

HANS URS
VON BALTHASAR
ON THE
SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

An Anthology

Introduced and edited by
Jacques Servais, SJ

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION*

BALTHASAR, EXPERT ON THE PRACTICE OF THE EXERCISES

What was particularly striking about Balthasar—when one happened to cross paths with him at a conference or through a mutual friend—was not only his simple, modest, reserved manner, but the openness and readiness with which he responded to the fumbling questions of his young interlocutors, in whom he sensed a serious problem. His air was not at all professorial (having refused every professorship offered to him), and at first meeting he did not come off whatsoever as the ingenious theologian that he certainly was. Rather, he had something in him of the spiritual master, pointing the way—in just a few words—to a path long searched for; encouraging frightened souls; reproaching the impatient (ever ready to cite Isaiah 28:16: “He who believes will not be in haste”); slowing down the impetuous (or even shaking them out of their false certainty); and generally guiding with both firmness and gentleness. Whether in one-on-one conversations or in short concise letters (which, often, the correspondent would be baffled to find in the mail just a few days after having written him), Balthasar would point out little contradictions, forcing the other to further develop his thought.

Very often—especially to young people seeking God’s will in their life—Balthasar recommended the Ignatian method of the Spiritual Exercises. He wrote the following in response to the many questions of one eighteen-year-old from Turin:

Thank you for your beautiful letter, which raises more problems than I can possibly address in just a few lines. Above all: Have patience with yourself and with your age, in which the search for a state of life and an anxious turning-in-on-yourself come crashing into one another. You must get beyond this latter: it is not important what happens to me personally (whether I build “myself” up or I be undone): as long as I do the objective will of God. Really, you might be ripe for making—with a very wise spiritual director—the true retreat of St. Ignatius (the Exercises), which has no other goal than to create perfect indifference in you (regarding the avatars of the “I”) in order that you be ready in the end to follow the Lord’s call. This latter is essentially His call and not mine (what seems to me most useful for society today, etc.) and to hear it, you need to enter—in prayer and in your whole interior disposition—into perfect silence. Christ could, for example, also choose you to be a Trappist, to efficaciously expiate with him the sin of the world (this is only an example).¹

Balthasar himself regularly gave the Exercises. In Basel, where he was sent as a student chaplain in 1940, after finishing his formation as a Jesuit, one of his two first initiatives consisted in offering students an Ignatian retreat. “I offered yearly student retreats for men and often for young women as well”²—which at that time (as Peter Henrici underlines) marked “an innovation.”³ These were not just generic student retreats, but rather, as Balthasar clarifies, Spiritual Exercises after the method of St. Ignatius,⁴ presented expressly as a means for electing a state of life. For the

* Translated by Thomas Jacobi, Jonas Wernet, and the editor.

1. Letter to R. Graziotto, published in Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Incontrare Cristo* (Piemme: Casale Monferrato, 1992), 259–60. From the original French, courteously provided by the recipient.

2. *EB*, 41 [36]. Cf. Texts Authored by Von Balthasar (II) in the Bibliography at the end of the volume.

3. Henrici, 17 [21]. Cf. Secondary Works on Von Balthasar (III.B) in the Bibliography at the end of the volume.

4. *Realtà*, [129].

“Studentische Schulungsgemeinschaft,” the community for student formation that he had founded with his young friend Robert Rast soon after his arrival in Basel, these Exercises served as an indispensable condition for admission. A good number of their male members eventually entered the Society of Jesus, while others decided to remain in the lay state, hoping to find a form of consecration to God in the world. As for the young women, a few of them quickly committed themselves to a first circle—expanding over time—of the Community of St. John (Johannesgemeinschaft), the institute launched by Balthasar and Adrienne von Speyr in August 1945.⁵

After his departure from the Society of Jesus in 1950, this activity did not slacken. The requests and commitments were so numerous that Balthasar had an enormous spread of work ahead of him. In 1958, he began giving the Exercises annually to the Cusanus-Werk, pulling in each time, he tells us, between 40 and 80 participants. In 1965, he would claim—with profound gratitude—that he had given the Exercises a hundred times. As busy as he was in the years that followed—between conferences, his literary work, his publishing house, not to mention his collaboration with organizations like International Theological Commission, the Synod of Bishops, and the International Eucharistic Congress, just to name a few—he never neglected to give the Ignatian Exercises. It was thanks to this pastoral work that in the 1980s he was able to bring together a group of seminarians and young priests that would become the core of the priestly branch of the Community of St. John.

Balthasar loved giving the Exercises. “Here, if anywhere, is Christian joy,” he once exclaimed.⁶ And this is because the Exercises, every time, send the one giving them back to the original experience of making them: “What is most important takes place each time in the Exercises themselves, which one cannot ‘give’ without oneself sharing in receiving them anew from their origin.”⁷

Ignatius remains a most vividly present reality to the Church in his rather awkwardly edited, unliturgical Exercises. Who could count how many hundreds of thousands of vocations were inspired over the centuries and continue to be inspired by this book? There are no substitutes for the event it described, even though many alternative systems have been proposed.⁸

What method could, in the last analysis, better communicate to Christians the evangelical renewal that they need today more than ever before? “The Exercises,” as Balthasar judged, “seem younger and more relevant than ever.” In fact, he even goes a step further, with regard to our own age: “The Exercises have functioned far too little in these four hundred years as the charismatic kernel of a theology of revelation that could offer the unsurpassed answer to all the problems of our age that terrify Christians.”⁹

5. On the Studentische Schulungsgemeinschaft and on the subsequent Akademische Arbeitsgemeinschaft, as well as the Johannesgemeinschaft, confer with Henrici, 16ff, 28ff [20ff, 38ff]. See also Jacques Servais, “The Community of St. John,” *Communio: Int’l Cath. Rev.* 19, no. 2 (Summer 1992), 208–219. Jacques Servais, “Les laïcs dans la vie et l’oeuvre de Hans Urs von Balthasar,” in *Eine Theologie für das 21. Jahrhundert: Zur Wirkungsgeschichte Hans Urs von Balthasars: Symposium zu seinem 25. Todestag*, edited by Hans Urs von Balthasar Stiftung (Freiburg, Germany: Johannes Verlag, 2014), 117–143, 119–123, 127–132.

6. *ZSW*, 52 [44].

7. *Ibid.*, 21 n.3 [21].

8. *DH*, 82 [61].

9. *ZSW*, 21 [21].

BALTHASAR IN THE SCHOOL OF THE EXERCISES

Balthasar was deeply convinced that St. Ignatius' Exercises are above all a guide for the practice of Christian life and that they give away their secret only to the one who makes them. Far from being merely theoretical, Balthasar's knowledge of the Exercises stems from the long experience of a man who not only gave the retreat many times, but made them very seriously more than once.

Balthasar's first Exercises retreat played a decisive role in his life: they signaled a break with the past, and above all they opened up a new path whose meaning would only be confirmed and clarified by later events. Here, grace touched him in an unexpected way, calling him to a radical conversion. It is summer 1927; Balthasar is twenty-two years old and working on his dissertation in Germanic philology. He joins a group of lay students at Wyhlen, not far from Basel, who were making the thirty-day exercises with Jesuit Father F. Kronseder. In his account of the retreat, Balthasar refers to the first of the *Three Times for Election* indicated in the Exercises: "When God our Lord so moves and attracts the will that without doubting or being able to doubt, the faithful soul follows what is shown" (SpEx 175). Like for Matthew the tax collector—Balthasar had a profound rapport with Caravaggio's painting!¹⁰—or for the "impatient rabbi Saul," everything begins for Balthasar with a baseline experience of Nothing.¹¹ Far from being "for the elite," this first kind of call is particularly for the "ignorant," or at least for those who have to pass through a fundamental humiliation, "so that they cannot boast about their own achievements." The call comes to Balthasar in the form of a sudden, demanding grace. He surrenders without resistance to the Eternal King (SpEx 91ff.) who calls him unconditionally to His service. He leaves everything behind and follows, not knowing where he will be led. Later, remembering the event at a distance of more than half a century, the author affirms the central part played by Saint Ignatius of Loyola in this vocation: "All my initial interests, such as music, literature, psychology, remained provisional until the encounter with Saint Ignatius. I did not choose him: he set me ablaze like a bolt of lightning"¹² Struck by this brilliant light, Balthasar did not, at that moment, have the slightest idea what Heaven had planned for him. What impressed itself into his spirit was this alone: to set out on "the way of St. Ignatius."¹³ He was struck deep from the outset by an image that quickly seemed to him a "motif of his life": Ignatius' broken leg from the battle at Pamplona.¹⁴ A mysterious symbol: God breaks our existence in order to heal it and make of it a necessary tool for His work. Letting oneself be placed, like Ignatius, with Christ Crucified and letting oneself become His companion, in accordance with the Father's will¹⁵: this is what Balthasar discovered as his personal vocation. Like Iñigo of Loyola the day after his conversion, he, too, found himself without a clue what God had in mind for him; at that moment, he was not thinking about the priesthood. "I understood that I had to obey, serve, but without yet knowing *whom*."¹⁶ Indeed, the call demanded from him a concrete commitment within the Church. The most natural response was to enter the Society of Jesus, which he did on November 18, 1929, after finishing his dissertation. He followed the normal course of formation for Jesuits, beginning with the novitiate, where during another

10. That is, Caravaggio's *La Vocazione di San Matteo* (Rome, San Luigi dei Francesi).

11. "From nothing comes forth nothingness: this elementary experience of Paul definitively motivated all his teaching on works and grace, on the Law and the Gospel; and analogous, too, was the experience of Matthew, which permitted him to mutually confront the Old Testament with the New, with majestic and unbending clarity." *Warum*, [400].

12. "Le sorgenti della mia vita," in *Realtà*, [49].

13. *UAE*, 35 [*UAW*, 37].

14. Au 1–5, 41ff.

15. Cf. Au 96.

16. *Realtà*, [123].

round of thirty-day Exercises Balthasar found confirmation for his renouncement of the world. “Dear Papa,” he wrote home once he completed the retreat, “the holy month has now come to an end with real gain and great joy. I will settle myself here, probably for good, and all but escape the temptation to exchange a calling so beautiful and full of joy for a worldly profession.”¹⁷ Balthasar was ordained priest on July 26, 1936. After two years of collaboration with “*Stimmen der Zeit*,” he went to Pullach to fulfill his “tertianship,” the last stage of Jesuit formation, a kind of “*schola affectus*,” in which the thirty-day Exercises have a part. He made these in autumn 1939 under the guidance of Father Albert Steger, who “was one of the first people in the German-speaking world to interpret Exercises mystically rather than just ascetically.”¹⁸ It is possible that Steger had an influence on Balthasar, as Henrici suggests, but we cannot say for certain.

Far more decisive were his Exercises in summer 1948, which led him to “the most difficult step of his life,”¹⁹ that of leaving the Society of Jesus. This introduction is not the place to describe the tough circumstances surrounding this moment, linked essentially to his collaboration with Adrienne von Speyr. In this regard, it is only worth mentioning the fact that he made the proper Exercises of election, under the direction of Father Donatien Mollat, in order to prepare for this final decision. His personal notes from the time of these decisive Exercises are still hardly known. They contain some valuable indications of how these days unfolded. At the beginning, Balthasar calls to mind the graces he has received, above all what in his life was most “decisive”²⁰: the common mission of a new foundation. “It’s impossible,” he writes, “to doubt all that has come before. Only a ‘methodical doubt’ is possible, a game.”²¹ This supernatural conviction does not keep him from obeying the superior general’s directives and making an election in the best form possible, as was its due. Balthasar makes an election that proceeds from rational reflection but gives precedence to spiritual sense, according to Ignatius’ definition of the *Second and Third Times* for electing a state of life (SpEx 176–177). Within the indifference in which he had been trained for years, he ultimately makes his decision according to the greater glory of God (SpEx 179, 184): “the evidence, the feeling of heaven.” After Balthasar overcomes the “perplexity” and darkness stirred in him by Father Mollat’s objections and by his own natural considerations, this definitive election fills him with great peace. And when he communicates the outcome to his guide, who meanwhile had had the same experience of consolation and desolation, Mollat had already reached the same conclusion and affirmed the path chosen. Since the Society considers itself unable to allow Balthasar as a Jesuit to carry out this “personal, special and non-delegable task,”²² he will thus leave the order. The fruitfulness of his subsequent activity will confirm the rightness of this decision made before the “darkness of the nearer, or more distant, future.”²³

IGNATIUS IN BALTHASAR’S WORK

At the origin of the Exercises stands both St. Ignatius’ direct contact with the Gospel and his familiarity with the living tradition of the Church, her saints and doctors: His conversion on his sickbed was accompanied by the reading of Ludolph of Saxony’s “*Vita Christi*” and the “*Legenda Aurea*” with its presentations of the saints. Nevertheless, as the first Jesuit fathers—intimate friends

17. Letter to his father, published in Guerriero, [43].

18. Henrici, 14 [18].

19. *ZSW*, [103].

20. *Ibid.*, 89 [76].

21. *Notizen*, [462].

22. *Abschiedsbrief*, [402].

23. *Ibid.*, 407.

of Ignatius—have shown, the Exercises were born chiefly from the interior illumination of the Holy Spirit.²⁴ Ignatius’ writings and testimonies bear plain witness to this: he gains his wisdom more from direct Revelation than from theological works. At the beginning of his journey, he had barely the slightest notion of such writings, and in the book of the Exercises one can find only negligible traces of the program of philosophical and theological formation he would go on to develop at Alcalá, Salamanca, and Paris.²⁵ He was not, at bottom, a speculative man. In fact, at the end of his life he would even confess his own incapacity to fully, rationally express what he had experienced at Manresa! This sense of incapacity was probably also his motive in burning nearly all of the “Spiritual Diary” that Father Luis Gonçalves da Câmara had requested from him.²⁶ The Scriptures and the spiritual tradition of the Church, which Ignatius had assimilated through self-instruction, passed on to him a strongly symbolic language adequate for the intuitions that God had infused into him directly. But because of his own limits, as well as the particular nature of his formation, he did not find in theology the help he needed to rationally express his own charisma. Moreover, the awkward, taxing style of Ignatius’ sentences, as Balthasar points out, attests to the saint’s difficulty in conceptualizing what he wanted to say, even more so in expressing the original, irreducible character of his spiritual vision.

From the notes that Saint Ignatius wrote down as guidelines for directing the Exercises, there arose a whole series of Directories,²⁷ composed by Jesuits both of his time and of subsequent generations. They contain mainly recommendations on the application of method, but also directives on spiritual and ascetic order. One of the most significant Directories is that of Father Acquaviva, fifth general of the Society of Jesus, whose definitive edition bears the date 1599. Acquaviva took up the annotations either drafted by Ignatius himself (Dir. autograph) or dictated to his closest collaborators (Dir. Alterum and Dir. Vitoria), adapting them and integrating them into a systematic framework wherein he then added a number of further Directories,²⁸ which, even then, already represented a firm tradition within the Society. With the exception of Suarez, who

24. Polanco writes that St. Ignatius received the Exercises through God’s own instruction (“Vita latina,” in MHSJ, vol. 73, p. 532), without the human intervention of teachers, academic doctors, nor any kind of discursive knowledge outside that of the Holy Scriptures (*ibid.*, p. 529). Nadal, for his part, speaks of “inspiration” (“Scholia in constitutiones,” in MHSJ, vol. 100, p. 61). When working on the definitive draft of the book, the saint consulted theological texts, as well as the Bible, but he did so, as Nadal attests, only to “find there confirmation of what he had already experienced through divine inspiration alone” (“Chronicon S.J. vita Ignatii Loiolae et rerum S.J.,” in MHSJ, vol. 5, pp. 529–30). In the chapter of “Vita S. Ignatii” dedicated to the composition of the Exercises, Ribadeneira, too, holds that Ignatius’ rather skimpy intellectual and doctrinal formation proves that this teaching came to him not through studies but through the anointing of the Holy Spirit (MHSJ, vol. 93, 135; *cf. also* “Letter to Fr. Giron,” in MHSJ, vol. 85, p. 600). And again Polanco maintains that we owe the Exercises “not so much to the wisdom of books but to the anointing of the Holy Spirit, to personal interior experience, as well as to practical relationships with souls” (cited in MHSJ, vol. 100, p. 62).

25. The *Eleventh Rule for Thinking with the Church* (SpEx 363) contains a brief recommendation on theological method, be it scholastic or positive. Ignatius is primarily interested in finding confirmation for his own intuitions within theology.

26. Cf. Au 100–101.

27. See Directories; Directoria.

28. The Directories of Míro, Gil Gonzáles Dávila, Canisius, Hoffaeus, etc. Balthasar regretted that most of the Directories merely relegate the Exercises to the sphere of “praxis” and “asceticism.” “The flood of literature on the Exercises remains almost entirely fixed on pastoral and ascetic themes; it occurred only to a very few that there should be important cues and inspirations here also for theoretical theologians.” *Exercitien*, [230].

built a kind of Jesuit spirituality from the Exercises,²⁹ it was not until the last century that properly theological studies on the Exercises began to appear.

The first to contribute was Erich Przywara,³⁰ who for Balthasar was the seminal master of these years of study. He had a significant influence on Balthasar's understanding of the Exercises, the first to open for him a rational insight into the Ignatian text. This approach had important effects on Balthasar's translation of the Exercises into German, as will be shown at the end of this Introduction. Two other theologians who dealt with the Exercises in their academic work are Gaston Fessard³¹ and Karl Rahner.³² The strongly systematic interpretation offered by these two authors strives to consider the needs of the times by "inquiring after the signs of God in the life of contemporary man and, in their search for an answer, drawing from the Spiritual Exercises."³³

Balthasar's written work, although we find there nothing truly comparable to the Directories or the modern systematic tracts they prompted, nevertheless contains manifold references to St. Ignatius and the Spiritual Exercises in particular. There are certainly numerous references in "The Christian State of Life," which presents itself as a theological meditation on the *Call of Christ* (SpEx 91ff.) and on the election of those disciples called to follow Him (SpEx 169ff.). But besides this expansive work—more than four-hundred pages, with plenty of fine-print digressions—there are also a number of shorter pieces (articles, book chapters, etc.) where Balthasar interprets the Ignatian Exercises. Here will be mentioned only "Exerzitionen und Theologie," a brief essay published in the journal "Orientierung" in 1948³⁴; "Ignatius von Loyola und die Barockherrlichkeit der Repräsentation" ("Ignatius of Loyola and 'Representation': Glory in the Age of Baroque"),³⁵ an important chapter in tome IV/2 of "Herrlichkeit" ("The Glory of the Lord, Volume 5: The Realm of Metaphysics in the Modern Age"); or "Drei Formen der Gelassenheit: Zur Theologie der ignatianischen Exerzitionen,"³⁶ a study in the fifth and final volume of "Explorations in Theology," which—taking a phrase from the Exercises' *Principle and Foundation*—bears the title "Homo Creatus Est": "Man Is Created."

29. *De religione Societatis Jesu* (1625) (see Bibliography pt. III.A). Compare the tract dedicated to the Exercises, where Suarez interprets the concept of indifference on the basis of his general metaphysical conception of being, which he understands as neutral, univocal.

30. *Deus semper maior: Theologie der Exerzitionen* (see Bibliography pt. III.A). This work, which comments sequentially on the various sections of the *Exercises*, was preceded by two smaller studies: *Majestas Divina: Ignatianische Frömmigkeit* (Augsburg, Germany: Filser, 1925) (later re-edited by Balthasar in Erich Przywara, *Schriften*, vol. I, Einsiedeln, Switzerland: Johannes Verlag, 1962, pp. 473–518) and *Heroisch* (Paderborn, Germany: Schöningh, 1936); in 1956, for the 400th anniversary of Ignatius' death, Przywara published yet another work entitled *Ignatianisch: Vier Studien zum vierhundertsten Todestag des heiligen Ignatius von Loyola* (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Knecht, 1956).

31. See Bibliography pt. III.A; cf. E. Pousset & E.L. Donahue, *Life in Faith and Freedom: An Essay Presenting Gaston Fessard's Analysis of the Dialectic of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (St. Louis, MO: Inst. of Jesuit Sources, 1980).

32. Among various other publications on the topic, see above all *Die Logik der existentiellen Erkenntnis bei Ignatius von Loyola* (Freiburg, Germany: Herder, 1956) and *Betrachtungen zum ignatianischen Exerzitenbuch* (Munich: Kösel, 1965) (*Sämtliche Werke*, vols. 10 & 13, Freiburg, Germany: Herder, 2006). Cf. Philip Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

33. Schneider, p. 195.

34. *Exerzitionen*, [229–32]. For a list of Balthasar's essays on this subject, see Werner Löser, "Die ignatianischen Exerzitionen im Werk Hans Urs von Balthasars [The Ignatian *Exercises* in the Work of Hans Urs von Balthasar]," in *Gestalt und Werk*, 118–119 [172]. Fr. Löser is the author of an important dissertation, *Im Geiste des Origenes: Hans Urs von Balthasar als Interpret der Theologie der Kirchenväter [In the Spirit of Origen: Hans Urs von Balthasar as Interpreter of the Theology of the Church Fathers]* (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Knecht, 1976), which already confronts the topic of Ignatius (particularly pages 6–7 dealing with Balthasar's vocation: "He himself described the original event of his vocation theologically—in the terms of the Ignatian Exercises.").

35. *H III/1/2*, 102–114 [455–466].

36. Translated as "The Serenity of the Surrendered Self: Three Variations on a Theme." *HC*, 38–46 [31–37].

For Balthasar, this insight is central: the Exercises, which render transparent the whole of Revelation as Word of Life and Word of Truth, hold within them a theological horizon yet to be explored. He writes in 1948:

The fact that the hierarchy has solemnly sanctioned the Exercises and recommended them to clerics and religious, indeed to all the faithful, shows that the Church sees here more than a merely practical means for spiritual renewal: she sees an authentic, genuine interpretation of her deposit of the faith. Even if everyone, following Ignatius' urgent wish, remains free in the Church to choose an ecclesial guide to God according to his own liking, it certainly is true, on the other hand, that this inexhaustible mine's theological substance has only just begun to be extracted.³⁷

Balthasar dedicated himself to the task of probing and contemplating ever anew their doctrinal content, convinced that Ignatius has "a distinct and superior 'teaching mission'"³⁸ and that he, for this reason, assumes a truly unique post within the Tradition. In Balthasar's eyes, Ignatius has a place among the most important charisms of sanctity entrusted to the Church over the course of her history—charisms that, as a living Gospel, are still able to show the faithful the way toward the living wellsprings from which they can draw.

In Balthasar's point of view, Saint Ignatius' Exercises open a door to the inner dynamics of the New Testament with its infinite and inexhaustible movement that remains open in all directions and yet always returns to itself. The divine Word is alive at every moment of history and can be interpreted in ever new ways. The dynamics of the Exercises correspond to this essence of the Word, integrating themselves into the encompassing movement of the New Testament and making it possible ever anew to experience its eternal liveliness. Ignatius knew how to revive God's unique Revelation in the eyes of the people of his time, shining a new light on it, showing facets of it that had been thereto unknown.

After meeting Adrienne von Speyr, a married physician whom he received into the Catholic Church, Balthasar's love for St. Ignatius of Loyola became even more committed. Already before her conversion, and all the more after, she had her own mysterious relationship with our holy Father Ignatius, "from whom," says Balthasar, "she learned far more than from me."³⁹ Through the mediation of this mysticism, as he recounts, Balthasar had the grace of being in "contact with this Father in heaven year after year" and of experiencing his "human and supernatural greatness": "What one experiences in contact with really great and superior people, this feeling of being overtopped from all sides and in all directions, this is immediately present when Ignatius appears."⁴⁰

The theologian was most deeply convinced that within Adrienne von Speyr there had been formed an elected vessel, wherein the Ignatian spirit pours forth "from the origin, in all the breadth of its theological insight"⁴¹; and he was convinced, too, that St. Ignatius' mission—past and, not

37. *Exerzitiien*, [232].

38. *Ibid.* [230].

39. *EB*, 13 [10]. In his opinion, Adrienne's mission comes to lie "within the radiant space of Saint Ignatius" and constitutes "a new, original living-out and realization of Ignatian spirituality. Whoever is willing to accept what Adrienne, in her self-understanding, affirms about herself will perceive in her figure, which is so forcefully spontaneous, a very personal, forceful decision on the part of Saint Ignatius to show to our time what he, in his own time, had been and really intended. A good part of his personal obedience was docility before the Holy Spirit, so that everything intended for much later times might remain open, and so that thereby, through Ignatius' obedient renunciation, that specifically Christian fruitfulness—and within this, once again, that specifically Ignatian fruitfulness—might not be impeded." *NB XI*, [10].

40. *NB IX*, [198] (No. 1579, Personal Notes, Summer 1946).

41. *NB XI*, [11].

separate from this, also present, “as he lives in the vision of God”⁴²—wants to offer a particular answer from Heaven in response to a specific distress of mankind.

On the role that Adrienne played in his life and work, especially concerning his knowledge and interpretation of St. Ignatius’ mission, studies have already been written.⁴³ It is impossible to understand the intimate connection between Balthasar’s thought and Saint Ignatius of Loyola if one does not recognize the “task” that he received and fulfilled together with his collaborator Adrienne.⁴⁴ For it is she who puts before Balthasar’s eyes the figure of Ignatius: “He is just as childlike as he is prudent, just as touchingly benevolent as he is relentlessly severe, when it is necessary, just as unmistakably unique as he is blurred into the whole of the Church.”⁴⁵ In 1946, Balthasar notes in his diary:

The boundless love I have received for Ignatius these years. For him, I will go into fire; for him, I will leave his Order gladly if it pleases him, i.e., if it is part of his plans for the greater glory of God. It is pure love and gratitude if I let myself be handled by him “like an old man’s staff.” I hope to show the world how far this love goes.⁴⁶

Balthasar was personally convinced that through Ignatius a concept of Tradition emerges that “contains in itself not only and not primarily an external, externally controllable, and continuous transmission of apostolic teaching, but above all the interpretation of the Son’s revelation through the Holy Spirit, an interpretation promised and taking place livingly within the Church.”⁴⁷ And with reference to Saint Ignatius, Balthasar continues: “The most living points of Tradition are those wherein the Spirit, in the Church and for the Church, throws a person—as it were—immediately back to the origin of Revelation, in order to make a direct interpretation, in a contemporaneity that only the Spirit can realize.”⁴⁸ Here it becomes especially clear what the founder of the Society of Jesus had been from the outset: “the mediator of an almost incomprehensible richness of sanctity, both open and concealed, of Christian imagination and prudence, and also of theology.”⁴⁹

Though Balthasar never put together the book on St. Ignatius that he had intended to write,⁵⁰ he really has given us far more. In his immense span of works, the fullness hidden in Ignatius is placed once more before our eyes. He has rendered fruitful the Ignatian charism in a very original way, launching from Adrienne’s prophetic intuitions and her equally powerful oeuvre. His testimony in this regard is crystal clear:

What had remained theologically implicit in Ignatius was then—in complete fidelity to the spirit of Ignatius’ initiative—interpreted in the Bible commentaries dictated to me, especially those on John. The theology of the Exercises acquired an immense Christological-Trinitarian backdrop and obviously, at the same time, a Marian-ecclesial one.⁵¹

42. *Ibid.*, [10].

43. Cf. Jacques Servais, *Théologie des Exercices spirituels: H.U. von Balthasar interprète saint Ignace* (Brussels: Culture et vérité, 1996).

44. Cf. Balthasar’s statements in *EB*, *UAE (UAW)*, and *Charisma*.

45. *NB XI*, [13–14].

46. *NB IX*, [197] (Nr. 1579, Persönliche Notizen, Sommer 1946).

47. *Exerçitiën*, [229].

48. *Ibid.*

49. *NB XI*, [11].

50. “I would like one day,” he noted in 1952, “to write a book on Saint Ignatius, the saint of whom I will always consider myself the least of sons.” *Über Amt*.

51. *Realtà*, [49].

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES FOR ELECTION OF A STATE OF LIFE

The school of the Spiritual Exercises through which Balthasar had passed oriented him toward an understanding and interpretation of the Exercises as a method for electing a state of life. If the retreats he led every year were strongly marked by this scope, it was not only because of his personal experience. Later in life, remembering the conversations that surrounded him during his theology studies at Fourvière, in the spiritual and amicable company of Henri de Lubac, Daniélou, Bouillard, Varillon, Ganne, Lyonnet, Mollat, and others, he recounts:

Almost all of us were marked by the Spiritual Exercises, the great school of christocentric contemplation, of attention to the pure and personal word contained in the gospel, of lifelong commitment to the attempt at following, which for the author of the Spiritual Exercises⁵² is above all a decision regarding the form [“Gestalt”] that a Christian may lend in his own life to the Lord’s attitude of total and loving renunciation (“evangelical counsels”).⁵³

Such a vision was something new for that time. In this regard, it is interesting to note that Balthasar’s Provincial, to whom he had presented a manuscript around 1945, refused to grant him a nihil obstat.⁵⁴ In 1977, Balthasar published the same text, without essential modifications, under the title “The Christian State of Life” [“Christlicher Stand”]. Reading this foundational text today, we can only marvel at such a censure. Probably it owes to the book’s interrogation of an official, then-uncontestable viewpoint. The custom at that time of offering the Exercises as a retreat for the general populace—and the Jesuits’ practice of themselves making the Exercises each year—had undoubtedly let slip from view the fact that the Exercises are not a book of “edification” in the usual sense of the term, but rather, as Ignatius makes clear from the outset, aim at “preparing and disposing (‘disponer’) the soul to seek and find the Divine Will in the disposition (‘disposición’) of one’s life”⁵⁵ (SpEx 1). At the very center of the method stands *election*, that is, the choice of the particular service that one wants to, and must, carry out.

Balthasar’s take on this is no different from that of his French companions, Fessard in particular.⁵⁶ Yet the stress falls on very different notes for the Swiss Jesuit. For one, Balthasar does not, like Fessard, see in election a (subjective) act of human freedom as much as the (objective) call of Christ who in His appeal to the freedom of the believer places him before an election to be made: the election of the form or, better, state of life corresponding to this call. His interpretation is based on the *Preamble to the Consideration of States of Life*, at the beginning of the *Second Week*.

The example which Christ our Lord gave us has already been considered. While continuing to contemplate His life, let us now begin to investigate and ask in what life or in what state His Divine Majesty wishes to make use of us to arrive at perfection in whatever state or way of life God our Lord may grant us to elect (SpEx 135, Puhl translation).

This preamble serves as the point of departure for all Balthasar’s arguments on the state of the counsels. We will take a brief look at his reasoning on the Ignatian text.

While the exercitant contemplates the *Mysteries of the Life of Christ* (SpEx 261ff.), listening to the Word made flesh whose call goes out “to the entire human race, to all and to each one in particular” (SpEx 95), he gradually discovers to what “state” or “life” God is calling him. What

52. Translation adjusted, with “der Begründer der Geistlichen Übungen” rendered as “the author of the Spiritual Exercises” instead of “Ignatius.”

53. *ZSW*, 51 [44].

54. *UAE*, 99 [*UAW*, 95].

55. Corrected version of the Elder Mullan translation (New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1914): “preparing and disposing the soul to seek and find the Divine Will as to *the management* of one’s life”).

56. *ZSW*, 48 [42].

does Ignatius mean by these expressions? First of all, he is referring to the two ways of life for which Christ gave us example in the first years of his life:

The example given us by Christ our Lord of the first state of life, the observance of the commandments, has been considered in the contemplation of his obedience to his parents. We have considered, too, his example of the second state, evangelical perfection, when he stayed in the temple, leaving his adopted father and natural mother to devote himself to the exclusive service of his heavenly Father. (SpEx 135, Puhl translation).

In the *Versio Vulgata*,⁵⁷ following a custom that perhaps would not correspond to the saint's first intuition, the first state gets dubbed "the common state," and the second, the state of the evangelical counsels, of "the vows of religion—obedience, poverty, and chastity" (SpEx 357; cf. SpEx 14). Of these three dimensions of the consecrated life (the life of "religion," as Ignatius formulates it, following the expression of his time: SpEx 356 et passim), the *Vulgata* underlines obedience, but in the autograph manuscript,⁵⁸ this second state is marked more by poverty, as for example in SpEx 15 where Ignatius speaks of a "promise" of poverty, or even more clearly in SpEx 98 where "spiritual" poverty, to which all are called (cf. Mt 5:3), is understood also in the sense of "actual" poverty, according to the particular call of those who make themselves available "for the pure service of his eternity," voluntarily becoming "eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven" (Mt 19:12): "Go, sell what you have and give to the poor" (Mt 19:21; cf. :27ff. ; Lk 12:33).

The way St. Ignatius represents these two states often varies: following the habit of his time, he speaks of "religious life" (SpEx 356), or, as mentioned above, of "evangelical perfection" (cf. also SpEx 357). The first state corresponds with the sphere of the family, while the disciple, in accordance with the Teacher's model (Lk 2:43; SpEx 273), leaves his own to follow Christ (Mt 4:16–22 et passim). Elsewhere he rates the first state rather lower than the "better" evangelical one (SpEx 154; cf. SpEx 14, 356), as the state less worthy of praise (SpEx 356); that is, he who "marries" or "goes into business" elects something that does not lead to evangelical perfection and that cannot therefore be the object of a vow (SpEx 357).⁵⁹ In the *Preamble for the Consideration of States of Life*, both states are clearly distinguished, and indeed Ignatius is far from always using the word "state" so formally. It can also be understood in a narrow sense, as in the instructions on the *Amendment and Reform of One's Personal Life and State* (SpEx 189). In this case, "state" can also refer to the management of a household or to some "employment" in the director's life. In other places, "state" is also understood in the broader sense of a "life or state within the bounds of the Church" (SpEx 177; cf. SpEx 170).

In his commentary on this *Preamble*, Balthasar heavily underlines the above-mentioned alternative and interprets it as a distinction between the two specific states: the married life

57. The text of the Exercises had been published in Latin in 1548, shortly after the approval of Pope Paul III. The translation had been commended by Ignatius himself. Its style is elegant, though not always faithful to the letter of the Spanish original.

58. The Spanish original text of the Exercises is called the "Autograph." It is a copy from the year 1544, written down by Ignatius' secretary at the saint's order. Afterwards, Ignatius made corrections in his own hand. The document is conserved in the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus. It was published for the first time in 1919 in the *Monumenta Ignatiana* (MI) (in MHSJ, vol. 57). A new critical edition of the Spanish original has been produced by J. Calvenas and C. Dalmases (in MHSJ, vol. 100, pp. 140–416).

59. Two times (SpEx 171–172) the Exercises name one right after the other, marriage and priesthood, as two examples of things proceeding from an "irrevocable election." There is nothing that would give us the authority to identify these two forms of life, both of which correspond to a sacrament, with the two "states" in question. Today's common distinction between the "priestly state" and the "lay state" does not coincide with that between the "state of the counsels" (in which one makes the "vows of obedience, poverty, and chastity," SpEx 14) and the general "state of the Christian" (i.e., married state) as established in SpEx 135.

(characterized by the spouses' mutual belonging and by the obedience that they each observe with regard to the other) and the consecrated life, a state that, although clearly distinct from the first, does not exclude life in the world. Surely on this point he is indebted to Adrienne von Speyr, for whom there are only two states, that of marriage and that of the counsels.⁶⁰ In any case, at the same time, Balthasar does not neglect to call attention to the analogical character of the word "state" in the Exercises: the term, in a first period, refers to the general state of the Christian in the Church (SpEx 170), then to the intra-ecclesial state that God has prepared for man (SpEx 171; here Ignatius explicitly names priesthood and matrimony; previously he had several times mentioned evangelical poverty), and finally also man's concrete situation and task within this particular state. Commenting on the directives for *election* (SpEx 170), Balthasar outlines the three stages in which—in accord with the analogical character of the "state"—he holds that the call of Christ is issued forth. First of all, the call to the state of the Christian in general, which takes place "in the sphere of our holy mother, the hierarchical Church" (SpEx 170): as the New Testament makes evident, the Lord has enacted a separation between the world and the Church (cf. Eph 1:4–5, :9; 2 Thes 1:14; 1 Cor 1:9; Rev 17:14, etc.) and has elected those whom he has called out from the midst of the world, in order to make Christians of them. This first stage of the call unfolds in a second one where the call, in conformity with an "unchangeable election" (SpEx 171), introduces the Christian into a particular state, and more precisely still in a third where God invites him into a quite concrete form of life, *hic et nunc*, within this state (SpEx 172).

These three stages of the call—to a general state within the Church, to a particular state within the Church, and, finally, to a concrete situation within the particular state—are, in some way, analogous to the call by which the Christian is first summoned out of the world to be a Christian and then translated, by a unique second and later call, to a particular state (marriage or state of the counsels) in order to finally enduringly bestow upon him a Christian life in this state, through the call's concrete Ever-Now.⁶¹

Here it is clear how closely Balthasar links call and state of life—in contrast with the interpretation that sees vocation primarily as a subjective reality, determined by an individual choice.

The doctrine of the call may seem at first to be but the subjective side of the objective doctrine of the states of life. From what has been said above it is clear, however, that such a distinction is not feasible, for the call of God already creates each Christian's respective "standing" and is the very substance of this standing.⁶²

The second stage of the call makes plain that man does not decide, *ab libitum*, the objective state to which he wants to belong, since this state does not come from himself, but from God, who with His call has already prepared in advance the form of life intended for him. Because of this, if an election is to conform with this express will of God, it must bear the character of obedience. Here we discover one of the Exercises' key concepts, one to which Balthasar in his writings will never tire of pointing: indifference.

60. "There is no third," she says (*UAE*, 99 n.3 [*UAW*, 96]). In 1956 Balthasar published a work of Adrienne's entitled "Christlicher Stand," the same title that he would later give to his own book. One can see here a deliberate intention to accentuate the unity between the two works on a central matter (despite an apparent difference) (cf. *UAW*, 17f. [15f.]). Like Adrienne von Speyr, Balthasar too will position the priestly ministry between the two states and demonstrate the internal convergence between the priesthood and the life of the counsels.

61. *CS*, 392–393 [318] (Translation adjusted).

62. *Ibid.* In German, "stehen" ("to stand") is the infinitive form of "der Stand" ("state"). Translation adjusted.

IGNATIAN INDIFFERENCE AS LOVE

For Ignatius, it holds firm that all elections—whatever the state or life that God presents—aim to “reach perfection” (SpEx 135). If on the one hand the two states are, per force, mutually exclusive, with the consecrated life appearing to Ignatius as the undisputable superior, on the other hand the saint also holds that both states can and must lead to perfection. But what kind of perfection is this? Balthasar has no doubts: the perfection of Christian love, which is a universal “commandment.”⁶³ After all, is this not the New Testament’s own crystal-clear teaching? Love is the summit of the Law and its key (Mt 12:28–33 and parallels), the essence of all moral demands (Gal 5:22, 6:2; Rom 13:8ff.; Col 3:14), the sole commandment (Jn 13:34–35, 15:12; 1 Jn 3:23; 2 Jn 5); charity is the one work—both singular and manifold—of the whole living faith (Gal 5:6, 6:22). Love is man’s destiny, yet not in a closed, measured form, corresponding to our limited human strength. Love does not just require a certain single part of our life. It is not enough to consecrate just one corner of our existence to Him, leaving us the rest of the time to devote ourselves to our own selves. The commandment of love is all-inclusive and, in a very concrete way, requires, demands our whole nature: “With all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength” (Dt 6:5). If we consider the “counsels” in this light, we have to admit that they concern all Christians; after all, who isn’t called to “be perfect” (Mt 19:21) in love?⁶⁴

Does not Balthasar, setting these words of the *Preamble for the Consideration of States of Life*—“to reach perfection”—in such strong relief, take up the position of those who see the spiritual life above all as an “experience of God”⁶⁵? Many commentators on the Exercises are convinced of this interpretation. For example, Gilles Cusson, in his study on the genesis of the Exercises in the life of St. Ignatius, voices the opinion that it would be quite in line with the historical tradition of the Society to interpret the Exercises—as he himself does—as a general school of Christian experience.⁶⁶ Balthasar does not downright rule out this interpretation, which has a certain legitimacy.⁶⁷ Still, as we have mentioned, Balthasar’s perspective is somewhat different, more focused on the case foreseen in the *Annotations*: the case of a true election. The complete Exercises, which last for “about thirty days” (SpEx 4), are according to Balthasar’s conviction chiefly oriented toward the (definitive) *election* of a particular *state of life*: that which God gives to man, whom He calls in a concrete way in order that he will elect this state (SpEx 135, 169ff.). Thus these full Exercises normally take place only once in one’s life. Those Christians “from whom not much fruit

63. With this, Balthasar shows how fully he stands in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, which brought out into light the universal Christian vocation to holiness. Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, § 42.

64. The perspective here differs from that of, for example, St. Augustine, who says: “A commandment is such that it is sinful not to obey. It is not so with a counsel, where the refusal to follow means choosing the lesser good but not committing sin.” *De Sancta Virginitate*, § 15 (translated by editor).

65. Cf. Phillip Endean, ed., *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001), 12–31.

66. Gilles Cusson, *Pédagogie de l’expérience spirituelle personnelle: Bible et Exercices spirituels* (Bruges-Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1968). See especially pages 104–118, where the author presents a historical tableau of various interpretations of the Exercises, which he subdivides into two opposing schools: that of the “eleccionistas” and that of the “unionistas.”

67. Balthasar observes, that Ignatius knows “in his mystical experience a contact with God that he describes as immediate (i.e., not mediated by anything worldly) and hence free from the possibility of deception (SpEx 330, 336). Thus, if one wanted to regard an experience of this kind as the highest form of this attaining to God of which Ignatius speaks (SpEx 20), it would not be difficult to extract therefrom a scheme of ‘ascent’ along Platonist lines.” *BG*, 267f. [235]; cf. *ibid.*, 134–138 (120–123) (Translation adjusted). The author criticizes L. Peeters’ interpretation (*Vers l’union divine par les Exercices de saint Ignace*, Coll. Museum Lessianum, Bruges: Beyart, 1924) and for his part believes that Saint Ignatius sees, “what, in a more modern sense, is called ‘mystical’ experience, as the (particular) unfolding of the general and, so to speak, ‘normal’ experience of the Christian who is seriously seeking to live his faith.” *HI*, 297 [286]. By requiring a “progressive detachment on the part of man,” the Ignatian method allows him to prepare himself “to ‘attain’ to God and take part in his grace.” *NK*, 157–158 [91] (Translation adjusted).

is to be expected,” being incapable of making an election with the kind of radicality necessary, and those seeking only a certain level of peace in their souls, should not go beyond the *First Week*, nor be introduced to any material on election (cf. SpEx 18).

So what fruit is to be expected from election Exercises proper? Not immediately an *election* of the life of the counsels, says Balthasar, but rather a lasting indifference with regard to this *election*, so that one can welcome God’s absolutely gratuitous love into one’s self in a fully disinterested way, free from all personal profit seeking.⁶⁸ In his interpretation, Balthasar stresses less the objective differences between the states of life—he used to reiterate that there exists no “universal concept of Christian striving for perfection”⁶⁹—than the personal attitude of unconditional availability to carry out God’s will, whatever it may be. And no one can, in the name of some general theory, predict what God will ask a man to do.

According to Balthasar, the call of love is no abstract law, no universal rule, applicable to everyone in the same way. It is an appeal from the living God, addressed to an individual person at a determinate moment in history. For the Christian, perfection always consists in responding to this call with total dedication, personally electing God’s own singular election for him, meant for him alone. Balthasar emphasizes that Ignatian indifference is the decisive sign of love, love as the spirit of pure surrender to the Beloved, who becomes the measure of all actions. Indifference is what gives divine love predominance over self-love. He who lives within the heart of love does not elect according to any other criterion than that of love. His election lies already behind him; now that he has elected love, he is elected forever in a turning towards God and neighbor: the total opposite of a reflexive freedom of choice (based on a kind of absence of ties, a false indifference). If, then, despite their fundamental unity, a distinction between the two ways of life is not only possible but indispensable “within our Holy Mother, the hierarchical Church” (SpEx 170), this is based on a decision made not first of all by man but rather by the Lord himself, who is free to call whomever he wants to a particular following, according to the Church’s objective needs. The state of the counsels does not correspond above all to a personal choice, left up to the Christian’s judgment or his desire for a greater perfection in itself, but to a singular, *concrete* election (SpEx 95) according to the Lord’s free initiative with regard to each person (SpEx 98).

According to Balthasar, the Ignatian Exercises in this way fundamentally resolve the question of whether one state’s perfection is superior to the other. Situating both states from the outset within the prospect of divine love, the question does not present itself anymore in terms of supererogation, namely, what grace *invites* the person to elect beyond what he is bound to do by conscience: to elect, then, what he “*may*” do, that is, what he is “free” to elect after having done all that he “*had to do*” or was “obliged to do”—as Jesus seems to teach the rich young man (Mt 19:16–30). The truly indifferent Christian knows that he has no choice left, only one desire: to order everything, truly everything, toward the perfection of Christian love. He is so given over to divine love that, without in any respect anticipating the divine will, he is ready to make exterior vows, if this is how he has to respond to the Lord’s ever-prevenient love. In this respect, the decision to enter into the consecrated life depends only on whether or not he is called by God in a completely personal way. The concrete disponibility to make this step—if God so desires it—is therefore the sign of a renouncement of self-governance and the sign of Christian love lived out. If a person

68. Even for those who, before the Crucified One, make the next three weeks, the Exercises do not necessarily have as scope the election of a state of life. Indeed, Ignatius wants no one to be pushed towards an election of the religious or consecrated life. He is aware that such vocations do not come from man but from God, who, as “Creator and Lord,” has the power to convey himself immediately “to the faithful soul” (SpEx 15). He expects, moreover, an “amendment and reform of one’s own life and state” for those people who remain in the world. For those who have already made an “unchangeable election” (cf. SpEx 171, 172), he presents the possibility of renewing this election, in order to reaffirm them in their decision.

69. See CS, 391 [317].

living in this attitude has seriously examined himself in this respect and yet hears no particular call, it will surely be more perfect for him to remain in the *first state*.

In practice, however, the person not called to a particular following typically does not reach this point of absolute indifference, which lies in the vow of perfect love. Furthermore, Ignatius will by no means presuppose, as the optimal precondition for a right election, that a person seeking to adapt his life to the logic of incarnate love already has this spirit of unconditional availability. On the contrary, the entire method of the Exercises aims to prepare man to meet this precondition for an “ordered” election (SpEx 172, 173), an authentic election that must be “pure and clear” (SpEx 172). Balthasar sees in Mary the perfect model of indifference, since she lives completely in the openness of love for the Lord. But insofar as our creaturely liberty remains disfigured by Adam’s disobedience, indifference also necessarily has a negative sense: the casting-off of “disordered affections” (SpEx 1, 21, et passim). In order to have part—through grace—in freedom and, cooperating with grace, carry out what it desires, human freedom—freed through baptism from original sin—needs to be purified of all those obstacles that derive from its sin-wounded nature, impeding it from purely fulfilling the divine will. So indifference consists in liberating oneself from everything that misdirects creaturely freedom from its supernatural end. It is the return of finite freedom to its original constitution, by way of self-surrender to the *infinite* freedom (SpEx 234). Ultimately, Ignatian indifference is identical with the Mother of God’s total disponibility and, from a Johannine perspective, analogous to the Son’s obedience before the Father.⁷⁰

THE TRANSLATION OF THE EXERCISES

At the end of this introduction, there will now follow some information concerning, first, the translation of the Exercises into German by Balthasar himself. Then, at the end, a few remarks on the text-form of this anthology will be added, as well as some practical indications for reading.

As a tool to help all this work in giving retreats, by 1946 Balthasar had already prepared and published a new translation of the Exercises after the Spanish autograph manuscript, “to unpack them for his exercitants and also, later, be able to hand it to them.”⁷¹ The inclusion of the book (in its second edition, 1954) as the first volume of the Johannes Verlag’s “Sigillum” series, dedicated to the works of spiritual masters, suggests how significant this text was for Balthasar. In his own texts, Balthasar typically quotes from this translation, though not exclusively: he sometimes prefers a slightly modified version.

Unlike most other translations of the Exercises, both earlier and later, Balthasar’s translation offers neither an introduction nor explanatory notes. As he explains in the edition’s brief afterword (wherein he shares the chief principles that guided him in his work): “For a truly right understanding, it is not enough to read the text with the aid of some annotations; one must make the Exercises in order to get to know them, and one must study them most thoroughly in order to be able to give them.”⁷² The Spiritual Exercises are not a book of meditation, but a handbook for those giving the Exercises—a kind of compendium that will not reveal its secret without personal practice and familiarization.

70. “The greater part of what I have written,” says Balthasar, “is a translation of what has been put down in a more immediate, less ‘technical’ fashion in the powerful work of Adrienne von Speyr.” *ZSW*, 105 [90] (Translation adjusted). If there is one point in the Swiss theologian’s work where this surprising claim finds confirmation, it is certainly in his reflections on the Exercises, for which he owes much to Adrienne’s Marian and Johannine vision.

71. Henrici, [21] (phrase missing from English translation); cf. also *ibid.* [36], [38], [41].

72. *Nachwort*, [115].

If Balthasar, in his version, faithfully keeps to the text of the Exercises, this does not bar him from making corrections or clarifications where he recognized errors,⁷³ or, where he judged it fitting, from lightly reinforcing the sense to prevent misinterpretation—to which the over-concise autograph is occasionally susceptible. In this regard, he follows the model of Father Roothaan, whose annotated translation was a staple among Jesuits;⁷⁴ he also let himself be guided by the indications in Father Acquaviva's *Directorium*.⁷⁵ Needless to say, Balthasar always takes care to place these small textual additions in square brackets. In this same concern with faithful translation, he also adjoined a number of Spanish words and phrases particularly characteristic of Ignatius.⁷⁶

This concern of his was, however, accompanied by the freedom of the sensitive translator, holding as faithfully as possible to the spirit animating the letter of the Exercises. "I endeavored to translate the Exercises in such a way," he writes, "that the glowing fire of the personal Evermore⁷⁷—the rhythm common to Ignatius and John—resounds in the word."⁷⁸ Following his master Przywara,⁷⁹ Balthasar, too, sets the dynamic comparative of the "magis," as it appears in the *Principle and Foundation*, at the heart of the Exercises. He emphasizes the significance of the little word "más" or "major," that formal element which permeates the whole book of the Exercises from one end to the other, appearing as early as the Annotations. For instance, in SpEx 18:

Similarly, so that each might derive *ever more* ["je mehr"] help and profit, what is given to exercitants should be accommodated to their dispositions.⁸⁰

In his version, Balthasar intensifies the expression ("*ever more*") by inserting into the next sentence the word "only," highlighting the dissimilarity with those who do not recognize this dynamic:

People hoping *only* ["nur"] to get some instruction and to reach a certain level of peace of soul.

Standing in contrast with the "weak constitution ('de poco subyecto)" and "little natural capacity ('de poca capacidad natural)"⁸¹ this dynamic comparative of Ignatius sets into relief the spiritual zest found in the one who dedicates himself to the Exercises with magnanimity and generosity ("con grande animo y liberalidad")⁸²—that is, with those interior qualities that together form the

73. Thus, in SpEx 199, he refers to the *Meditation on the Two Standards* and not, as in the original, to "los dos binarios" (the *Meditation on the Three Classes of Men*).

74. Not uncommonly, Balthasar in his translation follows the acute observations or clarifications of Roothaan's "Versio Litteralis," as for example in SpEx 229 (where, notes Roothaan, "the Spanish word 'verano' can mean both summer and spring").

75. This occurs, for example, in the first "preludio" of the meditation on the *Three Classes of Men* ("los tres binarios") (SpEx 150), where he specifies how the ten thousand ducats were acquired "legitimately." Cf. Dir. Acquaviva 211. The addition easily allows one to avoid every possible equivocation: the problem is not presented in terms of restitution of something wrongfully acquired, in which case keeping it would be out of the question (cf. SpEx 150).

76. Above all the translator points out those Spanish expressions that highlight the attitude of pure and magnanimous availability on the part of the exercitant: "disponer," "disposición," "dispuesto," "presto y diligente," "intención," "limpia," and "affectarse."

77. Translation adjusted, with "Jemehr" rendered as "ever-more" instead of "majus, 'still more'."

78. ZSW, 20–21 [20–21].

79. In his own translation of this expression, Balthasar makes use of Przywara's from the work *Deus semper maior* (cf. vol. I, pp. 133–38), with the explanation that Przywara here "made an effort to reproduce the authentic tone of the book" and "very often brought out in the text subtle undertones, through a meticulous adaptation of the original content." *Nachwort*, [117].

80. Unless otherwise noted, this volume will follow Michael Ivens' English translation of the Exercises (Leominster, UK: Gracewing, 2004).

81. SpEx 18. Balthasar's rather free translation corresponds to the Spanish expression, which he adds in parentheses.

82. SpEx 5: another significant expression that Balthasar puts in parentheses.

precondition for that disponibility that corresponds to the mystery's "ever-greater" sublimity. The expression returns again in particular at the end of the *Principle and Foundation*:

Desiring and electing only what conduces *ever more* to the end for which we are created.⁸³

This translation puts even more emphasis on the comparative, since it appears here in relation to the word "gleichmütig," or "indifferent" (in parentheses: "indiferentes"), found in the preceding phrase, and to the preposition "para" ("in order to") from the beginning, intensified again with "dazu hin" ("for this purpose"): man is created in view of a transcendent end, to which he corresponds by praising, revering, and serving his God and Creator.

In other places, the translator strives to maintain as much as possible the nonliterary character of the original text. Appraising the style of the Exercises, Balthasar writes of a "noble sobriety, concision, and impersonality," of which "the captivating glow of the content has absolute need, in order to both veil and express itself therein."⁸⁴ According to Balthasar, what especially gives the Exercises this laconic, austere tone is the ever-recurrent use of the impersonal infinitive. In this basically anonymous writing style, the scant use of personal pronouns is striking. Indeed, only in a few precisely selected places, as for example in the *Colloquio* at SpEx 53, does Ignatius opt out of the impersonal infinitive, so characteristic for him, in favor of a first-person singular construction, thus lending the "I" all the fullness of its meaning.⁸⁵ According to Balthasar, the impersonal style of the Exercises illuminates the essence of a spirituality that gradually detaches man from himself in order to lead him towards an ever more objective contemplation of Revelation. This push towards anonymity and objectivity is the necessary form by which the content can reveal itself, being a content that simultaneously veils and, in its very concealment, reveals itself, like a fire that burns in the darkness, a "captivating glow" that, to burn, must take away with it in its flames all that we are. The Nietzschean phrase "Flame is what I truly am!"⁸⁶—which Balthasar applies to Origen—also holds for the saint of Loyola, who was consumed, as it were, by the glory of God's humble love. Ignatius' language bears the seal of an experience of the divine fire. But in him, the heart's glow hides itself more deeply still, within the sobriety, the reserve, the austere severity of a laconic and impersonal style.

ON THIS ANTHOLOGY

This anthology gathers texts by Balthasar dealing with St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises or at least bearing a clearly Ignatian stamp. They are taken from books and articles of various kinds, as well as from various occasional writings. The earliest date from 1944, that is, after Balthasar's thought world had already found its center of gravity, indissociably theological and spiritual.

83. "Solamente deseando y eligiendo lo que más nos conduce para el fin que somos criados." SpEx 23. Here it is worth noting that the text of the Versio Vulgata suppresses the comparative without reason, just as it does with the adjective in the phrase from SpEx 189: "mayor alabanza y gloria." On this point, compare C. Dalmases, *Ejercicios Espirituales*, 5th ed. (Santander, Spain: Sal Terrae, 1987), 58 note.

84. *Nachwort*, [115]. On revelation's dialectic between veiling and unveiling, confront with *HI*, 441ff. [424ff.] and *TL I*, 206–216 [233–46].

85. Unlike other versions, which impress a subjective mark on the writing style, in his translation Balthasar strives with utmost rigor not to take the personal pronoun where Ignatius does not use it or where it does not have a particular weight under the saint's pen (e.g., the completely unemphasized expression "dijo" [I say] in SpEx 51). By contrast, the construction "mirando a mi mismo" in SpEx 53 takes on, within the dynamics of the *First Exercise* of the *First Week*, the existential intensity of an examination of one's own self in the face of the Redeemer. On the subject of Hell, see the phrase "cuántas veces yo le merecido" [how many times I have merited it] (SpEx 50).

86. Cited in the introduction to his work on Origen, *Geist und Feuer. Feuer*, 12 [24].

The first edition from 1993 contained exclusively texts with a clear citation to the Exercises. However, this methodology had a disadvantage: the documents gathered in their totality still did not offer a full picture of Ignatian spirituality as Balthasar had presented it in his courses of Exercises.⁸⁷ In fact, in the background of his theology often stand indirect allusions to the most vivid points of the treasury of Ignatian thought. For this reason, this new edition contains further texts with no explicit reference to Ignatius—passages that not only highlight particular points in the book of the Exercises, but map out its overall structure.

When it comes to the central intention of Balthasar's thought, one cannot draw a clear line of demarcation between the principal works and the (less "technical") articles. As a commentary on the *Mysteries of the Life of Christ* (SpEx 261ff.), the anthology includes some texts written for the Informationszentrum Berufe der Kirche [Information Center for Church Vocations] in Freiburg, Germany. They should reflect the content of the Exercises that Balthasar gave year after year, which made their way into his writings. This expanded edition also contains several passages on confession, the Eucharist, and the Paschal Mystery: they have been included because these mysteries of the faith—which have their place in the book of the Exercises but are little discussed—played a significant role in these courses of Balthasar's. At the end of the anthology, texts have been inserted concerning Balthasar's personal task with the Johannesgemeinschaft, which he founded together with Adrienne von Speyr.⁸⁸ Some important Ignatian themes, however, such as "finding God in all things" (cf. *HC*, 460–468 [368–375]), have been left aside. Texts directly requiring some particular experience in the fields of philosophy or theology have been deliberately omitted.

The reader should be aware, furthermore, that the texts contained in this anthology have been extracted from their original context and have been integrated into a new one that forms an organic unity; for this, some editorial adaptations and adjustments have been made, explained in more detail in the Translator's Note at the end of the Foreword. A certain knowledge of the Exercises will be quite helpful, and for this purpose a chart with the structure of the Spiritual Exercises has been drawn up, following immediately after this introduction. To help those readers unfamiliar with the material, both the titular phrases and the main themes have been printed in italics, e.g., *Principle and Foundation*, *First Week*, *Annotations*, and so on; to this same end, direct citations to the book of the Exercises have also been added. At times the text has been lightly supplemented with some further indications of source material. For easier navigation, a list of the original sources referenced, as well as an index of various persons and works, can be found at the end of the anthology.

Balthasar did not want to construct a closed theological system. Always in motion, his thought by and large rejects any simple linearity, but without ever lacking a precise orientation, that is, form ["Gestalt"]. In all the texts included here, in fact, there resounds a main theme that gets taken up over and over again and that—as in a Mozart symphony⁸⁹—unfolds in ever new variations. The editor of this volume stands firmly convinced that this guiding motif deeply corresponds to Ignatius' own thinking. Indeed, even a light reading of Balthasar always in some way leads toward or back to the matter of the Exercises, whose special character Balthasar honors to the utmost. So it was not difficult to give this present collection, which follows step by step the general composition of the Ignatian method, the outer form of a commentary. Nonetheless, this should not lead one to see Balthasar as the father of this project, which he himself never planned.

87. In contrast to much secondary literature that tries to draw out single "truths" from the Exercises, Balthasar presents "a (global) theological interpretation of Saint Ignatius' mission" (*Exerzitation*, [232])—his own fundamental aim. Cf. also Henrici, [62–63].

88. Cf. *UAW*, [147–148].

89. Cf. *WS*, 7–9 [7–9].

With his whole life and work, Balthasar aspired to promote the following of Christ in the Church. His radical theology of vocation, which is based so much on the Exercises, makes it clear that St. Ignatius wants to be a great help to us, especially today, in rediscovering the vitality of this Christian truth and finding the courage to commit ourselves to it completely. The aim of this anthology is to bring this central concern nearer to readers and let it become fruitful for them. For both the one making the Exercises and the one giving them, the texts hope to be a guide to a deeper understanding and better application of the Ignatian method.

Rome, February 2, 2018
Jacques Servais