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FREEDOM FOR SERVICE **How to Use** **the Individually-Guided Spiritual Exercises**

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How To Use the Individually-Guided
Spiritual Exercises

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FOREWORD

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius are the basis of the spirituality of the Christian Life Communities. As the General Principles of CLC put it, they are its "specific source" and "characteristic instrument" (Nº.4).

In recent years the individually-guided Exercises--which are the original form--are again being widely used and with great profit. This booklet aims to make that use as effective as possible. A short, earlier Progressio Supplement (1973, Nº.1) dealt with preparation for the Exercises and preparatory forms of them. This one deals at length with the Spiritual Exercises as such, individually-guided.

This booklet aims at helping a variety of people. First of all, those priests or lay persons who guide others through the complete Spiritual Exercises, whether this is done in a closed setting over a month's time, in stages separated in time, or while continuing one's daily activity. Then too, those who give the Exercises of a week or so in length, individually-guided, to priests, religious or lay people (including many CLC members). Those responsible for the formation in Ignatian spirituality of either religious or lay people--and in this group are CLC leaders--should find it of real help too. Finally, it should hopefully aid many people, and in a special way members of the Christian Life Communities, to understand the Spiritual Exercises better, to experience them (in greater or lesser depth) with more fruit, and to live out more fully the dynamic of the Exercises in daily life.

One result of the supplement surely should be to correct the false image of the Spiritual Exercises which views them as rigid in method or as a rationalistic approach in which a man lifts himself by his own bootstraps. As this

booklet makes clear, the Exercises are a remarkably supple instrument, in which method is wholly at the service of individual need and of experience, and which are aimed uniquely at favoring that utter openness to the Spirit which will allow Him to work freely in a man.

The booklet is much longer than our usual Progressio Supplements (a real bonus, therefore, to our subscribers!), but the topic simply could not be treated more briefly. The subject matter is admittedly not easy, but many of our readers have already experienced the Exercises personally, and this should help to clarify certain statements in it that might otherwise be obscure. This is the reason too why references are given to the corresponding texts of the book of the Spiritual Exercises in footnotes, so that the reader as he goes along can refer easily to the pertinent parts of the Exercises text.

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PROGRESSIO

Chapter I

THE BEGINNING OF THE EXERCISES PROCESS

Ignatius of Loyola knew no other form of the Spiritual Exercises than the individual Exercises. That is, exercises consisting in the making of individual meditation, for which the exercitant (retreatant) receives an individual introduction on content and method from an Exercises guide, to whom he is also able to give a daily account of his experiences. As time went on this form of the Exercises was largely replaced—even in the Society of Jesus—by a kind of "course-retreat", in which the opportunity for individual interviews was perhaps given, but where the instructions on content and method, which determine the course of the Exercises, were given to all the exercitants at the same time.

Historical research has recently brought to light much of the original mind of Ignatius. Attention to his thought is again being given in the practice of the individually-guided Exercises: the involvement of the whole person—including his senses as well as his emotions—in the retreat process through appropriate forms of meditations; the function of the instructions in the text for aiding the Exercises guide to be of service to the individual in his meditations; the importance of the interviews; the role of time as a deepening factor, and others. Strangely enough, this form of individually-guided Exercises has up till now not been used much, even though the extent to which the retreat can in content and method be geared to the individual is definitely decisive in the making of the Exercises. Perhaps this is based above all on a lack of willingness to work so intensively, which also means with such an expenditure of time, with one person.

Stimulated by the example of others (Fr. Hans-Bernhard Meyer S.J., Innsbruck; Fr. George Wolf SJ +, formerly

at Pullach near Munich; Fr. Hans William Guttermuth, SJ, Osnabrück; Fr. Herbert Roth SJ, Marburg), the author of this article has already for some years been trying to give the Exercises in the individually-guided form. The following report is based on his experience. For the most part what is given here is not an account of his experiences in the strict sense. Rather it is his reflections on those experiences. This allows a certain structure to be seen and recognized in and through the multiplicity of inner processes of many different individuals. That a single dynamic exists, operative through all the individual differences, is itself part of the experience about to be described.

The footnotes refer to the book of the Spiritual Exercises in which Ignatius assembled, as a handbook for "him who gives the Exercises", all that, from his experience with himself and with others, seemed of help to bring about that interior conversion process at which the Exercises aim. It is not therefore a book to read. It is rather a book of methods. It reveals its worth only to him who has the opportunity to experience in himself or in others the living process, which is what the book is all about.

It may be noted here too that the individually-guided Exercises should not be promoted and spread as the exclusive form of the Exercises. Nonetheless they do not seem to me to simply stand beside other forms. More important would be to find a meaningful arrangement of different forms of the Exercises in accord with the various phases of a person's faith and life.

I. THE EXTERNAL FUNCTIONING

To get a picture of what the individual Exercises are all about it is best for us to begin with their external functioning. Already here they differ quite visibly from the "course-retreats", as I have chosen, without any implied value judgements, to call all current Exercises forms which present points for meditation in common. Externally one can differentiate between two types of individual Exercises.

1. Several persons make the individually-guided Exer

cises at the same time next to each other, with the guide involved full-time in giving them. The number of exercitants that an Exercises director can handle may be different for different persons. Up to now I have never begun with more than ten. A suitable house must then be considered: retreat houses, guest rooms of monasteries or convents, perhaps even a quiet inn. In retreat houses the difficulty of ten arises that with so few exercitants the place is not fully occupied and so the house must be shared with another group. Depending on the type of parallel group, difficulties can develop. In such individually-guided Exercises, the mealtimes and the liturgy deserve special attention. Even without verbal interaction (discussions), a definite and even "intimate" kind of community can arise from these two "opportunities". We shall speak more in detail about this later.

2. The individual makes the Exercises alone. The retreat guide is not fully taken up with the Exercises. The time he spends daily amounts to around an hour. During such Exercises he can pursue his ordinary work. It is then possible for a person, with but a slight reduction in his ordinary work load, to give the Exercises to another—assuming that he will not be absent for several days during the time of the retreat. For the exercitants a quiet (and in winter, warm as well!) room must be found which is not too distant from the residence or office of the guide, so that one or two meetings daily for conversation are possible. In this case the question of meals must be properly clarified. One possibility is that the person takes care of meals for himself each morning and evening with an electric hot-plate in student style, and at noon eats in a restaurant. The situation during mealtimes should be such that the exercitant is not forced to enter into a table conversation.

Between these two there are naturally many other flexible possibilities. For the Exercises guide it is important to stay realistic and not to overburden himself with too large a number of exercitants along with his ongoing work. The contact with the retreatant must take place in an atmosphere of quiet. It should also be possible for the exercitant to consult the guide outside the agreed times—perhaps by telephone—should difficulties crop up suddenly.

Once or twice a day the exercitant meets his guide. In the conversation at these meetings the guide listens to how the last day or half-day has gone. In this account--which he encourages in turn by his questions--he must pay attention more to the tonal quality of the reactions experienced by the exercitant during his meditations and his periods of relaxation than to the contents of the meditation with which he has been occupied.¹⁾ The connection between specific content and specific affective reactions should be of special interest. Only when the guide is as well informed as possible on the development that has taken place in the retreatant is he in a position to present the material for the next meditation.

At least as important as the material for meditation are instructions regarding method. These should help the exercitant to improve his prayer continually and to face better the affective situations that will arise.²⁾ Two shorter meetings each day--each lasting half an hour or less--are better than one long conversation. The better one has learned to listen, the shorter these meetings can be. However, much depends on the exercitant himself, on whether he has learned--with the help perhaps of the Exercises guide--to express himself briefly and precisely, or whether he tries to use the meetings as opportunities for long, rambling narratives.

The division of time in the Exercises can be entirely adapted to the needs of the exercitant. It can also change during the course of the Exercises as the situation demands. Some need from the very beginning, or after a relaxed period at the start, a strict schedule for meditation, sleep and relaxation periods. That would even be the normal thing, and would emphasize the seriousness of the enterprise. If however in the initial exchanges the Exercises guide becomes aware of an up-tightness or a fixation on one's religious performance, a looser form of scheduling is recommended.³⁾

1) S.E. 313-336; 6, 7, 14, 157

2) S.E. 6-10

3) S.E. 4, 133, 162, 205, 209

If the exercitant is still unpracticed in meditating, one can always begin with half an hour for each meditation; on the second or third day this half-hour can be lengthened to forty-five minutes. If serious hindrances do not arise and generally fixed periods of meditation are planned, one should be able to arrive at an entire hour for each meditation. To stick to the planned forty-five minutes or hour in time of interior dryness, boredom or distraction, during which one always has to begin anew when he discovers his thoughts wandering elsewhere, is difficult, but very effective training toward selflessness in prayer.⁴⁾ In one day there is time for four or five hours of meditation. Between these hours there are periods for relaxation, more about which will be said below.

Following an old religious custom, Ignatius proposed a contemplation around midnight.⁵⁾ Experience has shown that this proposal can help even modern man. The night with its silence and its enveloping darkness often offers an especially suitable atmosphere for prayer. For some, however, there is here a danger of romanticism and the exotic, which the guide must guard against. But for others, to rise from sleep in the middle of the night—which for most is not at midnight but at two o'clock in the morning—in order to pray, is an act expressing one's earnestness and readiness to do all that the Exercises undertaking demands. But here too lurks the danger of vanity, which lies hidden in all that is out of the ordinary.

As to the length of the individually-guided Exercises, to begin with it can be said: the longer one can free himself for the Exercises, the better.⁶⁾ When the undertaking lasts less than six days, it is not worthwhile. The ordinary norm is about eight days. Especially when the Exercises aim at discovering God's will in a decision situation, eight days are generally not enough. In not a few cases on the eighth day the Exercises process has arrived just at the stage where one simply should continue; in ten or twelve days is the length of time recommended since the time of Ignatius for the so-called "long retreat", which

4) S.E. 12

5) S.E. 72, 74, 128

6) S.E. 20

includes all phases of the Exercises in their entirety. In order that so deep and all-encompassing a process of transformation—which is what the Exercises aim at—can actually take place in a time as relatively short as thirty days, the particular time chosen for it must be favorable as regards the exercitant's interior and exterior life situation. In general a person should not be advised to make the Full Exercises too soon.

II. THE INTERIOR PROCESS

The external framework of the Exercises are entirely at the service of the interior process. All the external elements—place, time, Exercises guide, material for meditations, instructions regarding method, even the meditations themselves—are means to set in motion a process of interior transformation and to keep it going.⁷⁾

The goal of this transformation can be defined in this way: to become like Christ and from this similarity with Christ to make choices in our concrete life situation.⁸⁾

To become like Christ, is this not a life's task? Can this take place in eight, ten or even thirty days? With this question we focus on the relation between the Exercises and one's life history. Surely no one will maintain that in a single Exercises retreat the process of transformation can be completed. What can take place is rather the step of a fundamental conversion or liberation of oneself. It certainly will have to be ratified and modified repeat-

7) S.E. 78-81, 228, 229, 17, 130.

8) As to the title Ignatius himself gives to the Exercises, see S.E. 21; compare also S.E. 1.

The literature on the book of the Exercises generally moves in two different directions: the one gives the central role to "choice" and interprets the Exercises as leading to a right decision, the other sees the Exercises as practice in living with God. From the above formulas, I follow, in the experience here reported on, rather a synthesis of these two conceptions - as was recently formulated quite clearly in Leo Bakker: "Freedom and Experience" (Freiheit und Erfahrung. Ignatius von Loyola". Würzburg 1971).

edly in daily life in all kinds of ways. It is also a step of deeply personal commitment to the following of Jesus, which also can and must be carried forward in an unending series of new decisions. So that such fundamental steps of the conversion process may be accomplished, the matter of how the time of the Exercises fits into the framework of one's life development is without doubt important.

In no case do the individual Exercises stand at the beginning of this process of development. Much has already taken place, even for someone who is young. Today the importance of the steps taken by a person even in the very first five years of life, as compared with those taken later on, has become ever clearer. As to what must already have taken place in order that the individual Exercises be meaningful and effective, something will be said later on.

Here it is enough to emphasize that the Exercises never begin at the zero point of a life, and so it is very important for the adapting of the personally-guided Exercises that the guide have at least a sketchy knowledge of the human and spiritual life-history of his exercitant. Only then can he effectively aid the mature forward step that is needed. If one wishes to make the most use possible of the precious time of the Exercises, it is advisable to have a conversation with the exercitant beforehand. Here the guide can get a clearer idea of the stage of development the retreatant is in at the time he makes the individual Exercises.

Despite all differences, and the enduring uniqueness of each exercitant, there still exists a fundamental dynamic which is the same for all. It is the dynamic of Love, or—as stated by Christ—the dialectic of death and resurrection, of "losing one's life to find it". This dynamic then unfolds itself in several broad stages, which are here only mentioned in passing since each will be explained further when the Exercises process is described.

In our context the initial positive phase must be termed that in which a man receives a desire and taste to open himself to the Gospel.⁹⁾ Then he must confront himself

9) S.E. 23.

with his own limitations, his failures, the existential need for salvation in which he finds himself.¹⁰⁾ In this confrontation he can come to realize that he lives and is allowed to live, only through Mercy and Grace. Only when he has experienced this liberation from himself is it possible for him to encounter the call of Christ to follow Him,¹¹⁾ and to follow with a commitment that is concrete.¹²⁾ In this world commitment to Christ involves as a consequence suffering; and the next step is given to this.¹³⁾ The final and all-encompassing step sets forth the risen Christ, who consoles those who are His own.¹⁴⁾ These steps or phases can also be described rather from the point of view of the affective processes involved.¹⁵⁾ In the beginning, a positive challenge by the ideals of the Gospel.¹⁶⁾ (we tried to make clear above that this is not the absolute beginning). Then the affective crisis as one is confronted with the need for salvation.¹⁷⁾ This crisis is overcome through faith in God's mercy, which in prayer is finally felt also as peace. This peace becomes more and more a personal love for Christ as a response to His own love. It prods one toward being one with Him in his lot and in his service.¹⁸⁾

As this attempt to describe it makes clear, the process has its own inner unity and norms to be followed. This means the duration of particular phases or steps is not something to be decided on from the outside.¹⁹⁾ Furthermore, it cannot a priori be determined how far an exercitant may travel in eight or ten or even twenty days of the Exercises, made at a particular point in his life. Experience shows that in the individually-guided Exercises of eight to ten days, generally only the first two phases (the Foundation and the First Week) are genuinely and thorough-

10) S.E. 24-90.

11) S.E. 91-98, 104.

12) S.E. 135, 147, 152, 157, 169-189.

13) S.E. 190-209.

14) S.E. 218-229.

15) S.E. 313-336, 8.

16) S.E. 316.

17) S.E. 316, 317.

18) S.E. 53, 98, 167, 193, 195, 197, 221.

19) S.E. 4, 18, 20.

ly accomplished. If so one should not go further, because honesty is an absolute must in the spiritual life. At some later time the process can, after a review of these phases, go on further—presupposing that meanwhile the Exercises are lived in daily life and not set aside. This translation of the Exercises into daily life and the helps that are needed to do this (spiritual guidance, community, regular spiritual exercises etc.) is something to which the guide must always give his attention in the closing days of the Exercises.

The community aspect of faith, which we of today have again discovered and seek to live out in many different ways, remains at the background of the personally-guided Exercise. At the background, however, does not mean unimportant. Indeed it is one of the presuppositions of the individual Exercises that the retreatants have already experienced a community of faith. In the Exercises itself then the faith community should be the supporting basis of the individual's faith. When several are making the Exercises at the same time, they form, even without verbal interaction, a community of faith. If the exercitants do not know one another, one will at the start of the Exercises afford the opportunity for each briefly to introduce himself (where he comes from, his family, profession, perhaps his civic or church involvement). This lessens the curiosity otherwise likely to grow each time they meet. At meals music from either a tape or a record is recommended so as to avoid embarrassing "be silent" situations. The Eucharist one does well to celebrate each day, though it should be stressed that people are free to participate or not. Here a rather "objective" arrangement seems advisable, with carefully chosen readings centering on fundamental themes of faith, and set prayers of the faithful. The concluding Mass can, however, by means of expressions of thanksgiving and petition on the part of the exercitants that communicate to others something of their own experiences in the Exercises, be a rich expression of the community that has meanwhile silently grown. If the retreatant has already learned (perhaps after a few days) how to overlook distracting externals and give attention only to essentials, the community of faith as the buttress of personal faith can also be experienced by him in the liturgy of a parish or, even better, of a religious community. Particu-

larly in the Exercises made entirely alone, such a "community" should be accessible.²⁰⁾

Besides the meditations and set times of prayer, which naturally are the most important vehicle of the interior process, the recreation periods, in between the meditations, should also be viewed as part of that process. In the beginning the extended prayer will cost some effort, and so the recreation periods will be found relaxing. As time goes on, the meditation should become easier, so that it is less taxing and no longer a duty; then it often continues on unintentionally into the periods of relaxation. In any case, this too is part of the Exercises, and the matter of which thoughts, images or pictures "come to the fore" in the exercitant's consciousness during these "breaks" can often shed important light on the process of the Exercises. What one does during these periods should not hinder this process; it may distract, but should not interfere. Some possibilities: taking walks (the possibility for extended walks seems to me indispensable during the Exercises), sports (but not competitive ones), cleaning, sewing, garden or house work (without pressure for performance), listening to or making music, painting or other creative occupations (without production pressure).

III. PREREQUISITES FOR THE PERSONALLY-GUIDED EXERCISES

1. Requirements for the exercitant

In the individual Exercises it is possible for the guide to devote himself completely to the exercitant and his needs and person.²¹⁾ In the light of this the question of requirements may seem superfluous: if during the first days it is discovered that, even though the guide is a person suitable for the retreatant in his present situation, no meaningful progress takes place, the Exercises guide can give up the undertaking.²²⁾ When however one recognizes that the personally-guided Exercises aim (as has already been shown) not simply at some sort of development or other but

20) S.E. 20.

21) S.E. 4-20.

22) S.E. 18.

at a definite process of spiritual transformation, and that it involves heavy demands on the time and energy of the Exercises guide, then certain requisites on the side of the retreatant must be fulfilled if the undertaking is to be justified.²³⁾ Some of these requirements are essential if a person is to be permitted to make the Exercises. Others are such that the more they are fulfilled the better fitted one is at a given moment for the individual Exercises; and the better fitted one is, the more deeply and thoroughly the transformation process can grip him.

Along with the requirements given below go also the topics that the guide, in the conversation that should if possible be held in good time before the Exercises begin, ought to pay attention to. As always in such conversations, rich information is furnished not only by the content, but also by the way in which the person answers the question: what is important to him, what he only shyly mentions, where he lingers in detail, etc. Thus many of the prerequisites mentioned here are in no way explicitly discussed in conversation. But the guide must himself be clear as to whether they have been suitably fulfilled. He should also, in my opinion, make clear to the person he is conversing with that the decision to make the personally-guided Exercises is not just a matter for the exercitant, but that the Exercises guide too must reach a decision, and that the outcome of this decision is in no way a priori certain.²⁴⁾

The first presupposition for the individual Exercises is a basic life attitude that is positive. This is generally the case. The danger rather is that the exercitant may bring with him a view of life that is overly idealistic and charged with illusions of optimism. The guide should therefore try to find out to some extent how much the exercitant's positive outlook on life is actually based on healthy, lived experience. In this regard, geographical and family origins, education and profession, social contacts and health are particularly informative spheres.²⁵⁾ Where one's positive outlook on life is not an

23) S.E. 18.

24) S.E. 18, 4, 20.

25) S.E. 18.

chored in actual experiences in these areas, there is danger of flight into an imaginary world. In this case the mature step to take would not be the individual Exercises, but real, direct confrontation with the environment.

Of special importance in this connection are social relations. Through these the affective life in us has developed from the earliest moments of our childhood on. If a person has had but very few successful social contacts—this means above all in early childhood—then the usual result is the underdevelopment of the affective sphere. Then there is danger rather that the Exercises will become purely intellectual activities, or that the underdevelopment will try to compensate itself in a false way, whether this be through dreamy imaginings or in mistakenly viewing the Exercises guide as a partner. In such cases, other methods in which exchange and discussion are emphasized would be advisable.

A further requirement concerns faith. Can one give the individual Exercises to a non-believer? Or is the Christian faith in the full sense an indispensable requirement? Since I lack experience along these lines, I prefer not to answer this question. To me what seems more important than an expression of belief or unbelief is interior openness, allowing oneself to enter upon the adventure of a personal search, of questioning and being questioned, in such a way that an answer may be received that exceeds my expectations. There exists too an intellectual fixation on critical questions that avoids putting one's self in question and having to make a commitment. It is therefore valid to say that in both directions one must be cautious. Where the conversation prior to the Exercises reveals an overly strong need for security, individual retreats are too delicate an instrument. Where intellectual considerations predominate, the personally-guided Exercises are an unsuitable medium.

In this context the importance of positive faith-community experiences may be noted. A dog that must be carried is useless for the hunt. Equally useless for the individual Exercises is a person who must be persuaded to make them. There must rather have sprung up within him an interior yearning that impels him to such an undertaking.

This does not rule out one's experiencing at the same time a repugnance, since one already has an inkling that the activity cannot succeed without sacrifice. Such tension points to God's being already at work.²⁶⁾ The person must have passed the stage at which he is asking only about his minimum obligations in the religious sphere. Where the yearning is directed, whether toward apostolic or loving service or toward interior conversion and growth in prayer, is not important. In no case may the Exercises guide come to that situation where he has to spoon-feed the exercitant. The setting of intimate conversation that exists in the individual Exercises allows no "preaching". When no strong inner longing exists, either little will happen or a strong identification with the guide will be the focus of the development. While this identification is never to be completely ruled out, and indeed is to a certain extent even necessary—we will have more to say on this below—it must never become the main (though hidden) motive of the retreatant.²⁷⁾

In general one can say that a healthy decision to make the personally-guided Exercises is already the fruit of a personal spiritual life of shorter or longer duration. At present one can assume too that other periods of intensive spirituality—"course-retreats", live-in seminars or at least days of recollection—have already at some point been discovered and used before one thinks of making the individual Exercises. If not, I would not begin—at least with young men up to thirty years old—with the individual Exercises, but recommend first another form of activity or session in which there is more opportunity to experience the support of a community of faith.

When a "personal spiritual life" is spoken of as a requisite, implied in this is a conscious effort to deepen faith (through lectures, conferences), personal prayer (at least continuing and repeated efforts at regular prayer on one's own), and self-criticism according to the criteria of faith. Furthermore, an apostolic and social consciousness must, in my opinion, be awakened if the individual Exercises are to be justified.

26) S.E. 313-336; 157; 6.

27) S.E. 5.

2. Requirements for the Exercises guide

All pastoral work involves a risk. The apostle continually has the feeling of being overwhelmed by the demands of his task. This holds true also for the work of the Exercises guide. Therefore one of the most important requisites is that he be a man who believes and trusts in God, who begins his task with a sense of responsibility, but who works always in the awareness of being an imperfect instrument that Someone Greater is using to help another. When therefore some qualifications of the guide are mentioned below, it is rather to point out where to look for the requirements that are typical for the personally-guided Exercises. It may at once be said that the Exercises guide does not necessarily have to be an ordained priest. The confession, so useful in the Exercises, and which often consists of a general confession covering a rather lengthy period of time,²⁸⁾ need not at all be made to the Exercises guide.²⁹⁾

The activity of the guide takes place, as mentioned, in one or two conversational meetings each day. A certain facility in conversing and dealing with a person is therefore required. Implied especially is a readiness and willingness to listen. It is also good if the guide can create an "atmosphere" of communication³⁰⁾ which makes it easy for the exercitant to express himself. Here however already lies a danger: when too much is done, there is the likelihood of emotional dependence of the retreatant on the guide; and such dependence can be seriously harmful, and not only within the time of the Exercises. The more the director is clear about the structure of his own relations with other persons, the more he will be able to avoid such difficulties.

An important tool available for his interviews to the Exercises guide--as indeed to any counselor--is the question.³¹⁾ The better, the more skilfully, the less captiously he can ask questions, the better. It is not at all easy to

28) S.E. 44.

29) S.E. 17.

30) S.E. 22.

31) S.E. 6.

ask questions in such a way that the person questioned does not already hear a definite, implied answer.³²⁾

If the individually-guided Exercises are to reach their full effectiveness, demanded of the instructor is a certain flexibility in his choice of materials. These should be geared to the particular situation and unique personality of the exercitant. A good knowledge then of Scripture and literature and a choice of suitable pictures can be useful to him. One would not actually prepare himself in the sense that he would already have definite material ready for each meditation. Were one to do this, he would be making poor use of the opportunity presented by the individual Exercises. It will often become clear only in conversation with the exercitant which materials would be most suitable; perhaps one may even need a moment of reflection.

The instructor should besides have experience and familiarity with the different methods of meditation and with other matters concerning approaches in the spiritual life. Here indeed is one of his most important functions: he must be able to lead the way to effective action.³³⁾ He must through his questions find out how and why a proposed method has been good or bad.

Finally, the Exercises guide must believe that God is calling the exercitant, and that within the Exercises--perhaps quite invisible to the outside--something of magnitude can take place.³⁴⁾ This he is not allowed to hinder either by softening the crises that arise, or by selling short the demands of the gospel. Goodness and love are essential qualities of anyone who works for souls, but these are quite different from complaisant softness.³⁵⁾

3. Requirements for the Interaction between the Exercitant and the Guide

In order that the Exercises guide be able to accomplish his task, a no-holds-barred openness of the exerci-

32) S.E. 15

33) S.E. 17, 1, 6-10, 238-260, 313-336.

34) S.E. 15, 20.

35) S.E. 6, 7, 12, 14.

tant towards him is necessary. This openness ranges over all that comes up during the Exercises, even in such seemingly unimportant and secondary phenomena as health disturbances, strange dreams or "crazy thoughts".³⁶⁾ It is not necessary continually to unload everything, but the readiness to do so must exist. Without such openness, I would not accept the responsibility for such a dangerous undertaking. This presupposes that the exercitant have a great trust in the Exercises guide. Should the exercitant have had otherwise no opportunity to know him, the exchange prior to the Exercises, mentioned above, offers an opportunity for this. Here the exercitant can among other things test for himself whether he is able to bring to this person such great trust. It is possible that an Exercises guide in himself good may not be suitable for a particular exercitant.

The relation between the two plays an important part in the Exercises. However, in order that this role not be a dominant factor, there are some requirements. First of all it is important that the no-holds-barred openness remain one-sided. The personal problems, joys or sufferings of the instructor have no place in the conversation. He is not a partner of the exercitant, but plays a kind of father- (or mother-) role vis-a-vis the exercitant. Something implied here too, and to be consistently observed if the Exercises are to take place as they should, is that the exercitant becomes ever more and more independent, that is, has less and less need of the guide.³⁷⁾ The guide therefore never takes on what the exercitant can do himself. As much as possible he limits himself to questioning, or to repeating what the exercitant has said in the last half-minute or so. He serves therefore as a mirror in which the exercitant can see himself better. With regard to the material on content and method furnished by the guide, it is important that this be strictly limited to the minimum required, so that the exercitant will be able to discover something through his own meditating.³⁸⁾

36) S.E. 6, 17.

37) S.E. 2, 15; 11, 199, 228.

38) S.E. 2, 15.

IV. BEGINNING THE EXERCISES

1. "Take up the thread"

When a person begins the personally-guided Exercises, he does not start from a spiritual zero point. He has already gone quite a distance. To put it better: God has already led him quite a distance. To use another image: in the many-colored fabric of his life, there exists already that one thread that has salvific capacity. It is perhaps still slender and weak, but it is there. This thread one must search out. And take up.

There are different ways to do this. If the retreatant has already made the Exercises several times and is trying consciously to lead a spiritual life, one can send him back to the notes or recollections he has from his last Exercises retreat, and ask him about the positive life experiences that he has in the meanwhile gone through. To assist in this one might also ask him what in the recent past he is most of all thankful for, or what word or picture he would use to express what now seems to him most important in life. Perhaps as he does this a quotation may come to mind that has for him come to have by now a special significance.

Another possible way of bringing to light what has already been growing in the exercitant is to ask him to express himself plainly and simply on the meaning of life. One can, for instance, have him write a real or fictitious letter to a close friend who is questioning him about the subject. That may seem like a plunge into cold water, so one should explain that what counts is not a statement that is exhaustive and objectively infallible, but what personally strikes him at the moment.

A third possibility would be to allow the person to go through his own life history for himself, to write this out or paint it—with the request that it be conveyed to the Exercises guide in a few sentences or in a picture or metaphor.

Certainly other methods are possible too. The point is to prod the exercitant to give his own positive life experience or salvation history, and his hope. Both these ele-

ments are important and in practice should not be separated: the experience up to this moment (past) and hope (future). Both taken together yield something like an ideal or the vision of a goal that has developed out of a man's life experience. Interwoven into such an ideal are of course both illusion and projection. But we are still just at the beginning of the retreat. And if the start of the Exercises is not the zero point, then the words and picture brought to light reveal something true and genuine. Is the "fleshiness" of the expectations of the men of the Old Testament, and how nonetheless God reaches them, not something to wonder about? And in what an "earthy" way salvation is presented and described even in the New Testament! One has only to think of the miracles and of the pictures of the wedding feast, of the heavenly Jerusalem, and so on. Hope is the power in man that impels him forward and beyond himself. It is definitely a theological virtue. But it cannot be denied that much more purification is needed before all the disorder in our concrete hope is eliminated.

As regards the manner in which the Exercises are entered into, it is of decisive importance therefore that the guide not present the exercitant with an ideal, but that the exercitant formulate this for himself. Each word, especially when what is involved are those deeply human core-words such as love, trust, service, obedience, readiness to help, and so forth--and such words do indeed crop up when what is being discussed are the meaning, the fundamental experience, the vision and the goal of life--has its own special meaning for a person, originating out of his own personal experience. Any other person often has no capacity whatever to guess what profound memories, yearnings or wounds are stirred up in a person when he hears such words... This is true even for an exercitant who fulfills all the prerequisites for the guided Exercises, and for whom one need not fear any bad effects. But there could be danger of catastrophe in the case of a young person who has never experienced a home and to whom one now speaks of nothing but love.

Still, it is not without value for the development of the Exercises process to know whether one, in speaking about the meaning of life, more readily uses words such as

trust, security and love, or obedience and the will of God and doing one's duty, or speaks of structuring the world and service and readiness to help. In the individual Exercises, it is not the function of the guide to meddle in the rightness or wrongness of the fundamental life conception of the exercitant, nor is it his task to communicate on an intellectual plane more knowledge, theological or otherwise, of life.³⁹⁾ If the Exercises instructor himself presents his own formulation of the meaning and purpose of life, the situation could arise where what slumbers unexpressed in the retreatant and what he has just been presented with are at odds. The resources resting unused within the exercitant would be unexploited, while he struggled to recoin foreign money into his own currency. This is something that not only wastes time, but is also, seen from the standpoint of the goal of the Exercises, useless.

2. Initial Positive Experience

For most men life is a fabric of many colors, in which various threads are interwoven. The yearning to achieve a certain order, or direction or unity in life is most often one of the things that prods one to make the Exercises. This is not accomplished however merely by taking hold of the one thread that is of salvific importance. In order to be able to spin it, one must hold this thread correctly in one's hands. Mere knowledge and memory must become experience, lived experience. The exercitant must sense afresh the magnetism of the outlook on life that he has arrived at. Indeed what is involved is even his hope for salvation.⁴⁰⁾ If a person is able to go back to his notes or mem

39) S.E. 2.

40) This way of presenting the "Principle and Foundation" (S.E. 23) may not seem in accord with the book of the Exercises. Here, the starting point for the process of the Exercises seems to be a sober text that can, at best, be used as an introduction to consideration, but never as material for meditation in its real sense. We shall come back to this aspect of the "Principle and Foundation" in the fourth chapter. When one examines, however, the book of the Exercises in all its parts and furthermore considers the practice of Ignatius, one

(Cont. next page)

ories of earlier Exercises he has made, then this is rather easy to do. In reading or recalling, what he reads or recalls becomes more alive to him. He therefore feels invited to linger there. This can be further encouraged by his meditating on a profane or biblical text that centers on the concept of the meaning of life that he has arrived at. Other means to aid this are simple pictures, in which the above-mentioned basic attitudes--such as trust, openness, dedication--are visibly portrayed.

Another way would be to let the retreatant not only go back over his own life but now, after having expressed the basic thrust of life's meaning for himself, to examine and linger over its moments packed with experience, especially those out of which has developed his present understanding of life's meaning. Something like an album of photographs or a book of pictures from one's home or region or city that is especially associated with such positive experiences may be of help here.

One must allow this activity the time it requires. The more conscious one's view of life's purpose is before the Exercises begin, the less time will be needed to feel it in such a way that it really begins to resonate in him. In some circumstances it may take two or three days before this launching pad for the take-off has been definitely established.

3. Beginning Prayer

At the same time, the step described is of help for entry into prayer. What was stated in the last section did not sound too much like prayer. It seemed to center more

- 40) (Cont.) will discover in both of them leads for the above described approach (compare with S.E.238-260 - three methods of prayer). Ignatius used these instructions as preparation for the Exercises - in most instances before they began; and so a kind of 'foundation-phase' was practised. Taking into consideration the atmosphere of insecurity regarding their faith in which many exercitants must live today, it seems legitimate to me to allow this aspect of positive initial experience to unfold itself more largely.

on the life of the individual. So a clarification is now in order. As soon as "the thread is taken up" and the exercitant begins to busy himself with it, the Exercises guide must at once steer the joy or hope awakened in him to a "Thou". Whether this Thou is already quite clearly and explicitly addressed as God or Father or Jesus Christ can still be, in my opinion, something open. What is important, however, is that the exercitant does not turn in on himself and brood, but prays. Because favorable experiences are involved, this prayer will be characterized by gratitude or praise. In this way, the fact that the experience being considered is a gift will come to the fore. The Thou that one here considers or addresses will reveal Himself more and more as a Creator who creates out of love and who "saw that it was good".

As topics for meditation one can begin with one's own life history as described and then relate to it texts or pictures or narratives of salvation history, in case the link between his expression of life's meaning and such texts is not already present. From what has been said, it is clear that texts expressing the theme of creation may come up here. Here one must notice that the biblical meaning of creation is much more all-embracing than the meaning one finds it given in theological or catechetical works, for in the Bible it forms a unity with God's salvific work through history up to and including Christ. In practice this means one can use a wide variety of texts of Holy Scripture in which the theme of salvation-creation rings out.

As regards method, much must be done in these first days of the Exercises towards entering into the practice of prayer. From the start one must pay attention to one's bodily position and the room in which he prays. This is applicable even where in an individual case one should be advised to use at first a freer and more relaxed method. In this connection, the practice of meditation on nature has its place in the Exercises. Another way would be to pray simply and slowly over a suitable psalm or a basic prayer such as the Our Father, the Apostles' Creed and like prayer texts, which have already played a role in the life of the exercitant. Through such forms of prayer the danger of intellectual speculation, which easily arises when the meaning of life is being dealt with, can be avoided.

At the end of this phase of the Exercises (which we have entitled "Beginning"), one should already have entered into a certain peace and recollection. The silence should no longer be felt as emptiness but rather, at least at times, as a pleasing opportunity to give oneself to a deeper experience of life and a deeper inner unity in life, and so to be, at least by intuition, in contact with the Thou who is full of mystery.

4. Absolute claim of the goal

Entering the Exercises by way of one's conception of the meaning and goal of life may seem dangerous to some. What man does not flee a little from his own reality into the world of ideals without responsibilities? When is a man's statement of meaning and purpose something that actually grows out of his life experience and no longer a projection of his unfulfilled wishes? Is not this danger especially great in so-called "idealists" who often are the people particularly involved in the Exercises?

The danger exists. It consists especially in two different worlds more and more standing forth: one world of ideals, in which charming dreams and successes--withheld in the real world--are available, and a real world which is, as one may view it, an evil world, a lost world, a world of appearances. The problem is serious, and when not enough experience of reality is present, the Exercises can be poison. This, because it will always push one further into a dream world. When, however, a foundation of healthy experience of life exists, the process of the Exercises attempts to solve precisely these problems.

The first step towards these solutions is to bar oneself from escaping into dishonest "compromises". The statement of meaning and purpose that the retreatant has tried to make more or less explicit on the basis of his past life or retreat experiences, raises an all-encompassing claim.⁴¹⁾ The meaning and purpose of the whole of life is referred to. There can be then no areas of life nor experiences that could find their meaning and so their justification anywhere else.

41) S.E. 23.

It is certainly hard to endure the tension between our ideal (which, in one's life development up to this point has had at least partial biblical justification) and our actual experience of life, above all of the marginal areas of that life of suffering and guilt. In any case, we are usually not conscious of this emotionally dark side when we consider the meaning and purpose of life.

Vice versa, when emotionally unpleasant demands stemming from our life goal arise, then we tend to forget or to repress this goal just enough so that our emotional pleasure is reconcilable with it. For a time we bracket and exclude something from the all-encompassing and absolute claim that our statement of meaning had already extended to every area of our life.

An exercitant's statement of meaning and purpose will always in some fashion, however different these ways may be, contain God as the absolute point of reference. Thus we can already state the unifying factor described above plainly and simply: God is the Lord of all things and of all spheres of life. I cannot, just for the sake of my own satisfaction, exclude something from His claims.

The last step of the Foundation phase of the Exercises is aimed only at gaining insight into the illogicality of trying to make such an exclusion. It is not yet a question of whether my conduct has or has not corresponded to this inexorable logic, and how I can bring this behavior to correspond to it. It is a matter rather of a simple consideration, through which the exercitant should become convinced that there cannot here exist any compromise. If service to one's fellow men is one's goal and what gives meaning to life, then service must be rendered also to evil men and to those hard to get along with. If God is the Lord, then He is Lord too of sickness and of war... The inexorability of this conclusion becomes more apparent when one begins to have doubts or hesitations about the "if"-part of the sentence above: Job understood much more about God when he complained to God in his suffering than does the satisfied bourgeois who shields his concept of God from question and danger by avoiding each and every form of suffering. On hindsight it becomes clear how important it was that the positive initial experiences of the retreatant have been able to be felt and re-experienced. Then the ex-

ercitant is able to face the consequences of his trust that "He who has begun the good work will also complete it". (Phil.: 1: 6)

This is the reason why these considerations lead to prayer. One can now sense something of the contours of this vast undertaking. It is an undertaking that exceeds the powers of the exercitant. What is to be accomplished is the re-ordering of the disorder in which the exercitant is caught. All this, so that the statement he has set forth about the meaning and purpose of his life may become true.

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Chapter II

THE CRISIS PHASE

I. THE START OF THE CRISIS

The further development in the Exercises process comes into play because the reality of the exercitant's personal life as well as his environment is not wholly in accord with the conception of the positive meaning and purpose of his life that he had projected for himself from his life experience up to now. There exists a tension between this conception and reality as it is. This tension has indeed existed even before now in the life of the exercitant. But if, in the first phase of the Exercises, he has dedicated so much time to the meaning and purpose of his life and to the positive experience on which it is based, the question as to "the other side" of reality cannot help coming up.

The "other side" is, on the one hand, all sorts of suffering and need; and, on the other hand, the exercitant's distance from the ideal. To use biblical terms: death and sin. With neither can the exercitant reconcile himself. Not with death because he believes in a good God. Nor with his personal sinfulness because he surely wants to live in conformity with God. Thus, the crisis starts here.

Depending on the individual involved, the words or images with which the movement towards the crises begins, vary greatly. Often, from his reflection during the phase of the Principle and Foundation, the exercitant of himself starts to talk about "the other side". Then he may perhaps also begin to talk about how far he still is from his intended goal, or to recognize the difficulties he encounters in realizing his goal, or to bring up obstacles encountered in his personal life history or in the problems involved in the structures of the world in which he lives. When he does not of himself bring up such questions and difficulties the Exercises guide must present to him "the other side",

in the form of images or texts for consideration. Good volumes with photographs about modern life, pictorial magazines and so on are suited for this. One can use not only current literature but also Holy Scripture for this purpose.

In doing this, the Exercises guide will orient himself according to the goal and ideal expressed by the exercitant during the phase of the Foundation, offering him now the counterpart. It is very important to pay attention to what the exercitant himself suggests and to which aspect of the materials he reacts. Here, the Exercises guide should not only listen to the problems directly revealed, but also pay careful attention to the meaning more indirectly implied in connotations and side comments or in difficulties mentioned. For quite often, such side comments give the direction where, behind explicitly expressed problems, one must search for the real problematic.¹⁾

If the process is to run its course rightly this real problematic must be allowed to emerge. How this is usually a texture of guilt and misfortune, will be dealt with later on. When the exercitant arrives at this point, the system he has used up to now breaks down or at least suffers damage. This system was a mixture of real faith and honest hope as well as illusions and defense mechanisms, with which he lived his previous life. But he also used it above all to find orientation and security amid the fluctuations of events and relationships. For this reason it is so threatening when this system is now touched. There we can now justifiably speak about a crisis. Crisis means separation. It is really a question of a separation of the authentic from the false, of truth from pretense. Something better lies behind the illusions. More substantial elements are released. This process does not stop even with the statement of meaning and purpose arrived at in the foundation phase. But inasmuch as this phase built on genuine experiences and contained valid elements of faith, it will, in the purifying process ²⁾, be changed and purified but not destroyed. How deep these changes will be depends on the degree to which genuine elements were already present before the crisis started. It can of course happen that someone has already

1) S.E. 6, 8, 10.

2) S.E. 10.

been shaken by a misfortune experienced or by personal guilt when he arrives for the Exercises.

This may perhaps be the real reason why he wants to make the Exercises. He is then already in the middle of the afore-mentioned crisis; he has a part of the above described process already behind him. One must always start where the exercitant is.³⁾

It can also be that someone, who arrives at the individual Exercises has already lived through a very deep personal crisis in his life and since then lives in a real openness and remains struck by what has happened to him. At first sight, it may not be easy to discern whether the equilibrium of a man is naive superficiality or already a genuine equilibrium achieved through suffering and crisis. If the latter is the case the person concerned will not struggle against considering themes like suffering in the world and personal guilt. It would then be possible in a few days to let the challenge of reality and gratitude for the mercy obtained to become so lively that the process of the Exercises could proceed to the next phase. If the exercitant, however, reacts by resisting becoming involved in the crisis, it is in general a sign that a serious crisis is still to come.

II. THE CONTENT OF THIS PHASE

The content proper to this phase of the Exercises is redemption, or to express it more exactly for the exercitant: "my redemption". For the sake of this redemption the exercitant must confront himself with the state of evil in which he finds himself.⁴⁾ The positive side seen as hope and promise stood in the center of the first phase. Now, in the second phase, one must go into the other side, the state of evil and sin, and this takes definite precedence: it is only in really experiencing this state that the gift of redemption can be longed for and felt.⁵⁾ Thus, above all at the beginning of this phase, evil in its double form of sin and suffering will constitute the main content of the meditations.

3) S.E. 4, 9 and 10.

4) S.E. 53, 54.

5) S.E. 60, 61, 71.

As set forth in the preceding section, it seems right in my opinion to start with what the exercitant himself mentions when continuing the approach started in the foundation phase regarding pictures and text materials. The Exercises guide will take up these leads and, through his guidelines for meditation, see to it that a deepening and extension of this understanding takes place during the meditation. It is recommended to use texts and images from Holy Scripture as well as materials from contemporary life --some photograph albums, magazine pictures, modern literature. There then results an interaction: on the one hand, the revealed texts, often known for a long time, become more relevant to reality through experiences of contemporary life; on the other hand, present experiences retain through the interpretation of the revealed texts their true dimensions. 6)

1. Recognizing the True Situation

In most cases the exercitant in his view of evil and sin in the world and in his own life is far distant from reality. He is a victim of that effort to anesthetize a situation which is very customary, even among Christians, to such a degree that one can talk of a kind of collective repression of the true situation regarding evil and sin. We touch here on the fact that the process of conversion does not merely involve man's activity and will but also his cognition. Even one who prepares himself for such Exercises and tries to think in line with his faith, is still quite blind and does not yet see with the eyes of God what happens around him, through him and in him, that is, does not yet see things as they really are. 7)

That is why experiences drawn from the life of the exercitant are usually no longer enough to carry on the process of transformation of which there is question here. The exercitant must be ready to open himself to the message and the witness of revelation. This can also be presented to him in the form of pictures, of 'profane literature' 8)

- 6) See this interaction also in the succession of the different "exercises" of the First Week, S.E. 45-71.
- 7) See the content of "the second prelude" and its form as prayer, S.E. 48 and 55; compare also S.E. 63 and 4.
- 8) Compare S.E. 74.

inspired by Holy Scripture, of letters and writings of the Saints, theologians or of believers in general. In this way, a deepening and broadening of one's understanding becomes possible. This was spoken of above, and will be made more explicit and detailed when we treat of the method of meditation in this phase. Even if the choice of concrete materials is determined at one and the same time by the exercitant and his problematic, one must be careful to see that both sides of the state of evil come into play: the moral-ethical side (in biblical language: sin), and the physical-factual side (in biblical language: death). In seeing the evil present in the world, a person comes to realize his share in causing that evil. This experiencing of guilt prevents his escaping from the reality of the evil he has caused. 9)

2. Recognizing the Thread of Evil

Many exercitants will indeed find in their lives no acts for whose evil consequences they spontaneously recognize themselves as guilty. They will rather have remained within the framework of an honest, even of a good Christian life, judging it by commonly accepted standards. To speak biblically, they will stand nearer to the figure of the Pharisee than to the publican and sinner. Should they now suddenly feel themselves to be sinners, dishonesty and interior repression threaten. Therefore Holy Scripture, from its first pages on, speaks of sin not merely in connection with death, but also shows that there is a thread running through the sins of an individual. Thus, one can speak about a history of sin.¹⁰⁾ Through consideration of this, there is greater likelihood of recognizing one's small mistakes, one's apparently harmless faulty attitudes and weaknesses as sharing responsibility for the history of sin, which as a whole has brought forth so much suffering and sorrow. ¹¹⁾ Here the apparent order of a bourgeois life shows itself to be a deceptive standard, because it is disturbed only by transgressions committed and not by love neglected and works omitted. In this manner, through con-

9) S.E. 51, 58, 60.

10) S.E. 55-61.

11) S.E. 58-61.

frontation with the true dimensions of life, the eyes of the exercitant will be opened to what he, in his constantly "good behavior", has unjustly withheld from others.

In addition, the consideration of the thread of evil reveals clearly that there is a Power of Evil, which is at work behind and through the actions and omissions of individuals. Whether one personifies this Power as Satan (which appears most reasonable to me in the face of reality) or not, does not appear so important to me, here. What is of importance is that the exercitant recognizes the pressure of evil, the urge towards evil, to which he is exposed. He must experience that the widely accepted concept of freedom, representing him as sitting on neutral territory and having sovereign choice between good and evil, is not in accord with man as he actually exists. His situation is rather one in which he is victim to the overpowering pressure of evil and is thus unable of himself to do good. The exercitant must come to the insight of this theological absence of freedom in unredeemed man, so that he will search for the Redeemer, who redeems him "out of this situation, doomed to death" (Rom 7,24). 12)

3. An Example

Let us try to clarify with an example what we have said so far. Let us assume that the exercitant has, during the first days of the Exercises, discovered trust as a basic experience of his life so far. For instance, a photo of a child, tugging on his father's coattails, has strongly appealed to him. (Genesis 12, 1-9), has fascinated him: Abram who upon the call of God left his home. As he continues he comes up against the fact that he, in his own life, does not live unbroken trust, that he experiences fear, and that his general behavior is not seldom characterized by cowardice. Through this he feels himself called on to pray for faith and trust. So far everything appears to be his own personal problem. Now the Exercises guide gives him the story of the Fall in Genesis 3 for meditation. He finds there, at the beginning of all evil, the rupture of trust between the first men and God. It becomes clear to him how,

12) S.E. 47.

according to Scripture, the lack of trust has catastrophic consequences. Illustrative material taken from modern life - a broken married life with small children, or the arms race of the big powers, for instance - shows him how human life is built on trust and is destroyed through mistrust, and convinces him after quiet and repeated meditation that his lack of trust is not a private harmless matter but a danger to be taken seriously. This may not yet have had any serious consequences for others merely because the right occasion has not yet occurred. On the other hand, it will appear evident to him from the examples considered that in life it is not only openness and love which await him, but that the struggle of life renders trust difficult and, humanly speaking, often impossible. How can I in an environment filled with mistrust build up trust? This question may not yet have pressed him too hard because he has so far lived in the relatively sheltered atmosphere of family and circle of friends. The widening of his field of vision beyond this warns him that the question has more importance than he at first suspected.

4. The Emergence of the Real Problematic

It can be shown in the example chosen how during the course of this phase the real problematic often first appears beneath the problem earlier articulated. Here the question of self-confidence, of courage in mastering life and activity, could be the real problem lying beneath the problem of trust. That, on the one hand, the positive experience of life is summarized in the word trust, that, on the other hand, fear and cowardice are present, besides the situation of a sheltered family life - all this taken together indicates the direction for the real problematic. Naturally, such a combination does not result in more than a conjecture. The Exercises guide must be on his guard not to take such conjectures for a clear knowledge of the real situation. But he can present, for meditation photographs and texts, on which the exercitant, now awakened, can comment, if the real problem lies in the conjectured direction. In the case described such could be a photograph (found in a certain photographic album) of a student, who surrounded by onlookers, and despite prohibition, paints on the pavement of a street. Or the account of Saint Peter who climbs out of his boat to walk over the lake towards Christ (Mt 14,

22.33). When the exercitant, using the material presented for meditation, discovers the deeper problem which is behind the original questions and failings touched on, then the time has come to talk with him about his own life history, the development of his relationships - above all towards parents, brothers and sisters and towards the opposite sex - and the shaping of his life. Here, the exercitant may discover the concrete localization of his problems. A recurring symptom - inability to trust - leads to the discovery of a deeper cause - fear of taking charge of his life - and is traced back to its origin: his not having freed himself from his parents.¹³⁾

It must once more be clearly underlined that the Exercises guide proceed very cautiously. His duty is not to make a psychological diagnosis. What he has to do is to give methodical and meaningful guidance for the meditation. It is in connection with this that he may and should direct himself in the choice of his material according to the requirements and the situation of the exercitant as he can assess them.¹⁴⁾ That is without danger as long as the exercitant meditates in the right way, which means meditating calmly and disinterestedly. That is why the Exercises guide must at all times in the Exercises have his eye on the

13) At first sight, Ignatius seems to have conceived the First Week in a much more simply and uncomplicated way. He contented himself with leading the exercitant to a repentance that included the affectivity and to a betterment of his life style, understood simply from a moral viewpoint. If one, however, considers the history of his own life as he himself narrates this in the "Autobiography", and his entire concept of grace along with the rules for the discernment of spirits, it becomes difficult for one to consider the exclusively moral concept of the First Week, which the book of the Exercises presents to us, as that really intended by Ignatius. What seems more to be the case is that the book of the Exercises - here as in many other points - contented itself with instructions for the beginning of the respective phase, hoping that all would then develop of itself out of a process correctly set in motion.

14) S.E. 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 17 and 18.

proper carrying out of the various exercises. If the relationship between the exercitant and his guide has developed as it should, the exercitant will of himself start to converse about what occurred to him during or after the meditation regarding his life and conduct. He should recognize symptoms by himself, discover deeper causes, and even indicate the neuralgic points of his life history which require being treated. The Exercises guide is in this process only the welcome opportunity for the exercitant to express outwardly what has been resolved during the meditation. Through careful questioning the Exercises guide can make it easy for the exercitant to express himself.

5. The Crisis of Truthfulness

The route described in the example, from the recognition of a lack of trust to the discovery of not having successfully freed oneself from one's family, makes it seem that the question of guilt has been reduced to a defect in one's normal development. In reality however the question of guilt is now in the right place. This is already indicated by the fact that the exercitant shows himself more deeply struck than before. Once able to speak rather freely about his lack of trust, words now seem to be faltering on his lips, accompanied perhaps with blushes or even with all kinds of veiled explanations. The Exercises guide becomes under these circumstances the witness of how the exercitant, struggling with himself, brings out only certain things. What may then surface is one's real guilt. But often what really constitutes the exercitant's guilt is not its objective dimension, but the dishonesty, pride or cowardice, which so far has constituted an obstacle to accepting the truth. When this happens the deeper cause of one's evil and sinful situation can be dragged around with one for months, years or decades. This poisons one's own life as well as the life of those around oneself. 15) At the beginning of this deeper cause the guilt of others may have had a share in it. The fact that it developed in this way is the responsibility of the one who "suppresses the truth" (Rom 1, 18).

15) S.E. 58.

It is thus that we can describe the crisis of which there is question in this phase as a crisis of truthfulness. When this step of conversion from lie to truth is finally taken, all now depends on whether the exercitant abandons himself to the boundless forgiving love which is offered to him in Jesus Christ. All argumentation and desire of self-justification have come to an end. What remains is repentant prayer and amazed gratitude for the unmerited grace received. Remission of sins is no longer only a legal act, but a personal relationship of love and trust. Thus experience is the real goal of this phase.

III. METHOD OF MEDITATION IN THIS PHASE

1. Method in Individual Meditations

From the content of this phase, presented earlier, results the method of meditation to be followed. Care at the beginning of the meditation, is here again, essential. 16) When one has taken the suitable, bodily position - which one has meanwhile already tested - and has quietly and in a relaxed manner recollected himself, an ordinary preparatory prayer follows. This has emerged from the content as well as the kind of dialogue developed so far in the course of the Exercises. It is prayer directed towards realizing in the exercitant's life the meaning and purpose that have been expressed: a prayer that the realization of this may begin already in the following meditation. To enter into the meditation in such a way is of the utmost importance because meditation thus becomes from the very beginning a place for reverence and receptivity, removed from all arbitrary self will of the person meditating.¹⁷⁾ In this phase, which is concerned at first with the situation of sin and evil, it is especially important that even this endeavor be framed in a posture of humble prayer for a gift.

After this the exercitant should pray for the fruit to be obtained from the meditation that follows. In this phase the concern is to recognize reality, including "the other side", to comprehend one's own guilt and limitations, to feel this. Such a concrete prayer only apparently con-

16) S.E. 75.

17) S.E. 3.

radicts the basically free character of meditation. For ruthfulness and purity are inherent goals of every form of meditation. If the process of the Exercises has gone on correctly, the time has now come to take the step in the stated direction. This prayer then does nothing more than situate in a concrete way the ordinary preparatory prayer. 18) One must pay close attention to the dialectic found in this second prayer: the will and the earnest readiness to take the relevant step renounces through prayer any arrogant independence. 19) Looking at it from the reverse side, the prayer is required to be serious when it is thus concretized in a definite situation. Even if at this stage of the Exercises one senses more tension than unity in this prayer, two essential elements of the process are nevertheless so joined with each other that later on in the Exercises they may grow more and more together into a unity embracing both elements of tension.

Together with this prayer for the concrete fruit on the meditation the exercitant will try to adjust his interior imaginative world to the content of the meditation. When I pray to comprehend the seriousness of my situation, I will not in doing so, think of a vacation trip in happy company. Pictures of situations come more appropriately to mind, in which I was closer than perhaps now to the seriousness fitting for the subject matter of sin and evil. At first, this endeavor may have something of the artificial about it. One should not spend too much time and energy on it. With time however one will experience that it is meaningful to use all the means that are at one's disposition, for an enterprise that one considers right.

After these preliminary steps, (much of the success of the meditation depends on the care employed there) one turns to the subject matter of the meditation. In this phase, apart perhaps from one or other meditation that is transitional between the foundation phase and this phase of crisis - there exists something objective which goes beyond the exercitant's memory and experience and of the concrete articulation of these, and which faces him as a mes-

18) S.E. 75, 46, 47, 48.

19) S.E. 63.

sage or testimony. To take in this content, whether it is presented in the form of word or image, is the first step.

This step is followed by a process of intellectual working-over of the content. Its goal is insight and understanding. During this working-over, combinations will be seen, connections made. Knowledge and the experience of one's life will enter in it. New things will be discovered, brought to light. When I said "intellectual", it can as a matter of fact have an intuitive character. First of all when a person meditates on a picture, what comes to mind more easily, are not abstract thoughts, but impressions which indeed reveal something, which mediate reality.

This entering into the subject is accompanied by certain feelings. First of all perhaps: curiosity, interest - or the opposite: boredom, indifference. This is followed by joy over a new discovery. Or, the exercitant wills to gain insight, but sees nothing. Correspondingly, emptiness and desolation will overshadow him. The confrontation with his own life takes place. The insight of having erred somewhere in the past, taking the meditation text as a standard, often does not evoke grief, but rather a sense of satisfaction at having found something that one can repent of. In this manner the affective element gradually becomes alive, still quite superficially maybe, based more on the subject matter and my momentary occupation with it than on my personal situation. 20)

When the exercitant, possibly in several attempts, has thus meditated upon the subject, he will return to petition to obtain the fruit of this meditation. He will simply repeat it, or, it may have, modified by the meditation, concretized itself in a definite direction. Thus the circle is closed.

20) This threefold step: - the taking up or making a fact present to one's mind - the reflectively working it over and gaining intellectual insight into it - the affective reaction - appears in Ignatian terms drawn from medieval philosophical-theological terminology as "consideration by the three faculties of the soul", as the triad of "memory, intellect, will"; most explicitly in the "First Exercise", S.E. 50-52.

2. Methodology During This Phase

During the process of the repetitions the weight moves always more and more towards the affective side. The two first steps, the taking up of the message and its consideration, become more of a kind of recapitulation and leave a lot of time to linger on the content discovered in this process. Here, the exercitant's being struck or not being struck by the matter has more time to extend itself. From this one's prayer of petition or gratitude becomes more and more intense. 21)

Therefore, when one considers the repetitions which are very essential for the process, then a clear deepening of the meditation towards one's real personal center and towards a dialog with God is to be recognized. The Exercises guide must see to it that this development will not be suffocated by too many materials, but, on the other hand, that it also is not dried up by too poor a content or that it does not degenerate in an unfruitful introspection. The meditation method in this phase is not a meditation without object. It is rather a meditative confrontation with the Word of Revelation and through it with God himself. This is why this Word must be introduced into the process. In the course of the days needed by this phase, the repetitions will increase in order to allow room for one's personal prayer and prayerful transformation.

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- 21) There is an analogy between the gradual penetrating of reality by the threefold step of memory-intellect-will used in each individual meditation, and the succession of the different exercises within the course of the "First Week" as it is proposed in the book of the S.E. The first one on the sin of the angels, etc. is a kind of taking up reality, as it is seen in Revelation; the second exercise with its different attempts of penetrating deeper into this reality with regard to one's own life corresponds more to the intellectual working-over to gain insight. The third and fourth exercises, being repetitions of the first two ones, give room for an affective reaction to this reality. The fifth exercise aims at a further deepening of that affective impression.

3. The Inner Dynamic

Because this phase is centered on the exercitant's acceptance of the truth about himself, the acquiring of insight will play an important role in this phase. But intellectual knowledge alone is not sufficient. In order that the truth may become a definite force in my life, I must have a genuine desire for it, that is I must love it. And even though love is not pure feeling, it has something to do with feeling; otherwise it is cold. Thus it is possible to describe the process of this phase also as the schooling of affectivity: 22) a maladjusted affectivity, which in turn so maladjusts man that he suppresses the truth, should be corrected, that means, adjusted according to reality. The conversion of man is essentially the conversion of his affectivity, from an affectivity that reacts egoistically to one that responds lovingly. Whether a conversion will be lasting or not depends much upon whether one's affective sphere has been properly reshaped in the conversion.

This change usually takes place in two steps. First, one must overcome the tendency to anesthetize one's state, which manifests itself affectively in a false peace and security. Then, the overcoming of discouragement, which generally sets in when the crisis can no longer be hidden. 23) Positively expressed: seriousness and trust. Both affective situations to be overcome are opposed to reality. The anesthetizing of one's real state beclouds the true situation and hinders one's taking decisive steps toward changing

22) Thus, in the three colloquies (S.E. 63) Ignatius makes the exercitant pray for "knowledge of the world", of everything (in the Johannine understanding) that, whether from inside or from outside me, comes to me as from a world shut off from God and that is a temptation to sin. When, however, what is concerned is the recognition of one's own guilt, one's own being a sinner, then Ignatius uses terms of affective perplexity: "shame and confusion" (S.E. 48), "sorrow and tears" (S.E. 55); compare also S.E. 65 and 63.

23) S.E. 314 and 315.

his situation. 24) The discouragement tends to lead one to give up the path one has already begun to travel. 25) These affective states are therefore not at all neutral but highly effective accomplices of evil. That is the reason why overcoming them is so decisive.

When we now want to follow up the process more in detail, we must first remember that this phase is preceded by a positive phase, - even if this took place perhaps some time or along time in the past, apart from the Exercises, - in which the exercitant through promise and hope was attracted to his present path. Without such a deep experience of hope one should not be allowed to enter the crisis phase. True, the first attempts, whose content deals with the theme of one's situation of sin and evil, will still be generally supported by a positive emotional situation. In these first attempts a certain type of joy in the intellectual discovery of new interrelationships in a complex subject plays as well a certain role. 26)

It becomes more laborious when there are no more novelties to discover, especially when one has recognized that one is himself in question. One should be struck, one has even understood that one should be struck - but nevertheless is not. In the meditations boredom and aridity arise. Disappointments appear. One longs for a change. Perhaps thoughts of pleasure come and one feels oneself urged to satisfy lower sensual demands. It becomes taxing to live through the fixed time for meditation. "What does it all mean?"

In this situation two dangers threaten: first, that one gives up. This can happen in very different ways. One can entirely give up the meditations, or at least shortens them. 27) Another way would be to look for new, interesting

24) See S. E. 314, which gives the extreme example of anethetizing evil: "those persons who go from mortal sin to mortal sin".

25) S.E. 315 and 2.

26) A way which Ignatius explicitly accepts and consciously employs as a possible means of getting into the process (see S.E. 2).

27) S.E. 12.

material in such a situation. The process of schooling one's affectivity would then, when it has hardly begun, come to a standstill. The first thirsty stretches of the interior way, which challenge self-centered feelings, induce the exercitant to turn back to the fleshpots of Egypt. Against this danger only an endurance without any compromise will be effective.²⁸⁾ A vigorous attitude vis-a-vis oneself is demanded here. Special care should be given to the beginning of the meditation. Time for prayer should not merely be kept exactly, but a few minutes should be added.²⁹⁾ Rather than indulge in self-pity, one should pray to God, worship him. One should not brood over the question of why and from where this aridity comes, but should simply continue to pray.³⁰⁾

The other danger is that the exercitant begins to produce feelings for himself. True emotions however can only be brought about indirectly through insight, conviction and the external situation.³¹⁾ Consequently every attempt to directly fabricate feelings must fail. It leads to unhealthy tension within oneself and sooner or later breaks down—perhaps with signs of physical strain, like headache, indigestion or at least inability to sleep.³²⁾

The generosity and commitment of the exercitant must therefore begin at the right place. This place can be exactly specified: it is the time proper to prayer and the attention that is to be given to it.³³⁾ Often the aridity that has appeared soon gives way to new consolation.³⁴⁾ But it is also possible—especially in the latter part of this phase—that the periods of such dryness last longer.³⁵⁾

28) S.E. 318, 319, 325, 327 and 13.

29) S.E. 319 and 325.

30) S.E. 13 and 321.

31) See the structure of meditation in the exercises of the First Week; esp. S.E. 48, 50.

32) Ignatius treats, in connection with penance, of how the physical state is indicative of the interior situation or of the measures possibly to be taken. S.E. 89.

33) S.E. 319.

34) S.E. 322.

35) See also S.E. 322 and 325-327.

ayer will then take more and more the form of a prayer hope and prayerful waiting. In this manner a new kind prayer develops which becomes more deeply conscious than fore of one's own powerlessness, as the exercitant discovers himself, in a very personal matter, dependent on the lp of the Creator.³⁶⁾

Time will be needed for the schooling of affectivity this way. For the meditations, this means primarily that ny repetitions take place.³⁷⁾ In these repetitions, now at the core subject matter has been taken up, thought rough and assimilated, one occupies oneself, in prayerful petition, with waiting until one is moved interiorly to a agree that is commensurate with the reality one has recog ized. This may happen very slowly and undramatically, or th a lot of ups and downs and dramatic turns and changes, which is to be expected if from the internal life history f the exercitant, some problem, till now covered over, sud only explodes. Thus may develop an interior, sober and rofound challenge and a felt experience of one's need for edemption. Based on experience, a period varying from 2 o 8 days may be necessary for this process.

The Exercises guide can certainly hinder this process f he himself does not believe in the seriousness of the iblical demand for conversion and does not require the exercitant to take the time he needs for it. There is a pontaneous tendency to spare the "poor" exercitant the ef ort of waiting for "feelings" when it seems to be enough to have good will" - as is easily said in mistaken kind- ness and friendliness. The Exercises guide absolutely must earn to integrate kindness and firmness in the right man- ner.³⁸⁾

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- 6) Compare S.E. 63 on the intensity of petition.
7) The importance of the repetitions is most clearly seen in that Ignatius assigns five exercises of the First Week for the course of one day, but specifies several days for the First Week, so that the following days, whose number depends on the actual course of the process, are once again "deepening repetitions" (Ex.64) of the first day.

- 8) S.E. 6, 7, 12, 14, 11.

When the anesthetizing of one's state is overcome, and now gives way to a commensurate seriousness, then shock at one's own seemingly hopeless situation, or dismay about one's being rejected, or even despair may arise as a new phenomenon. 39) It is also possible that the dryness described above may suddenly change into a very massive form of discouragement. The fact that at least some signs of this discouragement appear is a confirmation that the period of anesthetizing one's state is past. Everything then depends on strengthening and trust. As to content for meditation here, it is relevant to present texts and images which have for their subject matter God's promise of salvation, given without prior conditions. 40) The Exercises guide is now called upon to stand as a witness of the grace and mercy of God. 41) He must in his entire attitude arouse courage and trust. When confusion and despair - perhaps in the form of scruples 42) - become overpowering, and the exercitant finds himself continually sucked into a whirlpool of exhausting brooding, then the Exercises guide should advise him to take a half or a whole day off; or he should even energetically require it, in order to avoid greater problems. Such an escape would then be in this situation a required procedure of faith which here is the only way to overcome the tendency to depression and destruction. 43) Experience based on many Exercises retreats confirms that after a longer or shorter time of prayerful waiting and struggle, grace and mercy as a personal experience will be given as a gift to the exercitant. This experience is the proper goal of this crisis phase.

The false security at the beginning, with which one had anesthetized one's situation, and the threatening discouragement which may have followed, now give way to a profound gratitude. Earlier, the exercitant accepted his life with its manifold endowments and the offer of redemption made to him as something 'natural' and even implicitly demanded all this as if such were his right. Then this attitude perhaps threatened to totally reverse itself into a

39) S.E. 57-60 and 71

40) S.E. 61 and 53

41) S.E. 7; see also 326.

42) S.E. 345-351.

43) See S.E. 325-327 and 320.

signed pessimism. Now, at the end, he is struck with wonder and amazement that he still lives and that he lives in the situation he does, with all the opportunities thereby offered him. With this, he becomes rooted in a more personal attachment to his Creator and Redeemer.

7. INTEGRATION OF EXTERNAL ELEMENTS

The Exercises aim at the process of man's transformation. He himself should be changed. That is what is meant by the biblical term "metanoia" in its most radical sense. In this change all the layers and faculties of man must participate. In the preceding section special stress was laid on the transformation of the affective life, because this lies especially close to the depths of man as a person. In dealing with personal affectivity, the real difficulty of the whole endeavor here becomes clearest. Man has to change himself. In other words, to pull himself out of his own mire. But this is impossible. Such an endeavor can only succeed if man is not closed in upon himself. Grace is therefore not just an additional help, but the very condition making the whole enterprise possible: it is the transforming power, the motor of the movement taking place. But grace does not work by bypassing man and his faculties, but works through these. For that reason there is no contradiction with what was just said about the role of grace in the fact that what will now be discussed is the use of all means, even of external means. 44)

It is rather a sign that grace has reached the core of a man's personality when he decisively uses all available means to effect the change he knows to be necessary.

All means, we said, therefore also external means. Man is not merely spirit, but also body. The environment that he himself makes or chooses reacts on and influences him. Even when there are great differences between the extent of this reaction (compare, for instance, the influence on oneself caused by a film with the influence of having had coffee and cake), it is still essentially true that there

44) Compare with this the "additions" in S.E. 73, 74, 75, 76, 77-81 and 82-89.

is nothing without its reacting influence. This must be taken into account during the Exercises if one wants to use the precious time as effectively as possible. At the same time, there is certainly the danger too of slipping into a petty and picayunish approach which turns peripheral matters into essentials. But generally speaking, negligence and carelessness is the more common tendency with most exercitants.

What is here involved concretely? Food, drink, the use of pleasurable means (such as smoking, coffee, sweets), regulating time (punctuality in getting up, in going to bed, keeping of definite times), the manner and substance of recreation, the choice among sense impressions insofar as I can control them, control of imagination and thoughts insofar as it depends on me as to whether or not I occupy myself with them. Even though the meditations are the real substance of the Exercises, all these things also belong to them. They create, so to say, the atmosphere. Atmosphere is something very close to mood and so to affectivity. One who has discovered that his affectivity is lived not according to reality but according to a world of illusions that makes light of evil, is only consistent with himself when he tries to shape the external environment in such a way that it properly contributes to the schooling of his affectivity. 45) Interrupting the natural satisfaction of sensual wishes - by fasting, by cutting down on the use of pleasurable means or by temporarily giving these up altogether, by denying the senses occasions of distraction, - achieves for the meditations of this phase (here we are referring primarily to the first stage of this phase) that insertion into reality that is appropriate for them. Going further, the exercitant can impose voluntary severities on his physical constitution such as, for instance, unpleasant physical work, a hard bed, etc. I wish to leave it open as to whether forms of penance like flagellation, chain, etc. used in the Middle Ages are today still useful. 46)

In spite of the fact that modern man speaks much about the unity of body and soul, the whole subject appears to the majority of exercitants as something quite foreign, so that

45) S.E. 74, 78, 79, 80, 81.

46) Compare S.E. 82-86.

the Exercises guide may have to take the initiative. As in everthing else, he must here keep in mind the uniqueness of the individual and of his situation. Later on he must give special attention to motivation. To most exercitants such restrictions, especially voluntary ones, will appear quite artificial. The danger of sensationalism is present in this 47), but that does not constitute sufficient reason to fear it. This danger for the most part disappears quickly if the Exercises guide does not make a big thing of it. And, with repetition, the attraction of something new disappears and its sobriety and difficulty can be recognized. Such acts of penance should not become the most important thing in the Exercises. They must remain subordinated to the principal process which takes place in prayer. 48)

In the course of this phase the accomplishment of such things must become more and more something to be taken for granted. The motivation will also change. If at the beginning the resolution to use all available means was more in the foreground, there could follow the desire to make good what one in the past has lacked, even when one is conscious that such can really never be made good. At the end the motive of love, of conformity with the suffering Redeemer, may come into play. 49) During the stage of discouragement the Exercises guide must first of all be watchful that the exercitant does not try to force grace and mercy with such means. It is consequently necessary that the Exercises guide always knows what the exercitant is doing in these matters.

V . THE ROLE OF FAITH

The process of change which takes place in this phase of crisis is so all-embracing that it can only be described when its various aspects are laid down one after the other. Thus the fundamental role of faith which was mentioned in all the descriptions so far, should now be brought to the forefront since it has special importance. At the same time, the path of faith which the exercitant travels in this phase becomes manifest.

47) S.E. 88.

48) The auxiliary character is revealed clearly in S.E. 89.

49) S.E. 87.

In general one can describe faith as the vanguard, through which a man is always a bit ahead of himself. The tension between the vanguard and the main part of the army, to retain the metaphor, is what keeps the whole army on the march. The presupposition, of course, is that the vanguard have enough influence in the command headquarters that it at least participates in determining the route and speed of the march.

At the beginning of our phase faith stands as a positive fundamental conviction about life and about what is to be achieved in life, and as the hope that the enterprise is worthwhile and can succeed. In this, faith already transcends the experiences one has had, because these are only partial experiences. It bases itself on authorities - historical tradition, individual persons, favorite or outstanding texts, e.g. of Holy Scripture - which reflect more extensive experiences in the direction his faith is taking, than one's personal experiences can offer at the moment.

The statements of such authorities - possibly the Bible - now say to him that the state of sin and evil is wider and more all-embracing than his experience - or what he had considered to be his experience - has up to now been willing to admit. Should he now trust these statements more than the personal experiences he has so far encountered? The decision to use the statements of, say, the Bible about the situation of sin and evil as a basis for meditation, is something like a decision of faith. Faith is here involved in the acceptance of what Revelation says about sin as true. The decision, which the exercitant in moments of aridity and tedium has to face is along the same line: should he believe the statements of witnesses, that salvation and its absence are things which intimately concern the very depths of the whole man, or should he remain "reasonable" because "nobody is perfect". In both situations it is a question of accepting as valid a truth not experienced so far, and giving it a chance to prove itself true in my own case.

The decisive importance of faith in moments of discouragement is clear. Here faith takes above all the form of trust and hope, which the exercitant holds on to as something positively meaningful in the face of the negative ex

perience of the moment. 50) Here it may come to a hard struggle to persevere in faith. Recalling former experiences of "light" can be of great help in the present "darkness". The Exercises guide may offer support through his own confidence. Thus faith is the solid staff on which the exercitant, in the different moods that threaten to throw him back on himself, can rely, and through which he can gradually transcend himself. During this process, faith develops from an as yet self-confident view of the whole, through permitting truth to establish its validity, to, finally, personal trust.

VI. ENCOUNTER WITH CHRIST

Scripture speaks about sin and guilt in the all-embracing context of grace and mercy. It speaks about sin and guilt only for the sake of grace and mercy. This also constitutes the dynamic of this crisis phase. It is proper therefore, from the very beginning, not to exclude grace and mercy from the meditation. 51) This is not very easy. At the beginning the danger could be that one's guilt and hopelessness does not seem so bad, because there is grace and mercy. To counter this danger it is helpful to introduce grace and mercy into the meditations in their real form: the crucified Jesus Christ.

This is all the more fitting since the cross of Jesus is the result of the "crossing" of the path of sin and evil with the path of the love that Jesus actually had in his life. Of all the possible ways to show the mechanism of sin and evil, the most direct way is through the cross. Here it becomes clear that the crucifixion of Jesus is a consequence of a world enmeshed in sin and evil. When one thus meditates on Jesus Christ in the context of the real situation, it also becomes clear that his sacrificial death was not something accidental, but in fact the end of a life lived without compromise according to the will of God, an end brought about by wickedness. From that point of view, a better and more understandable approach to Redemption can be gotten. Whatever the case, we see Jesus Christ before

50) S.E. 320, 321, 326.

51) S.E. 53 and 54.

our eyes in his humanity and in his giving of himself. 52)

Texts and pictures taken from the account of the Passion are therefore here especially suitable for meditation, not only because grace and mercy become visible in their real form, but also because the different forms of guilt, in which I have a share, become clear to me in this direct confrontation with Christ. Pilate, the high priest, the Pharisees, the Scribes, the rabble and the various disciples - in one of these ways I also have broken with the Christ of love. That this death of this Son of God become man - which might be expected to provoke the supreme wrath of God - is actually our salvation: this is a simple truth of faith, in the face of which only amazed gratitude is possible. 53) The certitude of this develops from the resurrection from the dead of the Crucified One. In this act God clearly ranged Himself on the side of him who had died and gave his death, endured in patience, redemptive meaning. In this way the whole Paschal Mystery of death and resurrection is present in the meditations of this phase, just as in Scripture the cross, as the message of salvation, includes the resurrection.

In the course of the repetitions the calm factual analysis of the events concerned with the crucifixion and my share in it becomes more and more a personal encounter. The exercitant acknowledges more and more that he did not act against a law, but that he mistreated a man of flesh and blood, that he acted in solidarity with those who then murdered Christ, even when his guilt did not touch Christ directly, but touched other defenseless men. That is why he is moved by the patient and forgiving love of Christ, who accepted the injustice brought on him without calling upon the wrath of God to defend him.

Thus a genuine process of interaction goes on here: the frightening awareness of evil, sin and guilt calls for grace and mercy; the amazing experience of grace and mercy opens one's eyes to mistreated love and thus to deeper insight into evil, sin and guilt. More and more, there exists

52) Compare S.E. 53 with 193 and 197.

53) S.E. 53.

an eye-to-eye confrontation between the one who is guilty and the one who was mistreated. 54) The absurdity of all legal claims before God is recognized. There is less and less a factual objective reason to be found, either for my guilt or for the forgiveness I have experienced.

In this prayerful dialogue a personal relationship develops between the exercitant and his redeemer, Jesus Christ. 55) With regard to the further course of the Exercises, this is of utmost importance. Christ is no longer only a kind of ideal, not only a demanding standard of conduct or something similar, but the one to whom the exercitant owes his personal wholeness and salvation, that is, everything. This amazed gratitude will from now on characterize his prayer.

VII. THE END OF THIS PHASE

The process of transformation, with which this second phase of the Exercises, that we have called the crisis phase, is mainly concerned, has very many facets. Which of these various aspects appears in the foreground, and thus determines the way one speaks about the process, can differ from one exercitant to another. Let us now try to look back and summarize what has been taken up in the various parts describing this phase, so that the goal to which the whole phase has been leading may become once more clear.

As far as the temporal sequence of events is concerned, the process generally develops in two stages. In the first stage, the false security that anesthetizes one's state of evil is overcome and a personal confrontation results. In the second stage this confrontation develops into confusion or despair, which is overcome by surrender in faith to a saving Thou. The two stages may also overlap one another, so that the whole process preceeds in several self-generating waves. Here a process of purification of one's affectivity takes place. Through the alternating of satisfaction and frustration (the right attitude in time of frustration

54) "As I see Him in this condition, hanging upon the cross, I will meditate..." (S.E. 53).

55) S.E. 54.

is decisively important) a selfless affectivity, oriented toward reality and attuned to personal values, gradually develops. With regard to content the development moves from the level of moral transgression to the level of existential guilt.

For this, it is essential that the exercitant realize how deeply one depends on the other, and that misery and guilt are interwoven. Prayer becomes more simple, more personal and becomes more of a dialogue; therefore perseverance in moments of dryness is of great importance. The integration of external elements advances the overall unity of the person, in which intellect, emotion, desires and wants, bodily position and external behavior are integrated into an "I". Faith is exposed to certain trials and grows in the process: from an idealistic view of life, through the acceptance as true of important, and now decisive, statements of the Message, to the trusting surrender to Christ, to whom I owe everything. The goal to be attained through all these: for the exercitant to experience that he is redeemed in the most comprehensive sense of this word; for this experience to become so strong and so personal that henceforth the Redeemer will be the center of his life.

When is this goal reached - that is, when has the exercitant come to the end of this phase? At what signs does the Exercises guide recognize that the process of this phase is finished and that he can continue the course of the Exercises? It is clear that this question cannot be answered in terms of an external time measure, such as, after five days. Here, indeed, lies one of the decisive advantages of the individually-guided Exercises: that such a question can as much as possible be answered in terms of the interior or development of the exercitant. So the question becomes all the more important. In practice, it is for the most part up to the Exercises guide to answer this question. For the exercitant of himself does not have any idea of his further course.⁵⁶⁾

This having been said, we already touch on a criterion on the basis of which the Exercises guide can tell whether

56) S.E. 11

he may go forward. As long as the exercitant holds on to his ideas about the Exercises and in general about his own spiritual path and lets himself be determined by this, the complete surrender to God, in which he trustingly allows everything to be given to him, has not yet taken place. He has not yet had the liberating experience that he is secure through grace and mercy, and needs nothing else beyond that. Thus, the readiness, I would almost say the inclination, to stay longer in this phase, is one of the criteria that the new phase can start. But that alone naturally does not suffice. Besides, it must be noted that this readiness to remain where he is, may well go hand in hand with the existence, for the exercitant, of a certain question to be decided (whether or not he should let himself be elected to the parish council, for example), and that, based on this, he is thinking of the further course of the Exercises. But while at the beginning of the Exercises he may have been dominated by a certain anxiety to find the right answer quickly to his problem, he is now at peace with regards to this question, because he has experienced that God is at work, and works differently than we suppose.

In the last sentences a second, positive criterion was also indicated: confident security in God. This can certainly manifest itself and be felt in very different ways. What is perhaps most important is that the exercitant now no longer anxiously hide his weaknesses and mistakes, his guilt and his having-been-hurt, but can freely admit them - not only before God, and before himself, but also before other men - without of course having to broadcast them. This interior freedom, - I might almost say: a certain reveling in it - would be a criterion that he has experienced in faith essentially what Paul calls the unconditional justification of the wicked through pure grace. Hand in hand with this, there takes place a deeper personal relationship to Christ who embodies this mercy for the exercitant. It must, indeed, be noted here that this personal relationship can be developed also with the Father of Jesus Christ. Even in this case a personal relationship to Christ is implied; only, He is here not the final person addressed, but rather the permanent channel to the Father, and remains unarticulated.

As a further criterion, genuine humility can be mentioned. A humility that is truth: a humility to which the

exercitant does not have to work himself up, but which is simply the result of the truthfulness attained about himself and his situation. It shows itself primarily in that one no longer makes any great demands, for one is aware one has a right only to punishment, and that anything else is based on grace. With some exercitants this criterion may show itself in having to come down from their perfectionistic ideals, which also constitute a type of demand. And for someone it may mean to humbly demand his rights from others, since his personal limitations indicate this as necessary.

As a last criterion, a definite freedom must be reached in dealing with one's own needs. The Exercises guide must be very alert in judging about this, to insure that real freedom is not confused with repression. What is meant is that physical needs and sensual desires exist and are felt, and perhaps from time to time even give one a great deal of trouble, but that they are not simply indulged, that one learns to tolerate a certain frustration without the necessity of substituting some other satisfaction. How far the exercitant is able to go in this direction during the Exercises, will depend a great deal on his practice in this regard, when he began them. However, before he can enter in to the next phase of the Exercises he must have learned to practice this freedom as a matter of course in the carrying out of the Exercises, which does not always mean practising it with ease. 57)

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- 57) It may perhaps seem to some, that the standards given here for attaining the goal of the second phase of the Exercises are set too high. The standards are indeed very high and comprehensive. But I believe that what is here involved is the inherent goal of an inner process which (from the outside) one cannot simply change arbitrarily. It is the task of the Exercises guide to help the exercitant himself to allow this process to unfold in the best and most effective way possible. This certainly depends in part on taking the necessary time. Should one wish prematurely to "go further", one would either try to do something that is impossible, that is, to begin a new phase which presupposes one's
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To conclude, one word more as to what it means to speak of the goal and end of a phase. It does not mean, that one thing is ended and left behind, as in a work including several volumes: one is closed and another is opened. The image of a building of many stories fits better: one floor rests on the other. It is only when what was built so far continues to exist that something else can be built on it. It is only when the attitudes which are described as the goal of the second phase are further lived that the way can really continue. Humility as truthfulness and as security in the mercy of God, freedom with regard to one's own wants (always difficult) in the knowledge that dangers ahead remain, are the ground floor on which everything rests. And under this is the basically positive attitude (gained in the first phase) that is the foundation of the whole building.

It may happen that an exercitant in the Exercises lasting eight or ten days may not be able to go beyond the two phases described so far. From experience it can even be said that in the majority of instances such is the case. As hopefully may appear from the description of the various

57). (Cont.) having reached the goal of the previous phase, or to further the ongoing process by false means. In the latter case, the exercitant would simply be continuing the "old" phase, because interiorly he can do nothing else. The Exercises guide, on the other hand, would be suggesting materials and methods to him which aim at something different; that would certainly be no help. In the earlier case, the exercitant would try to enter into the new materials and use the new methods. The result is a dangerous, unreal exercise, in which the exercitant and the Exercises guide are deluded. This is all the more dangerous, since in the next phase, the third phase of the Exercises, the theme of discipleship comes into the foreground, and what is aimed at is a concrete decision concerning one's entrance into this discipleship. But where such decisions base themselves on illusions, catastrophe cannot be avoided, even when this catastrophe often will be postponed for a long time - even perhaps to the hour of one's death.

parts of these phases, one need not fear that this will result in a one-sided outlook. Where the process of this phase of the Exercises really has reached its goal, there is no gloomy, warped approach in faith, no ascetical fixation, no unbalanced sinner mentality to be expected. The Paschal Mystery which stands in the center of the New Testament revelation, also stands in the center of this phase.

On the other hand it would be disadvantageous, even dangerous, to start the second phase but not reach its goal. Above all when the personal problematic of the exercitant breaks into the open, the Exercises ought not be discontinued. If because of pressing outside necessity the Exercises cannot be extended, another way must be found - perhaps the so-called "open Exercises", - in order to continue the process that was started. The exercitant will in this situation make every effort to make a continuation possible.

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Chapter III

ADMISSION TO DISCIPLESHIP

I. NEW START

1. With Him - for the World

When a man has passed through the crisis about which we spoke in the last chapter, and has experienced in his own life what redemption means, he has become free from himself. He is freed for God through Christ. If the Exercises continue, then he continues on in this direction. Even if it is true that, after the crisis phase, one does not have to continue with the Exercises, there still exists an inner dynamic which urges one to go on. Just as Christ died for me, and in so doing rescued me from a desperate situation, so I am now faced with the question of what I can do for him and with him, in order to pass on to others the salvation which I have experienced.¹⁾ During the crisis the whole process had centered on myself. Now my vision widens again to embrace the whole world.²⁾ This vision is no longer a naive vision, unaware. It penetrates the outer appearances of the world, reaching to the very core of salvation.³⁾ The exercitant, who has himself stood on the edge of the abyss, cannot soon forget this abyss. He can therefore no longer be a neutral spectator, but feels himself called. He knows he is responsible for the salvation of others.⁴⁾ Now that the anxiety for himself has been taken away from him, he is gripped by a new concern for others.

It is also clear from the very beginning that the responsibility for the salvation of others cannot be accom-

1) S.E. 53 and 54. Compare with Rom. 14: 7-9.

2) S.E. 95.

3) S.E. 95.

4) S.E. 96. See the whole first part: S.E. 92-94.

plished on one's own, but only by being inserted into the great process of salvation authored by God that we call salvation history.⁵⁾ Concretely this means: in union with Jesus Christ.⁶⁾ That is why it is exactly on this point that the Exercises now go forward. Jesus Christ is the content of prayer. Now, however, the central motif is no longer, as it was in the crisis phase, Christ-for-me, even if the consciousness that he "loved me and gave himself up for me" (Gal. 2: 20) must remain alive.⁷⁾ Rather is it Christ-for-the-world, the Head of creation, under whom all should be unified (Eph. 1:10) who tirelessly struggles for the salvation of all men, who still struggles today - through men - for the fullness and salvation of the world.⁸⁾

This means an extension of my relationship with Christ: from "Christ-for-me" to "Christ-for-the-world-with-me". This can also be expressed in dialogue form: after Christ lived and suffered for me, and thereby saved me, there arises in me the question of what I can now do for him. In doing so, however, I can never leave him behind, and set about this work as simply something to be done. Rather, this work is a collaboration with him.⁹⁾ Here lurks one of the rocks on which, if one is not careful, one can suffer shipwreck. This would happen if one were to detach himself from the total dependence experienced deeply in the previous phase, and enter into this new undertaking on his own power. The exercitant, therefore, in all these meditations (about whose precise content and method more will be said below) must remain in a personal Christ-relationship, and must not slip into merely object-oriented thinking and feeling.¹⁰⁾

2. The Personal Invitation

This means that the exercitant cannot make this step

5) S.E. 95.

6) "Whoever wishes to come with Me, must labor with Me, so that following Me in suffering, he may also follow Me in glory" (S.E. 95).

7) Compare the offering which starts with the words, "In the presence of Thy infinite goodness" (Sp. Ex. 98) .

8) S.E. 95.

9) S.E. 98.

10) S.E. 97 and 98.

towards collaboration with Christ by himself, but that he must be invited to it in a personal way by Christ. This invitation comes to me personally and individually, not just in general as would a proclamation. 11) It is therefore not perceived in the way that one understands something universally valid. Rather it is experienced as an unmistakable call. That which is universal applies first of all to everyone, and so also to me. Here, it is something that applies to me; whether to others too, remains open. In any case, the character of the invitation as a summons does not spring from its general validity, but from a personal relationship to Christ, who calls me. 12)

In saying this, something is already said about the content of this invitation. Certainly it is an invitation to collaborate in the salvation of the world. But because this salvation is not a "thing" that can be resolved with sufficient commitment, because the salvation of the world is much more its Christification and therewith its being led home to the Father, 13) the primary content of the invitation is the invitation to travel the same path that Christ walked for the salvation of the world. Just as the apostles, who through the words of Peter confessed their adherence to Christ, were shown by Christ the way of suffering that lay ahead, so the exercitant, who has recognized Christ as his own salvation and who acknowledges that he is called by him, is called to the same path. 14) The worth of the individual's acknowledgement of Christ depends on his readiness to follow this way.

In line with this, the maintaining of a sober and honest approach leads to a more precise grasp of the nature

- 11) Compare the text of the second prelude and that of the offering (Sp. Ex. 91 and 98).
- 12) Sp. Ex. 91 and 98 show the uniqueness of what takes place, not as a matter of course but as an individual event "in the presence of Thy glorious Mother and of all the Saints of Thy heavenly court...".
- 13) This is the real meaning of the Ignatian metaphor (the most fitting one for his time) of the conquest of "the whole world and of all My enemies" (Sp. Ex. 95). Compare the Preface of the Feast of Christ the King.
- 14) S.E. 98.

of this way. In traditional Christian terminology one sums this up in the picture of the way of the cross. This however very easily remains an abstract, general concept, with no genuine validity in reality for the exercitant. Even if it is not yet a question here of finding that point in the life situation of the exercitant where his following of Christ along his path is made specific and concrete, still the way of Christ, to which one freely commits oneself, must remain something capable of being experienced by the exercitant in all its inhuman hardness.¹⁵⁾

Moreover, from the content of the invitation, what has just been said about the way in which the invitation is issued becomes clear. Here the exercitant can no longer do anything by himself, on the strength of his own power, to consciously and freely prepare himself for Christ's way of suffering - "for men it is impossible, but not for God". (Mk. 10:27) Therefore the response to the invitation of Christ cannot be given in a direct reply: I am ready. It can only be formulated as a prayer for this readiness.¹⁶⁾

3. The Image of Christ

The content of the contemplation is above all Christ in his universal salvific importance. This phrase precisely conveys the content of the New Testament. All the different writings of the New Testament deal with this. Of course the accents given, and the many approaches through which one arrives at the acknowledgement of Jesus as the Christ, are very different. It is not here the place to develop further the unity and differences of the New Testament Christologies. To mention it at this point is, however, important, since it is now a matter of discovering the approaches and accents which fit the exercitant. The guide must - drawing on the Exercises process so far and on what he knows of the exercitant - consider what suggests itself in this context. That is, whether he judges as more suitable for stimulating the exercitant's personal encounter with Christ the Johannine Christ in conflict with "the Jews", or the "cosmic" Christ of the epistles to the Ephesians.

15) Sp. Ex. 97, 98, 157.

16) The offering is made in the form of a prayer (Sp. Ex. 98).

ians and Colossians and of the Apocalypse, or the Jesus of the individual Synoptic passages, or the Christ of the personal Christ-mysticism of Paul which can be grasped in the letters to the Philippians or Galatians. 17) For this is clear: none of the New Testament images of Christ will be precisely that of the exercitant. One's own use of the texts of Scripture aims rather at a direct, irreplaceable, individual encounter with Christ. The Scriptural text is merely a stimulus, a means, and an expression of this, but not the thing itself. 18)

Such an encounter will at first only be vaguely sensed, or be able to be experienced for but a brief moment. Only when these flash impressions and signs experienced little by little take shape may something like a personal "picture of Christ" result. This however remains essentially incomplete. Yet with each new encounter new lines are added. If one can rather sense this mysterious process than describe it, 19) it may perhaps become clear also how the different texts of the New Testament retain their meaning and yet appear in an ever-new light. Thus the choice, rhythm, and the effectiveness of such texts can be for individuals very different.

For guiding the exercitant it is therefore important once again to emphasize the variety of possibilities. 20) In the case of one person, Christ can already be so much present as a result of the meditations of the First Week - the previous phase - that he can now simply once again contemplate the passage or passages or the picture from which he received so much. In doing so he will discover by himself the varied accents that were spoken about in the paragraph above. Another person arrives through a single passage of the gospel at his Christ, who calls him and sets

17) Ignatius offers the exercitant a particular image of Christ: Christ the King, described with all the attributes of a medieval feudal lord (Sp. Ex. 91-98). Today, sociological reality is much too complex to have one and the same image correspond to all exercitants.

18) Compare Sp. Ex. 15.

19) See the introductory petition throughout the whole Second Week (Sp. Ex. 104).

20) See Sp. Ex. 4, 17 and 18.

him in motion. Quite suitable for such "encounter-meditations" are especially the texts describing encounters in the Synoptic writers or in John. Others find their personal approach through the hymn-like texts of the epistles to the Colossians and the Ephesians, or of the Apocalypse or the Gospel of John. Another good possibility is offered by Christ's own assertions about himself in St. John's gospel. Some are especially struck by their meeting Christ in the Christ-encounter of St. Paul (as expressed particularly in Phil. 3; Gal. 2: 16-21; Rom. 8: 31-39; 2 Cor. 4; 2 Cor. 5: 11-15; or in the great confession of faith of 2 Cor. 10-12). 21)

Here what is important is that the person of Jesus Christ as sent by the Father is clearly seen through the text. What is essential are not the details, these or those traits or events, but that one sees the whole. For this reason it seems legitimate to me to bring the different passages together, e.g., to combine passages of Paul with those of the Synoptics, to "fill out" John's images with concrete narrations from the Synoptic gospels. Another possible way for most exercitants - since many passages of the gospel are familiar to them - is to go through many events of the life of Christ as unified under one title or theme.

For these contemplations good representations of Christ can serve well. Besides old pictures, medieval miniatures in books, Gothic glasswork or Roman frescoes, and modern paintings like those of Rouault can be considered. The picture chosen should represent Christ as the one who addresses me, who makes a claim on the person contemplating. It is quite possible to use both a text and a picture to help one contemplate; in this way one can shift from the picture to the text and vice versa.

Another approach to the contemplation of Christ would be pictures or texts from one's environment in which the need for fulfillment and salvation is strikingly visible. In addition to this a text or picture can be given in which Jesus in his life and activity can be recognized as an answer to the World's needs. In this way, the relevance of contemplation as a whole to today comes out.

21) S. E. 100.

4. The Dynamic of Generosity

If the exercitant during the crisis phase has really experienced being saved after having been hopelessly lost, then it is clear to him that his life from now on belongs to God and that the proper task of his life - even before taking any decision as to his calling and state of life - is his collaboration in the salvific work of Jesus Christ. He no longer places any conditions on this collaboration,²²⁾ as for instance that his collaboration within the framework of the work to be accomplished must be especially important or visible. Indeed he knows that he can in no way make any more claims, that the simple fact of his being alive really is a pure, undeserved gift of the mercy of God. In this inner peace and simplicity he contemplates Christ and while listening he perceives to his own wonder that Christ is personally turning to him. Christ invites him to come "with him".

With this invitation something new begins. Up to this point the Exercises dealt with hard necessities. It was important to overcome first the minimizing of the truth and then the feeling of the desperateness of the situation in order to face reality for what it is and to experience it as liberation. There what was spoken of was love, the unfathomable, merciful love of God. But this love was an utter necessity for me: it was my only salvation. The invitation now given is for me no longer necessary for salvation.²³⁾ Christ's personal turning towards me in this invitation is something of an unfathomable predilection that springs from friendship.

Friendship cannot be produced. One must wait until one is invited. Only then can one be admitted to it. Therefore at no point in the Exercises treated up to now is the continuation of the Exercises more questionable than at this point. Even if one may rightfully assume that Christ turns personally to each man, whether the time he wills to do so is precisely at this very moment remains quite an op

22) S. E. 97: "... in every service of their Eternal King and Universal Lord".

23) S. E. 18.

en question. Here again it becomes clear how little one can plan the Exercises in advance. 24)

The Exercises guide will therefore have to pay close attention to see whether the exercitant is experiencing the state of peace and contentment in which he is satisfied with what Jesus has done for him, 25) and furthermore does not confuse superficial enthusiasm for a personal ideal with the personal invitation of Christ. It is question much more of a deeply interior and generally also a quiet process, which thrives better in a dispassionate atmosphere. Here the exercitant waits passively and listens.

When "the invitation" is communicated, the exercitant experiences it in an incomprehensible inner urging or yearning for Christ and his way. 26) He cannot then satisfy himself with a simple readiness to collaborate, but is pressed to respond to the unfathomable predilection of Christ with disinterested and special service. A new dynamic bursts forth, the dynamic of personal love, which no longer can be grasped through external, objective concepts and standards. The exercitant feels himself pushed in this direction, but knows at the same time that he needs the permission of his Lord in order to do anything. Such is the setting of the offering with which he tries to answer the invitation. 27)

The direction of this offering is determined by the path the Lord has taken. To accept not only suffering, injustice, mockery, sickness and finally even death, but in these very experiences to come closer to Christ who invites —that is the need felt by the one invited, although it cannot base itself on any factual reason. 28) Here the real difficulty involved in what he is offering must calmly be realized. The exercitant must also remain aware of the fact that in his responding he remains dependent upon Christ's invitation, which makes such love possible. There

24) S.E. 11.

25) See the criteria for the end of the crisis phase, above.

26) S.E. 97 and 98.

27) S.E. 98

28) S.E. 95 and 98.

fore the form his offering takes is prayer, and a constant prayer involving readiness to live out his offering when God so approves. This situation of inner suspense can be compared to that of a 100-meter track runner crouched at his starting point, anxiously awaiting the shot of the starter's pistol. Considered from the point of view of the athlete - actually raring to go and held back only by the rules of the game - an earlier start is preferable to a later one. Similar is the case of the exercitant in the offering with which he has responded. He is already interiorly identified with it, ready to plunge into anything however difficult, but only when the Lord allows him to do so. Experience shows that this step - fundamental for continuing the Exercises - can hardly ever be achieved in one meditation. Most often, the exercitant lingers here one to two days. In doing so one can progress step by step: first, the contemplating of Christ in the overall sense described above, then the turning to Christ's work of salvation and his invitation directed to me, in the hope that the dynamic just described may take hold. This dynamic could then be deepened in succeeding repetitions. What would indeed be important in this process is that the step taken earlier be taken again repeatedly in the next meditation, so that the many different parts are not simply juxtaposed, but that a whole results.

It seems to me of the utmost importance that the Exercises guide have the courage to wait for the personal call of Christ. If he does not arrive at the conviction that such a call, however quiet and inapparent, is now being addressed to the exercitant, then he cannot continue the Exercises in the sense here described.²⁹⁾

- 29) In such a case, how to proceed depends on the exercitant's situation. The way so far covered in the Exercises has brought him great gain and basically changed his life. This way would now be concretized in some of its basic lines or, the situation suggesting it, in a decision to be taken. For this, meditations on the Gospel can be helpful. However, they will not then be contemplations in the sense of the following paragraphs, but meditations as already practiced in the preceding phase. A decision taken in such a situation would also not be an "election" in the sense of the Exercises text, but an "ordering of one's life" on the
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II. BECOMING FAMILIAR WITH JESUS

1. Getting to Know a Person

The inner logic of the meditations of Christ just described seems to lead directly toward a decision for Christ. A reform of life, the ordering of the whole in collaboration with him, perhaps even a concrete change in one's life - this now seems to be the next step to be considered.

Actually it may happen that the invitation which the exercitant has received personally from the Lord has become so unmistakable and concrete that there no longer remains any room for further searching, probing and questioning.³⁰⁾ The exercitant would then already be in the period of election and should receive the appropriate introduction and help.³¹⁾ Such a case would however be exceptional. Yet when this case actually seems to be occurring, it is necessary to check with great care as to whether this is really Christ's invitation that is already so concrete and definite, or whether the exercitant in his desire to do something for Christ has himself imperceptibly concretized the invitation.³²⁾

In most cases the contemplations of Christ, even when these have used up one or two days to treat fully their elements (Christ as Saviour of the world, his personal invitation to me, my response), will result in a beginning rather than a conclusion. After the unity of these elements has been experienced, they now need room to fully unfold themselves.

This holds true especially for the first part: Jesus Christ. The view of the whole, which the last exercises

29) (Continuation)

basis of the First Week. For this, one may use the "methods of making a choice during the third time". See below what is said about this "time" or way, and about the different ways of making an election.

30) S. E. 175 and 330.

31) S. E. 336.

32) Compare section IV, "The Election".

treated, can easily become diverted into an abstract scheme. In a personal encounter, however, one does not possess a person. One rather knows a person so as to get to know him better. If one loves the person, one seeks out possibilities of contact by which one can become more familiar with him. One wishes to be with the person in order to experience with him what he does, how he speaks, acts and reacts, what sort of friends he has, what life-style he prefers, and so forth. You cannot describe a person by principles, views, explanations, even if all of this is important. Only his life tells who the person is.

In order to take up life in its concreteness one has to be present. Only the senses can experience the unchangeable personality of a man. Only through the inclusion of such sense elements can what was only a spiritual outline become an individual person, whose ideas one is not only convinced of, whose life one not only admires, but with whom one has a warm-hearted and sympathetic relationship. Whenever in ordinary life men deal with one another - and this is true also in a group - it is not just their words that are important, but also the entire supporting background of the words as revealed in non-verbal communication (for instance, looks, gestures, bodily posture and movements), as well as its accompanying interpretation and the continuing shape it takes. Through all this the flow of encounter between one man and the next unfolds itself fully. So too the encounter with Christ can unfold in this totally human dimension.

2. A New Form of Prayer

This process is contributed to by a new form of prayer that we will call contemplation. In the preceding phases of the Exercises, the topic of meditation, the message, was taken up in its spiritual content and was then intellectually assimilated. In this way, especially through repetition, a deeper sense of being personally involved, of being the person concerned, resulted. The movement of contemplation, however, begins with the vivid elements of the text. One sees the person, hears what is said, becomes a witness to the event.³³⁾ In this way the encounter or the

33) This threefold approach to each of the "mysteries of the life of Our Lord" is explicitly described in the instructions for the first two contemplations (Sp. Ex. 106-108 and 111, 115, 116).

event becomes present to me - or I become present to the event - in which I take up with my senses the sense elements that the text offers. Thus I do not know anything more after the contemplation than before. It is not a matter of "interpretation". Most of the time we want to know from a piece of writing what it means. But this question is not the determining one in contemplation. Interpretation is justified, but not here. What do I see? What do I hear? What do I notice? These are the questions I should pursue. 34)

Here it is presupposed that I am ready to use the simplest means. Only after the First Week, with its deep purification of man, will the exercitant have the humility to give himself to such a simple and unpretentious process. 35) Only after he has come to know Jesus as his saviour and heard his call, is there awakened in him the longing to be present to Christ in such a concrete manner. 36) This can be compared only to the love that develops between two persons when every concrete detail about the other becomes important, because everything is an expression and representation of the person loved. 37)

Although sensible familiarity is already a familiarity with the whole, here we have something like a composing of the picture that proceeds from the exterior to the interior. Exterior here means the outer framework: the area or place with its particular objects, colors, smells, the weather and the season, day or night, and so forth. 38)

34) If already in the First Week, to be moved affectively played such a large role, then here - in the simple presence in the face of the events in the life of Jesus - the scene is almost completely dominated by the "interior understanding and tasting of things" instead of "abundance of knowledge" (S. E. 2).

35) S. E. 114.

36) S. E. 130.

37) The most direct expression of this longing is perhaps the instruction for the "application of the five senses" to the four exercises of the respective day, especially in its fourth point (S. E. 125).

38) Thus, the mental representation of the place, from the First Week, changes. From being merely a framework it prolongs itself into the contemplation itself. Compare S. E. 112, 114.

This includes the secondary persons who are present: the crowd in the gospel, comparable to the chorus in a Greek drama. Then the central persons come into the picture: above all, of course, the person of Jesus himself. Around these persons there also exists something like a framework: clothes, movement, gestures, facial expression, tone of voice, manner of speech, etc. If such a framework is present, the central event - be it a word, a conversation, an action or an experience of suffering - can very simply become present to the exercitant's senses.³⁹⁾ In speaking about the composition of a scene, however, we are not implying that the framework and the center are to be separated, for precisely in their unity lies the unique wholeness of the sensible experience. What is meant is much more that the attention turns first to the less central and less important elements which create the scene for the central event. In this way it is more easily possible to be fully present to the event.

The gospel text in its vividness offers the starting point for this process of representation. What we find here is not the wildest and richest of imaginations, producing as complete an inventory of details as possible. It is the text itself which offers such vivid elements: the road, the boat, the lake, the city - just to mention some details of place. Also referred to are behavior, emotions, views. The text never gives detailed descriptions of the externals. It always moves directly toward a center, a word or action of Jesus. Yet this word or action has a "body", a place, a set of circumstances in which it has been placed. And if one observes this accurately, one discovers more in the text than we - our sensibilities dulled by routine - would like to admit. Here we find various sorts of stark contradictions, strange elements. In this form of prayer we should not seek explanations of all these. We should simply linger with them.

Despite all its concreteness, however, the text of the gospel can only be a starting point for the representation. This is true with any act of sense knowledge. The complete picture only develops within a man, where the ele

39) S. E. 106, 107, 108.

ments of his previous experiences come to be completed.⁴⁰⁾ In this way the concrete world of man is present. Even Jesus can only become concrete for the exercitant when he is grasped in this manner. As long as the process remains always anchored in the Scripture text, there is no need to fear any deviation into one's subjective fantasy.

If the exercitant manages to avoid slipping into interpretative thought on the one hand, and wild imaginations on the other, and furthermore succeeds in simply lingering in an area opened up to him by the senses, then slowly and quietly there grows an intimacy with Jesus that can hardly be expressed in words. At the beginning it would be more of an intimation than an experience. With many repetitions, however, through which an inner unity is forged out of the various data sensed, there results something like a "taste" or "feeling" for the unmistakable individuality of Jesus. One can compare this with the dog who knows the scent of his master and is thus able to find his way home by sniffing.

In order to have enough possibility for repetition, one should not give more than two passages in a single day.⁴¹⁾ The Exercises guide must also abstain from giving exegetical or theological interpretations of the Bible in his introductions. In itself this could be very valuable, but it is out of place here. On the other hand it can be very helpful to go through the text with the exercitant, and with a few hints as to particular concepts or sentences, help him to read the text correctly.⁴²⁾ What the exercitant needs to have understood is not the meaning of the text, but what the text says. Thus various texts might come out in their paradoxical sharpness and disharmony more clearly than usual for us. If one has dealt often with such a text in this contemplative manner, one will hardly be able to explain it better afterwards, but will nevertheless

40) S. E. 130 and 127.

41) See the division of material for contemplation as foreseen for the first three days by the Exercises book (S. E. 101, 110, 118, 120, 132, 134).

42) S. E. 2.

have become familiar with it, and will have assimilated too the inherent tension in the text.

Particularly at this stage it is good to begin the day - or, if the occasion arises, the midnight meditation - with new material.⁴³⁾ As the second exercise, one could take a second gospel passage. Then two or three repetitions should follow in which both passages could at times be taken together. The way involved in using these repetitions is one of progressive simplification and interiorization. One could also call it personalization, because they lead at the end of the day to a very simple resting with Jesus, who is concretely present, and whose presence is savored through the exercitant's spiritual senses, which have been awakened in the contemplation.⁴⁴⁾

Naturally, it will not always go as smoothly as here described. Especially in the beginning it often takes a while before the exercitant finds a taste for contemplation. The Exercises guide must then encourage him to remain in the simple path and not to give up the longing for a more concrete encounter with Jesus, nor to escape into interpretation. Just as there exists a "fulfilled" way of contemplating in which the presence of Jesus is experienced, there also exists an "empty" way in which the absence of Jesus is painfully and longingly experienced. Both ways are "successful" ways of contemplating.⁴⁵⁾

3. The Material for Contemplation

Material from sermons (speeches) is not suitable for contemplation - at least not in the beginning - because it

43) S.E. 128 and 129.

44) See what is said about "application of the senses" (S. E. 121-125).

45) See S. E. 104 and 108 (where it is evident that the "inner knowledge of the Lord" is asked in order "to love and follow Him more and more" and that there is no difference between the points of insight, consolation or desolation, as regards their importance for the repetitions).

offers too few starting points for simple representations, and too many stimuli for intellectual reasoning. So-called narrative material is what is indicated: accounts of miracles, historical narratives (e.g., the baptism, the transfiguration, the temptations, the entrance into Jerusalem, the passion), conversations involving conflict and doctrine (which are not really speech materials since they are set in a concrete situation and contain an expressed character of encounter), the biographical elements. Encounters and events, therefore, which find their high-point in one word, as for example, the calling of his followers, Jesus at Nazareth, Zacheus, etc.⁴⁶⁾

46) The terms used above relate to the so-called "Formgeschichte", that is, the exegetic approach which tries to work out the literary forms of the New Testament texts and the history of their origins. One of its commonly accepted results is that the four gospels are not biographies of Jesus in a modern sense, but - as writings aiming at proclaiming the good news - developed in a very complicated process of handing-down and composition. The guiding reason for their composition was not to give an exact reproduction of details, but to bear witness to the truth that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world. For this purpose, one uses several literary forms - some of them already mentioned above - which tell and proclaim the events and words of Jesus, handed down not in a scientific-abstract way, but in a concrete, human way, in the perspective of their significance for salvation. Their truth is not in the nature of verifiable factual information but can only be experienced by submitting oneself to it.

The Exercises process reveals a good approach to the origins and the specific character of the gospels. For here the exercitant first understands the salvific significance of Jesus in encountering Christ, crucified and risen for him, during the First Week, and only then encounters this Jesus in his human life and thus gets a better knowledge of him. So likewise, at the origin of the New Testament, there is the encounter with Christ in his salvific relevance, as meditated in the earliest writings of the New Testament, the letters of Saint Paul. Only then does one turn towards

(Cont. next page)

I would in any case begin with the story of Christ's childhood.⁴⁷⁾ This is especially suitable for initiating contemplation, for it not only represents the beginning of the life of Jesus, but the person of Jesus is here still imbedded in his environment in a way common for anyone who is growing up. Jesus does not yet step out of his environment, questioning and demanding of men commitment; he is simply there. Thus the text leads more towards restful gazing and listening than towards active position-taking.⁴⁸⁾ The latter is more the case with the passages from the public life of Jesus, where the reader is placed directly before the question of recognizing the claim Jesus makes on him. These portions are therefore better given at the time in the process of the Exercises when the exercitant himself is struggling with a decision. Just below we will say more about this. But one final note concerning the contemplations on the childhood: two to four days for these are certainly not too much, if one realizes the importance of intimacy with Jesus for continuing the Exercises process.⁴⁹⁾

III. PREPARATION FOR THE "ELECTION"

1. Basic Orientation for Discipleship: the Way of Jesus

This third phase of the Exercises process deals with the decision to follow Christ, a decision to be reached in

46) (Cont.) the materials handed down on the life of Jesus precisely to find there this same Jesus Christ. And what else is the process of shaping this material handed down by tradition - based on the salvific experience of encountering the crucified and risen Christ - than a kind of contemplation? Thus the gospels were the result of exactly the same process as the exercitant is undergoing - with the difference that the gospels are closer to the events themselves, and that they have the confirmation of being true - in line with their author's purpose - and lead to truth.

47) S.E. 101-134.

48) See the role of the person contemplating (S. E. 114); also 106, 107, 108, 115, 116, 122, 123, 124.

49) S.E. 136 and 162.

the exercitant's concrete life situation. The phase began with the all-encompassing vision of Christ as saviour of the world, with his personal call, and with the first response of the exercitant. Two to four days were then passed in this way, contemplating Christ-become-man (history of Christ's childhood). During this time the invitation received to take part in the mission of Christ remained in the background. Now the time has again come to turn one's attention to this invitation.

This invitation must of course become concrete in the life of the exercitant. In order to avoid the exercitant making on his own a transfer from the perhaps faint and general call of Christ to his own concrete life, a cautious prior probing is recommended.⁵⁰⁾ Any rushing in this matter can be a tearing oneself away from the hand of Christ. The opposite danger, experienced earlier, of not venturing forth for fear of losing one's security, now no longer threatens too directly, provided the path up to this point has been honestly and correctly followed. After sensitivity for the person of Christ has in the preceding days deepened and unfolded, it is now a matter of, through groping and probing, finding the direction in which he calls me.⁵¹⁾ This is furthered by an exercise which brings one face to face with the fundamental direction proclaimed in the gospel for any following of Christ.⁵²⁾ This is first of all spiritual poverty, which allows itself to be expressed in a multiplicity of ways: here is the basis of all discipleship. One's seriousness about spiritual poverty reveals itself in the desire for actual poverty.⁵³⁾ Over and above this is involved a desire to participate with Christ in the scorn and injustice he underwent. For the way of Christ is one of being despised and misjudged, one of suffering injustice.⁵⁴⁾ In the gospel these characteristics of the following of Christ are verbalized in different passages, perhaps most clearly in the beatitudes - especially in Luke's version of them (Lk 6: 20-23) - and in the words about the following of Christ compiled in Matthew

50) S. E. 14.

51) S. E. 135.

52) S. E. 136-147.

53) S. E. 146.

54) S. E. 146, 147 and 98.

(16: 24-28) and Luke (9: 23-27), and more clearly in Mark (8, 34-9,1).

2. Sensing the Direction of and the Desire for the Way of Christ.

Before more is said about the material and the different possibilities for selecting this, the unique nature of this deliberation must be treated somewhat more precisely. What is in fact involved is not simply "knowing" the way of Christ and then applying this knowledge as a governing principle to the content of decision.⁵⁵⁾ The following example may clarify this. In choosing a professional or vocational position, should I choose the one that pays less because it involves more poverty, that is, a greater following of Christ? Such a way of considering it, purely from its intellectual content, overlooks the complex reality of the human decision-making mechanism. Since the same content can issue from very different motives, the mere result of a decision still says very little about its personal worth or its correctness for the individual in his following of Christ.

In considering a possible decision therefore, it is a matter of transforming the intellectual understanding of poverty, suffering, injustice and persecution, with which the way of Christ is marked (and the naive applications of these that result) into an inner sense.⁵⁶⁾ The exercitant as this point of the Exercises process is seeking for the way in which he can more live up to the challenge given him by Christ in the different possibilities of his life-situation.⁵⁷⁾ Starting with the attitude of spiritual poverty, which is closely related to the exterior realities of poverty, to being despised and persecuted, the exercitant should learn to be more closely attentive to the spirit of Christ. This spirit could possibly lead him to decisions

55) See the emphasis on "to investigate and ask" instead of on the application of an intellectually grasped principle, in S. E. 135.

56) "Thus, as an introduction to this subject, ... we will consider the intention of Christ Our Lord" (S.E.135)

57) The "magis" ("more") as a key word of the Exercises figures in each preparatory prayer (see especially Sp. E. 147 and 152).

for his particular life which would be quite different in content from that mentioned above. It is through this spirit too that the following of Christ is at this moment creatively structured from within.⁵⁸⁾ It is very important also to keep one's sight on external realities so that the whole affair does not take flight in illusions. Therefore the Exercises guide must take care that the hard unpleasantness of the things mentioned, such as poverty, suffering from injustice, and so forth, is always linked for the exercitant with realities he has experienced or is capable of experiencing.⁵⁹⁾ Working from the individual experience of the exercitant, he will bring in other concepts such as failure, loneliness, exorbitant demands, etc.

The exercitant's considerations therefore have first of all this result: it becomes clear to him that coming closer to Christ and collaborating more intensely with him in his work of salvation is bound up with greater hardship and unpleasantness, perhaps even his own death in both a moral and physical sense. The comparatives in the previous sentence are important. They indicate that for the exercitant it is no longer a matter just of being with Jesus and collaborating with him. This has been clear for a long time.⁶⁰⁾ They rather indicate the movement that is involved, whose main direction is definitely set. However, neither the length of the road along which it will lead, nor the stops to be encountered on the way, are clear. On the contrary, there exist no set limits, no real stopping. Instead there will always be the possibility of new advances.⁶¹⁾

From this insight - which is certainly not just intellectual but which has already been shaped by my intimacy with Christ - springs the spontaneous petition that God grant me the needed gift of wanting to put up with such uncomfortable experiences for the sake of Christ. This prayer is made especially in the repetition or repetitions of the main Exercises topics.⁶²⁾ This is not a prayer that

58) S. E. 135.

59) S. E. 135.

60) After the First Week, this is a matter of course. Compare S. E. 96.

61) S. E. 104, 152, 155.

62) S. E. 148.

after a while becomes superfluous, in the sense that the petition is granted and so need no longer be prayed for, or in the sense that I now have what I prayed for - gratefully, indeed, but still as something I possess. The fruit of this petition is much more that it always deepens itself as a prayer, and in the end completely fills me and accompanies me, and that in this way the desire becomes a constant experience. The desire of poverty, of being despised, of humility, is personal only when it is interiorly linked with my turning toward Christ, on whose account I desire it. Only in this way will every kind of autonomous self-sufficiency be avoided.⁶³⁾

3. The Opposing Direction

The preparation for the election would not be complete without a clear understanding also of the "opposing direction". After the exercitant has in the preceding second phase - the First Week of the Exercises - made his own the realistic view of revelation that he indeed stands in a history of sin and must first be liberated for freedom, he will not be victim to the illusion that contrary forces are no longer effective in turning him away from the following of Christ to which he has committed himself.⁶⁴⁾ The Scripture speaks very clearly and plainly about the "prince of this world". The question whether this opposing force must be traced back to a personal Satan, as Holy Scripture and the interpretations of many saints would have it, could be passed over had not a denial of Satan been bound up almost unavoidably with a minimization of this counterforce. On the other hand, there exists no danger in accepting this doctrine as true so long as the fear of the power of Satan does not become the ruling motive of action.⁶⁵⁾ For the exercitant it is of the utmost importance to humbly admit to himself that his good will alone

63) S. E. 147.

64) S. E. 141.

65) Here it is to be noted that the Exercises, precisely in the moments when the experience of Evil threatens to become overwhelming, show Christ as "the stronger one" (Luke 11:22), as the sign of the "greater" love of God (S. E. 53 and 61). He is the means by which, through his very love, one is admitted to share the victory over evil achieved through His cross and resurrection (see the petition of the Two Standards. S. E. 139).

achieves nothing, that he is vulnerable to temptations of deception which his own wisdom does not suffice to overcome. In the same way Peter, with the best of intentions, wanted to keep Jesus from the way of suffering and was exposed by him as a tool of the opponent of his salvific work (Mk. 8:33).⁶⁶⁾ It is thus good to get a clear view of the contrary current or direction in order to contrast this with the direction of Christ in the same way that Scripture often works with contrasts. Yet what is concerned here is not a literary trick. The opposing force exists and pulls the exercitant in a definite direction. It is shown somewhat in the "woes" that come with riches, complacency, excessive laughter, flattery (Lk. 6:24-26), or can be described as the reverse of the direction of Christ: a desire for riches, honor, recognition and the jealous preservation of one's own rights.⁶⁷⁾ Here it is important to note that these things are not bad in themselves, yet that they present themselves in such a way that they seem attractive to me and in practice lead me to become closed in upon myself and self-sufficient - which one can less discreetly but nevertheless correctly term pride. This intangible, unconscious, but nevertheless actual tendency in things that are in themselves neutral betrays the string-pulling manipulator in the background. To "develop a nose" for this tendency is the task of the moment.⁶⁸⁾ Here again the Exercises guide must choose the materials that suit the exercitant. Thus for example, it can be that for an exercitant whose self-confidence is still but weakly developed, to give in and not to defend his rights is not an unpleasant experience, but on the contrary, something easy and comfortable which misleads and seduces him. To contradict another person would be for him an unpleasant experience, drawing him out of his sheltered security into the loneliness of an argument.

The material for these broad considerations can be taken directly from the book of the Exercises.⁶⁹⁾ There are also passages out of Holy Scripture that are directly pertinent: the beatitudes and the "woes", or the entire sermon on the mount (Lk. 6:3-36); the confession of Peter

66) Compare S. E. 332.

67) S. E. 142.

68) S. E. 139.

69) S. E. 136-148.

with the prophecy of suffering that follows, and Peter's reaction (Mt.16:13-23 or 28); the washing of the feet with the announcement of the traitor and the dialogue with Peter (Jn.13:1-38); Matthew 11 with the Baptist's question to Jesus, Jesus' words about the Baptist, his words about the obstinate generation and the unrepentant cities, climaxing with his joyful praise of the Father; and the temptations (Mt. 4: 1-11). It is important that the passage chosen not only contains a clear expression of the direction or way of Jesus but that the counter direction or opposite way is somehow also expressed. One could also divide the exercise in such a way that it is presented in progressive steps. It should then, however, lead to a repetition which views the whole, so that the entire perspective can influence one's prayer. One could also - similar to what was already noted in the meditation on the call of Christ - work with pictures and examples from the present or the recent past.

4. Test of Unconditional Commitment

Along with meditation on the Two Standards or the two directions which has just been discussed, there is a second meditation which directly helps one prepare for the election. 70) One could call this the "test-meditation", whose point should be to test the exercitant's inner freedom. Is my yes to the following of Christ (the consequences of which have become clearer in the previous meditation) unconditional or is it a "yes, but..."? The starting point of this meditation is not the particular situation of the exercitant. On the contrary, it can be very well begun with biblical material: the rich young man (Mk. 10:17-27), where the conversation contained in verses 23-27 must absolutely be given special attention; the disciples who are not fully committed (Lk. 9:57-62); Abraham who offered Isaac (Gen. 22: 1-9); the words about following Christ, including the simile of the tower-builders and of war (Lk. 14: 25-35). 71) These are all very well suited for this testing. Once the exercitant no longer wishes merely to follow after but has decided to walk the road with the Lord, his task is to become clear that no compromises are

70) S. E. 149-157.

71) In a similar way the material offered by Ignatius as "three classes of men" is to be taken as a parable.

possible. This stands out negatively in the rich young man, and positively in Abraham. The clarity of this insight results in a constant petition for unconditional readiness for everything - whatever it may be. Often in this petition the exercitant comes upon something in his own life to which he still clings so much that he would like to bring it with him as he walks the way of Christ. His prayer must then become concrete: he must pray to be freed from this thing.⁷²⁾

At this point the exercitant is able to experience what has always been true but now becomes crystal clear : prayer is the lever by which a man can move himself. More correctly put: in prayer the movement of God's grace can take hold of the personal core of a man, so that he is no longer moved passively from the outside as a thing, but is moved independently from within. Thus, with total decisiveness he stretches himself toward that which he himself can not achieve. This certainly tells something about this type of prayer. In it is concentrated, in freedom, all the energy of a person. It is a transcending of one's own shadow. It is a leap beyond one's own self.

Whether this meditation is to be repeated or how often depends on the clarity and decisiveness that the exercitant achieves when making this exercise for the first time. It is a clarity and decisiveness which is humbly prayerful and not achieved by force or violence. Here indeed lies the danger in both exercises. It therefore becomes more urgent that the person of Jesus be present not only as the one to whom one's prayers are addressed, but, from the very beginning of the considerations, present as the all-meaningful "Thou". For his sake I ask for the desire for poverty and disgrace. For his sake I am decided to allow that all conditions to my offering of myself be taken away. ⁷³⁾

So that the two meditations just described can develop as they should and can actually be effective, time is needed. One day is the minimum; one-and-a-half to two days

72) S. E. 157.

73) See the structure of the meditation on the Two Standards (S. E. 137-147).

is the more usual length of this exercise. 74) The review after each period of prayer and the evening evaluation of the entire day now demand special attention to insure that the experiences undergone can be fruitful for the further course of the Exercise. 75)

5. In An Atmosphere of Calm

Without a doubt, ever since the exercitant left the quiet contemplations and entered this area of election through the two meditations described above, the whole atmosphere of the Exercises has come to a head. After so many days or perhaps weeks, and, in certain situations, after so many repeated starts, he has now arrived at that point where what is at hand is the task of changing his life in the concrete. This may mean taking a decisive step as regards choosing a vocation, or choosing a life partner, or involving oneself in politics or development work, or changing one's profession or residence, or definitively committing oneself to a way of life that has long been entered upon. 76) That he has really arrived at this point must now show itself, among other things, by his not plunging rashly and anxiously into the election or getting all taken up with the "business of the decision". If up to this point he has travelled the right way and if the Exercises guide has helped him avoid the path's many reefs and pitfalls and find his way out of blind alleys, then the main point of the considerations now is not the decision to be made (something like: should I or should I not go into politics), but true surrender to Christ. Now the tension that grips the exercitant is not a nervousness about possibly making a mistake, but a heartfelt straining toward Jesus. It tends, not to the mobilizing of all personal powers in order to "make it", but to a giving of oneself to the loving will of him in whom he is allowed to trust. 77)

Therefore the Exercises guide must pay attention, especially during these days, that the exercitant continues

74) The Spiritual Exercises hint at the time, but this is relative to the goal and to the situation of each exercitant (compare S. E. 4).

75) S. E. 160.

76) On the possible subject matter of the "election", see S. E. 170-174.

77) S. E. 169.

to begin the meditations calmly and quietly, with due attention given to bodily position, recollection, "slowing-down", and the preparatory prayer. 78) The exercitant is dispensed from these only if he is led into prayer at once in total passivity, quiet and without introduction. Then it might be too that the Exercises guide needs to admonish him to end his prayer after an hour, to spend the time between prayer periods freely and in a relaxed way, during which he could engage in walks or sports or light work or their equivalent. If prayer continues of itself and without effort, this is not only permissible but a sign that the exercitant is making headway in the spirit of the Exercises. But this must come of itself. He must now live his faith in an atmosphere of calm and surrender, especially now that he has a strong awareness of fixity of purpose.

6. Continuation of Contemplation: the Public Life of Jesus

The exercises that follow are contemplations on passages out of the public life of Jesus. They suit the exercitant's present situation of arriving at a decision because what is in fact involved in the encounters and events of the public life of Jesus are always decisions for or against Jesus. 79) The contemplations will therefore now be different from those before the meditations on the Two Standards and on one's unconditional openness. As contemplations they begin with the vivid elements of the text. By lingering here in this "seeing" and "hearing", one's sensitivity to Jesus and his manner and style of living will grow. 80)

But this Jesus now, more than before, is linked with his way or path, and the direction of that way. The exercitant experiences the challenge which Jesus presents in each encounter of his public life as a personal challenge to himself in regard to the direction which has perhaps already shown itself as concretizing the call. His prayer

78) S. E. 131, 130, 160.

79) S. E. 163 and 135.

80) Ignatius proposes only one Scripture text a day, even when the number of days are reduced (S. E. 162).

will continue to be a prayer to accept the way of Christ and to do so unconditionally.⁸¹⁾

Thus the Exercises, even after long preparation, do not at all lead to meditations of decision in which the exercitant would take up the concrete questions of life that are up for decision. Instead they continue to strengthen identification with Christ, from which alone the unsettled questions of one's concrete life can be resolved.⁸²⁾ This identification must be personal, that is, not a result of objective, rational understanding. Personal identification shows itself in an affective interior tendency. This we have just spoken about. In the contemplations which now serve as the supportive basis of the election, the identification must be so developed that being-in-and-with-Jesus becomes the criterion of the decision to be made.⁸³⁾ In other words: the exercitant pleads in prayer for this preference, to share the life-situation of Jesus - poverty, scorn, persecution - so that he finds himself in the attitude of preferring the same hardships (without any objective need to do so) just in order to be closer to him. The word "preference" indicates that it is not yet a decision but an interior tendency that is prior to a decision.⁸⁴⁾ As was just said in the considerations about the two directions, such a position is possible only as a prayer.⁸⁵⁾ But this ought not to be confused with stoical immunity from pain and suffering.

81) See the triple colloquy at the end of each contemplation after the Two Standards (S. E. 159).

82) S. E. 135.

83) S. E. 135, 147, 156, 157, and especially 167-168.

84) If for the election itself it is not this predilection but only the recognized will of God which prevails (S. E. 135), it is nevertheless evident in the "third degree of humility" that the desire of the "third class of men" to break all attachments is more than an exercise to attain the necessary indifference regarding the election. Rather its deepest root is this predilection: the desire to choose in so far as "the praise and glory of the Divine Majesty are equally served" poverty "with Christ poor, rather than riches, in order to become more like Christ our Lord" (S. E. 167).

85) S. E. 168.

In situations requiring a decision, we often have the problem that we do not know how we should decide correctly. Then we cannot understand why God does not make it easy for us to know what he wants from us. Indeed it is not primarily this or that thing that he wants from us. but ourselves. He desires our becoming-like-Christ. 86) Thus one could say: every problem that we have in making a decision is a sign that we are not sufficiently identified with Christ. For one could say it is not we who decide, but Christ who decides in and through us. It is not we who choose something, but we have been chosen for something. 87) Hence the long road of the Exercises, the road of purification and of unification with Christ, and of our recognizing in this what he desires from us. Only when we no longer set conditions on our offering of self are we ready to recognize the concrete task at hand for us. Only when scales are no longer lopsided can they indicate for us the correct weight.

IV. THE ELECTION

1. Discernment of Spirits

Our being chosen for something definite, or the concretizing of the call of Christ in our life, takes place within ourselves. Since a whole gamut of desires, impulses, emotions, and currents are entangled in and with each other inside man, to be able to differentiate here which impulses and stimuli come from the spirit of Christ is of decisive importance. 88) But before the importance of discernment for the election itself can be treated, this theme of discernment must be dealt with throughout the whole course of the Exercises. Discernment has always been present in the Exercises up to this point, but the starting point and the subject matter of discernment were very different. 89)

86) S. E. 15, 169 and 167.

87) See the respective terms in S. E. 135, 157, 169.

88) S. E. 32 and 313.

89) On the basis of this difference, see the division into Rules for Discernment of Spirits for the First and for the Second Week.

It is impossible here to trace the history of our spiritual movements back to all their possible sources. These sources can often be hidden, and most likely existed long before the exercitant's decision to make something like the Exercises. Whether what is here involved is a conversion in the sense of a radical, relatively sudden, reversal in one's way of living and in the guidelines for one's conduct, or a gradual, more or less continuous development out of foundations laid in one's childhood, in either case inner strivings are present which, however, may still not be consciously differentiated by the subject. The result of this process is that, impelled by faith, he goes ahead shaping his life according to love. With this will he comes to the Exercises. Before he makes the individually-guided Exercises he has already tested this will in his life for quite a while.⁹⁰⁾

2. Discernment During First and Second Phases

What discernment consists of in the first two phases of the Exercises is that the exercitant does not allow himself to be diverted from the course already entered upon through negative moods, and does not let himself be led astray into excessive pride and conceit when his moods are positive.⁹¹⁾ The standard for his behaviour in these phases therefore is not the affective impulses within him, but his own judgment and understanding.⁹²⁾ Even if this understanding is at this time not wholly free from still unpurified currents, and so is of only temporary worth, it is still able to help the exercitant on his way.

During the Exercises this way consists above all in fidelity to prayer and to the order of the day - which demands a certain discipline from the exercitant - and in openness to the Exercises guide. Dryness and aridity in prayer, the onset of boredom, stimulation by unrelated things, distractions and temptations which one (especially when giving in to them) keeps secret from the Exercises guide -

90) Compare what was said about the "requirements for the exercitant" in Chapter I.

91) S. E. 323 and 324.

92) See the terms used here: to consider, to recall to mind...

these are the currents which tend to withdraw the exercitant away from the way he has entered upon. The stronger they become and the longer they last, the more difficult it becomes to follow one's understanding along the right path already decided upon, because this understanding loses more and more its resonance within him, and is forced ever more into the periphery of consciousness. One's decision, indeed, does not thereby appear as wrong in itself, but seems more and more inopportune, senseless, all right perhaps for others but not now for me, exaggerated - and whatever other objections may be expressed that emerge out of the tepidity of one's feelings.

In the face of this it is important to remain steadfast in the understanding achieved earlier, and in the decision made on the basis of this understanding. Here, against one's feelings, one needs consciously to turn his attention to this decision, recall its justification, and continue with prayer, with the order of the day, with external and internal discipline, and with openness.⁹³⁾ The low period is more quickly overcome if the exercitant actively works against his feelings and tendencies of the moment and increases his fidelity in the points mentioned, by lengthening his prayer a little, by demanding a bit more from himself in the moderation and discipline of his external life, and, in case of doubt, by speaking about these matters with the Exercises guide.⁹⁴⁾

Fundamentally the same behaviour is indicated when one's negative feelings no longer have the character merely of tepidity, but also reveal stirrings of confusion, anxiety, discouragement and depression, doubt, mistrust or apathy. This mood can come about simply because the tepidity described above, despite the fact that the exercitant is conducting himself as he should, persists for a long time. In this situation also, which can be described as the crisis situation proper, it is important to remain faithful to the understanding and decision reached before the crisis.⁹⁵⁾

93) Compare S. E. 317, 319, 320, 322 describing desolation, and 318, 319, 321 stressing the measures to take against it.

94) S. E. 319, 326 and 13.

95) S. E. 320.

Now, indeed, in a way different from the preceding situation, which was described by the catchword "tepidity", one's understanding itself is tested by the crisis. Various imaginative elements of that understanding, which were projected into it out of one's unpurified emotional life, are now detached from it. What remains - and in which one must remain steadfast - is more than before an understanding of faith. This means too that the idea of one's ability to go on alone is destroyed, and that the exercitant becomes ready to wait for help from God. 96) This process of purification takes place of itself with the help and watchful care of the Exercises guide, if the exercitant in his concrete behaviour follows the same guidelines as were given above for his conduct in the period of tepidity.

Also in the situation where one's mood is positive - where prayer, the observance of a suitable schedule, and conversation with the Exercises guide give the exercitant a certain joy - it is recommended to keep a certain distance from the currents of one's feelings. For only too easily does the attention of the exercitant shift from God, the goal of all prayer, from the content of the exercises, and from the purpose of the day's order and of conversation with the Exercises guide, to the pleasurable feelings which emerge in these experiences. And then the exercitant becomes turned in upon himself.

In order to combat this disastrous development, which sets in quite imperceptibly, the exercitant must at times when his moods are positive, practice in a special way gratitude and humility, attitudes therefore of dialogue, in which he attempts to relate the positive experiences to the "Thou" of God. 97)

Another danger in this situation is that the exercitant in his enthusiasm wishes to make grand decisions which no longer stand in correct proportion to his real situation. Here his positive mood effectively projects itself into his understanding, producing false notions about his abilities. The Exercises guide must then emerge as an advocate of objective norms and of reason, who lowers the high-flying ambition of the exercitant. 98)

96) S. E. 322 and 324; second part.

97) S. E. 323 and 324, first part.

98) S. E. 14.

By way of summary the following may be said about "discernment of spirits" in the first two phases of the Exercises: the guideline for discernment here is the objective norms made one's own through understanding arrived at in faith, and which are to be faithfully followed against the pressure of changing moods or spirits. Through the conduct of the exercitant in the face of these moods, a purification takes place. Through this he emerges out of his egocentric feelings, experiences his radical need for salvation, and finds in his orientation to Christ his saviour a new, previously unknown quiet and peace. In this way the foundation is reached on which a discernment of spirits in the proper sense is possible, where namely one's having been interiorly attuned becomes itself the criterion for the decision to be made.

3. Discernment During the Third Phase

The quiet and peace just referred to needs to be specified more. First it should be said that this being-at-tuned is related to a "Thou". One could also describe this feeling as selfless. It does not inflate itself, it does not seduce one towards pleasure, it does not draw attention to itself. Rather, it is more a basic feeling or mood in which personal relationship, service, and self-giving, thrive. One could also speak here of freedom, freedom for Christ and freedom to be present to men. This being-in-tune is also in most cases quieter and less obtrusive than the moods mentioned previously. This means too that it can remain intact even when boredom, distraction, sensual desire or tepidity are felt, so to speak, on the surface.⁹⁹⁾

The meditations on the call of Christ and the contemplations of the following days serve to develop further this being-in-tune. In other words, they allow the relationship with Christ to find its resonance more fully in the heart of the exercitant. The meditation on the call stimulates more the side of selflessness, dedication and generosity. The following contemplations, on the other hand, are directed more to the "peace which surpasses all understanding" (Phil. 4:7), which is strengthened by looking at the sober, earthly reality of Jesus. Theologically expressed, what is involved is the unity of spirit and Word-

⁹⁹⁾ S. E. 329, 330.

made-flesh which is central to much of the writing of Paul and John. Also, granted that there is danger in the contemplations of slipping into sentimentality, that is, unreal fantasy, the quiet and in a certain sense passive experience of the personality of Jesus 100) is of great importance for the following meditations involving discernment, and for the election itself. Otherwise they may stagnate in mere intellectual understanding of principles and their abstract, self-sufficient use.

In the large, important, all-encompassing view of the "two directions", the exercitant should learn to take up the way of Christ in poverty, the suffering of injustice and the punishment that may result, in the peace that one has found in being with Jesus. 101) In other words, in praying that the selflessness involved in this peace may grow, so that this peace may be experienced not only in spite of but actually because of such hardships and discomforts. 102) The danger of trying to achieve this alone through a kind of spiritual ambition is great. Therefore the Exercises guide in these meditations especially must listen very closely to the overtones of what is said. This is in no way achieved through mere understanding of this stage's logical unity. Such a summary intellectual view of the content would have already had its place in the First Week and actually takes place there in one form or another. What is now involved, however, is interior growth. At the end of the meditations the decision must have been reached to let oneself accept the gift of the cross. This must have become a kind of permanent petition. 103) At the same time the external content of poverty, disgrace and humility (or whatever other words might be chosen) translates itself into an inner taste for the direction of hardship in whatever way this is a reality for the exercitant.

With the considerations of the "two directions", the life of the exercitant develops fully into a decision-situation. He is the "battleground of different spirits", among which he must decide. He is now thrust to the rock-

100) See the Two Standards, S. E. 144.

101) S. E. 164.

102) S. E. 167.

103) S. E. 147, 148, 156, 157, 159, 168.

bottom of reality where the real events are taking place.104) From there he recognizes many things that used to be important for him as in fact meaningless shadows or feeble appearances. Here also the perspective in which he sees the questions, relationships and facts of his life has changed. Many things before were for him anxious, terrifying questions, but have now simply disappeared. In everything a new dimension is added, or at least becomes clearer: one's unity with Christ.105)

It is now also clear that the exercitant is not the main actor in the process. He is only the follower who certainly must act, but who acts in total dependence. Precisely here rests the one really valid question: which impulses in him come from the Lord and Saviour of the world?106) For this reason the overriding concern the exercitant should feel is that of his own unity with Christ.107) If this unity is close and genuine, then alien impulses - even if they may remain for a time half-hidden and unrecognized - will sooner or later strike him as destructive of this unity. Here then is the basic principle of the discernment already mentioned.108) But before we speak of it more precisely and with less danger of misunderstanding, a view of the further course of the Exercises is in order.

4. The Election Itself

From what has just been said it is already clear that there exists no election meditation in the sense of an exercitant in his time of prayer taking up his life situation, with the related questions that emerge, as the subject matter, over which theme he then prays. The subject matter of further contemplations is much more Jesus in his public life, whom the exercitant regards by means of contemplation, and in the process sees his way. This means that in the course of contemplation the prayer for uncon-

104) S. E. 137.

105) S. E. 135, last part; and 139, 147.

106) S. E. 145 and 146.

107) See the thrust of all the prayers of the Second Week: S. E. 01, 104, 147, 167, 168.

108) See especially the seventh rule for discernment of spirits for the Second Week, in S. E. 335, but also 331, 332, 333 and 334.

ditional readiness to follow Christ can come into the foreground. 109)

With regard to the "election" itself - in the language of the Exercises, this is the term used for concretizing in the life situation of the exercitant his following of Christ - experience reveals three different methods of doing it.¹¹⁰⁾ These are not unconnected with each other, but can in practice be clearly distinguished. Just as this election - taking place after the meditations on the Two Standards - determines the course of the Exercises, so too from the differences in the election process result differences for the further course of the Exercises.

5. The First Method of Election

Just after the meditation on the call of Christ, it was hinted that the invitation of Christ to the exercitant can come in a clear, definitive and unmistakable way. Such a breakthrough of the Spirit can naturally take place at any time. This can be a genuine experience of God in which the exercitant in complete passivity so clearly and definitely experiences the presence of God that he in no way can doubt that God was acting here.¹¹¹⁾ Henceforth he carries within himself an experience as a result of which the word "God", or the name "Christ", expresses his vocation. Such an immediate and utterly certain experience can also be inseparably linked with a task to perform, a clarifying of one's life situation.¹¹²⁾ In such an experience discernment has no place, because different elements do not exist which would need to be distinguished.¹¹³⁾

One can and must, however, correctly distinguish between the exact time of such an experience and the moments immediately following. In this latter period, the exercitant, under the strong influence of the experiences just undergone, can come to conclusions or decisions still apparently passive, but without actually being so. Humili-

109) S.E. 135, 163, 164.

110) S. E. 175-178.

111) S. E. 330.

112) What Ignatius calls the "first time to make a wise and good election", S. E. 175.

113) S. E. 175: "without doubt or even the possibility of doubt".

ty and docility are in such situations especially important. They aid the exercitant - with the help of the Exercises guide - to return to the real experience. This return is necessary to separate the true content of the experience from the transfer that followed.¹¹⁴⁾

Probably every election is in fact being-chosen in the sense just described. The difference between the various methods of election would then be only that in some cases one experiences the breakthrough of the divine impulse itself, while in other cases it remains hidden and only its effects are experienced. The different methods of election are intrinsically connected with each other and in practice overlap each other in this sense, that the "higher" way at times persists in the next method. As soon as the experience of the respective "higher" way stops or if the "higher" experience is not actually undergone, the next method of election comes into play.

6. The Second Method of Election

It is now time to treat the second method. The election begins when the exercitant has "prayed himself into" unconditional readiness for anything. What is meant by this is that in the prayer - which perhaps first centered on his being able honestly to request freedom from some favorite object - he has now found interior equilibrium and peace.¹¹⁵⁾ Perhaps a quiet transition occurs so that when between his meditations he becomes aware of his actual life situation, he finds himself considering a specific solution which clarifies things for him and seems to be more in keeping with his following of Christ.¹¹⁶⁾ Now he tries, using this solution as a hypothesis, to live and to pray. If the peace, described above as the basis or foundation of the election, is destroyed through the hypothetically accepted solution, it is a sign that this solution is not the right one. If that peace remains undisturbed as he considers the solution, then he must try, hypothetically, the other alternative. This would then have to be experienced as being incompatible with the unity he has with Christ.

114) S. E. 336.

115) S. E. 16, 130, 135, 157, 169.

116) S. E. 176.

117) See the division suggested in the Exercises text: three days before and eight days after the Two Standards.

The above description makes clear that some time is needed for an election process of this kind.¹¹⁷⁾ The contemplations on the life of Christ must at the same time continue. Being directed toward Christ, life with him and growth in unity with him - these make up the atmosphere in which this testing is possible in the manner described. This inner support gives him a certain distance from things and problems. These are no longer important in themselves, but only in relation to Christ and his mission. The process described above therefore presents no artificial acrobatics, as might at first sight seem to be the case, but comes about naturally out of the inner dispositions of the exercitant.

Thus the exercitant must indeed allow himself, hypothetically but really, to enter into each of the two alternatives of a decision being considered. This presupposes a considerable inner flexibility that can be reached only through a deep process of purification and serious, persistent petitioning for unconditional freedom and readiness for everything. This yielding and surrender take place in the periods between the meditations. The more spontaneous and calm this process is, the better. The more perfectly that a decision when hypothetically accepted is in accord with the contemplations on Jesus, the more quickly one can presume this solution to be the correct one.¹¹⁸⁾

It is also possible that this probing goes back and forth several times, that new ideas come up; or that it becomes clear during the probing that the alternatives for the decision are not yet mature, since neither of the two awakens a reaction. If new ideas come up, they can often be recognized as misleading if they enter the scene with noise and commotion; the idea itself may be good and attractive, but the enemy is recognized in the "accompanying music".¹¹⁹⁾ It can also be, however, that a train of thought proves itself to be misleading only little by little, in that it would bring with it things that are inconsistent with one's life, that flatter one's ego, or that are simply morally evil.¹²⁰⁾

118) S. E. 333.

119) S. E. 335.

120) S. E. 332.

The convergence therefore of intellectual probing of content and affective harmony serves as a criterion for the discernment of spirits. Here one must observe the development from the viewpoint of content as well as from the viewpoint of affective reaction. Nothing is static; all is in motion. Our inner life can best be compared to a river, which carries with it the most varied strivings, feelings and moods. It is only in its movement that the direction a specific stimulus is taking is revealed. It is only after a certain time that the harmony or disharmony of a particular position or way of acting with one's unity with Christ can be ascertained.¹²¹⁾

The greatest difficulty in this method of election probably lies in determining the end of the election process. When is the confirmation of a decision to be considered as sufficient? Very little can be said about this. Just as on the one hand a certain amount of time is required in order to be able to test it quietly, so on the other the temptation exists to demand continually more clarity. In this connection, to look at the different grades of finality that a decision may have is often helpful. Every election arrived at is in a certain sense final when it is seriously intended. Each is the irrevocable yes to the real consequences. Generally it is question, however, of a path on which the exercitant either is entering for the first time or deciding definitely to continue. This path is, again, often laid out in foreseeable stages. This character of "beginning" which an election can have makes it possible to interrupt the election process until, after the Exercises, new prerequisites for its continuation are arrived at through the clarity found during the Exercises. Indeed, life after the Exercises will be a kind of carrying out of the election in that the clarity discovered during the Exercises is experienced in the constant openness and readiness to follow new calls. The termination of the election process in the Exercises would then be but temporary, so that the election remains open to what lies ahead, to, therefore, its becoming more specific and taking fuller shape in the future. A formal termination of the election process in the Exercises would mean that this process, having reached sufficient clarity after a certain time, results in a prayerful offering to God of the decision arrived at.¹²²⁾

121) S. E. 333 and 334.

122) As described for the "third time" in S. E. 183.

7. The Third Method of Election

Before the end of the election just referred to is more precisely spelled out, it is necessary to speak of the third method of election. It is in my opinion much more difficult to distinguish this from the second than the second from the first. It is to be employed next, when the second is either impossible in general or impossible at the moment, and a decision must nevertheless be reached.¹²³⁾ This is the case if the inner resonance of one's union with Christ has not yet sufficiently developed through experience, or if this resonance has not been sufficiently indicative for either of the alternatives.¹²⁴⁾ It is not the place, either here or at that point in the Exercises, to enter upon a discussion of the possible reasons for this absence. It is much more important to note that, as far as the exercitant is concerned, this lack is really to be expected, since that is what is deserved, while every kind of grace-experience is really unmerited and therefore an incalculable gift.

The third method of election¹²⁵⁾ consists in the exercitant's weighing the reasons for and against one of the alternatives, and then doing the same for the second.¹²⁶⁾ It is presupposed here that he is in a state of inner peace and equilibrium and that he has no inner "block" to any of the possible reasons. The word "reason" here is to be taken in its widest sense; perhaps "viewpoints" is the better word. The weight of the reasons is the basis for deciding the election.¹²⁷⁾

This sober method of coming to a decision is however imbedded in prayer. Not only does the entire Second Week with its many meditations precede this decision. The contemplations should at the same time be continued, even if during this method of election - as distinguished from the other two ways considered - more time for the election con-

123) S. E. 178.

124) Compare S. E. 177 with 176.

125) This method includes the "first way" (S. E. 178-183) and the "second way" (S. E. 184-188)

126) S. E. 181.

127) S. E. 179 and 182.

siderations themselves is necessary, so that the number of contemplations needs to be reduced. The exercitant must therefore pray for light, pray that in posing the alternatives, in searching for the reasons pro and con, and in weighing these reasons, he not be led astray.¹²⁸⁾ Finally, he will lay the result of this weighing before God.¹²⁹⁾ Regarding this third method of election one could say it is the second or even the first way, but with this difference, that the breakthrough of the Spirit and his effect on the affectivity of the exercitant remain hidden and only appear in the veiled form of the greater or lesser weight of the dry reasons.

8. The Conclusion of This Phase

How this phase ends will be very different depending on how the exercitant was led into the election process, how strong and unequivocal or how rending were the experiences of the election process. In any case it seems important not to end the election merely with a sense of having found a result with some measure of clarity. Rather it is that the exercitant is able in prayer to bring this result before God, and that he lives identified with the decision he has made.¹³⁰⁾ The form and the duration of this very grateful and prayerful presentation of one's decision or of one's life in the election that has resulted will vary greatly.

In any case the contemplations continue. Jesus, who in his public life in increasing measure challenges men to decision, remains the center for the exercitant. He ought not to be pushed aside by the result of the election. It may, however, well be that through the election the relation of the exercitant to him has, perhaps without noticing it, transformed itself into greater identification with him. In this phase of the Exercises there should remain some time for this experience.

128) S. E. 180.

129) S. E. 183 and 188.

130) S. E. 183 and 188.

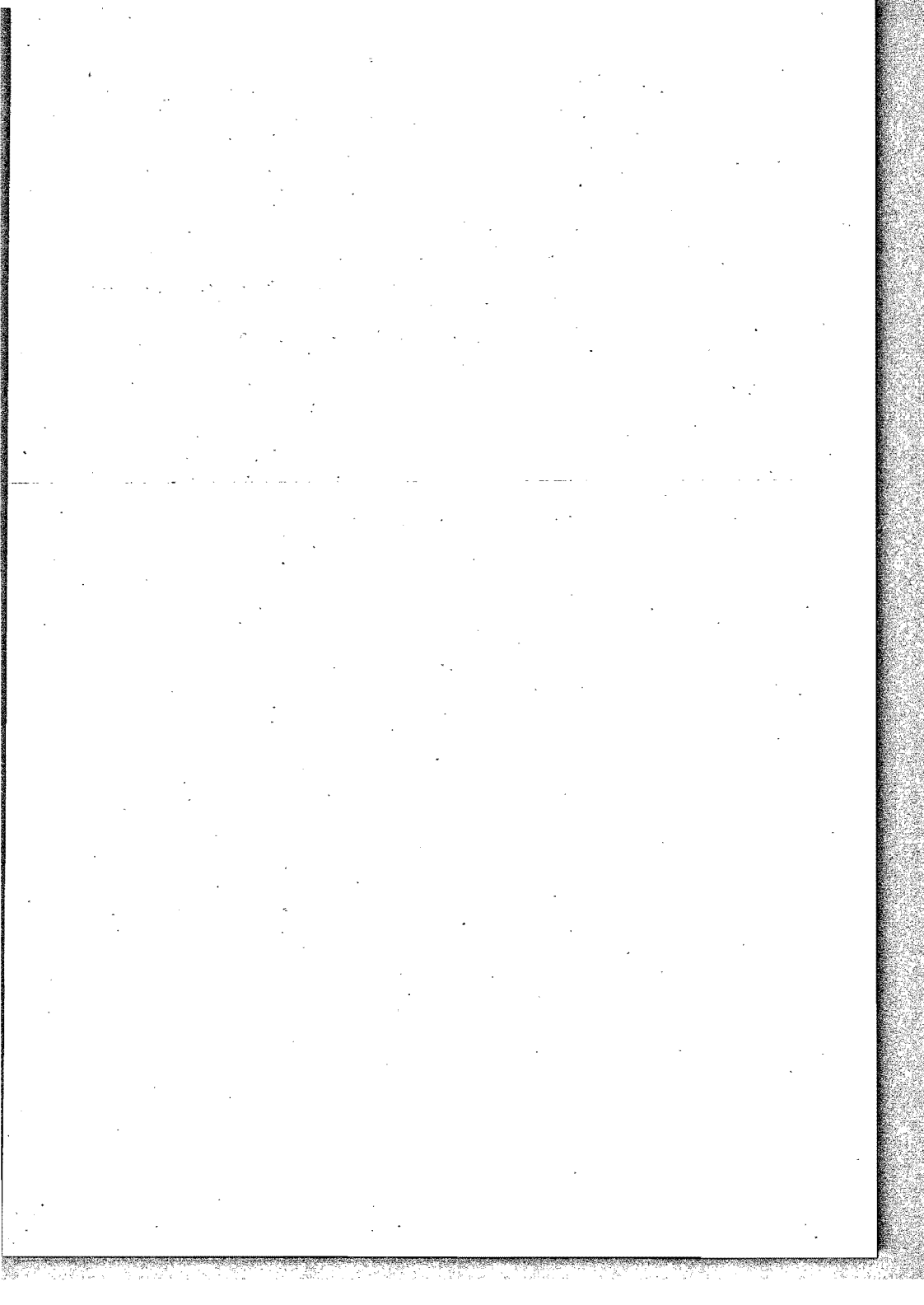
Concerning the time needed for the Second Week (or third phase) of the Exercises, on the whole less can be said than for the previous week. After the meditation of the Two Standards so many things come into play at unforeseeable moments that it is not possible to give exact time limits.

Perhaps the Exercises guide should ask - in case the election process prolongs itself - whether he may have allowed the previous steps to be made too quickly and so has not viewed with sufficient seriousness the presuppositions for the election.

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Chapter IV

PARTICIPATION IN THE PASCHAL MYSTERY

An essential insight drawn from the experience of the Exercises reflected in this article is this: an interior process exists that can be helped, and indeed, to a certain extent stimulated, by the content and process of the Exercises, but which can in no way be forced. Each of the chapters of this article tries to follow one phase of this process, as reflected in the use of the Exercises. It is, however, clear, in the experience of the author of this article, that the phases - provided one understands them in their full meaning - develop much more slowly and run more deeply than a widespread practice of the Ignatian Exercises has generally recognized. The result of this is that the experimental basis for the phases to be described in this part is considerably more limited than for that of the first three phases. Nevertheless the description of these phases may be of use, not only for the Exercises, but also for spiritual guidance outside the time of the Exercises.

I. SUFFERING AND DEATH

1. After the Election: Meaning of the Next Phase

It may seem that the process set forth by the Exercises has, with the election, reached a point where it can proceed no farther in the closed atmosphere of the Spiritual Exercises but only in life, that is, in the actual living out of the election.¹⁾ But if one looks to the deeper reality of the election, one recognizes how the path that has been begun continues,²⁾ and how at least the focusing of attention on this path still belongs as an exercise to the area of activity of the Exercises. The election is in-

1) Compare the purpose mentioned in S. E. 21 and 1.

2) Compare S. E. 147 and 167.

deed identification with Jesus Christ in the concrete life situation of the exercitant. Confronted with a question to resolve that has been raised before or during the Exercises - for instance, whether the relationship one has with a particular person should become a lifetime bond, or whether the profession one has learned and practiced to date is the kind of service one is best fitted for - the exercitant discovers his identification with Christ to involve his identification with one of the two possible answers to this question. 3) Or in other words, seen from the standpoint of Christ: Christ draws to himself a particular man in such a way that his being chosen involves at the same time the carrying out of a definite concrete choice in the life of the exercitant. 4) To the extent that this election is not dictated by some general obligation and so takes place in an atmosphere of moral freedom, 5) to that degree is the personal profession of faith in Christ of the one chosen bound up with his obedience to Christ in the election. 6) He can no longer go back on himself without becoming unfaithful to Christ, even if this unfaithfulness is not an outright denial of Christ. In other words: from something general and theoretical, his commitment to Christ has become concrete and practical. Thus, insofar as the exercitant carries out the election, he stands and acts in the place of Christ. 7) This means, however, that he has entered into a community sharing the destiny of Christ. It is to be expected, then, that he will be rejected and persecuted as Jesus was, however this may take place. Here one must keep in mind that the martyrdom of Jesus was in no way merely an external persecution, but that, according to the testimony of the gospels, he experienced fear, interior abandonment, and darkness. 8) He was

3) Compare the movement towards concretizing the general request (S.E. 98 to 152 and 175-189) with what was said in the preceding chapter of this text, page 92.

4) S. E. 135.

5) S. E. 170 and 172.

6) S. E. 173.

7) S. E. 135.

8) The Exercises book warns the guide against influencing the exercitant in this or that direction when there is question of finding his state of life (S.E. 14 and 15). It thus leaves entirely open the way in which one should

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delivered over to the "power of darkness" (Luke 22:53). It is precisely as a result of the fact that Jesus has "come to this hour" (John 12:27) in which "the prince of this world comes" (Jn 12:31) and lets loose his power on him, that "sentence is passed on the world" and that "the prince of this world is overthrown" (Jn 12:31) and clearly "has no rights over me" (Jn 14:30). Through remaining steadfast in spite of his impotence and through endurance even to death of the power of evil, Jesus triumphs over the power of evil. Something of all this will happen too to the followers of Jesus.

Whether this will take place immediately after the election during the Exercises themselves, or only later, after one has already begun to carry out the election in the concrete reality of daily life, or still later, after one has lived months and perhaps years with an election or a whole series of decision processes that become continually more concrete, cannot be said ahead of time. So the question again arises at this point as to whether the Exercises should now be continued. This is not to be answered in general terms. 10) One thing, however, can be

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- 8) (Cont.) "be in reality more like" Christ humiliated. (S. E. 167). Prayer towards a specific direction is only used at a period when inner readiness for all possibilities does not yet exist, as in the case of repugnance or aversion to external poverty. (S. E. 157) In contrast to this, Ignatius does not allow one to pray for martyrdom as a perhaps appropriate choice. He is very convinced that, in every case, the choosing of the exercitant by God involves, no matter what form this choice takes, being chosen for a following of the Crucified.
- 9) As expressed more strongly in the fifth point presented for each contemplation of the third week (S. E. 196).
- 10) While Ignatius marks clearly the transition from the first to the second week and has the Exercises guide decide whether the exercitant should continue on (see S. E. 18), the transition from the election to the third week becomes clear only in the material dealing with the Passion and with its corresponding introduction and annotations (S. E. 205 and 206). Again, while in the first week it was said that this phase should be shortened or lengthened (S.E. 4), in the third week
(Cont. next page)

said: here it is a different situation than at the end of the phases described up till now. There is now nothing dangerous in continuing the Exercises (beginning with the exercises on the Passion) even if the process has not progressed far enough for the exercitant to enter into the inner dynamic of this phase. We shall speak in more detail below about this dynamic, which we here describe in a word as "suffering as Christ without Christ". The contemplations will then help to deepen that selfless love which played a central role in the preparation for the election. Further, one cannot rule out in advance the possibility that prayerfully occupying oneself with the sufferings of Jesus may gradually stimulate the interior dynamic of this phase.

In this inner process two things are involved which succeed one another in stages or, even more frequently, alternate with each other. On the one hand, there is the sealing of the election,¹¹⁾ holding firmly to it, despite the loneliness or even the desolation experienced in it, all of which can exert tremendous pressure against the election. On the other side, there is the suffering and dying with Christ,¹²⁾ which results from remaining firm to the election. In the first stage, the attack of Satan (it becomes clear in this phase that the "power of darkness" traces back to a personal entity),¹³⁾ directs itself to in

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- 10) (Cont.) there is mention only of alternative topics for contemplation, "if one wishes to spend more time" or "less time" on the Passion (S. E. 209).
- 11) This is indicated too in that the colloquies of the second week are once again taken up at the close of the initial contemplations of the third week (S.E. 190-198), with the same key function they had in the preparation for and process of the election (S. E. 199).
- 12) S. E. 203.
- 13) "How the divinity could destroy its enemies and does not do so..." (S.E. 196). It is noteworthy that Ignatius does not speak of the enemies of Jesus, of those who played an active role in the events of the Passion, but of the enemies of the divinity, of the Enemy as such. Here the exercitant approaches quietly but steadily, in six points (S. E. 194-198), the true dimension of the Passion.

ducing the exercitant to go back on his election. In the second stage, it aims at getting the exercitant to renounce his obedience through a kind of physical or moral self-annihilation. More will be said of this later.

2. Content of This Phase

The Passion, which is the content of this phase, is in fact present in all the phases, and certainly in the crisis phase 14) and the phase of discipleship that follows it. But the relationship of the exercitant to it, the viewpoint from which he looks at the Passion, is different.

In the crisis phase he discovers himself among those who cause this suffering - Peter, Judas, Pilate - or among the high priests, the Sadducees, the disciples or the people for whom this suffering is being borne.¹⁵⁾

In the following phase, which deals with the acceptance of discipleship, suffering is recognized as that which continually accompanies Jesus, almost as a characteristic of him whom one loves, and which therefore one must learn to love too.¹⁶⁾

What is now at hand in this phase is suffering with Jesus.¹⁷⁾ The point of view is that of Jesus himself - in-

14) S. E. 53)

15) Compare what was said in connection with the first week about the encounter with Christ and especially about the contemplations on the Passion, page 51.

16) This appears already at the beginning of the second week in the call of Christ which challenges one to respond (S. E. 95-96). This is the source of the dynamic of the offering (S. E. 98) and of the whole process of accepting discipleship. See too the petitions made in the course of the second week: S.E. 104, 109, 116, 147, 157, 168.

17) As shown by the third prelude in S. E. 193, the petition is no longer primarily for "confusion, because for my sins the Lord is going to his passion" (although this always remains) but for sorrow and compassion. This becomes even clearer in the introduction given in the fourth point (S.E. 195) and in the petition in the second contemplation on the Passion proposed by Ignatius (S. E. 203).

sofar and as much as this is given to a person. Or, put perhaps more exactly, is granted him as a grace.¹⁸⁾

At the threshold of the Passion in all the gospels is the account of the Last Supper.¹⁹⁾ In the last supper Jesus seals the way he has so far travelled. He gives himself up even before the enemy lays hands on him. He makes it clear that the suffering to come, no matter how it may appear, is no mere misfortune, but the consciously accepted consequence of his way. Thus, this hour - in John this passage reads, "his hour had come" (Jn 13:1) - is the hour in which the public activity of Jesus has reached its end. He can no longer say or do anything. What follows now is nothing but fulfillment.

After the election the exercitant finds himself in exactly the same position on his path. He has taken the step which his election has allowed him to recognize, not forced by the pressure of external events, but in response to an inner call. The process of decision has come to completion - at least in the definite area with which the election concerned itself. Now, he who has come to this decision, he who has, as his election implies, concretely identified himself with Christ, must as a result give himself up. In the contemplation of the Last Supper, the parting and final surrender of Jesus will be the central theme.²⁰⁾ The different texts of the individual evangelists offer different possibilities of approach. Luke strongly emphasizes the dimension of parting (especially in 22:14-18); Mark and Matthew, more the dimension of betrayal and victim; John, through the washing of the feet and the priestly prayer, more Christ's offering of himself.

18) The terms chosen to describe the content of the exercitant's petitions, repeated since the meditation on the Two Standards (S. E. 147), underline well this character of gift, something left to the free disposition of God: "... should the Divine Majesty be pleased thereby and deign to choose and accept me" and "provided only that I can suffer these without sin on the part of another and without offense to the Divine Majesty".

19) S. E. 190-198 and 289.

20) S. E. 289.

The next stage, the beginning of the Passion as such, is the Agony on the Mount of Olives.²¹⁾ For the first time in the gospel Jesus is portrayed as one afflicted by anxiety and abandonment, who seeks refuge in his disciples. He wrestles with his fidelity to his mission, with his adherence to his decision. This prayerful struggle against the pressures of anxiety remains at the heart of the contemplation.²²⁾

The steps that follow mark the road of the physical annihilation of Jesus. It begins with their laying hands on him, bringing him into their power.²³⁾ The "power of darkness" (Lk 22:53) rages against him. It is not necessary here to go through the steps of this road one by one.²⁴⁾ Still, it is good to follow his way of suffering step by step. In this way, it can be more clearly experienced how Jesus is no longer the subject acting, but is now the object being acted upon.²⁵⁾ The physical torments ought not to be the center of attention, yet they are something one simply cannot overlook.

What is essential, however, is that the exercitant finds his way into the "interior side" of the suffering: his mission a failure, robbed of his freedom, unjustly dealt with, scorned, helplessly handed over to hostile men, the pawn of political machinations, abandoned and betrayed by his friends, without hope of rescue, abandoned, finally, by God... The text of the gospels is very sober. It does not decorate anything. It is not sentimental.²⁶⁾ It reflects reality.

3. Prayer of This Phase

The kind of prayer in this phase is contemplation, as

21) S. E. 200-204 and 290.

22) See, in Ignatius, the growing intensity of the three points (S. E. 290).

23) Compare S. E. 291.

24) Compare S. E. 209.

25) S. E. 201, 292 and 294. The division of the matter for contemplation reflects this aspect clearly.

26) Notice the style of the Exercises in the Passion period, equally laconic (S. E. 289-298).

explained earlier.²⁷⁾ But now something is added. Not only has the exercitant meanwhile changed, he has in fact become another person through the prayer that prepared the decision and through the election process itself. He is identified with Christ in a way different from before. For this reason too he can now no longer simply watch Jesus, as he did at the beginning of the second week.²⁸⁾ He can no longer simply be present when Jesus is imprisoned, struck, scorned, crucified. Otherwise, he would be an idle onlooker who is co-responsible for his death. That attitude he has already experienced toward the end of the first week, in the crisis phase. No matter how much this situation remains valid and therefore even here is a point of departure,²⁹⁾ one's prayer now concerns itself with finding one's place in the Passion events beside Jesus. Or, to put it more pointedly: in Jesus, in his place.³⁰⁾ The contemplation, which begins with simply being present by seeing and hearing, transforms itself, due to the identification with Christ reached in the meantime, into a prayer for participation in his suffering. This prayer is based on a very deep longing for what is prayed for. Out of this longing, still other possibilities of empathy are perceived, as mentioned in the crisis phase.³¹⁾ Thus the exercitant gropes by different paths toward compassion.

Pictures of the Passion, old or new, are helpful tools. Concerning these, one should take care that it is not suffering itself but the suffering Christ that is the focus of attention. The older art representations of the Passion may present less difficulty here. From the Middle Ages, popular piety has developed prayers and prayer forms like the way of the cross, the rosary and litanies. These can today still help this prayerful entry into the Passion.

No matter how much active effort is at times needed to leave the spectator position and enter that of one who

27) See pages 69-73 of Chapter III.

28) This change becomes clear when one compares S. E. 114 and 195, also 203.

29) S. E. 197 and 53.

30) S. E. 197.

31) Compare Chapter II page 47.

is himself suffering, 32) the Exercises guide must nevertheless pay attention that no false tension emerges. After the experience of the previous phase, this danger should, however, no longer be so great. The exercitant should have learned that he can find his way to inner experiences only indirectly, that the time of waiting is not time wasted, and that all that takes place in the process of the Exercises is a gift of the sovereign God.³³⁾ At the point where the exercitant now finds himself, it can be added that it is not at all certain whether he has already become mature enough to enter into the Passion. On the other hand, the readiness, indeed the longing, to follow Christ in his Passion is indispensable.

4. Inner Process of This Phase

As said earlier, the inner process of this phase takes place in two stages. Even if these stages need not be sharply distinguished, even if they are often intermingled, still it is useful to distinguish them.

The first stage is marked by anxiety, confusion, doubt, or darkness with regard to the election decision arrived at. It is the situation of the Agony in the Garden. It is still possible to go back. The exercitant is under the temptation to give up the election, to declare it invalid, to start once again from the very beginning. ³⁴⁾

32) S. E. 195 and 206.

33) Thus the instructions on how the exercitant should pass his time outside the formal periods of prayer are seen as a means to dispose himself for this experience and create an atmosphere for recollection, but not a way to produce this experience (S. E. 206).

34) Ignatius says the first fourteen rules for "understanding and recognizing the different movements produced in the soul" are "more suited to the first week" (S.E. 313-327). He presents the following eight as more suitable for the second week. He gives no hint of special rules for the third week (nor for the fourth), unless the "notes to aid us to understand scruples and the temptations of our enemy" (S. E. 345-351) are seen as fitting in here. Such a context would be suggested by
(Cont. next page)

The forms of this anxiety can be very different. It may be a flood of new reasons, which change the entire picture, so that instead of the simple clarity that existed before, complicated obscurity emerges. 35) It may be massive anguish, which makes the way entered upon seem like a bottle neck in which one finds no fresh air to breathe and no elbow room. Or confusion, in which all the motives which were previously so strong are now lost. Or again, darkness, in which one simply no longer sees. Or also fears, which picture the consequences of the election in horrifying and distressing proportions. In whatever form the inner threat is experienced, it directs itself against the election and

- 34) (Cont.) the arrangement of the various "Rules" and "Notes", which, beginning with S. E. 313, are placed after the text and explanations for the four weeks and the collection of "the mysteries of Our Lord". The rules for the discernment of spirits relate to the first and second weeks respectively. The "rules for the distribution of alms" are only an application of S. E. 189 and therefore clearly belong to the context of the election. The notes on scruples then follow, and after them come the "rules to foster the true attitude of mind we ought to have in the Church militant". Since these latter are considered as belonging to the fourth week, the rules for scruples, located in between, seem from their position to be connected with the third week. But the question remains whether Ignatius was here actually thinking in this systematic fashion. That no help - or at least no clearer help - is given in the third week for the discernment of spirits, can perhaps be explained by the fact that the inner process of this phase is concerned, not with new discovery or new knowledge, but with an absolute steadfastness, a fidelity against all opposition and in the face of the power of evil, to that which has been previously recognized as right. Thus the situation, despite other differences, has something in common with the situation of the first week, where what was involved was also steadfastness against massive temptations. Therefore what the rules for the discernment of spirits 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7 say for the first week, insofar as they deal with recognition and discernment of the "enemy" (S. E. 315 and 317-320), is applicable also to the third week.
- 35) Compare the characteristics of Satan's way of acting (S. E. 329).

promises the exercitant, freedom if he abandons the election. 36)

It is of great importance for the Exercises guide to perceive the situation correctly, for the exercitant is dependent on his help. To perceive the situation rightly means here primarily to perceive whether the election process is over. Where is the exercitant now on his journey? Did he, during the preparation for the election - the consideration on the Two Standards and the test-meditation on the Three Classes of Men - really perceive how hard it is to follow Christ? Was he in the election objectively aware of the difficulties involved? Did he take enough time? And were the criteria (rules) for discernment paid attention to? 37) If these questions can be answered by a "yes", then it was right to have moved out of the third phase into the fourth phase which contemplates the Passion. Then the experiences described above are not to be looked on as a genuine questioning, but rather as a confirmation of the election. They are temptations against it, pseudo-reasons, not counter-reasons.

In this phase a certain firmness is expected of the Exercises guide. During the election he should have formed a judgment as to whether it proceeded properly or not. Even if he could have done nothing himself as regards the election, he could and should have kept the exercitant from letting himself be led by illusions. 38) If he has done this properly, then he must now, after the termination of the election, unmistakably and decisively support the election arrived at. He is now called to be a witness, from whom the exercitant, in his own helplessness, confusion and darkness, can gain support. 39)

For all depends on the exercitant's not allowing himself to be trapped in the questions and doubts, the pseudo reasons and subtleties. His task now is not to seek to

36) S. E. 317, 318.

37) Compare Chapter III, preparation for the election, page 75.

38) S. E. 14 and 345-351.

39) Compare S. E. 7.

know what is to be done - this was the task earlier, in the second week - but to live out what is recognized as God's will.

This shows why the Exercises guide needs to be clear as to which phase of the process the exercitant is in. The exercitant alone would be overburdened by this task.⁴⁰⁾ He has indeed in the previous phase tried to learn to let himself be led by his interiorly-experienced harmony with Christ, and to feel disturbance of this harmony, through a certain train of thought or way of acting, as something suspect.⁴¹⁾ Is he now simply to go on despite being troubled so much? Here he needs an experienced guide or companion, who can give him the confidence to dare to enter into the suffering for which he has longed. The Exercises guide cannot remove the persisting darkness, the confusion and anxiety from the exercitant. Yet he must help him come to the certainty that enduring it is right.

If the exercitant with the help of the guide holds fast, that is, if he does not give way to doubts about his election, but remains prayerfully steadfast with Christ in his anguish of the Agony in the Garden, then this anguish or darkness may lessen temporarily. From an overall viewpoint, however, a complete disappearance of the suffering cannot be expected. On the contrary, what must be expected is an increase of anguish and distress, but which directs itself now no longer merely against the election, but against the exercitant in his entire existence. This is the second stage of the Passion phase. Whereas earlier, abandoning his election seemed to him a possible solution, the temptation now becomes more radical. Now, the only thing that seems to offer hope of freeing him from the unbearable pressure is the surrender of the entire Exercises effort, the abandonment of everything so far done and, under certain circumstances, even putting an end to a life that has become meaningless.

The forms that this distress takes in this situation may be various. It may be utter anxiety and depression, which seem to destroy all desire to live. Or despair,

40) Compare S. E. 6, 7 and 8.

41) Compare S. E. 335, 333, 332, and Chapter III, pages 90 and 94.

which makes the simplest of life's occurrences a problem. Or finally, overpowering guilt feelings, by which the exercitant believes himself rejected.

This conviction of the exercitant, when he is deeply drawn into participation in the Passion, that the entire Exercises up to this point has been but an illusion, poses for the Exercises guide challenging questions. Has the experience up to now been genuine? Is the exercitant physically healthy? Such questions crop up. Again, one should keep calm and not allow oneself to be alarmed. If the Exercises guide has repeatedly raised these questions for himself in the course of the Exercises, if he has had the courage to meet and clarify well-founded doubts that might have arisen, then he has no reason to begin now once again with these questions. That they are raised by the exercitant is part of the process of this phase. He is then called to give witness to the exercitant of the faith experience of the Church, in which this terrifying phase, that deprives him of all perspective as to both past and future, is recognized as a passing phase that forms part of the following of Christ.⁴²⁾

For the exercitant everything depends on remaining steadfast from hour to hour and sometimes from minute to minute. All that renders this steadfastness possible is permissible. Because the appropriate inner experience of faith and prayer has been removed from him, he must like an immature child support himself with the prayer and faith of the faith-community. This means, in practice, that he uses simple vocal prayer and that he prays from

42) As witnessed and described by the masters of the spiritual life, and perhaps most strikingly by John of the Cross. Here is a short passage from Theology of Contemplative Prayer, by Hans Urs von Balthasar: "This dialogue carried to its ultimate existential experience is the 'dark night of the soul', the participation in the desolation of Jesus on the cross. It takes place in a love which no longer receives light, and which remains incapable of judging and discerning, a love where the dialogue has been changed into a monologue without echo or response. But this night, it too, is a gift of the Risen One, who guides it and limits its extent."

and with other texts formulated and used by others. 43) In this situation it would be good for him too to take refuge in Mary and the saints. Because he can no longer experience his own prayer as being real, calling instead on the saints for their prayers is, indeed, in some circumstances, the only way he can pray.

As for a child, obedience now plays an important role. Because the components of experienced faith are more or less, and under certain conditions, entirely removed, only obedience remains as the true and appropriate form of faith. This obedience is nothing theoretical or abstract. It is a very simple holding on to the meaning of faith and the commandments against all the futility he experiences, and against the emerging temptation to gain freedom from the torture through a short-cut of some sort. Against the tendency to give in to the stratagems of doubt, obedience with regard to the instructions of the Exercises guide is called for.

It naturally remains an open question how far the exercitant - whether in the thirty-day Exercises or in a repetition of the Exercises made after many experiences of them - enters into this full inner process. What has been here described is the full unfolding of that process. It is of course possible that the exercitant comes to only a brief and passing experience of this sort. In any case, it is correct to guide the exercitant, after the election, in to prayerful meditation on the suffering of Christ, and to continue the Exercises in this way. This helps to deepen his love for Christ and to prepare him for the suffering which, in one form or another, he will eventually encounter.

5. The Power of Darkness

In no other phase of the Exercises does it become as clear as here that there is a power which tends to bring to ruin the way of the Exercises, and indeed, to destroy

43) See the "third method of prayer" (S. E. 258-260).

the exercitant himself. 44) That this power remains for the most part hidden and does not show itself as an opponent is one of its most effective methods. This leads to one's not taking it sufficiently into consideration, and even to one's entire denial of it. It has already been made clear in the last chapter that a sober position, in which one deals realistically with this power's effects without allowing fear of it to become one's overriding motive, is important for the exercitant. 45)

Before we go more into detail on the role of that power in this phase, we first wish to review the tactics which it has so far used in the course of the Exercises process. If in doing so the "power of darkness" - which is itself a biblical expression (Lk 22:53) - seems to be personified, it is because I am following biblical expressions, since they most simply and clearly summarize the different tendencies of evil. On the other hand, this summary view will show that the effects experienced can most easily be explained by assuming the presence of a manipulator behind them. At the beginning of the path travelled, the attack seeks to hinder the exercitant from actually setting out on the journey, or, once on the way, to bring him to a standstill, or to go back. The means used for this purpose are simple: lukewarmness, boredom with prayer or with the content or impulses of faith, yielding to the seductiveness of all that withdraws him from this path. The farther he goes, the more the question bothers him: why must he be so "crazy" and not be able to go on like the rest of the world, like the rest of reasonable and normal men? 46)

If the exercitant does not give in to this diversionary maneuver, and faces up to the seriousness of his situ-

44) Ignatius speaks of this power not only as the "evil spirit" (S.E. 314) but more often as the "enemy" (S.E. 12, 325, etc.) and, almost as a stereotyped expression, as the "enemy of human nature" (S.E. 7, 10, 325, 326, 327, 329, 334), and finally, as the "enemy of our progress and eternal salvation" (S.E. 333).

45) Chapter III, page 79.

46) S.E. 314. See too Chapter III, page 86, on the discernment of spirits throughout the course of the Exercises.

ation, then the second wave of attacks comes in the form of discouragement, depression, confusion or scruples. Once again the goal of the attack is to throw obstacles in his path ahead and to induce the exercitant to break off this undertaking with God.⁴⁷⁾

Naturally the subject matter of these obstacles experienced is of the psychological order, and can to a large extent be described in psychological or ethical categories. If, however, one has learned to see the whole in the light of Scripture and of faith, then indeed, one will notice with amazement the consequences of the obstacles that appear. One will recognize the clever smokescreen tactic, which lets one see only what "the enemy" wishes.⁴⁸⁾ In this way the enemy can remain entirely in the background. He who is led astray must of course believe that he is only acting in accord with reality. This mixture of evil and blindness in him, which the exercitant and his helper must tackle, betrays a power which is able to exert influence on the psychic mechanism.⁴⁹⁾

In the following phase, that of the second week, the attack is more subtle and still more veiled.⁵⁰⁾ If the weaknesses of the exercitant have up to this point been the starting point for leading him astray, now the starting point is his good side: his selflessness, generosity and his actual achievements.⁵¹⁾ These virtues are now exaggerated in order to cause difficulties for the exercitant. The process now is like sharpening a pencil. If one insists on sharpening it still more, its point finally breaks off, and one must begin sharpening all over. In this way the excessive effort at self-denial leads to disgust and confusion.⁵²⁾ The exercitant is forced to return to the

47) Compare S.E. 315, 317, 322, and the rules for scruples, S.E. 345-351.

48) As regards these tactics and the goal they aim at, Ignatius uses two comparisons which, although conditioned by his time, remain relevant and worthy of consideration (S.E. 326, 327).

49) See S. E. 330-332.

50) Compare S. E. 9 and 10, and the rules for the discernment of spirits for the second week, S. E. 328-336.

51) S. E. 332.

52) S. E. 349.

point where his effort began and once again to travel the distance between. Thus the adversary has at least been able to cause a hesitation in the decision of the exercitant, and this is dangerous for his intention.

Things become worse when the exercitant, because of difficulties, pressure or confusion, now insists on reaching a seemingly greater selflessness or certainty or poverty, or something of the sort.⁵³⁾ Here he risks losing the sensitivity for the measure intended for him, the childlike readiness to be satisfied with a gift received. His following of Christ becomes separated from the personal nature of the disciple relationship and, in a kind of spiritual ambition, is coveted as something of material value, which increases one's own power.⁵⁴⁾ What remains is only the "I can" - all the more dangerous since it is on a spiritual plane. This "power" is perhaps the most extreme perversion of Christian sanctity. Such a man would have become a true companion of Lucifer, one of his congenial followers. One difference, however: Lucifer sees through to the ultimate meaninglessness and inevitable frustration of his efforts and acts out of hate and despair, while the person led astray by this unique blindness, becomes more and more aware of the weaknesses and mistakes of others, but more and more blind to his own pride.⁵⁵⁾

Here it appears clearly that the dangers for one who progresses in the Christian life in no way lessen, but on

53) S. E. 333, also 332.

54) This is why the triple colloquies hold such a large place in the meditations and contemplations of the second week, which lead to the election. The desire to follow Christ ever more fully can only be lived in a climate of prayer, where, in direct relationship with Christ, one expects all from him and abandons oneself to him. This stands out very clearly in S.E. 168. See also S.E. 156, 147, and page 83 of this text.

55) These aspects of hate, compulsion and evil, as well as the tactic of remaining in the background and clouding over evil, converge in the picture of "Lucifer, the chief of all the enemy", as presented at the beginning of the meditation on the Two Standards (S.E. 140, 141, 142).

the contrary, continually become greater. The Christian way does not lead to self-satisfaction and power, but to greater union with God. If there is therefore any progress on this road, it is reflected in a growing consciousness of being dependent on God. Where this consciousness is lost, there may still remain for a while a personal commitment, a strong "I can". And this can even, seen as self-mastery and self-discipline, as readiness for sacrifice and self-denial, be genuine. But in place of the living relationship to a beloved "Thou", the "I" has now become the center of everything. The longer such a process of perversion lasts and the more strongly it is entrenched, the greater the ultimate catastrophe will be. The one remaining hope is that the call of God to conversion - a call which continually becomes louder and which God allows to be heard in the language of life experiences - breaks the stubborn armor early enough so that the crisis can still be salvific.⁵⁶⁾

In the three phases just described - that of the principle and foundation, the first week, and the second week - the tempter remained entirely in the background.⁵⁷⁾ This is true also in the first stage of the Passion phase. Doubt, anxiety and confusion - tools used by him - still seem to have a positive goal: life according to the will of God. Humility in the face of the graces given by God to the retreatant now seem a reason to him why he may, even must, yield to the pressure against the election. Here we encounter a typical tactic of the adversary: he always uses the correct way of acting of the phase immediately preceding. Thus the criteria according to which the Exercises

56) Although such a man does not "go from mortal sin to mortal sin", in the sense of moral violations, he is nevertheless, precisely by his pride - which he does not recognize - caught up in a deadly deviation and isolation from God, so that the first rule for the discernment of spirits in the first week is once again relevant (S. E. 314).

57) Under the appearance of an "angel of light" (S.E. 332) whom one recognizes at the "end" of the temptation (S. E. 333) and by his "trail of evil" (S. E. 334).

guide and the exercitant, with his guide's help, can judge in which stage he is, are of such decisive importance. 58)

Only when the exercitant resists the pressure against the election and thereby ratifies his identification with Christ, made in the election, does Satan allow his mask to fall and enter into open combat. Through interior and perhaps also exterior torments he lets his power loose on the man in order to prove to him that he is the "prince of this world" (Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). The man is placed before the option of choosing God - which, for now, means suffering - or denying God, with the promise of an immediate end to suffering. Like Jesus, the exercitant is abandoned to this attack. He has no defense weapons with which to keep his opponent away from his body and his soul. He is pushed back into the last corner of his person, to which no other creature has access. Everything else around him and in him is in the hands of the enemy.

But here the limits of the enemy's possibilities become clear. He has might, but no genuine power, if by power one understands the ability to move a man from his inmost person. He cannot deprive man of the free decision to make an end to all, be this in ending his life through suicide or in throwing overboard all that has been the meaning of life - that is, God himself. Thus, it remains possible for man in this most extreme distress to triumph over the adversary in Christ - if he suffers in fidelity. 59) Perhaps it would be more exact to say, Christ triumphs in this man, 60) because for this man Christ is no longer visible nor perceptible, neither beside him nor before him. This is just what his suffering consists in: that Christ, and with him all consolation, is taken away. He suffers as Christ without Christ. It is Christ who has entered into him and who carries in the person of this man the cross.

58) As Ignatius spells out in more detail for the passage from the first to the second week (S. E. 9).

59) This is the extreme degree of the situation which Ignatius already, in the context of the desolation of the first week, drew attention to (S.E. 320). But its full consequences are apparent only in this phase.

60) See Chapter III, page 80, especially footnote 69.

6. Goal of This Phase

With these last words we have already touched on the goal of this phase. It is, expressed in the words of Scripture, dying with Christ. Here is not the place to enter in to a discussion on whether or how this is possible on this side of the barrier of physical death. To me it seems unmistakable that at least Paul and John, but also the synoptic evangelists, are familiar with an anticipation of the existential event of dying, against which physical death is but a final stroke. In Christian history too, there are sufficient witnesses to confirm what I am trying to say.

Dying therefore means that man gives up the opposition by which he asserts himself for his own sake, that he becomes so free from himself that he is ready to accept the end of his own existence for the sake of another, that he has become obedient even when this obedience means the extinguishing of his own ego. It is certainly impossible to describe adequately this event in words. All that can be done is to indicate the direction in which this might be looked for.

One may presume, I think, that the following sentence refers to such participation in the suffering and death of Christ: "Thus I fill up in my own body what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ for the sake of his body, which is the Church". (Col 1:24) Suffering is in all phases of the Christian life an essential element. It is, first, a help to purification, and then, to growth in one's love for Jesus. In this phase it becomes, above all, suffering out of love. Paradoxically, it must be recognized that this is no longer something willed, but pure obedience: the one alternative would be the denial of love. Such suffering is indeed now only to a small degree necessary for one's own purification, and can, in its excess, become vicariously fruitful for others. If this is so, then this fourth phase of the way, which to man seems so completely useless and meaningless, is the most fruitful of all up to now.

II. THE NEW LIFE

1. Transition To the New Phase

What was true for all the phases so far described, and true especially for the Passion phase, is true also for this new phase, the last: it is not something that can be induced exteriorly by methods or by occupying oneself with texts, pictures or materials. But what was just said about the previous phase is valid here too: even if the essential interior process of this phase is not now received, it can still be helpful to apply oneself to the subject matter, which is the Resurrection and the sending on mission. 61)

If the contemplations on the Passion have remained simply contemplations without the exercitant's having been admitted to the inner process of suffering, then it is a question to be weighed as to whether and when he should end the contemplations on the mysteries of the Passion and turn to the Resurrection appearances. I am not of the opinion that the Exercises must in every case end with some Easter meditations. The paschal mystery of the Cross and Resurrection must be present as the deepest core of any Christian achievement of salvation, no matter what phase this may belong to. There is consequently no need to add a few exercises of this kind at the end. It therefore becomes a question of time available, of inner, peaceful inclination of the exercitant, and perhaps also of other factors, as to whether contemplations of the Risen Life should still be made after the Passion contemplations.

This is valid for the case where the inner process of the phase of the Passion has not been entered upon, or, if so, only in a brief, cursory way. If one has little time at one's disposal I consider it in general better to devote some days completely to prayerful penetration into the

61) Compare the Exercises book, where the fourth week, from S. E. 218 on, begins quite simply with the new content and the corresponding changes required in prayer and in one's general comportment (S.E. 223-224 and 226-229). The experience of joy and the grace "to be glad and rejoice intensely at the so great joy and glory of Christ our Lord (S.E. 221) is at first - if not exclusively - present only as a request.

Passion than to do two days of the Passion and one of the Risen Life. Should one, contrary to this, have more time, it can be very useful, after some days of intensive prayer on the Passion material, to move on to the contemplations of the Resurrection appearances. Even if the inner process of the Passion phase has not been completed, the exercitant may have arrived at greater intimacy with Christ, deeper commitment, and increased openness to God. After some days this might even have come, in a relative sense, to completion. Then it would no longer be merely possible, but desirable to move on to new material.

The situation is different if the process of suffering in the existential sense, as described in the previous chapter, has begun. One cannot externally end this. Nor is this something which one can steer through the materials presented for prayer. To give the exercitant Easter contemplations when he is suffering from depressions or despair is in most cases of no help. It can easily heighten the danger of throwing everything overboard. There remains no possibility other than to wait for the end of this phase. Its end has certainly come when the exercitant undergoes new experiences that are unmistakably different.
62)

Whether one should also speak of the end of the Passion phase when the overpowering pressure and darkness decreases or disappears without there having occurred a new, positive experience, is another question. Perhaps what is here involved is merely a pause in one's suffering. The Exercises guide in this case may encourage the exercitant to accept such a relief and lightening as a help and, in a certain sense, to relish it. Then the Resurrection appear-

62) The Exercises book, again, does not describe what this "to be glad and rejoice intensely" consists in. Ignatius simply has one pray for this grace, and, in the fourth point of each contemplation, to consider "how the divinity, which seemed to hide itself during the Passion, now appears and manifests itself in its true and holy effects" (S.E. 223), and after this to "consider the office of consoler that Christ our Lord exercises" (S. E. 224).

ances can be presented for contemplation, and the new phase, as regards its content, be begun. Whether there will also be a breakthrough in the inner process can and must remain an open question.

2. Content and Method of Prayer in This Phase

The narratives of the appearances of the Risen Christ have, in their density and directness, a unique character. 63) When one goes through them, one finds that they all generally have the same structure: his disciples are busy with something of his that has been left them by him; the Risen One is suddenly with them, usually unrecognized at first; through a word or a sign he makes himself known; he conveys a mission and he disappears. These simple accounts of meetings are especially suitable for the simple kind of prayer that contemplation is.

The content will increase in the exercitant the yearning for direct encounter with the Risen Christ. That this yearning is now free of envy and ambition - a necessary condition if something is to happen - is the fruit of the experience of suffering and dying.

3. The Inner Process

It would certainly be presumptuous here to speak of what can happen in the last phase, which means participation by anticipation in the Resurrection. What one may hope for in this phase is the encounter with the Lord. After the torments of suffering which have preceded this phase, such a turning to the Risen Lord is experienced as bliss. Even if what is here involved is not a direct encounter, but a mediated one through consolation, such as the exercitant had perhaps already experienced, such joy and such peace may be very great. Above all, the character of consolation, which such an experience brings after the Passion, is to emphasized. 64)

The Lord comes, but he does not remain. This coming and going is characteristic. The exercitant should learn

63) S. E. 224.

64) S. E. 224.

to adjust himself to it. His gaze which, full of yearning and then of happiness, is at first directed toward his Risen Lord who appears, gradually expands. He sees men, things, the world, with other eyes. He recognizes that all has changed, because all is the world of his Risen Lord, the enlargement and extension of his Body.⁶⁵⁾ One can distinguish two levels of this phase, which overlap. In the first, the Lord himself stands in the center. In the second, his disappearance is no longer experienced as a vanishing, but as a sign of his enduring presence in all men and all things.

On this second level, something new is added. We saw that in the narratives of Christ's apparitions, this disappearance is linked with a mission which the Lord conveys. To accept this aspect of mission - sending - is an important task for the participant. What is involved here is not the specific mission which he received in the election. Here it is much more experiencing the fact that meeting the Lord and his mission are no longer different things which follow one another. Rather one can meet the Lord in one's mission and in those to whom one is sent. What in an earlier stage would have been a premature leveling of differences and so a deception that would have avoided the serious decisions needed, has now become possible: the unity of all things coming from God and returning to God.⁶⁶⁾

65) S. E. 223.

66) Thus, the journey of the Spiritual Exercises flows into the Contemplation to Gain Love (S.E. 230-237). Here, in four broad approaches, this unity of all things as coming from God is presented for contemplation: God as the source of his gifts and sharing (234); as the bearer of his own presence (S. E. 235); as the sign of the "foolishness" of his love (S. E. 236); and as the outflowing of his goodness (S. E. 237). In the same way, returning to God by means of my response: "what I, on my side, ought to offer the Divine Majesty, that is, all I possess and myself with it. Thus, as one moved by great feeling, I will make this offering of myself, 'Take, O Lord, and receive...'" (S. E. 234).

If in this phase there is a definite movement, it is the movement away from great and intense encounters - or at least of contemplations of encounter - to the modest and less dramatic sensitivity for the presence of Christ in all things, even in the smallest and most-everyday of things, which are indeed included in his mission.

At the end of this series of appearances and after the contemplation of the ascension into heaven, it is useful to seek in prayer an overall view of the unity of everything - all coming from God and all returning to God. It is in this unity that everyday life can be lived in simplicity, in humility, and yet in bliss.

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