



The Fallacy of the Common Good in the Light of the Conversion of Ignatius of Loyola

José Luis Retolaza¹ · Ricardo Aguado¹

Received: 20 July 2023 / Accepted: 21 July 2023 / Published online: 4 August 2023
© The Author(s) 2023

Abstract

The achievement of the common good is generally identified, specially in Christian social, economic and cultural environments, with the Kingdom of God. While for many this is an obvious thinking, in this paper this vision is challenged and dismissed. The recent celebration of the 500 anniversary of the conversion of St Ignatius of Loyola serves us as a revulsive to analyze his process of conversion in order to give light to the discussion about the common good and the Kingdom of God. At the same time, we will use the narrative of the three temptations of Christ in order to reinforce our conclusions. In addition, we will reflect about the purpose of the corporation regarding the conversion of St. Ignatius and will discuss if the orthodox economic model could be a way of building the Kingdom of God. Finally, we will propose that only an economic approach that places in its core love, compassion and the logic of the gift could be compatible with building the Kingdom of God on earth.

Key words Common good · Kingdom of God · Society of Jesus · Catholic Social Teaching (CST) · Orthodox economics · Logic of the gif

Introduction

The 500th anniversary of the "conversion" of St. Ignatius of Loyola was recently celebrated¹. This anniversary contains two very curious characteristics. Firstly, it celebrates the conversion of an "old" Christian², duly baptized, with a strong faith in God. Secondly,

¹ Although in the title and in this first reference we mention Saint Ignatius of Loyola, a name better known today, from here on we will refer to him as Íñigo or Íñigo de Loyola, since it was not until many years after his conversion (between 1537 and 1542) that he replaced this name with that of Ignatius.

² In the 15th and 16th centuries, in Spain it was used to designate the Christian who descended from Christians, with no known mixture of Muslim, Jew or pagan.

✉ Ricardo Aguado
ricardo.aguado@deusto.es

José Luis Retolaza
joseluis.retolaza@deusto.es

¹ Department of Finance and Economics, Deusto Business School, University of Deusto, Bilbao, Bizkaia, Spain

and unlike the fall of St. Paul's horse, the conversion of Iñigo is not a punctual moment, but a prolonged period, whose celebration extends from May 20, 2021 to July 31, 2022; and in historical reality, from that same date in 1521, which coincides with the wound that Iñigo received in the defense of Pamplona, until February 1523, when his stay in Manresa ends; where he experiences a form of illumination that confirms and concludes his process of conversion. What can we learn from this process of conversion?

Isomorphism of the Conversion of Ignatius with the Temptations of Jesus

St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus, is known for his own conversion experience that resembles the temptations of Jesus in the desert in several respects. Several authors, including theologian Karl Rahner and psychiatrist William Meissner have proposed that there is an isomorphism, that is, a structural similarity between the temptations of Jesus in the desert and the conversion of Iñigo de Loyola. Iñigo himself, in his book "Autobiography", describes in detail his conversion experience in which he is tempted by the devil and finally finds his way to God. For his part, the German theologian Hugo Rahner (2021) wrote an essay on the conversion of St. Ignatius entitled: Ignatius of Loyola and the Historical Genesis of his spirituality, in which he compares the temptations of Jesus in the desert with the spiritual trials that St. Ignatius experienced during his own conversion. In the same vein, other authors (Tetlow, 1989; Barry & Doherty, 2014) compare St. Ignatius' conversion experience with Jesus' temptations in the desert, arguing that both experiences are an inner struggle between good and evil, self-gratification and service to God.

The analogy between the temptations of Jesus and the conversion of St. Ignatius is based on the fact that in both situations there is an inner struggle between two opposing forces. In both cases, there is a temptation to satisfy worldly desires and to seek earthly power and glory, and there is a need to choose between following the way of God or the way of the world.

According to proponents of isomorphism, the inner struggle experienced by St. Ignatius is similar to the temptations of Jesus in the desert. In both cases, it is the final choice to follow God's way and resist the temptation of the world that leads to spiritual transformation and salvation.

In the famous parable of Fedor Dostoyevsky (1880), the Grand Inquisitor³, the Grand Inquisitor dialogues with Jesus after condemning him to death. We might think that this condemnation, as it happened in the real case, was due to his disbelief about Jesus' relationship with God. But nothing could be further from the truth, the grand inquisitor is clear that Christ, in this case reappeared in the Seville of the 16th century, is God. What is also clear to him is that his message is detrimental to people; not only is it not aligned with the common good, but it works against it. In the words of the grand inquisitor, the rejection of the temptations of the desert is a refusal to work for the common good of humanity.

"The Spirit of denial and of nothingness, spoke to you in the wilderness, and the Scriptures testify that it "tempted" you. Nothing more profound can be conceived than what was said to you in those three questions, or, to use the language of Scrip-

³ Fedor Dostoyevsky (1880) The Grand Inquisitor. Poem, translated into prose, which is part of the novel The Brothers Karamazov. It is recited by Ivan to his brother Alexei (Alyosha), a novice monk.

ture, in those three "temptations." If there has been any authentic, evident miracle, it has been that of the three temptations! The fact that such questions could have sprung from lips is already, in itself, a miracle! Suppose that they had been erased from the book, that they had to be invented, that they had to be forged anew. Suppose that, with this object in view, all the wise men of the earth, the statesmen, the princes of the Church, the philosophers, the poets, were assembled, and that they were told: "Invent three questions which not only correspond to the greatness of the moment, but which contain, in their triple interrogation, the whole history of future mankind"; do you believe that this assembly of all the great terrestrial intelligences could forge something as lofty, as formidable as the three questions of the intelligent and powerful Spirit? Those three questions alone prove that the one who spoke to you that day was not a human, contingent spirit, but the Eternal, Absolute Spirit. The whole further history of Humanity is foretold and condensed in them; they are the three forms in which all the contradictions of the history of our species are concretized. This, then, was not yet evident, the future was still unknown; but fifteen centuries have passed and we see that everything was foreseen in the Triple Interrogation, which is our history. Who was right, say? You or who interrogated you? ...

You rejected the only flag that would have assured you the submission of all men: the flag of earthly bread; you rejected it in the name of heavenly bread and freedom, and in the name of freedom you continued to work until your death....

Neither did you want to subdue man with the miracle, because what I wanted from him was a free belief, not violated by the prestige of the marvelous....

Announcing to men a freedom that their natural foolishness and wickedness do not allow them to understand, a dreadful freedom, because for man and for society there has never been anything so dreadful as freedom!

You could have taken Caesar's sword; why did you refuse such a gift? Accepting it, you would have satisfied all the longings of men on earth.

Why have you come to bother us ...? You know very well that your coming is untimely.

The passage of the temptations of Jesus in the synoptic gospels is written as a theological summary of the whole life of Jesus. And it is worth asking ourselves, perhaps as a research question: what parallels are there between these temptations and the conversion process of St. Ignatius? how can this reflection be of value in the current socio-economic moment?

In a brief exegetical reflection, it can be considered that the story has been preserved in two sources (Mk and Q), which are probably not totally independent of each other; of these two original versions, that of Mk seems to be older. This original version would have been expanded in the other source, and the gospel of Matthew seems to reproduce this expansion more faithfully than the one of Luke. The three temptations in the Gospels do not represent an isolated event; there is a presence of "the temptation" throughout the life of Jesus (Heb 4:15; 12:2; Lk 4:13; 22:28), understood as a range of opposing possibilities before which an inescapable choice must be made. Both the desert and the forty days prevent (because of their marked theological symbolism) a concrete spatialtemporal attribution of the temptations; which reaffirms the theological interpretation of the same made by the first Christian communities. The fact that the answers to temptations, on the part of Jesus, are through biblical quotations, reinforces that we are before a symbolic and not

strictly historical interpretation. The answer to the first temptation is a quotation from Dt 8:3, which, in turn, alludes to Ex 16:1 ff (the manna). The answer to the second temptation is a quotation from Dt 6:16, which, in turn, alludes to Ex 17:1-7 (the waters of Massah). And, finally, the answer to the third temptation contains a quotation from Dt 6:13, which the experts refer to Ex 32 (the golden calf) or, more generally, to the command not to worship the Canaanite divinities (Ex 23:24 and 34:13-17).

In any case, the three synoptic Gospels have seen in the passage of the temptation not an isolated episode, but a kind of synthesis that occurred throughout the life of Jesus. As in the conversion of Iñigo de Loyola, we find a process prolonged in time. All three link it chronologically to Baptism, which represents the key moment in the self-awareness of Jesus, in a certain similarity to what the experience of Manresa represented for St. Ignatius. The texts present a Jesus who assumes the figure of a servant (Pagola, 2007) as a way of carrying out his messianic mission. It is in the light of this link with Baptism that the passage of the temptations should be understood; and it is also in the light of his subsequent mission that the conversion of St. Ignatius in Manresa should be understood; as if it were a new baptism.

Hermeneutics of Temptations

There are several authors who have approached the theme of the temptations of Jesus in the desert from different theological and spiritual perspectives. Already St. Augustine, in the fourth century wrote a treatise on the temptations of Jesus in the desert in which he interprets the three temptations as representations of the three main types of sin: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. Later, St. Thomas Aquinas, in the same vein, wrote about the temptations of Jesus in several of his works, and focused on the idea that Jesus faced the temptations to show humanity how to resist temptation and sin. He also argued that Jesus' temptations were a demonstration of his divinity and perfect humanity.

More recently, Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1997) and Urs von Balthasar (Schwager, 1986) argue that temptation is an essential aspect of the Christian life and that the struggle against temptation is an important part of the process of spiritual formation. In the same line, Jose M^a Castillo (1979) updates the temptations referring them respectively to having, prestige and power.

Benedict XVI (formerly Joseph Ratzinger) writes about the temptations of Jesus in his book "Jesus of Nazareth" (2007), in which he interprets the temptations as a dialogue between Jesus and Satan that represents a struggle between two worldviews and two ways of understanding power and authority. He also argues that Jesus' temptations are an expression of his humility and his commitment to service to others.

In a straightforward way, it can be understood that both Jesus and Iñigo, in particular, and in general, Christians as a whole, are faced with three types of temptations: 1) to seek recognition for the things we have [To have], 2) the evaluation that others make of us [Prestige] or 3) the ability to impose ourselves on others [Power]. Evidently the three temptations are not alternatives, but are generally complementary. Seeking wealth, prestige and power simultaneously is a very real possibility. However, the three temptations formulated in this way, which may be common to a large part of believers, seem too crude to be the temptations that Jesus or Iñigo de Loyola suffered at some point in their lives. Even before the end of his conversion process, Iñigo, let alone Jesus, seems to be able to overcome these three temptations comfortably: he had renounced the possession of the family goods

that would allow him to live a quiet life materially, also the carnal or other passions (gluttony, lust...) related to economic resources (the anecdote of the temptation of his brother, gave reason for this); he had also renounced the prestige of his surname and that which he could have had obtained in the ecclesial sphere, by joining one of the established religious orders or the regular clergy; and equally he had already renounced to the power of his title or his position as captain [...]. All this before arriving in Manresa.

However, the real temptations for good people are not those that push us directly to do evil, but quite the opposite: the worst temptations in life are those that propose us to do good, but using means that, instead of leading to good, what they do is to turn us into agents of evil. As rightly pointed out by Castillo (2010), the one who suffers such temptation sees it as a "realistic" proposal to achieve the "good" end that is pursued, for example, the Common Good.

In this sense we can distinguish between a simple approach to temptations, when we understand them as a proposal of personal satisfaction linked to having, power or prestige; or a meta-analysis, rather more complex, when we understand them as tools, not of personal satisfaction, but of the construction of the Kingdom of God. The analysis of the first approach is evident and does not generate excessive interpretative problems; however, the second approach generates an important interpretative problem, especially when we shift its focus from the original theological sphere to the social, political or economic spheres. And it is on the analysis and the possible lines of resolution of this problem that we wish to focus the present work (Table 1).

In this regard, Benedict XVI's reflection on the first temptation is enlightening:

"The proof of God's existence that the tempter proposes in the first temptation consists in turning the stones of the desert into bread. In principle it is a question of the hunger of Jesus himself; this is how Luke sees it: "Tell this stone to become bread" (Lk 4:3). But Matthew interprets the temptation in a broader way, as it was presented to him already in the earthly life of Jesus and then was and is constantly proposed to him throughout history. What is more tragic, what is more opposed to faith in a good God and faith in a redeemer of mankind than the hunger of humanity? The first criterion for identifying the redeemer before the world and for the world, should it not be that he gives bread and ends the hunger of all? When the people of Israel wandered in the desert, God fed them with the bread from heaven, the manna. It was thought that one could recognize in this an image of the messianic time: should not the savior of the world demonstrate his identity by feeding everyone? Is not the problem of feeding the world and, more generally, social problems, the first and most authentic criterion with which redemption must be confronted? Can anyone be called a redeemer who does not respond to this criterion?" (Ratzinger, 2011; p:21).

In reality, as formulated by Ratzinger, the first temptation can be a much more sibylline temptation for a believer. As Ratzinger himself points out, "It is proper to the temptation to adopt a moral appearance: it does not directly invite us to do evil, that would be too crude. It pretends to show us what is best: to abandon at last the illusory and to use our strength effectively to improve the world. Moreover, it presents itself with the pretense of true realism. What is real is what we see: power and bread. In the face of this, the things of God appear unreal, a secondary world that is not really needed" (Ratzinger, 2011, p:20). The parallel with Dostoevsky's parable of the inquisitor is evident.

Is it wrong to give bread to people in need? It is difficult to see any wrongdoing in this, whether given by a believer or a non-believer; in fact, the work of *Caritas*, highly regarded by the entire Christian community, consists fundamentally in this. Nor would

Table 1 Dimensions of temptation

| | DIRECT [1st Level]. | INSTRUMENTAL [2nd Level]. |
|----------------|---|---|
| 1ST TEMPTATION | Having things for personal enjoyment [HAVE] | Having things to make them available to others |
| 2ND TEMPTATION | To obtain prestige and personal recognition [PRESTIGE]. | Using prestige to bring the Kingdom of God closer |
| 3RD TEMPTATION | Obtaining power for one's own benefit [ARROGANCE]. | Using power to achieve a more just world |

Own source

it seem that using power, for example, to enact laws aimed at building a more just society could pose a moral problem. And even the use of personal or collective prestige to oppose actions that violate human rights, such as, for example, unjust imprisonment, does not seem to be subject to any recrimination.

However, since Theodosius promulgated the Edict of Thessalonica in 380 A.D., the Roman Empire in the first place and the subsequent socio-political structures progressively tried to turn the Christian faith into a political factor of imperial unification. The kingdom of God was thus to take the form of a political kingdom and its splendor. The weakness of faith, the earthly weakness of Jesus Christ, was to be sustained by political and military power. In the course of the centuries, in various forms, there has been this temptation to secure the faith through power, and the faith has always run the risk of being suffocated precisely by the embrace of power. The struggle for the freedom of the Church, the struggle so that the kingdom of God could not be identified with any political structure, must be waged in every century. Indeed, the fusion between faith and political power always comes at a price: faith is placed at the service of power and must bow to its criteria. On the other hand, however, it is also worth noting the weight of Christianity in the development of the socio-political culture of the environment (Holland, 2019).

Returning to the conversion of St. Ignatius, and understanding this as a process (Montes, 1982), it would already seem that in the first moment of his conversion during his convalescence in Loyola; and to which we could put the final date with his confession in Montserrat and the change of the clothes of a knight for the mendicant habit, which took place between May 18 and 20, 1522, he had overcome the temptations in their simplest form. Prior to the wound of May 20, 1521, it is possible to perceive an Inigo Lopez Sanchez, directly tempted by wealth, power or prestige. Inigo, in his first stage, was not a fool, he was a man that possibly the church would qualify as a good Christian, where he does not seem to be aware that wealth, power or prestige could be considered as temptations; or at least, we do not have information that would indicate it to us. However, after the beginning of his conversion in Loyola, these temptations are present to him; in fact, the change of habit in Montserrat, stages his renunciation of these temptations. In his autobiography he relates an example of a temptation of the first type when his older brother *"took him to one chamber and then to another, and with much admiration began to beg him not to go astray, and to see how much hope people have for him, and how much he is worth, and other similar words, all in an attempt to turn him away from the good desire he had. But the answer was such that, without departing from the truth, because he already had a great scruple about it, he was scornful of the brother. The brother and some in the house suspected that he wanted to make some great change"* [Au. 12].

As Corella (1991: 461) points out, *"Montserrat represents the first external reference of the process of his conversion. Until then he had not shown himself as a convert: the clothes had been the same, the mule and the weapons, the same. At this moment the process is socialized, so to speak. If I may use the expression, Montserrat represents the ecclesialization of the converted Ignatius"*. However, this does not seem to be enough. After Montserrat, Inigo settles in Manresa where a second part of his conversion process takes place, which lasts almost a year - 11 months - from March 25, 1522 to February 1523. This was a period in which a new transition took place, where, as he would later express in the Exercises, *"he exercised himself in order to fight desolation and overcome temptations"* [Ex 13].

But what are these temptations, if he has already explicitly and possibly consistently renounced wealth, power and prestige? Perhaps it is necessary to refer to the true temptation of Jesus, in order to understand the temptation of St.

Ignatius and the temptation that lurks for any believer: to abandon the will of the Father. A temptation, that apart from the theological summary that is made of it in the temptations of the desert, will be repeated throughout his life: when they want to make Jesus king, when Peter wants to free him from the cross, when the disciples want him to make fire come down from heaven, when he feels fear and resistance before the ensuing passion and death, when he is asked to come down from the cross.... In the prayer *Our Father* we ask "lead us not into temptation", since temptation accompanies us continually (Rambla, 2008).

Ignatius had the marvelous intuition of understanding the radical centrality of God, realizing that we are constantly tempted by the "vanities of the world", which dynamite the true experience of God. This is why he considers the task of "*overcoming oneself*" [Ex. 21] a fundamental aspect. If Christ had fallen into this temptation, perhaps, as the Grand Inquisitor believed, it might seem that the mission of Jesus would have gained in efficacy and efficiency. But, on the other hand, Jesus would not have treated men as God had treated him; and in this way the image of God that Jesus proclaims would no longer be trustworthy. In order to optimize the efficiency of his mission, Jesus would have renounced the meaning, the purpose (efficacy) of the mission itself. Paradoxically, the improvement of efficiency would have been in contradiction with the ultimate purpose of his mission. Perhaps in terms more akin to economics, the core of the temptations could be formulated as a paradox consisting of gaining efficiency in exchange for losing effectiveness (purpose), which ultimately leads to the loss of any kind of efficiency. And we realize that this is not only the temptation of Jesus or of Iñigo de Loyola, but that of a large part of Christians in their relationship with the social, political and economic spheres.

In the case of Iñigo de Loyola, in order for his motivations not to come from the great and vain desire to gain honor, it was not enough to repeat or surpass what the saints had done. It was necessary to go a step further; and this is what he discovered in Manresa. Ignatius realized that the tendencies that came out of consolation and desolation were opposite. Likewise, he perceived that both had the danger of becoming entangled in the same temptation: to trust in oneself and not in God. "If it is consolation, let us go down and humble ourselves, and think that then comes the trial of temptation; if temptation comes, darkness or sadness, let us go against it without taking any hold, and wait with patience for the consolation of the Lord, which will remove all troubles and darkness from outside" (Iñigo de Loyola, 1536:159).

It is precisely in Manresa that he begins to discover, as Meloni (2001:195) would say, that in relation to Christ, the individual is not the one who leads, but the one who is led; the individual is not the one who takes the initiative, but the one who receives it.

"There seems to be no better disposition than that of the most radical denial of self, as a way of affirming in his life the submission to God and his Law" (Morano, 2006:167). Thus, Iñigo, even after his conversion, had to continue fighting against the narcissism of focusing on himself, which led him to pride and vanity. "It was on this battlefield where he had to fight important battles and heal the damage that this human affectivity meant for any spiritual journey" (Elorriaga, 2010:200).

Only in this way did Ignatius begin to leave more room for the manifestation and communication of God. Only in this way did he begin to open himself to otherness and enter into the regime of love. He realized that the new direction was not his to plan and define. "This desperate and radical prayer-plea is the last "weapon" Ignatius had left [...]. Ignatius surrenders because he recognizes that this new enterprise he has begun does not depend on him" (Castro Valdés, 2001: 238) And in this surrender is victory; just as Jesus overcomes temptations by renouncing the instrumentalization of the relationship with God. It is at this moment when it becomes clear that Ignatius "has reached such a point of maturity in faith

that his strength lies in the interior magisterium of God and personal experience" (Rambla, 1983:215). The transformation that has taken place, both in his understanding and in his will, will continue to stimulate him to seek and do God's will and not his own [Au 47; Au 11; Au 14]. Iñigo de Loyola himself deals with the theme of temptations in the Exercises, devoting point 142 to them [Ex 142]:

"142 Third point. The third consider the discourse which he addresses to them, how he exhorts them to cast nets and chains; so that they should first tempt from covetousness of riches, as is commonly the case, that they may the more easily come to the vain honor of the world, and then to increased pride, so that the first step may be of riches, the second of honor, and the third of pride; and from these three steps he leads to all the other vices."

Deconstructing the Alignment between the Kingdom of God and the Common Good:

In the light of the previous reflections related to the temptations in both Jesus and Iñigo, it is worth questioning the relationship between the Kingdom of God and the common good as it is socially understood. Do the Kingdom of God and the common good identify with each other, as many theologians have postulated (Bloch et al. 1986; Monltman, 1993) and, in general, all liberation theology has proposed? Do they oppose each other, as the great inquisitor of the parable states? Or do they maintain a blurred relationship interacting in multiple and particular ways?

In a first approach to the Christian tradition, the common good is presented as an important dimension of the Kingdom of God. In Paul VI's encyclical "Populorum Progressio" (1967), it is explained that "*the building up of the Kingdom of God, the supreme goal of the Church, implies the promotion of the integral good of the person and of the whole of human society*" (n. 14). From this perspective, the Kingdom of God and the common good can be considered as two sides of the same coin. Both seek the transformation of the world and the promotion of people's well-being. Moreover, commitment to the common good can be a way of working for the Kingdom of God, since it promotes justice and solidarity, central values in Christian teaching.

However, it is not at all clear that a possible (utopian) optimum of the economic common good, where there would be sufficient and well distributed wealth for all the inhabitants of the world, would correspond to the Kingdom of God; at least, if the distribution mechanism were based on the optimization of individual interests as proposed by orthodox economic theory. Nor would it be so if that optimal distribution were imposed by a public administration, regardless of the degree of popular support for that administration. Likewise, it does not seem that the concept of (retributive) justice is excessively compatible with grace and forgiveness, when it is a fundamental pillar in any conception of the common good. The same could be said of changes, whether tremendously positive at the social level, sponsored on egocentric incentives.

In this sense, the question that the temptations of the desert seem to raise is that of total openness to the will of God, putting trust in Him before trusting in our own means to advance towards the common good. The great inquisitor poses in all its crudeness how the common good demands sacrificing the message of Jesus; not because he does not like it or because it seems unrealistic to him, but because it is not good for people. Returning to the Gospel text of the temptations, in the first one, the devil says to Jesus: Then the tempter came and said to

him: "If you are the Son of God, tell him to turn these stones into loaves of bread to eat". But Jesus answered him: "It is written, 'Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'". This answer implies a relativization of what was possibly the first concern of the society in which Jesus lived; important enough for him to take it up in the prayer with the Abba: "Give us this day our daily bread". Why did the first Christian communities consider as a temptation such a laudable objective as satisfying hunger, whose correspondence with the current Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 is obvious? For its part, the second temptation, although normally linked to prestige, is somewhat more complicated, since it refers not to the prestige of Jesus in the service of the Kingdom, but to basing his prestige on a direct intervention of God. As this intervention is possibly far from the possibilities of the readers, it can hardly be a temptation in the instrumental sense to which we have referred. However, it can be substituted by metonymies, such as wealth and success in Calvinism (not only), the magisterium in Catholicism or the symbolic in the Orthodox rite. That is, the substitution of God for the sacred (*ordo ad sanctum*) in the purest tradition of the phenomenology of religion (Velasco, 2006).

However, the third temptation seems even more clearly rooted in current models of the common good. "Still the devil took him up into a very high mountain and from there showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. And then he said to him, 'All these things I will give you if you will bow down before me and worship me.'" We must understand that the temptation for both Jesus and Iñigo is not to have power and riches in order to take advantage of them personally, but in order to contribute to their missions. To what extent do we not agree that having political, economic or any other kind of power, well used, can help to build a more just and equitable world? It seems that this is not the way of Jesus and Ignatius. Why? Let us analyze it in the field of economics.

Since Adam Smith, an economic model has been constructed that responds to an ego-centric approach in the motivational understanding of people. Individuals are opportunity seekers, i.e., they are moved by external incentives that generate some kind of benefit for them, preferably economic⁴. The orthodox model (Tirole, 2018) considers that the social optimum is obtained by the confluence of egoisms in a free market. Regardless of the credibility that this produces, it is worth asking whether, if true, it would correspond to the Kingdom preached by Jesus. Could a conglomerate of selfish people motivated exclusively by their own interests who, thanks to the virtues of the free market, obtain sufficient resources to live well, be considered a good image of the Kingdom of God? It would hardly seem that the characteristics transmitted, through the parables, the sayings and the lifestyle of Jesus, in relation to the Kingdom, are compatible with this approach. With a certain similarity we can go back to the necessary alignment between ends and means proposed by Tostoi⁵ (1894) in the field of violence.

Possibly the Kingdom of God is not found in the final results, but in the process. And a process that incorporates freedom, community, gratuitousness and transcendent motivation as fundamental elements (Pagola, 2007). Sacrificing the means to the ends means falling

⁴ The attempt to overcome the reductionism implied by the exclusively economic incentive by resorting to the concept of utility leads to a tautology (whatever is done is because it produces utility, therefore it is a proposition impossible to refute; ergo, it is not a scientific proposition) used to defend the eminently selfish understanding of people.

⁵ We could have referred to Gandhi: Mahatma Gandhi (2001). *Autobiography: a history of my experiences with truth* (1st edition). Arkano Books. p. 119. ISBN 9788496111707; but given the Christian context of the article, the reference to Tostoi seems more appropriate.

into the third temptation; a temptation that is widely accepted and justified in today's socio-economic environment. Thus, it is expected that public institutions or the market will bring us closer to the common good, regardless of the virtuousness of people, solely linked to their activity as voters or consumers, both understood from their own individual interests. Can there be anything more contradictory to the nature of the kingdom of God? From this perspective, we do not see an alignment but a clear antinomy between the common good, as it is normally understood, and the Kingdom preached by Jesus. Possibly, this discovery marks the transition from Monserrat to Manresa made by Inigo de Loyola.

Reading in the Light of the Sign of the Times

In "Eichmann's Dream", the philosopher Michel Onfray (2021) imagines a dialogue between Eichmann and Kant, where the former shows himself to be a faithful follower of the Kantian categorical principle. One can imagine the bewilderment, not only for Kant himself, but also for the readers, when a person with direct responsibility for the death of millions of Jews claims to have behaved all his life in an ethical and even Christian way. This is a fiction, but various historical documents (Arendt & Kroh, 1964) confirm that, in many cases, the Nazis felt no particular tension between their actions and the ethical and even Christian principles they professed. In a less radical setting, this same dissociation is identified in current financial environments; Luyendijk (2015), in his book entitled "Swimming with Sharks: My Journey the World of Bankers", based on 200 interviews with managers of financial institutions in the City of London, highlights: 1) that these managers are flesh and blood people; not monsters. 2) most of them are concerned about ethics in their private lives, but not when they enter the financial institution, because they think that what a bank has to do is to make money. 3) That is, within the law; if it is outside the law, it is not ethical. Ethics and law are identified, as in the case of Einchman. 4) The relevant role played by perverse incentives; if you are paid to obtain certain results regardless of the way to achieve them, ethical codes remain a dead letter.

At present,⁶ many managerial positions in business or government institutions are occupied by Christians who, in their daily lives, participate by action or omission in decisions that are in clear contradiction with some Christian principles. Suffice it to mention the contradictions with, at least, "Laborem Exercens" (1981), "Sollicitudo rei sociales" (1987), "Caritas in veritate" (2009), "Laudato Sii" (2015) or "Fratelli Tutti" (2020). However, these contradictions do not seem to pose a problem for these Christians, who often feel that their behavior is legitimized by the fact that they are contributing to a better world, or that they are aligned with the best possible "realistic" option. This may be true, but the question is not that, but whether they are really contributing to the coming of the Kingdom of God. We understand that this is a question that only concerns the followers of Christ, and that is why the reflection on the subject is framed mainly in the field of theology, and not primarily in the fields of economics or sociology.

Crossing a phenomenological approach to economic theory with the exegetical-hermeneutical analysis of the New Testament, we find an evident tension between some of the characteristics attributable to the Kingdom of God and some principles of economics. The first question to be asked is whether the two paradigms can coincide in a future

⁶ Since *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), written at the time of the Second Vatican Council, it has become essential to translate the understanding of the Gospel to current circumstances; in this case to those of business economics.

time. The working hypothesis is that they will not. Perhaps economic theory can help to make the world a better place, but it can hardly contribute to the coming of the Kingdom of God, since its principles and developments are far removed from and even in contradiction with the logic of the Kingdom. The commitment of many Christians in line to build a better world based on orthodox economic theory reminds us of Dostoyevsky's parable of the Grand Inquisitor, where the optimal option for humanity excludes the authentic message of Christ, indoctrinated as mere religion. And it is not by chance that this text refers to the temptations of Christ, and especially to the temptation to build a better world through our own means: economic resources, power or prestige, instead of putting our trust in God. Many of the "tempted" will consider that the best way to follow Christ is to fall into the temptations that he rejected; perhaps because they distrust that his message is useful to face the reality of injustice and suffering.

The second question is whether Christ's message about the Kingdom and the principles and criteria that he transmits through his word and his life can be compatible with some kind of economic thinking capable of serving as a basis for the real economic interactions that occur in the set of societies that make up humanity. In this respect, the first reflection is that orthodox economics, fundamentally reflected in microeconomics, does not work. Constantly the hypotheses generated are systematically refuted and replaced by ad hoc hypotheses; for more than a century, it represents one of the great human efforts to make reality conform to theory; perhaps the geocentric theory in physics or that of miasmas, in medicine, represented a similar effort at the time. Since it is not a theory that correctly explains reality, it is necessary to develop a new paradigm that helps to understand the real functioning of the economy. In this sense, it may be a good idea to analyze whether, based on the proposal of the Kingdom of God, it is possible to think of an economic approach that explains reality, at least at a level similar to orthodox theory, but which is compatible with the good news announced by Jesus, which needs love and compassion (and not egoism) as building blocks.

Some of the elements that emerge as consubstantial to the Kingdom and that should be incorporated in an economic model aligned with the same, would be:

- A) Transcendent motivation in line with the proposal of the human action model of Pérez López (1991). People are not necessarily guided by external incentives, even if these are focused on personal development. In many cases human behavior is oriented to the welfare of others as the ultimate goal.
- B) Consequently, many of the actions are not guided by instrumental reciprocity, but are truly gratuitous actions towards others. The logic of the gift could replace the logic of reciprocity.
- C) Community, belonging and collaboration become some of the basic elements of human action; it should be noted that with Christianity this community can only have a universal dimension.
- D) Regulation and control cannot be the force that originates good conduct, supposing it were possible to achieve such a thing, but it must start from a personal choice within a framework of freedom.

As can be seen, these general principles, suitable to the message of Jesus, are almost systematically opposed to the elementary principles that underlie orthodox economics. The following graph visualizes this obvious contradiction (Fig. 1).

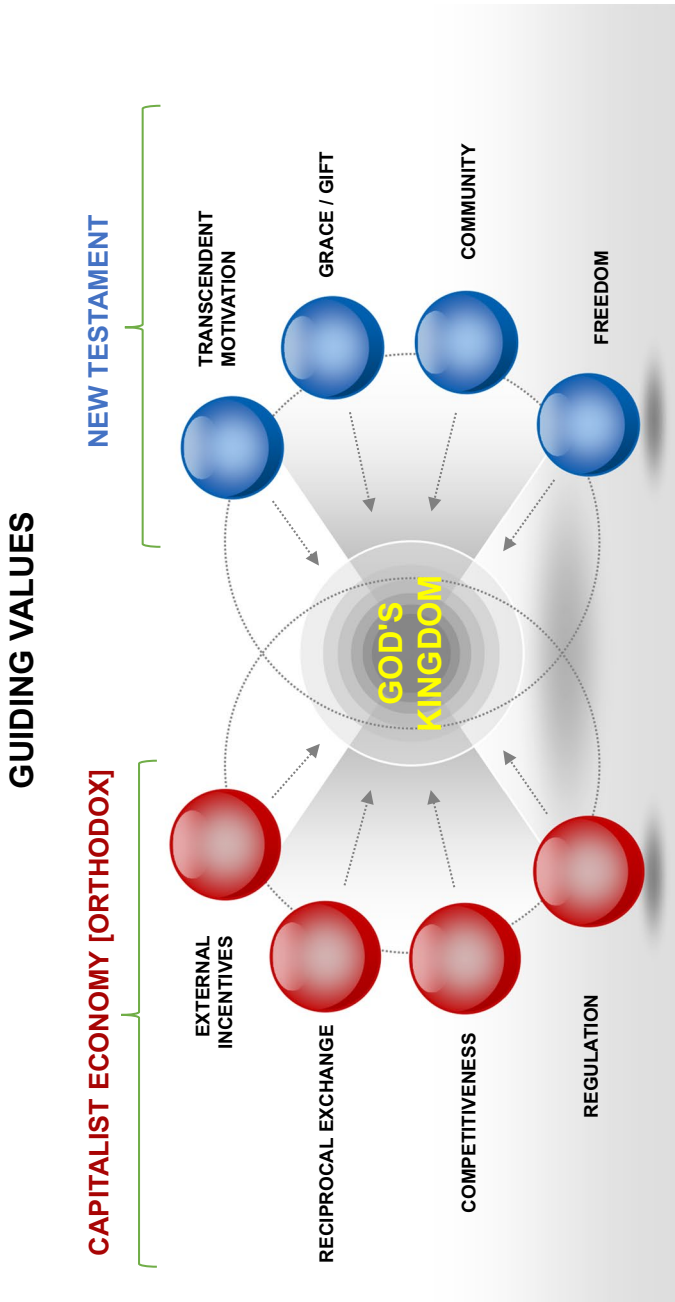


Fig. 1 Orthodox Economics vs New Testament. Source: own elaboration

Four values proper to the message of the Kingdom are in clear contradiction with the principles underlying the neoclassical capitalist model; the question of which social optimum corresponding to that model cannot at best be assimilated with the message of the Kingdom. Social justice, which is undoubtedly a constant throughout the Social Doctrine of the Church, must flee from the temptations proposed from other paradigms of understanding and really focus on the development of the values proposed by Jesus, which are synthesized in love:

I give you a new commandment: Love one another; as I have loved you, so also love one another. Your love for one another will be the mark by which all the world will recognize you as my disciples. (John 13:34-35 PLB)

But can this love with these values of transcendence, grace, community and freedom be compatible with the functioning of an economic system?

The first thing to point out is that the Kingdom of God is an idiosyncratic proposal, and therefore should not be thought of as a socio-economic system of universal character. Universality refers to the invitation; the extent of the outcome will depend on the response of those invited. The fundamental question is not whether these principles can support a global economy, but whether they can guide the economic behavior of Christians in a way that facilitates the alignment of faith and behavior. In this sense, the Gift Economy could perhaps provide an economic model consistent with the principles of the Kingdom of God and capable of materializing in reality.

Conclusions and Main Lines of Research

The temptations of Jesus in the desert are a recurring theme in the Christian tradition, and have a symbolic richness that goes far beyond the literal narrative. Visualized in the life and conversion of Iñigo de Loyola, they seem a constant reminder of the risk of putting personal or even social interests before the message of the Kingdom. The conversion of faith into a mere support for the common good, be it social, political or economic, perfectly embodies the core of the temptations, and especially the third temptation (Ratzinger, 2011: 30).

In this hermeneutical context, one cannot but conclude that there is an obvious aporia between the common good, at least as it is commonly understood, and the Kingdom of God. Integral parts of this aporia are the egocentric anthropological model that governs current economic understanding; egalitarian and retributive justice as the basis of personal rights that easily leads to a meritocracy; and the logic of equitable (just) exchange as opposed to the logic of the gift.

In such a situation, the building of the Kingdom of God must overcome dependence on models developed in other disciplines and return to the original message of Jesus. God and his grace should be the center and the model of reference. Love expressed through transcendence, gift, community and freedom should be its true backbone.

From this perspective it is worth exploring, or rather we are obliged to explore, the possibility of building on these values a new economic model; with a scientific, systematic and universal character. Although the latter would not be necessary, since universality would be limited to Christians who accept the message of the Kingdom, it is interesting to consider the possibility of mass acceptance. In this context, several lines of research open up: first, the critique from a scientific perspective of the current explanatory model, which does not seem to correspond at all to the reality explained; second, the in-depth analysis of the

economy of the gift, which seems to constitute, if not an alternative, then a good practice along the lines proposed. Last but not least, perhaps we should situate our comprehensive paradigm in a diffuse logic, which does not require us to choose between one model or another in a radically dichotomous way, but rather to identify concrete behaviors that are closer to the Kingdom of God.

In conclusion, the temptations of Jesus, visualized through the conversion of Iñigo de Loyola, are presented to us as a teaching on the importance of trusting in God and resisting the temptation to seek worldly power and wealth, whether for one's own benefit or, even instrumentally, for the greater good.

Funding Open Access funding provided thanks to the CRUE-CSIC agreement with Springer Nature.

Declarations

Conflict of interest On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

Open Access This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

References

- Arendt, H., and Kroh, J. 1964. *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (p. 240). New York: Viking Press.
- Barry, W. A., and Doherty, R. J. 2014. *Contemplatives in action: The Jesuit way*. Paulist Press
- Bloch, E., Solla, N., Solla, S. and Knight, P. (1986). *El principio de la esperanza* (Vol. 3, pp. 1954-1959). Cambridge: Mit Press.
- Bonhoeffer, D. 1997. *Creation and fall temptation: Two biblical studies*. Simon and Schuster.
- Castillo, J. M. 1979. *La alternativa cristiana: hacia una iglesia del pueblo* (Vol. 52). Sígueme.
- Castillo, J.M. 2010. Tentaciones de Cristo y nuestra tentación; en Redescristianas.<http://redescristianas.net/tentaciones-de-cristo-y-nuestratentacionjose-maria-castillo-teologo/> 20.2.23
- Corella, J. 1991. El itinerario espiritual y eclesial de Ignacio de Loyola. *Miscelánea Comillas: Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales* 49 (95): 453–473.
- de Castro Valdés, J. G. 2001. *El Dios emergente: sobre la consolación sin causa*. (EE 330) (Vol.26). Editorial SAL TERRAE.
- de Loyola, I. S. 1536. *Carta a Sor Teresa Rejadell en 1536*, MI, Epp I, 105.
- Dostoyevski, F. 1880. *Parábola del Gran Inquisidor*, en Los hermanos Karamazov
- Elorriaga, F. 2010. *Las Heridas de San Ignacio*, ed. Mensajero. 118-119.
- Holland, T. 2019. *Dominion: The making of the Western mind*. Hachette UK.
- López, J. A. P. 1991. *Teoría de la acción humana en las organizaciones: la acción personal*. Ediciones Rialp, SA.
- Luyendijk, J. 2015. *Swimming with sharks: My journey into the world of the bankers* (Vol. 4). Guardian Faber Publishing.
- Melloni, J. 2001. *La Mistagogía de los Ejercicios, Mensajero – Sal Terrae, Bilbao – Santander*.
- Moltmann, J. 1993. *Theology of hope: On the ground and the implications of a Christian eschatology*. Fortress Press.
- Montes, F. 1982. *La conversión de San Ignacio: Un modo de comprender su carisma*. Bilbao: Mensajero.
- Morano, C.D. 2006. Ignacio de Loyola a la luz del psicoanálisis. In *Proyección: Teología y mundo actual* 222: 25–56.
- Onfray, M. 2021. *El sueño de Eichmann: Precedido de Un kantiano entre los nazis*. Editorial Gedisa.

- Pagola, J.A. 2007. *Aproximación histórica*. Madrid: PPC.
- Rahner, H. 2021 *Ignacio de Loyola y la génesis histórica de su espiritualidad*. En *Escritos ignacianos*, 23-149. Madrid: Didaskalos
- Rambla, J. M. 1983. *El peregrino: autobiografía de San Ignacio de Loyola* (Vol. 2). Editorial Sal Terrae.
- Rambla, J. 2008. *Ejercicios Espirituales de San Ignacio de Loyola*. Una relectura del texto (i), Barcelona, Edicions Rondas.
- Ratzinger, J. (2011). *Jesús de nazaret. primera parte. desde el bautismo a la transfiguración*. Doubleday Broadway publishing group. New York
- Schwager, R. 1986. Der Sohn Gottes und die Weltsünde: zur Erlösungslehre von Hans Urs v.Balthasar. *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 108 (1): 5–44.
- Tetlow, J. A. 1989. *Choosing Christ in the world: directing the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola according to Annotations eighteen and nineteen; a handbook*. Saint Louis
- Tirole, J. 2018. *Economics for the common good*. Princeton University Press.
- Tolstoi, L. 1894. *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*. Cassell Publishing Company.
- Velasco, J.M. 2006. *Introducción a la fenomenología de la religión*. Editorial Trotta.

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.