



FACULTAD DE TEOLOGÍA

FROM INDIFFERENCE TO PREFERENCE

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MADRID
2020



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Madrid, 02 DICIEMBRE 2020

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ABBREVIATIONS

Au	<i>Autobiography</i> of Ignatius of Loyola
BAC	Biblioteca de autores cristianos. Madrid
CJ	Compañía de Jesús
CIS	<i>Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis</i> . Roma
CN	<i>Complementary Norms</i>
DEI	<i>Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaciana</i> . Bilbao - Santander
DHCJ	<i>Diccionario Histórico de la Compañía de Jesús</i> . Roma - Madrid
ed	editor
eds	editors
FN	<i>Fontes Narrativi de S. Ignatio de Loyola et de Societatis Iesu initiis</i> (4 Vols.), Romae 1943-1965 (66, 73, 85, 93)
GSP	Gujarat Sahitya Prakash. Anand
IHSI	<i>Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu</i> . Roma
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium</i>
Man	Manresa. Madrid
MHSI	<i>Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu</i> . Madrid - Roma
MI	<i>Monumenta Ignatiana</i>
p	page
SpEx	<i>Spiritual Exercises</i> of Ignatius of Loyola
St	Saint
UPComillas	Universidad Pontificia Comillas.

Acknowledgement

First and foremost, I would like to express my profound gratitude to God for the gift of my vocation to the Society of Jesus, where I experienced the graces of the Spiritual Exercises and His inspiration to write about the Ignatian Indifference and Discernment.

My heartfelt gratitude to my guide, Prof. José García de Castro Valdés, SJ for his appropriate guidance, patience, support and encouragement. I place on record my sincere gratitude to the other professors of Máster Ignatiana and the other staff of the Universidad Pontificia de Comillas.

I am thankful to my Jesuit community at Cantoblanco, Madrid, for giving me all the necessary facilities to work and for their care and support. I am also grateful to my companions of Máster Ignatiana for their friendship, companionship and rich insights.

Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam

INTRODUCTION

When I started writing this paper, honestly I should admit that I did not have any inspiration to proceed. The reason might be that I started the Masters Programme from the fourth module. However, in the course of the time, one of the themes that captured my attention was ‘indifference,’ which is essential to make a good election. I reflected over it and finally fixed on this theme ‘From Indifference to Preference’ for my TFM. While writing on this theme, I could see my own life in the light of St. Ignatius’s life. In a certain sense, it is a discovery of my own self in the person of St. Ignatius. My own novitiate experience was inadequate though profound to understand the deeper meanings of indifference and discernment. After going through the Masters programme, I could experience a new perspective in my Jesuit vocation and mission.

One of the characteristics of human being is that he endowed with freedom. God has blessed the human person with the gift of freedom. This freedom has been understood differently by different people down the lanes of the human history. For Ignatius, the human freedom is to choose to grow in the relationship with God and to do his will. This enables man to partake in the redemptive work of God and that is the mission to which God constantly invites the human person to collaborate. For this to happen, the human person has to experience a certain degree of inner freedom, which St. Ignatius calls “Indifference”.

In the Principle and Foundation (Sp.Ex., 23), St. Ignatius lays down the goal of human life: to serve, to love and to give reverence to God. In this process, whatever helps him to reach his end, he has to use and whatever impedes him, he has to leave it. “Gandhi made a statement along this line, and no one can accuse him of not being involved in the modern world. “Man’s ultimate aim,” said Gandhi, “is the realization that all his activities, social, political, religious, have to be guided to the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of that endeavour simply because the only way to find God is seeing him in his creation and to be one with him.”¹

Ignatian holy indifference leads one to have a total openness to the will of God. The Ignatian vision is that everything has to be directed towards “Greater glory of

¹ Paul Coutinho, *The Ignatian Ideal and Jesuit Reality*, (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1998), 11.

God". In all the actions, in all conversations, Ignatius felt the presence of God and contemplated the presence of God. He could enjoy the mysterious gift of seeing God because his vision was not blurred by impediments. Nadal explains the expression of "finding God in all things" as simply doing the will of God, where we find peace, quiet and devotion in all that we do.

The dynamics of the Contemplation to Attain Love are designed to help the exercitant grow in the experience of the Spiritual Exercises. The deepening of the experience begins with the petitions when Ignatius moves the exercitant from asking "that I may love him more" to asking that "I may in all things love and serve the Divine Majesty." Furthermore, the exercitant comes to recognize at the end of the Fourth Week that Christ is the Creator, Redeemer and Consoler and this devotion and assimilation into the Trinity is the focus of the four points of the Contemplation.²

When I joined the Jesuit novitiate at the age of 19, I had a fervent desire to become a Jesuit priest to serve God and people. At this age my freedom was limited and maturity was not sufficient. However my desire was holy and my commitment to become a Jesuit was strong. I had profound experiences and an inner call to become a priest. It is true that I cannot be indifferent or detached until I have experienced God's love in my life. It was during my Spiritual Exercises, I was initiated into making discernment of my vocation to the Society. As a 19 year old boy, I did make a decision to follow Christ in his footsteps in the Society of Jesus. However as I journeyed in the Society with the accompaniment of formators and spiritual directors, I discovered the real depth and richness of making discernment in the spirit of indifference. It may not be pertaining to a decisive point but rather to day today living in accordance with the Spirit. In the Principle and Foundation, one can see God as transcendent. My relationship with God is seen in my way of giving him reverence, praise and service. The same presence of God is stressed in "Contemplation to Attain Love". There is an experience of God in everything and everything in Him. Therefore as long as I don't have an awareness of his presence within me, it is impossible to get into the spirit of indifference. However, as Anthony De Mello notes,

The great obstacle to knowing God's will is our inordinate attachments. Otherwise it is not so difficult to find God's will. If we do not let smoke screen deceive us, we will see God's will with fair enough clarity. But we suffer from carnal love, sensual love and worldly love; we have vested interests, and anyone who has vested interest will let them influence his or her thinking.³

²*Ibid*, 55.

³ Antony De Mello, *Seek God Everywhere*, (New York: House Inc., 2010), 85.

For Ignatius choosing to serve the Lord is more important than anything else while making decisions. Ignatius laying down his sword at the altar of our Lady of Montserrat was a decisive moment in his life in choosing the greater cause of serving the Lord in an atmosphere of indifference and this is the preference that he made in an attitude of indifference. This moment had driven him to be always at the service of the eternal King. Having experienced a radical conversion, Ignatian considered that his mission is set towards the goal of salvation of the souls, which would construct the Kingdom of God. To enjoy a certain degree of spiritual freedom, which is fundamental to move towards the greater preference, one should grow in the virtue of indifference. Therefore, Ignatian indifference is a fundamental principle, which helps us to order our lives in order to know the will of God and to save our souls.

Objective

There are certain fundamental questions that every person, sometime or later, will ask; where have I come from? What am I doing? And where am I going? Man searches for answers to these questions. But more often he finds it difficult to orient himself in the right direction of this search for meaning because of his inordinate attachments or unintegrated feelings. This blocks him from finding the true will of God.

During the study of Masters in Ignatian Spirituality, I have been somehow captivated by this theme of 'indifference', which is a fundamental principle in the process of making any preference. In this paper, my main objective is to explore in depth the Ignatian principle of holy indifference, which is orientated towards the finding of the will of God. What is the role of Indifference in arriving at a preference that in accordance with the will of God? What are the fundamental prerequisites and consequences of the indifference? While responding to these questions, I would also study the Ignatian categories of the indifference.

While writing this paper, apart from other authors in Ignatian Spirituality, the important authors, who helped me deepen my knowledge of Spiritual Exercises and Discernment, are Michael Ivens and Timothy M.Gallagher. In the English speaking world, they explored Ignatian Spirituality and made it available to not only the scholars but also for the ordinary folk. These two authors have a certain influence on my understanding of Spiritual Exercises. The books that I have utilized extensively are *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises* by Ivens and 'Setting Captives Free' by

Gallagher. I have learned a lot from these two authors especially on the topics of indifference and discernment.

Content and structure of the Paper

This paper contains three chapters. The first chapter deals with the meaning and nature of indifference, which serves as a kind of introduction to the general understanding of the principle of indifference. Here I have studied the presence of the principle of indifference in the Directories and Spiritual Exercises. The book of the Spiritual Exercises is the fruit of the lived experience combined with his knowledge of theology and Christian tradition of St. Ignatius. Therefore an exploration of this book is fundamental to understand the principle of ‘indifference’.

In the second chapter, I will explore the impediments that one may encounter in the whole journey of the election a journey that leads from ‘indifference to preference’. This will expand to the various areas of human psychological, cultural, spiritual and relational aspects. The purpose is while becoming aware of these impediments, one can respond to the call of being a true Christian, which means learning to respond with love to God, to people and to circumstances. It leads to a search for ways of living out the gospel commandment of love, while recognizing the imperfection of our attempts.

The last chapter is about a practical application of the art of discernment to daily living journeying through the Old Testament and New Testament and also exploring the life and experience of St. Ignatius of Loyola which he shared in his Autobiography and the Spiritual Exercises. We turn to the Scripture because we know that the Lord speaks there. In the Scripture, we find wisdom and direction. Through discernment, we find out the priorities of God in our life and thus we share the vision of coming of the Kingdom of God. We study Ignatian way of doing discernment because of his contribution and wisdom found in the Spiritual Exercises.

Methodology

This will be studied in the context of Ignatian understanding of the purpose of human life and mission, using a few primary and other secondary resources that are available in the wide publications of Ignatian spirituality. I will employ a descriptive method to point out the basic elements of the Ignatian indifference.

CHAPTER 1

MEANING AND NATURE OF INDIFFERENCE IN SECULAR UNDERSTANDING, SPIRITUAL EXERCISES AND DIRECTORIES

Introduction

One of the key aspects of Ignatian Spirituality is the principle of Indifference. Ignatius underlines its importance in the very beginning of the Spiritual Exercises. In the Principle and Foundation, Ignatius gives an overview of the creation and the purpose of man.⁴ God invites human beings to be magnanimous and generous co-workers in His salvation project. In order to respond to this call, the human being has to in a certain let go off his own will, his inclinations, his attractions and aversions in order to embrace the will of God. The principle of Indifference is one of the important tools that helps the exercitant to discern the will of God properly. Ignatius says that the exercitant should be instructed that the deeper he lays this the foundation of the indifference the firmer will be his edifice. In the Annotations of 15 and 16, he describes that for the Creator to work directly in his creature, there should not be any obstacle or impediment.⁵ Sometimes because of our own inordinate attachments, we fail to attain the required liberty to respond to the will of God adequately. Therefore Ignatius suggests that the exercitant should work to achieve a state of mind that gets itself rid of all the attachments so that he can make a choice in complete freedom without being influenced by any other forces.

Among some other influences, the Book of *Spiritual Exercises* is the fruit of the lived experience of Ignatius. He communicated his lived experience that had been cultivated through various stages of purification, which lead to a continuous growth of interior knowledge. In such a process of growth, the principle of Indifference appears as

⁴See *Principle and Foundation* 23, (...) For this it is necessary to make ourselves indifferent to all created things in all that is allowed to the choice of our free will and is not prohibited to it; so that, on our part, we want not health rather than sickness, riches rather than poverty, honor rather than dishonor, long rather than short life, and so in all the rest; desiring and choosing only what is most conducive for us to the end for which we are created.

⁵ Annotation 15, [...when seeking the Divine Will, it is more fitting and much better, that the Creator and Lord Himself should communicate Himself to His devout soul, inflaming it with His love and praise, and disposing it for the way in which it will be better able to serve Him in future. So, he who is giving the Exercises should not turn or incline to one side or the other, but standing in the centre like a balance, leave the Creator to act immediately with the creature, and the creature with its Creator and Lord.]; Annotation 16, [For this—namely, that the Creator and Lord may work more surely in His creature—it is very expedient, if it happens that the soul is attached or inclined to a thing inordinately, that one should move himself, putting forth all his strength, to come to the contrary of what he is wrongly drawn to...]

something that has a greater influence and importance in his life. However the word ‘indifference’ was never born in the hands of Ignatius.

San Ignacio no usa la palabra “indiferencia y tampoco quiere presentar una doctrina sobre la indiferencia. Así como todos los Ejercicios son fruto de su experiencia, espiritual, de conversión, de entregarse incondicionalmente a Dios, de buscar su camino en el servicio del Señor, en el mismo modo habla de la necesidad de hacerse y de ser indiferente.”⁶

It is important that the exercitant frees himself of all the earthly influences so as to arrive at a state of inner freedom where he considers doing the will of God as his primary objective before all the worldly things. In the process of making any decision, the person has to be aware of his own state of soul and his disposition of mind and heart, which play an influential role in the ambience of the discernment. In other words, only in a state of indifference, the exercitant will be able to discern properly the divine will. Suspending one’s “inordinate attachments” to any given matter is a way of discerning how this given matter might play a role in the “attainment of man’s end.”⁷

The word indifference has been understood differently in different contexts because of its significance and nature. It can mean completely negative in one context while sounding positive in another context. So it is important to understand what Ignatius had in his mind while speaking of this word ‘indifference’ in his Spiritual Exercises. A good understanding of the meaning of the word helps us to grasp the depth of the subject. Therefore in this chapter I intend to bring out briefly the meaning and nature of indifference in the secular understanding as well in the Ignatian understanding of the word. I also will explore some of the Directories, which speak of indifference so as to give a wider expansion while treating this subject.

1.1. Dictionary Meaning

The New International Webster’s Student Dictionary of English Language explains the meaning of the word ‘indifferent’ as having no inclination, concern, or interest. It is in being in a condition of apathy⁸. It means that the person holds neither any preference nor any importance or value to the subject given. He is in a state of neutrality, where he

⁶ Juan García - Lomas, ed., *Ejercicios Espirituales y mundo de hoy*, (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero y Sal Terrae, 1997), 149.

⁷ Robert A. Maryks, ed. *A Companion to Ignatius of Loyola, Life, Writings, Spirituality, Influence*, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2014), 236.

⁸ Landau, I., S., (ed.), *The New International Webster’s Student Dictionary of the English Language-International Encyclopedic Edition*, Trident Press International, 1996 edition, 364.

lacks emotion or motivation. Indifference understood in this sense of lack of emotion, can actually connote a negative meaning. The human person is a conscious being with emotions and motivations. Sometimes, they can be positive or negative depending upon the conditions and the influences. But the human person is never free of emotions. Emotions form part of normal human life.

El Diccionario de la Real Academia Española gives a similar meaning to that of the Webster's Dictionary.

1. No determinado por si a algo más que a otra cosa. Que no importa que sea o se haga de una o de otra forma. 2. Que no despierta interés o afecto. 3. Estado de ánimo en que no se siente inclinación ni repugnancia hacia una persona, objeto o negocio determinado.⁹

This type of meaning can also reduce the fullness of human person into a mere object. As if the human person cannot choose between two things because of his lack of inclination to anybody or anything. He shows no interests or emotions in anything. He experiences neither inclination nor repugnance towards anything. He is meant to be a rock in a literal sense.

Diccionario de uso del Español de María Moliner has a similar understanding of the word indifference;

1. Expresa no preferencia a favor de una u otra de dos o más cosas entre las que existe posibilidad de elección o alternativa. 2. Expresa que la persona representada por el complemento de persona no tiene interés o afecto por la cosa a que se aplica el adjetivo "indiferente". 3. Se aplica en forma absoluta a cosas que no son ni buenas ni malas, que no agradan ni desagradan.¹⁰

The above meaning says that when there is a possibility of election or alternative, no preference or favour expressed. There is no interest or affections in the subject represented. This kind of understanding does not connote a holistic meaning of the word 'indifference' in its real sense. The person is a very passive actor in a certain sense in front of the matter presented.

Diccionario del Español actual presents the meaning of 'indifference' in the following words.

⁹ *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*, Vigésima Segunda Edición, (Madrid: RAE, 2001) II, 1267.

¹⁰ María Moliner., *Diccionario de uso del Español*, (Madrid: Gredos, 1998), 45.

1. Que no se inclina más a una pers.o cosa que a otra. 2. Que no muestra atención o interés hacia nada. 3. Que no es objeto de preferencia ni de aversión. Que no tiene más importancia o significación en un sentido que en el opuesto¹¹

One can raise a serious question whether a human being can truly be free without any interests and affections. Is it possible for a man not to express preferences and to remain just in the state of indifference as it is understood in the secular meaning? From the above meanings, one can draw a conclusion that the subject just remains without any importance or significance and he chooses not to make any choices.

The Oxford *Dictionary of English* also explores the similar meaning for the term Indifference.

Absence of active feeling for or against, esp. absence of care or concern for, or interest in, a person or thing; unconcern, apathy; the fact of not mattering, or making no difference; unimportance; an instance or thing of unimportance; absence of bias or favour for one side or another; impartiality.¹²

The above meaning of the Indifference is also very much in use in the secular understanding of the word that a person indifferent makes no preferences and choices. Such understanding of the meaning of the indifference can actually make the person as one who does not have passions, emotions, preferences and choices. Indifference as understood by the above illustrations can only portray the person being apathetic about his preferences. He is in a state of passivity. This passivity cannot make the person involved as an active subject in the finding and doing of the will of God. The will of God cannot happen all of a sudden if there is no active participation of the human person with God. Such kind of meaning of indifference will also manifest a lack of freedom from the part of the person, who stands before a reality.

The greatest gift, the human person has received from God is the gift of freedom and it is impossible for a person not to get inclined to the various possibilities and preferences presented before him. The human freedom renders the human person to be an active subject in having his preferences and choices and a secular understanding of the principle of indifference makes him incapable of the exercise of this element of freedom, which is actually a greater negation of an inherent human character. Therefore a non-theological and non-religious understanding of indifference reduces the human person to an object and negates the fullness of human creations and nature.

¹¹ *Diccionario del Español Actual*, Vol.II, (Madrid: Grupo Santillana,1999), 2604.

¹² *Oxford English Dictionary*, 6th Edition, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1365.

1.2. Ignatian understanding

God is at the centre of the existence of man. He is Alfa and Omega. All things come from him and return to him. Ignatius outlines in the Principle and Foundation the vision and the purpose of the creation of human being.¹³ God is continuously in communication with man. God enters the history of humanity and manifests himself to the man as someone who loves us unconditionally. It is always God who takes the initiative to meet the man. The true relationship with God calls for a total freedom and availability from the part of man. Our response to the initiative of God depends on the depth of relationship, we maintain with him. It depends on the level of freedom that we experience to reach the end for which God has created us. It is total trust and confidence in God. Elias Royon says,

La indiferencia ignaciana sitúa en Dios la seguridad y la esperanza del hombre. “Abandonarse enteramente en manos de Dios”, lo cual exige una adhesión afectiva, personal al Creador y Señor que nos ama, una experiencia de “sentirse” amado por Dios, como alguien único e irrepetible. El resultado de esta experiencia es precisamente lo que S. Ignacio entiende por “indiferencia”.¹⁴

In a world that throws so many options and possibilities, it is not so easy for man to focus himself on his end. A certain kind of disorientation that moves the man away from the sense of life always poses a threat to God-man relationship. The things that man has created for himself may turn out to be obstacles in his relationship with God. Making right choices in a right discernment results difficult for the man of this 21st century. It is not that man has lost his vision of God but because he lacks the necessary freedom to make the right choices. He is chained by so many attractions and aversions, which do not allow the man to focus on the end.

In such a complex context and condition of humanity, Ignatian indifference makes sense for human being to rediscover his vision and purpose of life. Considering God as the author and the Lord of my life drives me to the right direction and the proper execution of the human freedom.

¹³ “Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul. And the other things on the face of the earth are created for man and that they may help him in prosecuting the end for which he is created. From this it follows that man is to use them as much as they help him on to his end, and ought to rid himself of them so far as they hinder him as to it. For this it is necessary to make ourselves indifferent to all created things in all that is allowed to the choice of our free will and is not prohibited to it; so that, on our part, we want not health rather than sickness, riches rather than poverty, honor rather than dishonor, long rather than short life, and so in all the rest; desiring and choosing only what is most conducive for us to the end for which we are created” (Sp.Ex 23).

¹⁴ Royon, E., “Principio y fundamento” *DEI*, 1493.

Dios como Creador y como Señor de la historia humana tiene el derecho absoluto sobre mi vida. Pero respeta mi libertad, la capacidad de disponer de mi vida, de decidir, de elegir, aun de tomar una dirección equivocada. Me respeta como persona, como un ser libre porque me creó a su imagen y semejanza¹⁵

Ignatian Indifference is not to be passive but to be active co-participant in the divine project. Realization of God's presence in our life and listening to his subtle voice makes man more oriented towards the end. Therefore a right disposition of our attitude and experience of the inner freedom is what is fundamental in the process of realization of the end. If the man enters seriously into the relationship with God, there is a certain divine influence in all the aspects of his life.

Evidentemente, la indiferencia ignaciana no significa ser pasivo, vivir en actitud de simple espera sin hacer nada, sin tomar la iniciativa, sin buscar activamente la voluntad de Dios. Todo lo contrario. Los Ejercicios son para las personas de "grandes deseos" y para querer "mas" en el servicio al Señor. El estado de equilibrio interior, el "hallarme como en medio de un peso" (Ej. [179]) es para "desear y elegir lo que más nos conduce para el fin que somos criados" (Ej. [23]) Ignacio quiere preparar al ejercitante para que participe activamente en la obra del Señor, para que sea capaz de discernir continuamente, a lo largo de su vida, la voluntad de Dios y elegir libremente y así contribuir a la historia de la salvación. Todo se refleja una visión muy dinámica de la vida humana.¹⁶

Putting God as the center of everything and walking towards Him is ultimately what becomes essential in our day to day life. For Ignatius, indifference plays a crucial role in the process of the discernment, which orients us to know the will of God. Indifference has its roots in the loving and conscious relationship with God. It orients the man to a conscious relationship and union with God freeing him from his inordinate attachments. The experience of Ignatius at the river Cardoner¹⁷ has marked a profound influence in his life that he began to understand the things clearly. It dawned on him a new understanding of the purpose of the creation. This experience of Cardoner left in his an indelible mark in his understanding of the principle of indifference.

1.3.Spiritual Exercises

According to St. Ignatius, "Spiritual Exercises are means to conquer oneself and regulate one's life without determining oneself through any tendency that is disordered" (Sp.Ex, 21). In other words, reaching a state of indifference, one would accomplish knowing the will of God. The focus of the Spiritual Exercises is on the "saving the soul"

¹⁵García-Lomas, ed., 148.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 149.

¹⁷ [...] y estando allí sentado, se le empezaron a abrir los ojos del entendimiento; y no que viese alguna visión, sino entendiendo y conociendo muchas cosas, tanto de cosas espirituales como de cosas de a fe y de letras; y esto con una ilustración tan grande, que le parecían todas las cosas nuevas. (Au, 30).

and in other words its preoccupation is with the well-being of humans. The God-experience of Ignatius was translated into the Spiritual Exercises, which is handed over to the generations of people as a treasure.

El punto clave de la experiencia espiritual de lo que llamamos indiferencia ignaciana es nuestra relación con Jesucristo. Los Ejercicios son una escuela para descubrirle, para conocerle íntimamente, para identificarse con su persona y su misión, para imitarle como Maestro de indiferencia, que vino al mundo para hacer la voluntad de su Padre.¹⁸ Spiritual Exercises is about the inner conversion that leads to personal holiness.

It is a rediscovering and reestablishing of his relationship with God, which motivates him to search for the will of God and to embrace it. The purification of one's intentions and life and search for the way to God is at the heart of the Exercises. The Exercises serve as an aid to overcome any obstacle in the relationship between the Creator and the creature. (Sp.Ex, 15).

1.3.1. Principle and Foundation (Sp.Ex.23)

While exploring the principle of indifference it is important to study the Principle and Foundation of the Spiritual Exercises as it gives the fundamental vision of the origin and the end of the human being.¹⁹ The Principle and Foundation reminds us that human person has to define himself in his relationship with God by understanding the purpose of his creation and by the proper usage of the created things in achieving his end.

La vocación del hombre para Ignacio se halla claramente definida por la intención de Dios sobre la creación. Las criaturas, “las otras cosas sobre la haz de la tierra”, son puestas a disposición del hombre para que en ellas y a través de ellas pueda “alabar, hacer reverencia, servir al Creador”; en definitiva para que usándolas desde su libertad, pueda realizarse, lograr su fin último, su felicidad.²⁰

Considering everything as a gift of God, the human being has to make use of them to reach God. All things in the world manifest the presence of God and it is a means to know him and to return to him. Making use of the freedom that the Lord has bestowed upon the human being, he has to discern the means properly to achieve the end.

The Principle and Foundation is described in the 1599 Directory as ‘the groundwork of the whole moral and spiritual edifice of the Exercises’.²¹ It also makes an invitation to abide in the love of God by responding to him correctly. The correct

¹⁸ García-Lomas, ed., 150.

¹⁹ Cf. Spiritual Exercises, 23.

²⁰ Royon, E., “Principio y fundamento” *DEI*, 1492.

²¹ Palmer, M., trans. *On Giving the Spiritual Exercises: The Early Jesuit Manuscript Directories and the Official Directory of 1599*, (St. Louis, Mo.: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 643.

means of responding to God and opening oneself to his love is the practice of the principle of indifference. The human being has to be consciously aware of his creation and the purpose for which he is created.

At the very beginning of the *Spiritual Exercises*, St. Ignatius calls of a true Christian perfection through the Principle and Foundation.

Ignatius's purpose for the Principle and Foundation seems to have been twofold. He wanted to situate the one making the Exercises within God's plan of creation but he also hoped that reflecting on the wonder of creation might elicit a deeper affectivity, a great desire for this God who so desires each person.²²

Ignatius reminds us that the goal of the human being is to live with God eternally. Whatever the Lord has given to us is to be used as long as it helps us to reach the end and anything that is seen as an obstruction in the process of reaching the end has to be considered as an impediment in the relationship with God. In other words, everything should be ordered to God's plan for human beings. An attachment is regarded as inordinate or disordered if that's use is not directed solely to the praise reverence and service of God. Michael Ivens highlights the place of indifference in the Principle and Foundation in the following words:

It is in the context of this fundamental vision that the practical themes of the 'ordered use of creatures' and 'indifference' should be considered. The exercitant's reactions to these themes will depend partly on his or her general dispositions and partly on the extent to which sensitive personal issues are raised by them. Sometimes, even at this early stage, an exercitant will be stirred by a desire to serve and live for God, such that for the moment indifference is simply 'there', a grace 'given', a fact of experience. On the other hand, the immediate grace of the Foundation may consist not so much in 'having' indifference as in wanting it, difficult as it might be²³

Two important principles stand out as essential in the Principle and Foundation, "That man is to use them *as much as* they help him on to his end, and ought to rid himself of them *so far as* they hinder him as to it" and "desiring and choosing only what is most conducive for us to the end for which we are created."²⁴ The relationship between these two formulations has an intrinsic meaning. The driving force is always to reach the end and in the process, it emphasizes on the need for the purification from all

²² Katherine Dyckman, Mary Garvin and Elizabeth Liebert, *The Spritual Exercises Reclaimed*, (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), 90.

²³ Michael Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, (Leominster: Gracewing, 2008),27.

²⁴ *Spiritual Exercises*, 23.

the hindrances. Here comes the right understanding of the rule of ‘tanto cuanto’, which serves as a tool:

La regla del tanto cuanto, excluye en el uso de las criaturas todo motivo, razón, respeto o intento que no sea subordinado y reductible a la gloria de Dios ya a la salvación y perfección del alma. Porque si el hombre ha de usar de las criaturas tanto y no más, cuanto le ayudan para este fin, y asimismo ha de quitarse de ellas tanto y no más, cuanto para ello le impiden, ello no puede ser por otra razón, sino porque en el uso de las criaturas no puede buscar ordenadamente otro intento más que la glorificación divina y su propia perfección.²⁵

This rule of ‘tanto cuanto’ is an attitude that one shows before an object or person. When confronted with the choices, because of his lack of proper vision, man is at a complex state of mind, which makes him difficult to arrive at a right decision. Therefore this simple rule of ‘tanto cuanto’ that Ignatius offers in the Principle and Foundation is a way to become conscious of our present and future. Whatever the election that I make, it should help me for the end for which I am created and the means that I choose have to realize this end. The final objective is always to be the service and the glory of God.

Man is to grow in the purity of intention that sets him on the right path towards God. This purity of intention that drives the man to labor for the service of God and seek the glory of God in all things is that which makes his life meaningful and fulfilling. Ignatius gives a lot of importance in growing in the right intention in the Spiritual Exercises. The Preparatory Prayer is to ask grace of God our Lord that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to the service and praise of His Divine Majesty.²⁶ It becomes inordinate, when my motives, my reasons, my intentions and actions prefer my own personal and temporal benefits and interests instead of seeking exclusively the glory and service of God.

Confirming ourselves to the divine will and fulfilling it with love and gratitude will be possible only when man learns to put God before all his personal preferences. The will of God is manifested to those who are awake and those who open their eyes to see the grandeur of God. It is the destiny of man to know the divine will and fulfill it overcoming all his imperfections and inordinate attachments. The scope of the Spiritual Exercises is precisely this; knowing and doing the will. From the beginning to the end, the Spiritual Exercises focuses on this fundamental aspect of man’s purpose, “not

²⁵ José Calveras, “Alcance de la regla del Tanto Cuanto”, *Manresa*, No.7 (Julio 1931), 194.

²⁶ Spiritual Exercises, 46.

wanting nor seeking any other thing except in all and through all the greater praise and glory of God our Lord.”²⁷ From the Principle and Foundation till the last exercises of the Contemplation to attain love, the focus is on this journey towards the realization of the service and glory of God.

In the immediately obvious sense, ‘indifference’ consists in an attitude of equipoise, and such an attitude, neutralizing as it does the effects of disordered affections, may obviously in some situations be a prerequisite for making a right choice.²⁸ Indifference is an effective way to seek God’s will in freedom and openness.

However Ignatius is aware of the fact that man is not a theoretical entity rather a concrete and existential being. When he speaks of subject of his Exercises, he has in mind a person, who is deeply wounded by the original sin and his personal history with all their consequences. The reality is that the inordinate attachments impede his true freedom to live according to the will of God. Therefore he insists that it is important to make ourselves to indifferent to all the created things.

El hacernos indiferentes significa que nos espera una lucha espiritual, un esfuerzo, una tensión interior para lograr el estado de indiferencia, es decir de libertad interior y pastoral, de equilibrio en frente de las cosas y de disponibilidad total en frente de Dios. Hacerse indiferente significa entrar en un proceso de purificación, de descubrimiento de mi verdadero “yo” deformado por las tendencia a cerrarse en sí mismo y no reconocer de hecho el orden establecido en el mundo de Dios.²⁹

Willing to serve God and saving our soul is the principle matter of all the elections that the retreatant makes during the Exercises. The focus on the purpose of the human creation leads to a deeper examination of the spiritual state of oneself. And such an examination grounds itself in the preferences that I make in the intimate realities like biological and psychological life. We should not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honor to dishonor, or a long life to a short life. Obviously these preferences will be influenced by the clarity of the end that I carry in my spiritual state of life. We cannot be indifferent or reach a state of detachment if we do not attain some awareness of God’s love within us. Therefore a true self knowledge is very essential in the election of these preferences.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 189.

²⁸ Ivens, 31.

²⁹ García-Lomas, ed., 148-149.

1.3.2. Three classes of men (Sp.Ex.149-157)

We consider this meditation of the three classes of men from the viewpoint of freedom and indifference. It is an exercise to discover whether the exercitant is attached to anything may it be money or honor or position etc. and see where he stands in the state of indifference. It is designed to determine in a concrete case the extent of one's generosity, one's universal antecedent willingness, one's indifference, one's generosity and readiness to do whatever God wants.³⁰ This exercise is considered as one of the important aspects of election which points to the correct use of the means to respond to the Principle and Foundation.

The retreatant begins the Three Classes exercise with certain questions uppermost in mind: What is the state of my companionship with Jesus? How deep and intimate is the relationship? To what degree am I committed to Jesus? Or, in other words, how free am I from the biases that stand in the way of intimacy and commitment? It is the answers to such questions that this exercise is designed to provide.³¹

Three distinct kinds of men: Each one of them has acquired for himself ten thousand ducats³², with an intention other than divine worship and love; but now they wish to be at peace with God and be saved, by removing, in whatever way possible, that harmful attachment to things that is an impediment to salvation.³³ A careful study of these three men gives us an understanding that each of them shows a different attitude and reaction.

The first class of people knows that they must become free of the attachment but they keep on postponing without taking any necessary step. They remain attached and continue with the things that keep them away from the Lord.

The second class of people have a desire to get rid of the disorderly attachments but they continue to cling on to the things. They compromise with themselves. Their response to God is only a partial but not complete. They want to draw God to their wishes instead of removing the attachment.

³⁰ James L.Connor, S.J. *The Dynamism of Desire*, Bernad J.F.Lonergan, S.J.,on *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2006), 296.

³¹ *Ibid.* 294.

³² It is important to remember that Ignatius was able to support himself as a student at the University of Paris on fifty ducats a year. 10,000 ducats represent a fabulous fortune. Cf. *Letter to Martin Garcia de Onaz*, brother of Ignatius, June 1532 (MHSI *Epp. Ig.* I, no.3, pp. (77-83 [trans. *Personal Writings*, p. 188]).

³³ *Spiritual Exercises*, 150.

The third class of people is willing to get rid of any disorderly attachment that comes as an obstacle in realizing the glory and service of God. They have freedom to keep it or let it go as their attention and focus is completely on God. They perceive through the divine inspiration what is more fitting for the glory and service of God³⁴. Each case of the above three persons is a revelation of the person's emotional attachment to the money. However it is third person, who responds perfectly freeing himself from all the affections.

“Y entre tanto”. Hasta que descubre la voluntad de Dios, que es lo único que le importa, se hace a la idea de que “todo lo deja en afecto”. No solo está indiferente, sino que, en cuanto de él depende, se inclina a dejar el dinero mientras no se oponga al servicio de Dios nuestro Señor.³⁵

The contemplations on the life of Christ help us to reflect on the type of life that God wants to make use of us. The Two Standards and the Three Classes of Men help us to obtain the attitude that is necessary to reach the state of perfection to which God calls us. It is important to notice the grace to be asked for in this meditation.

Ignatius does not say that the retreatant should seek the grace to belong to the third class. Rather, he suggests that the retreatant pray to choose what is more for the glory of God and the salvation of his or her soul – the “more” (*magis*) indicated in the Principle and Foundation the choice of what better serves Jesus Christ. It is an interesting grace to ask for. Notice that people of the third class do not exactly decide on a course of action, rather, they desire to be better able to serve Jesus Christ. That desire alone is to be “the cause of their accepting anything or relinquishing it” (SE 155)³⁶

This meditation is a focus on the purpose of the creation of man. Indifference is the central point of the whole meditation. It is necessary to become aware of the things that enslave us and interfere in our freedom. In our total offering to God what is it that is not allowing us to move forward? Such an examination of conscience helps us to understand our response to God and open ourselves to the knowledge of the Spirit of God. Sometimes, it happens that we are driven almost like enslaved by the natural elements like fear, personal ambition and pride. Hardly do we have control over them. They block us in the project of the realization of the true inner freedom and the accomplishment of the purpose of human creation. Inordinate attachments in the proper sense are directed only towards objects, as distinct from persons. Because persons can be regarded and used as things, they are considered in this meditation where Ignatius

³⁴ *Ibid*, 153-155.

³⁵ Antonio Alburquerque, “Binarios”, *DEI*, 234-235.

³⁶ John J. English, *Spiritual Freedom*, 2nd ed., (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1995), 164.

tests our disposition towards things.³⁷ We have to seriously examine our attitude and disposition towards the other human beings whether we are treating the persons like things.

Attachment to any person or object should not be considered as his proper call or direction rather it stems from a disordered need which is a consequence of the loneliness and a sense of lack of love in his life. The person, in his attempt to escape from his own inner struggle of isolation and lack of love tends to resort to being attached to a particular thing or person. The call of Christ is always to leave the persons and things and to follow him to experience the life – life in abundance. “I have come that they may have life, and have it the full” (John 10:10). In order to experience life to its fullness, it is necessary to leave everything behind and focus on the Lord, who is the source of life and love.

Among the three persons, it is only the third person who is truly indifferent. He has unrestricted openness and willingness to respond to whatever God wants of him. He experiences a new level of consciousness and the power of God’s love. Such kind of free response comes from a deep experience of the conversion.

The approach of Ignatius to overcome these inordinate attachments in this meditation is known as *agere contra* (to against oneself). *Agere contra* is a deliberate choice of the human person against his own tendency. Ignatius uses it correctly by advising those who feel inordinately attached to something to ask God to remove it or to give them the very opposite.³⁸ As the exercitant ends this meditation, Ignatius gives a direction to pray over whatever in our lives hinders our total surrender to God. *Agere contra* is a grace of freedom obtained during the prayer.

1.3.3. Three Kinds of Humility (Sp.Ex.165-168)

Three Kinds of Humility was probably elaborated and drafted by Ignatius in Paris between 1528 and 1535.³⁹ In the Exercises the kinds of humility are considered at this point in order to enable the exercitant to check his or her here-and-now dispositions,

³⁷ *Ibid*, 166.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 167.

³⁹ Pavulraj, Michael. “Loco por Cristo en Tres Manreras de Humildad (Fool for Christ in Three Kinds of Humility) – An Exegetical Reading” *Ignaziana* 20 (2015), 123.

especially in relation to the impeding election.⁴⁰ The first kind of humility is faithfulness to the law of God. It is necessary for salvation. I humble myself to obey the law of God in all things. I would not consent to violate a commandment and thereby commit a moral sin. The second kind of humility is more perfect than the first. I neither desire nor incline to riches rather than poverty, honor than dishonor, long life than short life, provided only in either I promote the service of God and salvation of my soul. I would not consent to commit a venial sin. The third kind of humility is the most perfect one. It is to imitate and to be in reality that is close to Christ. I desire and choose poverty with Christ poor rather than riches; insults with Christ rather than honors; I desire to be accounted as worthless and a fool for Christ.⁴¹

Arzubialde is of the opinion that the in the growth process of the interior freedom of the exercitant, the principle of indifference plays a vital role if he is affected by the true doctrine of Christ and if he allows himself to be penetrated by the mystery of Christ where all the human securities will come as secondary when compared to the glory and service of God.⁴² Ignatius' emphasis on desiring to choose poverty with Christ poor, rather than riches; insults with Christ loaded with them, rather than honors; and desiring to be accounted as worthless and a fool for Christ, reveal that the exercitant should seek a new relationship with Christ. Identification with Christ is a grace to be obtained in this meditation. The indifference in this exercise leads the exercitant to experience a personal affection for Christ. It is an exercise to purify the willingness of the exercitant. Hugo Rahner says,

Ignatius in the Three Degrees of Humility uses the language of Foundation; the First and Second Degrees reflect the first and second part of the Foundation, the Third Degree corresponds to the last sentence of the Principle and Foundation, but is not altogether intelligible before the Kingdom of Christ, which is the Foundation seen on the level of the history of salvation⁴³

The Principle and Foundation and the Three Kinds of Humility have got the same objective in common to realize. Ignatius outlines in the Principle and Foundation that the human being is created to praise, reverence and praise God and by means of doing this he would save his soul (SE, 23) and in the Three Kinds of Humility, he

⁴⁰ Ivens, 123.

⁴¹ Spiritual Exercises, 165-167.

⁴² Santiago Arzubialde, *Ejercicios Espirituales de S. Ignacio, Historia y Análisis*, (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero - Editorial Sal Terrae, 1991), 358-359.

⁴³ Hugo Rahner, *Notes on the Spiritual Exercises*, (Woodstock: Woodstock College Press, 1956), 299.

explains that for the praise and glory of the Divine Majesty, one has to obtain the third kind of humility (SE, 167).

A careful study of these two meditations reveals that Ignatius in the Principle and Foundation expresses “praise, serve, and save” (alabar, servir y salvar) in the descending order while in Three Kinds of Humility explains “save, serve, and praise” (salvar, servir y alabar) in the ascending order. Thus, it is evident that there is a dynamic relationship between Three Kinds of Humility and the Principle and Foundation.⁴⁴

The third kind of humility is therefore a way for a Christian to mature in his relationship with Christ. It is an expression of the freedom to be with Christ and to suffer with Christ. This kind of humility will help us to opt for Christ and to work for his Kingdom being faithful till the end. Because it is only in this reducing of oneself, one can be inspired by the love, which drives him to encounter the true life, which is present only in God. It is a total surrender with trust in God. It is a step towards growing in an attitude to indifference and his readiness for the election which is oriented in his search for the will of God in order to embrace it.

Ignatius insists that having an attitude of total resignation of one’s will is prerogative to enter into the elections. If possible, he says that the exercitant reaches the third degree of humility. This exercise is introduced as an aid to the exercitant as well as the director to become aware of the attitudes that influence the process of the election.

For admission to the election, the first kind of humility is insufficient. The second is both required and sufficient. The third is highly desirable, but not strictly necessary. To sum up, the three kinds of humility can be characterized as ‘love of creature’, ‘love of the servant’, ‘love of the friend’.⁴⁵

Ignatius’s focus on the three kinds of humility proceeds from the fact that the exercitant willing to enter the elections has already been affected by the true teaching of Christ. Arzubialde says that in the exercise of the Three Kinds of Humility, the exercitant is to move from the indifference to the passion of love for Christ.

El tema de la Indiferencia, frente a los grandes binomios que sustentan la seguridad del ser humano, no se refiere en este momento directamente al cumplimiento de la ley, sino que retoma ahora el uso ordenado de las cosas del Principio y Fundamento y se proyecta hacia la tercera manera de Humildad, a la que queda vinculada mediante una frase inclusiva, que ahora se repite por tres veces:

-“siendo igual servicio de Dios nuestro Señor y salud de mi anima” [166,2]

-“siendo igual alabanza y gloria de la divina majestad” [167,1]

-“si igual o mayor servicio y alabanza fuere a la su divina majestad” [168,2]⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Pavulraj, *Ignaziana* 20 (2015), 132.

⁴⁵ Ivens, 123-124.

⁴⁶ Arzubialde, 363-364.

The principle task of the exercitant is to always search for what the Lord wants of him and his willingness to respond to the call of God in greater freedom and love for God. From the point of indifference, the exercitant determines not to commit any venial sin. Any venial sin committed is a sign of loss of indifference as it arises from the conditioning of the liberty of the individual.

1.4. In the Directories of the Exercises

Directory is a guidebook of instructions that served as an aid to giving the Spiritual Exercises. The first generation of the Society had an access to the author of the Exercises itself and most of them were also personally guided by him. However over the course of time, the Jesuits felt the need to adapt the Exercises to different persons and situations. In the years following St. Ignatius' death in 1556, individual Jesuits in various parts of Europe wrote down and circulated occasional notes on giving the Exercises. A number of these have survived in manuscript form.⁴⁷ It was Fr. Acquaviva, who took up the mantle of assembling a dossier of the various manuscript directories composed up to that point and publishing it in its definitive form in 1599.⁴⁸

In the Directory dictated to Juan Alonso de Vitoria probably in 1555, under the section of 'On how to give the Exercises in the first week', it is said that the exercitant should be explained the Foundation in a such a way that he will have a starting point for finding what he is seeking.

Convendría hacerle el camino de esta manera: para que sintáis la dificultad que hay en usar indiferentemente de los medios que Dios nuestro Señor nos ha dado, para que podamos conseguir el fin para que nos creó y para que conociendo esto os pongáis totalmente en sus manos, pues aquí está el fundamento de que hallemos lo que deseamos; mirad que algunos, tomando la vía de la religión, por no haber perseverado en ella, ni querido sujetarse al suave yugo del Señor se han ido al infierno, porque se han salido en ella, y apostatas muerto por su culpa.⁴⁹

Vitoria says from his experience that one of the true difficulties that exists is in leading the exercitant and initiating him into the work of conquering of himself and ordering his life without being influenced by any inordinate attachments.⁵⁰ However the exercitant should be guided not to lose focus of the end of the Exercises. An indifferent

⁴⁷ Palmer, 2.

⁴⁸ Miguel Lop Sebastia, S.J., ed. y trad. *Los Directorios de Ejercicios*, (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero - Sal Terrae, 2000), 17.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 35.

⁵⁰ Royón, E., "Principio y fundamento", *DEI*, 1493, Translation my own.

state of mind is a prerequisite to seek what the Lord has designed for us. If our mind inclines to the things, which do not reflect the service of God, the result may occur erroneous. Momentous attractions and aversions should not be the criteria for making the choices in life. A good election of the state of life and search for the will of God is possible only when we approach the election in a state of indifference. The principal attitude to begin the Exercises is openness to the spirit of the God and flexibility to be guided by him.

Indifference appears as an important element in the Counsels of Father Duarte Pereyra, who made the Exercises under Francisco Villanueva, considered by St. Ignatius the best at giving them after Pierre Favre and Alfonso Salmeron.⁵¹ He says that the Foundation of the Exercises lies in the foundation of the election. Therefore the exercitant should see that indifference plays an essential in the process of the election. This is a crucial point on which much needs to be done.

Esta indiferencia es una resignación con la cual el hombre se pone en las manos de su Dios y Señor, diciendo: Señor mío y Criador mío, veis aquí Señor toda mi libertad, todas mis potencias, mis sentidos y mi cuerpo y todo cuanto tengo, todo lo pongo en vuestras manos; ordenad Vos, Señor, de ello y de mi como conviene más para gloria y honra vuestra y salvación de mi alma.⁵²

It is a surrender to the will of God in and placing our faith in him. Directing everything towards the glory and service of God flows from the abandonment of one's will and surrendering ourselves to the will of God. During the second week, in the exercise of the Three Kinds of men, Father Pereyra emphasizes on the need for the exercitant to see how he is doing with regard to the indifference. It is here, the exercitant becomes clear of his motivations and aspirations as he journeys from the Foundation of the Exercises, which has its vision only in the greater service and glory of God. In the words of Father Pereyra:

And thus, when our Lord has granted this indifference he normally calls the soul to what is most perfect; and to this the soul is normally moved by reason, even though it is true that the conclusion, "this is better and more perfect; therefore it is better for me," does not follow unless there intervenes a calling from the Lord; for whatever state God calls a person to is best for him even if it is not the most perfect in itself; this will relieve a person who was beginning to feel under pressure....⁵³

⁵¹ Palmer, 2.

⁵² Lop, 63.

⁵³ Palmer, 62.

Therefore, in the state of indifference, the exercitant finds his capacity to move towards the will of God. This is fundamental in knowing where the Lord is calling him and to what the Lord is expecting of him. In the notes on meditation by Father Jeronimo Domenech, it is said that an attitude of subordinating our will to God's will and the consciousness of possessing the spirit of freedom is a kind of prerequisite to do the meditations proposed in the Exercises.⁵⁴ Ultimately the exercitant is in search of God's will and this search can be realized successfully only when there is a freedom to abandon one's will and attachments. God can act only when we make space for him in our hearts.

Father Antonio Valentino, who worked as the novice master in Italy for twenty-six years, writes in report his experience of how he formed his novices and how he gave them the Spiritual Exercises. In this report he makes interesting observations as regard the indifference.

Y mientras no estamos ciertos de cual sea la voluntad de Dios y de los Superiores, permanecer por entonces en perfecta indiferencia de voluntad, esperando ser movidos, y orando para que os ilumine a conocerla diciendo dos veces con el Profeta: "reparado está mi corazón, oh Dios, preparado está mi corazón"⁵⁵

In a state of uncertainty of knowing the will of God, remaining in the condition of indifference is the perfect way so that God acts upon us as and when He wills. Sometimes, nothing seems to be clear. The exercitant in his incapacity may not advance further in his election. In such a situation it is better that he takes the example of Christ and remains faithful and fervent to his search. It is important to pray that God liberates him from whatever that is separating him from knowing the will of God. One should understand that a perfect state of indifference takes us close to the attitude and image of Christ. Arzubialde notes;

La indiferencia, por consiguiente, en cuanto actitud existencial humana, lleva en si la imagen del Hijo. Es el modo dinámico de pasar de la imagen a la semejanza, de la libre disposición a la obediencia – amorosa a la voluntad del Padre, la forma Christi. El hombre se identifica con el Hijo en la medida en que reconoce y asume la voluntad de su Padre. Este es su modo existencial de creer, y el centro neurálgico de toda posible ascesis, que consiste en esta disponible para Dios.⁵⁶

Openness to the will of God and docility to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit will lead the exercitant to a proper disposition and election. Given to our fallen nature

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 73.

⁵⁵ Lop, 99.

⁵⁶ Arzubialde, 79.

and our concupiscence to making erroneous choices, it is not always possible to see clearly the plans and the path of God. It is in complete faith and abandonment of our preferences, the exercitant will allow God to act upon us in a perfect way. By taking Christ as the way, the exercitant assuming the attitude of indifference, surrenders himself completely to the will of the Father. It is God who invites us into his relationship and all that we need to do is to show our willingness and openness to enter into his loving relationship by overcoming all the impediments.

In the Answers of Lawrence Nicolai, the principle of indifference was proposed during the time of election for the persons particularly who have already chosen their state of life and want to change it for the better. If the retreat director thinks that the exercitant has already made a good election, there is no need to propose the exercises pertaining to the election. But if he thinks that there is a need to revise the state of life, then there is a need to focus on the exercises of the Second Week. In the words of Lawrence Nicolai,

Si les consideraba aptos para otra cosa, o que ciertamente habían elegido una religión que no les convenía, o para la cual les juzgaba poco idóneos, le daba más perfectamente los Ejercicios de la segunda semana, y trataba de volverles a la indiferencia, creando al mismo tiempo en ellos preocupación por elegir un estado con reflexión, o por comprobar a lo menos si habían antes elegido bien.⁵⁷

During this time, once the exercitant is directed to the state of indifference, the director carefully emphasizes the importance of testing whether their original choice was good. According to Nicolai, the major impediment that he finds in the exercitants is their difficulty in altering their decisions already made because of an inordinate affection or because they want to avoid a particular state.⁵⁸ In such a condition of lack of indifference, he suggests that they should remain in the First Week. In the second Directory of Diego Miro, the same point is stressed for the persons making the election.

If a person wants to decide his state of life but is not indifferent toward following the counsels or the commandments, and not truly abandoned into the hands of the Lord and prepared to do whatever he wills, all treatment of the methods for making a good choice should be entirely omitted. If it seems advisable, he should then continue with the Exercises, or conclude them expeditiously, or postpone them to another time.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Lop, 117.

⁵⁸ Palmer, 157.

⁵⁹ *Ibíd.*, 176.

Ignatius describes that the end of the Exercises of the Second Week is to grow in the sense of the interior knowledge of the Lord.⁶⁰ Therefore avoiding all the emotional attachments that impede this process of growing in the interior knowledge of the Lord, the exercitant will be able to reach a state of indifference in order to make a good election. The same point is stressed in the 26th Breve Directorio:

Acerca de la elección hay que notar que no deben dars las reglas sobre el modo de elegir bien al que no quiera determinar del estado de su vida; como tampoco al que no estuviese indiferente para seguir los consejos o preceptos, ni plenamente resignado en manos del Señor, y dispuesto a hacer lo que creará deba más agradarle.⁶¹

The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius have a concrete aim to help the exercitant to make a decision. Such a decision may happen at any stage of life. Therefore the primary work of the director of the Exercises is to accompany the exercitant to be indifferent, which is a proper disposition for a good election. The exercitant should be left freely to choose where the Lord is calling them. In the 15th Annotation, Ignatius says that the one who is giving the Exercises should be careful not to influence the choices of the one who is receiving the Exercises as the Creator and the Lord directly communicates to the creature. The understanding of Ignatius in proposing these Annotations is that ultimately the decision does not belong either to the director or to the exercitant. It is instead an act or rather the will of God and the task of both director and exercitant is to discern this divine will.⁶² Any influence of the director on the exercitant will stand as a kind of impediment in the process of the proper election of the exercitant. In the Directory of Antonio Cordeses, we can find the similar reference to the role of the director of the Exercises,

The one giving the Exercises should take care not to incline him in one direction rather than another. His job is not this; it is to prepare the creature by bringing it to indifference so that it may be taught by the Creator, either through inspiration and movement in the affections or through reasoning in the mind. The director must leave the entire business of a vocation to God, who will be able to preserve and perfect the person therein.⁶³

The idea of Ignatius was that both the director and the exercitant work together to reach a state of mind, which suspends all the earthly affections and attachments, which influence the process of the decision. A proper preparation is important in order

⁶⁰ *Sp.Ex.*, 104 Tercer preámbulo. El tercero, pedir lo que quiero: será aquí pedir conocimiento interno del Señor que por mí se ha hecho hombre, para que más le ame y le siga.

⁶¹ *Lop*, 237.

⁶² *Maryks*, ed.235.

⁶³ *Palmer*, 280.

enter into the question of the election. Being fully conscious of the vocation of man, everything should be oriented towards its realization. It is a kind of trust that one puts in God to be guided by Him. Being docile to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit and being open to the designs of the God will ultimately shape the person in a path of indifference.

Conclusion

It can be summed up that the true experience of the state of Indifference can be attained through the growth in aliveness of the Spirit and surrender of self-centeredness. The Spiritual Exercises, which are the core of Jesuit formation, are geared systematically towards the answering ‘what course of action is more pleasing to God?’ For this to happen, the exercitant must first gain “an intimate knowledge of our Lord.” This is the focus of the Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises. According to St. Ignatius, whatever the choice the retreatant makes, his intention must be “the praise of God our Lord and for the salvation of his soul.” Therefore it is essential to first consider the intention and then to choose that way of life, which will lead him to the greater service of the Lord.

In this chapter, the study of the nature and understanding of the principle of Indifference through the secular and Ignatian line of understanding is quite different from what is it normally referred. In the secular understanding it is meant to be an attitude of not caring about something and on the contrary Ignatian indifference is filled with passion to find the will of God and the good of all. The retreatant’s Indifference makes him so passionate about caring for the greater service of God that he is ready to give up anything that comes on his way as an obstacle. Ignatian Indifference does not make him void of emotions rather it leads him to the deepest desire to praise, reverence and serve God.

Indifference is a gift from God. However hard I try, I cannot manufacture it by myself. However I can always ask the Lord for the grace and work toward indifference of the will. Therefore a deeper awareness of my inclinations, thoughts and desires is the first step towards seeing my actions in the larger context of God’s action in the world.

CHAPTER 2

IMPEDIMENTS FOR ELECTION

Introduction

Growing in a discerning heart and mind is an art, which has to be acquired through practice. This practice involves self-awareness and grace. It means being attentive to the movements and counter movements within, which are a result of God's intimate involvement with us. Discernment is a personal journey with God, who has unconditionally loved me.

It is about discovering a personal God who embraces both our darkness and our light because in God's eyes "darkness and light are same" (Ps 139:12). It means striving to find God in all the realities of our life – the inner dimensions of our mind, heart, spirit, imagination, and memory and other aspects of our relationships, community, work, leisure and world.⁶⁴

God is always in continuous communication with human beings. He is a God, who talks. "And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it,' when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left'" (Isaiah 30, 21). Learning to hear the voice of God requires a certain profundity of discernment. One has to be docile to the voice of God distinguishing from the other voices. Listening to the voice of God requires ability to openness to conversion and a reflective attitude. There is a constant tension and ambiguity in ourselves while making the good election. It is strenuous process with moments of light and darkness. Because a part of us genuinely desires to know God's will and to live a life of greater goodness and integrity. But a part of us resists that desire and is suspicious of any interaction with God.⁶⁵

Given to the vulnerability and the spiritual strength of the individual, his journey in the election either is a smooth process or a difficult task. One has to check for himself where he stands in his relationship with God honestly. If one does not take stock of his strengths and weaknesses, there is a greater scope for committing errors in his election.

Decision making is a struggle, yet the Ignatian approach accepts the struggle wholeheartedly. In fact, the approach to decision making that Ignatius suggests depends

⁶⁴ Moureen Conroy, *The Discerning Heart – Discovering a personal God*, (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1993), xi.

⁶⁵ J.Michael Sparough, Jim Manney, and Tim Hipskind, *What's Your Decision? How to Make Choices with Confidence and Clarity* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2010), 25.

on this struggle. It claims that the signs of God's direction for our lives are found precisely in the shifting movements of our divided hearts as spiritual forces struggle for mastery. Ignatian discernment teaches us to become aware of those moments, to reflect on them, and to interpret them. The battle is the problem, but it is also a solution.⁶⁶

Therefore, walking through the battle can be considered as a time of consolidation towards arriving at a proper discernment, which is in accordance with the will of God. God manifests himself through ups and downs as Ignatius himself defined his relation to God during his months at Manresa, as God, his educator, "During that time, God behaved towards him in the same way that a school- master conducts himself with a child: he was teaching him" (Auto. n. 27). It is a difficult process to identify the footprints of God in all the circumstances. But it is not impossible to learn. It requires a focused mind and a spirit of faith to be led by the Lord.

In the process of making an election and taking a decision, it is obvious to encounter certain impediments, which do not allow the process to be a smooth going. Taking in the good spirit and faith, overcoming the impediments can be a very good learning experience. For Ignatius discernment an act of faith that God was acting to inspire him to follow Jesus. Insight must be followed by action for the discernment to be complete, and the action is an act of faith in God's direction for him.⁶⁷ Therefore faith is a prerequisite to entering into the process of election.

In this chapter, I intend to explore the impediments that one may encounter in the whole journey of the election a journey that leads from 'indifference to preference'. This will expand to the various areas of human psychological, cultural, spiritual and relational aspects. The objective is while becoming aware of these impediments, one can respond more freely to the call of being a true Christian, which means learning to respond with love to God, to people and to circumstances. It leads to a search for ways of living out the gospel commandment of love, while recognizing the imperfection of our attempts.

2.1. Inordinate attachments

St. Ignatius talked about these inordinate attachments, those things that keep us away from the Lord. When the response of the person is not in proportion to the reality, the

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 26-27.

⁶⁷ William A. Barry, "Discernment of Spirits as an Act of Faith", in *An Ignatian Spirituality Reader, Contemporary Writings on St. Ignatius of Loyola, the Spiritual Exercises, Discernment, and More*, ed.W.Traub, (Chicago:Loyola Press, 2008), 161.

person can be obsessive. This kind of obsessive nature can paralyze him in his process of thinking freely, acting freely and discerning freely. He may resort a compulsive behaviour, which may not be in accordance with the moral way of living. It impedes him from an authentic engagement with God. Attachments make a person focused on things and hamper his holistic growth as a person. The Lord has come to give us life, life to its fullness. (John 10:10). The focus on the attachments does not let us to receive and life in this abundant life.

The word “inordinate attachment”⁶⁸ itself implies for a discerning person that such an attachment is out of order because it involves sin. Though Ignatius uses the term ‘disordered affection’, in English, this sense of the noun ‘affection’ has been lost, and substitutes such as ‘tendency’, ‘inclination’, ‘propensity’, ‘attachment’ only partly convey it. The earlier sense survives, however, in ‘well affected’, ‘disaffected’, ‘disaffection’.⁶⁹ For Ignatius, detachment leads one to the spiritual freedom. An excessive or disordered love exerts influence on the individual and make him less free of choosing the purpose of God in his life. Therefore Ignatius designed his Spiritual Exercises in such a way that they lead the retreatant to a true spiritual freedom.

Man by nature invites pleasure and avoids pain. Because of this natural tendency, when he indulges in the excessive pleasure seeking or gets caught up in the web of addictions, it becomes difficult for him to discern the will of God and to become what God has designed for him. St. Ignatius has treated this concept of inordinate attachment in order to facilitate the retreatant to engage himself in complete freedom in his process of election.

St. Ignatius understanding of indifference is that it is oriented towards a balance at equilibrium, where the retreatant is not inclined to either side.⁷⁰ He enters the election

⁶⁸ Cf. for more bibliography refer: Bojorge, H., “Absolon, hijo mio! El duelo de David como ejemplo de afección desordenada”, *Boletín de Espiritualidad* 147 (1994) 8-15; Calversas, J., “Tecnicismos explanados Quitar de si todas afecciones desordenadas”, *Man* 1 (1925) 25-42; 118-128; 307-320; *Man* 2 (1926) 21-34; 119-132; 201-215; 322-332; *Man* 3 (1927) 12-29; 112-129; *Man* 5 (1929) 124-141; Corella,, J., “Dinámica del deseo y afecciones desordenadas en el proceso de los Ejercicios Espirituales”, *Man* 66 (1994) 147-160; Domínguez Morano, C., “Ordenación de la afectividad y mecanismos de defensa”, en *Psicología* I, 109-140; *Psicodinámica de los Ejercicios ignacianos*, M-ST, Bilbao-Santander 2004, 139-235; García Domínguez, L.M, *Las afecciones desordenadas. Influjo del subconsciente en la vida espiritual*, Bilbao-Santander 1992; ID., “Que son las afecciones desordenadas para Ignacio y como leerlas hoy desde la psicología”, en *Psicología* I, 94-107.

⁶⁹ Ivens, 2.

⁷⁰ See Sp.Ex. no.179 *Obras de San Ignacio de Loyola*, BAC, 2014. Segundo: es menester tener por objeto el fin para el que he sido creado, que es para alabar a Dios nuestro Señor y salvar mi alma; y además de

with an attitude of openness and spirit of being guided by the will of God. It is to leave everything to be filled by love for Christ. It is an expression of his desire to know and do the will of God in order to better praise, serve and revere God.

From his own experience, Ignatius had learnt that the enemy of human nature can tempt more under the appearance of good, when persons are exercising themselves in the illuminative life, which corresponds to the exercises of the Second Week. In Barcelona, when Ignatius dedicated himself to study, there came to him new insights into spiritual matters and fresh relish, to such an extent that he could not memorize, nor could he drive them away no matter how much he resisted.⁷¹ Little by little he realized that it was temptation. He could recognize it as a temptation even though he was lost in the spiritual thoughts. It is to say that the evil sometimes presents itself in the form of good in order to make the person addicted to it. One needs to have a keen eye to notice the tricks of the evil if not he can get inclined or attached his own passions, which can make him as disordered person.

2.1.1. The concept of 'inordinate attachment' in Christian tradition

Detachment is a central theme in the Christian spirituality. The journey of a Christian is towards encountering the face of God by living a life that is worthy of his vocation. Obtaining a loving union with God is highest manifestation of one's virtuous life. Discipleship is an invitation to let go and die to oneself. There is a cost of discipleship. In the Gospel of Matthew 19: 21-22, when a young asks Jesus what he should do in order to attain eternal life, Jesus tells him to sell everything and give it to the poor and then to follow Him. Matthew says that the young man goes sad because he had attachments. Anything that comes in the way of following Christ is considered a hindrance in the Christian vocation. In the Middle Ages, an understanding of the contempt of the world is considered as the true following Christ. *Contemptus mundi* leads to the imitation of Christ. A popular author of this period was Thomas A.Kempis, who in his book *Imitation of Christ* (1419) preaches this concept in the very beginning of Book one, chapter one,

esto hallarme indiferente, sin afección alguna desordenada, de manera que no esté más inclinado ni aficionado a tomar la cosa propuesta más que a dejarla, ni a dejarla más que a tomarla; sino que me halle como en el fiel de la balanza, para seguir aquello que sintiere ser más para gloria y alabanza de Dios nuestro Señor y salvación de mi alma.

⁷¹ Autobiography, no.54.

This is the greatest wisdom—to seek the kingdom of heaven through contempt of the world. It is vanity, therefore, to seek and trust in riches that perish. It is vanity also to court honor and to be puffed up with pride. It is vanity to follow the lusts of the body and to desire things for which severe punishment later must come. It is vanity to wish for long life and to care little about a well-spent life. It is vanity to be concerned with the present only and not to make provision for things to come. It is vanity to love what passes quickly and not to look ahead where eternal joy abides.⁷²

Therefore because of such understanding of the call of the Christian to follow and imitate Christ, there emerged a tension in truly understanding the gift and the creation of God. The comprehension of a Christian is that God calls him to be in the world but not of the world. Kempis put it this way: “We must be watchful, especially in the beginning of temptation, because then the enemy is more easily overcome. If he is not allowed to come in at all at the door of the soul, but is kept out and resisted at his first knock”⁷³

Perhaps it falls in the teaching of New Testament; “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect”(Romans 12:2). Therefore what should a Christian do? Should he or she view the world with contempt or should he regard it as a means to live his call in fullness?

The Second Vatican Council had an extensive discussion on the relationship of man with the world and the fruit of its discussion is the birth of the document of *Gaudium et Spes* (The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World). This document reiterates the importance of using the human goods for the service and glory of God. We will not completely be free of the attachments. However a right use of them is necessary to live in holiness.

Hence, while earthly progress must be carefully distinguished from the growth of Christ's kingdom, to the extent that the former can contribute to the better ordering of human society, it is of vital concern to the Kingdom of God. For after we have obeyed the Lord, and in His Spirit nurtured on earth the values of human dignity, brotherhood and freedom, and indeed all the good fruits of our nature and enterprise, we will find them again, but freed of stain, burnished and transfigured, when Christ hands over to the Father: "a kingdom eternal and universal, a kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and

⁷² Thomas Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, trans. by Aloysius Croft & Harold Bolton (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1940), 3.

⁷³ *Ibid.*3.

grace, of justice, love and peace." On this earth that Kingdom is already present in mystery. When the Lord returns it will be brought into full flower.⁷⁴

Letting go of the attachment is a way to return to God. Misuse of God's abundant blessings and gifts results in disordered desires and sin, which ultimately brings rupture in the relationship with God, nature and oneself. The traditional understanding is that evil always emerges from the desire. Therefore one should try to get rid of the desire. However one has to properly understand that desire is the key to union and intimacy with God. St. Ignatius emphasizes a lot on the importance of desire to desire.

St. John of the Cross understood that freedom from the attachment is necessary for an intimate relationship with God. He emphasized this concept of detachment in most of his writings. Saying 'yes' to the invitation of God means not allowing any created thing in the world to have dominion over his decision-making. Therefore faith is a fundamental aspect in his understanding of his union with God.

The foundational principle for John's theology, the motivation for detachment, the explanation of his emphasis of 'nada', all this is rooted in the conception of faith that John articulates. This is something that Wojtyla emphasizes as a key to understanding John's writings: "the whole concept of the dark night is based on the structure and intrinsic logic of faith"⁷⁵

Faith paves the way to detachment, which frees the person from the dependence on the created things. The key emphasis of St. John of the Cross is on faith which means entering into a loving relationship with God. Faith is to let go off everything and hold on to the Creator and not to the created things. Union with God calls for an abnegation of one's false self. This can be witnessed in the mystery of cross, death and the resurrection of Jesus. One has to let go and die to the detachment in order to raise to the newself. Cross is not the end. It looks empty but is the fullness, which is a way to new life in abundance. Therefore detachment is understood as the cross by which one is raised to a new life and new relationship with God.

⁷⁴ *Gaudium et Spes*, promulgated by his Holiness Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965, no.39.

⁷⁵ Karol Wojtyla, *Faith According to St. John of the Cross*, trans by Jordan Aumann (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981), 115.

2.1.2. *The concept of 'inordinate attachment' in Ignatian understanding*

'Affection', a key term in the language of the Exercises refers to the many variants of love and desire, together with their antitheses, hate and fear.⁷⁶ Most probably Ignatius came to know of this concept in the books that he had read in Loyola during his time of convalescence and definitely in the book of *Imitation of Christ*. He had to experience its reality throughout his life. The inordinate attachments affect the whole being of the human person. They exist in all of us. They sway the individual on different levels like his relational life, spiritual life, psychological life and emotional life. The influence of it can be felt in all the dimensions of his life from thinking, feeling and acting. The concept of inordinate attachment is very closely related to the election, which has to be done during the Spiritual Exercises.

“Afección desordenada” significa para Ignacio que uno es movido por tal inclinación o tal aversión hacia una persona o cosa que le impiden hacerse indiferente a esa persona o cosa, en orden a poder elegir lo que más conduce al servicio y alabanza de Dios: en lugar de eso, tales inclinaciones o aversiones le llevan a decisiones y/o actitudes que carecen de recta orientación y que no tienen pureza de intención.⁷⁷

Therefore it can be derived to a conclusion that inordinate attachment has an affective character, which has the power to confuse and disorient the person from the path of right decision making. Growing in awareness of distinguishing the sentiments and affections is a key to entering into the election. Therefore for Ignatius, a necessity for obtaining the freedom from these inordinate attachments is so important that without which a good discernment process for the retreatant is highly impossible.

La afección desordenada es un concepto importante en el texto y en el proceso espiritual de los Ejercicios, pero no se explica directamente en ninguna parte. Se trata de un caso particular del afecto, el de un apego o inclinación que orienta decisivamente la elección del ejercitante, pero engoándola respecto a la voluntad de Dios sobre él, pues se presenta a sus ojos como un bien y encubre lo que tiene de mal real para quien la experimenta ya para los demás.⁷⁸

St. Ignatius calls for freedom of detachment which paves a way to indifference. The freedom born from indifference is a desired outcome expressed by him in the Spiritual Exercises as the whole scope of the retreatant is to obtain the ability to order one's life in such a way that no decision is made resulting from an inordinate attachment. In the Principle and Foundation, Ignatius talks about the use of things that

⁷⁶ Ivens, 2.

⁷⁷ Luis María García Domínguez, *Las Afecciones desordenadas*, (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 1997), 85.

⁷⁸ Luis María García Domínguez, “Afección desordenada,” *DEI*, 91.

lead us closer to God and leave behind those, which do not help us attain the end. Whatever helps us to reach the end is called order and whatever impedes us to reach the end is called disorder. Therefore this is the criteria to interpret and discern the inordinate attachments. However, it is not always easy to get rid of the inordinate attachments that block our way to God.

El concepto de afección es clave para la inteligencia de los Ejercicios. “Afección, según san Ignacio, es el amor más o menos que se tiene a una cosa o persona, el cual mueve a quien lo tiene y le hace elegir la tal cosa o favorecer a la tal persona con preferencia a otras (184, 338)”. Es un amor particular o interés, es una inclinación hacia una personal o cosa y que puede llevar a enamorarse de la persona, a elegirla, a hacerla el centro de los propios sentimientos.⁷⁹

Therefore in the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius proposes this concept of “inordinate attachment” in the process of election. According to Meister Eckhart, detachment “enkindles the heart, awakens the spirit, stimulates the longings, and shows us where God is”. This freedom from attachment leads to a freedom of desire that is characterized by “great unbounded love, endless creative energy and deep pervasive joy”.⁸⁰ Trying to obtain freedom from the inordinate attachments is not literally saying no to the desire or to avoid it, it is rather seeking a healthy balance, where the person does not allow any power over himself. It is to grow in a kind of attitude and openness where the individual is free to say yes to the invitations of the Lord to live a life according his divine will.

La expresión completa y literal “afección desordenada” (en singular o plural) aparece en los Ejercicios siete veces, en seis números del texto, de las que dos veces se refieren al conjunto del libro [*Ej* 1.21], cuatro a las elecciones [*Ej* 169.172.179], y otra a las Reglas de distribuir limosnas [*Ej* 342]. Otras expresiones que expresan el mismo concepto, aunque con otros términos, se encuentran en contexto de elección: en la anotación 16 [*Ej* 16], el ejercicio de Binarios [*Ej* 150.153-155.157] y las Reglas en el ministerio de distribuir limosnas [*Ej* 338; cf. *Ej* 184].⁸¹

During the Second Week in the Preamble for making election⁸² for the state or the change of life, St. Ignatius proposes that an attitude of indifference is absolutely

⁷⁹García Domínguez, 19.

⁸⁰ Larry Warner, *Journey with Jesus: Discovering the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 94.

⁸¹ García Domínguez, *DEI*, 91.

⁸² See No.169, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius- translation and commentary* by George E. Ganss, St. Louis, 1992. In every good election, insofar as it depends on us, the eye of our intention ought to be single. I ought to focus only on the purpose for which I am created, to praise God our Lord and to save my soul. Accordingly, anything whatsoever that I elect ought to be chosen as an aid toward that end. I ought not to order or drag the end into subjection to the means, but to order the means to the end. In this way it happens, for example, that many choose firstly to marry, which is the means, and secondly to serve God our Lord in marriage, although the service of God is the end. Similarly, there are others who first

necessary. It is because, while making the election, one should not lose sight of the end of his creation. Whatever may be the choice, it should help the retreatant to reach the end, for which he is created. Ignatius says that if the retreatant is not free to make the election on account of his possessions, he wants God to come straight to his inordinate attachments. The objective should be first and foremost to desire to serve the Lord.

Before coming onto matter for election and the ways of finding God's specific will, the text returns to the disposition which is the prerequisite to decision. The disposition is that already indicated by the Foundation (23), the Third class (155), and the second kind of humility (166), while the examples of disordered choices recall the Second Class (154). As in the Foundation, right intention is presented under the aspect of ends-and-means logic, rather than in the affective climate of an outlook changed by the experience of Christ. That the latter has been developing and will continue to develop throughout the election process is assumed.⁸³

A right disposition of attitude and interior freedom born out of all detachments leads the retreatant towards a right decision making, where he is not imprisoned by an extremely ill-considered past decision or prejudice. St. Ignatius said that the person making the right decision desires in some way or the other to follow and imitate Christ. For instance, in his letter to his brother Martin, Ignatius after speaking of Christian charity and the order to be followed in charity and encouraging him to merit the goods of eternity by a proper use of those time, he ends the letter by saying, "May the Perfect Goodness be pleased to ordain all to His holy service and continued praise".⁸⁴ Only in the state of Indifference a person can truly engage himself in the service of God within Church as many of the choices of a state of life of the individual are directly concerned with his role in the Church. In his role as the Christian his primary mission is to seek the glory and service of God.

In the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius proposes that the retreatant should ask for the grace that he may feel the disorder in his actions, so that finding it abhorrent; he may amend his life and put order into it.⁸⁵ The prayer of the retreatant is to

seek to possess benefices, and afterwards to serve God in them. Thus these persons do not go directly to God, but desire God to come directly to their disordered attachments. As a result they transform the end into a means and the means into the end; and consequently what they should fasten on in the first place they take up in the last. For I ought to aim first at desiring to serve God, which is the end, and secondarily at accepting the benefice or marrying if that is more suitable for me, which is the means to the end. Finally, nothing whatever ought to move me to choose such means or deprive myself of them except one alone, the service and praise of God our Lord and the eternal salvation of my soul.

⁸³ Ivens, 133.

⁸⁴ William J. Young., trans., *Letters of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1959), 8.

⁸⁵ *Spiritual Exercises*, no. 63. Trans.by Ganss. The First Colloquy will be with our Lady, that she may obtain for me from her Son and Lord grace for three things: First, that I may feel an interior knowledge of

obtain the knowledge and a changed attitude regarding his personal sins, the disorder in his life and the sinful world. The disorder is something that has been misdirecting his desires, attitudes and leanings. By becoming aware of this disorder, the retreatant intends to make amendments to his past life by overcoming himself. Winning over oneself leads to a kind of interior freedom and knowledge of himself. Ultimately whatever the retreatant chooses should direct him to search for the will of God and to accept it in peace and joy. For St. Ignatius it is not enough that the retreatant has a good will. He should aim at growing in the purity of intention. Because it is the purity of intention that which finally makes the person free in his process of finding the will of God. In Indian spiritual tradition, some spiritual masters claim that the proof of the true spiritual evolution is the purity of intention.

The impact of inordinate attachments can be felt during the rules for the discernment in the First Week and the Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises. In the First set of rules, the good spirit appeals to the moral principles by pricking the conscience of the individual against the effective criterion of instinctual satisfaction and pleasures. And in the Second set of rules, the bad angel can play on the emotional capacity of the retreatant by giving him consolation in order to manipulate him and mislead him in his search for God's will. It is here St. Ignatius insists very much that the retreatant becomes aware of the tricks of the evil spirit.

El trabajo de ordenarse progresa desde el nivel de la estricta necesidad moral - oposición al mal - hasta el del Magis y el de la discreción en la caridad con miras a la mayor gloria de Dios, por lo que "hay que saber ordenarse hasta en el bien". En definitiva, la afección desordenada se da en el ejercitante que busca la voluntad de Dios en cosas indiferentes o buenas.⁸⁶

Therefore an inordinate attachment is a central theme in the Exercises especially in the process of discernment and election. Winning over oneself is the way to prepare oneself to discern the will of God and to be in union and intimacy with God. The union with God is nothing but to do the will of God and to serve him with a singled minded devotion as St. Ignatius in the Contemplation to attain love says, "To ask for what I want. Here, it will be to ask for interior knowledge of all the good I have received so

my sins and also an abhorrence of them; Second, that I may perceive the disorder in my actions, in order to detest them, amend myself, and put myself in order; Third, that I may have a knowledge of the world, in order to detest it and rid myself of all that is worldly and vain. Then I will say a Hail Mary.

⁸⁶ García Domínguez, 27.

that acknowledging this with gratitude, I may be able to love and serve his Divine Majesty in everything” (Sp.Ex.232).

2.2. Christian Anthropology

In the history of salvation man is not meant to be a mere spectator rather an active collaborator with God. The message of salvation comes to him and it is the divine will that he takes this project forward in building the Kingdom of God. Christ’s incarnation is the manifestation of this message of salvation as Karl Rahner remarked, “Christology is the beginning and end of anthropology”. Therefore it is appropriate to consider discernment from the point of view of theological anthropology. Because discernment in a certain sense will be treated as it regards the response of the individual to the action of grace.⁸⁷ God invites man to partake in his salvific mission and man responds to his call depending upon the health of his soul and the kind of interior freedom he enjoys.

2.2.1. Man as the image of God

Human being is created by God in his own image and likeness (Gen 1:27). This *imago Dei* is the corner stone to understand the human person. Therefore man is the part of the story which continues throughout eternity. It is this relation with God that gives meaning to the experience of human person. The creation of man distinguishes him from other animals and created things. The other animals are destined to remain always earthly. But as God breathed an immortal soul into the human person, he is called to live a higher level of life by realizing who he is and what he is. God has further bestowed upon man sovereignty to rule over all other things; “Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth” (Gen 1:26). On account of this delegated sovereignty, man has the responsibility before God by taking care of the creation and at the same using it appropriately for the glory of God.

When, in Psalm 8:4, the Psalmist asks the question, 'What is man that you are mindful of him ... that you care for him', he is not asking the anthropological question in the way that the contemporary researcher might ask it. He is not giving the kind of answers that we might be looking for. He is not providing a description of various characteristics of human life. He is bowing before God in worship, praising him for his continuing love. Finding the question, 'what is man . . .?', within a psalm of praise to the God of constant love, serves to remind us that our deepest significance lies not in ourselves but in God

⁸⁷ Rulla, Luigi M. “The Discernment of Spirits and Christian Anthropology.” *Gregorianum*, vol. 59, no. 3, 1978, pp. 537–569. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23575663. Accessed 10 May 2020.

our Creator. Grappling with all the complications and ambiguities of human experience, we look beyond all that, and we see the God who cares, the God to whom we matter.⁸⁸

Therefore the Christian understanding of man is that God made human person as the crown of the material creation. The incarnation of Christ further reveals the meaning of the human person as the image of God⁸⁹. By this act of incarnation, God has also revealed the dignity of human nature in the whole of creation and empowered that human being is the only appropriate subject to enter into divine nature, in the person of Christ. Jesus is the focus of Christian understanding of the human person made in the image and likeness of God. Therefore the human beings are created to be in relationship not only with God but also with the whole creation respecting and being responsible for the all creatures and the created order. The image of God is manifested fundamentally as relational as God is worshiped as Triune – three persons in one nature. So it is very clear that human person cannot be understood and comprehended individually. He is naturally bestowed with the capacity to relate. This leads another fundamental truth of freedom.

God acts in freedom, choosing and refusing; we humans act in freedom, choosing and refusing. And when we act in freedom, we are acting with God, which lays the root to “finding God in all things”. Further, God is creative, sharing divine life and making all things; we are creative, begetting children and making things. Whenever we create, including our own selves, we cocreate with God.⁹⁰

Therefore, the starting of a good discernment begins in our faith that God is our creator and He is calling us to be whole persons in the divine likeness. This realization of divine likeness helps us to understand that God is intelligent, thinking, imagining, planning. This automatically manifests in the human persons also as thinking, imagining and planning beings. Along with God, we are thinking and planning.

2.2.2. *Fallen nature and sin*

Because of man’s rebellion again the divine will and his inordinate desires, a separation was created between man and God. He has ruptured his relationship with God. In

⁸⁸ Charles Cameron, “An Introduction to Theological Anthropology”, *Evangel*, 23.2, (2005):54.

⁸⁹ Cf. The Second Vatican Council proclaimed that the incarnation of Jesus revealed to us the “New Man”. “The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a figure of Him Who was to come,(20) namely Christ the Lord. Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear. It is not surprising, then, that in Him all the aforementioned truths find their root and attain their crown”. (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22)

⁹⁰ Joseph Tetlow, *Always Discerning, An Ignatian Spirituality for the New Millennium*, (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2016), 49.

Genesis 3, we can see God judging the man. The earlier phrase of “Man was created in the image and likeness of God” also now affirms the fact that “Man is also a sinner”. He earned for himself the wrath of God by failing in his responsibility of being in the right relationship with God. This has in a way brought to him certain incapacity in his process of choosing right decisions.

The human situation, in the beginning, was quite different from our present situation - 'Adam knows neither what is good nor what is evil'.⁵ Adam walked with God, without shame (Genesis 2:25). He did not know 'evil' as an inescapable fact of his everyday life. He did not know 'good' as a kind of 'elusive butterfly' which always seemed to be just out of his reach. Like Adam, we still stand before God. We live out our lives in the presence of the living God. We, however, no longer stand before him without shame. There is no way of returning to the situation of Adam before his fall. It cannot be done. We are simply not in a position to remove ourselves to this paradise 'beyond good and evil.'" We are 'separated from the life of God' (Ephesians 4:18). Estranged from God, alienated from him, our situation would seem to be utterly hopeless.⁹¹

Trying to understand man apart from God leads to a disaster and not to a holistic comprehension of his nature. Because the Sacred Scripture says that humanity stands second to God both in the order of being and in the order of knowledge. Therefore the knowledge of God helps to obtain the knowledge of the self. This effect of sin had brought about radical disintegration in the relationship between man and God.

Understanding of the motive and purpose for which God originally intended for man has become difficult. Guilt, condemnation and sin have entered the human nature. As a result doubt and lack of faith have become part of man. Therefore there is every possibility to listen to only what is attractive to him even though they are contrary to the divine will. In Book of Revelation, God has warned us to be aware of the self-deception: “For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched pitiable, poor, blind, and naked” (Rev3:17). Because of sinfulness, self-knowledge and self-awareness are not fully obtained.

Saying that humanity has been created in God's image is not all that has to be said in a theological anthropology. We must also speak of sin and salvation. The creature rebels against the human will asserts itself over against the divine will. This leads to separation from the Creator. By his own sinful choice, the creature places himself at a distance from the Creator. Creation in the image of God is followed by the fall from God, brought about by sin (Genesis 3). The fall was followed by the flood (Genesis 6-8), the judgment of God upon humanity, whom he had created and by whom he had been 'grieved' and 'filled with pain' (Genesis 6:6-7)⁹²

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 55.

⁹² Cameron, 54-55.

Because of this sin, man is caught in the middle, between the image of God in which he was created originally and the image of sinful Adam, which he had chosen to be. There is a privilege of being in the divine likeness and at the same time a temptation to go away from this. St Paul in his letter to the Romans expresses this dichotomy saying, “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do” (Romans 7:15). There is in each individual to varying degrees, an interior struggle which is expressed as inconsistencies between that which he would wish to be and to do habitually (the ideal self) and that which he is and habitually does (the actual self).⁹³

In his letter to the Galatians, St. Paul affirms the same fact, “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would” (Gal 5:16-17). This seems very realistic as there are these internal divisions and inconsistencies present in man. Therefore these attractions and aversions play a vital role in the process of discernment as man is naturally tend to choose the pleasure against the pain. The anthropology presented in Gal 5:17 also concerns liberty. Even though he is animated by the Spirit, man has a limitation on his effective freedom; his liberty is imperfect.⁹⁴ Spirit and will seem to in contradiction and therefore the impact of it will be on the hindering of the will of man. These interior struggles and inconsistencies are an expression of the concupiscence, which can affect the discernment process because of the unconscious force.

The central idea of this whole episode of fall is “to know good and evil”, which means to choose to decide and to determine what is good and what is evil.⁹⁵ Man has deliberately chosen the wrong path, which is against the divine path. The consequence of it still continues in his lack of freedom to choose. However an optimistic outlook could be that man has still the privilege of being what he was in the beginning by overcoming his shortcoming and sinful tendencies. It is possible to walk and collaborate with the Lord by being in union with the Lord because of the opportunity offered by God to redeem.

⁹³ Luigi M. *Gregorianum*, (1978), 559.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*,561.

⁹⁵ Rick Peels, “The Effects of Sin upon Human Moral Cognition”, *Journal of Reformed Theology*, 4 (2010), 54.

2.3. Ignatian Anthropology

St. Ignatius taught that God is not at a far distant past but is present here and now, creating us moment by moment. Just by being of the earth, then, each of us has unique original purpose.⁹⁶ But God is also creating each of us directly, so it is God who puts into each of us a unique original purpose. We each have a personal vocation from God. No one else can do what God calls each one of us to do, for evolution careens on through time and time.⁹⁷ By assigning to us the original purpose, God wishes us to be what we were at the beginning.

The importance of the 'Principle and Foundation' is evidenced in the Ignatian understanding of the person, of his relation to God and to the world in order to understand the significance 'order' and the corresponding 'disorder'. Ignatius describes very well the concept of the person created and loved by God and, for this reason, called to self-transcendence, a call that constitutes the human person. This is a fundamental element for every Christian anthropology.⁹⁸

The Principle and Foundation of the Spiritual Exercises regard the human nature as oriented towards the transcendence and the center of his transcendence is God. He came from God and he is moving towards God. He is created by God and for God. The man of St. Ignatius also a privileged place in this material world. All the created things may help him to reach the end for which he was created. Therefore man is caught between his place in the created world and the creator and here he is called to make a good election in the midst of the chaos.

La elección se presenta entonces como el eje sobre el que bascula toda la actividad humana en tanto que, por su libertad, el hombre decide y asume las consecuencias de sus decisiones –ordenando su vida hacia ese horizonte teológico o bien perdiéndose en la espesura de sus relaciones con las cosas- y, con ello se va haciendo persona, agente

⁹⁶ See *Spiritual Exercises*, no. 23. Trans.by Ganss. Human beings are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord,' and by means of doing this to save their souls. The other things on the face of the earth are created for the human beings, to help them in the pursuit of the end for which they are created. From this it follows that we ought to use these things to the extent that they help us toward our end, and free ourselves from them to the extent that they hinder us from it. To attain this it is necessary to make ourselves indifferent to all created things, in regard to everything which is left to our free will and is not forbidden. Consequently, on our own part we ought not to seek health rather than sickness, wealth rather than poverty, honor rather than dishonor, a long life rather than a short one, and so on in all other matters. Rather, we ought to desire and choose only that which is more conducive to the end for which we are created.

⁹⁷ Joseph A. Tetlow, *Making Choices in Christ – The Foundations of Ignatian Spirituality*, (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008), 19.

⁹⁸ Franco Imoda, ed., *A Journey to Freedom, An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Anthropology of Fomation*, Garcia Dominguez, "Inordinate Attachments in Ignatian Anthropology", *Studies in Spirituality*, Supplement,5 (Leuven: Peeters,2000), 282.

de la Historia, en las encrucijadas de su biografía, al tiempo que se arroga la autoría de un mundo infradeterminado en permanente construcción.⁹⁹

Immediately after the Principle and Foundation, St. Ignatius highlights the man's fallen nature and sinful condition. Those making the Exercises seek to come to a deeper realization of their personal sins and sinful tendencies, so that they can undergo a process of purification and thus turn more fully to God.¹⁰⁰ During the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius proposes the second meditation on one's personal sin.¹⁰¹ The main consideration of this meditation is not only to look into one's personal sin but also to obtain a new vision of self in the whole creation.

The Ignatian view of the person is only descriptive or existential. Through the theology of the times, he also displays the underlying ontological reality that explains the present historical condition: why is this man a sinner? Likewise, within the first week two other moments express Ignatius's basic anthropology and the 'anthropological frailty' which characterizes it: the composition of place and the third exercise of the first week. The composition of place of the first week (Sp.Ex.47) presents an 'imaginary' vision that vividly describes in a few traits the anthropological perspective more suited to each believer.¹⁰²

The perception of St. Ignatius is that man is understood as a dual reality. He is composed of body and soul. During the First Week on the meditation of sin, St. Ignatius invites the retreatant to imagine that his soul is imprisoned in this body which will one day disintegrate (Sp.Ex.47). Because of the existence of this dual reality, there is an inner tension and division within himself. This is somehow in accordance with the platonic understanding that the earthly reality is opposed to the heavenly reality.

Likewise, when he presents his view of the world in the contemplation of the Incarnation, he chooses a few examples that are not exactly optimistic; 'all were going down to hell', 'all the people in such blindness', 'they swear and blaspheme', 'they wound and kill' (Sp.Ex.102, 106-108). Even after the First Week of purification, one always finds a nature basically rooted in an orientation toward what is good for oneself.

⁹⁹ Luis Martínez Guerrero, "Sentir y Gustar Internamente Los Ejercicios Espirituales y el Lugar de la Afectividad en la Antropología Ignaciana", *Revista de Historia de la Psicología*, 2018, Vol. 39 (2), 23.

¹⁰⁰ Charles J. Healey, *The Ignatian Way – Key Aspects of Jesuit Spirituality*, (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2008), 28.

¹⁰¹ See *Spiritual Exercises*, no.56-58 Trans.by Ganss, The First Point is the court-record of my sins. I will call to memory all the sins of my life, looking at them year by year or period by period. For this three things will be helpful: first, the locality or house where I lived; second, the associations which I had with others; third, the occupation I was pursuing. The Second Point is to ponder these sins, looking at the foulness and evil which every mortal sin would contain in itself, even if it were not forbidden. The Third Point. I will reflect upon myself, by using examples which humble me: First, what am I when compared with all other human beings? Second, what are they when compared with all the angels and saints in paradise? Third, what is all of creation when compared with God? and then, I alone—what can I be? Fourth, I will look at all the corruption and foulness of my body. Fifth, I will look upon myself as a sore and abscess from which have issued such great sins and iniquities and such foul poison.

¹⁰² García Domínguez, 283.

Inordinate affections will emerge later on in the spiritual life because of this inclination of our human nature.¹⁰³

The exercitant has to come in confrontation with the experience of shame and confusion and at the same time a cry of wonder. Man is continuously called to a theocentric self-transcendence. By purifying himself in the First Week, he seeks the experience of salvation and theologically this salvation comes from Jesus, who shed blood on the cross. St. Ignatius also speaks of human faculties that are innate in man such as psyche, mind and intellect. Through these operations, human person will pray, meditate, consider, reflect and contemplate.

St. Ignatius highlights, in the Exercises, the theological meaning of the term and seems to find it in the use of human faculties oriented to the personal encounter with God. Nevertheless, any type of operation will be holy to the extent that it is moved by love, and not because it is more spiritual and less material. Ultimately even the purely psychic operations of the soul can be moved by God, since the Lord 'moves and brings our souls to one activity or the another' for its own good.¹⁰⁴

St. Ignatius was convinced that there is every possibility that during the Spiritual Exercises, the human natural condition could have an influence on the spiritual experience of the person. Therefore in his condition of being unaware, man can opt for a wrong choice, which is contrary to his self-transcendence. Human freedom in a certain sense is conditioned by his unconscious influences, which can make his discernment process difficult and erroneous. As a result the human response to the invitation of God is also conditioned and incomplete. Making the choices in the election process results extremely biased and manipulated.

Nothing is more difficult in the Exercises than to be able to manage well this matter of election...because at this time it is subject to different movements of the soul and sometimes to deceit since man is drawn to evil under the guise of good. It is a time of birth, when there are involuntary sadness which seem to stifle; and ...we risk if we do not behave as a good midwife, that all toward which we labored will never see the light and everything will end up badly.¹⁰⁵

St. Ignatius also was aware of the indirect influences of the evil which leads to the self-deception. In the rules for discernment, some common tactics of the enemy were enumerated in the Spiritual Exercises under the numbers 326 and 331. The spiritual experience of the retreatant may contain some hidden deceptions. St. Ignatius identified them from his own initial experience during his convalescence in Loyola. Therefore the Ignatian anthropology looks at man as an imperfect being but capable of

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 284.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 286.

¹⁰⁵ Gil González Dávila, *Dir.* 31, no.100.

responding to the call of God by the grace of salvation. He is created by God and for God and man is destined to transcend.

2.4. Psychological issues

Emotion and cognition play a vital role in the process of decision making. Therefore it is highly important that the retreatant is aware of what he thinks and feels. When he attempts to make a decision, it is apparent that he experiences the signs of conflict like uncertainty, guilt, shame, resistance, stress, anger etc. Such kind of negative emotions and tendencies hamper a good discernment process. Therefore one has to become aware of these psychological traps. The following questions can serve as a guide to identifying the individual patterns.

Do I tend to commit too quickly? Or, alternatively, do I have a tendency to procrastinate and postpone, to drag out decisions? Am I inclined toward childlike or compulsive conformity or to subservience? Do I tend toward adolescent rebelliousness or a desire to be different? Do depressive moods make me see everything in a bleak light, paralyzing me from acting? Do I tend towards an exaggerated sense of self-worth and to dreams of being a hero? Or, on the contrary, do I have feelings of inferiority? Do I tend to be hyperactive? Or do I have tendency to lack motivation or to run from situations and responsibility?¹⁰⁶

Without being conscious of these psychological traps, it is difficult to mature into a good discerning person. However these impairments can be overcome by professional advice like counseling and therapy and spiritual guidance too will be of some help. It is important to face oneself without shame and fear. Prior to making any important decisions, the retreatant should check for himself how healthy he is psychologically; if he is not, he should attend to resolve it first and then begin his decision making.

High levels of stress interfere with cognition, impairing one's attention and perception while fostering rigidity in one's thinking. As a result, the individual tends to perceive fewer alternatives, overlook important long-term consequences of these alternatives, engage in an inadequate search for relevant information, evaluate expected outcomes erroneously, and utilize faulty heuristics and oversimplified decision rules which fail to consider the full range of values implicated in the final choice. When the stress reaches very high levels, premature closure becomes very likely as the generation of alternatives and the appraisal of outcomes are truncated, if not completely bypassed.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Stefan Kiechle *The Art of Discernment- Making Good Decisions in Your World of Choices*, (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2005), 90-91.

¹⁰⁷ Michael .O'Sullivan, "Trust Your Feelings, but Use Your Head –Discernment and the Psychology of Decision Making", *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, (St.Louis:1990), 11.

St. Ignatius emphasized a lot on the rational in his third time of making a choice.¹⁰⁸ In the stronger rational sense, evidence can be found as the criterion is not the movement of the spirit but reason. The contemporary psychologists have made extensive research on the fact that the decisions can be influenced by the perceptions and the stress experienced by the individual. Therefore a right setting for making a decision is the atmosphere of tranquility.

The term tranquility implies first an absence of any ‘spiritual movements’ which could of themselves determine choice, and second, a freedom from all negative feelings (not only spiritual desolation but ordinary emotional feelings such as worry, anger, distress restlessness) that might obstruct rational deliberation. Tranquility need not however imply the total absence of spiritual movements, either of ordinary or quiet consolation or slight desolation, or of the emotional fluctuations normal in a difficult search.¹⁰⁹

Therefore, compulsive behavioral patterns and conflictual struggles that permeate one’s inner circle do influence the discernment process. Scruples and depression as well hinder the spiritual growth process and lead to massive negative results. A right decision is always confirmed by increased faith, hope and love, humility and peace whereas the internal influences bring frustration, emptiness, pride shame, guilt and anxiety. It is not surprising that some of these phenomena reflect the Christian’s infantile dreams, inordinate desires, immature projections, and pathological hallucinations.¹¹⁰

A rational way of weighing the pros and cons regarding the decision to be made will lead to a state of balance at equilibrium. However St. Ignatius insists that the retreatant has to go God in prayer in order to seek confirmation. The technique of role playing, imagining oneself giving advice, or placing himself on deathbed also play an important role in process of decision making. To choose a right decision, a state of inner freedom is needed. With God’s grace, the retreatant has to aim to liberate himself from all these obstacles and unconscious impulses. It is the whole person with his mind and heart has to respond to the personal invitation of Christ. It should be his entire self, which has to resonate with Lord.

¹⁰⁸ See *Spiritual Exercises*, no.177, Trans.by Ganss, The Third Time is one of tranquility. I consider first the end for which human beings are born, namely, to praise God our Lord and to save their souls; then, desiring this, as the means I elect a life or state of life. The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius within the limits of the Church, in order to be helped in the service of my Lord and the salvation of my soul. By a time of tranquillity I mean one when the soul is not being moved one way and the other by various spirits and uses its natural faculties in freedom and peace.

¹⁰⁹ Ivens ,138.

¹¹⁰ W.W.Meissner, *The Psychology of a Saint – Ignatius of Loyola*, (London: Yale University Press, 1992), 317.

Conclusion

As election is one of the central aspects in the Spiritual Exercises, it has to be done in a state of freedom and grace without any impediments. In this chapter, I have explored some of the major challenges that may appear in the process of discernment. Disorder and lack of peace manifest the reality that time of election has not arrived. St. Ignatius describes that the aim of the Spiritual Exercises is to help the person to master oneself and order one's life, without being swayed by inordinate attachments. By undertaking the Spiritual Exercises, the retreatant learns the skills of recognizing the disordered attachments and stay on course in union with God. One has to also read the signs of the devil as it may act as an angel of light. Achieving a state of indifference is foundation to the election.

The Christian anthropology gives us an understanding of the creation of man and his later on consequence of fallen nature. Because of his loss of divine bliss and union with God, he is under the sinful tendencies and concupiscence. This kind of human nature also is a hindrance to arriving at a right decision. Man needs grace of God and confirmation in his decision. Every decision has to be made with the ambit of prayer and the Church.

The Ignatian anthropology sheds light on the reality of man understood by St. Ignatius from his own experience. Man is created for a purpose and he has to realize this purpose by responding to the invitation of God day by day. Finding God in everything and everything in God needs a discerning heart. Man is a sinner but he has the capacity to experience the love and forgiveness God in order to follow Him. Only a redeemed man can follow Christ in complete freedom and take up his mission in this world. This definition of man is resonated in the 35th General Congregation, "A Jesuit is a sinner, yet called to be the companion of Christ". A discerning person can only follow Christ wholeheartedly.

Man is also a psychological being. Every unconscious response is once upon time a repressed feeling. Man is not a machine to give automated responses. He is an evolving person assisted by the grace. Therefore, while talking of the human responses to the divine invitation, his emotions and rationale do play a crucial role. The unconscious fears, scruples, wishes and hesitations condition human freedom, which will naturally reflect in his state of life. Overcoming the psychological blocks will ease the process of discernment as emotions are a key in the election.

CHAPTER 3

TOWARDS MAKING A GOOD DISCERNMENT

A journey through the Scriptural and Ignatian understanding

Introduction

One of the most important words that I used to hear at the very beginning of my formation was “Discernment”. I did not realize the depth and the intensity of this word at the age of fifteen, when I decided to become a Jesuit. However, as the days passed by, I was taught the art of discernment in my Jesuit formation. As I was growing in my relationship with my God, the Rules for the discernment helped me to understand my own interior life. Many times I returned to scriptural light and Ignatian explanation to seek direction and to open myself to recognize, understand and respond to my experience as a result of God’s presence. However, I do feel that it is not always easy to make a good discernment. There is always an immense struggle and a pain involved in this process of discernment.

The world we live in has become very complicated. The possibilities it offers are nearly unlimited, each with its own particular advantages and disadvantages. This fascinates us and irritates us, excites us and frightens us. Because the possibilities and consequences are intertwined, every decision creates repercussions that are not directly connected to it.¹¹¹

In the history of Christian Spirituality, the great spiritual masters and mystics experienced the mystery of God going through many spiritual struggles. Some of them even experienced the ‘darkness’ in their inner life. However their perseverance and their humility to understand the revelations of God kept them strong in their faith. Discernment did play an important role in every person, who wished to grow in communion with the Lord. However “Discernment requires affective maturity, inner quiet, and an ability to attend to one’s interior life. Discernment takes practice, and we learn to “discern the spirits” by trial and error”.¹¹²

The main objective of this chapter is to find a practical application of the art of discernment to daily living journeying through the Old Testament and New Testament

¹¹¹ Stefan Kiechle, *The Art of Discernment*, (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2005), 12.

¹¹² Kevin O’Brien, *Ignatian Adventure* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2011), 18.

and also exploring the life and experience of St. Ignatius of Loyola which he shared in his autobiography and the Spiritual Exercises. We turn to the Scripture because we know that the Lord speaks there. In the Scripture, we find wisdom and direction. Through discernment, we find out the priorities of God in our life and thus we share the vision of coming of the Kingdom of God. We study Ignatian way of doing discernment because of his contribution and wisdom found in the Spiritual Exercises. St. Ignatius from his own experience chalked out the rules for the discernment, which can be mastered and applied to daily living in order to discover the presence of God in our daily actions and discernment is not a study but a living experience.

3.1.Discernment in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, God is seen involving himself in every walk of the life of the Israelites. He was there with them guiding them and calling them to be faithful to the covenant. There were numerous incidents in the faith journey of the Israelites, where they have proved to be unfaithful. In their sinfulness and infidelity, they have failed to recognize the presence of God.

When there is no faith from the side of the people, discernment makes no sense to them. It is impossible to make any discernment when one is not motivated to see what God wants in his or her life. For any discernment, the prerequisite is that the faith that God always cares for them. In his famous classis work on the history of discernment, Jacques Guillet, S.J., writes two reasons for the absence of the idea of discernment in the ancient Old Testament texts:

...in the most ancient text we may not yet speak of discernment of spirits for two reasons. First of all, the action of these spirits (good and evil) is so overwhelming and powerful that it seems impossible for the one experiencing the action to resist it. Doubtless, he does not lose his personality. It is the same Saul whom the good spirit makes a marvellous chief (1Sm 11:16), while the evil spirit turns him into a cruel and suspicious tyrant (16:14-23); all the while Saul remains the man who merits praise for his bravery and condemnation for his unjustifiable jealousy. Nevertheless, in both situations he is given over to one stronger than himself.

The second reason given by Guillet was that

for the Israelites, both good and evil spirits have the same origin. They come from the Lord God, although the former show forth his plan of salvation and the latter will lead

his adversaries to ruin (Jgs 9:23, 1 Sm 16:14-23; 18:10; 19:9; 2 Kgs 19:7; Is 19:14; 29:10).¹¹³

It was difficult for the Israelites to remain in the covenant of the Lord faithfully. Though they failed in their faithfulness, the Lord never abandoned them. There are various instances in the later period, where the Lord exhorts the Israel to do discernment in remaining faithful to the covenantal relationship by listening to his voice and abandoning the false voices and false prophets.

3.1.1. Genesis 3

Often it is very obscure to distinguish between these voices as the voice of Satan presents itself as very rational and logical. It is only the person, who is used to listening to the voice of God can clearly distinguish it from the other voice. The example of Adam and Eve in the context of their sin in disobeying the Lord (Gen 3) can be presented to the reality of the two voices. Failing to discern the will of God, they fell in sin and the Holy Scripture presents the later consequences. What is to be noticed from this is that the logic and the rationale with which Satan presents his arguments. It is not so easy to get away from the clutches of Satan, as it is very tenacious and strong. One of the important characteristics of the discernment is *prayer*. One must take God seriously and believe firmly that God is concerned about him. The faith that God loves the human beings and He leads them in his ways is the point of departure for a good discernment. In simple words, a discerning person must be a praying person. It is important to be a praying person because along with divine voice there is always another voice.

3.1.2. Exodus Experience

The exodus experience of the desert in the life of the Israelites is a very important episode in the whole of their history. It is here they began to experience the love of God as well as their infidelity towards God. It has been the experience of many saints and great spiritual masters that discernment is learned only by difficult experiences. It is often said that people learn to become mature out of their difficult experiences. It was the same case with the Israel. Their faith was weak in the Lord. They had to go through an experience when they went on learning in their faith journey. The inner struggle that they faced certainly made them mature. God gradually makes them aware that it is only through the personal relationship with Him, they can live. When the maturity dawns on

¹¹³ Jacques Guillet et al, *Discernment of Spirits* (Collegeville Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1970) 19. This is the English translation by Sr. Innocentia Richards of the classic article from the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite Ascetique et Mystique*: "Discernment des Esprits,"

the consciousness of people, the personal responsibility before God begins to be important. Thomas H. Green says that life becomes more complex as people mature. A simple, blind, childlike following of clear commands is no longer possible. God being and revelation are much more mysterious than when the faith of the persons was that of a child; the well of simple verities runs dry, or at least the water becomes much cloudier. As persons move out of their sheltered home into the darkness of the marketplace, there are many more voices competing for their attention with the Lord's (and often mimicking his).¹¹⁴ In such a situation, man finds himself incapable of listening to the voice of God clearly. It is a kind of darkness, which overpowers him and he needs the grace to come out of it and walk in the path of the Lord that is designed for him.

3.1.3. Discernment and Moses

The Lord has chosen different men like Moses to interpret his message to his people. These men played an important role in guiding the people to make a good discernment. For instance in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses tells people to choose between life and death –

See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you this day, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his ordinances, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you are entering to take possession of it (Deut 30:15-16).

In this passage, one needs to realize the importance of discernment in decision making. Sometimes, many people feel that it is hard to make good decisions. The philosophical questions are why isn't God more present to the human beings and why do people grope around in the dark, struggling with their decisions, wondering what to do? In the book *'What's Your Decision?' – An Ignatian Approach to Decision Making:* Sparough, SJ says,

The problem is built into the very nature of making choices. God's will is usually difficult to discern, and our awareness of God's presence is often dim. We are free to choose, and this freedom is a curse as well as a blessing. Bad human choices cause most of the misery and suffering in the world – we can choose evil as well as good. We can be selfish or generous cruel or kind, vengeful or forgiving. We can pursue personal glory, or we can work for the good of other people.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Thomas H.Green, *Weeds Among the Wheat*, (Notre Dame: Indiana, 1990), 28-29.

¹¹⁵ Michael Sparough, J. Manny and T.Hipskind, *What's Your Decision?*, (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2010), 23-24.

As it is said, God always deals with humans in freedom and it is up to them to make good decision in the light of their relationship with God. The words of Moses present the reality of the inner struggle that each person goes through to arrive at a good decision that is pleasing to the Lord.

3.1.4. Solomon.

One of the important persons, known for wisdom in the Old Testament is King Solomon. His prayer for wisdom is another example of discernment

Give thy servant therefore an understanding mind to govern they people, that *I may discern between good and evil*; for who is able to govern this thy great people? It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. And God said to him, “Because you have asked this and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself *understanding to discern what is right*, behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you (I Kg 3:9-12).

King Solomon realized that discernment is crucial in governing the state and the people. A discerning mind is one, which is in accordance with the will of God. We can clearly see here that discernment is a gift given by God. We have to ask the Lord for it. The prayer of Solomon was so pleasing to the Lord that He blessed Solomon more than he asked for. Solomon has asked the Lord for the gift of discernment so that he would discern between good and evil, which is another important aspect of discernment.

3.1.5 Good and False Prophets

One of the principle concerns of the Israelites was to discern between good and false prophets. During that time, there emerged many false prophets, who were naturally in contradiction to one another. There was no unity of the message and authenticity in the interpretation of that message. The people were very much confused to determine who was actually speaking the Word of the Lord. Over the centuries certain criteria emerged like;

1. Prophecies of misfortune are likely to be authentic than prophecies of good fortune.
2. Authentic prophecy is confirmed from the prediction of “signs” which actually do come to pass.
3. The test of fidelity to the fundamental faith of Israel.
4. The life witness of the prophet will be as important as his soundness of doctrine.
5. The intention of the prophet
6. The prophet’s own experience of his or her prophetic call. ¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Thomas H. Green, (1990), 31-32.

Although the term “discernment” is not understood by them in the sense that that is perceived now, certainly the Jewish people did search for the norms that would help them in discerning the authenticity and genuineness of a prophet’s vocation. They had a strong faith that God involved himself in their history. But they found it difficult to perceive his involvement clearly as it is always mysterious and obscure. As it is said, only those, who are in a mature relationship with the Lord, can judge and discriminate between the authentic and inauthentic voice of the Lord.

3.1.6 Eli and Daniel

Similarly, there are many figures in the Old Testament, who exercised discernment in some way or the other to listen to the voice of the Lord and to distinguish between good and evil. For instance, Joseph was able to discern the hearts of his brothers, who sold him and act with them at an appropriate time according the mind of the Lord. Eli played an important role to discern the call of the Lord that came to little Samuel. Daniel, who was known as the seer, was given the gift of discernment to understand visions and dreams. With this gift, he was able to separate various nuances and symbols and interpret the message of the Lord. The priests in the Old Testament not only offered the sacrifices to the Lord but also assumed the role of the teaching to the people what is holy and what is profane. From above cited examples, we understand that in the Old Testament, the term “Discernment” is not yet really found and its scope is narrow. However, a brief review of the practice of discernment in Israel has yielded some important insights.¹¹⁷

3.2. Discernment in the New Testament

In the New Testament, we see the image of God very clearly more mature than in the Old Testament. Through the incarnation of Jesus, man finds that his destiny is to become like Jesus. Jesus was the first born of many. He is the King, Priest and the prophet. Therefore, the vocation of everyone is to respond to this lofty call by just becoming *Alter Christus*.

3.2.1 Discernment in the life of Jesus

Jesus was truly God and truly human. Yet he was tempted by the Satan in the desert. “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil .and he fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. And the tempter

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*32.

came and said to him, “if you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But he answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God’ ” (Mt 4:1-4). It is interesting to note that Jesus had three temptations before beginning of his public ministry. Luke also presents these temptation in chapter 4:1-13. Thomas H. Green says, “These passages are striking since they reveal him as the new Moses or the new Israel. Each time he is tempted by Satan, Jesus quotes from the passages in Deuteronomy where Moses is reminding the Israelites of their great failures during the desert years, and warning them to be wary of the devil’s temptation in the future. Jesus is the new Israel: Where she failed Yahweh, he has triumphed over Satan”.¹¹⁸ Unlike the Israelites in the desert, who gave up to the temptations, Jesus found his strength in the Holy Scripture. It is very revealing for me to know that for a good discernment, a big source of energy flows from the Holy Scripture. Forty days time is too long and he is physically weak. Satan thought that he could take advantage of the situation. Jesus could recognize the enemy’s voice and rebuke him immediately. One of the important steps in the process of discernment is to recognize the enemy. At times, our strength alone is not enough to combat the enemy. We need the strength from the Lord and the Holy Scripture is a great source of energy as Jesus himself had used it.

St. Ignatius tells us that in persons entrenched in serious sin the enemy ordinarily works on the imagination. “He fills such persons’ imagination with images of ‘sensual delights and pleasures’ awaking, consequently, an attraction toward these ‘delights and pleasures’ which confirms them all the more in their ‘vices and sins’”.¹¹⁹ The imagination that the evil spirit stirs is so strong that it is not easy to get rid of it. It is one of the tactics of the evil spirit to act up on the sensual pleasures and delights to make us fall in the pit of sin. Therefore, a good discernment requires that one pay a serious attention the aspect of the imagination. Jesus could discern the logic of the devil and he could win over it. It is absolutely necessary not to be carried away by the logic and the reason that the evil spirit presents to us at the time of making a discernment.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*42.

¹¹⁹ Timothy Gallagher, *The Discernment of Spirits: An Ignatian Guide for Everyday Living*, (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2005), 35.

3.2.2. *Gethsemane*

The devil attempted to play on the human nature of Jesus so as to make him fall in sin. Jesus was truly human and the gospels clearly presented this in several instances. The most striking one was the Gethsemane experience, which undoubtedly reveals the human side of Jesus filled with agony and uncertainty. Three times Jesus prays: “Father, if it is possible let this cup pass me by. Nevertheless, let it be as you, not I, would have it.” (Lk 22:42) We see Jesus very close to our own human nature. When filled with agony and doubt, Jesus discerned the will of the Father and surrendered himself completely saying “Let your will be done”. This kind of faith and surrender are very important when we find ourselves in uncertainty. It is not always clear to us what God wants us to do in our life. There are certainly moments obscure and uncertain. Discernment, without faith that God involves himself in my life journey, cannot search for the will of God. At times it is absolutely necessary to say to God, “Let Thy will be done”. Looking at the experience of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, it can be said that Jesus truly discerned. “Jesus’ discernment was unerring because he was totally open to the Spirit. The Holy Spirit could guide him accordingly to the Father’s will, even when this will was obscure and unclear to Jesus’ human understanding, because he was a man without sin, without disordered attachments.”¹²⁰

3.2.3. *Disciples*

The gospels present to us that at times, the disciples, who were with Jesus, were blocked by self-love. They were not open to the public life of Jesus. In the case of sons of Zebedee, they sought the places of honour in the kingdom of heaven (Mk 10:35-40); or wealth, as in the case of the rich young man (Mt 19:16-22); or by timidity, as when Peter denied that he knew his Lord in the courtyard of the high priest’s house (Lk 22:54-62). In short, the disciples failed in openness.¹²¹ Because of these attachments, though they discerned, they went wrong. Their lack of openness to the Spirit led them fail in their perception as well as in their discernment.

A man, who is liberated from the disordered attachments, can make a good discernment. St. Ignatius in the Spiritual Exercises says that the aim of prayer is “to overcome oneself and to order one’s life, without reaching a decision through some disordered affection” (*SpEx* 21 [p.31]). In other words, he says that to make good

¹²⁰ Thomas H. Green, (1990), 47.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, 46.

decisions, we have to be free from personal preferences. Only in freedom, one can make a good decision. St. Ignatius calls us for the attitude of *indifference* which is another word for *freedom*. Decisions, not made in such freedom, are fallible and erroneous.

This can be applied to the life of Peter and Judas. In John 6:66-71, when most of his Jesus' hearers and even his disciples have left him because they found his teaching on the bread of life too hard to take, Peter answers for the Twelve when Jesus asks if they too will go away. His reply is: "Lord, who shall we go to? You have the words of eternal life." In effect, Peter chooses not Jesus' doctrine but Jesus himself. Tragically Judas never seems to have found in the person of Jesus what Peter found. Because he did not, Jesus' teaching never seems to have found place in his heart.¹²²

3.2.4. Peter

One of the striking examples of the discernment of Jesus was narrated by both Matthew (16:13-23) as well as Mark (8:27-33). These passages shed light on the way people perceived Jesus during his time. Some said that he was John the Baptist, Elijah, and Jeremiah or one of the prophets. However, the most important part of the passage is Peter's identification of the Jesus as Christ. Jesus asks his disciples, "Who do you say I am?" Peter answers by proclaiming Jesus to be the longed-for-Messiah of Israel: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." The response of Peter is a great profession of faith. Peter is able to make this affirmation about Jesus' identity because God has enabled him to recognize Jesus as "the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus praises Peter saying, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven..." (Mt: 16:17-19).

Yet in the very next passage of the Gospel, Peter wavers and Jesus calls him "Satan". Why? Because Jesus had gone on to reveal that he was to be a suffering messiah, put to death for the salvation of his people. And Peter was not prepared for this. Peter loved Jesus and firmly believed him to be the Christ, but a Christ conformed to his own ideas, expectations and attachments. How strange – and confusing – it must

¹²² *Ibid*, 49.

have seemed to Peter to be praised and blamed virtually in the same breath: praised because he was led by the Spirit of God, and blamed because he was misled by Satan.¹²³

But later on we can see Peter growing in the art of discernment as he was taken possession of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. In Acts 8:20-23 Peter correctly discerned the motives of Simon the Sorcerer. In the case of Cornelius, though it was contrary to his past traditions, he was able to recognize God at work. Peter says, “Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him (Acts 10:34). The figure of Peter corresponds very closely to every human nature. He truly loved Jesus at the same time, he was carried away by his impetuosity and fear. He even went the extent of denying Jesus. The same Peter could rise up again and be a witness to the Gospel. What is important to notice here in the case of Peter is the aspect of vulnerability. Kevin O’Brien says, “In our Vulnerability, we are likely to cry out for help to God or to other people. However, when we are complacent or too proud, we can become slack in our vigilance and easily forget our need for help, which is just what the evil spirit wants.

Without a healthy humility, we may ignore our weaknesses and sin and open the door to desolation”.¹²⁴ An attitude of humility and complete surrender are very important in knowing the will of God. St. Ignatius says that the enemy is weak, and grace always prevails, if we let it. With the gift of self-awareness, we can fortify our all-too-human weaknesses. The temptations, doubts, and fears may come, but they will not be able to take hold if grace leaves them no room.¹²⁵

3.2.5. *Martha and Mary*

Another example of the discernment in making the right choices can be found in the story of Martha and Mary. When Jesus came to visit, Martha was busy preparing food for Jesus, while Mary chose to sit with Jesus and to listen to him. Jesus tells Martha, “You are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her” (Lk 10: 41-42). “The one thing needed is to deepen one’s relationship with Jesus – God incarnate. Ignatius put it a little differently. He said that the one thing is “praise, reverence and service of God.”¹²⁶

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹²⁴ Kevin O’Brien, (2011), 195.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* 195.

¹²⁶ Michael Sparough, J. Manny and T.Hipskind, (2010),45.

When we realize that our vocation is to choose and do the will of God, we will naturally incline ourselves to the person of Christ. Christ's call to us that we become "wise as serpents and harmless as doves" implies that we must develop discernment. We must be able to detect the motivation and the spirits that operate in us.

3.2.6. Beatitudes

The teaching of Jesus on beatitudes has a significant meaning in the context of discernment. When Jesus declares "Blessed the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Mt 5:8), he is referring to those who with all their being seek to remain free of every form of the defilement of sin. God places a lot of emphasis on being clean in heart. To maintain this purity of heart, one needs to have constant vigilance, a determined discipline and a clear vision of what lies before us. Therefore, a constant self-examination is a tool to grow in this virtue. The fruit of this exercise is the blessing of spiritual discernment.

3.2.7. St. Paul

St. Paul speaks of two different spirits: Holy Spirit and the evil spirit. He also enumerates the gifts of each spirit. Each spirit manifests itself in different ways in different people. He exhorts the believers to be open to the fruits of the Holy Spirits while being vigilant against the instigations of the evil spirit. The interesting fact to note here is the operations and the outcome of the Holy Spirit and evil spirit. He speaks of evil spirit tempting while the Holy Spirit inspiring. The gifts of the Holy Spirits include wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, prophecy, discerning spirits, speaking in tongues etc. This list is found in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. From this, we understand that discernment is a gift from God through which we are enabled to do what He has called us to do. Again in 1 Corinthians 2:10, St. Paul says, "God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God." The revelation of God changes the course of person's life. For instance, let us suppose that if only those people, who had killed Jesus, were to have the clear vision of who Jesus was, they would not have done it. They could not perceive the person of Jesus. Such type of discernment cannot be done by physical means. It is beyond the human comprehension, which has to be revealed to us by God himself as it happened in the case of Peter. The prerequisite for such kind of transformation is the realization that discernment

presupposes that a person has to be truly open to be taught by and led by the Lord. We have to be truly open to ‘do God’s work’.¹²⁷

St. Paul says that while making discernment we have to be on our guard to distinguish clearly between angel and Satan. In 2 Corinthians 11:14, he says, “And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.” We cannot expect Satan to appear to us as bad as he is. He never shows himself openly to be a spirit of wickedness. He enters subtly and block our vision of the will of God. Unless we open ourselves to the angel of light, we are sure to fall in the trap of the Satan. Failing to realize this, Adam and Eve had to pay the price for their sin. Satan presented himself to Eve as a wise person and finally led her to disobey the command of the Lord. As human beings we are to live in a real world. Therefore, in a world that is dominated by digital revolution and surrounded by technological noise, it is not so easy to pull ourselves to the atmosphere of tranquillity to listen to the voice of the Lord. In such a situation, discernment does play a vital role to creating in us awareness of the presence of the Lord. Doing a right discernment in a real world is a challenge. Fr. James Martin S.J., says,

“Discernment has a practical end. It is not simply a way to try to find God’s will, nor is it a way just to move closer to God in prayer. Discernment helps to decide what is the best way to act. It isn’t simply about relationship with God alone; it is about living out your faith in the real world.”¹²⁸

The cry of St. Paul in Romans 7:15, “I do not understand my own action. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate” stands as a silent witness for the reality of human nature. He expresses the conflict that he maintains within himself. He gives us a warning against the satanic deceptions that enter in our day today life. It is important to note that St. Paul does not negate the presence of the flesh in his life neither can we do. Although we believe in Christ, we still have the propensity to sin. It is a reality of our life and we are called to live a faith-accountable life. The tension that we live between the flesh and the spirit will certainly make us grow in maturity. The faith that the Spirit of the Lord dwells in us keeps us going forward to deepen our union with the Lord and discernment as an important tool will keep us in right relationship with God.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* 63.

¹²⁸ James Martin, *The Jesuit Guide to Almost Everything*, (New York: Harperone, 2010), 309.

3.2.8 Conclusion

Thomas H. Green says, “We go to the scripture, not primarily for wise ethical instruction, valuable as this may be, but to encounter God in the person of Jesus Christ”¹²⁹ We have seen Jesus as a person, who discerned unerringly and infallibility. He was able to be the master of discernment because he was guided by the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the model for authentic discernment. The various instances in the gospels show Jesus blaming the apostles more for not having the faith in Him. The struggles in the process of the discernment are very much seen the personalities in the scripture. “This is seen the inspired writers of the Scriptures. They communicated God’s word in a style and a manner that flowed from their own depths in accord with their own personal uniqueness. Discernment of spirits is a cooperative venture of God and man working as one.”¹³⁰

The personal experience of God is so important for every Christian to translate that experience into daily living by making right choices by means of discernment. “We discern Jesus not merely in prayer but in the concrete situations of our life as a Christian community.”¹³¹ In this chapter, we tried to understand the evolution of discernment from an idea of premature to an authentic discernment from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Scripture is an important source to know what kind of people we are and how can discern Jesus and his Father’s will in our lives today.

3.3. In the life of St. Ignatius

3.3.1. Experience of Ignatius of Loyola

There were many men and women in the history, who have explored various ways and means to come in contact with the Lord. Among them, St. Ignatius of Loyola, learning from his own experience, explained that there were always two contrasting movements in one’s heart. Discernment is one of the greatest gifts that St. Ignatius gave to the Society of Jesus as its founder. The charism of the founder is the lifeblood of any religious congregation so is the spirituality of St. Ignatius to the Society of Jesus. Ignatius experienced God in a unique and provident way and he could recognize the presence of God in his life using this art of Discernment. Gradually I realized that the

¹²⁹ Thomas H. Green, (1990), 49.

¹³⁰ David, L. Fleming, *Notes on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, (St. Louis: Review for Religious 1981), 228.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*52.

life of St. Ignatius is very close to any human being, who experiences the tension between good and evil. Every human person goes through complex interior movements, which include thoughts, emotions, feelings, repulsions, desires, and attractions. In the process of discernment, we become sensitive to these movements. Upon reflecting on them, we understand their origin and finality

In his Autobiography, Ignatius shares the struggles, pain, energy, desolation and consolation that result from his relating personally to God.

Ignatius' spiritual journey is a vibrant one. In his autobiography, Ignatius focuses both on his life circumstances and on his interior experiences. However, his deeper purpose is to describe his experience of God. He shares various facts about the unfolding of his life, yet the richness and beauty of his story lies in the description of his interior movements. Ignatius's autobiography is primarily the story of his inner journey.¹³²

From his own personal experience, Ignatius noticed that the person is led by the Holy Spirit and sometimes, the person is led by the evil spirit. He also clearly provided certain aids to know these movements that go within one's heart and to respond to them in a more effective way. He outlines all these tools and rules in his famous Spiritual Exercises.

3.3.2. *Conversion*

It is good to begin with the convalescent experience of Ignatius because it is the best introduction to the discernment of Spirits. It is during his conversion experience originate the key elements of the Spiritual Exercises and the Rules for discernment. Ignatius was born as the last of many children of Don Beltrán Ibáñez de Oñaz y Loyola and Doña Marina Sáenz de Licona y Balda in 1491 at the castle of Loyola in Spain.¹³³ After receiving the chivalric and academic education, at the age of thirteen, he was sent by his father to the household of the chief treasurer of King Ferdinand of Aragon. He remained there for a number of years. Later he entered the military service under Duke of Najera and Viceroy of Navarre. In 1521, when French troops entered Spain and advanced on Pamplona, Ignatius was there to defend it.¹³⁴ He was hit by a cannon ball in the battle. Therefore he was carried to his native place Loyola, where he was given medical treatment.

¹³² Maureen Conroy, (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1993), 3.

¹³³ Tellechea Idigoras, *Alone and on Foot – Ignatius of Loyola* (Dublin: Veritas, 2008), 16.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.* 28.

While convalescing at Loyola, he wanted to read the tales of chivalry to pass the time. However the only books available in the house are *The Life of Christ* and *The Lives of Saints*, which were brought by his sister-in-law from her house to Loyola.¹³⁵ Since there was no choice, he turned to these books rather reluctantly. These two books made a great impact on his imagination as well his on his emotions, which later led him to reflect on his own past life to reorient himself to the future course of action., i.e., imitation of saints in following Christ. It was here the conversion of Ignatius began.

3.3.3. *Beginning to discern*

As Ignatius was reading these books, he began to get immersed into his thinking and feelings. Gradually he was becoming aware of the different movements that were going on in him. The below account beautifully narrates the process of his thinking:

As he read them over many times, he became rather fond of what he found written there. Putting his reading aside, he sometimes stopped to *think* about the things he had read and at other times about the things of the world that he used to *think* about before. Of the many vain things that presented themselves to him, one took such a hold on his heart that he was absorbed in *thinking* about it for two or three or four hours without realizing it: he imagined what he would do in the service of a certain lady, the means he would take so he could go to the country where she lived, the verses, the words he would say to her, the deeds of arms he would do in her service. He became so conceited with this that he did not consider how impossible it would be because the lady was not of the lower nobility nor a countess nor a duchess,¹³⁶ but her station was higher than any of these.¹³⁶

Two things can be noticed very evidently in the above account. The first thing is the worldly attraction, which is experienced in his imagination, thoughts and of course at the level of his affectivity. The second thing is “born of the sacred reading that also occupies Ignatius’s thoughts, alternates with the worldly project. Now Ignatius begins to consider imitating, with great energy, the holy life of the saints.”¹³⁷ He noticed that there was shift in his moods. He used to imagine and get lost in a fantasy to imitate the lives of the saints dedicating himself to a serious life of prayer and penance. Then again he would fall back to his daydreams of being a great soldier and winning the heart of the lady, whom he wanted to marry. There was always back and forth in his imagination and thoughts.

He did not notice, this, however; nor did he stop to ponder the distinction until the time when his eyes were opened a little and he began to marvel at the difference and to reflect upon it, realizing from experience that some thoughts left him sad and others

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* 31.

¹³⁶ Timothy Gallagher, (2005), 12.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.* 12.

joyful. Little by little he came to recognize the difference between the spirits and were stirring, one from the devil, the other from God.¹³⁸

He was aware that his emotions were unsettled and disturbing. Some days he would feel happy and other days he was restless and sad. “All of his day dreams pleased him while he was dreaming, but the emotional aftermath differed. He was calm and peaceful after he dreamed of following Christ.”¹³⁹ His interest and concern slowly shifted from winning the military glory to giving glory to God by a life of prayer and penance.

The Spanish word for understand, *sentir*, means to know by the senses, by feeling. It means a felt-knowledge, that is, an affective, intuitive knowledge possessed through the reaction of human feelings to exterior and interior experience. Ignatius had an affective reaction in pondering the things of God and the world (delighted, consoled, dry, dissatisfied, cheerful, satisfied), and he began to wonder and reflect on the difference.¹⁴⁰

This insight was the beginning of Ignatius’s conversion, which had eventually led him to be a great master of discernment. The initial experience of Ignatius in identifying the movements of hearts renders a great spiritual value. In fact this identification of the movements of the spirits is so useful and practical to begin the process of discernment.

3.3.4. At Manresa

After having discovered what was happening in his heart and the clear noticing of the movements of the spirits, Ignatius at the age of thirty, decided to undertake a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. On the way, he had to stop at Manresa for about eleven months where he says that his spirit was purified and had a number of mystical experiences. He spent a major part of his stay in prayer and asceticism. He went about begging for his livelihood. He says that God has dealt with him like a school master and taught him the basics of his spiritual life. As the days went on, Ignatius experienced the unconditional love of God and at the same time, learned the art of discerning the movements of the spirits. The ultimate result of his prayer and penance in Manresa was the fruit of the Spiritual Exercises.

¹³⁸ Ignatius of Loyola, *A Pilgrim’s Testament*, trans Paramanada R. Divakar (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995) 9-10.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* 13.

¹⁴⁰ Maureen Conroy, R.S.M, *The Discerning Heart – Discovering a Personal God*, (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1993), 10.

3.4. Spiritual Exercises

Spiritual Exercises is a compilation of prayers, meditations and contemplative practices. “The Exercises were designed to enable one to make that choice with objectivity and freedom of spirit and under the most immediate inspiration of God.”¹⁴¹ Spiritual Exercises help people deepen their relationship with God. Ignatius wrote that the purpose of the Exercises is to help the person to conquer himself and regulate his life in such a way that he always makes his decision in the light of God and not under the influence of any inordinate attachment.¹⁴² “These Exercises are ways of meeting God and of discerning in our experience what is of God and what is not of God.”¹⁴³

3.4.1 Rules for the Discernment of Spirits

In his *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius provides some rules for discernment. “Ignatius composed these rules for those who guide others in the Spiritual Exercises, a time of prayer and of seeking the will of God. He presumes that these guides will know the rules well and will explain them to the retreatant in accordance with the retreatant’s spiritual needs (*SE*, 8)”¹⁴⁴

The rules help us in four ways. They help us become aware of our inner life. They help us understand what the movements of our inner life mean, where they come from, and where they leading us. They help us judge the right course of action by indicating which alternative leads us closer to God. They help us know how to act in times of consolation and desolation.¹⁴⁵

It has been the experience of number of people, who have gone through the Spiritual Exercises that these rules have truly been very helpful in knowing and deepening their spiritual experience. These rules have become a locus and a principal aid to anyone who makes discernment. These help the retreatant in finding out the movements of the spirits in order that they grow in their commitment to Jesus Christ. There are always two persons in this process; the person making the retreat and the person guiding the retreat and God is present to both of them. In the discerning process, “The director helps the retreatant to discern the mysteries of the interior life in a practical way that is meant to lead to practical decisions and practical service of

¹⁴¹ John O’Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 38.

¹⁴² Michael Ivens, *Understanding The Spiritual Exercises* (Leominster, United Kingdom: Gracewing, 2016), 22.

¹⁴³ William Barry, *Finding God in All Things* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1991), 14.

¹⁴⁴ Timothy Gallagher, (2005), 5.

¹⁴⁵ Michael Sparough, Jim Manney, and Tim Hipskind, (2010),69.

Christ.”¹⁴⁶ Based on the rules the director interprets the experience of the retreatant in the light of the Christ.

“In his *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius proposed two set of rules for discernment”¹⁴⁷. The first set of rules are found in *Spiritual Exercises* (313-327). These rules deal with desolation and they serve as a kind of help to the directors to accompany the people going through the dark and dry moments in prayer and with these rules they can also understand the nature and meaning of emotions. The second set of rules is a help to those people, who are firmly established in spiritual life. Their focus is on spiritual consolation. Through these rules they will be able to discern the presence of God in the movements of consolation.

3.4.2. Desolation

The Spiritual desolation, properly seen can lead the person to be firm and faithful to the Lord. Though it is a bit painful, it can serve as a means to advance in the spiritual life. Gallagher says, “Persons in spiritual desolation, who consider this truth while they are enduring the desolation, find themselves crossing a spiritual threshold.”¹⁴⁸ In the first week of the *Spiritual Exercises*, with the help of these rules, the person is called to conversion of the heart from a worldly life to a life in God. Desolation, as the work of the evil spirit can make the person feel as if he were abandoned by the Lord. It can make him hopeless and despair in his faith journey. “For this reason, St. Ignatius’ first rules dealing with desolation is both surprising and crucial. He tells us: In time of desolation we should never make any change but remain firm and constant in the resolution which guided us the day before the desolation, or in the decision to which we adhered in the preceding consolation (Sx318).”¹⁴⁹

This rule is so important that the person should always remember in the advancement of his spiritual life. It always happens in the lives of the people that they tend to make bad decisions because they fail to interpret the desolations rightly in the light of the Lord. The devil plays on the piety and the faith of the people. Evil spirit is usually smarter than we are. Therefore, right interpretation of the desolation is a key to see the hand of God in knowing the will of God.

¹⁴⁶ David L. Fleming, (1981).23.

¹⁴⁷ Timothy Gallagher, (2005), 5.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*95.

¹⁴⁹Thomas Green, (1990), 108.

Spiritual desolation is an experience of the soul in heavy darkness or turmoil. We are assaulted by all sorts of doubts. We feel bombarded by temptations and mired in self-preoccupations. We are excessively restless and anxious and feel cut off from others. Such feelings, in Ignatius's words, "move one toward lack of faith and leave one without hope and without love. One is completely listless, tepid, and unhappy, and feels separated from our Creator and Lord (*SE* 317).¹⁵⁰

People in desolation try to engage in other activities and deviate from the prayer life because it is a way to run away from pain and suffering rather than to deal with it. The root cause of desolation is temptation. St. Ignatius says that God is always there even when one does not feel divine presence. "A person who is undergoing spiritual desolation says Ignatius, is to *work* to be in *patience*."¹⁵¹ He suggests that it is important to identify the root cause of the desolation. Sometimes, it happens that desolation seems to come from nowhere and it seems to be beyond our comprehension. "Most of the times, it is noticed that people have done something to bring it on. Negligence in some important responsibilities and duties and falling prey to selfish desires and temptations are some of the reasons that bring desolation. It is important to remember that God never causes desolation, but God might be allowing the desolation as a test and trial so that we can grow in virtue and learn to love God and others in bad times as well as good".¹⁵² Desolation can bring good to the people and help them closer to the Lord. It is an opportunity not to be missed. Because it can also be a test from God to show how vulnerable and limited we are. During the times of desolation, one should faithfully remain firm in the virtues like patience, trust, increased prayers, and more importantly should do service to others in order to reap the fruits out of desolation.

3.4.3. Consolation

Consolation is exactly the opposite of desolation. When the person grows in a deeper level of commitment with the Lord, he receives strength, consolations, tears, inspirations and peace. Since evil is spirit can trick the people, sometimes, it can appear to be the voice of God in order to tempt and make the people suit to his purposes. In the first rule of the second week, St. Ignatius says, "It is characteristic of God and his angels, when they act upon the soul, to give true happiness and spiritual joy, and to banish all the sadness and disturbances, which are caused by the enemy. It is characteristic of the evil one to fight against such happiness and consolation by proposing fallacious reasoning, subtleties and continual deceptions "(*Sp.Ex.* 329)

¹⁵⁰ Kevin O'Brien, (2011), 117.

¹⁵¹ Timothy Gallagher, (2005), 106.

¹⁵² Michael Sparough, Jim Manney, and Tim Hipskind, (2010), 78.

Thomas H. Green says, “When we turn to consolation, however, deceit is possible; and so we must distinguish between true and false consolation, between that which is really from God and that which only appears to be from him.”¹⁵³ Therefore, one should keep himself awake to read the signs and the sources of consolation. According St. Ignatius there is only one consolation, which cannot be caused by devil i.e., consolation without any previous cause. It is God alone, who gives consolation to the soul without any previous cause. It is a gift of joy, peace, hope, charity, love and an increase in faith. “Thus, consolation without any sensible cause is a sure and precious experience of God and can be a valuable guide to discern his will; it is not the normal experience of human beings.”¹⁵⁴ As the devil can trick the people in disguise, they should be very careful to scrutinize their experience.

Anyone with minimum experience of genuine discernment will be able to see through the things knowing that devil can never produce a lasting joy of consolation. “Ignatius says that we must examine the beginning, middle and end of our consolations; if all three are wholly good, it is a sign they are from the good angel.”¹⁵⁵ Ignatius understood that spiritual life is an on-going alteration and a journey through the spiritual consolation and spiritual desolation.

The time of spiritual consolation is also a time of preparation to face the turbulence of spiritual desolation in the future. One should prepare himself adequately to meet the moments of spiritual desolation in future. “St. Ignatius not only accepts the gift of great spiritual consolation but also, in time of consolation, thinks about his former experience as a preparation toward future times when spiritual consolation will be withdrawn.”¹⁵⁶ For that, Ignatius says one should develop an attitude of humility. “Ignatius writes: ‘Let one who is consoled seek to humble himself and lower himself as much as he can, thinking of how little he is capable in the time of desolation without such grace or consolation.’”¹⁵⁷ Humility is a way to strengthen one’s relationship with the Lord. God always blesses the humble hearts. Humility safeguards and confirms the gift of spiritual consolation

¹⁵³ Thomas H.Green, (1990), 128.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 133.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 137.

¹⁵⁶ Gallagher, (2005), 132.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 140.

3.5. Discernment in Everyday Life

At some point or the other, each one of us is caught up in a situation, where we find ourselves incapable of proceeding further in decision-making. Day by day, we learn to grow in the awareness of the need to discern the will of God. St. Ignatius perceptively noted that Jesus invites everyone to discern the will of God in everyday life. St. Ignatius posed the following questions, which are like indicators of our discernment: “What have I done for Christ?” “What do I do for Christ?” and “What will I do for Christ?”¹⁵⁸ When making everyday decisions, our fundamental attitude should be to keep Jesus always at the center of everything. One of the important things to realize in our everyday discernment process is the faith that God cares about our decisions.

3.5.1. Freedom and the will of God

We are endowed with freedom but our freedom comes from God. Sparough says, “Our freedom has a purpose, and decision making is essentially a matter of discovering this purpose and aligning ourselves with it.”¹⁵⁹ This process of discovering the purpose takes account of our own conscious realization of our Lord’s presence in our life. Freedom is a blessing as well as a challenge to make use of it in a proper orientation. Because we, as the human beings because of our imperfections, are vulnerable even to reject the good. Therefore, bad choices cause most of the misery and suffering in the world. “We can choose evil as well as good. We can be selfish or generous, cruel or kind, vengeful or forgiving. We can pursue personal glory or we can work for the good of other people.”¹⁶⁰ This is the reality of life that we encounter every day.

However once we realize that God created us for a purpose of being in relationship with him and manifesting him in our life, we begin to make choices differently in line with the Holy Spirit, who guides us. This is a kind of realization of God’s love. “The world God created is good. All things in this world exist so that we can love better. Our decisions are choices about how we use the things in this world. Our decisions matter to God.”¹⁶¹ It is very natural to be caught up in fix and a state of confusion, when are met with two or three attractive decisions. It becomes very easy if we are to choose between good and evil. But it is not so easy to choose when there is no

¹⁵⁸ Ivens, (2008), 53.

¹⁵⁹ J.Michael Sparough, Jim Manney, and Tim Hipskind, (2010), 3.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*24.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*4.

clear right or wrong. In such kind of situations, we tend to ask ‘what is God’s will?’ ‘Where can we find God’s will?’ The answer is very simple.

“God’s desire for us manifests to a large degree in our own desires and struggles. God’s will is something we can know, but we can’t be sure that we know it perfectly. We are sinners with flawed minds and wayward hearts and an impressive capacity for self-delusion.”¹⁶²

We have the capacity of knowing and doing God’s will. We need to become aware of the desires and attractions that lead us away from the right path. Once this awareness dawns on us, by seeking the grace of God, we can get rid of the inordinate attachments and desires, which hold us back from knowing and doing the will of God.

3.5.2. Preparation

First and foremost, a person should have a strong desire to do God’s will. Discernment presupposes a committed faith in the Lord. It is not possible to speak of discernment in the life of a person for whom God is unimportant. For a good discernment, St. Ignatius says that one needs to have a good preparation for which he proposes various spiritual activities like Holy Eucharist, Spiritual Exercises, Silence, Scripture, and Spiritual Direction etc. All these are means, which help us to seek and find the divine will in the process of discernment. “The preparation for discernment is crucial. Without it, no true process of discernment is possible. By means of it, many problems in discernment are resolved. For these reasons, Ignatius dedicates a substantial part of the Spiritual Exercises to this preparation – a model for any process of discernment.”¹⁶³

Of all the above-mentioned means, prayer is the most important means to a good discernment through which we communicate to God our fears, our insecurities and our entire dilemma etc., and seek the grace to understand everything in the light of God. St. Ignatius says that in the process of the preparation, we have to dynamically move towards indifference. Indifference is understood to be “I am indifferent to anything but God’s will.” It is a state of openness to the Holy Spirit. It is not so easy to arrive to this state of indifference and openness, especially when we have vested interests in the choice that we are going to make. The heart is well prepared for good discernment in prayer as prayer is a way to stay in the presence of the Lord. “The God who is active in prayer is also active throughout the day. A further aid to discernment is the *examen*

¹⁶² *Ibid.* 6.

¹⁶³ Gallagher, (2005), 64.

prayer (*SE,43*), through which the one discerning attends to God's workings beyond the formal time of prayer, in the course of the day. Ignatius's great esteem for this daily prayer is as a means of discernment is widely recognized."¹⁶⁴ Through the examen prayer, the person can discover his movements of the spirits and his emotions and assess whether he is moving towards God or going away from him. This is a great prayer to

3.5.3. Role of the Spiritual Director

God often speaks through the wisdom of others. In the prayer and examen, we discover many things, which may appear to be obscure and our lived experience is not sufficient to understand them. Therefore, we have to depend upon someone else, who has more lived experience than we have. Talking to a person, who has more experience than us, will make us more practical and bring us a lot of clarity in decision making. It is natural that we tend to overlook many things because of our own limited experience. As Eli, who interpreted to Samuel, the voice of the Lord so will be the role of the spiritual directors in our life. The Spiritual director will help us see the light of the Lord in the process of arriving at the decision. He analyses our spiritual experience through various instruments and based on his experience and expertise. In other words, the spiritual director is a co-discerner, who assists me. Gallagher highlights the role of the spiritual directors in his book – *The Discernment of the Spirits*, "The role of the director is not to make the directee perpetually dependent on himself or herself, but to bring directee to that personal experience of the Lord which will enable one to make personal discerning judgements about the will of God in his or her life."¹⁶⁵

It is often said the spiritual director is person mirror-reflecting back my life. I have found a great value in the spiritual direction. It has always been my experience that after meeting my spiritual director, I have always seen the things differently than before. I come to more awareness and consciousness of my interior life and my relationship with God. Spiritual director does not make choice for me rather he only plays the role of the interpreter. The choice is always mine as it is between the Lord and me. He helps me to see what is of God and what is not of God. One needs to understand that discernment is never a solitary activity. It is always in collaboration as its goal is growth in relationship with God, with others and the creation. Gallagher says, "Growth takes

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*63.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*63

time, and growth in discernment is no exception to this universal law. Progress in the ability to live the spiritually discerned life occurs through continuing prayer, effort, conversation with a spiritual guide, and all the means that Ignatius outlines in his rules.”¹⁶⁶

3.5.4. Emotions

One of the important factors that play a vital role in our decision making is our emotions. To a large extent our decisions and our relationship with God depend upon what we think and what we feel. Paying attention to the emotions that are born in us will help to us to understand ourselves better. The question always remains; “Can we trust our emotions?” Emotions interpreted make us mature in our decisions. We should not simply go by our impulses and gut. Analysis is part of decision making. We should listen and reflect on our experience and develop sensitivity to subtle spiritual signals. As William A. Barry S.J., says,

“God is always communicating to us who God is, is trying to draw us into an awareness, a consciousness of the reality of who we are in God’s sight. Whether we are aware of it or not, at every moment of our existence we are encountering God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who is trying to catch our attention, trying to draw us into a reciprocal conscious relationship.”¹⁶⁷

The recognition of the presence of the Lord in in every moment of our life is so important not to err in our everyday decisions. St. Ignatius was of the opinion that the person should never attempt to make a decision, when he is pressured by thoughts and feelings. The person should wait until he achieves a level of comfort in his heart before making any decision. There is never a time, when God is not present in our hearts.

Our everyday life is filled with a lot events and thoughts, which trigger emotions. Reflecting on these feelings is very important for discernment. I ask myself, how did I react to that incident or that idea etc.? One needs to pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in these reflections. There is nothing so small that is insignificant. There are always positive and negative emotions. We need to look at joy and the happiness, the laughter and the love, the sorrow and the anger, the jealousy and the sadness.¹⁶⁸ In complete honesty with God as far as possible, I need to name my feelings and tell it God. It is advisable to choose one of the emotions of the day, which is very strong and

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 187.

¹⁶⁷ William Barry, *Finding God in all things*, (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1991) 15.

¹⁶⁸ Michael Sparrough, Jim Manney, and Tim Hipskind ,(2010), 65.

pray for it. It is a way of prayer, which will make us improve the quality of our life looking forward to tomorrow with hope and new outlook.

3.5.5. Spiritual Movements

Most of the time, when we have to make an important choice, we are confronted with conflicts. We notice different movements within us. Sometimes, we feel attractive and sure about what we are about to decide and at the same time, immediately from nowhere doubts arise in our hearts and feel diffident about the same. “Ignatius thought that this movement back-and-forth between consolation and desolation was the usual condition in the heart of a person trying to make a significant decision”.¹⁶⁹ As a master of discernment, Ignatius offers an important rule in his Spiritual Exercises saying, “In time of desolation never make a change, but be firm and constant in the proposals and determination in which one was the day preceding such desolation...”¹⁷⁰

In our struggle to make choice, the good spirit and evil spirit are operative and active. This is normal in anyone’s case. In fact, Ignatius told spiritual directors to worry only when *nothing* seemed to be going on in the heart of someone facing an important decision.¹⁷¹ One needs to be patient with all these movements going on in his heart and present everything to the Lord for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in identifying the will of God. Primarily, one has to pray for the knowledge of God’s will. This prayer has to be done in an atmosphere of freedom expressing a firm and a clear desire to do only what God wants of me. It is clarity of purpose.

3.5.6. Examen

The *examen* prayer is a very good tool to recall the waves of feelings that occurred in our soul during this process. After becoming aware of these spiritual consolation and desolation, one needs to discern the source and direction of his feelings. Where have they come from and where are they leading me to? The end of spiritual consolation is always a feeling of coming home where as the end of the spiritual desolation is a feeling that that we have lost our home away.¹⁷² The rules for the discernment are very helpful to identify the spirits involved in these feelings. When one experiences more spiritual consolation, it is a sign that his decision is in harmony with God’s will. If one is filled

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*115.

¹⁷⁰ Gallagher, (2005), 135.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*115.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*119.

with desolation, it means that the course of action is not in accordance with the will of God. As a result of the consolation that I feel I may find that I am completely open to the Holy Spirit. I find it easy to offer all my desires and all my freedom to the Lord so that he can make use of me and all I possess in whatsoever way is in accord with his most holy will.¹⁷³ It is always advisable that one seeks the help of a spiritual director or a trusted friend in front of whom, the person can weigh the pros and cons. Describing the decision and process to someone will always help the person to see it clearly and understand it better. Once the decision is made, the person has to seek the confirmation of it presenting it to the Lord. Confirmation is so important that it will not raise any doubts and anxieties in future. Asking for a sense of confirmation from Christ will make us confident and courageous in the course of action.

3.5.7. Signs of a Good Decision

Very often, after having made the decision, there may be an element of uncertainty remaining in us. It seems to be natural to anybody in most of the situations. Human beings are never flawless. There are always moments of clouds and restlessness even after confirming the decision. However, it is possible to arrive at a stage and a feeling that the person has made a right decision. “Four factors in particular are signs of good decisions. They have to do with movement, freedom, the engagement of the whole person, and deeper knowledge of the self.”¹⁷⁴

In decision-making, people do most of the work to be free. It is a struggle. After the decision, we may look outwardly to be free but inwardly, we may still experience fear and anxiety. St. Ignatius names them as inordinate attachments. Sparough says that the person in the state of his fear to move ahead in his struggle for freedom should consider the following steps. Primarily in complete honesty, the person has to admit himself to God that attachments to ideas and values are preventing him from being truly free. It is advisable that the person recognizes that he is not ready to make a decision until his fears are dealt with. Secondly, he suggests that the person acts as if he were free which means that he makes a sincere effort to consider his alternatives freely, as if he were not attached to one or the other. Finally, one has to ask God for the gift of freedom. If the person feels that he is strongly attracted to one alternative, he has to pray

¹⁷³ James L. Conner, *The Dynamism of Desire*, Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J., on *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola* (Saint Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2006), 350.

¹⁷⁴ Michael Sparough, Jim Manney, and Tim Hipkind, (2010), 143.

to be ready to accept the other.¹⁷⁵ Freedom is a gift of God and we have to approach it with humility. A good decision is always balanced involving the whole person. Once the person confirms that he has made a good decision, he feels deeply connected with God as well as the external world.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would say that discernment is one of the greatest tools in journeying ahead in spiritual life that is in accordance with the will of God. Times faced with important decisions teach us a lot about ourselves. They put us in great anxiety and at the same time lead us to greater maturity. Discernment of spirits should not be reserved only for important decisions. It should become a way of life. “Perpetual discernment alone harmonizes all our actions with our growth pattern in Christ, in accord with the will of God. Perpetual discernment is the life of a mature agent contemplative.”¹⁷⁶ A good discernment is always the work of the Spirit and once the Spirit is at work in us, we begin to receive the gifts of the Spirit like love, joy, peace, patient endurance, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness and chastity.

Good decision means saying *yes* wholeheartedly to both the positives and negatives that come with any choice. One should prepare himself to receive anything that comes out with the decision. That’s where St. Ignatius says that our entire focus should be *Greater Glory of God* and everything should lead us to this reality. “Every state of life, every decision, includes some pain that must be accepted if you are to enter fully into those decisions, and into new life. ‘All symphonies remain unfinished,’ said Karl Rahner. There is no perfect decision, perfect outcome, or perfect life. Embracing imperfection helps us relax into reality.”¹⁷⁷ In this state of imperfection, we need to trust that God is with us and He leads us to good decisions. Every decision that we make lead us to deeper sense of ourselves and an easier recognition of the true God. The art of discernment is not acquired in a day. It takes time and it is a painful process. But this discernment of spirits, in choosing the will of God, will eventually set us free. Freedom from captivity is the message proclaimed by the Savior.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 147.

¹⁷⁶ David L. Fleming, 237.

¹⁷⁷ James Martin, *The Jesuit Guide to Almost Everything* (New York: HarperOne, 2010), 338.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to study the Ignatian principle of Indifference, which leads to the election. I have attempted to study their representation and roots in the life experiences of St. Ignatius, Spiritual Exercises and Directories. Ultimately connecting oneself with God in deep faith and is what leads him to an experience of awe and wonder. Reaching to a level of indifference is not easy or clear unless one opens himself to the whisperings of the Spirit. It requires a certain self-mastery and grace to respond to what the Lord is asking us to be.

One of the major challenges of the Church of today is that Christian spirituality seems to exert very little appeal in this 21st century of expanding secularization and digital revolution. Going into an interior life of silence and search is a challenge for many people. They are not sure how they can know God's will for them. It is a difficult task to explain to the people clearly about God's will as the Lord communicates to each one differently. Each one is unique and unrepeatable. God puts into each of us a unique original purpose, which is a very personal vocation. In the Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius says, "...Hence the giver the of the Exercises should not be swayed or show a preference for one side of a choice rather than the other, but remaining in the centre like the pointer of a balance should leave the Creator to deal with the creature, and the being with the Creator and the Lord (Sp.Ex.15). The emphasis of St. Ignatius is to help the retreatant to focus on the factors and attitudes so that he becomes interiorly free to respond to the will of God with greater generosity and love.

One of the ways of growing in an attitude of indifference is that the contemporary focus of spiritual experience should broaden our horizon to ordinary day to day experiences where we can find the presence of God even in small things. In the life of St. Ignatius discernment began when he first became of his interior spiritual experience. Ignatius asks us in the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus to seek the will of God not only in the choice of life, but in all particulars. Thomas Merton speaks of such awareness as an "interior asceticism" through which we review the stirrings of our hearts and their related thoughts: Where are they from? Where are they going? Toward

God? Away from God? Merton describes this attention as a discipline, as asceticism of our thoughts.¹⁷⁸

The focus of St. Ignatius on his interior movements led him to discern the will of God and let go of whatever was impeding him to accomplish it. Only a person in an attitude of affective indifference will be able to a total 'yes' to God's will. This is in fact the heart of Ignatian Spiritual Exercises as the whole purpose of Spiritual Exercises is geared to to help people rid themselves inordinate attachments. Once they become free from these attachments, they will be in a position to seek and find the will of God.

In conclusion, I would say that the following are my learning experiences while writing this paper. My journey through this paper helped me to deepen my understanding of indifference and discernment.

Firstly an attitude of indifference is required not only for the choices of life but also for day to day events and circumstances where God is manifest mysteriously. In a culture of competition and comparison, it is not easy to arrive at the attitude of indifference to know the will of God. However it is not impossible to become indifferent if one is infused with a great desire of loving, serving and following God. Therefore realization of one's purpose of life is fundamental to walk it the path of Christ.

Secondly becoming aware of impediments that come on our way to discern the will of God requires a certain self-awareness and discipline. It is always easy to cheat ourselves and others by way of pretention. However the Lord knows our interior and hearts. The Lord says, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). Therefore in order to enjoy the fullness of life, we have to overcome the impediments that come on our way.

Thirdly at the end of our life, each one of us is called to accountable to God. The extent to which we God will and do it willingly will bear the fruits of eternal judgment. It is not so much of going to heaven or hell, but serving the Lord with whole soul, mind and body. It is about the delight of recognizing the presence of God in day to day life.

I have not explored this theme from the sources of Spiritual Dairy, Letters and Constitutions of the Society of Jesus. It is left unattended. Therefore this theme has got

¹⁷⁸ Gallagher (2018), xxx.

is limitations. I have extensively utilized the secondary sources in English, which therefore calls for a deeper study of primary sources. If I had to continue to investigate more deeply on the theme of 'indifference' perhaps I would like to go deep into the impediments to attain the spirit of indifference. Each person is unique and has a different socio, cultural, political background. The person is either enriched or limited by his surroundings. At a certain level we are all the same, because all of us are created in the image and likeness of God and at other level each individual is different. Therefore there is no same yardstick to measure each one in the same way. Due to my inability and lack of experience, I have left this part of exploration unfinished in this paper.

Another important aspect of the study of indifference would be with those people, who do not believe in God. It is often a common expression among the people of this generation, who proclaim "I am spiritual but I am not religious" and "I don't need God to be good and to lead a moral life". The question is, can we work with such kind of people to help them reach a state of indifference? Definitely I would say that I am more optimistic to help such kind of people to develop an attitude of indifference. At the core of every human person, there is a deeper longing to be united with God. Every man has an innate sense of God and a capacity for transcendence. This sense of transcendence keeps every person in deeper search for God. Touching upon this core aspect, perhaps with a proper methodology and apt sources, we can derive good and positive fruits. The methodology and sources can be developed according to the culture and proper disposition of the person. However the common objective should be to help the person to live life in its abundance.

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