from the otherwise utilitarian Principle and Foundation, to the vulnerable encounter with a loving Christ in the First Week, to the climactic intimacy of the Third Week, to the active love in the companionship of the Resurrection. Love is the premise, not the conclusion.

Second, because of the foundational importance of love anchoring the retreat, this reading highlights the fundamental link between

affective consolations and action. Ignatius boldly directs the exercitant to seek consolations throughout the retreat, even during the otherwise gruesome Third Week, because love propels the lover into action. Indeed, Christ's Incarnation means that he is present to each faculty of the soul in the meditative process as much as he is in the world into which the exercitant is sent. The *Exercises* is a systematizing of the generous response we hear in the *Suscipe*: "Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and all my will" (*SpEx* 234); or perhaps in Ludolph's words, "I beseech your mercy to enlighten my soul, fashion my mind, regulate my thoughts, control my senses, and direct my words and actions" (*VC* 1.1.18:372). Christ's new creation in the Resurrection means that he is still incarnate, laboring and inviting us to co-labor with him in the world. Here, Ludolph's incarnation-aesthetic, baptizing the human senses with Christ's presence, ultimately commissions the exercitant from affect into effect.

On this note, five hundred years ago, in Ignatius's convalescence, the *Vita* directed him to stir his affections to love and his will to action. In Ludolph's concluding prayer from the conversion of the tax collector Matthew, the dissolute courtier from Castle Loyola was challenged to pray words of affective interior conversion that lead to effective exterior response:

Lord Jesus Christ, you call and admonish me in many ways to follow you. Enkindle my heart with your divine inspiration so that by your grace I may answer your call; let nothing separate me from your love. Grant that I may serve you with holy thoughts, feelings, and affections, with good deeds and virtues. Allow me to provide you with a banquet of great delight and devotion of spirit. You who desire mercy rather than sacrifice and have come to call sinners and not the just, graciously grant that this poor sinner may deserve to experience your mercy. Amen. (*VC* 1.1.31:593)

Ignatius certainly read this prayer, potentially prayed it, and magnanimously responded.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor:

Thank you for the Autumn 2020 issue. In the letters exchange, Frs. Creed and De Marco disagree with Fr. Pidel on whether it is proper for a spiritual director to “teach, preach, or give insight” (p. 42). Fr. Pidel returns in his letter to the adultery case that he had cited in his original essay as evidence that directors trained in Barry and Connolly’s contemplative school learn not to provide moral counsel so as not to jeopardize the “working alliance” with their directees (Spring 2020, p. 26). Seeing this as a deficit, Fr. Pidel suggests that spiritual directors may at times offer moral correction and also might recover Nadal’s early use of didactic instruction.

Note however that Nadal, along with other early moderns like Alvarez, Borgia, and La Colombiere, most likely included confession, catechesis, and pastoral counseling in doing what we today would call spiritual direction. As Frs. O’Malley and O’Brien remark, “‘having a spiritual director’ [today] has for devout persons largely replaced the practice of ‘having a confessor’ common in earlier days” (Autumn 2020, p. 32). Then, should

contemplative-style spiritual direction allow for the moral instruction that one might receive from a good confessor?

Ignatius’s autograph directory suggests not, explaining that “where possible, it is better for someone other than the person giving the Exercises to hear [the exercitant’s] confession”—a point that Polanco amplifies and that the 1599 directory upholds.<sup>1</sup> Consider too Ignatius’s recommendation that a director “contribute nothing of his own beyond the ministry of giving the Exercises as they ought to be given,” especially in issues relating to an election (ed. Palmer, 18). But while Ignatius’s approach would not allow thoughts of adultery as matter for election, it might permit considering them as matter for discernment of spirits, which would enable the director to maintain a “working alliance” with a directee so concerned.

Note too that the specialization of spiritual direction today presumes that directees receive didactic input from other forums (e.g., adult faith formation or 12-Step

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<sup>1</sup> *On Giving the Spiritual Exercises*, trans. and ed. Martin E. Palmer, SJ (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 7, 130, 318.

groups). But do directors in the contemplative school encourage their directees to seek such input? Also, Frs. Creed and De Marco consider as matter for supervision those instances where directors in that school do give moral instruction. But how often does a Jesuit spiritual director today avail himself of regular supervision—as the 1599 directory puts it, to “confer his own method of procedure with that of someone more experienced, noting carefully anything he may find useful or counterproductive” (ed. Palmer, 299)?

The issue is this: (1) if we maintain the boundaries of a purely contemplative spiritual direction, then we are faced with a lack of external opportunities for didactic instruction; and (2) in the moments where those boundaries are flexed, we are faced with a lack of supervision.

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