In most studies of the *Exercises*, it is the first two weeks and the Election that are analyzed in depth. This stands in sharp contrast to the often hasty and superficial treatment of the program's third and fourth weeks. Without a doubt, it is the sense that the *Exercises*’ very nature is determined by the Election that accounts for this unfortunate neglect. The third and fourth weeks, it is often argued, do no more than to strengthen the exercitant’s determination to proceed according to the choice he made in it. Iparraguirre, for example, speaks of the third and fourth weeks as aiming at “una más íntima compenetración y transformación del alma con el Señor” and at an “ordenación plena del propio amor.”1 While this kind of assessment is not intended to minimize the impact of the *Exercises*’ second half, it assumes that what is most decisive—the establishment of a “rapport” (*compenetración*) between God and the soul and the soul’s very “transformation” (*transformación*)—has already taken place.

The third and fourth weeks are devoted to Christ’s Passion and Resurrection; they are the most faithful to the Gospel narrative as it was then channeled and made available to popular devotion by works like Ludolph’s *Vita*. Given that it is in them that Christ’s redemptive sojourn comes to the fore, it is surprising to see even discussions of *Exercises*’ Christology devoting but a few pages to them. Hugo Rahner’s famous study is a good example in this regard. Rahner recognizes that “Christ’s work of salvation is now being brought vividly into the mind and heart of the exercitant under the aspect of the passion,” but he ends up agreeing with the widespread opinion that the third week is “entirely at the service of the *ordinatio vitae*” brought about by the Election.2 Of the fourth week, in turn, he writes that it “need only be touched on” since the exercises contained in it are, like those of the third week, “a means of confirming the Election.”3

---

1 See Iparraguirre’s introduction to his edition of the *Exercises* in the *Obras completas de San Ignacio de Loyola*, 122–3.
3 Ibid., 133. The third week revolves around the crucifixion, itself the crux of the Gospel narrative, which the *Exercises* assimilate: “The cross of the incarnate creator and Lord of
The strong reliance not simply on the Gospel narrative, but on this narrative as it was then disseminated by popular works of devotion like Ludolph’s *Vita*, might give one the impression that the third and fourth weeks are devoid of originality and that this justifies their abridged discussion. One has only to take a closer look at the text, however, to see that these sections contain a series of insights that, aside from being original in their own right, might clarify the specific sense in which the *Exercises’* second half might be said to be a means of “confirming” the Election. This confirmation has been traditionally understood to concern the impact that what is felt in the course of those meditations on Christ’s redemptive work has on one’s relation to the choice one has made. Is one’s resolve strengthened in the course of those meditations? If it is, then one can assume that one made the right choice.

Would it be possible to speak of a “confirmation” in other terms? As I argued in the previous chapter, the consolation without preceding cause is tantamount to the image’s disappearance. The Election, in treating this occurrence as its ultimate criterion, could be said to underscore the need for this disappearance, to establish it as the image’s fate. If the second half of the *Exercises* “confirms” the Election, it is by holding up an image of this fate: the meditations devoted to Christ’s Passion and Resurrection, as I hope to show in what follows, refer to an eschatological interlude that allegorizes the image’s trajectory, from its awakening to its disappearance, precisely what is ciphered in Christ’s disappearance from the world in the Ascension.

The image’s disappearance, announced by the consolation without preceding cause and allegorized in the second half of the *Exercises*, resonates with an obvious but crucial fact. The reign of the image, so to speak, has a limited duration, since at some point the *Exercises* are bound to come to an end. What interests me in this context is the threshold that signals this end, and what this threshold tells us about what preceded it. This threshold is to be found in the famous *Contemplatio ad amorem*. In what follows, I argue that the reign of the image cannot help but be associated with a condition of inoperativity. The whole point of the *Exercises* is to

---

all things,” Rahner writes, “stands in the very center of the history of salvation, as well as of the spiritual life of the exercitant.” Rahner then writes that the third week “is again not merely a loosely-strung set of devout meditations on the life of Christ” but is rather “totally subordinated to the Election” (130–1). The decision made then concerns, too, the spiritual life of the exercitant. Because the suffering Christ is also the crux of the spirituality that emphasizes imitation, it would seem that it is a question of assessing the conformity of one’s choice to the model in front of one (132).