

St. Gaspar Bertoni's Ecclesial Service:

Community, Corporate, Domestic Obedience
&
Apostolic, Missionary, Doctrinal Obedience
[In Obsequium]



[CF 2; 138-151; 158-186]

UNION OF HEARTS & UNITY OF APOSTOLIC SERVICE

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St. Ignatius's Letter on Obedience

[March 1553]

&

The Conclusion to His *Spiritual Exercises*

[*Sentire Cum Ecclesia*]

[SpEx nn. 352-370]

Volume II

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PRESENTATION

SEVENTH PART of *Original Constitutions* of St. GASPAR BERTONI

THE OBSERVANCE OF THESE VOWS [SECTIONS I – IV, ## 90-151]

FOURTH SECTION: THE MANNER OF OBEDIENCE [## 138-151]

Chapter 1: Obedience in General [## 138-141]

Chapter 2: The Degrees of Obedience in Particular [## 142-151]

FOURTH SECTION: ON THE MANNER OF OBEDIENCE

Chapter 1 On Obedience in General

138. All the Rules and prescriptions in this Institute do not oblige under any sin, either mortal, or venial. In like manner, the simple command of the Superior is not considered to include any obligation under sin, unless he should add ‘in virtue of obedience’, or something similar.

139. All will obey even the subordinate Superior, or anyone who may have been placed over their office, and anyone who has received from the superiors the faculty of commanding, as one would obey Christ himself.

140. All will take care that when they indeed do obey, they will also further conform their will and mind itself to the order of the Superior.

141. The obedience that is to be shown in everything that is ordered which does not go against the precepts of God, or the Church, or the rules of this Institute, is to be **integral, prompt, strong and humble** with the perfect abnegation of one’s own will and judgment.

Chapter 2 On the Degrees of Obedience in Particular

142. In the first place, all will take care that in its execution, or in the act of obedience, that this be shown integrally, and not only in a partial manner. This holds true not only in obligatory matters, as this is simply required, but also with a view to the height of perfection in all other proper areas. For that obedience is **perfect**, when it is **universal** and makes no exception, unless in what would displease God. Obedience will be all the

more prompt when it anticipates the expressed precept of the Superior, once his will has come to be understood.

43. Promptness also will especially appear in the act of obedience, so that no one will slowly or hesitatingly accede to carrying out what has been ordained. Rather, the confreres will rival the heavenly spirits on earth, putting aside all delay, leaving behind all their own projects, they will hasten and even **fly to do the will of their Lord**, just as soon as each one comes to know of the wishes of the superior, or perceive a sign from him. Such **perfect obedience** leaves unfinished one's own business.

144. The act of obedience will also be **humble** when no excuse is brought forward before carrying it out. However, should a real impediment arise, or at least a confrere considers that there is one, or that he entertains some probable doubt concerning it, this will be humbly pointed out to the Superior, and the solution will be left up to him.

145. Lastly, the act of obedience is to be **strong**, that is, **constant**, and with due **perseverance**, so that it not be held back in anything, or at any time, no matter how difficult and repugnant to nature it may be.

146. In the second place, then, as to all that pertains to **the exercise of the will** in obeying, it should primarily be **pure**. And the formal intention of obedience is toward the observance of the precept, and toward the fulfillment of the will of the Superior; or, **more exactly, of the will of God, which is manifested in it and through it.**

147. Obedience must also be **voluntary**, so that very **freely** and very **diligently** the confrere will defer, as Jerome states, to the 'Superior of the monastery, **fearing him as the Lord, and loving him as the Father**'. [cf. *Ep.* 125 ad Rusticum, c. 15. t. 1, 937 A]

148. Lastly, obedience should be carried out with a smile and with **spiritual joy**, and that it be observed with a constant and persevering mind, and with all humility of spirit.

149. In the **third** place, in so far as the **intellect** is concerned, all will strive and take every care that obedience be entirely **simple**, so that they will not look upon the Superior as a man, but as God, and that **they accept his command not as human, but as divine**.

150. The confreres will not inquire about the reasons of the order, nor discuss it, nor analyze it provided that all that is ordained is beyond sin. No one should pass judgment on the decision of the Superior, as the role [of the subject] is to obey and to carry out what is ordered, in harmony with the statement of Moses: ***Listen Israel, and be silent!*** [Exodus, Dt]. This is precisely what wisdom is: that in this field, one must not have any, as the Apostle states: ***Whoever wishes to be wise, should be the fool!*** [cf. 1 Co 3:18].

151. Each one will make every effort to be ruled by that counsel and judgment, according to the saying of the Fathers, found in Cassian [*Coll.* 2, c. 11], to be carefully retained: that by no other vice does the Devil up-end the monk, and leads him to death, than when he persuades one to trust in his own judgment and conviction, rejecting the counsels of his **Seniors**.

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Part I – ST. IGNATIUS'¹ LETTER ON OBEDIENCE²

A. The Letter itself [March 26, 1553]

Jesus – May the perfect grace and everlasting love of Christ our Lord greet and visit you with His most holy gifts and spiritual graces.

[1] It gives me great consolation, my dear Brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ, when I learn of the lively and earnest desires for perfection in His divine service and glory, which He gives you, Who by His mercy has called you to this Society, and preserves you in it and directs you to the blessed end at which His chosen ones arrive.

[2] And although I wish you all perfection in every virtue and spiritual gift, it is true [as you have heard of me on other occasions], that is in obedience more than in any other virtue, that God our Lord gives me the desire to see you signalize yourselves, and that not only because of the singular good there is in it, so much emphasized by word and example in Holy Scripture, in both the Old and the New Testaments, but because, [as St. Gregory says]. Obedience is the only virtue which plants all the other virtues in the mind and preserves them once they are planted.³ And in so far as this virtue flourishes, all the other virtues will flourish and bring forth the fruit which I desire in your souls and which He claims Who by His obedience redeemed the world after it had been destroyed by the lack of it, becoming obedient unto death, even death on the Cross.⁴

[3] We may allow ourselves to be surpassed by other religious orders in fasts, vigils, and other austerities, which each one following its Institute holily embraces: but in the purity and perfection of obedience, joined to the true resignation of our wills and the abnegation of our judgment, I am very desirous, dear brethren, so that by this virtue its true sons may be recognized, men who regard the person whom they obey, but in him Christ our Lord, for Whose sake they obey. For the Superior is to be obeyed not because he is prudent, or good, or qualified by any other gift of God, but because he holds the place and authority of God, as Eternal Truth has said: *He who hears you, hears Me; he who despises you, despises Me*⁵; nor, on the contrary, because he lacks prudence, is he to be any the less obeyed in that in which he is Superior, since he represents Him Who is infallible wisdom, and Who will supply what is wanting in His

¹ For the Latin translation, cf. *Regulae Societatis Iesu*, pp. 68-82; *Institutum Societatis Iesu*. III, pp. 27-33. [cf. **Appendix 2** of these notes].

² *Perfect Obedience. Commentary on the Letter of Obedience of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*. Father Manuel Maria Espinosa Polit, SJ. Westminster MD: The Newman Bookshop 1947, pp. 20-30; Spanish Version, o.c., pp. 300-307.

³ St. Gregory, *Moralium*, Book 35, c. 10: Obedientia sola virtus est quae menti caeteras virtutes inserit insertasque custodit.

⁴ **Ph 2:8**: *Factus est oboediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis.*

⁵ **Lk 10:16**: *Qui vos audit, audit me; qui vos spernit, spernit me.*

minister; nor for the lack of goodness or other desirable qualities, since Christ our Lord having especially said: *The scribes and Pharisees have sat on the chair of Moses,* adds: *all things, therefore, that they command you, observe and do. But do not act according to their works.*⁶

[4] And so, I should wish that all of you would train yourselves to recognize Christ our Lord in any Superior whomsoever, and with all devotion, reverence and obey in him His Divine Majesty. And this will appear less strange to you, if you keep in mind that St. Paul, writing to the Ephesians, bids us obey even temporal and pagan Superiors as Christ from Whom all well ordered authority descends: *Slaves, obey your masters according to the flesh with fear and trembling in the sincerity of your hearts as you would Christ: not serving to the eye as pleasers of men, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart, giving your service with good will as to the Lord, and not to men.*⁷ From this you can judge, when a religious is taken not only as a Superior, but expressly in the place of Christ our Lord, to serve as a director and guide in the divine service, what rank he ought to hold in the mind of the inferior, and whether he ought to be looked upon as a man, or as the Vicar of Christ.

[5] I also desire that this be firmly fixed in your minds, that the first degree of obedience is very low, which consists in the execution of what is commanded, and that it does not deserve the name, since it does not attain to the worth of this virtue unless it rises to the second degree, which is to make the Superior's will one's own; so that there is not merely effectual execution of the command, but interior conformity, both willing and not willing the same. Wherefore, it is said in Scripture: *obedience is better than sacrifice*⁸; for according to St. Gregory: 'In victims the flesh of another is slain, but in obedience our own will is sacrificed'.⁹ And because this disposition of the will in man is of so great worth, so also is the offering of it, when by obedience it is offered to his Creator and Lord.

[6] How great a deception it is and how dangerous for those who think it is lawful to withdraw from the will of their Superior, I do not say only in those things pertaining to flesh and blood, but even in those which of their nature are spiritual and holy, such as fasts, prayers and any other pious works! Let them hear Cassian's comment in the Conference of Daniel the Abbot: 'It is one and the self-same kind of disobedience, whether in earnestness of labor, or the desire of ease, one breaks the command of the

⁶ **Mt 23:2:** *Super cathedram Moisi sederunt scribae et pharisei. Omnia quaecumque dixerint vobis, facite; secundum vero opera eorum nolite facere,* etc.

⁷ **Ep 6:5:** *Obedite dominis carnalibus timore et tremore, in simplicitate cordis vestri, sicut Christo, non ad oculum servientes, quasi hominibus placentas, sed et servi Christi facientes voluntatem Dei, ex animo cum bona voluntate servientes, sicut Deo et non hominibus...*

⁸ **1 K 15:22:** *Quod melior est oboedientia quam victimae.*

⁹ St. Gregory, **Moralium** Book 35, c. 14, n. 28: 'Per victimas aliena caro, per obedientiam propria voluntas moetatur.'

Superior, and as prejudicial to go against the statutes of the monastery out of sloth as out of watchfulness; and finally, it is as much to transgress the precept of the Abbot as to condemn it to sleep.¹⁰ Holy was the activity of Martha, holy the contemplation of Magdalen, and holy the penitence and tears with which she bathed the feet of Christ our Lord; but all this had to be done in Bethania, which is interpreted the house of obedience. Whence it would seem that Christ our Lord would give us to understand, as St. Bernard remarks: 'that neither the endeavor of good works nor the quiet of contemplation, nor the tears of the penitent, could have been grateful unto Him out of Bethania.'¹¹

[7] And so, my dear brothers, try to make the surrender of your wills entire; offer freely¹² to God through His ministers the liberty He has bestowed on you. Do not think it a slight advantage of your free will that you are able to restore it wholly in obedience to Him Who gave it to you, whereby you do not lose it, but rather perfect it, when you conform your will wholly to the most certain rule of all rectitude, which is the Divine will, the interpreter of which is the Superior who governs you in place of God.

[8] And so, you must never try to draw the will of the Superior [which you should consider the will of God] to your own, for this would be not to make the Divine Will the rule of your own, but your own the rule of the Divine, thus distorting the order of His Wisdom. It is a great delusion in those whose understanding has been darkened by self-love, to think that there is any obedience in the subject who tries to draw the Superior to what he wishes. Hear St. Bernard, a man well experienced in this matter: 'Whoever endeavors either openly or covertly to have his spiritual father enjoin him what he himself desires, deceives himself if he flatters himself he is a true follower of obedience; for in that he does not obey his Superior, but rather the Superior obeys him.'¹³ And so, he concludes that he who wishes to rise to the virtue of obedience must rise to this second degree which [over and above the execution] consists in making one's own the will of the Superior, or rather in putting off his own will to clothe himself with the Divine will interpreted by the Superior.

[9] But he who aims at making an entire and perfect oblation of himself besides his will must offer his understanding [which is a further and the highest degree of obedience], not only willing, but thinking the same as the Superior, submitting his own

¹⁰ **Cassian**, *Collationes*, Book 4, c. 20. 'Unum et idem inbedientiae genus est, vel propter operationis instantiam, vel propter otii desiderium, senioris praeterire mandatum; tamque dispendiosum pro vigilantia, quam pro somno monasterii statuta convellere; tantum denique est Abbatis transire praeceptum ut legas quantum si contempnas et dormias...'

¹¹ **St. Bernard**, *Sermo ad milites templi*, c. 13: 'Quod nec studium bonae actionis nec otium sanctae contemplationis, nec lacrimae poenitentis extra Bethaniam illi accepta esse potuerunt.'

¹² The copy of the Letter destroyed in the fire at Madrid began here.

¹³ **St. Bernard**, *Sermo de tribus ordin. eccles.* n. 4 'Quisque vel aperte vel occulte satagit ut quod habet in voluntate hoc ei spiritualis pater iniungat; ipse se seducit, et quasi de obedientia blanditur, nec ipse in ea re praelato, sed magis ei praelatus obedit.'

judgment to his, so far as a devout will can bend the understanding. For although this faculty has not the freedom of the will, and naturally gives its assent to what is presented to it as true, there are, however, many instances when the evidence of the known truth is not coercive, in which it can with the help of the will, favors this or that side. And when this happens every obedient man should conform his thought to the thought of his Superior. And this is certain, since obedience is a holocaust in which the whole man without the slightest reserve is offered in the fire of charity to his Creator and Lord through the hands of His ministers; and since it is a complete surrender of himself by which a man dispossesses himself to be possessed and governed by Divine Providence by means of his Superiors, it cannot be held that obedience consists merely in the execution by carrying the command into effect and in the will's acquiescence; but also in the judgment which must approve the command of the Superior, in so far [as has been said] as it can, through the energy of the will, bring itself to this.

[10] Would to God that this obedience of the understanding were as much understood and practiced, as it is necessary to any one living in religion, and acceptable to God our Lord. Necessary, I say, for, as in the celestial bodies, if the lower is to receive movement and influence from the higher, it must be subject and subordinate, the one body being ordered and adjusted to the other: so, when one rational creature is moved by another [as takes place in obedience], the one that is moved must be subject and subordinated to the one by whom he is moved, if he is to receive influence and virtue from him. And this subjection and subordination cannot be had unless the understanding and will of the inferior is in conformity with the Superior.

[11] Therefore, if we regard the end of obedience, as our will, so our understanding may be mistaken as to what is good for us; wherefore, as we deem it expedient to conform our will with that of the Superior to keep it from going astray, so the understanding ought to be conformed with his to keep it from going astray: *Lean not on your own prudence*, says the Scripture¹⁴. And thus, those who are wise judge it to be true prudence not to rely on their own judgment even in other affairs of life, and especially when personal interests are at stake, in which men, as a rule, because of their lack of self-control, are not good judges. This being so, we ought to follow the judgment of another [even when he is not our Superior] rather than our own in matters concerning ourselves; how much more, then, the judgment of the Superior, whom we have taken as a guide to stand in the place of God and to interpret the Divine Will for us? And it is certain that this guidance is all the more necessary in men and matters spiritual, as the danger in the spiritual life is great when one advances rapidly in it without the bridle of discretion. And hence, Cassian says, in the Conference of the Abbot Moses: 'By no other vice does the devil draw a monk headlong, and bring

¹⁴ Pr 3:5: Ne innitaris prudentiae tuae...

him to death sooner, than by persuading him to neglect the counsel of the elders, and trust to his own judgment and determination.¹⁵

[12] On the other hand, without this obedience of the judgment, it is impossible that the obedience of the will and execution be what they should; for, the appetitive powers of the soul naturally follow the apprehensive, and, in the long run, the will cannot obey without violence against one's judgment. And when, for some time it obeys, misled by the general apprehension that it must obey even when commanded amiss, it cannot do so for any time; and so perseverance fails, or if not this, at least the perfection of obedience which consists in obeying with love and cheerfulness; but when one acts in opposition to one's judgment, one cannot obey lovingly and cheerfully as long as such repugnance remains. Promptitude fails, and readiness, which is impossible without agreement of judgment, such as when one doubts whether it is good or not to do what is commanded. That renowned simplicity of blind obedience¹⁶ fails when we call into question the justice of the command, or even condemn the Superior because he bids us do something that is not pleasing. Humility fails, for although on the one hand we submit, on the other, we prefer ourselves to the Superior. Fortitude in difficult tasks fails, and, in a word, all the perfections of this virtue. On the other hand, when one obeys without submitting one's judgment, there arise dissatisfaction, pain, reluctance, slackness, murmurings, excuses, and other imperfections and obstacles of no small moment which strip obedience of its value and merit. Wherefore, St. Bernard, speaking of those who take it will when commanded to do things that are unpleasant, says with reason: 'If you begin to grieve at this, to judge your Superior, to murmur in your heart, though outwardly you fulfill what is commanded, yet this is not the virtue of patience, but a cloak of your malice.'¹⁷ Now, if we regard the peace and quiet of mind of him who obeys, it is certain that he will never attain to it who has within himself the cause of his disquiet and unrest, that is, a judgment of his own opposed to what obedience lays upon him.

[13] And, therefore, for the maintaining of union which is the bond of every society, St. Paul so earnestly exhorts all *to think the same thing*¹⁸, because it is by the union of judgment and will that they shall be preserved. Now if head and members must think the selfsame, it is easy to see whether the head should agree with the members, or the members with the head. From what has been said, it can be seen how necessary is obedience to the understanding.

¹⁵ Cassian, *Collationes* Book 2, c. 11: 'Nullo alio vitio tam praecipitem diabolus monachum pertrahit ac perducit ad mortem, quam cum neglectis consiliis seniorum suo iudicio persuaserit definitionique confidere. [cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, CF # 151]

¹⁶ CSJ n. 547.

¹⁷ St. Bernard, *Sermo 3 de Circumcisione*, n. 8: 'Hoc si moleste coeperis sustinere si dijudicare praelatum, si murmurare in corde, etiam si exterius impleas quod iubetur, non est virtus patientiae, sed velamen malitiae...'

¹⁸ Rm 15:5; 1 Co 1:10; Ph 2:2: cf. Giovanni Ceresatto, *Il volto e l'anima. Profilo spirituale di San Gaspare Bertoni*. Verona: CSS 1991, p. 156 [episode of Fr. L Schlor]

[14] But how perfect it is in itself and how acceptable to God can be seen from the value of this most noble offering which is made of the most worthy part of man; and because in this way the obedient man is made a living holocaust most acceptable to His Divine Majesty, keeping nothing whatever to himself; and also because of the difficulty overcome for love of Him in going against the natural inclination which all men have of following their own judgment. Hence, it follows that obedience, though it be a perfection proper to the will [which makes it ready to fulfill the will of the Superior], yet, it must also, as has been said, extend to the understanding, inclining to agree with the thought of the Superior, for it is thus that we proceed with the full force of the soul – of will and understanding – to a prompt and perfect execution.

[15] It seems to me that I hear you say, most dear Brethren, that you see the importance of this virtue, but that you should like to see how you can attain to its perfection. To this I answer with Pope St. Leo: 'Nothing is difficult unto the humble, and nothing hard to the meek.'¹⁹ Be, therefore, humble and meek, and God our Lord will bestow His grace which will enable you to maintain sweetly and lovingly the offering you have made to Him.

[16] Besides these means, I will place before you three especially, which will afford you great assistance in attaining this perfection of obedience of the understanding.

The first is that [as I said at the beginning] you do not behold the person of your Superior a man subject to errors and miseries, but rather Him Whom you obey in man, Christ, the highest Wisdom, immeasurable Goodness and infinite Charity, Who, you know, cannot be deceived and does not wish to deceive you. And because you are certain that you have set upon your own shoulders this yoke of obedience for the love of God, submitting yourself to the will of the Superior in order to be more conformable to the Divine will, be assured that His most faithful charity will ever direct you by the means which you yourselves have chosen. Wherefore, do not look upon the voice of the Superior, as far as he commands you, otherwise than as the voice of Christ, in keeping with St. Paul's advice to the Colossians, where he exhorts subjects to obey their Superiors: *Whatsoever you do, do it from the heart, as to the Lord, and not to men* [knowing that you shall receive of the Lord the reward of inheritance]. *Serve the Lord Christ.*²⁰ And St. Bernard: 'whether God or man, His substitute, commands anything, we must obey with equal diligence, and perform it with like reverence, when, however, man commands nothing that is contrary to God.'²¹ And thus, if you do not look upon man with the eyes of the body, but upon God with those of the soul, you

¹⁹ St. Leo, *Sermon 5 de Epiphania*, c. 3: 'Nihil arduum humilibus, nihil asperum mitibus.'

²⁰ **Col 3:23-24: Quodcumque facitis, ex animo operamini sicut Deo et non hominibus ...Christo servite...**

²¹ St. Bernard: *De praecepto et dispensatione*, c. 9: 'Sive Deus, sive homo, vicarius Dei, mandatum quodcumque tradiderit, pari profecto obsequendum est cura, pari reverentia deferendum; ubi tamen Deo contraria non praecipit homo.'

will find no difficulty in conforming your will and judgment with the rule of the action which you yourselves have chosen.

[17] The second means is that you be quick to look for reasons to defend what the Superior commands, or to what he is inclined, rather than to disapprove of it. And a help towards this will be to love whatever obedience shall enjoin; whence will come a cheerful obedience without any trouble, for as St. Leo says, 'it is not hard to serve when we love that which is commanded.'²²

[18] The third means to subject the understanding which is even easier and surer, and in use among the holy Fathers, is to presuppose and believe [very much as we are accustomed to do in matters of faith] that what the Superior enjoins is the command of God our Lord, and His holy Will; and to proceed blindly without enquiry of any kind, to the carrying out of the command, with the prompt impulse of the will desirous of obeying. So it is to be thought Abraham did when commanded to sacrifice his son Isaac²³; and likewise in the New Testament, some of those holy Fathers, to whom Cassian refers, as the Abbot John, who did not question whether he was commanded was profitable or not, as when with such great labor he watered a dry stick throughout a year²⁴; nor whether it was possible or not, when he tried so earnestly at the command of his Superior to move a rock which a large number of men would not have been able to move.²⁵ We see that sometimes God our Lord confirmed this kind of obedience with miracles, as when Maurus, St. Benedict's disciple, going into a lake at the command of his Superior did not sink²⁶; or, in the instance of another, who, being told to bring back a lioness, took hold of her and brought her to his Superior²⁷; and others with which you are well acquainted. By this I mean that this manner of subjecting one's own judgment, without further enquiry, supposing that the command is holy and in conformity with God's will, is in use among the saints and ought to be imitated by anyone who wishes to obey perfectly in all things, where manifestly there appears no sin.²⁸

[19] In spite of this, you should feel free to propose a difficulty should something occur to you different from his opinion, provided you pray and it seems to you in God's presence that you ought to make the representation to the Superior. But if you wish to proceed in this matter without suspicion of attachment to your own judgment, you must maintain indifference before and after this representation, not only as to undertaking or relinquishing the matter in question, but you must even go so far as to

²² St. Bernard: *Sermo 4 de jejunio septimi mensis* : 'Non ibi dura necessitate servitur, ubi diligitur quod iubetur.'

²³ Gn 22:2, 3

²⁴ Cassian: *De Institutis renuntiantium* [alias, *coenobiorum*] Book 4, c. 24.

²⁵ Cassian, o.c., c. 26.

²⁶ St. Gregory the Great, Book 2, *Dialogue. Life of St. Benedict*.

²⁷ St. Gregory the Great, *De Vitis Patrum*, Book 3, n. 27.

²⁸ St. Gaspar Bertoni, CF # 141.

be better satisfied with, and to consider as better, whatever the Superior shall ordain.²⁹

[20] And what I have said of obedience is not only to be understood of individuals with reference to their immediate Superiors, but also of rectors and local Superiors with reference to Provincials, and of Provincials with reference to the General, and of the General towards him whom God our Lord has given as Superior, His Vicar on earth; for in this way complete subordination will be observed, and, consequently, union and charity³⁰, without which the welfare and government of the Society or of any other congregation would be impossible. And by this means Divine Providence gently disposes all things, bringing to their appointed end the lowest by the middlemost, and the middlemost by the highest. Even in the angels there is the subordination of one hierarchy to another; and in the heavens, all the bodies that are moved, the lowest by the highest, and the highest, in their turn, unto the Supreme Mover of all. We see the same on earth in well-governed states, and in the hierarchy of the Church, the members of which render their obedience to the one universal Vicar of Christ our Lord³¹. And the better this subordination is kept, the better the government, but when it is lacking every one can see what outstanding faults ensue. And, therefore, in this Congregation, in which our Lord has given me some charge, I desire that this virtue be as perfect as if the whole welfare of the Society depended on it.

[21] Not wishing to step beyond the bounds I set at the beginning of this letter, I will end by begging you for the love of Christ our Lord, Who not only gave us the precept of obedience, but added his example, to make every effort to attain it by a glorious victory over yourselves, vanquishing the loftiest and most difficult part of yourselves, your wills and intellects; that thus the true knowledge and love of God our Lord may possess you wholly and direct your souls throughout the course of this pilgrimage, until at length He and you and many others through you to the last and most happy end of bliss everlasting. I commend myself most earnestly to your prayers.

From Rome, March 26, 1553.

The servant of all in our Lord,

Ignatius³²

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²⁹ [St. Gaspar Bertoni, **CF # 144**].

³⁰ [St. Gaspar, **Part X: The Unity, Or The Union of the Congregation [## 187-266]**].

³¹ **NB:** for this, cf. *Sentire cum ecclesia*, cf. especially **SpEx nn. 353 [Rule # 1] and 365 [Rule # 13]**.

³² *Monumenta Ignatiana*, series I, IV, 669-681.

B. A Commentary on this Letter

INTRODUCTION

Let us begin with the Conclusion of Letter³³: Jesuit scholars have verified an exact agreement between the ideas of this **Letter on Obedience**, and those contained in the [Conclusion of the] **Book of the Spiritual Exercises nn. 352-370** of St. Ignatius. It will not be amiss to show in a **combined view** how the doctrine of obedience has its foundation and finds its most exact explanation in the great ascetical principles of the ***Exercises***.

The **mutual relationship** between obedience and the teaching of the ***Exercises*** may be studied under a double aspect:

- either that of **the role that obedience** develops within the spiritual system of the ***Exercises***;
- or, that of the **influence** these [***Exercises***] have for the perfect practice of that virtue.

[1] The Role that Obedience develops within the spiritual system of the *Exercises***:** With regard to the former, it is evidently **a principal means** to attain the purpose of the ***Exercises***, which is to order one's life, or to set it on the road to sanctity, **by the perfect fulfillment of God's will**. In fact, what is solid and true in Christian sanctity consists in conforming our entire lives with the Will of God, our Lord. St. Teresa affirms this very positively, and it may be said that her statement is the expression of the unanimous opinion of Catholic tradition:

*The entire aim, she says, of one who is beginning prayer [and do not forget this as it is very important] must be to endeavor to determine and dispose himself, with all the diligence possible, **to make his will conform with that of God**; and, as I shall say later, be very sure **that in this consists the greatest perfection attainable in the spiritual way**. He who holds this more perfectly will receive more from the Lord, and will advance more in this way.*³⁴

Now, the ***Exercises*** have no other aim than to teach us how to do the Will of God perfectly, for on the very threshold we are told that they are dedicated **to prepare and dispose the soul ... to seek and find the Will of God in the management of one's own life**.³⁵ St. Ignatius wishes the exercitant to learn to discern the **Divine Good Pleasure**.

³³ cf. Espinosa Polit, o.c., pp. 253- 257

³⁴ ***Second Mansions***, n. 15.

³⁵ MI, series 1a, I, 682.

The obedient man will find, then, in the **full submission of his own will** to that of the Superior, an effective means of regulating his life according to the ideals of holiness found in the ***Spiritual Exercises***. And this by itself is enough to justify the singular importance given to **obedience in the Ignatian spirituality**, and consequently, **in the life of the Society of Jesus**.

[2] The Influence which the *Exercises* have for the perfect practice of that virtue: It remains now to consider the second aspect of the relation between religious obedience and the teaching of the ***Spiritual Exercises***. There can no room for doubt that the truths contained in the golden little book are excellently suited to move the members of the Society to an effort **to signalize themselves in that which is the characteristic virtue of their order**, that of being in the Company, Society of Jesus.

[a] For, in the first place, the *Exercises* point out with marvelous accuracy the immovable foundation on which the virtue of obedience rests as on a cornerstone. This is the absolute and inalienable dominion of God, our Lord, over man in virtue of the very fact of his **Creation. Obedience to the Divine will** by which man in a practical way recognizes and worships the sovereignty of His Creator, is, then, the logical consequence of his condition as a creature, a **duty of justice and religion** founded in the essential relations that flow from the fact of his participated existence.³⁶

[b] But, as true and solid virtues do not grow in the soul except in proportion to the extent that a man overcomes and denies himself, it is evident that the sole way to arrive at **the summit of perfect obedience is the royal road of **abnegation** and **sacrifice**. The practice of obedience such as St. Ignatius understands it** presupposes a heart so detached from the spirit of pride and ambition that only he who tramples these enemies underfoot will know how to put from himself effectually his own will and judgment so as to will and think the same with the Superior, even in the instances of being bidden to do things that are difficult and repugnant to sensuality.³⁷

[c] In the *Exercises* of the 2nd and 3rd Weeks, the Jesuit Founder is intent on teaching us to **wage war on all that the world vainly esteems and to establish ourselves in the mortification and genuine humility of Christ, with no other thought than that of imitating and following Him as closely as possible.** The Religious imbued with these ideas esteems himself happy and successful if he loses all to gain Christ; he will experience no difficulty in **renouncing his own judgment and in willing to be ruled entirely by Christ, having no other will and life than His**.

[d] In the last place, the '*Contemplation for Obtaining Love*' with which the *Exercises* are closed, contains the noblest and most powerful motive possible to

³⁶ *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 4, a. 7, ad 3^{um}; q. 104, a. 3, ad 1^{um}.

³⁷ CSJ, P. III, c. 1, n. 23.

arouse a generous will to make daily more effective the **holocaust, the oblation, the obsequium [cf. Rm12:1, f.] it offered in the Vow of Obedience**. For, after establishing that the love of friendship demands a reciprocal giving between lovers, St. Ignatius has the exercitant ***dwell with great affection [SpEx 234]:***

*... **The First Point**, I will call back into my memory the gifts I have received – my creation, redemption, and other gifts particular to myself. I will ponder with deep affection how much God our Lord has done for me, and how much He has given me of what He possesses, and consequently how He, the same Lord, desires to give me His very self, in accordance with His divine design.*

*Then I will reflect on myself, and consider what I on my part ought in all reason and justice to offer and give to his Divine Majesty, namely, all my possessions, and myself along with them. I will speak as one making **an offering [obsequium]** of deep affection and say:*

Suscipe!

Take, Lord, and receive **all** my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and **all** my will – all that I have and possess. You, Lord, have given **all** that to me. I now give it back to You, O Lord. **All** of it is Yours. Dispose of it according to Your will. Give me Your love and Your grace, for that is **enough** for me.

This is how God has complied with this **fundamental law of a loving friendship**, bestowing upon man gifts and blessings which only He Who is substantial and infinite love can bestow. And when the human soul, realizing interiorly all the good the unworthy believer has received, one comes to experience himself in an abyss before the immensity of the love that God has shown, a longing will break forth spontaneously from the innermost source of one's being and offer and give, in a just interchange, to the Divine Lover, ***all things that are his and himself along with them.***

But, among a person's possessions, that which is of the greatest value, the most worthy of being offered to the Giver of all good, is one's **liberty**. For this reason, writes Fr. Casanovas, St. Ignatius places **the surrender of liberty** before every other offering, as the gift which includes all other gifts. Lovers have always looked upon it as the pearl of the Gospel ***to offer an entire life to the one who is loved***, glorying in bearing the marks of servitude, for ***surrendering one's liberty is equivalent to surrendering oneself.***

The effective contemplation of the infinite manifestations of Divine love leads, therefore, ***by virtue of the law of friendship, to the servitude of perfect obedience.*** In fact, the ***Suscipe***, springing from a heart that feels itself infinitely loved, seeks to return love for love and ***in all things love and serve His Divine Majesty [SpEx # 233]*** achieves its fullest realization in religious obedience, above all, if to promptness of **execution** there is added the **adherence of the will** and the **humble surrender of one's judgment**. Because only then can it be said with truth that man has ***given all for pure love***, without reserving anything at all, ***to belong entirely to God***, and to ***serve as a docile instrument in the furtherance of His designs.***

Summary

There can be no surprise at the perfect agreement to be seen between the teaching of the **Spiritual Exercises** and the standards and norms of obedience given in the **Constitutions** and in the great **Letter** [of March 1553] which our holy Father wrote on this virtue, seeing that all these writings have been inspired with the same spirit and spring from identical principles. And having forged the **Exercises** according to the happy expression of Fr. LaPalma, 'the first Plan and Pattern of the Society of Jesus as a Religious Order',³⁸ it is obvious and natural that they should contain the substance of the teaching on obedience which is so essential a virtue in our Order, and its symbol, so to say, and prerogative.

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1. SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

OT

Gn 22:2,3: *Take your only begotten son, Isaac, whom you love, and go into the land of vision: and there you shall offer him for an holocaust upon one of the mountains which I will show you. So, Abraham rising up in the night, saddled his ass; and took with him two young men, and Isaac, his son; and when he had cut wood for the holocaust, he went his way to the place which God had commanded him...*

I K 15:22: *And Samuel said: Does the Lord desire holocausts and victims, and not rather the voice of the Lord should be obeyed. For obedience is better than sacrifices: and to hearken rather than to offer the fat or rams.*

Pr 3:5: *Have confidence in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not upon your own prudence...*

NT

Synoptics

Mt 11:29: *Learn of Me for I am meek and humble of heart and you will find rest for your souls...*

Mt 16:24 *I exhort you, then, to be His disciple, to deny himself... etc.*

Mt 17:5; 23:2

This is My Son, the Beloved; He enjoys My favor. Listen to Him...

...do not be guided by what the [Pharisees and Scribes] do...

Lk 9:35; 10:16

... this is My Son, the Chosen One; listen to Him...

³⁸ Cammino espiritual, Book 8, c. 2; II, 298.

...Anyone who listens to you, listens to Me; anyone who rejects you, rejects Me, and those who reject Me, reject the One Who sent Me...

JOHN

Jn 6:38: *I have not come to do My Own Will...*

Jn 20:21: *... As the Father sent Me, so am I sending you....*

PAUL

Rm 15:5, f.: *... following the example of Christ Jesus, so that united in mind and voice you may give glory to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ...*

1 Co 1:10: *... for the sake of Our Lord Jesus Christ ... be united again in your belief and practice ...*

Ep 6:5 [2 x]: *... Slaves, be obedient to the men who are called your masters in this world, with deep respect and sincere loyalty, as you are obedient to Christ ...*

Ph 2: 2, 8, 18; 3:17: *... if love can persuade at all, or the Spirit we have in common, or any tenderness and sympathy, then, be united in your convictions and united in your love, with a common purpose and a common mind ...He was obedient unto death... My brothers, be united in following my rule of life...*

Col 3:23-24: *Whatever your work is, put your heart into it as if it were for the Lord and not for men, knowing that the Lord will repeat you by making you his heirs. It is Christ the Lord that you are serving ...*

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Fr. Espinosa Polit, SJ offers his classical commentary: This last text, from the Letter to the Colossians³⁹ shows us once again how conformable to the teachings of revealed truth are the rules and counsels on obedience which the holy Founder of the Society gave to his sons. To poor slaves, frequently the victims of the cruel demands of their heartless masters, the divinely inspired Apostle earnestly recommends an open and generous obedience, and **his exhortation is founded on the motives of consolation offered them by the faith**. Christ is their true Master, and, therefore, when they fulfill their duties, they in reality serve and please our Lord, and thereby make themselves His creditors for those eternal blessings which He reserves for His friends and faithful servants. They should then overlook the vices and the wickedness of their masters and subject themselves to them with a heart expanded with hope, confident that God Who gladly accepts their services will give them in turn the eternal inheritance of sons in glory:

³⁹ Fr. Manuel Maria Espinosa Polit, SJ, *Perfect Obedience. Commentary on the Letter on Obedience of St. Ignatius of Loyola* [March 26, 1553]. Westminster MD: Newman 1947, pp. 138, f.

... He who hears you, hears Me, and he who despises you, despises Me [Lk 10:16] – Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as to the Lord and not to man [Col 3:23] ... Obey your prelates and be subject to them... [Heb 13:17] ... And so brothers, your faith has been a great comfort to us in the middle of our own troubles and sorrows; now we can breathe again, as you are still holding firm in the Lord...[2 Th 3:7-9]. ... Do not let people disregard you because you are young, but be an example to all the believers in the way you speak and behave, and in your love, your faith and your purity... [1 Tm 4:12]... Since, as president, he will be God's representative, he must be irreproachable... [Tt 1:7]

St. Peter offers his ideal:

... Now I have something to tell your elders: I am an Elder myself, and a witness, to the sufferings of Christ, and with you I have a share in the glory that is to be revealed. Be the shepherds of the flock of God that is entrusted to you: watch over it, not simply as a duty, but gladly, because God wants it; not for sordid money, but because you are eager to do it. Never be a dictator over any group that is put in your charge, but an example that the whole flock can follow. When the chief shepherd appears, you will be given the crown of unfading glory... [1 P 5: 1-3]

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It would be helpful to consider the motives which the holy Founder of the Jesuits had in **making obedience the honor and glory of his Order**, while giving it a **marked pre-eminence over the other virtues**. Of the reasons set forth in the **Letter** [March 26, 1553], the first, contained in the clause:

... God our Lord gives me the desire to see you most truly eminent in the virtue of obedience; and this not only for the excellent and singular fruits thereof, are proved by many testimonies of Holy Writ, both in the Old and New Testament...

This is based on the great blessings which obedience bring with it, which the Holy Spirit has deigned to point out to us in Holy Writ.

There are many passages, to be sure, in the Sacred Scriptures, as the Jesuit Founder states, in which by word and example the merit and value of obedience is extolled, or where, on the other hand, is weighed the harm and evil caused by disobedience. The Historical Books and the Wisdom Books, especially, contain many admirable sentences and suggestive examples which put **in a clear light the pleasure which our Lord looks upon obedience**, not merely that general obedience to the commands of those who have authority from Him, as well as the severity with which He chastises the disobedient. [See, for example, Ex 16:8; Dt 17:10-13; 1 S 15:22-23; Pr 15:28; 21:28. Also among others, the examples of Isaac (Gn 22:9) and Samuel (1 S 3:5-10) – Patterns of perfect obedience].

Other holy persons of the OT are noted for their **docility and submission** to their Superiors, thus bringing on themselves and their people, the blessings of God. [Take for example: Joseph, Gn 37:14; Jacob, Gn 28:1-5; Ruth Rt 3:5; the Young Tobias, Tb

5:1; Esther, Est 2:20]. On the contrary, the disobedience and revolt against Moses was the cause of the terrible destruction of Core, Dathan and Abiron – Nb 16:1-35. Saul was for his disobedience disowned by God which was the beginning of his aberrations and misfortunes – [1 S 15:23; See also Nb 14:41-45].⁴⁰

It might be asked: Has this ancient insistence still any objective reality, or is it merely a pious fiction of ancient writ? Are the words of the Gospel: ***Qui vos audit, Me audit*** [Lk 10:16] – anything more than a way of speaking to make concrete in our eyes the authority of the Superior? Let us examine the exact meaning and the true scope of the statement of our Lord, for the matter is too important to be passed over lightly.

In the text: ***He who hears you, hears Me*** [Lk 10:16], the word *hear* means not only docility to teaching, which is evident, but also submission and obedience to the direction of legitimate pastors and reverence for their authority.

We can infer this as the precise meaning of obedience:

- first, from the meaning of the Greek verb, *akouw*, which means **obey**, as well as to hear, not only in classical Greek, but in NT Greek [cf. Mt 17:5; Lk 10:167 – texts given by Greek biblical dictionaries];
- in the second place, from the fact that **the authority which Christ communicated** to His Apostles as His representatives and the continuators of His work, is **the same as He receive from the Father**: ***As the Father has sent Me, so I send you...*** [Jn 19: 19, f.]

Wherefore, as the divine words of Tabor, ***ipsum audite*** [listen to Him: Mt 17:5; Lk 9:35: addressed to all believers]] must be understood, according to the interpreters, not merely in receiving His teaching, but also in the sense of doing what He says [as his words addressed to the Apostles: ***do this in Memory of Me !***]. In like manner, the word in our text must be taken as a synonym of submission and obedience, for in both the one and the other instance there is question of an acquiescence of the will with one who has the right and power of command.

Then, the words: ***He who hears you, hears Me*** – clearly suppose that the Apostles and disciples to whom they were directed received real authority from Christ to impose laws and precepts, and they, therefore, leave no doubt as to the real identity between the Person of Him Who sends and him who is sent, between the Divine King to Whom has been given all power in heaven and on earth,⁴¹ and His ambassadors, between Christ and His Apostles. Whoever receives their teachings, whoever submits himself with docility to their direction in the things that pertain to

⁴⁰ ib, pp. 46, f.

⁴¹ Suarez, *De Rel. S.I.*, Book IV, c. 15, n. 3 [508].

the Kingdom of God, **hears and obeys Christ Himself**. Whoever, on the contrary, rebels against their authority, despises the authority of Christ Himself...⁴²

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2. The Exemplary Causality of JESUS CHRIST

[cf. also the **Theology of the Eucharist** [faith supplies for the defect of the senses] and **Faith** [oblation of intellect and will – DV 5]]:⁴³

a. We shall speak now of the NT, where **the sublime example of the Son of God sheds its calm light**; there we find the Christian concept of view both by St. Paul and the Prince of the Apostles [read carefully on this point: Rm 13:1-7; Ep 6:5-9; Col 3:23-25; 1 Th 5:12-13; 1 Tm 6:1-12; Tt 2:9, 10; 3:1; Heb 13:17. 1 P 2:13-18]. This principal, or practical norm from which obedience draws all its force and energy, is enunciated by the saint in a phrase of lapidary conciseness:

... they regard not the individual whom they obey, **but in him, Christ our Lord, for Whose love they obey ...**

... For the Superior is not to be obeyed because he is prudent or virtuous, or excels in any other divine gift whatsoever it may be, but for this only that **he is in the place of God**, and has authority from Him, who says: *he that hears you hears Me, and he that despises you, despises Me...*

b. As is seen, for St. Ignatius, **obeying the Superior and obeying God are one and the same thing**. This idea which contains the substance of the teachings of the holy Patriarch on obedience, he inculcates, *importune et opportune*, and it will be worth while to collect together as a sheaf of testimonies, some of his frequent passages in the ***Constitutions***, in his ***Letters***, and ***Instructions***, where we see repeated with various shades of meaning the real thought of the Founder.

In the ***Formula***, or Fundamental Rule of the Institute of the Society, presented to Julius III, and approved by him in the Bull, ***Exposcit Debitum***, there is express mention of this principle as of something of vital importance in the way of life proper to our vocation:

... And all its subjects, as well as for the great fruits resulting from good order, as for the very praiseworthy exercise of continual humility, will be found in all things that pertain to the Institute of the Society, always to obey not only the superior, but **to recognize Christ present in him** and give him becoming reverence ...⁴⁴

⁴² Espinosa-Polit, o.c., , pp. 60, ff.:

⁴³ [Fr. Manuel Maria Espinosa Polit, SJ, *Perfect Obedience. Commentary on the Letter on Obedience of St. Ignatius of Loyola* [March 26, 1553]. Westminster MD: Newman 1947, pp. 56-59, *passim*.]

⁴⁴ Institutum Societatis I, 25.

To the Candidate who knocks at the door of the Society, the saint explains very properly the same doctrine with clarity and an abundance of detail, which give him clearly to understand how seriously he must take it from the rest of his life. Beginning with the humble duties which are usually performed, above all in the time of probation, the holy Jesuit Founder says:

... When anyone goes to the kitchen to help the cook, he must obey him with much humility in all things pertaining to his office, showing him always complete obedience; for if he does not, it is not likely that he will show obedience to any Superior, since **true obedience is not concerned about the person to whom a thing is done, and for whom; but if he does this for our Creator and Lord alone, the same Lord of all is obeyed.** Wherefore, one should not look to see whether it is the cook of the house, or its Superior. Whether he who commands is one or the other, for neither to them, nor for them – [as sound intelligence understands it] is this **obedience shown, but only to God and for God, our Creator and Lord.**

And therefore, it might be better for the cook not to ask his helper to do this or that, but modestly to command him, or say: do this, or that. For if he asks him, he will appear rather to speak as man to man; and it does not seem honorable, or right for a lay cook to ask a priest to wash pots or do anything similar. But if he bids him to do this or that, he will show that he speaks rather as Christ to man, since it is in place of Him that he commands. And so, if he who obeys is to be entirely acceptable to His Divine Majesty, he should reflect and look upon the words that come from the cook, or from the Superior, **as though they came from Christ our Lord...**⁴⁵

The Novices who are admitted to probation and the Scholastics who, following the Novitiate, and who take their First Vows, are preparing themselves for the apostolate of tomorrow with the two-fold reputation of **learning and virtue**⁴⁶, must nourish their spirits with the clear vision of Christ in their Superior and prepare themselves for the sacrifices which holy obedience may demand of them. The **Novices** are exhorted:

... It chiefly conduces to advancement and is very necessary, that all should give themselves to perfect obedience, **acknowledging the Superior, whoever he may be, in place of Christ, our Lord,** and yielding to him **inward reverence** and love...⁴⁷

... and it is very necessary that all should obey not only the Superior of the Society, or house, but also subordinate officials, who have received authority from him.... And they must accustom themselves not to behold who he is whom they obey, but rather **who**

⁴⁵ Examen, c. 4, n. 29, 30: CSJ nn. 84, 85.

⁴⁶ cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, Part IV of his *Original Constitutions: De Progressu* - ##47-68.

⁴⁷ P. III, c. 1, n. 23: CSJ n. 284.

He is for Whose sake they obey, and for Whom they obey in all, that is Christ, our Lord...⁴⁸

The second group, of the **Scholastics**, is reminded:

... that they must hold the Rector in great reverence **as one who holds the place of Christ our Lord...**⁴⁹

Dealing with the more advanced of his sons, and wishing, as he himself says in the beginning of the Sixth Part, to point out to them some more substantial things which will help them:

... more fruitfully to employ themselves according to our Institute in the divine service and help of their neighbor ... that they show great reverence especially towards their Superiors, **beholding and reverencing them in Jesus Christ...**that in all things to which obedience can with charity extend, we be ready at its voice, **as if it came from Christ our Lord, since in His place and for His love and reverence we do it...**⁵⁰

Those who are ***scattered in the vineyard of Christ to work in that part which was entrusted to them,*** he bids to:

... leave the free disposal of themselves to the Superior who **in the place of Christ our Lord** directs them in the way of His greater service and praise...⁵¹

Although the Office of ***Collateral*** [the **Admonitor**] has been, and actually is in little use in the Society, some of the instructions given by our Holy Father for the proper discharge of its duties are much to our purpose. One of its principal duties is:

... to harmonize as much as possible the dealings with subjects with their immediate Superior, going among them like an angel of peace, endeavoring to see that their attitude towards the Superior have the proper affection, since **he holds the place of Christ our Lord...**⁵²

Finally, abridging the end of the 3rd Chapter of Part Nine, concerning the authority which the **General** should hold over the Society:

... and he must be obeyed and revered as one **who holds the place of Christ our Lord ...**

Fr. Espinosa continues:⁵³

⁴⁸ P. III, c. 1, n. 24: CSJ n. 285.

⁴⁹ P. IV, c. 10, n. 5: CSJ n. 423.

⁵⁰ P. VI, c. 1, nn. 1, 2: CSJ nn. 547; 551

⁵¹ P. VII, c. 1, n. 2; c.2, n. 1: CSJ n. 606; cf. litt. A; I.

⁵² P. VIII, c. 1, litt. D: CSJ n. 661.

⁵³ o.c., pp. 61, 71, f., 93-96.

c. **The Apostles:** But the authority which the Apostles had the right to exercise in the Church in Christ's name was not a purely personal prerogative. Rather, as they must have successors to perpetuate their Mission of transmitting to them the power and authority necessary for good government of the Church. And, consequently, Christian tradition has always understood the words of Christ: **He who hears you, hears Me** [Lk 10:16] – not only as said to the Apostles and immediate disciples of the Lord, but also to those who in one for or other, in the course of the ages would inherit their authority. Referring to this text, Fr. Suarez writes:

*... Christ speaks to **the Apostles who must take His place as Pastors**, and in them, to all those who will have the care of souls; but, St. Basil, St. Bernard, the Abbot Antiochus, St. Vincent and others, apply these words in a particular manner to religious superiors ...*⁵⁴

... It chiefly conduces to advancement and is very necessary, that all should give themselves to perfect obedience, **acknowledging the Superior whoever he be, in place of Christ our Lord**, and yielding him inward reverence and love ... [CSJ n. 284]

... likewise, let them treat their Superiors with great interior reverence, **beholding Jesus Christ in them and loving them sincerely as fathers in Christ** ... [CSJ n. 451].

Fr. Mersch, who has explained solidly and clearly, the close relation which exists between **the virtue of obedience and the dogma of our incorporation with Christ**, remarks that, according to the axiom *operari sequitur esse*, 'the act of the will in the supernatural order should pattern itself on the supernatural life from which it flows.' Our supernatural life, even before our own, **is of Christ** from Whom we have received it, so that, as the life of the branch depends upon its union with the trunk, and only by means of this union receives the sap which rises from the roots, and as the life of the member depends entirely on its insertion into the body, so, in like manner, our life and activity depend upon our adherence to Christ, on our being engrafted on Him...

d. **'To put on Christ'**, writes Fr. Ferdinand Prat⁵⁵ means to be wrapped in that divine atmosphere, made a living member of Christ, placed under the influence of that supernatural force which is called the soul of the Church and which is nothing other than the Holy Spirit. The Apostle delights to speak of **putting on Christ**, or **the Lord Jesus Christ – putting on the new man, putting on immortality, the weapons of light, the armor of God, the helmet of salvation, the breast-plate of faith and charity**: in all these examples the figurative meaning is transparent. **We put on Christ**, less as a mantle which covers our wretchedness than as a vital form which us to participate in His life.

Among the spiritual notes of Fr. Jerome NADAL, St. Ignatius' 'own' theologian for his *Constitutions*, can be found a few paragraphs of particular interest, as they

⁵⁴ De Rel. S.I., Book IV, c. 15, n. 3 [508]

⁵⁵ Vol. II, p. 311.

seem to confirm the point of view here advanced. In fact, they permit us to know how deeply that excellent man, who understood the spirit of our Father as few men did, experienced the **mystery of our incorporation with Christ** and its influence on our spiritual activities. He says: 'Accept and diligently exercise **this union with Christ Jesus** which the spirit of the Lord graciously moves you, so that you will realize in spirit that it is **through His intellect that you understand, through His memory that you recall, through His will that you desire**, and that **you are wholly in Him**, that you live and work not in yourself, but **in Christ**. And this is the height of perfection in this life, a divine virtue, wonderful sweetness.

Our Holy Father begins⁵⁶, therefore, by recalling **the principal foundation of obedience**, which is to see the Superior as clothed with the divine authority, not as a mere man, but as an instrument, an interpreter, a representative of God, Whose place he takes. This principle is most true, and we can, therefore, without doing the slightest violence to reality, close our eyes to the human qualities and deficiencies of the Superior to see God alone, Who by means of man communicates Himself to man ;to show him His ways and to teach him His paths...' [cf. Ps 24:4].

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3. DOCTRINAL REFLECTIONS on the DIVINE WILL

a. Abandonment to the Divine Will: "*Thy Will be done!*"

In the studies of Lk's presentation of Mary, it is noted that her FIAT is much more noted in the 3rd evangelist than it is in Mt – **Jesus' FIAT is a command, Mary's is an optative**. Mt, coming from the rabbinical tradition, seems more interested in God's Will – whereas for Lk, the central concern is the Kingdom. The **Third Petition** of the **LORD'S PRAYER** is that His Will indeed be done. This has a deep OT background:

*... you asked no holocaust or sacrifice for sin; then I said: **HERE I AM! I am coming... to do your will...** (cf. Ps 40:7, ff.; cited by Heb 10:9). Bless Yahweh, all His angels, heroes mightily to **enforce His word, attentive to His word of command ... servants to enforce His will...** (cf. Ps 103:19, ff.). ... I have fled to you for shelter; **teach me to obey you**, since you are my God: may your good spirit guide me... (cf. Ps 143:9, f.).*

But now give thanks to Yahweh, the God of your ancestors, and **do His will** (cf. Ezr 10:11).

*I am God, unrivalled, God who has no like ... I say: **My purpose shall last ...** (Ps 46:10)*

... the Lord's will is sovereign ... (cf. Ps 135:6).

⁵⁶ cf. Fr. Espinosa, p.133.

My beloved *will perform my pleasure* ... (cf. Is 48:13, f.).

Cyrus, my shepherd ... he will fulfill my whole purpose... (cf. Is 44:27; cited by Ac 13:22).

Whatever be the will of God, he will perform it... (cf. 1 M 3:60).

It may be that the Semitic mentality is much clearer in this distinction regarding the “Will of God”:

- the subjective sense: the divine faculty of willing;
- the objective sense: the “content”, what it is that God wills.

In Jesus Christ, true God and true man, there are two wills: the divine and human. In the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, united in the One Nature, there is only one divine will common to the three. The divine faculty of willing is sometimes referred to as “innards”, the deepest interior (the Italian “*reni*”), the divine heart.

In the objective sense, it is not so much the result of some abstract decision: but rather, the more spontaneous and instinctive tendency. The faithful are called upon to give preference in their lives, to seek out the divine good pleasure.

In the **OUR FATHER**, the central concern seems to be not so much the psychological, spiritual power of choice, but much more the concrete object willed by God – that which He desires, loves. The “content” is what is understood by the Greek THELMA.

In most modern languages, the divine will perhaps most commonly means just precisely what it is that God would want in these circumstances. The term: “the divine good pleasure” gives to many a sense of “paternalism”, “condescendence”, of one putting up with one considered inferior. To find the proper terminology in the discussion is not always easy, nor agreed to by all. There is a divine “Will” that seems clear to a believer: the commandments, duties of one’s state in life. Then, there is that very vague and difficult area of “all that happens.”

Not very often is the divine will found in the plural – it might respond to the various intentions of one’s prayer, but it also seems to leave the door open to caprice, involving a multiplicity of choices. Some have tried to render the “divine good pleasure” by the word “desires”. However, for many others, this seems much too weak to apply to God in that it is often contrasted with **HOPE**, which is a future good, difficult, but possible. It is its “difficulty” that separates **HOPE** from desires. These are much more passing, much closer to “velleity”, wishful thinking.

Through the centuries, the divine will is not only seen as the object of verbs, such as “to do”, “to carry out” – but perhaps even much more is the divine will the

object of verbs such as: “to seek out”, “to choose”. Both QUMRAN and the Ignatian tradition come together on this point – in the spirit of St. Ignatius., “discernment” plays a most important role.⁵⁷

The **NT** often speaks of the divine will and it is found often in connection with “to do; become”.

The **Synoptics**: praise particularly those who “do” the Father’s Will:

Who are My mother and My brothers?... Here are My mother and My brothers. **Anyone who does the will of God**, that person is My brother and sister and mother ... (cf. Mk 3:45; cf. also Mt 12:50).

It is not those who say to me: ‘Lord, Lord’, who will enter the kingdom of heaven – but **the person who does the will of My Father in heaven** ... (cf. Mt 7:21).

In the **Prayer of Gethsemane**, there are some interesting variations:

But let it be as You, not I, would have it (cf. Mk 14:36).

Nevertheless, let it be as You, not I, would have it... if this cup cannot pass by without My drinking it, **Your will be done!** (cf. Mt 26:39, 42). Father, he said, if You are willing, take this cup away from Me. Nevertheless, let Your will be done, not Mine... (cf. Lk 22:42).

In a different way, **the 4th Evangelist** insists on the intimate tie between Jesus and the Father’s Will:

My food is to do the will of the One Who sent Me ... (4:34).

My aim is not to do My own will, but the will of Him Who sent Me (5:30). ... I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but to do the will of Him Who sent Me ... (6:38).

... anyone who does the will of God remains forever... (1 Jn 2:17).

The **Epistles** contain similar insights:

... be obedient as to Christ ... (cf. Ep 6:16).

God, here I am! I have COME TO DO YOUR WILL (Ps 40, LXX) ... You will need endurance to do God’s will, and gain what He has promised (cf. Heb 10:6,f., 36).

... may He make you ready to do His will in any kind of good action... (Heb 13:21).

Hence, the NT emphasis seems to emphasize much more the “content” of the divine will:

Now the will of Him Who sent Me is that I should lose nothing of all that He has given to Me, and that I should raise it up on the last day. Yes, it is My Father’s will that whoever sees the

⁵⁷ cf. Piet Penning de Vries, *Discernement des esprits. Ignace de Loyola*. Paris: Beauchesne 1964

Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life and that I shall raise him up on the last day ... (cf. Jn 6:39, ff.)

What God wants for you is to be holy (cf. 1 Tm 4:3)... keep away from fornication... it is indeed the will of God that makes people holy ... (cf. Mt 6:10; cf. 2 Th 2:13; Ep 1:4).

Be happy at all times; pray constantly; and for all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus ... (cf. 1 Th 5:17,f.).

God wants you to be good citizens ... (cf. 1 P 2:13, ff.).

In synthesis, it seems that **the Will of God for the NT writers** means **to keep the commandments** – and the will of God for Christ is **to lead all to everlasting life**. In petitioning that God's Name be hallowed, we pray that we might be led through the divine good works to extend His glory:

... your light must shine in the light of men so that seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven ... (cf. Mt 5:16).

In asking for **His Kingdom to come**, we are asking that it might come also for us – in the hope and prayer that the divine will, which the Kingdom is, might find no obstacle, that we might indeed be governed in accord with His will. So, **Thy WILL be done**, is in perfect harmony with the two preceding petitions of the Our Father: **“Hallowed be Thy Name” – “Thy Kingdom come”**: the Will of God simply is that His Kingdom should come ever more fully, and procure all glory for His Name.

As in the earlier petitions, there is no subject to these verbs – and this intended omission allows the Church to make the most broad application possible.

The **intense prayer of the Church** is that the Will of God be done everywhere, always and by all. We do not pray, therefore, simply that creatures carry out the will of the Creator – but we are asking that God Himself carry out His will. .

We are asking God, as in a **Prayer of Abandonment**, to be made docile and obedient in bringing our wills in harmony with His. This is why not a few translators read this passage: that the divine will be carried out, accomplished, fulfilled, realized. Such a translation really is not necessary: the open style of the original implies this already.

The usual translation: **Thy Will be done!** – has the advantage of being more vague, general and universal – and hence, the more easily can it include both aspects, that the divine will be done:

- on the part of God, that He be not impeded;
- and on the part of humanity, by the willing acceptance of human beings.

There is no implicit “fatalism” in the term: in the sense that since God is already omnipotent, and that His will will be done anyway – then: so be it. Such a spirit, however, may not be terribly far from what is related of Judas Maccabbaeus:

Whatever be the will of heaven, He will perform it – it is better to die in battle than to watch the ruin of our land (cf. 1 M 3:60).

This is similar in spirit as well to the appeal made to Paul not to go on to Jerusalem:

For my part, I am ready not only to be tied up but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

And so as he would not be persuaded, we gave up the attempt, saying: The Lord's will be done! (cf. Ac 21:14).

Hence, the Petition: Thy Will be done! – is **the prayed HOPE** that the Will of God will be effectively realized. One prays – and almost commands God – that He carry out His will and that each one might collaborate the more to bring this about.

This 3rd Petition simply continues the first: “Hallowed be Thy Name!” And the 2nd Petition (“Thy Kingdom Come!”) also adds a dimension to the first Petition. The coming of the Kingdom means for all **“sanctification”, consecration to the service of God**. This **sanctification** transforms us, elevates us in a fundamental manner – but at the same time, this **being raised up to a new life** gives us the capacity, a certain empowerment, and imposes the obligation, to render an effective service, that each might undertake one's duties with this new spirit of the risen Lord. Hence, this 3rd Petition: Thy Will be done! Adds to the 2nd Petition (“Thy Kingdom come!”) also a commitment. The Kingdom of God is within – it is still coming, and is the ultimate bearer of the divine will. God comes to accomplish His will, which is our sanctification.

In His coming, He offers a superabundance of messianic goods. It is these blessings of the New Covenant which establish one as pertaining to the New Covenant, and which constitute one as pertaining to His Kingdom.

There is required of the believer, however, that each be opened up to this divine coming. Through the Kingdom that is received, the divine will takes full possession of one, leads and draws those who will respond, by its own inner power.

The challenge is to follow this divine impulse through an effective abandonment. This sublime obedience – in imitation of Christ's own relationship with His heavenly Father – is but a prolongation, a lived attitude of inner correspondence through which more and more the divine will becomes a concrete and vibrant reality within the believer. It becomes a truly active presence, as one begins to see Jesus as **A value** – then, grows, intensifies some, to see Him as an **IMPORTANT value**. The ultimate ideal would be achieved when **He is THE value**.

The intimate and close relationship between the 2nd and 3rd Petitions of the OUR FATHER shows the most profound tie between the Kingdom of God (heaven) and the Will of God. For some interpreters, this is why Lk has not reproduced the OUR FATHER in such detail as in Mt, enumerating all these Petitions that are so closely inter-connected: his tendency, “style”, is to suppress that which appears superfluous.

For Lk, once one has asked for the Coming of the Lord's Kingdom, one is implicitly asking at the same time for the full realization of the divine will. For the rabbinic tradition, however, it is the Will of God that is tantamount, and which constitutes the essential Prayer for Mt. There are citations that come close to this thought:

Eli said: He is Yahweh: **LET HIM DO WHAT HE THINKS GOOD** (cf. 1 S 3:18). Joab said: Take courage and stand firm for the sake of our people and the towns of our God. And **MAY YAHWEH DO AS HE THINKS RIGHT** ... (cf. 1 Ch 19:13).

Summary: This attitude is part of Mt's rendition of the OUR FATHER – the committed believer wills only the Father's Will. There is involved in this the **OBSEQUIUM** (cf. Rm 12:1; also 1 P 2:4, ff.) **of our own personal will**, and the elimination of all that would be self-centeredness. The effort here is to base our lives on the Will of God. There is in this the firm decision to share in this Will in the fullest possible accord with one's own capacity.⁵⁸

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b. THE LORD'S LIVED EXAMPLE

As all Christian virtues, Holy Abandonment has its source in the Gospel – in the words and deeds, the teachings and example of our Lord Jesus Christ. St. Francis de Sales presents Christ as the **MODEL OF HOLY ABANDONMENT** in the various stages of His mortal life:

- in the Crib (cf. Entretien XXI);
- His infancy (Love of God, book IX, c. 14);
- in the flight into Egypt (cf. Entr., III);
- and above all, during those terrible sufferings that concluded.
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⁵⁸ **NB:** for these pages of these notes, cf. Jean Carmignac, *Recherches sur le Notre Père*. Paris: Letouzey **1969**, pp. 103-109, *passim*. Cf. also: R. Guardini, *The Lord's Prayer*. Manchester: SOPHIA: 1932 [re-print]; Lehodey, *Holy Abandonment*. Rockford: TAN 1934 [re-print 2003]; de Margerie, SJ, *L'Abandon a Dieu*. Paris: Tequi 1997.

His earthly sojourn, particularly in these words: “**Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit!**”⁵⁹

The **Imitation of Christ** is the great challenge of believers: He Leaches by word and example how to be abandoned to the Will of God in suffering – all believers are thus challenged to repeat the Savior’s own words in the LORD’S PRAYER and in GETHSEMANE: Your Will be done... not Mine ... Not what I will, but as You will it. (cf. Mt 6; 26:39; Lk 22:42).

The culminating example of Abandonment is to be sought in Jesus on the Cross. Through the doctrine and the lived experience of the saints, the believers of today – assisted by grace – can imitate the abandonment of Jesus Christ. In the trials of human life, the Lord’s grace can lead the faithful through a variety of levels, or stages of the faith, and eventually come to the offering of the “spiritual sacrifice”, the “oblation” to God’s Mercy.

For many theologians, such a sacrifice asks a correspondence to the call of “costly discipleship”, passing through a variety of “stages of development”, “seasons in a person’s life”: Dark Night, Spiritual Winter. As for the perfection of abandonment, of course, no one could reach it without the special assistance of God. In the supreme level, sacrifice is consummated.

The Lord’s own teaching in this regard may be seen in a special way in episodes that are central to His Person and Mission: the teaching of the OUR FATHER, and the example of GETHSEMANE.

1.] THE “OUR FATHER”

On Christ’s lips, this invocation’ has a profundity of meaning that it seems the disciples came to understand only with time. With Joachim Jeremias, many believers hold that every time Jesus referred to His Father in direct address, most likely He would have used the affectionate term ABBA⁶⁰. The original text may be in the Synoptic accounts of Gethsemane, particularly that of Mk:

ABBA! (Father), He said. Everything is possible for you. Take this cup away from Me. **But let it be as You, not I**, would have it ... (cf. Mk 14:36).

a. Then, it is found in two Epistles attributed to Paul:

... it is the spirit of sons and it makes us cry out: ABBA. The Spirit and our spirit bear **united witness** that we are the children of God ... (cf. Rm 8:15).

⁵⁹ cf. St. Francis de Sales, Love of God, b. IX, c. 15.

⁶⁰ cf. also Marchel, *Dieu Père dans le NT*. Paris: du Cerf 1966; Robert Hammerton-Kelly, *God the Father*. Philadelphia: Fortress 1979

The proof that you are sons is that God has sent **the Spirit of His Son into our hearts – the Spirit that cries ABBA, Father ...** (cf. Ga 4:6).

b. For Christ Himself, this term was the expression of the Mystery of His own divine Filiation within the bosom of the Most Blessed Trinity. The first Christians used this same term to express their own adoptive filiation, that associates them to the person and to the prayer of Jesus Christ.

c. The early Church seems to have been convinced that a prayer of this nature could be formulated only with the help, and by the direct activity of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, for the early Church, the expression: ABBA, Father – had profound theological implications for Trinitarian theology and for the theology of the divine Indwelling, the life of Grace:

- for Christ Himself it meant **His Trinitarian Filiation**;
- for the faithful, it implied our **adoptive filiation**.

Periodically, the question arises – sometimes as an objection – could the LORD'S PRAYER, the OUR FATHER, really have been Jesus' own personal prayer? (*"Videtur quod non..."*). The OUR FATHER is clearly extended in the context in which it is found – of a group of disciples asking to be taught how to pray – to the disciples of all time, to all who would be willing to accept a share in His filiation.

Some have excluded Christ Himself from the prayer, not only because it asks for forgiveness of "sins", but also in the light of His clear distinction made to Mary Magdalen:

He said to her: But go and find the brothers, and tell them: I am ascending to MY Father and your Father, to MY God, and your God... (cf. Jn 20:17).

Once more, this kind of language seems to find a parallel in OT discourse:

Ruth said to Naomi: wherever you go, I will go, wherever you live, I will live. Your people shall be my people, and YOUR GOD, MY GOD (cf. Rt 1:16).

However, the context of Jn 20:17 seems to be that Jesus is returning to the One Who is at the same time, HIS Father, and to HIS God: Who is also, through Jesus, our Father and God. Two "distinct" paternities may indeed be noted:

- never before, or elsewhere does Jesus use a formula that would risk confusing His unique filiation, that of His divine person – with the adoptive filiation of His disciples;
- precisely, in Jn 20:27, where God is presented at one and the same time as Christ's Father and the Father of all disciples.

These two distinct “paternities” seem carefully noted in the formula used by Jesus: *MY... your*. This precision seems that it had for its purpose the avoidance of any ambiguity also in the OUR FATHER.

In consulting a concordance, it can be seen that Jesus often distinguishes between “**My**” Father (18 x in Mt; 4 x in Lk; 25/26 x in Jn) – and “your” Father (13 x in Mt; 2 x in Mk; 3 x in Lk 2/3 x in Jn) – without ever bringing together the two formulae in one common “Our” Father. In the case at hand, some have concluded that the OUR FATHER pronounced by the disciples brings them together, all in one collective, ecclesial invocation to their common Father – but, does not include Christ in it. In addition to this, it is evident that the Petition including the pardoning of sin, could not apply to Jesus. Thus, many interpreters have concluded that the LORD’S PRAYER was not truly His “own” – it was merely one that He taught to the Church for its usage, but was not so much His own personal prayer.

BUT (Sed contra....!): this conclusion is far from the majority view. The “us” of the OUR FATHER is not limited to the disciples, it does not exclude Jesus: He also is associated with the lowest dregs of society, us sinners [cf. Ga 3:14; 2 Co 5:21 – cf. Dt 21:23]. For Him, God is His Father; at the same time, **the Father of all disciples**. This is proven by a great number of the variants of certain texts (cf. Mt 18:14) concerning the divine paternity. This permits the conclusion that the conscience of the early Christian had absolutely no hesitation in affirming that the OUR FATHER was the Prayer: both of the disciples, as well as the special prayer of the Lord Himself, addressed to their common Father.

The LORD’S PRAYER may not be reduced, then, to some kind of collective prayer of Christians, worked out by the early Church. It is the echo of **the very personal Prayer that Jesus would offer** throughout His mortal life. By His Mission, He made **this personal Prayer of His** into the very personal Prayer of each and every disciple for as long as time lasts. He has taught this personally to His “own”, whom He loved to the very end.

a. Most would seem to see the OUR FATHER in this light: it is the Lord’s own Prayer, **the echo of His personal Prayer**, and He has made it the personal Prayer of all who would ever accept to follow Him. The Prayer has distinct ecclesial characteristics.

b. The gospel precision that carefully clarifies the distinction between **Jesus’ unique filiation – and the “adoptive” filiation** for everyone else, needs not also to be insisted on here in the OUR FATHER. As Jesus shared in our humanity, our **adoptive filiation** is indeed **a share** in Jesus’ own natural filiation, **in His “essential” Filiation**. In like manner, we can say that our **filial prayer** is an analogous participation in the Trinitarian prayer of Jesus. This seems to be behind St. Paul’s words: the proof that you

are children is that God has sent His Spirit, the spirit of His Son, into our hearts – it is the Spirit that cries ABBA! (cf. Ga 6:4).

c. All the Fathers of the Church and early commentators have insisted on an evident consequence of this common divine Paternity. Since all have the same Father, that all human beings are really brothers and sisters, who are divinely called to love one another, and to treat each other as such. This is the fundamental principle that inspires all of the morality and the spirituality of Christianity. The gospel states this explicitly:

... you are all brothers... since you have only one Father, and He is in heaven ... (cf. Mt 23:8, ff.).

This theme has been eloquently and repeatedly developed down through the years – with evident implications for the theology of charity.

A further difficulty: was this prayer meant to be something reserved only to believers, to the faithful – is the divine paternity limited to them? Is God the Father of the sinner?

a. With **GS 22**, that in some way, **Jesus is united in some way to every single human being**. There is always need, therefore, to clarify the more the true nature of divine paternity and the broader amplitude of this human fraternity. Some questions do need reflection:

- God is indeed Our Father because He has created us;
- even more so, He is Father in redeeming, sanctifying us.

b. The divine paternity is the more fully extended to those who do accept God as Father, and model their lives on that of His Son. Creation does indeed constitute the divine paternity, and makes of all human beings truly brothers and sisters. This is already clear in the gospel:

But I say this to you: love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you – in this way, you will be the sons of your Father in heaven, for he causes the sun to rise on the bad as well as on the good... (cf. Mt 5:44, ff.).

c. There is a problem in an overly restrictive reading of the context for the OUR FATHER in Lk's presentation. It does seem to be addressed just to the followers of Christ, perhaps in some contrast even with those who followed John the Baptist: ***"Lord teach US to pray, just as John taught his disciples ... (cf. Lk 11:2). Even in Mt's rendition (cf. Mt 6:7,ff.), another precision is offered: "In your prayers, do not babble as the pagans do – for they think that by using many words they will be heard."*** Some interpreters read this in an exclusive sense – that therefore, the LORD'S PRAYER is meant exclusively for the close followers of Christ.

Nonetheless, all Christian prayer is essentially **a share in the life and mission of Jesus Himself** – all become sisters and brothers in what Christ has accomplished for the world. This is so in a particular manner, when one prays motivated by faith, hope and love – the OUR FATHER, as Christ prayed this.

a. There are various “extensions” that have been suggested over the years:

- primarily restricted to those who share the same faith – at least in Jesus Christ as Savior and Son of God;
- an exclusive reading would be to see this prayer limited solely to those in the state of grace;
- others see this as the special prayer of those who sincerely seek the truth, honestly do good, seek integral justice: “***facienti quod in se est, Deus non denegat gratiam.***” (St. Thomas wrote: when one is said to do what is in him to do, this is said to be in his power, **according as he is moved by God.**” (cf. I-II, q. 109, a. 6, ad 2um).

b. There is a particular value, of course, in sharing in Christ’s own life of filiation – adoption is transmitted to us by Christ Himself. There is already a natural fraternity among human beings – Pope John XXIII also called “socialization” (the gathering of human beings for various motives, as culture, sports, business) – as one of the very promising signs of our time. So, there is no attempt to deny the natural bonds of fraternity that need to be encouraged among human beings – or, to make membership in the Church a kind of exclusive saving “Noah’s Ark” for the storms of our times.

c. Perhaps a solution to a possible difficulty would be to extend the Our of the OUR FATHER as far as neighbor in the commandment, to include every “other”, all human beings are called by Jesus to come follow Him, to become members of His household, partners with His disciples, to listen and to put into practice His Beatitudes.

d. Indeed, already “blessed” are the “pure of heart”, the “poor in spirit”, “those who mourn”, those “who suffer for justice’s sake.”⁶¹ Certain “levels”, stages in the divine Paternity, and its corresponding “filiation”. There is, first of all, the unique “natural” Filiation of Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity. There follows then, a “**share in His nature**” (cf. 2 P 1:4), those who willingly accept and live the life of grace. The matter was often discussed in various ways through the centuries.

⁶¹ (cf. Jacques Deupont, OSB, *Les Béatitudes*).

e. The early Church included in its baptismal liturgy as well as in its Eucharistic liturgy – the LORD'S PRAYER, and this from the very beginning. This is surely because the newly baptized are plunged deeply into the mystery of Christ through the regeneration afforded by baptism. Surely, the baptized, those who specifically follow Jesus Christ have a special right/obligation/challenge to pray and to live the Lord's own Prayer. With immersion into the Paschal Mystery of Christ (cf. Rm 6), and with Christ present in the Eucharist, Christians can surely echo in a more resounding way, uniting their voices to the very Person of Christ, present in a most special manner in the Eucharist, present "in a way that surpasses all other 'presences'" [cf. Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei*, Sept. 1965].

f. Periodically this view emerges anew under various forms (pertaining either to the mystery of grace, or to the Church), 'would restrict the right to the OUR FATHER especially to the "saints"'. For this view, espoused also by many of the Fathers of the Church, the LORD'S PRAYER should be reserved to those who are sincerely trying to conduct their lives as sharing in Christ's own filiation. Around the year 250, Cyprian wrote that the new Christian 'person', regenerated and given over to God by the grace of baptism, can now indeed say 'Our Father.' The reason is because such a person has just become son/ daughter. In appealing to God as Father in heaven, such a person attests in his/her first stuttering utterances that he/she has surrendered earthly relationships in favor of the heavenly.

1.) St. Augustine (around 410) repeated this view in other terms: one could not pray the OUR FATHER if he/she were not yet "born". In his Sermon 59, he stated that the OUR FATHER is not yet the prayer of the catechumens – but will become so after their baptism.

2.) Much closer to our own time, Karl Barth wrote that the OUR FATHER is not just any ordinary prayer: there is much emphasis also to be given to the "our" and to "us." He is indeed "our" Father in a particular manner: by bestowing this privilege, He has made some demands. It is through the mediation of Jesus that we indeed have become His children, and He has become "ours". It all depends on whether or not we will follow in His footsteps, living His own life. This prayer implies communion with Jesus, that we enter into His discipleship, that we undertake His Mission. It is Jesus Who invites us, permits us, commands us, enables us – to come and follow Him. Only He can give us the ability to use His very own Prayer in addressing His very own Father. This prayer does indeed invite us to adore Him, to pray to God as His children – to make the Words of His only-begotten, most beloved Son – our own.

c. Yet, through the centuries the Church has defended strongly against an overly "exclusivist" understanding of being the "children" of God. Different forms of Jansenism have been rejected through the years:

- the Constitution “***Auctorem Fidei***” (1794) rejected a number of propositions of a Synod which met at Pistoia in Tuscany (1786);
- there were also condemned many rigorist positions: the conception of a Church comprised solely of the saints (cf. D-S 2615) – or that all grace needs to be mediated through the Church was rejected by Clement XI in 1713 (cf. D-S 242.9)

Surely, in a most unique manner, the Father is Jesus’ “own” – Jesus is His unique, most-beloved Son, the “first-born.” Only through adoption does the follower of Christ receive His Father. God becomes the Father of those who become the disciples of His Son, imitate His way of life, who truly want to follow after Him, to see where “He lives.” In this sense, one needs to accept the “total Christ”, be a vital, living part of the community He has founded.

a. To modern hearts, rightly attuned to socialization, ecumenism – it might seem excessive to limit the OUR FATHER in this way.

1.) Because of creation, in some way God is indeed the Father of all, in that He gives life, nourishment, up-bringing. Humanity does seem to be the glorious crown of the universe, at least in some of its conceptions – even in its infinitesimal insignificance. Already, the divine “paternity” includes all that has been created, as a first stage.

2.) Further, this created universe is already (passively) open toward – has a natural, passive obediential capacity – also for Christ. There are levels, then, of divine paternity, depending upon the extent that one would accept adoptive filiation. In this sense, we are not children of God by nature alone – but are called to enter into a more intimate relationship with the Father through grace, a unique share in the Filiation of His own Son.

b. Should anyone reject His extended hand, try to establish one’s own personal relationship unassisted with the Father, this is condemned from the outset to failure. Jesus has made a special gift of His own relationship with the Father to each and everyone who will agree to come and follow Him.

c. With all that is said: Jesus’ own personal Prayer to the Father remains a Mystery. This will never be penetrated in comprehensive manner, even when we pray His own prayer, and express ourselves in terms of His own natural Filiation.

SUMMARY: surely, Christians and non-Christians alike, saints and sinners: none are excluded totally from the divine paternity. Nonetheless, in order to become the adopted children of the Heavenly Father in the full sense, it is necessary to become truly His adopted children, by accepting His grace, acting upon it, by taking up the

Cross of Jesus Christ every day, and to follow Him. The challenge is to live the full density of the OUR FATHER – a certain “composite picture”, pattern, paradigm evolves in any careful reading of Scripture:

- the Son is one with the Father (cf. Jn 10:30; 17:21);
- the Son’s prayer is one of adoration for the Father’s glory (cf. Mk 14:36; Jn 17:4);

Jesus has come on earth specifically to give to human beings the power to become the children of God (cf. Jn 1:12);

- He has come to gather the dispersed children of the Most High (cf. Jn 11:52);
- Jesus’ coming has made all brothers and sisters, and in a more intense, elevated manner (cf. 3n 20:17);
- the OUR FATHER is a formula that expresses the new relationship uniting human beings to God;
- by the Incarnation, God the Creator offers to all the possibility of re-birth to a new life (cf. Jn 3:5-16; 10:10).

While it is true that the formula: OUR FATHER can be in common with anyone who thinks of God as Creator – on Jesus’ lips it also expresses His own unique relationship, which is offered to anyone who will accept it, as a participation in it. Therefore, the fullest meaning of the OUR FATHER is to live HIS WILL, to share in some way, already now, within the life of the Most Blessed Trinity⁶².

†††

2.] **GETHSEMANE (cf. Mk 14:32-42; Mt 26:36-46; Lk 22:39-46)**

While some of the dogmatic questions associated with the OUR FATHER lead to **Trinitarian** reflections and also to some thoughts on the Nature of **Grace** and the Divine Indwelling, the Agony of Gethsemane leads to a consideration of the “wills” in Jesus Christ, and the old teaching called Monothelism.

A Bit of History:

a. The eternal Son of God, “**one of the Trinity**”, became man in order to save the world. The mystery of the Word Incarnate has been approached throughout the Christian Tradition from two opposite directions, using as their starting points:

⁶² NB: for these pages of these notes, cfr. Jean Carmignac, *Recherches sur le Notre Père*. Paris: Letouzey 1969, pp. 63-69, *passim*.

- the humanity of Christ – as largely followed by the School of Antioch;
- the divinity of the Son of God – as espoused by the School of Alexandria.

Both schools had the problem of showing that Jesus Christ is **truly God** and **truly man**, and that He is One.

b. This led to a variety of errors:

- Arianism: denied the divinity of Christ;
- Nestorianism denied the unity of His Person;
- Monophysitism rejected the duality of natures after union. (For all practical purposes, this last mentioned, rejected the humanity of Christ).

The great Christological Councils of the 5th century were faced with the task of expressing in clear terms the mysterious union of the two natures in one person.

c. Later it became also necessary to explicate the same mystery on the level of Christ's actions – against the Monothelitist tendency, the Church explained that the two wills and actions, the divine and the human, remain distinct in the one person of the God-man. Except for the exclusion of the error of the AGNOETES (who held that in Christ there was ignorance), the Church's reflection on the mysterious union of the divine and human knowledge was reserved for a later period.⁶³ Thus, the mystery of Christ, a mystery of unity in duality, has been through the centuries the object of a deep reflection; in recent years this reflection has taken on a new dimension with the problem of the psychological unity of the God-man⁶⁴.

3.] A FEW DEFINITIONS OF THE CHURCH:

a. The Council of Lateran (649):

If anyone does not, according to the holy Fathers, confess truly and properly two wills, the divine and the human, intimately united in one and the same Christ God, since it is one and the same Who by each of His two natures has willed our salvation, let him be condemned (D-S 51d; The Christian Faith, 11 627/10 – p. 167).

If anyone does not, according to the holy Fathers, confess truly and properly two actions (ENERGEIA), the divine and the human, intimately united in one and

⁶³ cf. Jacques Maritain, *On the Grace and Humanity of Jesus*. Herder & Herder 1969; Bertrand de Margerie, SJ, *The Human Knowledge of Christ*. Boston: St. Paul 1980

⁶⁴ cf. Pietro Parente, *L'io di Cristo*. Rovigo: Padano 1981; cf. also *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*. rev. ed. by N. Neuner, SJ - J. Dupuis, SJ. Staten Island, NY: Alba 1982

the same Christ God, since it is one and the same Who by each of His two natures has worked out our salvation, let him be condemned. (cf. D-S 511; The Christian Faith, 627/11).

If anyone, following the infamous heretics, confesses only one nature or one will, or one action of divinity and humanity in the Christ God, destroying thereby what the holy Fathers confess and denying the mystery of the Incarnation of our Savior, let him be condemned (cf. D-S 512; The Christian faith, // 627/12).

If, in the Christ God in Whom, as has been taught by our holy Fathers, the two wills and the two actions, the divine and the human, are essentially preserved in their unity, anyone, following the infamous heretics, confesses against the doctrine of the holy Fathers one will only and only one action, let him be condemned (cf. D-S 513; The Christian Faith, // 627/13).

If anyone, following the impious heretics, confesses their impious doctrine of one will and one action in the Christ God, and denies and rejects the two wills and two actions, the divine and the human, 'physically' preserved in their unity in the Christ God, as is professed about Him by the holy Fathers according to orthodox doctrine, let him be condemned. (cf. D-S 514; The Christian faith, # 515). – for these texts, cf. id., pp. 167, f.).

b. The IIIrd General Council of Constantinople (681):

We likewise proclaim in Him, according to the teaching of the holy Fathers, two natural volitions, or wills, and two natural actions, without division, without change, without separation, without confusion.

The two natural wills are not – by no means – opposed to each other, as the impious heretics assert; but His human will is compliant, it does not resist or oppose, but rather submits to His divine and almighty will. For as the wise Athanasias says it was necessary that the will of the flesh move itself, but also that it be submitted to the divine will; because just as His flesh is said to be and is the flesh of God the Word, so, too, the natural will of His flesh is said to be and is God the Word's very own, as He Himself declares: 'I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.' (Jn 6:38). He calls the will of His flesh His own will, because the flesh also has become His own. For just as His most Holy and immaculate flesh, animated by His soul, has not been destroyed by being divinized but remained in its own state and kind, so also His human will has not been destroyed by being divinized. It has rather been preserved, according to the words of Gregory the theologian: 'For His will – referring to that of the savior – being fully divinized, is not opposed to God. (D-S 556; The Christian Faith, // 635 – pp. 172, f.)

Therefore, preserving entirely what is neither fused nor divided, we proclaim the entire matter in this concise utterance: believing that one of the Holy Trinity, who after the incarnation is our Lord Jesus Christ, is our true God, we say that His two natures shine forth in His one hypostasis. In it, throughout His entire human existence in the flesh, he made manifest His miracles and His sufferings, not in mere appearance, but in reality. The difference of two natures in that same and unique hypostasis is recognized by the fact that each of the two wills and performs what is proper to it in communion with the other... (D-S 537; The Christian Faith, 11636, p.173).

4.] **A THEOLOGY OF HOLY ABANDONMENT TO THE DIVINE WILL**

a.] **THE MEANING OF THE WORD:** generally, the following distinction is made:

- passive: one can have the experience of having been abandoned by God (the “Dark Night”, “Spiritual Winter”: Why have you abandoned Me? (Ps 22).
- active when one really abandons him/herself to God.

“Passive” Abandonment is generally considered as a part of the spiritual life, and is considered under the headings of: ARIDITY, DESOLATION, DERELICTION, PURIFICATIONS.

Of particular interest here would be the reflection that is needed on Active Abandonment to the divine will. This was defined in classical theology as: a conformity to the divine good pleasure. It is a **“conformity” that springs from love**, and is brought to an elevated degree. In some manuals, the Latin equivalent was often considered to be resignatio, used by the author of the classic *Imitation of Christ*, and by others in the Devotio Moderna school.

b.] **ITS FIELD:** the spiritual life is a work accomplished by two, the accomplishment of two wills: divine and human, the second being that of the believer. The Will of God has infinite power, and in a certain sense, is considered by many to exercise the principal role. It is the divine will that takes the initiative, offers the means. It is the role of the human will to cede, to accede, to the divine in the work of cooperation: our will is **called to be in conformity with the divine will**, to depend on it more and more. St. Alphonsus is quoted to refer to this process as bringing the human will into **uniformity** to that of God. This is the summit of perfection. (Scripture does offer a few “models” from every day life of how baptism makes us one with Jesus Christ: Peter’s “Living Stones”, resting on the Risen Corner Stone; the vine and the branches with the same life; putting on the garment of Christ; the nuptial theme; the Mystical Body).

For St. Vincent de Paul, perfection consists in so uniting our will to that of God that His and ours are properly speaking, but one and the same – both in willing, as in non-willing. Whoever excels the more in this, is the more perfect. A meditation that dates from the Middle Ages on the Lord's Prayer, and attributed to St. Anselm, proceeds thus:

This is the joy of the Angels, the celestial desire to be able to offer yourself totally for the reward of heaven, to accept all for this, to conform your will to it fully... (“... **tibi totaliter obsequendum**...”).

c.] **DISTINCTIONS:** the “Will of God” may be considered as follows:

1.] **The “Signified Divine Will”**: this is what is already known in advance, manifested clearly and explicitly by the commandments of God, the precepts of the Church, counsels, inspirations, rules, and constitutions (cf. St. Francis de Sales, Treatise on the Love of God, Book 8, c. 3, & 5-9) – the vows and the orders of superiors.

2.] **The Divine Will of Good Pleasure**: under this difficult title, the committed believer is called to accept all the events of life, over which there is no control. This includes all those things that happen: sickness, deaths, affliction, consolations – adverse, as well as prosperous realities, all that has not been foreseen, planned, “programmed.”

To submit to the SIGNIFIED DIVINE WILL, technically, is not “Abandonment” – it is **obedience**, which when coupled with love, is the normal means of achieving perfection. The broad area of the DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE is the specific field of Holy Abandonment.

One could imagine situations when the SIGNIFIED DIVINE WILL would call for Abandonment, as in the instance of one giving truly dedicated effort constantly to the duties of one's state in life for the success of some endeavor, that also depends on many other factors. Some of the efforts that may indeed be judged to be “the will of God” call upon Abandonment particularly when the results do not seem in proportion to the effort that went into it all (cf. St. Francis de Sales, Divine Love, book 9, c. 6).

a.] There can never any real conflict between the “Divine Will of Good Pleasure” and the “Signified Divine Will” – of necessity, being the same Will of God, they are in agreement. Should there ever be an apparent conflict, the SIGNIFIED DIVINE WILL takes precedence, and gives ultimate meaning to the DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE. St. Francis de Sales taught that in doubt, obedience should predominate.

b.] Not all submission to the DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE merits the name “Abandonment”, even when it is in conformity to God’s Will. “To resign oneself”, in the present meaning of the word, is not always “Abandonment.” In order to be genuine “Abandonment”, one would need **a more generous self-giving** – not one that is forced. Abandonment is never a quiescent restraint that may imply hesitation and deliberation. St. Bernard indicated three levels of submission to the DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE:

- that initiated by fear, sustaining the Cross of Christ patiently;
- those more proficient, may carry the Cross out of hope, willingly;
- those consummate in charity, embrace it even ardently.

Conformity to the Divine Will that proceeds from Fear is simple resignation; that conformity which comes from ardent love is surely Abandonment.

- 1.] Some of the earlier discussion centered on whether in the act of perfect abandonment, there could be mixed in any elements of HOPE - and there were theologians who would eliminate hope from the practice of authentic abandonment.
- 2.] For others, though, there is a specific exercise of ABANDONMENT, expressed as **perfect Hope in God**. Such Abandonment demands an act of confidence in the goodness of God – it rejects not only all worrying solicitude, but remains committed; it would never be accompanied by uncontrolled restlessness, concern. It disposes us to **a total oblation of oneself to God**. Such abandonment that realizes these conditions will lead virtually to the act of charity. It will soon and easily become a pure love of God. However, it is necessary to make clear that the Virtue of Abandonment is already constituted by these elements, and not merely by confident Hope in God.
- 3.] Other interpreters see it differently: for them, conformity through hope is not yet that complete detachment, which would ask for a more complete detachment, indifference, to the remission of one’s will wholly into the hands of Providence. Abandonment cannot be partial conformity with the DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE – it is rather an entire conformity, a complete reconciliation to His Will, in order to embrace that of God. This special character of abandonment necessarily requires the exercise of charity. Conformity through the exercise of hope is an abandonment in

potency – or, rather, an initial abandonment: it will only be achieved when love is added to it.

- 4.] Most authors do speak of **Abandonment** only in connection with **Charity**. However, Fr. R. Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, maintains that **heroic hope is the eminent degree of Abandonment**. It makes one tend more and more toward God, relying on the help promised to all. The formal motive of theological hope is helpful Omnipotence, Mercy! Heroic Hope is characterized by invincible firmness and trusting abandonment.
- a.] The Council of Trent (D-S 1541, *De munere perseverantiae*) teaches that all should have a most firm hope in the help of God, for if we do not resist His grace, as He has begun the work of salvation in us, He will finish it, working in us both to will and to accomplish (cf. Ph 1:6; 2:13).
- b.] The invincible firmness of hope appears in the passive purifications, when the Lord permits every human hope to disappear. The tried person, in the “**School of God**” of suffering, obtains a clearer view of his/her own need. In times of illness, strong temptations and in discouragement, the call is to hope heroically and theologically against every human hope.
- c.] When trials are courageously endured, hope grows stronger and is increased. Like all theological virtues, which are infused, Hope, too, is infused “like an acquired virtue”, and therefore – with the concomitant help of Grace – it needs to be exercised. The Christian hopes increasingly for salvation with a certitude of tendency. The firmness in tending toward eternal life should be invincible, because of the formal motive on which it rests. In spite of rebuffs, contradictions, the sight of our own wretchedness and our sins, we are called to have hope in God, Who has promised His help:

Ask and it shall be given to you – seek, and you shall find – knock, and it shall be opened to you... (Lk 11:9-13).

If God is for us, who is against us: Even if one were the greatest sinner on earth, there is still no reason not to have any less trust in God – for hope does not rest on human innocence, but on God’s omnipotence as mercy (St. Therese).

- 5.] With St. Paul, we can almost rejoice in our infirmities, so that the power of Christ might indeed dwell in us. **For when we are weak, then it is that we are truly strong** (cf. 2 Co 12:7, ff.). Often one is crushed to grow, in order to be the more configured to Him. Isaiah speaks of Him as ***“He was wounded for our iniquities... by His Wounds, ours are healed...”*** (cf. Is 53:5).
- 6.] Heroic Hope manifests itself not only in firmness, but by **trusting abandonment to divine Providence** and to **the omnipotent goodness of God**. Perfect abandonment differs from Quietism because it is accompanied by Hope and unwavering fidelity to duty. Such unwavering fidelity to the SIGNIFIED WILL OF GOD, made known in the present responsibilities, prepares one to abandon oneself with full confidence to the as yet unrevealed DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE.
- 7.] Heroic Hope rests more and more on the infinite merits of our Savior, on the value of the Precious Blood that He shed for us. No matter what happens, all are called to hope in the divine Good Shepherd, Who gave His life for the sheep – and in good, the Father, Who after having handed over His Son, cannot refuse to come to the aid of those who have recourse to Him – and in the Holy Spirit, who breathes where He wills, overshadows us, to bring forth Christ, as He did Mary.
- 8.] The Church professes this heroic hope, trusts also in Mary, universal Mediatrix. At the foot of the Cross, she stood, and there made her great act of Hope when all seemed lost. She merits to be called: Mary, Help of Christians, Comforter of the Afflicted, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, “our life, our sweetness and our **hope!**”. In her own FIAT, and her message to the servants of Cana: DO WHATEVER HE TELLS YOU – she has left this heritage for the Church of every generation.
- 9.] Heroic Hope, then, is never separated from Charity – just as Paul’s “**obedience of faith**” (cf. DV 5) means includes the entire theological life of faith, hope and charity. Hope also is united to the **KENOSIS** – its best climate is the **Beatitude of Poverty, and the Gift of Fear of the Holy Spirit** – in St. Thomas’ synthesis (cf. II-II, q. 19). Hope, therefore, is not “selfish”, self-seeking: it does not seek eternal life solely “for us”, but for the glory of God. Faith keeps hope from being merely political, as it must be based on an “integral” reading of God’s word. And charity keeps hope from

being solely for oneself: it must include God and neighbor. Its scope has been considerably broadened in recent reflection (cf. e.g. GS 39).

5.] **ABANDONMENT AND INDIFFERENCE:**

a. Very frequently in the Rule of St. Ignatius, there is insistence on “being content”, being “indifferent.” This kind of attitude seems to be one of the goals of his **Spiritual Exercises**. “Indifference”, classically was considered to be a “negative virtue”, a kind of “pre-requisite to “full-fledged” abandonment. As it is described in the fundamental meditation of the **Spiritual Exercises** of St. Ignatius, it is a preliminary disposition to the fuller living of Abandonment. Holy Abandonment supposes the human will exists in a loving expectancy, a waiting upon God’s Will, ready to proceed into act once this DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE is known. “Indifference”, then, would seem to have no further reason for being once the DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE is clear.

b. Nonetheless, the two are intimately bound together in that St. Francis de Sales may confuse the two: he often refers to “Holy Abandonment” as a “Holy Indifference.” He defines Holy Abandonment as a kind of perfect Indifference to receive, accept all kinds of happenings that take place through Divine Providence – affliction as well as consolation, sickness as well as health, poverty as well as wealth, rejection as well as honors, shame as well as glory.

c. In Book 9 of the Love of God, the saint treats of the love of submission by which the human will is united to the DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE, and hardly seems to distinguish between resignation and indifference.

d. Perhaps coming from his soldier’s training, St. Ignatius of Loyola insists very much on abandonment, as obsequium to the Roman Pontiff in matters of the Apostolic Mission. This seems to be the area of the “**Fourth Vow**”.⁶⁵ The matter of Holy Abandonment is treated in the well-known classic by Jean-Pierre de Caussade.⁶⁶

6.] **SPIRITUAL TEACHINGS BASED ON THE GOSPEL:** this is not some kind of sublime spirituality unknown to the flock. It has deep biblical roots:

That is why I am telling you not to worry about your life and what you are to eat, nor about your body, and how you are to clothe it. Surely life means more than food, and the body more than clothing! Look at the birds in the sky ... yet, your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth more than they are? ... Think of the flowers growing in the fields ... they never have to work, or spin. Yet, I assure you that not even Solomon in all his regalia was robed like one of these...Now, if

⁶⁵ cf. Albert Chapelle, La quatrième vœu de la Compagnie. Rome: CIS 1978.

⁶⁶ Self-Abandonment to Divine Providence. Collins, Fontana Library 1959.

that is the way God clothes the grass in the field, which is there today and gone tomorrow, thrown into the furnace, will he not much more look after you, you men of little faith!...So, do not worry... Your heavenly Father knows your needs. So set your hearts on His kingdom first, and on His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you...So do not worry about tomorrow: tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own... (cf. Mt 6:25-34).

There is no need to be afraid, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom... (cf. Lk 12:22-31).

St. Peter teaches his own brand of abandonment when he encourages the followers of Christ to put all their care on the Lord, because He will take care of them:

Bow down, then, before the power of God now, and He will raise you up on the appointed day; unload your worries on to Him, since He is looking after you ... (cf. 1 P 5:7, ff.).

7.] DIVINE PROVIDENCE: ⁶⁷The scholars who have studied Abandonment see it founded on a variety of dogmatic truths, that offer the solid basis on which to entrust ourselves totally to God. The principal dogma would be Divine Providence, particularly in these aspects:

a. THE SOVEREIGN DIVINE WILL:

1.) All that happens on earth flows out from the sovereign will of God. St. Augustine remarked in his *Enchiridion* (n. 24) that nothing happens that is not willed by divine omnipotence: either by permitting it, or by positively bridling it about. All that a human being endures against his/her will – in the last analysis, really cannot be limited to the choices of human beings – rather, all that happens is to be attributed to the Will of the One Who gives power to all wills (cf. *De Civ. Dei.* 1. V, c. 10, n. 1).

2.) In effect, God holds in His own hand all the created wills and even when they act contrary to the divine will, even when they seem to go contrary to His designs: through his omnipotence, he can make them tend toward the goals that He has established in advance. St. Augustine stated (*De Civ. Dei*, 1. XXII, c. 2) that much is done by the devil, even contrary to the Will of God – but, such is His wisdom, such is His power and virtue that He is able to direct all to those purposes, or goals, that He knew beforehand; even what seems for the time adverse, in some way, tends to His purposes. God even accomplishes His designs that are, in the long run, beneficent – even by making use of ill will. Even the sacrilegious death of Jesus Christ is turned by the omnipotent mercy and wisdom of God to the redemption of the world.

⁶⁷ cf. St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*. The Classics of Western Spirituality. NY / Ramsey/ Toronto: Paulist 1980.

3.) Since the divine wisdom and power govern and direct all, as St. Augustine deeply believed, he was able to draw this conclusion: in our lives, nothing happens by chance – all that seems to go against our choices, can only come through the will of God, from His Providence, from that order that He has personally established, from that consent that He bestows and from the laws that He has drawn up (cf. En in Ps 118, v. 12).

4.) Behind the secondary causes that affect us directly, we are called upon to see the hand of God – to see God, in all that happens. All that humanity undergoes, despite free will (the afflictions, the chagrin, travail, humiliation) – all, is attributed to the just will of God (cf. En. In Ps 32, II, n. 24, 26).

b. THIS DIVINE WILL IS INFINITELY BENEFICENT:

1.) The divine choices, decisions, all are good: in their source, in their goal, in their forms – good even without the mixture of evil, good in all aspects and always! St. Augustine commented on this basic principle of his: God is so good that even evil serves His purposes. He would never allow evil just to happen, if He did not have some plan to utilize this by His sovereign will (*Opus imperf. Contra Julianum*, V, n. 60 – PL 45, 1495).

2.) The glory of God, in which all the divine actions coincide fully with the ultimate good of each one, may not seem in accord with apparent good – but, beyond doubt, this leads (in the final analysis) to each and everyone's eternal good. Cassian pointed out that really no one could say in the depths of one's own being these words of the LORD'S PRAYER: 'Thy Will be done!' – except one who would believe that everything: adversity, as well as prosperity – is dispensed in our regard by God, for the ultimate and final good. God's only purpose is for the salvation and well-being of the faithful. For this, He is more attentive and more caring than anyone could be in his/her own regard (Cassian, Conference IX. On Prayer, c. 20)

3.) A line from St. Paul that is often quoted in this regard is: ***We know that by turning everything to their good God cooperates with all those who love Him, with all those that He has called according to His purpose*** (cf. Rm 8:28).

4.) The Will of God is the sole rule for the devout. In all that occurs, the devout, the truly faithful, will only that, and are attached to only that. Those who respond to this grace see the divine blessings in it; become content with their lot in life – and desire only that God's will be accomplished. The graced believer is convinced that God would will nothing, allow nothing, that He could not turn to the advantage of those whom He infinitely loves. **All that happens, flows from His hand** – all, but sin. All events can become blessings – all occasions, can become opportunities. The crosses that come into every life lead one to resemble ever more the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, and Model of all spirituality.

5.) For a committed believer, dedicated on making this world more humane, nothing would be more reasonable than entrusting the entire endeavor more and more to the Word of God (cf. DV 5). The exercise of this abandonment leads of its very nature to convert all that happens into virtue, blessing. If indeed, one believes that God is the sovereign Master, Lord of the universe, His will indeed is accomplished in all things.

6.) **Christian abandonment is far superior to Stoic resignation.** As with Aristotle, and his brilliant insight into the spirituality of the soul, there is also an admirable preparation for truly “Christian” abandonment in Epictetus. He once wrote that he was trying to become instructed to learn how to will those things that did happen! One has to come to ponder the One who has regulated it all (cf. his “Contentment of Spirit”). It does seem that the Stoics made a concerted effort to balance perfectly human activities with the divine interventions in their lives. They readily understood the basic distinction between what did truly depend on human choices, and all that was above these. Particularly regarding these latter, this system of thought strove seriously to teach a perfect submission to those things that God indeed had chosen. Epictetus taught never to disobey God, never to reproach Him, never to complain about those things He asked us to share – never to be discontent in doing, or in suffering, what indeed was inevitable.

7.) All of life offers repeated opportunities to put oneself in conformity with the Will of God: this is that sublime capacity to turn to gold whatever one touches! The contribution of the old Stoic school, in this regard, is indeed considerable: with the revealed sense now of “God is love” (cf. 1 Jn 4:8, 16), and with the assistance of grace – this doctrine may be lived to a most sublime degree.

8.) Abandonment goes hand in hand with a deeper appreciation through faith in Divine Providence. In the school of St. Francis de Sales, St. Jeanne de Chantal practiced abandonment to God’s love to a sublime degree. Hers was a sublime devotion to Divine Providence. Her abandonment was indeed entire and genuine – her love for divine providence was both real and solid. Any reflection on this mystery for her was a blessing. Her synthesis of sacred Scripture was that saying: Eternal Father, Your Providence governs all things! Under such government, the offer is peace of soul. In success, as well as in the harsh events of life, in all fatigue – the ideal faith is to unite divine Providence with the free divine Will, moved by Mercy toward humanity in all of His interventions.

8.] ELEMENTS AND EFFECTS OF ABANDONMENT: different theologians over the years have pondered the nature of Holy Abandonment and offered their own “list” of elements, or virtues that go to make it up. High on this list would be these following that recur so often: detachment, faith, confidence, love, hope.

- for Bossuet, abandonment is the sum total of **all the Christian virtues**: the most perfect faith, the most complete hope, and the most fervent and faithful love.
- for de Caussade, in his Spiritual Instructions, he chose to follow this doctrine, for the most part. For him, the state of abandonment is **a certain mixture of faith, hope and charity**, in one and the same act, which unites one's heart with God and to His activity (cf. Book II, c. 1, II 3).
- Piny understood the way of abandonment as that alone which one exercises the most vivid faith – and where one practices **supreme hope** – while being at the same time, the path of **true love**. It is where one practices the more, the virtue of **justice** and the virtue of **patience**. Abandonment, then, is the most penitent and crucifying way to follow the Lord.

In summary, then: for most of the classical interpreters, Abandonment is a synthesis of all the theological and all the moral virtues. The following are its absolutely essential elements:

a. **RESIGNATION**: in it, one surrenders his/her own self, own will, one's own interests, to be occupied solely with God's will and His love. To be abandoned TO God, one has to depart FROM much that pertains to self. There could be no wonder in noting that all the classical descriptions of Abandonment are much colored by "abnegation."

1.) The "resignatio" of the Imitation of Christ seems to occupy the mid-way point between abnegation and the gift of self – or, rather, a combination of both of these (cf. Book III, c. 37). In order to obtain freedom of heart, there is necessary a pure and integral resignation of self. Abandonment, as presented by St. Francis de Sales, coincides with "abnegation", and the "handing of oneself over to God."

2.) In order to abandon oneself, and to set aside one's own interests, this will always mean "surrender", to be detached from one's own will, in order to surrender oneself totally to God. In the sublime ideals of St. Francis de Sales, this means: to ask for nothing for oneself; but not to refuse anything, either. It involves committing oneself to the arms of Divine Providence, without being diverted, or side-tracked by any personal desire. In the final analysis – with all the efforts to describe it – it comes down simply to will what God wills for us. In order to be attached to God, means not being riveted to anything else. To live this state, there is required that the DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE needs to be discerned and become the ultimate principle, the rule of life. It is in this attitude that all are invited to formulate all of prayer.

3.) Abandonment is a “**cession**”, a handing over of self to God. It has to be a totally free choice on the part of a committed believer. It involves one’s whole being: body and soul, thoughts and desires, intellect and will – past and future: to remit oneself to God according to His sublime ideals. It is presupposed that one will believe in the infinite and omnipotent Goodness, Love and mercy of God. It asks for a complete self-surrender to these divine attributes. It is to trust in the infinite power and grace of God, to make all this possible.

b. LOVE: detachment, faith and hope in divine Providence are just the “dispositions”, the “pre-requisites” for genuine abandonment. In order that this state be integral, complete, to be handed over to God unreservedly, LOVE is necessary.

1.) Abandonment to God in the midst of adversity calls necessarily upon a filial affection. It is in trials and tribulations where it can be seen whether one is a slave / servant, or trusting child. When adversity threatens, when it really does come – the hired-hand flees. The child, on the contrary, remains indefectibly attached to the parent in the difficulties as well as in the good times (Tauler).

2.) St. Francis de Sales writes with great insight in this regard: to entrust oneself to God in sweetness and peace, when times are good, is possible for all. But, to commit oneself to Him in the times of storm and tempest, this is proper only to His children. My view is that we are called to commit ourselves to Him with a total abandonment (Letter of January 7, 1611).

3.) It is from its real purpose, which is that of uniting the believer to God – that one is able to distinguish authentic abandonment from that which is useless, or perhaps an exercise in Stoic vanity. **Love remains the distinguishing mark.** Abandonment leads to the perfection of holy love, while all the while, permitting one to experience this love. It can truly be said: in order to be abandoned to God, one must love Him; and it is only in loving God, that one could ever even begin to be abandoned to Him. In this sense, abandonment is the most integral expression of perfect love for God.

4.) Throughout the history of spirituality, most praise has been heaped on the Way of Holy Abandonment. St. Paul of the Cross called it “the most perfect way, the treasure of all treasures.” St. Francis de Sales offers the most frequent praise of it, as it permeates so much of his work on divine love: “Abandonment is the virtue of virtues: it is the chrism of charity, the odor of humility, merit of patience, and the FIAT of perseverance: great is this virtue and only worthy to be practiced by the most beloved children of God.” Surin, a classical spiritual writer, placed the Love of Abandonment among the points of perfection that lead the believer to great holiness.

9.] ITS SCOPE:

a. There is perhaps no other reality as extended as is Abandonment. It is extended to everything: to the past, the present, to the future. It involves the body and all the states it passes through – to the soul, and all its miseries, as well as to its considerable qualities – to good as well as to evil; it includes the benevolence of others, as well as their malice. It involves the vicissitudes of the material world: death, time, eternity.

b. In brief, it has the same extension as Divine Providence does. From this, nothing is excluded, escapes. The saints were “abandoned” to God regarding their own physical well being. It may be noted that the truly “faithful”, with a most sure conscience, can be fully committed in everything, to the divinity. Each should rejoice without knowing in advance what it is that God may ask. Perfection resides, then, in committing oneself to the DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE.

c. This level of abandonment involves the spiritual life as well. St. Francis de Sales wrote (Jan. 16, 1603): I supplicate you... that you repeat often with the Psalmist: ‘I am Yours – save me!’. Or, be like Mary Magdeline who so trusted Jesus Christ who called her by name, to sanctify His Name.

†

10.] LIMITS TO HOLY ABANDONMENT:

a. To pray for suffering, reverses: this would seem to go beyond the usual state of Holy Abandonment. One can indeed offer heroic service to God, give witness, without asking for suffering – while yet remaining willing to accept it should it come. The specific prayer for suffering, the offering of oneself as a “victim”, surpasses the limits of Holy Abandonment. This manner of the spiritual life can only be entered upon with great discretion, counsel – and only by those persons who are indeed called to it by God.

1.) St. Therese of the Child Jesus, despite her desires for suffering, and even though she offered herself as a “victim” to the merciful love – in order not to leave behind the way of abandonment, did not ask for any sufferings beyond those which God destined her to have. “I would be afraid of being presumptuous, and these sufferings would then be unbearable to me, and I might be obliged to carry them alone. I would never be able to do that, all alone.” (cf. History of a Soul, c. 12).

2.) Yet, even here, there is nothing outside the way of abandonment in striving to endure those sufferings that God might send, also in the spirit of “victim”. Thus, we should never limit the ways of Providence. Even heroic individuals may not be called specifically to pray explicitly for sufferings – the way of Holy Abandonment only asks that those that do come, be accepted. Only the truly exceptional could rightfully

ask for suffering – for most, the ideal would be to accept as “crucified joy”, those that do come:

... This is a cause of great joy for you, even though you may for a short time have to bear being plagued by all sorts of trials... (1 P 1:6).

... you, too, the holy priesthood that offers the spiritual sacrifices which Jesus Christ has made acceptable to God, may be living stones for the spiritual house... (2:5, f.) think of what Christ suffered in this life, and arm yourselves with the same resolution that He had...

... Think of God's mercy ... offer your living bodies as a holy sacrifice, truly pleasing to God... (cf. Rm 12:1, ff.).

3.) It might also be well to recall the Eucharistic Doctrine of Pius XII and Paul VI:

“To shed further light on the mystery of the Church, it helps us to realize that it is nothing less than the whole Church which, **in union with Christ in his role as Priest and Victim**, offers the sacrifice of the Mass and is offered in it... the summit of sanctity which is nothing else **than the total offering of oneself to service of the divine majesty**.” (cf. Mediator Dei 19k7; Mysterium Fidei, 1965, notes nn. 25; LG 11).

b. Energetic Performance of Duties: the way of Abandonment will never dispense one from carrying out positive duties. Between the SIGNIFIED DIVINE WILL, and the DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE, there is never any opposition. Whatever the Signified Divine Will calls for, must be carried out.

1.] Authentic abandonment will never exclude prudence – but presupposes it. There is a general care of body, soul, mind and will that must be taken: Holiness also means “wholeness / health”: *sana mens, sanum corpus*. Such care is already demanded by the SIGNIFIED DIVINE WILL. Hence, abandonment could never reach the extreme that it would demand the absolute sacrifice of one's salvation: there simply could not be any state in this life that could ever consent to the eternal damnation, and to make the surrender of eternal life. St. Thomas offers a commentary on this:

To will one's own eternal damnation would not be in conformity with the divine will, but only to the will of sin (cf. De Ver., q. 23, a. 8, ad)

2.] In the writings of the saints, one might occasionally come across such sentiments expressed in **bursts of ardor** – but, these must be taken “with a grain of salt”. All the saints sincerely and ardently yearned for their beatitude, without ever wishing to renounce that sovereign possession of God, to which all are called. One cannot take expressions that seem to oppose this, in the rigorous meaning of the

terms expressed. There is need to bring to such ardent expressions the broadest possible interpretation. One has to enter into the “spirit” behind such expressions – as Moses, St. Paul and the Little Flower are often quoted here:

a.) Moses:

And yet, if it pleased you to forgive this sin of theirs ... But if not, then blot me out from the book that you have written ... (cf. Ex 32:32).

b.) St. Paul:

I would willingly be condemned and be cut off from Christ if it could help my brothers of Israel, my own flesh and blood ... (cf. RM 9:3).

c.) St. Francis de Sales:

He held that a person might indeed become so heroically indifferent, preferring perhaps even hell, with God's Will, over Paradise without God's Will. Should such a hypothesis be simply unrealistic – what he was implying with the unusual expression is that all he wanted to do in life was the will of God – in everything (cf. Love of God, 1. IX, c. k).

d.) The Little Flower:

“... I said to God that to please Him I would consent to see myself plunged into hell so that He would be loved eternally in that place of blasphemy...” (Story of a Soul, c. 5. Washington: ICS 1972, p. 112).

3.) In these “impossible hypotheses”, the emphasis is the grandeur, the vehemence, the ardor of their charity. But, all of the above are infinitely distant from the crass indifference in possessing God, or losing Him eternally: as though it was of equal value to be loved eternally by God – or, by hating Him eternally. These fervent saints willed that they would most willing to do anything so that the divine will might be achieved. They would endure all the struggles of time, and even the pains similar to those of hell – without, of course, ever sinning, which is the only way in which the pains of hell might be inflicted. They so love God that they are most desirous of pleasing only Him, and they are most willing to do all that within them lies to glorify Him, and to bring souls to Him.

11. CONDITIONS:

a. **Active:** Abandonment must be exercised, lived: there does not really exist “passive virtue” (cf. Leo XIII, Testem Benevolentiae, Jan. 22, 1899). God Who has indeed created us without us, does not redeem us without us! The state of Holy Abandonment does not dispense one from concerted effort. Our sanctification must always be the work of God's grace and free human cooperation, collaboration. It is not

without repeated and costly effort that one will ever come in practice to the state of a holy indifference.

1.] Before the event, the believer is called to remit him / herself into the merciful hands of God, by a simple and general sense of expectancy, awaiting. However, this is not passive, and it is not without real effort of collaboration with grace as one “waits” in this way. Abandonment presupposes that the believer follows through on all the movements of grace. There needs to be a balance between expectancy and activity; otherwise, one could tempt God.

2.] To abandon oneself to God without pulling one's share, this is “laxity”, nonchalance in the worst sense. Authentic and venerable abandonment is that which is accompanied by that which God is asking from each. It is contained in a number of expressions that are well known in various traditions, all flowing from the central injunction in this regard from Christ Himself:

- Watch and pray!
- ***ora et labora;***
- ***contemplata aliis tradere;***
- to pray as though all depended on God; to work as though it all depended on oneself.

3.] Abandonment is an attitude that is accompanied by the recognition of our need, and a healthy mistrust of self – it is a matter of recourse to God through prayer, accompanied by a firm confidence in Him. It is the real commitment to attention to God and the proper consideration of oneself. It involves the firm resolution of fighting temptations and of working out all that Providence will present us to do, and to suffer, should this occur.

4.] St. Francis de Sales recommended to his spiritual daughter, St. Jane de Chantal, a kind of “sweet repose” in the arms of the Savior (cf. Ps 131), and adds: Remain in tranquil resignation, to commit yourself to the hands of our Lord, without ever ceasing to cooperate dedicatedly with His holy grace by the exercise of the virtues and the occasions that present themselves. One who is truly committed, abandoned into the hands of God ... only seeks to remain with Our Lord, without caring for anything else, whether for one's body or soul. It will always be necessary, of course, to think of those things to which we are obliged, each according to one's own responsibilities.

5.] It is most apparent, then, that in the unfolding of Holy Abandonment, it is necessary to give the proper place, time, to human activity. One who is committed to this way in the spiritual life has no other concern than to remain within the arms of the Lord, not unlike the biblical image of spiritual childhood. The

child accepts being put down, and lifted up again. The infant does not give much thought to where he/she is going, but so often allows the parent to lead (cf. Ho 11). A believer committed to this spirit, seeks only the Will of God, the will of DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE. In all of the events of life, the believer allows the unfolding of the divine plan – and seeks to do everything possible to cooperate with the SIGNIFIED DIVINE WILL.

6.] It is only right in general terms to say that our active piety corresponds to the “Signified Divine Will” – and that our “passive piety” has for its area of concern, the “divine Will of Good Pleasure.” To maintain oneself in this loving and confident submission to God, it is necessary to give very active effort to the endeavor: to hold on under fire, is not an easy task!

7.] To strive to enter into the way of Holy Abandonment will not eliminate the natural repugnance which is never separated from the most difficult inner struggles. Abandonment in no way will dull, or lessen suffering. Abandonment resides in the “upper part of the soul”: keeping in mind that desires that are contrary to God’s will can exist simultaneously in the same person. Abandonment is one of those virtues that have their roots in the “superior” part of one’s nature. St. Paul noted that within him, there was often a kind of terrible “battle” going on:

... I am unspiritual... I cannot understand my own behavior... I have a self that acknowledges that the Law is good ... there is nothing good living in my unspiritual self ... What a wretched man I am...! (cf. Rm. 7: 14, ff.)

8.] Some interpreters, perhaps combating Quietism, state that abandonment to God is the most perfect, the surest way of reaching heaven. While it does allow full sway to God, it is never that passive in the acceptance of the divine will that there is hardly anything one has to do on his/her own, whether interiorly, or exteriorly, in all that pertains to one’s duties. However, it must be kept in mind that while it is true that the divine will is but the First Cause in our regard – it will never exclude, but will make intensifying demands on the believer, as a secondary cause: collaboration, in the application to all that He wills and orders. Whether the endeavor succeeds, or not – must be left up to the DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE.

9.] In the way of Holy Abandonment in the spiritual life, there has to be a certain balance maintained between abandonment to God and personal effort – this synthesis has been admirably expressed by a number of the saints, but perhaps particularly well by St. Ignatius – whose Part VII of the Constitutions Company of Jesus speaks so sublimely about the Mission (s) carried out in response to the directives of the Roman Pontiff: the Latin term that the most often recurs is obsequium: so much discussed in Vatican II (cf. LG 25), the religious submission to the Magisterium required of the entire Church.

b. UNIVERSAL: the way of Holy Abandonment cannot exclude any other virtue – all the virtues are inter-connected. Holy Abandonment must accompany them, and can never take their place.

1.) Abandonment is not the only way, nor does it offer a complete treatise of Christian reflection. The emphasis rightfully given to it is merely to show its immense value. No one, however, has ever taught that this “way” is the only way to reach holiness.

2.) The way of Holy Abandonment is often recommended, particularly in the writings of St. Francis de Sales. Some reading his writings receive the impression that for the Bishop of Geneva it has almost an absolute value.

CONCLUSION

The way of Holy Abandonment and the “Little Way” of St. Therese come together in some of their essential points. She described her “Way” as the way of confidence and total abandonment. In itself, it presents few complications – but, it does suppose uncommon detachment, extraordinary humility, outstanding obedience, and on-going mortification. It is clearly biblically inspired – and may reach its culmination in the spirituality of St. Therese of Lisieux⁶⁸.

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A PRAYER OF ABANDONMENT

Charles de Foucauld + Dec. 1, 1916

FATHER,

I abandon myself into your hands; do with me what you will.

Whatever you do, I thank you. I am ready for all, I accept all.

Let Your will only be done to me, and in all Your creatures.

I wish for no more than this, O Lord.

Into Your hands I commend my soul.

I offer it to you with all the love of my heart, for I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself, to surrender myself, into Your hands with boundless confidence,

for you are my

FATHER!

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⁶⁸ **NB:** for these pages of these notes, cf. **M. Viller, "Abandon", in: *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, Paris: Beauchesne, 1937, Vol. I, col. 1-25.** [cf. also Fr. Nello Dalle Vedove, *Il Modello di sant' abbandono*. An English translation of this may be found under 'LIFE & SPIRITUALITY': www.st-bertoni.com].

4. St. Ignatius' Principles: based on the Person of Jesus Christ ⁶⁹

As early as 1569, St. Francis Borgia wrote these remarkable words in a letter to the whole Society, entitled: 'On the Means of Preserving the Spirit of the Society and of Our Vocation':

'... As to **the virtue of obedience which is the purpose and guide of the Society** and its tower of defense, although I might call attention to some things, I shall rather refer you **to the excellent and admirable Letter [of March 26, 1853]** which our Father Ignatius, of happy memory, has written on that virtue; he has said all, and left nothing more to be said: *Hoc fac, et vives* [Lk 10:28]; I hope in the Lord that if we do what is there set down, **we shall be true sons of obedience....**'

The same thought is repeated by Fathers General Aquaviva, Mutius Vitelleschi, and later by Father Lawrence Ricci on the eve of the catastrophe to which the Society succumbed. After the restoration in 1814, Fr. Peter Beeckx expressed himself in identical terms in his letter of April 15, 1855, 'On the Observance of the Vows.' Nearer our own day, Fr. Louis Martin in turn made the thought of his predecessors his own in his well-known letter: 'On Some Dangers of Our Times', speaking of obedience says:

... Concerning this virtue, which can be called **the soul which informs the Society and governs its movements**, and ought to be, according to St. Ignatius, **the distinguishing mark of her character**, it seemed little to him surely to have dictated such wise laws in his Constitutions, but he also wrote **that admirable Letter [of March 26, 1553]**, which is in my judgment, the most perfect and complete pronouncement on obedience that could be made...

The **Letter on Obedience** deals not with the Vow, but with the virtue, more accurately still, with the perfect practice of the virtue... And truly though I wish you to be perfect in all spiritual gifts and ornaments, yet **especially do I desire** [as you have understand of me heretofore] **to see you most eminent in the virtue of obedience.** The idea that **perfect obedience must be the essential law of the Society and the distinctive mark**, as it were, by which its true sons may be recognized, was for our holy Father something like **a fixed idea**. He takes it for granted that the Fathers and Brothers of Portugal, to whom the **Letter** is addressed, already know, having heard it on other occasions, how much he has at heart to see them all really signalize themselves in this virtue and excel all others in its practice. It is, therefore, quite natural that this idea should be found scattered throughout the other writings of the saint. And beginning with the **Constitutions**, there are many passages in them, says Fr. Aicardo, in which **the necessity of obedience** in the Society is stressed, from the

⁶⁹ Fr. Manuel Maria Espinosa Polit, SJ, *Perfect Obedience. Commentary on the Letter on Obedience of St. Ignatius of Loyola* [March 26, 1553]. Westminster MD: Newman 1947, pp. 31, f.;38-40, *passim*.

Examen where the candidate receives **his first instructions in obedience**, even to the **eldest** in the House.⁷⁰

- in the formation of **Novices** special stress must be given to obedience;⁷¹
- and it is recommended especially to **those in their studies**, not only in the observance of the discipline of the house, but also in the order, method, and time of study;⁷²
- obedience must take precedence in the duties of those **admitted to profession**, or otherwise **incorporated** into the Society;⁷³
- and by obedience must be strengthened the bonds of union throughout **the whole body of the Society**.⁷⁴

Two texts merit special attention, for they recommend briefly, but weightily, the hearty eagerness which all of ours should feel **to signalize themselves in the practice of religious obedience**. They are:

... It chiefly conduces to advancement and is very necessary, that all should give themselves to perfect obedience, acknowledging the Superior, whoever he be, in place of Christ the Lord.⁷⁵

... All must be **especially sturdy to observe obedience and to excel in it**, at the mere sign of the Superior's will, though he should give no express command ...⁷⁶

This doctrine is **intended for all**, and far from exempting from the law of obedience even partially those who are outstanding in authority, in prestige, or any other merit, they are exhorted so to exert themselves as to serve as models for the rest, and by their example to contribute to its preservation in the Society in all its freshness and vigor. The Jesuit Founder legislated:

... and let even the foremost in the Society give good example in this matter [of obedience] to the others, maintaining a close union with their Superior, and devoutly and humbly obeying him ...⁷⁷

... And ordinarily those who being in charge of others, and having to exact obedience of them, should give them the example of obedience by practicing this virtue towards those who are the **Superiors, in place of Christ, the Lord**...⁷⁸

⁷⁰ *Examen*, c. 4, n. 29: CSJ, n. 84; 32: CSJ n. 89

⁷¹ P. III, c. 1, n. 23, 24, V: CSJ nn. 284-286.

⁷² P. IV, c. 6, n. 2: CSJ n. 361; c. 10, n. 5, 8: CSJ nn. 424; 434.

⁷³ P. VI, c.1,n. 1, 2: CSJ nn. 547; 551.

⁷⁴ P. VIII, c. 1,n. 3: CSJ n. 659; X, n. 9: CSJ n. 821.

⁷⁵ P. III, c. 1, n. 23: CSJ n. 284.

⁷⁶ P. VI, c. 1, n. 1: CSJ n. 547.

⁷⁷ P. VIII, c. 1, n. 3: CSJ n. 659.

It is understood, then, why the holy Patriarch desired so earnestly that his sons excel in this virtue, persuaded as he was, that if it **flourished**, the Society would appear in the divine presence, always *without spot or wrinkle, holy and immaculate...* [Ep 5:27: spouse], adorned with those solid and perfect virtues which will help it better to correspond fully with the providential designs of her King, Christ Jesus, in raising her up in His Church.⁷⁹

After merely referring to **the example of Jesus Christ made obedient to death, even the death of the Cross [Ph 2:8]**, St. Ignatius adds, by way of corollary, another reason for the pre-eminence of this virtue, i.e., that **perfect obedience** ought to make up in the Society for greater austerity and other praiseworthy practices which other Institutes piously observe, and which for just reasons are not practiced among us. Let us hear the words of the Saint:

... More easily may we suffer ourselves to be surpassed by other Religious Orders in fasting, watching, and other severities in diet and apparel, which according to their Institute and rule everyone does piously practice. But in true and perfect obedience, and in the abnegation of our will and judgment, I greatly desire, most dear Brothers, that those who serve God in this Society, should be conspicuous, and that the true and genuine progeny of the same should as it were be distinguished by this mark...⁸⁰

Fr. Suarez thinks that in this passage there is question not only of pointing out the pre-eminence which the virtue of obedience ought to have in the Society, but also of insisting that the **pre-eminence in the practice of this virtue is one of the proper and specific means** which St. Ignatius points out for attaining the particular perfection of our Order.⁸¹

This virtue is more necessary [according to St. Robert Bellarmine] for us than for all others. For, without it, I do not see what we can do in the divine service; other religious have frequent fasts, their apparel is poor, they make frequent use of the discipline, wear haircloth, keep strict silence, remain continually shut up in their houses and rise, nearly all, at night, to chant the divine praises. But we eat well, dress well, sleep well, we are not bound to a rigorous silence, we are frequently out of the house, and have no regular practice in the matter of disciplines and haircloths. And what is more, some of us live more comfortably than we have lived in our own homes. If, then, in spirit of this, we fail to obey; if, dedicated with all our strength to one thing, we do another, what reward can we look for? I am afraid, indeed, that we should be deserving rather of chastisement than recompense, for what answer shall we give

⁷⁸ P. IV, c. 10, n. 8: CSJ n. 820.

⁷⁹ Espinosa, pp. 50, ff.

⁸⁰ Letter to Fr. Andres de Orviedo.

⁸¹ De Rel. S.I., Book I, c. 2., n. 11 [25]

when God asks us what good we have done? But, if we keep this virtue with great care, there is no reason why we should envy another Religious Order, because it is impossible to practice obedience except at the cost of great sacrifice, and, on the other hand, God take much delight in it.

Our Holy Father wishes his sons **to practice obedience with the highest perfection** ... It is a matter of **capital importance for us** to have clear and accurate ideas on the fundamental principle of obedience. This will permit us to understand why **St. Ignatius lays so much stress on it**, and does so whenever he speaks of this virtue...⁸²

Fr. Espinosa presents the challenging matter of 'Blind Obedience':⁸³ ... In the light of this, one can do no less than wonder when Fr. Pedro de Ribadeneira undertakes to give a restricted and softened sense to the word *blind*. He takes his stand on Ignatius' words [cf. **CSJ n. 547**] ***caeca quadam obedientia*** which are found in the Latin translation of the Constitutions as if the intention of the holy Founder had been to soften with that indefinite adjective ***quadam***, what might be absolute and too inflexible in the word ***blind***. But, what is stranger still, seeing that the adjective ***quadam*** is not found in the original text, is that this unusual interpretation has been adopted by authors of note, even in our own day⁸⁴.

However, Fr. Nadal, in his ***Scholia* [120]**, commenting on the words ***caeca quadam obedientia***, says nothing that might be interpreted as a thinning down, a diluting of the meaning - a clear proof that he did not think that the sense was changed in the least by the addition of the indefinite ***quadam***..... We have three texts from which to determine with exact fidelity the real thought of St. Ignatius on **blind obedience** in all its shades of meaning:

[1] The Letter of March 1553:

*...is to determine within yourself whatsoever the Superior commands to be the commandment and Will of Almighty God Himself; and as to believe what the Catholic faith proposes, you at once bend all the forces of your mind to consent thereunto; so in doing that which your Superior commands, you must be carried with **a kind of blind impulse** of your will desirous to obey ...*

[2] CSJ n. 547:

*... persuading ourselves that everything is just, denying **with a blind obedience** every contrary judgment or opinion of our own in everything that the Superior commands, where [as has been said] we cannot discern any kind of sin, realizing*

⁸² Espinosa, p. 56.

⁸³ Espinosa, c. 7, pp. 148-186: CSJ n. 547: Blind Obedience – a very long text in the Constitutions.

⁸⁴ Suarez, Lib. 4, c. 15, n. 26 (531)...

that they who live under obedience must suffer themselves to be carried and ruled by Divine Providence in their superiors, as if they were a dead body which suffers itself to be borne to any place or treated in any manner whatever; or, like an old man's staff which serves him who holds it in his hand where and in any manner whatsoever [quacumque] he pleases; for thus the obedient man should employ himself cheerfully in whatever way the Superior should wish to use him for the good of the whole body of the Order, holding it for certain that he is thus fulfilling the Divine will more than he would in any other way of his own choosing by following his own will and judgment...

[3] Letter to Fr Juan Felipe Vito:

...I should not belong to myself but to Him Who created me, and to him who holds His place, so that he may direct and govern me [just as a piece of wax receives the impression of the smallest object] and be ready either to write or study to speak with some persons rather than with others, and find all my devotion in doing as I am bidden

I should be like a dead body which has neither will nor understanding; or like a little crucifix which, without difficulty, allows itself to be moved from one side to another; or, finally, I should be like a staff in an old man's hand who may put me where he pleases and where I can be of most help to him. Thus, I must be ready to help and serve my Order in any way I shall be directed ...

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5. Theological Reflections on the Letter

a. In General [A Virtue]⁸⁵

Special obedience, or obedience properly so called, may be defined: a habit of virtue which inclines us to fulfill what a legitimate Superior enjoins for the very reason that he has commanded it. Obedience, so understood, is a moral virtue allied to justice. Its object extends to all acts enjoined by the Superior within the limits of his authority, once he makes known his wish in a clearly expressed precept, or is satisfied with making it known some other way, by means of counsel, exhortation or suggestion.⁸⁶ ... The Superior complies with the obligations he is under to correct and direct his subjects in keeping with the End of the Institute, not merely by explicit orders and commands, but also in a milder and kindlier manner by the prudent and discreet manifestation of his will.

⁸⁵ Espinosa, pp. 36, f.

⁸⁶ Suarez, *De Religione* ...Tr.X, Book 4, c. 14, 11 – 492.

Hence there arises another important division of the virtue of obedience, namely, necessary and perfect obedience. The first, according to St. Thomas, occurs when one submits his will to an express command of the superior, and it is clear that in this case he cannot fail to comply with it without sin. Perfect obedience is that by which the subject is brought to conform his will with the will of the Superior, even in that which is not commanded, the superior merely advising or showing his inclination. The field of this Obedience is very broad ... it is likewise the subject of the **Letter** [March 1556] of our Holy Father.

Finally, we only need to recall that obedience may be considered under two aspects, as a moral virtue, and as a religious vow. As a virtue, it inclines a man to reverence the will of God and submit himself to it whether it is manifested directly, or whether it is transmitted, as usually happens, through the agency of another man in whom resides the authority derived from God. By the vow of obedience, which is one of those essential to the religious state, the subject, besides the obligation of justice which binds him to the Superior arising out of the surrender he has made of himself to the religious order, contracts a fresh obligation attached to the virtue of religion, by which he engages himself to God to obey in all that his legitimate superior enjoins, provided it be possible, licit, and in keeping with the rules and constitutions of the Order...

b. Its special nature.⁸⁷

The expression of St. Augustine is well known; it has all the brevity and luminosity of an aphorism: *In a certain sense, this virtue of obedience in the rational creature is the mother and guardian of all the virtues...*⁸⁸ Similar is the thought of St. Catherine of Siena: *Oh, how sweet and glorious is this virtue of obedience, in which all the others are included!*⁸⁹ Theologians state that obedience is the most direct way to sanctity in the spiritual life, because if we possess it, we possess in a wonderful manner all the other virtues; we traverse in a short time all the ways of the true life, and we quickly approach eternal life, which is the goal of all our desires and our perfection. We can understand how obedience plants and preserves the other virtues in the soul in two ways showing the connection and dependence that these have with obedience:

- either the acts of the moral virtues depend directly on obedience in so far as they are the objects of a divine command;

⁸⁷ *ib.*, pp. 48, ff.

⁸⁸ *City of God*. Book 14, c. 12.

⁸⁹ *Dialogue*. Tr. 5, c. 2.

- or, also because obedience, inclining a person to conform himself in all things with the Divine Will and Pleasure, disposes him to exercise the acts of any virtue which he recognized as agreeable to God.⁹⁰

All of our rules and all the tasks that we are enjoined are an exercise of virtue... Another reason why **obedience may be called the mother of the virtues** is that it wonderfully prepares the soul for the practice of all that is good and perfect. For, any act of obedience, as St. Thomas has just shown us, is by its intrinsic nature a real recognition of the supreme domination of God our Lord. It is clear, therefore, that the daily exercise of this virtue will tend by repeated acts to strengthen the conviction of one's own dependence, and consequently the determination of belonging entirely to God, and of serving Him with the reverence and perfect which are his due. Now, this disposition which St. Ignatius points out as the principle and foundation of sanctity, has, in the opinion of the Angelic Doctor, a marvelous efficacy for inclining the will to the habitual exercise of all the virtues. For when a man seeks and desires only the greater praise and service of God our Lord, aspiring only to know always and fulfill perfectly the divine pleasure, his will be not less disposed to keep the moral order sanctioned by God, not merely in one particular thing, but in all things without distinction. The acts of the various virtues, even the most sublime and difficult, will then gush forth, as from their own foundation, from this will, which is determined to see nothing else in life that *to love and serve the Divine Majesty in all things* [SpEx 233].

c. The 'subject' of obedience – where it 'resides':⁹¹

The power of jurisdiction is not the sole power to which religious are subject. In many cases, perhaps in the larger number, they submit their will by the Vow of Obedience to the **power called dominative**, which results from the **surrender [obsequium]** which the religious makes to the Order, when he professes in it a determined rule, with the promise and obligation of obedience according to it. In virtue of this **surrender**, says Fr. Suarez [Tr. 8, Bk 3, c. 18.], the Order and its Superiors acquire the right of commanding the religious and of profiting from his labor as they shall judge proper. The **dominative power**, as far as the religious is concerned, according to the same *Doctor Eximius*, does not descend from Christ by special communication, such as He has made to the Church; rather, its origin is to be sought in the will of him who professes the Rule, and makes the **surrender** of himself to the Order, as has been said.

⁹⁰ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa*, II-II. q. 104, a. 3, ad 2 um.

⁹¹ ib., p. 69

1.] Obedience of the Execution, Will:⁹²

Dom Columba Marmion states: the humble soul knowing the sovereignty and the rights of God which flow from the fullness of His being and the infinity of His perfections and being aware of its own nothingness and dependence, does not seek to find in itself the motives for its life and its activity; it looks for them in the Will of God and for that reason **it sacrifices its own will** to the Divine Will...; consenting to what God grants it to know through the voice of a man as His good pleasure... [*Christ, the Ideal of the Monk*]...

After having firmly established the fundamental principle on which religious obedience rests, as on an immovable base, our holy Father goes on at once to expound **its perfect practice**. For the understanding of the teaching he is going to give us, he presupposes the distinction, as simple as it is natural, of **the three classes**, or degrees of obedience, namely of execution, of will and of understanding. Among the manifold divisions of obedience proposed in their treatises by doctors and ascetical writers, that adopted by St. Ignatius has the advantage of being based on the very nature of the act of obedience: for as Suarez [Bk 4, c. 13, n. 2 (478)] well observes, three elements concur in the obeying of any law, or precept:

- the execution of what is commanded;
- the will to fulfill the precept;
- and the judgment of the understanding which points to the conformity of will and then the execution of the act.

In the Constitutions the holy Founder clearly points out the nature of these degrees when he says:

... There is obedience of execution, when the thing enjoined is done: there is obedience of the will, when he who obeys has the same will as he who commands; there is obedience of the understanding when he thinks the same, judging good what is commanded ... [CSJ n. 550.]

Here we see that the classical division into obedience of **execution**, of **will** and of **understanding** does not refer to the faculty which produces the act, but to the act itself that is commanded, considered purely in its material realization, or in its realization accompanied by the assent of the will, or finally, when to this will there is still added the conformity of one's own judgment with that of the Superior.

[a] **The first degree, that of execution**, St. Ignatius dismisses with this brief remark: 'Moreover, I desire that this should be thoroughly understood and deeply imprinted in your minds, that it is but a base and very imperfect kind of obedience

⁹² Espinosa, pp. 75-99, *passim*

which consists in the natural execution only of that which is commanded; and that it is not worthy of the name of this virtue, unless I pass to a further degree, making the will of the Superior our will, and so agreeing with the same that there is not only external fulfillment of the command, but also agreement of will; that so both may be of the one mind in willing and not willing the same.

Obedience in an action that is merely external is empty of all spiritual value. The will, it is true, intervenes to require of the external powers the action necessary to realize the command, but this influence is so low and faint that, although it is enough to satisfy, and in fact, does satisfy, the obligation of the vow [Suarez, Bk 4, c. 13, n. 3 [479]; c. 14, n. 78, 499.] it is in no way sufficient to assure the exercise of the virtue, and much less its perfection.

Now the Jesuit Founder in his Constitutions considers obedience of execution as united with that of the will and the judgment and vivified by the influx of these faculties, because it is his intention to present in a kind of ensemble the perfection of obedience such as he wishes to see practiced in the Society.

[b] Our Holy Father invites us to consider the supernatural excellence of **perfect obedience of the will**. This is founded precisely in the magnitude of the sacrifice which the obedient man imposes on himself to make the will of the Superior in act his own. And for this, the Saint begins by examining the intrinsic worth of the obligation by which a man abdicates his own will into the hands of the Superior who takes the place of God in his regard.

Let us first transcribe the words in which he declares his thought on this point: 'And for this reason it is said in Holy Writ, **'obedience is better than sacrifices.'** [1 S 15:22] For as St. **Gregory** teaches, **in victims, the flesh of another, but in obedience our own will is killed**. And because this part of the soul is so excellent, hence, it is that the offering of it to our Lord and Creator through obedience is of great price and value.

After recalling the two classical texts in this matter, that of **1 S** and that of **St. Gregory**, which exalt the merit and value of obedience, praising it as **the most exalted of all sacrifices, since it immolates the most precious possession of man, his free will**, St. Ignatius proceeds to the very heart of the question, and points out with admirable precision the intrinsic reason of this worth.

According to the common thought of men, a sacrifice must be esteemed in the direct ratio with the greatness of what is sacrificed and the difficulty one has in dispossessing himself of it. Now, there is no doubt that according to this standard, the sacrifice that is made in obedience is not surpassed in merit and dignity by any other except martyrdom [St. Thomas, II-II, q. 124, a. 3, ad 2^{um}]. Because if we regard what the religious renounces is placing himself under obedience, we see that it is just that which a man most prizes after his own life, that is, his own liberty of disposing of

himself independently by means of the free exercise of a will that is *sui iuris*. According to the graphic expression of St. Robert Bellarmine, the will which is he source and principal cause of man's actions is converted by obedience into a living instrument in the hands of another.

In this way, we can understand how it is that in perfect obedience we offer to God **the supreme sacrifice of ourselves**, a sacrifice which under a number of aspects resembles that of **martyrdom**, and for that reason shares in the inestimable worth of martyrdom. With reason, does St. Gregory assert: **To make little of, and abandon external possessions is perhaps an achievement, but to abandon oneself is something very hard and difficult. It is not much to renounce what one has, but it is very much to renounce what one is.** [Hom. 32, in Evang.]

This is what St. Ignatius says in the Letter to Gandia, already quoted: 'This way of life [under obedience] is likewise of singular merit for those who know how to take advantage of it, since **it is a martyrdom** which continually cuts the head off one's own judgment and will, placing in its place that of Christ our Lord, made known to us by His minister.

The greater merit of obedience will more than compensate for what should have been acquired in the work that was omitted. This doctrine is in complete conformity with the teaching of the Angelic Doctor. When he explains why the vow of obedience is the most excellence of the three vows of religion, he expressly states: **All that is done through obedience is more acceptable to God than what is done by one's own will, and thus fasting does not please God when it proceeds from its own will** [II-II, q. 186, a. 8, c.].

And elsewhere, after demonstrating the primacy of obedience over the other moral virtues, for the reason that it **sacrifices not any possession whatever**, but the greatest and most prized of all man's possessions, he continues: Wherefore all the works of the other virtues are meritorious in God's sight because they are done in obedience to His Will. Because should one suffer martyrdom or distribute all one's goods to the poor with some other purpose distinct from fulfilling the Divine Will, which fulfilling pertains directly to obedience, all these acts would fail to be meritorious ... [II-II, q. 104, a. 3, c.].

Obedience indeed is a **kenosis** [cf. Ph 2:5, ff.]...In fact, what is proper and peculiar to true obedience is, as has been said, **the complete and unrestricted surrender of our will to God, our Lord, into the hands of the man who holds His place, absolutely and without reserve**. By obedience, the religious empties himself of his own will to be possessed by the Divine Will, accepting it in advance for the supreme norm and the unique motive of his actions.

Obedience is also an *obsequium voluntatis* [cf. Rm 12:1, f.; DV 5; LG 25] ...St. Ignatius adduces, therefore, two reasons to prove his assertion: the first, that by this complete surrender of his will to God in the hands of His legitimate representative, man makes the most noble use of his personal liberty; the second, that this surrender is in every way conformable to reason.

Obedience indeed merits the term *Suscipe* [SpEx n. 234]: ...The **oblation** which takes place in obedience succeeds, then, in satisfying one of the most public and generous aspirations of the Christian heart, that of returning to God practical love for practical love, **the will of self-surrender for the will with which the Lord Himself desires to give me Himself in so far as He can according to His divine ordination ...**

2.] Obedience of the Understanding:⁹³

The obedience of the will is perfect obedience: that of the understanding is most perfect. And for this reason, our Father delays over his study of it with visible pleasure, devoting more than half of the Letter to this point. What this obedience of the understanding of the saint sufficiently sets for as follows: ... **But he that will wholly sacrifice himself to God, besides his will, must offer up his understanding [which is the third and highest degree of obedience], that he may not only will, but also think the self-same with his Superior; and submit his own judgment unto him, so far as a devout will can bend the understanding ...**

Obedience, says Fr. Meschler, is a virtue of the will; the act of obedience embraces the exterior execution of the command imposed and the interior conformity of the will with this command. The operation of the understanding should precede and accompany the action of the will, because of this, considered in itself, is a blind faculty and has need of light and direction of the understanding. It is the part of the understanding to point out to the will what must be done, why and how it should obey. In so far as it is a speculative faculty, it must determine whether the command is in every respect licit and honorable, and, in so far as it is the practical reason, it must propose to the will the means and the motive for carrying into execution the order received.

In what, then, does this obedience of the understanding consist exactly? In a passage of the Constitutions, already quoted, St. Ignatius defines it thus: **It is obedience of the understanding, when he who obeys thinks the same as he who commands, when what is commanded appears good to him...** [CSJ n. 550].

It only remains to remark with Fr. Nadal that for this perfect obedience it is not enough to suspend a judgment that is opposed to the judgment of the Superior, but

⁹³ Espinosa, pp. 100-125, *passim*

that it is necessary, moreover, to approve as good what which he commands . In fact, every command of a legitimately appointed Superior is in reality a means ordained to a double end: to a proximate and particular end intended by the Superior, and to the ultimate supernatural end intended by God.

Let us hear the Angel of the Schools: Sometimes the understanding cannot be determined to one or other of conflicting statements, not seeing at once the precise force of the terms, as it does in first principles, nor deducing the truth by reasoning, as happens in the conclusions of a proof. But, it is determined by the activity of the will which resolves to attach itself to one of two statements to the exclusion of the other, by a motive which, if not sufficient to move the intellect, is sufficient to sway the will, in the sense that the assent of the intellect seems good and proper; and this is the disposition of the believer who admits the assertions of another on the grounds that they seem good and reasonable ... [De Ver. q. 14, a. 1].

Example of the **Heavenly Constellations**: Inanimate and irrational beings are ruled in their movements and operations by natural powers and properties, which are only so many other instruments which God makes use of to move them properly to their ends. In exactly the same manner God directs the actions of rational creatures to their ends in a way in keeping with their nature, by setting their understanding and will in motion by means of precepts and counsels [St. Thomas, I-II, q. 6, a. 1, ad 3um; II-II, q. 104, a. 1, c.]... thus in the **sidereal universe** from which our holy Father takes the point of comparison for his argument, the planets, the comets, and their satellites will never be able to revolve in their respective orbits if they are not found in those **spheres of influence** of the **Star towards which they turn and gravitate**.⁹⁴

Moreover, unless we have this obedience of our understanding, it is impossible that either the consent of the will, or the execution, will be such as it ought to be: for nature itself has so ordained, that the concupiscible powers of the soul must follow the apprehensive, and the will, without violence, cannot long obey against the understanding. And if there be any who for some time obey, induced by that common apprehension, that obey they must through commandment amiss; yet doubtless this cannot be firm and constant, and so perseverance fails, or at least the perfection of obedience, which consists in obeying promptly and with alacrity; for there can be no alacrity and diligence, where there is discord of minds and opinions. There perishes that zeal and speed in performing, when we doubt whether it be expedient or not, to do what we are commanded: there perishes that renowned simplicity of blind obedience, when we call in question the justice of the command, and perhaps even we condemn the Superior, because he bids us do such things as are not very pleasing unto

⁹⁴ cf. von Balthasar's **Christological Constellation**: 'The Real Christ in His Constellation', in: *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church*. Ignatius 1986. pp. 131, ff. [cf. St. Gaspar, Parish Sermon, **Epiphany 1806 –MssB ## 1211-1240.**]

us; there fails humility; for although on the one hand we obey; yet, on the other, we prefer ourselves before our Superior; there fails fortitude in difficult enterprises, and [to conclude in brief]. The whole force and dignity of this virtue is lost...

†

3.] A possible fourth level: **'blind' obedience**⁹⁵:

Fr. Suarez, after a careful examination of the principal testimonies of the Fathers and Doctors, does not hesitate to affirm that the Saint either borrowed the teaching on blind obedience [cf. **CSJ. n. 547: *omnem sententiam ac iudicium nostrum contrarium caeca quadam obedientia abnegando ...***] from them, or at least spoke with the same spirit as they [Lib. 4, c. 15, n. 4; n. 26.].

It is not easy to determine just exactly what those authors who have written on the subject thought of the specific value of blind obedience. Even those who follow St. Ignatius as their master and guide do not always use in their writings the precision and clearness which one might desire. Some in particular, seem to speak of blind obedience **as though it were a new division of this virtue, something like a fourth degree, distinct from obedience of the understanding.** Fr. Ignatius - wrote Fr. Acquaviva - in speaking of **blind obedience**, stating that he wished to designate with this name only an obedience that is pure, perfect, simple, which does not discuss the command, nor its reasons, being satisfied with knowing that it is commanded.

†

4.] Loving Imitation of Jesus:⁹⁶

Parallel in Faith with the Eucharist [*sensuum defectui*]:

As may be seen, in all the texts cited, it is taken for granted that there is a *practical* identity [in faith] between God and the Superior, in virtue of which every command of holy obedience is clothed for us with the character and dignity of a divine command. Taking his stand here, our holy Father insists on the necessity of prescinding from the gifts and talents that may adorn the man who has been given us for Superior, and fixing the gaze of the soul on the titles and credentials which accredit him as **a vicar of Christ**, and the **visible substitute** of the invisible God, **something similar** to what we **see in the mystery of the Eucharist** [*sensuum defectui*], when we forget the white wafer of the accidents, and hurry straightway **on the wings of faith and love** to the **adorable Person of the Savior Who** is hiding beneath them.

Seeing Christ, then, in the Superior is equivalent to ignoring the exterior accidents which make an immediate impression on our senses; it is rather to go at once to **the divine reality hidden beneath those accidents**, which is the **most holy will**

⁹⁵ Espinosa, Chapter VII, pp. 148-186. [cf. e.g., **CSJ, n. 547**: only occurrence: **CF ## 149, 150, *passim*??**]

⁹⁶ ib, pp. 60-63.

of Christ our Lord made known to us by means of the Superior. Hence, it is that for the truly obedient man it is not talent nor goodness nor the moral prestige of him who commands that constitutes the ultimate reason for his obedience; and though these motives are not without some power to move him to conform his will with that of the Superior, they remain, finally, merely human and consequently, contingent, passing, frail, totally insufficient to serve as a foundation in difficult circumstances for the exercise of perfect obedience. A motive of incomparably greater excellence, nay, a motive of divine excellence is that offered by faith, when it teaches that the command of the Superior is not in reality the command of a man, but the command of God Himself, who avails Himself of man as a conscious instrument for the transmission of His will.

‘When we gaze at the ‘Sacred Host’, beautifully writes Dom Columba Marmion, ‘our senses exclaim: ‘That is not Christ: it is nothing but bread.’ We see, though, and taste only bread. But as Christ has told us: *Hoc est corpus meum: this is My body*, setting aside the testimony of our senses, we say to Christ: ‘You have spoken – I believe, *credo*; and to give exterior expression to our faith, we fall on our knees before Christ, really and substantially present under the species, we adore Him, and we surrender ourselves to Him to fulfill His Holy Will.

In the same way, Christ conceals Himself from us in our Superiors. In spite of his imperfection, **the Abbot is for us the representative of Christ**; Christ hides beneath the weakness and the imperfections of the man, just as He conceals Himself beneath **the Sacramental species**. Just because the Superior is placed in such faith, as it were, *supra candelabrum*, the daily exchanges which we have with him may betray his deficiencies; wherefore, we feel tempted to exclaim: ‘This man is not Christ’ his poor judgment is not infallible, he can make mistakes, in fact he does; he can compromise my plans; he allows himself to be guided by this or that preference. But, faith answers: ***Abbas Christi in vices Christi creditur***. Whether Christ gives us a Solomon to take His place, or a man without talent, to the eyes of faith, it is **always Christ Whom this man represents**. **Faith discovers Christ**, and touches Him, so to say, behind the imperfections of the man. And if I have faith, I will say: *Credo, I believe*. I obey this man whoever he may be, because in obeying him, **I obey Christ**, and I remain united with Him: *qui vos audit, Me audit* [Marmion, *Christ the Ideal of the Monk*, pp. 267-268].

5.] This is an Oblation of the Intellect⁹⁷:

According to what we have said, religious obedience is essentially a **sacrifice a holocaust**; it is the **total oblation of self** as an act of supreme homage to God our Creator and Lord in recognition of His sovereign dominion over creatures. The Fathers and theological writers, alluding to the most perfect sacrifice of the Old Law, call it a

⁹⁷ ib, pp. 107, ff.

holocaust, in which the victim was burned and totally consumed by fire, **nothing at all being reserved** even for other holy uses. The comparison is certainly suggestive and corresponds to reality with sufficient exactitude. As a matter of fact, **obedience in its truest sense means an unconditional and absolute surrender** by which **man strips himself [kenosis] of what is most his own, to belong henceforth only to God**, leaving in His hands **the entire disposal of himself and of all his actions**. In this **surrender**, then, is verified literally and in the loftiest and noblest sense that **destruction and annihilation** characteristic of the ancient holocausts.

This concept of **totality** which excludes all limitation in the sacrifice we have already considered when dealing with the obedience of the will, and from it we deduced precisely the excellence and extraordinary merit of religious obedience, seeing that it embraces **the complete offering** made to God of one's own will and liberty. But even though the **total renunciation** of the will constitutes a most excellent sacrifice, there yet remains to man something which can be **offered in sacrifice, of much greater value, which marks him out specifically as man – his reason and judgment**. Now if this sacrifice must be consumed by the fire of charity, that is, if it must reach the ultimate consequences attainable by a generous love, if obedience must be entire and perfect, and properly merit the name of **holocaust**, to the sacrifice of the will must be added **the sacrifice of the understanding**, so that the judgment of the inferior remain completely subject to the reason and judgment of the Superior.

But, let us hear these ideas from the very lips of the Jesuit Founder:

*... For obedience being a **holocaust**, in which the whole man, nothing at all excepted, is offered unto his Creator and Lord in the fire of charity, through the hands of his substitute, and as it is a full renunciation to which a religious man freely yields up all his own rights to dedicate and bind himself to God, to be possessed and governed by His Divine Providence by means of his Superior; it cannot be denied that obedience comprehends not only the execution, so that the person do that which is commanded, and the will, so that he do it willingly, but also the judgment, so that whatsoever the Superior commands and thinks good seems just and reasonable to the inferior, so far, as I have said as the will by its force and vigor can bend the understanding.*

The obedience then, which reaches to the subjection of the understanding appears to St. Ignatius as the greatest and most generous **sacrifice** which man, short of his own life, can offer to his Creator and Lord; and, for the same reason, he felt that there was hardly another more worthy of being sought by a heart on fire with desire to **serve** the Divine Majesty in all things. Indeed, **the renunciation of one's own will and judgment** represents the **total gift**, the **complete offering**, the **perfect sacrifice** which a rational creature can make of itself; for then it not only **immolates** its most valued and prized possessions with which the liberality of its Creator has enriched it, but, as the saint reflects, all that becomes **a living holocaust** most grateful to His Divine Majesty, keeping nothing whatever to himself.

Obedience, writes Fr. Oswald in his Commentary, is the noblest and most excellent **sacrifice** by which we can offer to the sovereign Majesty of God the worship and the honor that are His due. Because in obeying, our will asserts a deliberate desire to belong completely to God, as right reason demands; and in proof of it, it **subjects and surrenders** to Him the supreme and absolute Master of all things, that which only the free will has the power of disposing of, namely, understanding and will, with the one desire that He accept and dispose of those faculties according to His good pleasure. Thus, that **sacrifice** of annihilation is consummated by which we cease to be masters of ourselves, and begin to be the property and possession of God.

Fr. Roupain notes: Obedience surely supposes a **renunciation** and a **sacrifice**, since we cannot obey without suffering diminution in something. But the highest interests will be compromised the moment this kind of obedience ceases to be regarded in the Church with the appreciation and esteem it deserves. To refuse God the **sacrifice** of that which we most love, of that which **we look upon as most our own**, our convictions, namely, our opinions, our preferences would be equivalent to making little of that fundamental axiom of the Gospel: ***He who does not renounce all that He possesses, cannot be My disciple*** [Lk 14:33]. And the **greatest sacrifice** which a soul anxious to practice the virtue of religion with the greatest perfection, can make to God is the **renunciation** of its own ideas, submitting them to the direction of a Superior in whom it recognizes God as ruling and governing it.

The sacrifice, it is true, is immense, but as **St. Gregory** well observes: *For a man to give up his possessions is perhaps a thing easily done, but for a man to give up himself is a work of great difficulty; for if it costs little to renounce what he has, it costs very much more to renounce what he is.* [Hom. 32, in Evang.].

This is indeed an **obsequium**⁹⁸ - as Fr. Mersch affirms, emphasizing the necessity of perfect obedience in spite of the errors and shortcomings of Superiors: ... we have not engaged ourselves to obey Superiors, or men, but Christ. Our Lord has the power and the wisdom to make all things redound to our greater good. This is the great principle and definitive truth on obedience. We have **surrendered ourselves** to the direction of Christ in the manner in which He wishes and approves. We need not know more to be certain that He will not abandon us, and that in the measure of our faith and love, He will manage things in such a way that we shall not come to love Him less for having exerted to love Him more, as He Himself teaches us.

This last observation naturally leads us to examine the other reason proposed by our holy Father for reposing confidently in obedience; the certainty, namely, that the divine fidelity has, so to say, undertaken to stand by us in all difficulties, provided we **surrender ourselves** into the hands of the Superior and through him, into the

⁹⁸ ib, pp. 136,ff.

hands of God, rather than trust to our own judgment. He says: And because you are conscious within yourselves that you have undergone this yoke of obedience for the love of God, to the end that you might, in following the Superior's will, more assuredly follow the Divine Will; doubt not but the most faithful charity of our Lord continually directs you and leads you the right way by the hands of those whom he has given you for Superiors.

Fr. Aicardo has a masterly development of the idea set forth in the text of our Father that the vow of obedience has the force of a **bilateral contract**, in this, that, on the one hand, the religious surrenders himself to his Superiors to be guided by them in the way of sanctification, and on the other, that God in a certain sense promises not to permit in His minister so serious a misapprehension as invincibly to lead the subject to error. This obedience, he says, is like all the life of perfection, a free and spontaneous **offering and oblation** which the religious makes, taking another person as Superior and father to be directed in the service of God by the means which He has chosen. By a principle of faith that all authority comes from God, and that everything happens in the world, aside from the malice of sin, is of divine ordination, the religious sees in the Superior, freely chosen by him and to whom he has submitted, an instrument of God for his own sanctification, an interpreter of the Divine will. From this motive, then, he obeys him and all those to whom the Superior delegates his authority, that is to say, wherever clearly appears the formal and supreme principle of obedience, which is the fulfilling of the will of God....Therefore, obedience looks upon the Superior as **God's instrument**, and not as this or that person, or this or that man, but only inasmuch as he is invested with his office, applying to him what our Lord said to His Apostles: ***He that hears you, hears Me!***

6.] A Distant Comparison to Theological Faith:⁹⁹

The essence of blind obedience apparently consists in prescinding completely from every consideration inspired by natural prudence alone to take refuge in principles of faith... Our holy Father adds that taking such a position before the difficulties of this obedience of the understanding must be in a **manner similar to that which takes place in matters of faith,**

He is quite right in using the word ***similar*** which denotes a certain community of traits, more or less integral and perfect, rather than a complete identity. In fact, there is **an essential difference** between the act of **blind obedience** and the **act of faith**. Because, while the believer subjects his understanding to the truths of faith by relying on their absolute certainty, a certainty derived from **the infallible authority of God**, the religious who with **blind obedience** subjects his judgment to the opinion of his Superiors relies on the **practical certainty** he has of finding y this means the Will of

⁹⁹ Espinosa, pp. 154, ff.

God, a **certainty derived from the Superior's power of commanding, always supposing that what he commands is lawful** [Suarez, Book 4, c. 15, n. 31.].

In fact, just as the Christian in being presented with a mystery of faith does **not give his assent on intrinsic reasons** that convince him of the truth of the mystery, but by means of **the infused habit of faith**, submits to the **revealed truth** on a motive that is entirely **extrinsic**, the authority of God, from Whom the revelation comes: so, **in like manner**, the religious to whom the Superior gives a command, the reasonableness, or unreasonableness of which does not evidently appear, once he has discarded the possibility of sin, does **not bother about the intrinsic reasons** which might move him to subject his understanding and conform it with that of the Superior, but is solely concerned, because of the strength of the **virtuous habit of obedience**. With the **extrinsic motive, which is the Will of God**, manifested in the command he has received.

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Part II – ST. IGNATIUS' RULES on *Sentire cum Ecclesia* [SpEx ## 352-370]

A. SENTIRE CUM ECCLESIA¹⁰⁰

The Missionary, Doctrinal Modality of Ecclesial Obedience [cf. CF # 2]

352: [RULES¹⁰¹ FOR THINKING, JUDGING AND FEELING WITH THE CHURCH¹⁰²] TO HAVE THE GENUINE ATTITUDE¹⁰³, WHICH WE OUGHT TO MAINTAIN IN THE CHURCH MILITANT,¹⁰⁴ WE SHOULD OBSERVE THE FOLLOWING RULES.

¹⁰⁰ St. Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, nn. 352-370: their conclusion. [*Ignatius of Loyola. Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works. The Classics of Western Spirituality. NY. Mahwah: Paulist 1991, George Ganss, SJ, pp. 211-214. [cf. Appendix 2 for Latin rendition].* This is the **Missionary Modality** for Ecclesial Obedience.

¹⁰¹ In Ignatian terminology: **Rules**, i.e., guidelines, directives, norms, or suggestion, to be prudently applied; but not obligations [o.c., note on p. 429, referring to n. 100 on Constitution n. 210: **Reglas**: this is the first of five sets of such directives which Ignatius terms *Rules*, in the *Exercises*: those on eating [210-217]; on discernment of spirits, I [313-317]; and II [328-336]; on distributing alms [337-344]; and on maintaining a genuine filial attitude in the Church [352-370].

Each set of these rules was given not to all retreatants, but according to the needs and desires of individuals [cf. **Directory**, c. 38, n. 1]. In all these cases it is important to attend to what he means by **rules**.

The classical Latin **regula** has many meanings: [1] a measuring rod; [2] a pattern, model, example, measure of right and wrong; [3] an obligation, or law.

In ecclesiastical Latin, **regula**, [and the Spanish, **regla**] often meant a rule imposing an obligation. However, by **rules** in the five sets mentioned, Ignatius cannot mean rules imposing an obligation, since an exercitant has no obligation even to make the **Exercises**. Therefore, he has other meanings according to contexts, such as directives, guidelines, norms, suggestions, or models, as when he wrote that **Christ is our Model and Rule**. [n. 344].

¹⁰² This is an attempt [admittedly, with limited success] to pack the meaning of Ignatius' lengthy title into a short one for handy reference. Longstanding endeavors in the same direction have been: **Rules for Thinking with the Church** and **Rules of Orthodoxy**. They are accurate, but incomplete, for his lengthy title in SpEx 352 involves far more than the realm of thought, or correct belief.

His own title is found in three formulations which illumine one another [cf. **SpEx MHS, pp. 374-375**]. Of the three, that in the Autograph, A, best reveals his whole thought; but it receives clarifications from P and V, as will be seen in subsequent notes.

These well known and influential Rules were in the manuscript of the **Exercises**, during their revision in Rome [1539-1541], and possibly during Ignatius' stay in Paris [1528-1535]. In either case, they reflect the Church's stormy situation which he knew by experience in both periods. Many people were justly clamoring for the Church's reform. Some of them pointed out the abuses respectfully and properly, but others acted irreverently and dangerously. For example, one group, the **Illuminati** in Spain, and others like them in Paris, was practicing a pseudo-mysticism which ignored the doctrinal accuracy and scorned the precisions of Scholastic theology.

A second group consisted of those openly heretical, such as the **Lutheranizers** in Paris.

In a grey area in between these two groups was a third, **disgruntled Catholics** and humanists who often gave reason to doubt whether their faith was still genuinely Catholic. They were critical of the Church, frequently uncharitable, sarcastic, or ambiguous. **Erasmus** is an example, with his captivating but mordant satires and exaggerations mocking the Pope, bishops, theologians, priests and nuns. Two years before Ignatius arrived in Paris, an edition of 20,000 copies of his *Praise of Folly* was exhausted. In 1526, the Sorbonne requested Parliament to condemn his *Colloquia*. In Rome, Ignatius contended with the persecutions stirred up by Landivar and the disgusted heretics, Mainardi, Mudarra and Barreda.

353: *The First Rule.* With all judgment of our own put aside, we ought to keep our minds disposed and ready to be obedient in everything to the true Spouse of Christ our Lord, which is our Holy Mother the hierarchical Church.¹⁰⁵

354: *The Second*¹⁰⁶ We should praise Confession to a priest, reception of the Most Blessed Sacrament once a year, and much more once a month, and still more every week, always with the required and proper conditions.

Most of these practices were contrary to Ignatius' temperament and typical procedures. For him, the Church was a **mother** and a **divinely established institution**, an **embodiment of the Kingdom of Christ**. Painfully aware of her defects, he loved her nonetheless and sought her renewal – but his tactics were **quiet, positive** and **constructive**. They aimed chiefly at interior reform of individuals through **conversations** and his ***Spiritual Exercises***, and eventually they blossomed into his Society of Jesus with its educational system, foreign missions, and other ministries.

He placed these rules about the Church at the very end of his ***Exercises***, and in them he is not argumentative or polemical. He is content to give calm counsel. He intended the rules precisely for an exercitant who for a month had been gazing in love on Christ, contemplating his calls for help in spreading his Kingdom and his example, and was now about to return to ordinary life, perhaps among heretics, or weak Catholics. Polanco states in his ***Directory*** that these rules are given as antidotes 'to those things which the heretics of our time, or those showing affinity to their doctrine, are prone to attack or scorn... Moreover they serve not only to keep such an exercitant from erring in speaking privately or writing publicly in a manner other than proper, but they also help him to discern whether the statements and writings of others are departing from the Catholic Church's manner of thinking and speaking, and to advise others to be on their guard.

Many of Ignatius' topics and details are as applicable in our day as in his, but many too are rather obsolete in our vastly changed circumstances. What is most important for any person now is to catch the **underlying tenor of a loyal attitude of his, or her own, and by it guide oneself and others to live and work in loving loyalty to the Church, Christ's Spouse and our Mother.**

Here is a brief bibliography:

AaVv, *Una lectura actual de las reglas para Sentire cum Ecclesia*, ROME: CIS 1983.

CORELLA, SJ, Jose', *Sentire la Iglesia. Comentario as las reglas ignacianas para el sentido verdadero de Iglesia. Mensajero.Sal Terrae* 1988

GANSS, 'Thinking with the Church': The Spirit of Ignatius' Rules. *The Way. Supplement* 20 [1973]

¹⁰³ **Sentido:** sense, reason, feeling and many other meanings, is often used by Ignatius with nuances of their own. Frequently, as here, it means cognition which is basically intellectual, but is savored so repeatedly that it becomes also deeply emotional and 'satisfies the soul'. Thus, it becomes a habitual attitude of mind, a frame of reference instinctively used to guide one's life.

¹⁰⁴ **Militant:** i.e., the Church on earth, with the human defects found in many of her popes, bishops, priests and other members.

¹⁰⁵ This Rule is the fundamental principle underlying all the rest. It is developed by three groups of directives, which follow, and the Rules indicate. In no other place in the ***Exercises***, does Ignatius so fully reveal his concept of the **Church: true Spouse of Christ, our Mother, and hierarchical**. But his concept is richer still. Elsewhere he describes her as **Christ's Kingdom to be spread** [91-95]; **the community of the faithful** [177]; **Roman** [Sp Ex 353]. And as **Christ's Mystical Body** governed on earth by His Vicar, from whom all authority descends **through hierarchically ordered superiors** [CSJ 7, 603, 666, 736].

¹⁰⁶ **Group I: Rules 2-9**, gives suggestions for establishing an attitude on the devotions and way of life of loyal Catholics.

355: The Third. We should praise frequent attendance at Mass; also, chants, psalmody, and long prayers inside and outside the Church; and further, the schedules setting the times for the Divine Office as a whole, for prayers of every kind, and for all the canonical hours.

356: The Fourth. We should strongly praise religious institutes, virginity and continence, and marriage, too, but not as highly as the former.

357: The Fifth. We should praise the vows of religion, obedience, poverty, chastity, and vows to perform other works of supererogation which conduce to perfection. We should remember, too, that just as a vow is made in regard to matters which lead to evangelical perfection, so vows ought not to be made with respect to matters that withdraw one from it, such as to enter business, to get married, and the like.

358: The Sixth. We should praise relics of saints, by venerating the relics and praying to the saints. We should extol visits to stational churches, pilgrimages, indulgences for jubilees and crusades, and the lighting of candles in churches.

359: The Seventh. We should praise precepts of fast and abstinence, for example, in Lent, on Ember Days, Vigils, Fridays and Saturdays; also penances, not only interior but also exterior.

360: The Eighth. We ought to praise the ornamentations and structures of churches, also images, and their veneration according to what they represent.

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361: The Ninth. Lastly, we should praise all the precepts of the Church, while keeping our mind ready to look for reasons for defending them, and not for attacking them in any way.

363: The Tenth.¹⁰⁷ We ought to be more inclined to approve and praise the decrees, recommendations and conduct of our superiors¹⁰⁸ than to speak against them. For although some of these acts are not or were not praiseworthy, to speak against them either by preaching in public or by conversing among the ordinary people would cause more murmuring and scandal than profit. And through this the people would become angry at their officials, whether civil or spiritual. However, just as it does harm to speak evil about officials among the ordinary people while they are absent, so it can be profitable to speak of their bad conduct who can bring about a remedy.

¹⁰⁷ **Group II: Rules 10-12:** builds an outlook in regards to superiors in the Church, respectively in regard to jurisdiction, learning and sanctity. The fundamental principle of this group is in **Rule 10: *Be more inclined to praise than to blame.***

¹⁰⁸ *Mayores* means here and in other places, our superiors, the officials or authorities both ecclesiastical and civil.

363. *The Eleventh.* We ought to praise both positive theology and scholastic theology.¹⁰⁹ For just as it is more characteristic of the positive doctors, such as St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. Gregory, and the rest to stir up our affections toward loving and serving God our Lord in all things, so it is more characteristic of the scholastic teachers, such as St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, the Master of the Sentences, and so on to define and explain for our times the matters necessary for salvation, and also to refute and explain all the errors and fallacies. For the scholastic teachers, being more modern can avail themselves of an authentic understanding of Sacred Scripture and the holy positive doctors. Further still they, being enlightened and clarified by divine influence, make profitable use of the Councils, canons, and decrees of Holy Mother Church.

364: *The Twelfth.* We ought to be on our guard against comparing those of us who are still living with the blessed of the past.¹¹⁰ For no small error is made when one says, for example, 'He knows more than Augustine', or 'He is another St. Francis, or even more', or, 'He is another St. Paul in goodness, holiness and the like.'

¹⁰⁹ In the 1500's many humanists and reformers were reacting against the scholastic teachers and their methods, often with scorn, and putting more stress on Scripture, sometimes taken alone, or sometimes along with the Fathers. They set scholastic and positive theology in opposition, but Ignatius saw the good in both and presented the two as complementary. Thus through his *Exercises*, [363] and his colleges and universities, a widespread influence on the teaching and study of theology. On scholastic and positive theology, cf. CSJ 366, and its note here:

Ignatius names Sts. Augustine and Gregory as positive doctors, and Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure as scholastics. Scholastic theology was classified as speculative. By inductive and deductive methods and means it sought deeper understanding of God's revelation as found in Scripture and tradition. It was *faith seeking understanding* and in the 12th and 13th centuries it was summed up through such works as the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard [1158] and the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas [+ 1274].

These works fostered devotion as well as knowledge, and presented God's whole redemptive plan. They furnished a comprehensive outlook by which persons could guide their lives. In the 1300's and 1400's, however, many scholastic teachers fell too often into a decadent dialectical of formalism. Their multiplied distinctions became irrelevant to the lives of ordinary people.

However, throughout the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries, Catholic scholars took care in studying the Fathers, whom Ignatius terms the **holy and positive doctors**. [Sp Ex 363]. During his 16th century, Catholic protagonists, too, alongside the Protestants, were developing the study of Scripture, the Fathers, canon law, and other sources of Catholic belief. Their methods became known as 'positive theology', and Ignatius was among the early writers to use this term. He saw the good in both scholastic and positive theology and presented the two as complementary. This thought of his is expressed briefly in SpEx 363 and is prescribed for his colleges and universities in CSJ nn. 351, 353, 366, 446, 464, 467. Thus through his *Exercises* his attitude exerted for centuries a wide-spread influence on the teaching and the study of theology.

¹¹⁰ This is a caution against premature admiration of living persons even over canonized saints. In Ignatius' experience, e.g., with Landivar, Mudarra and Barreda in Rome in 1538, some living preachers were highly esteemed for a while but were disguising their heresy.

365: The Thirteenth.¹¹¹ To keep ourselves right in all things, we ought to hold fast to this principle: What I see as white, I will believe to be black if the hierarchical Church thus determines it.¹¹² For we believe that between Christ our Lord, the Bridegroom, and the Church, His Spouse, there is one same Spirit, Who governs and guides us for the salvation of our souls. For it is by the same Spirit and Lord of ours who gave the ten commandments that our holy Mother Church is guided and governed.

366: The Fourteenth. It is granted that there is much truth in the statement that no one can be saved without being predestined and without having faith and grace. Nevertheless great caution is necessary in our manner of speaking and teaching about all these matters.

367: The Fifteenth. We ought not to fall into a habit of speaking much about predisposition. But if somehow the topic is brought up on occasions, it should be treated in such a way that the ordinary people do not fall into an error, as sometimes when they say: 'It is already determined whether I shall be saved or damned, and this cannot now be changed by my doing good or evil.' Through this they grow listless and neglect the works which lead to good and to the spiritual advancement of their souls.

368: The Sixteenth. In the same way we should notice with caution that by speaking much and emphatically about faith, without any distinction and explanation, we may give the people an occasion to grow listless and lazy in their works, either before or after these persons have a faith which is informed by charity.

369: The Seventeenth. Similarly, we ought not to speak so lengthily and emphatically about grace that we generate a poison harmful to freedom of the will. Hence, one may speak about faith and grace as much as possible, with God's help, for the greater praise of His Divine Majesty; but not in such ways or manners, especially in crimes as dangerous as our own, that works and free will are impaired or thought worthless.

¹¹¹ Group III, Rules 13-18 treats of doctrinal topics, some of them, controverted often passionately, and a manner of expounding them in the troubled 16th century. Again, the group begins with the fundamental principle in Rule 13, which is in substance a rephrasing of Rule I. [353].

¹¹² *Determina*: in the meaning of *decide*. Some texts use *defines it [definierit]*. Notice that Ignatius does not state that we ought to believe that white is black. Instead he writes, *what I see, as white, I would believe to be black*; and the Latin Vulgate in 1548 translated this by *what appears to my eyes as white*. In other words, the error would be in my hasty subjective judgment and not in the Church, because the Church is governed by the Holy Spirit and cannot err in her solemn definitions. This statement seems to be an allusion to Erasmus, who had written: 'Nor would black be white if the Roman Pontiff should pronounce it so, which I know he will never do.'

370: The Eighteenth. It is granted that we should value above everything else the great service which is given to God because of pure love Nevertheless we should also strongly praise fear of his Divine Majesty. For not only is filial fear something pious and very holy, but so also is servile fear. Even if it brings a person nothing better or more useful, it greatly aids him or her to rise from mortal sin, and once this is accomplished, one may more easily advance to filial fear, which is wholly acceptable and pleasing to God our Lord, since it is inseparably united with love of Him.

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B. A MODERN REFLECTION

Harmony with the Church in Communion¹¹³

Ignatian Obedience

1. Obedience [Rules 1 & 13]
2. Praise [Rules 2 – 12]

Sp Ex 353: The First Rule. With all judgment of our own put aside, we ought to keep our minds disposed and ready to be obedient in everything to the true Spouse of Christ our Lord, which is our Holy Mother the hierarchical Church.¹¹⁴

Sp Ex 365: The Thirteenth.¹¹⁵ To keep ourselves right in all things, we ought to hold fast to this principle: What I see as white, I will believe to be black if the hierarchical Church thus determines it.¹¹⁶ For we believe that between Christ our Lord, the Bridegroom, and the Church, His Spouse, there is one same Spirit, Who governs and guides us for the salvation of our souls. For it is by the same Spirit and Lord of ours who gave the ten commandments that our holy Mother Church is guided and governed.

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¹¹³ Jesus Corella, SJ, *Sentire la Iglesia. Comentario das reglas ignacianas para el sentido verdadero de Iglesia*. Mensajero-Sal Terrae 1995, pp. 110-142. [The notes that follow here are a running commentary on this text].

¹¹⁴ This Rule is the fundamental principle underlying all the rest. It is developed by three groups of directives, which follow, and the Rules indicate. In no other place in the *Exercises*, does Ignatius so fully reveal his concept of the Church; true Spouse of Christ, our Mother, and hierarchical. But his concept is richer still. Elsewhere he describes her as Christ's Kingdom to be spread [91-95]; the community of the faithful [177]; Roman [SpEx 353]. And as Christ's Mystical Body governed on earth by His Vicar, from whom all authority descends through hierarchically ordered superiors [CSJ 7, 603, 666, 736].

¹¹⁵ Group III, Rules 13-18 treats of doctrinal topics, some of them controverted often passionately, and a manner of expounding them in the troubled 16th century. Again, the group begins with the fundamental principle in Rule 13, which is in substance a rephrasing of Rule I. [353].

¹¹⁶ *Determina*: in the meaning of *decide*. Some texts use defines it [*definierit*]. Notice that Ignatius does not state that we ought to believe that white is black. Instead he writes, what I see, as white, I would believe to be black; and the Latin Vulgate in 1548 translated this by what appears to my eyes as white. In other words, the error would be in my hasty subjective judgment and not in the Church, because the Church is governed by the Holy Spirit and cannot err in her solemn definitions. This statement seems to be an allusion to Erasmus, who had written: 'Nor would black be white if the Roman Pontiff should pronounce it so, which I know he will never do.' [Perhaps a tranquilly lived modern application in the *sensuum defectui* of the *Tantum ergo*: what I see as bread, wine - faith tells me is the Real Presence...]. [One might also ponder the theory of *mega-history*: comparing the Mystery of Calvary for a believer, and the American author, Ernest Hemingway's *Death in the Afternoon* - as the end of all].

Introduction

[1] Here we penetrate into one of the most important lines that recur in these Rules: the maintenance and the development of **ecclesial communion** in the heart of the retreatant. The Church needs to be lived as **a single entity**¹¹⁷, as a body, or more properly, as a **Person** [the total Christ] who does not acquire its unity by a mere juxtaposition of her elements, but in the harmony with which each member tends to the one vital shared end. There are different functions of one and the same being, in a vital coherent tendency. This is the ecclesial communion.

[2] The vital principal which maintains and develops this mutual correspondence is the Spirit of Jesus. Without Him, the cohesion would be lost. However, the Spirit is not enough. There are dynamic human beings who need to function to make this communion possible. Therefore, in the Church, the divine and the human both form a **mysterious couple**, nuptials, in which neither the human may take the place of the divine, nor the divine substitute for the human. If the human element in the Church functions badly, in that which refers to the 'person', or to the structural, the Church will function badly, despite the Church, who will groan, frustrated, in its interior, without being able to recreate this new 'cosmos', which is supposed to come down from the Trinity toward us. Thus, the Church will achieve its ends very clumsily, as has happened with some frequency throughout history. We need to be grateful that in the new Creation there has not taken place what happened at this first: ***His Kingdom will not end.***

[3] Among the various dynamic responses possible that would promote the ecclesial communion, Ignatius selected two for his Rules: **obedience** and **praise**. Both acquire their importance precisely beginning with the ideal of communion, toward which both are ordered and from which they flow. The reason is that obedience and praise are, in their turn, pedagogy of authentic communion, the path toward it, and its unmistakable expression, its most spontaneous fruit. But going, further, with reference to obedience, would it not have to be said that it is this ecclesial communion which justifies and gives legitimacy to genuine obedience in the Church? Would it not be for this reason why obedience to the Church so endeared itself to Ignatius in his Rules, for the urgency of the desired communion, or said even better, it is on this that it circulates?

[4] We play much on the theme of **ecclesial communion**, as to take care to put in movement all the legitimate means, both divine and human with a few to espouse it. Even more: it is not good to go begging with a certain stinginess the limits of these two attitudes, in that which communion finds its greatest support and expression. Ignatius posits an **integral obedience**, and a **generous praise**, which pour forth from the very

¹¹⁷ cf. A Stigmatine Retreat on Communion: www.st-bertoni.com

heart of the retreatant, so much so that in his/her generous response to be the stable, firm, attractive expressions of one's feeling for the Church. One feels that he/she is 'Church' when there can be noted in this person certain manners of being, preferences, criteria, tendencies; and these are also such a person's desires and utopias. One at the same time discovers within personal sins, those of the Church, one's own laziness and that of the Church. One allows that the life of the Church is expressed in him/her, with the joy of **fraternity possessed**, of **participated filiation**, pardon already realized, which destroy the walls of separation and of hatred. There is noted the joy of having one sole heart and one soul. Likewise, one sole head, which make out of many one sole language. It is for this that obedience and praise come into the Church.

To achieve all this there is needed **a certain dying to self**, a life-long *kenosis* [cf. Ph 2:5-11], let us never forget this. To die to one's isolation, in a certain sense; or if one would prefer, one's extreme self-centeredness. This is the 'step', the Pasch, in order to reach love and the belonging, or that feeling for the Church in greater depth towards the spirit.

[5] We are going to speak, of the first term, of obedience. Here, too, Ignatius begins with a very high standard. And after this, we will speak of his sense of praise, which is only understood well only after one had penetrated the mystery of obedience. We will distinguish the general attitude of praise and those concrete realities that should be praised in the Church.

[a] As Ignatius speaks of obedience in two of these Rules, the 1st and the 13th, we will comment on them together. The sole difference between the two lies in this that the 1st Rule is as the principle and the foundation of the rules, and describes **the attitude of obedience** as the point of departure. The 13th Rule which for some time closed the entire block of these Rules, after having had recourse to the mystagogic [theological] reflection on praise, both concrete and even going more deeply, both regarding its requirement as well as in the more explicit and detailed motivation.

[b] This is the typical Ignatian manner of proceeding. Between the 1st Rule and the 13th Rule there is the same difference, understanding the proportions, as between the Principle and the Foundation and the Contemplation in order to attain love in the *Exercises*. In both cases, the tactics are the same: in both cases, there is a mystery, going forward and with decision, however, very soberly in the beginning, in order to unveil in all its richness the 'core of the corresponding mystery', after having completed the transforming path of the whole process.

[6] In the course of the ***Spiritual Exercises***, it is the mystery of the love of God as the unifying end for man and the personal response of freedom. In the ***Rules*** it is the same mystery, however, incarnated in that which we will the **'Mystery of the Church.'**

And in these Rules, there succeeds practically the same goal: to seek the Mystery of the Church, the **1st Rule** almost does not discover anything more than the clear attitude of entrance, a species of synthesis between the 'presupposition' and the Principle and Foundation, as was said earlier, in that which asks of us acceptance and esteem of the Church. It is in the **13th Rule**, the last one on the path toward praise, in which we discover **the entire mystery, the spousal union of Christ with the Church**, the Church as '**Mother**', **hierarchical**, which is what **rules** and **governs** it.

[a] In the Contemplation to arouse love, it is love that we discovers. In this last Rule it is the Spirit. Is it not exactly the same? Do not the commentators say that ***Contemplation toward Love***, is in reality the experience of Pentecost with the Spirit descending on the retreatant, inundating each in love, and making each capable by moving each to hand over each one's freedom? I do not find a better key in order to understand this **Rule** than the *Contemplation toward Love*. The reason is because the Spirit breaks into this **Rule**, as if it were a matter of a new Pentecost, and not just as a personal experience of the retreatant. The experience is as though he/she were at the beginning, in the Church, in what which the retreatant has to work through in order to incite **spousal love** which certainly is the only reality that is complete with the Lord Jesus.

[b] ***To keep ourselves right in all things [Rule 13]:*** The Spirit reveals to us that He rules the Church, and makes of it one flesh only with Jesus, as the only key of comprehension and **the living of the mystery of communion**, and also as **the sole legitimacy of the path of total obedience**.

[c] In the recent Congress on the ***Spiritual Exercises*** in Loyola, Spain, September 1991, someone asked why there is no mention of love in the Principle and Foundation. Just asking a question of this nature might manifest that the person had not yet discovered Ignatius' mystagogical [theological] sense. In the beginning, there did not exist any categories: mental, affective and not even spiritual, that would enable to understand what 'love' truly is. **Love is precisely that which is discovered in making the *Spiritual Exercises*, as it is the ultimate key to the Christian life.** And if someone falls into the danger of already understanding what this 'love' is from any less worthy categories, without at the same time achieving an overwhelming love desire for the divine by means of authentic 'love', in order to re-organize by means of it all other 'loves', I believe that it is necessary to live out the entire process and only in that way will anyone reach this Ignatian ideal of 'love.'

[d] Something like this occurs with the full process contained in these Rules. I am referring here especially to the first 13. It is only in the 13th, after different exercises of diverse harmonies, and quests of my own proper place in the Church, is the Spirit give to us as a Gift. With Him, comes the Gift of Communion [to catch up with 'love'], that free liberty of **total obedience** and the **response of praise**.

[e] From a structural point of view, the joining of the 13 presents the same structure as the human word. At least in their Indo-European roots, it is accustomed to distinguish the hard part of the consonants, at the beginning and the end of the root, and the more modulated and bland part of the center which is more reserved to the vowels, susceptible to significant variations – philologists call these ‘alternances’. Here, the modulating factor is the praise – whereas the hard and resisting factor in order to support the ‘alternances’ of the praise is obedience. Both assure and express a loving belonging – they are, first of all, a language, and not a legal demand. Otherwise, they would lack meaning.

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1. *With all judgment of our own put aside, we ought to keep our minds disposed and ready ... [Rule 1]*

a. The rhythm of the phrase leads to emphasizing the contrast between something that one has to give up, and that which must be posited to take its place. The Ignatian expression: ***all judgment put aside***, evokes a situation of election. In order to enter into the ‘Elections’ within the process of the ***Spiritual Exercises***, it is necessary to put aside one’s own judgment: this means, some room has to be left for what is new that can be produced through the motions of the Spirit, which have shown us God’s will. Each person needs to keep himself open, and the judgment shuts off the assumptions, and many times even our own heads.

b. Likewise, before Jesus, each one must lay aside his own personal judgment. This is just the contrary of what the religious authorities did in His time: in order not to lay it aside, in order to hold matters already resolved and clear, they rendered themselves incapable of the newness that was Jesus, and they judged all reality from the point of view of their own judgment. It is this kind of ‘our own judgment’ to which Ignatius refers here: an act of conclusive affirmation on something, for which one even comes to the point of saying; ‘definitely, this is the way it is.

c. In the abundant variety of possible rational operations of each person, the judgment expresses a posture that is properly definitive, the fruit of previous operations which culminate in this, one’s ‘own’ judgment. For this reason, Ignatius does not seek, for example, for one to lay aside simple apprehensions, or personal intuitions, or one’s own evaluations of reality that can exercise oneself on an historical fact, or some realization of a person. All these intellectual operations are that through which the person approaches reality, understands it, reacts to it, perceives its importance sees the difficulties, or the advantages, foresees its effects. However, none of this so far is his ‘judgment.’ He remains open to new data, or to new interpretations. And this does not go counter to **obedience to the Church**. One does not for all this close his eyes in order not to see that which happens both within, as well as outside the Church, as though to obey without entering into it, would be more perfect than to

obey by entering into it. The only reality that can block this obedience is the posture taken as one's position having been already taken, as having 'posited one's own judgment.'

d. There are individuals who think that to lay aside one's own judgment is not to see the reality, is to remain blank, or to deny oneself the capacity of evaluation of the ecclesial realities, or of those socio-cultural and historical realities which affect the Church. It does not have to be this way. It is not the same to *lay aside one's judgment* as not even '*to think*', and Ignatius does not ask the surrender of thought, but to put aside ones own judgment. It is not the same *to judge* and *to see*, and Ignatius does not ask not to see – he does not ask the renunciation of this latter. There is included here also the fact that some metaphysician looking at all this might say that to *lay aside one's judgment* there would be needed judgment to do even this.

e. This is always in order to an election, or to a determination which must be taken. It is as though Ignatius was asking us to **free ourselves from pre-judgments**, and not to convert them into judgments that would distance us from **ecclesial communion**. In place of proceeding on one's own, we ought always to remain within our position in the Church, in order to opt as members of the Church, and not as persons who are simply individuals.

f. For the rest, also Superiors, too, have to know how to *put aside* their own personal judgment, or opinion. In some early 'Determinations' of the Company, which probably proceeded from Deliberations which our first Fathers took in the first years of the history of the Company, and which do have an unmistakable Ignatian flavor, there is this following text:

... Should the Superior, according to greater or lesser doubts in those matters which consist in his charge, ought to have greater or lesser recourse to those who are his brothers and sons in the Lord? And the answer is affirmative...

*... After the Superior will have read such writings and will have come to understand such opinions [those of his brothers and his sons], having put aside all motions which could move them in accord with passion, ought to have recourse to his Creator and Lord, representing such opinions, **and laying aside his own personal view** [should be perchance have any], not seeking nor looking for any other goal than his greater glory and praise in all things, and in accord with this he ought to act according to his conscience ... The answer is affirmative...*

g. We note this contrast: on the one hand, the Superior should lay aside his own opinion, and then act according to his own conscience. This is a very Ignatian *spiritual exercise*! In a general way, it is a very Ignatian exercise to lay aside one's own judgment, and each one must make further reference in that which pertains to the

Church. This implies a relationship with the process of the Discernment of Spirits, and included in human prudence is one's own thinking, keeping in mind that *it is genuine prudence not to trust in one's own prudence, and in a special way, in one own views, since men are not ordinarily good judges because of their passion.* [Ignatius' Letters]

h. Polanco offered a similar characterization regarding Ignatius: 'He was accustomed to using much the means of *laying aside his own judgment*, and to allow himself to judge through others, in whatever another might show himself to be more fixed in his view than was proper.' Speaking in his **Constitutions** regarding the impediments keeping one from entering into the Company, he included in these *that lack of judgment, or notable hardness in one's own view.*¹¹⁸ This phrase, as we noted earlier, illumines the meaning of ***laying aside one's judgment*** of the rule under discussion, and this is why it is necessary to keep this one.

i. If one recently admitted should give certain signals that he cannot *dispose himself to live in obedience and to the manner of proceeding of the Company [modus], either because he cannot, or because he does not seek to overcome his own judgment* [CSJ n. 216], it is better to send him away from the Company. Thus, the Ignatian tactic of always having a witness for his own processes of discernment, which delivers one from himself, and from one's own contradictions, or false motions of a variety of spirits.

2. ... We ought to keep our minds disposed and ready [to obey] ...

a. This is the positive part of the phrase: there is a formidable contrast between the words: ***judgment*** and ***mind*** seemingly a similar idea expressed in that in what is asked of superiors between ***their own opinion*** and ***conscience***:

- 'Judgment' is harsher, harder, less flexible. In judgment-making, we are so free if we allow ourselves that we hand over our capacity to make judgments, we are not going to be masters of our own selves.

- 'mind': is something else. By this Spanish word there is understood an interior state of the individual, resulting from a coming together of operations and actual living, in which are included perceptions, motivations, evaluations, intentions, emotions and diverse desires.

b. In a letter redacted by Polanco, but then revised by Ignatius himself, written to a Scholastic who was finding obedience very difficult, and this same contrast comes up. In order to inspire the young Jesuit to obedience, the letter states: '... keep your *mind*, then, and leaving the uncertain and dangerous path of *your own judgment*, and follow the certain and sure path of holy obedience ...' The *mind* can dispose one

¹¹⁸ Cf. CSJ n. 184. Fr. Bertoni speaks of **obstinacy** [CF # 18] and **Stubbornness** [CF #20] as impediments.

toward obedience. It is that field in which many factors may enter, such as: the pre-existent and very vivid desire to maintain ecclesial union; my own personal sentiments of personal poverty that are prior also to any critique; the humble perception of my own ecclesial sins, and my own sins in general; a previous general tendency to save the proposition of my neighbor; a good motivation to obey; the arousal of the fact of being the judge in matters which affect me; or finally, a healthy sense of interior freedom in matters pertaining to the Church and the like. All this helps to overcome the reaction, which many times is quite mechanical, of my own judgment in matters of the Church. This means it should ask us for greater mental anchoring [cf. Heb 6:19], with the object of integrating the realities of the Church in a form that is more accessible to the entire person, and not only to his critical capacity.

c. Even more, with this substitution of **judgment** for **mind** there is suggested that the ambit of **feeling with the Church** is not to be reduced to what is strictly intellectual, or analytical – as would happen in the case in which the ‘Church’ would be merely a mental object. This whole context ought to refer, above all, to the area of relationship, because the Church is, above all, a question of the bonding of persons, of personal relationship, to which we approach more by the **mind** than by the **judgment**. One can undergo the exercise of broadening the capacity of including better other persons, to consider the others’ point of view, that might be more positive, to comprehend, to tolerate. If we go forward only with the **judgment**, everything will be more difficult, not to say downright impossible. The reason for this is that in the **judgment**, there tends to prevail self-affirmation, while in the **mind** there is included the quest.

d. The broad area of **desire** must not be overlooked. The **mind** is a concept much linked to the world of desire. It is like a movement that lifts me to seek; it is an attitude that favors suggestions, it gains incentives for its own understanding, and drawing one up out of his own doubts and narrowness. It implies a very distinct manner of thinking, from desire then to think rather than remain in apathy. From this, the importance of what exists in me as a **mind** nourished by the desire to be ‘Church’, as a previous given prior to all conflict which then proceeds to present itself in the ecclesial inter-action. This is what it seems to me that Ignatius wants to say in this contrast between **judgment** and **mind**.

e. There are two adjectives which accompany the word **mind**: **disposed** and **ready**. These are significant in the light of any authentic theological discussion on the Church as Communion:

- **Disposed**: this means prepared before hand – this involves real commitment before hand, a real labor on the part of the individual. Realizing his own inner mechanisms and seeking to respond these and not to force them, the person disposes himself beforehand, in order to be able to arrive at the level of Christian obeying.

[1] This is not easy to do. It is necessary to know oneself well; one must be quite free interiorly, in order to motivate oneself to genuine obedience, within oneself. This is not a matter how others might appear to us, but much more how one appears to himself as a faith-filled believer, with inalienable responsibility, with regard to obedience. One cannot obey without motivations, or without desires to do this. Motives and desires that come to life many times not only from intrinsic values of the content of the mandate in what is being treated, but also from the level of pure faith, of those values superior to the Reign of God bound to the act of obedience as such, or of the healthy perception of one's own freedom in thinking. All this is well integrated within the person.

[2] The non-transferable commitment of each one is to work so these values might be indeed proper values, so that they might produce, within, affective impulses of the quest for Communion, of overcoming all difficulties. One necessary question is: 'Why not?' All of this is within the *mystique* of authentic obedience. To be prepared to obey is something much more than accepting obedience. It means to take an active part in it, as in one's own business, with one's own responsibility, independent of the responsibility of the superior – and beyond all this how, and why he can command. For my part, I dispose myself, psychologically and spiritually, and in so far as I am able, to the free and mysterious act of obedience.

[3] To prepare oneself to obey basically means to take the responsibility to walk toward personal maturity, without which there is no authentic obedience in the Church. To prepare oneself means to grow, and to free oneself. Of oneself, and based on false human respect that might move us to take other stances, and which have so little to do with authentic obedience – as, for example, to flatter the Superior, to make of him a myth, or to fear his reactions; or, to alienate oneself fanatically from his personal opinions or tastes; and the lack of any desire to obey - is all that this Rule requires of us.

[4] This responsibility is made one's own from the fact that one assumes his '**becoming Church**', and one discovers himself being called to serve in a positive manner in it. This includes the responsibility each has as the 'first agent' with the Holy Spirit, for his own formation, the progressive elimination of impediments and the exercise of one's own capacities with a view toward obedience.

- **Ready**: this suggests a distinct aspect. The preparation for this is something that has to be experienced beforehand – this requires previous commitment, because it is a process. To be **ready**¹¹⁹, it is that challenge to remain on the pathway of ascent, with the yearning to break out into a run. It is more in accord with the genuine values of

¹¹⁹ In the Stigmatine tradition, Fr. John Mary Marani, the Founder's first successor as Superior General, was long remembered for his slogan for the Apostolic Missionaries: *Parati ad omnia!*

the reign of God that of obeying over that of commanding.¹²⁰ This means *to be for*, as tending by connaturality, toward obedience. This is a matter more of attitude which is to remain in life more as one who serves [cf. Lk 22:27]. Each is to seek that attitude of being unfettered, exercising availability, to remain in form, without demanding too many pre-requisites, maintaining agility of movement, the absence of excessive impediments, the desires to serve. In a word, a gesture, an occasion, would be sufficient to lead one to 'hasten, even fly' to obey.

[1] Commanding commits no fault that one be **ready**, disposed. On the contrary: it will be good that the one whose job it is to move others to act, when one ponders more slowly. Obeying, however, is able to maintain a more spontaneous rhythm. It is the privilege of those who serve, the genuinely poor.

[2] In order for this readiness toward obedience be a stable attitude, there is required a certain connaturality. Whatever type of attitude that is forced, which puts a man interiorly out of joint, might still allow him to function in one case, while it would not suffice for him in the Church in a stable manner [keeping in mind, however: faith is obedience (**DV 5**) – and theologians are called to surrender (cf. **LG 25**). We cannot remain in her as one would be fastened to a chain, or making an extraordinary effort each time that he is to act. One cannot posit the old objection that a violent obedience does not last: it will either move one to cease functioning, or it will damage the psychological health of the individual. Yet, the kingdom of heaven does suffer violence – and the Lord's grace will be sufficient for us to comply knowingly and lovingly to the Lord's will.

[3] What St. Ignatius is looking for is that each one might hold to a certain pedagogy within himself in order *to be obedient in everything*. If to this there is added that care in the Superior of sending with utmost accuracy, and if obedience comes only when he succeeds in doing this, then all would hum right along an open road. In any case, it would always be good that **both**, the Superior and the one who has to obey, might hold a certain margin to supply for mutual possible deficiencies, without limiting himself simply to carry out a strict obligation. [In the end, the Superior has the right to command.]

3. To be Obedient in Everything

a. It would be difficult to think that Ignatius does not insist here somewhat on his convictions regarding **his spirituality of obedience**: in the light of his Formal

¹²⁰ Among the writings of Ignatius, that is one that is entitled: *The Form of the Company, and Oblation* [cf. **BAC**, p. 326] – there is related the process which his first companions followed in order to elect him Praepositus General. When in the first ballot he was unanimously elected, he stated that deep in his own soul he experienced a greater will to be governed than to command – he was unable to find in himself the sufficiency to rule over himself, let alone even think of striving to govern others.

Letter on Obedience [March 26, 1553] – or his concluding paragraphs to his *Spiritual Exercises*, [nn. 352-370]. Loving Obedience is often considered as **the characteristic virtue of the Society of Jesus**. His thought here is most penetrating and challenging. We need to allow to permeate our hearts and minds these great principles of his **obedience in everything**. It is clear that he is beginning from his own experience coupled with God's grace. The Saint learned to obey in the midst of all that he was doing under the guidance of God through His mandates, both positive and negative, those he might have found either agreeable, or disagreeable – that he received also from ecclesiastical authorities. He received many prohibitions throughout his life: Jerusalem, Alcalá, Salamanca, Paris. However, he was always led forward to levels of which he had been unaware.

b. Until he had realized his experience at La Storta, perhaps this proved to be the convincing key of his ideal of the Church. La Storta provided the confirmation of his arrival in Rome, where he had been promised God's special help there. That experience placed him in the 'Society, the Company of Jesus', God's Son, at the very heart of the Church. This was the realization of his identifying following of the Crucified Lord. The end result always was the same: to be in communion with the Most Blessed Trinity as the revelation of what 'Church' means, and it is to this that one undertakes the *Spiritual Exercises*, or strives to live the *Constitutions*. Mysteriously asks this of Mary, who leads him to her Son, leading him to the Church. This principle is what lies behind **obeying in all**. The practical living out of this would make real demands on Ignatius.

c. Departing from these principles, which are rather schematic, it might be deduced that the most unique innovation that sets Ignatius apart, is **to live Obedience in the Church habitually** as the simple, trustworthy and viable mediation in the quest for the divine will. For this reason, it is ordinarily united with spiritual discernment. Likewise it is necessary to detach the richness that the concept and the exercise of ecclesial obedience acquired, beginning with **Mission**. To command is, above all, to **send**; and to accept with all one's person the fact of being sent is to obey with that typically Ignatian obedience. It was in this manner that Ignatius and his companions come to Rome. The **Mission** forms part of the very Ignatian concept of obedience, and is always encountered within its horizon. It is included when this concept is referred to **Corporate Obedience**, which is, as is known, came later in the Ignatian history, and which is **oriented more to the good internal functioning of the apostolic body**. In the final analysis, of this apostolic body is to function well, it is due to the **Mission**, which gives it meaning.

d. Let us recall, lastly, that for Ignatius, **to obey** is above all to be well integrated in the social body about which is spoken here, i.e., the Church. Not to function in an autarchic manner, on one's own, but rather in harmony with one's

neighbor, as a living stone, or living member of a body. The relationship with the superior is motivated for, or orientated toward the total belonging, in life and mission, to this body, in which it knows that the Lord Jesus Christ seeks my life and my mission.

e. **To obey in everything:** is a very Ignatian expression. It is complex, totalizing, in both a quantitative and qualitative manner. This type of expression is very frequent in St. Ignatius – it is a combination of words that suggests a going to the very depths of the question, or a clear attitude, defined, without ambiguity. A like phrase is found in the Constitutions of St. Ignatius, Examen, chapter 4 – n. 103]: ... *a continual mortification in all possible matters*. This certainly means a continued succession of possible acts of mortification, which would lead us to live – and which even suggests an underlying attitude, a quality of a life of **abnegation, total renunciation**, that no one would ever want to leave aside.

f. Here, **to obey in everything** means to obey totally, even to the depths of oneself, with an obedience like that which Ignatius always recommended. This consists not only in the execution of the mandate, but that it should include the whole man, even to arriving at being a true living of the faith and love.¹²¹ This is the quality of obedience to the Church which is being so highly recommended. That obedience to the Church which stops with exteriors is not good. The reason is that obedience such as this, which for Ignatius would hardly merit the name of 'obedience', cannot contain within itself the mystery of the Church, as its motive, nor to exercise it, as is asked for here. Only that obedience that is more profound, more totalizing, can serve as the basis of a living of this type. What Ignatius speaks about here is the obedience he learned at LaStorta. It is that loving obedience which is authentic communion. It is this obedience, even though it is at times with the cross on one's back.

4. To be obedient in everything to the True Spouse of Christ Our Lord

a. We arrive here at the key point: the *terminus* of the act of obedience is thus described. Since it is true that for all practical purposes, it is necessary to obey concrete ecclesiastical superiors. However, their persons are not the *terminus* of the act of obedience. If one obeys within a referential context which is precisely that of **feeling with the Church** – and that to which in the final analysis, it is all remitted in order for the act of obedience to be genuinely **ecclesial**. Only the Church, as such, is the genuine referential terminus of this common act, mine and of the one constituted in authority, which is the 'command/ obey.'

¹²¹ cf. Letter on Obedience, Masrch 26, 1853: execution, obedience of will, obedience of intellect: cf. nn. 5-7 – this is the 'holocaust'. [cf. CF ## 142-149, 3 levels of obedience].

b. To obey **the true Spouse** of Christ: most would not agree that the **true Spouse of Christ** is no one in particular in the Church.¹²² Only the Church, precisely realized in its totality, representative of the Mystery of Jesus Christ, is **the authentic Spouse**. Neither is always just the Hierarchy, collectively considered, the Spouse. It is true that in immediate matters, and in concrete questions, one obeys the hierarchy, because this exercises this basic function in the Church, that of expressing and urging the mandate with an order to its good functioning, as the human reality which it is. However, it needs to be kept in mind that St. Ignatius identifies the **true Spouse of Christ**, and the **Church as Mother, is the Hierarchical Church: which is our Holy Mother the hierarchical Church.**

c. Strictly speaking, for some the act of obedience, in its integrity. With all its interior value, is the Church. In the same manner that each of us belongs to the Church, and not any single member of the hierarchy, or some particular representatives of the hierarchy – even though each one is always under the jurisdiction of a determined superior – and all the members of the Church are under the Pope – the ‘content’ of Ignatius’ 4th vow is the person of the Holy Father.

d. The effort has been to say today that St. Ignatius in this phrase, taken in total isolation, might not be explicitly speaking of obeying the members of the Hierarchy of the Church, but to **the Church as the Spouse of Christ** – this distinction is offered by some, but is certainly not accepted by all. It is as though one were saying: the obedience to the Church means to recognize her as Spouse, and to think of her as such. And the contrary is true: for a believer, to think of the Church as Spouse is to arouse oneself to obey her, in a response which is fundamentally love, **one of communion-identification with her.**

e. The title **Spouse**, is not a mere literary adornment, in the sober Ignatian style, but instinctively pours forth, as the first title from the loving heart of Ignatius, in reference to the Church. We are at the very beginning of his Rules. It is the first that breaks out of the ground, and, as generally happens in his writing-style, besides being the first, it is also the **fundamental** principle of the 17 Rules that follow here. This is **the fundamental principle**. All the rest of these Rules are derived from this **founding experience** which Ignatius wants to transmit to the one on Retreat, or joining the Jesuits: **the Church is the Spouse of Jesus Christ**, and each one needs to consider her as such in the most concrete realities of life. There is required a reverential love, and a consequential love, one that is efficacious, and not merely platonic, merely abstract.

¹²² Some would maintain that the image of the Church as **Spouse emphasizes choice**; while the emphasis on the Church as **Mother**, would be union.

f. This image of the **Church-Spouse** is the primordial image referred to in these rules. And these are the composition of a man, most sober in expressions of love:

[1] It has been frequently noted how in the Ignatian spirituality there are lacking mystical expressions which manifest the nuptial theme, so frequent in other Spanish saints, to describe mystical union. However, there is a 'mysticism of service', with great emphasis on the Spanish *servir* - and to oblige.

[2] This is true when we consider only Ignatius' life-style and personal expressions regarding his own life. However, this is not true regarding his idea and metaphors regarding the Church. While in his Diary, and other documents regarding his own interior life, the nuptial theme seems absent – whereas in the *Spiritual Exercises* and the *Constitutions*, Ignatius presents the Church as the Spouse of Christ. Yet, this does not seem to be a mere literary expression in Ignatius.

[3] The metaphor seems to manifest a deep aspect in Ignatius' thought, one that is much alive in the heart of the Jesuit Founder. She, the Church, and not some individual person in particular, is the Spouse. However, it needs to be kept in mind that the main emphasis in the Ignatian charism in this context is the person of the Holy Father, as is noted by the Saint's insistence throughout his Constitutions to the *obsequium Romani Pontificis, Vicarii Christi*. Other mystical spiritualities manifest mysterious espousals of the soul with God. Ignatius manifests a strong communitarian, **corporate** sense in his love. He is the mover toward the **union of souls** as the source of mutual love in the Company.¹²³ He lives his personal mysticism most sublimely treating the problems of the Company and its Constitutions, as his Spiritual Diary clearly indicates. This strong **corporate sense** is that which without doubt leads him to resonate more profoundly with the Church, in all that refers to her: she is the **one, unique Spouse**. In the final analysis, she is the key of the very union of each particular person with Jesus Christ, because the Church is **the place of encounter**, in which each member becomes intertwined with the Head, and seeks to be **re-capitulated** in the Church. It is in the Church, or in reference to her, that we are loved. This is Ignatius' thought.

g. From this theological insight, it is quite true that this perspective is much more precise than would that more private and individual bond ever could be. A profound depth of Ignatian spirituality is noted here in terms of nuptials – both **mystical** as well as **corporative**.

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¹²³ Cf. St. Gaspar *Original Constitutions*, Part X De Unione, seu Unitate Membrorum: both juridical union, but **fundamentally** spiritual harmony of hearts].

5. Which is our Holy Mother the [Hierarchical]¹²⁴ Church

a. As a result, one could not exaggerate this type of life-style in Ignatius. This enthusiastic out-pouring in Ignatius tends often to be balanced in him with others – but, in all of them there predominates the respect and a certain sentiment of humble contrast. His main model throughout is **the relationship of Jesus Christ with His Father**. This is a sentiment of faith that produces in Ignatius a clear sensation of ‘otherness’, identification, union with Christ, with respect to the Church. **For Jesus Christ, the Church is His Spouse**. For us, the Church is our **Mother**. Both titles as are clear in the tradition of the Church, come together also in Ignatius. His is the sentiment of unworthiness, a certain contrast between his own situation and that of the Church, which orients him toward another type of union, more proper to himself, that of ‘unworthy slave’¹²⁵. His is a **union of service**, of **instrumentality [the blind man’s cane]**, and his ultimate ideal, **filiation [in His ‘company’, ‘society’]**. Obedience to the Church is, then, motivated in a humble love, the fruit of perception of the contrast of his own unworthiness and the dignity of the **Spouse-Mother, the Hierarchical Church**. In this context, and always, obedience for St. Ignatius is a form of humble and loving service, proper to one who has been received under the standard of Jesus, despite his sins.

b. It would be good to emphasize here that the sentiment of humble ‘otherness’ with respect to the Church does not originate in Ignatius coming from his ‘Two Classes of Persons’, or states within her. It is not just that he felt himself to be a rank-less, lowly soldier, standing at attention before the Hierarchy, which has been constituted by the Holy Spirit [cf. Ac 20] in the divine power of spiritual authority, and should be revered. However, this sense of ‘otherness’ is familiar to us in our own time. The sense of lowliness that inspires, and establishes obedience to the **Holy Spouse-Mother Hierarchical Church** is above all, an experience, spiritual in nature, interior, in so far as Ignatius considers himself a **Servant** of the Church, by the will of Jesus Christ, His Eternal Lord and Supreme Captain. There has to be some insistence on the person of the Roman Pontiff. Mentioned so often in the Ignatian rule. The Society is called to ***serve the Church, the Spouse of Christ, under the Roman Pontiff***.

c. It is from Ignatius’ **Mysticism of Service**, of his **Lord** and **Supreme Captain**, incarnate in the Church under the Holy Father, that his language on obedience flows. To obey the **Spouse-Mother** is to belong to the Church, to serve her in an active manner. To continue the image: it is to be called in her **in one and the same flesh**, with the Lord Jesus, as the Spouse with her Husband. It means to

¹²⁴ Surprisingly, the author – P. José Corella, SJ, [o.c., p. 123] has not included the determining adjective here – but, it is, of course, implied as his explanation indicates. The citation of some Papal documents would be of great help here asking for obedience in both Intellect and Will.

¹²⁵ *SpEx* n. 114.

reverence her, and to be full of esteem for her. And this is the fundamental necessary **Ignatian ecclesial obedience**, his '**interior guiding principle**' in serving the Church. Ignatius speaks of the two levels as though they were inseparable, thinking of both with absolute spontaneity. This means that Ignatian obedience to the Church as presented in this Rule, cannot be fully understood, nor exercised, without this **interior, spousal** and at the same time, **filial** experience. A real present-day danger is to see this lofty ideal of ecclesial service riddled and truly weakened with endless rationalizations based primarily on human logic, personal, socio-cultural and psychological structures.

d. In order for this beautiful Ignatian ideal to be lived to the spiritual depth that the Founder understood it, these experiences can be lived with reverence to the Supreme Authority in the Church keeping in mind this view of 'Church.' The Spouse of Christ, for many today, does not mean the hierarchical Church, no matter how respectable this might seem. Yet, the Ignatian ideal was clearly the Church in the concrete, not some 'abstract person' – it is this Church, with its present leaders. And this obedience needs to be ever greater, ***ad maiorem Dei gloriam*** - for the **ever greater service of this Church**. The exercise of ecclesial obedience and the daily living of the **mysticism of spousal and filial service** is very Ignatian.

6. The Place of the Roman Pontiff

a. It is pointed out in recent times that nowhere in these Rules, nor in the rest of the ***Spiritual Exercises***, is there any allusion whatever to the person of the Holy Father. However, it does appear in the Jesuit Founder's **Letter on Obedience [March 26, 1553]**:

... And what I have said of obedience is not only to be understood of individuals with reference to their immediate Superiors, but also of Rectors and local Superiors with reference to Provincials, and of Provincials with reference to the General, and of the General towards him whom God our Lord has given as Superior, His Vicar on earth ... Even in the angels there is the subordination of one hierarchy to another; and in all the heavens, and all the bodies that are moved, the lowest by the highest, and the highest, in their turn, unto the Supreme Mover of all. We see the same on earth in well-governed states, and in the hierarchy of the Church, the members of which render their obedience to the one universal Vicar of Christ our Lord. And the better this subordination is kept, the better the government, but when it is lacking everyone can see what outstanding faults ensue. And therefore, in this Congregation, in which our Lord has given me some charge, I desire that this virtue be as perfect as if the whole welfare of the Society depended on it ... [n. 20]

b. St. Francis Borgia commented on this letter to the whole Society:

... As to the virtue of obedience which is the purpose and guide of the Society and its tower of defense, although I might call attention to some things, I shall rather refer you to the excellent and admirable letter which our Father Ignatius, of happy memory, has

written on that virtue; he has said all, and left nothing more to be said: ***Hoc fac et vives.*** [Lk 10:28]. I hope in the Lord that if we do what is there set down, **we shall be true sons of obedience...**¹²⁶

c. There are moments of **mystical inspiration** which enkindle and enrapture – and there are moments of dedicated **activity** when concrete plans are made. This is more or less how Ignatius' own life unfolded. The **Rules** under discussion have been placed by Ignatius between these two levels: thus one can speak of the necessity of obedience, beginning from the vibrant impulse of love, even without further and particular references to the operational nature of obedience. We need to ponder the spiritual depth of the Founder, the source of these initiatives – moving the person making the *Spiritual Exercises* to return to the life he is living, to the every-day Church of which he is a member, once the retreat is over. Ignatius insists strongly on the necessity of keeping uppermost in mind this **affective dedication**, and including aspects of the lived mysticism. To the service of the Church, in order to reach the desired level of being an efficacious and operative member in her – this is the basis of being capable of ***feeling, believing with the Church.***

d. The Pope is present in the **Formula** of the Institute of the Company of Jesus founded by St. Ignatius [cf. CSJ n. 1; cf. also nn. 16; 17; 26; 27; 375; 377]. With much greater detail, the Pope is present in **Part VII** of the Constitutions of St. Ignatius, ***De Missionibus***, the first part of the Constitutions developed by the Founder [cf. CSJ nn. 210-214; 560-570] – it is here that there is planned the **apostolic strategy** of the service of the Church. This is described succinctly by St. Ignatius as ***to assist souls***. These are various stages of one and the same **experience of total dedication in obedience to the Church**. There needs to be **an on-going quest within the Company for the most efficient manner of service in obedience to the Supreme Shepherd**. It would suffice to recall to mind the **Fourth Vow**.

e. However, it can also be noted that it is only in the context of the conclusion to the ***Spiritual Exercises*** [that of striving to lead one to discern how to live with deeper commitment in a more Christ-like manner] that there is found the formula, perhaps originating with Erasmus' facetious rejection of it: ***What I see as white, I will believe to be black if the hierarchical Church thus determines it*** [Rule 13, *SpEx* n. 365]. This challenging principle is not found in a context of concrete operation. Nor is it imposed on the Jesuits, those who are indeed called, and who profess solemnly to be totally committed to personal abnegation in carrying out the Pontifical Mission, is this placed in the their Constitutions. It is not found in the *Formula*, or in any similar norm that might serve as an immediate operative criterion. The emphasis here is on **a total obedience in the hierarchical Church to the person of the Holy**

¹²⁶ Fr. Manuel Maria Espinosa Polit, SJ, *Perfect Obedience. Commentary on the Letter on Obedience of St. Ignatius of Loyola*. Westminster: Newman 1947, p. 31.

Father in the matter of Pontifical Mission. This is a higher level of living, responding to the Gospel – this is the Ignatian *manner of living* : And truly though I wish you to be perfect in all spiritual gifts and ornaments, yet especially do I desire [as you have understood of me heretofore] to see you most eminent in the virtue of obedience...¹²⁷

f. The matter sometimes is placed in more general terms, it is necessary to ponder the heart of the Formula and the Jesuit Constitutions. In the heart of Ignatius, this bond to the **Vicar of Christ, the Pope**, may be thought of as the ultimate link of a unique process, which raised Ignatius, as this on an *Itinerary of the Mind*, a kind of **spiritual pilgrimage** that began in Jerusalem and ended at the feet of Paul III. The principal points of arrival in this spiritual pilgrimage toward the Church are the following: Jerusalem, Paris, LaStorta, and on entering Rome, the Vicar of Christ. Each of these points of arrival held an essential and specific stopping off place in the Ignatian charism, and none one should forget that each of these localities left a lasting impact on his understanding:

- Jerusalem: represents an overcoming of an interpretation of the Mysteries of Jesus life as part of the 1st century a.D. – here, Ignatius came to understand that Jesus had risen, ascended to the right hand of the Father, that He lives on in the Spirit and in the Church: the 'integral' Paschal Mystery. However, it must also be kept in mind that Manresa was for Ignatius, his 'Early Church' – Nadal had noted that already in Manresa he began to treat of the interior of his soul and the variety of his spirits, giving him the lord in this great realization, and very **vivid sentiments of the divine mysteries alive and active in the Church**.

- Paris: represents the discovery of that which would be of great help in assisting souls, by taking on a more organic form. This is where St. Ignatius realized more acutely the enormous value of more study, and of **having more 'good' men, who were also 'learned' men**, and well prepared. He had come to know the Church as more anchored in the past and sorely in need of a profound renewal, in order for it to be reinvigorated.

- Montmarte: here there came to him the realization of the possibility that to come to the service of the Vicar of Christ, there was need of reproducing, Company-wide, the specific nature of Christ's **Filiation**, which he saw as being the **Father's Envoy**. He thought this required of him a pilgrimage to the same land where Jesus was 'sent' for the first time to the Church.

- La Storta: this led to a deeper sense of the identification with Jesus Christ by **serving and loving the Church** – the actual Church of its time, by giving one's life for her. This implies serving Jesus with His Cross on one's shoulders: for here one will suffer many

¹²⁷ Cf. Espinosa, o.c., p. 38 text from Ignatius' *Book of Rules*.

contradictions. Rome, the roman Church, is universal, which all want to serve in the most efficacious manner, with the full meaning of what is always the **greater service** applying this to apostolic fruitfulness.

- **the Vicar of Christ:** to fulfill all this, the quest is to be sent by the Vicar of Christ, to any part of the world, wherever there may be the **greater need**. [cf. CSJ nn.622, ff.].

g. Such that is the process of the unfolding of the Ignatian charism. There is thus explained how the times of devotion and even of mystical grace were intimately bound with those moments of planning and apostolic discernment, in a harmony that would permeate throughout the entire Company of Jesus and its service in all times. The **Formula** of 1550 offers **a synthesis of the full maturity of this charism**. The emphasis is on serving only the Lord and His Spouse, the Church, under the Roman Pontiff. To serve the **Church-Spouse-Mother** will culminate in the **Ignatian Mysticism of serving souls**. To place oneself at the disposition of the Roman Pontiff will culminate in what is ever the **greater** in that preferred universal efficacy, as if this dedication to the Pope would assure the greater harvest, the greater apostolic fruitfulness of ecclesial love.

h. **It is the Church that we have been called to serve and obey in all, under the Roman Pontiff.** It is not merely in this, or that area, or even just here and there, or now and then. The vocation is to serve her in all her universality, both geographical and qualitative, so that this love might indeed obtain greater results. In order to achieve this there is nothing better, considering the most efficacious plan of operation, than to place ourselves entirely at the disposition of the Roman Pontiff, to be sent, to serve with the greater criteria of a greater service, as we want to do. All is to be done without ever forgetting '**the greater devotion in obedience to the Holy See**' [cf. *Formula*], founded in that which the person of the Pope means in a church of communion and full belonging.

i. We do not always live with due clarity and articulation this level of our Church commitment. The wonderful challenge of Pope John Paul II, **Totus Tuus**, dedicated to Mary, a unique Model of the Church.

7. Toward Communion with the Entire Church.

a. With reference to the **Spouse**, we are all called to the one holiness, while there is **a divinely constituted hierarchy**. Our differences of parties, categories, and even level of perfection are indifferent – even though the central vocation is to holiness. The great challenge is personal holiness and truly qualified, competent apostolic efficacy. It is beginning with these sublime goals: holiness to be communicated, that we receive from the **Holy Spirit**. He is the source of all we are, and all we receive, as sharing in **Christ's** Filiation and Mission, in service of the **Father**. All is

born within us through the Church, **Christ's Spouse** and **our Mother**, and to her we are all called to be dedicated, as to the **Spouse** of Christ. She establishes this free circulation of the Communion of Saints, in which we are rich with divine gifts, and still in the disarray of real spiritual poverty, as a Church.

b. To belong to the Church means: to give of oneself, and to receive, without defensive isolation. The **human heart** is a great teacher: it does not hoard its own blood – it continually receives it, and sends it forth – to hold it back would be the death of the organism. The obedience that is asked for by Ignatius in his First and Thirteenth **Rules** are not stifling but freeing us to live more sublimely our Filiation. We are being challenged to a profound level of oblation, **obsequium** to live that of Jesus Christ Himself: ***as the Father has sent me, I now send you!*** [Jn 20:19, f.]. This is what the difficult vocation [cf. **CF # 185**] asks of us, and this vocation is not **temerarious**. In pondering **the integral Paschal Mystery of the Fourth Week** of the *Spiritual Exercises*, **this is the ideal**.

c. It needs to be pointed out that this is the transcendent ideal of obedience in the Church. For Christ's great goal that we might all be one – and for Ignatius' great ambition to work for souls, such finality is what moves us. All we do needs to be measured toward ecclesial communion. Ignatius is crystal clear here and minces no words in his challenges for **Obedience**: both **Missionary** [Part VII – ***sentire cum Ecclesia***] and **Corporate** [**Letter on Obedience**, March 26, 1553, about **40 months before his death**] – we are pondering here his most mature thought. We are not allowed to have ambiguity in our own conduct - as this brings about a given deterioration of the living organism. Vatican II has challenged us to **reveal**, and **not conceal** the face, the mind of Christ Jesus. This is the time – early in the Third Millennium – to intensify our personal mission, to make it more competent. The Bark of Peter is not a restricted Noah's Ark – nor a steel box, but a net. While it is open for all, it is challenging to all who are called to be Missionaries of the Spouse of Christ. The role is to look for the lost sheep – the ship-wrecked, those lost in the darkness – to bring them to the Light of the Nations. We need to supply the oil for the lamps in the night.

d. The great catch-words are the challenges: **obedience**, **mission** and **communion** - some would distinguish two kinds of obedience:

- **vertical**: this is one much connected with the personal Mission of Jesus Christ;
- **horizontal**: the emphasis here is more communion.

The clear danger, of course is to divide these – they need to be complementary. As a Church, our main thrust is for the greater honor and glory of the most Blessed Trinity.

St. Ignatius also has his distinctions that are coordinated:

- **Missionary Obedience**; the 4th Vow, Part VII, *De Missionibus*, the original Ignatian ideal.
- **Corporate Obedience**: a Superior General for Life - when this is 'loving', it is the source of the **Union, Unity**: not only **juridical**, but **union** of hearts. St. Ignatius explains this in his rule, Constitution 659 – and Fr. Bertoni in **Part X**, following the **Missionary Dispersion of Part IX, on the Apostolic Missionaries**:

...This **union of spirits** is achieved for the most part through **the bond of obedience**, and this maintains always in its vigor. Those who are sent out to work 'in the field of the Lord' from the Houses, in so far as this is possible, should be persons well exercised in it, and that those who are superiors in the Company are to give good example in this matter for others ... [CSJ, n. 659].

e. The other aspect of obedience, that bonding with the union of souls, or communion, is also typical of Ignatius. Obedience is something that one gives to another, in a real exchange of solidarity, when it is lived in the Christian way. It is important that the 'superiors', 'the elders' – all those individuals who are constituted in some form of authority, should be in the forefront **in feeling with the Church**. It is not the Church that needs to be adapted to feel with its membership – but, **it is the members that need to 'feel with the Total Church.'**

f. As a result, one cannot speak of obedience only in a superficial manner, or as something outside, or merely as a '*let it be*', '*so-be-it*', of an improper distance with respect to what is mandated. But, whatever it means to obey all, and every one of the orders, or prescriptions that might be given, that which these **rules** demand of me with a certain level of totality and without any beating around the bush, is to live in obedience from the very depths of myself, as the attitude which generates a very attractive, motivated communion and belonging. These **Rules** do not pretend that anyone is without sin. However, the retreatant is to take much care and to be fortified within, that attitude described here.

7. To keep ourselves right in all things... [Rule 13]

a. **To see something as white**, means **to ascertain**. It is the certain movement of the arrow which reaches its bull's eye. It means to achieve its final objective, the goal. It is necessary to understand this expression also in the key of the Principle and Foundation: **for** - as the *means* are meant *for* the end, which is what is meant by Ignatius' insistence: **in everything**. [This is like faith: which supplies for the defect of the senses in discerning the true nature of the Eucharist in St. Thomas', *Tantum Ergo* – with the emphasis on: *sensuum defectui*].

b. Having been brought to some level of spiritual maturity in the course of the ***Spiritual Exercises***, this is precisely what the Retreatant seeks. He is not yet very much concerned with this sublime quest for good, because he accepts, or may not accept what is said, or because of other circumstances of a personal type. What he seeks is precisely to 'ascertain', and this in all freedom, with respect to himself and others, achieved in the ***Spiritual Exercises***. He experiences some anxiety to reach, much like the arrow, the objective uncovered for him, desired and possibly elected during the retreat. This is ***the end which he pretends***, that which he truly desires, because the desires are now being better ordered.

c. There is in this Rule a yearning for efficacy, as there always is in Ignatius. There is also evidence of one's **overcoming himself**. We do not search precisely in this Rule any concern for one's own fulfillment, or for some challenge to 'seek good.' We are here already beyond that. We are now in the dynamic of 'transcending self' which presupposes clearly sufficient results in the previous processes of maturation. And this is not just talking for the sake of talking, because if we are to pretend that this rule is faithfully accomplished by persons who are still immature, we can still reap great losses both in the psychologist as well as in the Religious. This Rule is not for beginners, but rather for a man already raised to a certain level of Christian maturity by the ***Spiritual Exercises*** already completed, so in one in whom human maturity is presupposed.

d. ***In All Things***: this is by now an Ignatian expression with which we are quite familiar. We do not give it solely a quantitative meaning: to ascertain always, in all things and in each of the dilemmas of life, as Ignatius would promise here to ascertain always with the number of one's lot. This Rule is in order to gain all well organized alternatives, and not to err in anything. God has not granted us any such talismans which the Church herself does not fully possess, and which for that matter would destroy the human being.

e. ***To keep ourselves right in all things***, means to ascertain in truth, to ascertain to the depths of truth, to ascertain in a final manner. No one in the Church is guaranteed in everything so that he/she would never make a mistake, never to commit any errors, more or less partial. The Church herself many times needs to traverse torturous pathways. The Retreatant, in obeying the Church, will ascertain ***in all things***, in a *composed sense*, to arrive at the end which is offered here, even though at times this might be through pathways that are not always in conformity with human logic, which for that matter is not to be desired that it happen frequently. Faith does not destroy reason, however, but elevates – the logic of the Cross surpasses that mere 'common' sense, applying a democratic approach [for the sake of seeing what people 'want' rather than what is needed] - to what is to be believed, or lived in morality.

f. ***To keep ourselves right in all things*** in a definitive manner may not always totally overcome equivocations along the way. We have rightfully become in the Church very accustomed to the Spirit Who guides us, to recast plans of salvation in the broad scope. Redemption, [or, 'Church', for that matter] for example, assumes many 'Models', each one presenting in a limited manner the union of Infinite Divine Mercy with abysmal human misery. We need to handle, integrate, the many human obstacles – the Hierarchy itself is at the service of God's Word. Pope John Paul II challenges the College of Bishops¹²⁸. As a result, this challenging **Rule 13** neither affirms the absence of all false steps in the Church, nor does it provide any support for presumption. There are partial errors, both in Church members as well as in each individual. What is primarily affirmed here is that, in one way or in another, there will be ascertained ***in plenitude***, according to **Rule 13** that which has been prepared for and decided that all need to obey in plenitude in the Church, according to the **Rule 1: *we ought to keep our minds disposed and ready to be obedient in everything to the true Spouse of Christ our Lord, which is our Holy Mother the hierarchical Church ...***

g. By the same principle, this Rule 13 is not opposed to certain faith-filled critical assessments of the exercise of the Magisterium¹²⁹ in a given matter. If these

¹²⁸ ***Apostolos Suos*** [May 21, 1993 - Ascension] – College of Bishops

Introduction

1. Collegial Union
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3. Complementary Norms
4. Eucharist & Episcopacy [Louis Bouyer]

¹²⁹ The Magisterium and theological discussion offers many insights as a guide-line in this matter:

A BRIEF BIBLIOGRAPHY

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C.D.F., ***Agendi ratio in Doctrinarum Examine***. May 28, 1998.

John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, ***Ad Tuendam Fidem***, May 18, 1998 [Oss. Rom., English edition - booklet to be published in September].

discussions are conducted with modesty and kindness, such opinions and conversations in no way would threaten ecclesial communion. Let us not forget that authentic Communion pluralizes the Church with all the contributions of the personnel gifts of those who make it up. When we are one heart and soul, then indeed the Church, or community, is increased, intensified, as Fr. Bertoni noted in his *Original Constitutions*, copying here from Suarez:

266. **St. John Chrysostom commenting elegantly on that expression in John [cf. 17:11 b, 21, 22], 'that they may be one even as we are', states: 'Nothing can be compared to the harmony and mutual union of wills – for by it, one becomes many. For if there are two, or ten, in agreement, an individual will no longer be just one person, but each one of the community will be as ten, and you will find one in the ten, and ten in the one.' And further on: 'This is the excellence of love, in the strength of which one is both indivisible and multiple, and one can be in many places at once, in Persia and also in Rome. And what nature cannot do, love can' [Hom. 71, in Jn 16].**

h. While on the one hand it would be horrible to imagine a Church in which there are no differences of opinion, we do know that pluralism can enrich faith, but at the same time, truly challenge charity, union. This Rule would not block the ecclesial dynamism of fraternal correction, in the style of Paul and Peter, a fraternal sharing of communication of differing approaches and a real dialogue between the hierarchy, thinkers and the people.¹³⁰ Some positions that are taken have at times proven to be contumacious, and these exacerbate the difficulties. There have been criticisms that have tended to generalize an evil that are generally negative and these tend toward disengaging one from the Church – into an isolating self-sufficiency. This is always dangerous, and therefore, one who may discover this tendency within, and tends to be isolated in his tendency to the great harm to communion.

i. The objective of this **Rule 13** and its first motivation is communion. In the Ignatian style, one may note 'a structure of contrasts':

- I/ we¹³¹: in the first part of the rule, the first person singular pronoun is used – and in the latter part, it is the 1st person plural. This legislation does not mean to surrender creativity, for the theologian's task is to assist the Magisterium.¹³² However, it does tend toward overcoming, surpassing isolation of the first person singular – as sometimes occurs in praying the Creed: both '**we**' and '**I**' are used in praying the **Creed**. This is a clarion call to the communion of life. Over-insistence on the 'first person singular' brings to mind the old saying: the challenge in some forms of

C.D.F., Commentary on the above - June 29, 1998 [Oss. Rom., English edition].

¹³⁰ The Vatican considered this also with regarding to the harmony in mission between Religious and Bishops – cf. **Mutuae Relationes April 23, 1978.**

¹³¹ CCC ##, 26, ff.: 'I believe – We believe'.

¹³² cf. **The Task of the Theologian** - Dulles, Ratzinger.

mysticism is that it is born in the **mist** – ends in **schism** – because of the big **ego** in the middle!¹³³ This is really the style of the entire **Spiritual Exercises** – from the solitude of the First Week, in the reflection of one's own sins - there is passage to the 1st person plural, **we**, of the Reign of God, as one is being received with many others then, under the Standard of Jesus Christ. It is necessary to get up from one's own self-love, from one's own interests, which at times place before us clear colors in order to see the reality, and in this we might think of the Third Week of the Spiritual Exercises, in order to lead us to the Resurrection and Ascension of the Fourth Week. By this time, the Retreatant is being led to be more of a part of the 'we' in the Church. The invitation in **Rule 13** is to become an enthusiastic part of the Communion of the Church. This means to overcome isolation, without destroying each one's gifted individuality. The emphasis is Blessed Pope John's oft-quoted saying: 'In necessary matters, let there be unity – in matters of open discussion, let there be freedom – but in all, let there be charity.'

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¹³³ Fr. Paul Murray, OP. [NB: There is an important Ecclesial dimension of the Faith – noted also in *Dei Verbum*.

C. THE CLASSICAL PRESENTATION: Fr. Jerome NADAL, SJ

The rationale of the Jesuit Vocation¹³⁴

Presentation

The phases of the spiritual life which are considered to be constitutive of the active, superior life [both contemplative and missionary] of Fr. Jerome Nadal can be beautifully represented in the ultimate mysteries of the Economy of Redemption as lived by Jesus Christ:

- in the **Death of Christ**, there was communicated for Fr. Nadal Penance of the spirit;
- in the **Resurrection of Christ**, as presented in the Fourth Week of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius, Fr. Nadal contemplated the spiritual life of grace;
- in the **Ascension** Nadal recalled the life of contemplation and the entire elevation of mind;
- finally, the **Descent of the Holy Spirit** on the Early Church, in the Mission of the Holy Spirit, Nadal noted the most sublime image of that **life superior to the merely active, or to the merely contemplative life**. In virtue of this Nadal noted that not only do we live spiritually and that we contemplate, but that **through both** we are able to share with others and we are able to evangelize others on **the manner of proceeding** in piously living and there can be enkindled in others charity into their hearts and that each Jesuit can reach out to others or assist in procuring **salvation and perfection** for them¹³⁵.

1. The Particular Grace of the Company¹³⁶: came to the Jesuit Founder in his vision at La Storta. For the Saint, the foundation of the Company was Jesus Christ Crucified. For it was through the Cross that He redeemed the human race, and suffered such enormous afflictions and crosses each day in His Mystical Body. The Company is called, then, to follow after Christ in her many persecutions, to work in company with Jesus, in His society, for the salvation of souls. For Ignatius, his vision was '**crucial**', 'cruci-form': he perceived Jesus, carrying His Cross, and he felt himself being called to fall in after Him, in His service. The promise he heard from the pages of Scripture: ***I will be with you!***

¹³⁴ Cf. Miguel NICOLAU, SJ, *Jeronimo Nadal [1507-1580]. Sus obras y doctrinas espirituales*. Madrid 1949, pp. 530-536.

¹³⁵ o.c., p. 333.

¹³⁶ o.c., pp. 342-361, *passim*.

This is the synthesis of the Founder's trust – and this is the **special grace** [cf. **CF # 185**] - in the integrity of the Paschal Mystery, the Risen Christ will not suffer further. He is asking others to follow in this *militia* to be His Companions by means of the Cross. This is the cap-stone of the Society of Jesus, in its 'Christological charism.' It is of great help to think consciously that we are indeed following Jesus Christ, Who still carries His Cross in the militant Church. We follow Him with our own crosses and are asked to remain faithful right through to the end. Our Crosses, our 'spiritual sacrifices' [cf. Rm 12:1; 1 P 2:2, ff.] are poverty, shame, our labors, our sorrows, and even our deaths. Our Crosses are already resplendent in the light of His Resurrection.

We are all called to be the companions of Jesus Christ, to live in His Society, to follow him in the Spiritual Combat, as this [battle] rages in His Mystical Body. Our following of Christ is imitation of Him – our challenge is to fight on to be poor and chaste, to accept rejection: this is how we take up our Cross and serve in His militia.

2. Two Key Meditations: Service of the King, the image of the Two Standards: the former of these two images presented the ideal of serving in the ranks of Christ the King, of being enrolled in His *militia* – this is the ordinary vocation of the follower of Ignatius. The underlying 'reason of this vocation' is to attend to the intellectual and spiritual progress of souls, as the Apostolic Bulls teach this as presented in the Constitutions. In order to accomplish this **difficult vocation**, there is a **special grace** of the call from God. There is a war on – and the Powers of Darkness will not prevail in this difficult struggle. Through community, the individual joins in with companions in a joint service – to inspire His followers, God promises a reward which is literally 'out of this world.' Christ came into this world in order to conquer it, and hand it over to His Father, to render it obedient to His Father: ***I have conquered the world*** [Jn 16:33], Christ is the ultimate reason for all our victories, so there is a pressing need to remain close to Him. We are the *coadjutors of God* [cf. 1 Co 3:9]. We are His **cooperators**. Christ wants of all in His Society for them to participate in the spoils of His victory already won, and that they apply it to making up for what is still lacking in the sufferings of Christ [cf. **Col 1:24**].

Through the permanent relational character of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders, we remain related to the conquering Christ – and through grace, we participate in the very nature of God [cf. 2 P 1:4]. Christ suffers in his Church militant and He leads it through His Companions to the Victory of His Resurrection. The standard under which we are called to wage this fierce combat is the luminous Sign of the Cross, as the only path to the Resurrection.

An all out war has been proclaimed against the enemies of God: while the combat is difficult, the end result has already been won in the Resurrection of Christ and His Realm as they remain in open hostility with sin, heresy, the lack of perfection.

We need always to be 'on the ready' – take up the Cross of Christ in our Apostolic Mission under obedience.

3. The Cross of Jesus Christ: an underlying Ignatian principle is that in order to follow Jesus Christ, it is necessary to follow Him with His Cross: the Jesuit is not in the Company, Society, of Christ unless carrying His Cross. Christ still does this in His Church [cf. Col 1:24]. So, a believer cannot be genuinely seen as carrying a cross unless each one practices abnegation. With efficacious will, putting to death past vices, the hunger for honors, and the putting aside all temporal goods, surrenders one's own will and proper judgment [grades of Jesuit obedience]. One needs the good will to realize all this, and to bring it to execution in so far as each man can.

All are called in this vocation to follow, imitate Jesus Christ still suffering in His Church – Col 1:24 seems very close to the surface throughout here. The Cross is not exhausted merely by carrying out one's duties, but to accept whatever shame there might be attached to this, as Christ did. Each one in this vocation is ardently challenged to reject all what pertains to this world and which is not Christ, as all else is an obstacles to total self-giving to Christ.

It is necessary to **seek the Lord in all things** – and in order to embrace Christ, one must also embrace His Cross. Christ will never be found in the Church separated from His Cross. He carried this for us, and continually offers Himself to us. The Scriptures tell us that it was simply [*hypothetically*] 'necessary' for Christ to have suffered these things and so enter into His glory [cf. Lk 24:26]. There is no other avenue toward contemplation [cf. **DV 8; SC 2** – the vocation of the whole Church] – unless from the meditation on the Passion of Christ, and by cultivating the taste and desire for the Cross: whoever follows Him, must take up His Cross each day [cf. Mt 16:24; Lk 9:23].

The Cross is the ultimate explanation of both the Church, and the Company of Jesus. The Company of Jesus was considered to be a certain body of men, made up of statutes, tending toward eternal life. The missions and the work of the community are comparable to wings which raise up the congregation toward the heavenly Jerusalem by means of tribulations, labors and persecutions.

4. The Imitation of the Apostles: this following of Jesus Christ, in this particular obediential modality [corporate, as well as Missionary, Doctrinal obedience] is so proper to the Society of Jesus in the mind of Fr. Nadal that it is little more than an imitation of the life of the Apostles. These men were given the title of ***apostles – missionaries*** so that they might come to know, experience Jesus Christ. The Apostles were sent by Jesus on His Mission received from the Father, that of announcing the Gospel in a variety of modes [*quodcumque Verbi Dei Ministerium*], and of administering the sacraments. This is what Ignatius meant in his *Formula* by his

expression: **universum verbi Dei ministerium**. The Company is called to all this – it shares its ministry of the word of God in sacred conferences, explanations of the Scriptures, teaching Catechism to children and the unlettered, in pious conversations, giving retreats to communities, and missions to parishes, along with the administration of the sacraments. In brief terms, this is what is meant by *every ministry of the word of God*.

The Apostles were sent in every land [**quocumque**] by the Lord Jesus [cf. ***Euntes docete...***! - the Missionary Discourse after the resurrection – cf. Mt 28] – the Jesuits were sent into every land by the Roman Pontiff. The Apostles wandered the face of the globe – and did not have stable monasteries, but they sought the Lord in all things, in every place, with every ministry, and every soul. This is the **principal end** of the Society: that they, like the fishermen Apostles, were called to wander the face of the globe to extend the Kingdom of Heaven by ‘fishing’ believers from all the streams of life.

For the **Original 12**, their **vows** were **the Lord’s evangelical counsels**. There was **no distinct habit** for the Apostles – thus in Rome and everywhere, the early Jesuits dressed as did the better clergymen of their area. While the Apostles prayed in the Company of Jesus, they did not assume the practice of **monastic Choir**. Their main task was to communicate the Body of the Lord, and for their ministries, simply imitate the **Apostolic Mode of Living: in obedience to Christ Jesus – by obeying the Roman Pontiff – modeled on the obedient Jesus, as He was to His Father**. The Society simply imitated the **Apostolic endeavor**. The Jesuits professed themselves to be **servants of the Roman Pontiff** [***obsequi – servire – auxiliary***].

Being in the Company of Jesus, they were taught how to pray, to give up their own goods – they undertook the six Experiences of Formation: working in hospitals; going on pilgrimage unsupported; extended practice in preaching if they are priests; teaching catechism to the young and unlettered.

5. The Heart of the Jesuit Vocation¹³⁷: the very core of this calling is to place one’s entire life under the care of Jesus Christ, in His activity, movements and directions. **The incarnate manifestation of the Will of the Risen Christ is the will of the Roman Pontiff**. The solemn **Fourth Vow** is the profession of **the full imitation of Jesus Christ**. All is meant to be done in the Society for the greater glory of God.

As there are various levels of gravity, importance in Apostolic Service, St. Ignatius devised a diversity of **Grades of Service and Juridical Belonging**, accommodated to the seriousness of the various works of the Apostolic Mission, the various talents of each candidate and the variety of talents. The main ask in the

¹³⁷ Nicolau, o.c., pp. 530, ff. *ratio Vocationis Societatis Iesu*.

Society is the almost restless search to **serve the Lord in all things, to seek Him everywhere, in the perpetual business of winning over souls for Jesus Christ**. Each candidate [*quicumque*] is called to the perfection of intellect and spirit, in accord with native talent and graces received. All learning is subordinated to the spiritual life.

There is a gradated approach to Apostolic Service and Juridical membership: the Six Experiments are a gradual preparation for the ***more grave ministries, accommodated always*** to the changing times, places and needs of the Roman Pontiff. All are called to serve Jesus Christ, the Son of God - through the Church, the Spouse of Christ – represented by the person of the Roman Pontiff.

There is required supreme reverence and observance publicly manifested toward the Apostolic See and the person of the Roman Pontiff. He is the Vicar of Christ, the Bishop and Pastor of the Universal Church, whose dignity and authority of jurisdiction on earth is supreme. Along with this, it is only right that reverence should be shown to all bishops, Pastors in the universal hierarchy of the Roman Church.

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Part III – APPLICATIONS TO OUR OBEDIENCE TO THE MAGISTERIUM

[DV 5; LG 25; CCC # 891, f. and Recent Documents]

GOD, THE HOLY SPIRIT: ACCEPTANCE IN FAITH AND THE TRANSMISSION OF THE SACRED DEPOSIT

A. DV 5

Acceptance in Faith

DV 5: The Oblation of Intellect and Will

The ‘obedience of faith’ [Rm 16:26; cf. 1:5; 2 Co 10:5-6] must be given to God who reveals, an obedience by which one entrusts his/her entire self freely to God, offering ‘the full submission [obsequium] of intellect and will to God who reveals’ [D-S 3006] and freely assenting to the truth revealed by Him. If this faith is to be shown, the grace of God and the interior help of the Holy Spirit must precede and assist, moving the heart and turning it to God, opening the eyes of the mind, and giving ‘joy and ease to everyone in assenting to the truth and believing it’ [D-S 377; 3010]. To bring about an ever deeper understanding of revelation, the same Holy Spirit constantly brings faith to completion by His gifts.¹³⁸

Presentation

[1] A theology of faith might be developed from a wide variety of points of view. One would be analytical and abstract. Whether it be a question of the genesis of faith, as well as the structure of faith, a variety of elements would be studied: subjective factors [understanding, will and divine grace] – the objective data [credibility, material object, formal motive]. This was the usual point of view of theologians, up until Vatican II.

[2] A second procedure would be synthetic and concrete: there would be studied, first of all, faith in its concrete totality, while bringing out its existential structure. This is the usual point of view as presented by Sacred Scripture and the Fathers of the Church. In this perspective, it seems that faith is explained as an organic system of personal loving relationships.

¹³⁸ *Deo revelanti praestanda est ‘oboeditio fidei’ [Rm 16:26; cf. 2 Co 10:5-6], qua homo se totum libere Deo committit ‘plenum revelanti Deo intellectus et voluntatis obsequium’ praestando [D-S 3008] et voluntarie revelationi ab Eo datae assentiendo. Quae fides ut praebeatur, opus est praeveniente et adiuvante gratia Dei et internis Spiritus Sancti auxiliis, qui cor moveat et in Deum convertat, mentis oculos aperiat, et det ‘omnibus suavitatem in consentiendo e credendo veritati’ [D-S 3010]. Quo vero profundiorusque evadat revelationis intelligentia, idem Spiritus Sanctus fidem iugiter per dona sua perficit...’ [DV 5].*

[3] In recent years, this second point of view has found much support. Hence, when applied to the “faith”, the following matters may be considered:

- its objective principles [witness];
- its subjective response [fidelity of the believer, adherence];
- its development.

One of the great ways to present this delicate theology of the faith is to reflect on Christian personality in the light of the Mystery of the Most Blessed Trinity.

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THE TRINITARIAN DIMENSION OF CHRISTIAN FAITH¹³⁹

Introduction:

[1] The response to the question: What is Faith? – would go a long way to indicate the theological position of the respondent. Each attempt to answer this extremely complex question would show that every position is generally conditioned by particular directives and one’s own history.

[a] This present “Theological Analysis” is a quest for a definition – and yet one which will include the wealth of biblical ideas on faith, and yet one which will strive to consider the contributions made through the centuries by the efforts of others’ reflections on Scripture and Tradition. It is admitted that perhaps no single definition of the Faith will include all of its aspects: each definition will indicate something of a choice.

[b] No one solution has yet been offered which would satisfy the “Cartesian ideal” of a definition: one that would be able to summarize fully the entire wealth of the material content. Were one to restrict the definition solely to Scripture and Tradition, the effort would be greatly simplified – as these sources present a somewhat united view of the faith, even though they do offer a number of particulars.

[c] The theological analysis will be an effort to present the multiple reflections of theologians and to present them in some kind of a “system. This effort is always necessary, and no one synthesis would absorb the wealth of material *obsequium*.

[2] The tract begins with the understanding the Christian and Catholic faith has of itself – and meaning basically that faith which is “alive”, as it is described as the response to the Person of Christ. The effort here will not be “apologetic”, but simply

¹³⁹ cf. J. Trutsch, in: *Mysterium Salutis*, II, Brescia: Queriniana pp. 417-497, *passim*.

to present the usual situation of faith, one permeated with charity. It is sometimes called the “**Amen of Salvation**”, taking the root Hebrew word, and using it to indicate one’s response to the invitation offered by the Word of God.

[3] The definition of faith will tend toward that faith as it is lived, and not only in its intellectual content. The *fides scientifica* is a necessary corollary to faith as it is presented in the Scriptures – as the divine word is interpreted by each passing generation, until the fullness of truth be achieved. Through the centuries many elements and controversies have added to the Church’s understanding of the Faith.

[4] In the great and much discussed problems associated with ideas contained under headings such as: *fides scientifica* and the analysis of the faith, it is very difficult to avoid certain choices, and there is always the possibility of presenting a unilateral, or “conditioned” view. In all of this effort, the theologian has to exercise caution not to lose sight of the totality of the faith.

[5] There are several definitions of the Faith that are known to students of theology:

[a] **Heb 11**: this passage is often used as the basis for discussions on the faith, even though it is certain that the unknown author did not intend this line as a formal definition of the Faith: “...**Only faith can guarantee the blessings we hope for, or prove the existence of the realities that are present...**” St. Thomas considered this passage as the most complete definition of the faith [cf. De Ver., 14, 2, c]. Rightly considered, this definition does offer a variety of elements with which one could define “faith” - even though the text, as it is, does not lend itself to the precision that should be associated with any definition.

[b] **St. Thomas**: pondering this text, other biblical data, as well as much of the contribution of Tradition, St. Thomas offered this definition of the faith: “...**It is the habit of the mind, infused by God, by which eternal life is begun in us, making the intellect assent to those things which do not appear...**” [cf. II-II, q. 4, a. 1, c].

[1] With this definition, it is clearly stated that faith is formally an act of the intellect – placed between opinion and doubt on the one hand – and vision and science, on the other. There is within the faith **the intervention of the human will**, “making the intellect assent” [which separates faith from opinion and doubt, which do not give firm assent] – to those things which do not appear [hence, removing “faith” from the level of “science or “vision.”

[2] Within the definition of St. Thomas, there is also the noted inherent dynamism of the faith toward eternal life. Faith lies along the path to salvation.

[I] Faith as Intellectual¹⁴⁰

1. MAGISTERIUM: In a number of interventions the Magisterium of the Church has affirmed the character of the Faith as “intellectual”:

a. Faith is not merely “a vague religious sense” [cf. D-S 3477, ff.] – it is rather **the supernatural principle of knowledge** [cf. D-S 3008, 3015, 3035], distinct from natural knowledge [cf. D-S 2829, 3032].

b. It is not “blind assent”, nor is it contrary to reason – it is transcendent on the rational plane.

c. Faith is not produced by rational arguments [cf. D-S 2574, 2845, 3033, 3341, 3425, 3884, 3542].

d. Faith is a certain, infallible, immutable assent, because of its motive: the authority of the revealing God [cf. D-S 3020, 3031, 3036, 3225, 3135].

1.] Scripture would offer this same truth – but great caution is asked by the exegetes in citing the divine word for theological arguments. Nonetheless, Scripture would offer examples of how faith does have an intellectual aspect [cf. Jn6:21; 8:46; 10:37; cf. Lk 1:20, 46].

2.] In these instances, the subjective “faith” and the verb “to believe” seem to have the meaning of an intellectual conviction. A mere “fiducial faith”, bereft of an intellectual content, would be contrary to the description offered of faith in Sacred Scripture. One could never surrender all of one’s life to a God Who is in no way intelligible, Whose nature and personality have never been propounded for the reflection of human intelligence.

2. THOMISM: The Thomistic system accentuates this cognoscitive character of the Faith. With Faith, we share in the very revelation which God has of Himself and His Plan, in that activity with which He says the Word, and in the Word, knows, does all things. The faith may be compared to a seal impressed on the human mind by the First Truth [cf. In Boet., De Trin., q.1, a. 1, ad 4].

a. Faith is a knowledge, because the intellect is determined by faith to adhere to a knowable object. But, this adherence is determined by a truth that is not a “vision”. Faith is based on the truthfulness of the One revealing [cf. I, q. 12, a. 13, ad 3 um].

b. This participation in God’s own knowledge elevates and ennoble the

¹⁴⁰ cf. D. Mongillio, OP, *La Somma Teologica*, II - II, qq. 1-22, *La Fede*. Introduzione, ed. Solani, Vol. 14

human intelligence, and is not repugnant to it. The intelligence, in its **obediential potentiality**, is open to all truth, to truth as such – and one can remain under the action of God and come to understand in some way, the Word with which God instructs humanity.

3. IMPERFECTIONS: Even though the knowledge of the Faith is sublime, because of the Divinity which specifies it, faith is still imperfect, considering it from the aspect of being an operation of the human mind.

a. The reason for this is that the intellect cannot understand, comprehend, the truths it believes, that one holds as “true” in faith: in the knowledge that one has by means of the faith, the intellectual operation is most imperfect on the part of the intellect [cf. III C.G., c. 40].

b. Faith, however, is not “erroneous knowledge”, or a “doubtful” understanding, but a most certain knowledge which is tending toward the vision of eternity [cf. I, q. 12, a. 13, ad 1^{um}]. Faith, of its nature, tends to eternal life, toward the vision of God “as He is in Himself”. Faith not only “merits” this vision, but faith is just a “beginning” of that vision of the blessed. With God for eternity, we will know the identical realities which we now accept in the faith.

4. An ‘OBSEQUIUM’ [Oblation] RENDERED TO GOD: Faith is a knowledge that **renders homage to God**, in so far as a human being believes uniquely and solely because he/she **accepts God** as the Master of Truth, and on the Divine Word one adheres to that which is not “seen.” The believer allows him/herself to be guided toward goals that are not fully understood [cf. Heb 11:8-10].

a. **Faith is a Homage-Sacrifice:** because the believer does renounce the autonomy of human reasoning, and overcomes its natural and legitimate demands for rational evidence, to enter decisively into the mysterious world of what is “not seen, nor heard.”

b. **The Act of Faith is a Judgment:** it always implies a taking possession of truth and knowledge with the affirmation of the identity between the subject and the predicate of a proposition: “God is One and also Triune” – “Jesus Christ is the Son of God” . The believer says “AMEN” to the Creed, as he/she does to the Lord’s Prayer accepting integrally its truths as the Word of God.

c. **Faith is an immediate judgment:** it is a direct decision, one that does not depend, either on intellectual research, which would precede the certain knowledge of the duty to believe – nor, does it flow from the study of individual truths, or the elements of which they are comprised. The fathoming of the revealed doctrine, to which the believer comes under the action of grace, implies a more penetrating affirmation of this identity.

d. Notwithstanding some affinities, the judgment of faith differs radically from all other forms of judgment:

1.] The judgment of Faith has affinities with the knowledge of “First Principles” and with “scientific judgment” – because, like these judgments, it implies the affirmation of a truth; however, it differs from these because the judgment of faith implies a tendency toward evidence, while these other judgments [those of “first truths” and those about “scientific truths”] are based on their evidence [cf. I, q. 12, a. 13, d 3um].

2.] The Judgment of Faith also has some affinity with doubt and with opinion, because also in these, there is a judgment that is not based on the intrinsic evidence of the truths; the judgment of faith, however, differs from the judgment of “opinion” and that of “doubt”, because the judgment of the faith implies a firm affirmation of truth that these other judgments do not have.

5. TENDING TOWARD EVIDENCE: The judgment of faith is indeed in this situation. If we reflect on the various forms of human knowledge, we see that faith differs decidedly from each one of them:

a. The knowledge of intuition of first principles: in such knowledge, it is sufficient to understand the terms of the judgment with which the principles are announced, in order to make a most certain judgment concerning them.

b. If it is a scientific judgment, there is needed research - if this effort does not terminate in evidence, there can be no assent, and uncertainty remains. When evidence is achieved, only then is assent given.

c. In doubt and opinion, there is a research and this does not achieve evidence – so, assent is not giving, and uncertainty remains.

6. FIRM ASSENT: in faith, however, there is a most firm assent:

a. This assent, however, is not achieved by research – but, rather by the testimony of God and by the human will that is moved internally by divine grace.

b. The firm assent is not motivated by evidence, and therefore, the assent of faith cannot be separated from an on-going search which will terminate in eternity – where the truths will become “evident”.

c. This on-going, life-long “quest” differs totally from that of “doubt” – which studies not the evidence of the truth, but the truth itself. St. Thomas offers this fundamental aspect of the psychology of faith: “... In the knowledge of faith, the desire of the believer remains unfulfilled [it may be thought of as a hunger and thirst]. Faith is an imperfect knowledge: truths that are not evident are believed, and, therefore,

there remains in the mind of the believer the tendency to see perfectly the truth which one believes, and to know the One through Whom one can be introduced to this Truth [cf. *Compend. Theol.* II, c. 1].

d. The knowledge of faith does not satisfy the desire, but rather heightens it, in that each one desires to see the things which are believed [cf. III C.G., c. 40]. The believer has a profound nostalgia for heaven, there is a thirst for light, since the faith causes a desire for the truth that is believes [cf. *In Jn*, c. 4, lect 5].

e. Faith, therefore, does not paralyze the activity of the human will, but “capacitates” it; faith breaks through the mental horizons that habitually limit it, and urges the mind ever onward to **fix its contemplative gaze on the very mysteries of God**. The most coherent attitude of the faithful person is not one of already having the “truth”, or feeling that full truth is impossible: the truly “faithful” is the perennial seeker – not so much of the truths of which the believer already is in possession, but rather the yearning for full light.

7. CONCEPTUAL MEDIATION:

a. As is true in other forms of knowledge, the believer affirms realities through conceptual mediation. During life, these mediations are the one means for knowing God. In the matter of faith, however, it has to be kept in mind that **“faith” does not terminate in the formulae**, but rather, in the mystery enunciated – but **faith is a virtue uniting the human mind to the divine reality**. The human mind needs enunciations, formulae, not only to achieve the knowledge of the realities – this is needed both for knowledge, as well as in faith [cf. II – II, q.1, a. 2, ad 2^{um}].

b. In the matter of faith, that which is affirmed is **God Himself**, known through the gift of Faith, just as He is in Himself. Infused faith brings it about that God indeed is the “term” of knowledge.

c. The formulae, as the Articles of Faith, are, from the part of the human mind, the means by which the divine reality is expressed. The concepts of the faith are formed by human intelligence, with truth that proceeds from God, expressed by Him in human knowledge, and then drawn up into *Compendia*, or “*Formulae*” [e.g., dogmas], by the infallible Magisterium of the Church, which then cares for their interpretation.

d. Because of the requirements of the human mind, it is impossible to think of a faith without expressing it in some way, in human terminology. Faith cannot be thought of as a kind of mystical knowledge reserved for the few. In reality, even mystical knowledge always is based upon conceptual knowledge of theological faith, which is a necessary condition.

e. Through intellectual concepts, the believer is illumined and directed by

the Holy Spirit. Through these, the believer tends toward the divine reality and has some contact with it – so that in some way, the divine reality and truths will be “lived”. However, faith, in its most profound nature, remains always an intellectual assent, and not an intuitive encounter with God in Christ through the Spirit.

f. The object of the act of faith is directly reached, in so far as this is mediated to the intelligence by means of doctrinal affirmations. The Faith itself has as its object, the Reality presented behind the formulations.

8. CERTAINTY: [cf. In Jn, c. 4, l, 5]:

a. All that the faith considers is absolutely true, because faith can consider a truth in so far as this is revealed by God, guaranteed by God and His veracity. It is not possible that an authentic act of theological faith would have for its object a false enunciation [q. 1, a. 3].

b. This does not exclude the fact that in the mind of some believers there may be mixed in with the believed truths, some human and erroneous conceptions [cf. Rahner’s “Material Heresy”]. It is not, however, the “faith” as such that would have one affirm these imprecisions, but rather something that could be reduced to “error in the faith”, or something along this line.

c. The Certainty of the Faith is most firm: because it comes from God – “faith has a certainty through its light, which is divinely infused” [cf. In Jn c. 4, lect. 5]. At the same time, however, it is precarious, because this is rooted imperfectly in the human intelligence. Because of its inherent darkness and the lack of proportion with the divine object of Faith, the human intellect of the believer is also aided by the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Understanding and Knowledge – nonetheless, there still remains an imperfection. The certainty of faith, however, does not depend on acts of reason which precede the act of faith, and the grasping of the certainty of human conviction. The certainty of faith is superior to all human certainties, because it has as its foundation the divine truth itself: “it is based on the divine reason.”

d. The foundation of such certainty does not consist in the possibility of verifying it on the part of the believer, but is based rather on the testimony of the revealing God. As an affirmation of truths that are not evident, faith supposes essentially a witness that affirms the existence and guarantees the truth of what is affirmed.

e. The testimony on which the faith is founded is not only that which is external, coming from the One who announces the message – but, rather [and this is its greater part] – it is that internal conviction, the result of grace, which God establishes this in the spirit of the believer. Without this inner grace, the exterior testimony would be ineffective and empty, and it is simultaneous to the affirmation of

the truth on the part of the believer. The faith is an interior light leading to assent and is a gift from God – in this sense, faith is an “infused gift.” [cf. In Boet, D Tin. Q. 3, a. 1, ad 4 um].

f. The One and Triune God is not only the object of the faith of the believer, but also its motive. In this sense, there is affirmed the motive of the faith that is believed together with its mysteries: the motive is “co-believed” with the mysteries. With one and the same act, the believer assents to the God Who reveals as well as to the God Who is revealed – just as with one and the same act of sight, one sees the light and the realities made clear in that light.

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[II] With the Influence of the Will

1. **COGNOSCITIVE AND VOLITIVE:** Faith is at one and the same time a **cognoscitive** and a **volitive act** – it depends in its existence and for its development on the will. This is a doctrine that has been constantly affirmed by the Magisterium of the Church,

a. Among the essential elements of the act of faith, the Council of Orange speaks of the pious affect of credulity: this means **the movement of the will under the influence of the Holy Spirit**, one goes from incredulity to faith, from impiety to piety [cf. D-S 375, 377]. In its turn, Vatican I, describes the act of faith as: a full submission of the intelligence and the will to God Who reveals [cf. D-S 3008]. In faith, a human being freely obeys God, through the consent and the cooperation that is given to grace, to which one could indeed offer resistance [cf. D-S 3010]. “Let him be anathema whoever says that the assent of the Christian faith is not free, but is produced necessarily by proofs offered by the human mind” [cf. D-S 3035].

b. With its more vital, and less abstract language, Sacred Scripture affirms the influence of the will precisely where it brings out the responsibility of human beings toward the message of God. This is a statement of the Lord Himself to the Pharisees: “... ***If you do not want to believe me, then believe my words...***” [cf. Jn 8:46].

c. The free cooperation of a human being is an essential requirement for the infusing of faith. According to John, that attraction which the Father exercises [cf. 6:44] is accomplished when the human being, with open mind, accepts the fact that God is speaking to him/her [cf. 6:45]: every human being can allow him/herself to be drawn by the Lord [“...anyone who listens...” – cf. 5:24]. The unbelievers of that time are fully responsible for their incredulity: they preferred the darkness to the light, the esteem of their fellow human beings over that of God [cf. 3:19; 14:43; they did not choose to come to Jesus [5:40; cf. 8:44] – there is no real excuse for their lack of faith [cf. 15:22, 24] – Jesus considered this rejection to be a sin [16:9].

d. The non-acceptance of the faith is inexcusable, according to this biblical view. This can happen only if a decision of the will is possible, i.e., whoever believes in the Son already has eternal life [cf. 3:36; cf. 3:15; 6:40-47]. ***If you believe, you will see the glory of God*** [cf. 11:60]; ***whoever believes in me, will not remain in the darkness*** [12: 46, etc.; cf. 6:35; 11:25; 14:12; 3:18]. All of these texts seem to imply the use of free will in the exercise of a life of faith.

e. St. Thomas has expressed in rather clear formulae this same doctrine. Faith establishes itself in the intellect **only under the command of the will**. Thus, it results that this act of the will, which is accidental in relation to the intellect, is nonetheless essential for the act of faith [De Ver., q. 15, a. 1]. In the knowledge of faith, the action of the will is predominant: the intellect in fact assents through the faith, to those truths which are proposed because it chooses to assent [moved by grace], and not because it is necessitated to assent by the evidence of the truth [cf. lii C.G., c. 40].

f. The virtue of faith does not have the function of moving directly the intellect to assent to those revealed truths, but of **disposing** it to follow docilely the movement of the will. The faith, in fact, is rooted in the intelligence, considered, however, formally in so far as it is subjected to the command of the will [cf. De Ver. q. 14, a. 4]. Faith does not pass to the act directly, but only under the impulse of the will, attracted by the First Truth which is also the Supreme Good [cf. q. 1, a. 6, ad 3^{um}; De Ver. q. 14, a.2].

2. THE WILL **PREPARES** ONE FOR FAITH

a. The perception and acceptance of ethical and religious values suppose a complexity of spiritual dispositions. These are the fruit of **the commitment of the will**. These dispositions are not the cause of the affirmation of the faith, but they do condition it. They do not create the object, but they either permit, or impede one from recognizing it.

b. Moreover, faith is a duty – and the perception of the duty to believe, as all duties, demands on the part of the individual, a voluntary attitude of loyalty, fidelity, purification.

c. This rectifying action of the will does not last only up to the conversion and to the acceptance of the faith, but always. It is the will which conserves in the soul that necessary climate for the faith: a climate of right living, purity, humility, piety, generosity – thanks to which the faith becomes more deeply rooted and developed.

d. In a plan of salvation that is offered – and can be accepted, or freely rejected – it is noted that the same will can foment a climate of deceit, or self-seeking,

tepidity, or pride - attitudes that may weaken the faith, or have it disappear altogether.

3. THE WILL INTERVENES IN THE VERY ESSENCE OF THE ACT OF FAITH:

a. The influence of the affectivity on knowledge is multiple. The **quest** for truth is always **sustained by the will**, which **concentrates** the attention on one object, rather than on another, and moves the intelligence to consider it. The **love** for truth constitutes an empowering of the connatural thrust of the intelligence toward truth. Love has the capacity for creating a particular interest in favor of the beloved object [cf. I – II, q. 28, a. 2] - and, therefore, perfects the cognoscitive faculty. There is indeed a profound influence of the affective connaturality in the cognoscitive process.

b. In the **affirmation** of moral truths, the will has to intervene not only to apply the intelligence, but also to dispose the spirit to affirm the proposed truth. The practice of good and the experimental knowledge of virtue add to the speculative judgment, in the matter of morality, a power of discernment which is both direct and spontaneous: it is knowledge “by connaturality” [cf. II – II, q. 45, a. 3].

c. In the affirmation of religious truths of a natural order, the will and the good moral dispositions have the function of permitting and facilitating the normal exercise of the intellect, to perceive the intimate value of the rational demonstrations.

d. In the affirmation of supernatural truths, the situation is completely different. The truth, object of faith, is mysterious, and has as its essential characteristic, one of which is “in evidence.” As such, the intelligence could never know it, unless a force intervenes which would move it from the outside, and would sustain its adherence for all the time that this lasts. The will, in the case of the act of faith, intervenes in a diverse manner, from all the preceding cases; it enters directly into the constitution of the act, in so far as it determines it.

1.] In fact, the intellect knows and assents to what is revealed; however, the will determines it causally to assent. The influence of the will is required to have the act of faith subsist, not only in so far as it is a human act, but also in so far as it is an intellectual act. The theologians, therefore, say that the faith is formally in the intellect, but “causally” in the will.

2.] The ultimate reason of this essential intervention of the will is not the evidence of what has been revealed: the intellect assents not because it “sees”, but because it is constrained, moved by the will to assent.

3.] In the case of living faith, informed by charity, the will is induced to command the assent by the attraction that the desire of reaching perfection and the happiness in the possession of God, exercise on it. God is at the same time, the

Supreme Truth, and the Supreme Good. The object of the faith is not, on the one hand, simply a truth – and then, on the other, a beatitude: but the One and Triune God who is at the same time, Truth and Beatitude. The proper object of faith is God Who renders a human being “blessed” [cf. q. 2, a. 5; q. 4, a. 2].

Conclusion of the Thomistic Position

[1] The fundamental theses of the coming of the faith to a human mind can thus be simple: a supernatural illumination of the object of the faith, proposed through statements about the message. There is not yet adherence, but the simple apprehension of the truth that has been proposed. **The object of the faith is known by the intelligence elevated by an actual grace**, but this is only proposed for acceptance. In the light of this presentation of the truth, **a motion of grace inspires the will**, and has it **seek** the goodness and the convenience of this truth, which postulates the affirmation of the intelligence, demands faith. Grace **arouses** [if the free human will does not reject it] the supernatural attraction of desire, the “pious affection of credulity” the will to believe.

[2] Under the influence of this first love, the will determines the intelligence to assent, to the act of faith properly so-called, which is then emitted when God infuses into the soul, the habit of theological, Trinitarian faith.

[3] The supernatural affection in question here is not necessarily an act of the virtue of charity: in fact, it subsists also in “informed” faith, which is that faith of one in the state of mortal sin – but in one who still retains a certain yearning for the goods that have been promised [cf. De Ver., q. 14, a. 2, ad 10]. Charity perfects faith, but does not really constitute it.¹⁴¹

[4] ‘Inform’ faith, however, which subsists without grace and charity is not the gift of God in its fullness, and does not help to merit eternal life. The true, integral faith in God is that of those who enjoy His **friendship, filiation**. St. Augustine states that by believing, **we tend towards Him**, to be incorporated within His members. This is the faith that God wants from us: not just any kind of faith, but one that works in charity [cf. In Jn Ev., tr. 29, 6].

[5] This working through charity evidently cannot exclude external acts. This is particularly valid for the faith, but also that of giving witness of the committed adherence of believers to the loving service before God. Therefore, from the faith flows necessarily the external profession of the believed truths. “To believe” and “to profess” the faith are acts of one and the same virtue: they have the same object, the same end. A faith which is not professed would be, by that very fact, non authentic: it

¹⁴¹ cf. M. Labourdette, La vie theologale selon St. Thomas l’affection dans la foi, in: *Revue Thomiste*, 1960, pp.364-380.

would not embrace the human being in all the dimensions of one's being.

[6] The profession of the faith is much more than the enunciation of formulae: in fact, it is manifested in a comportment that is coherent, consistent with the revealed truths. Faith becomes concrete in an attitude of coherence which is manifested in all other acts of life.

[7] The faith is a gift from God – but, it is one that is meant to transform the entire conduct of the believer, to be inserted, directly or indirectly, in all the manifestations of its existence. It is a gift which demands to be communicated and transmitted, coming thus to constitute the primordial element of unity, to which the People is called. **On this demand of the handing on of the faith, is based the duty of evangelization in the apostolic mission.**

[8] Faith in the presentation of a theology of salvation history: while this does not necessarily deny the Thomistic presentation, does not pretend to be a mere appendage to it – but, should be integrated within it. Salvation History-Theology will speak perhaps more clearly and with greater emphasis than even St. Thomas did, with this historical conditioning of his own time, of the Event of Salvation in Jesus Christ. Thomas' theology surely has the Christ-Event as the core of the message – but, in the theology of faith from the aspect of Salvation History, there would be an even greater emphasis on the following, imitation of Jesus Christ.

[9] Rudolf Bultmann sees "faith" as "the acceptance of the Kerygma" - he sees it as faith in the salvation achieved in Jesus Christ. This "salvific work" is a good presentation with which to begin a reflection of faith – but effort should be made also here not to make it merely an intellectualist approach.

[10] After analyzing these and possibly other classical definitions of the faith, it cannot be considered merely as something which is intellectualist only. It must be thought of as something which is correlative to the salvific offering of God, to His revelation in events and in words, no matter how this may be worded:

- to the preached "kerygma" [as Bultmann saw it];
- to "those things which do not appear" [as Hebrews sees it];
- to the eternal fulfillment and to its embryonic beginning in us, i.e., to the salvation offered and revealed, as St. Thomas saw it.

[11] In all of this, there becomes gradually clearer the fundamental **APORIA** in all of divine Revelation: there is built into it an insoluble difficulty. It has been described in these terms: in the revelation of the word, one of the following takes place:

- God speaks in an infinite manner, and we understand in an infinite manner [but, this would mean there is no real comprehension possible here, for the human

mind cannot grasp the “infinite”];

- or, God speaks in an infinite manner, and humanity understands in a finite manner [once again, there would be no proportion between what is said and what is understood];

- or, finally, God speaks in a finite manner and humanity understands in a finite manner [but, in this instance, how could God truly reveal Himself and his Plan?

[a] Hence, there is in faith something **like the Mystery of the Incarnation of the Infinite God in a finite creature – the Indwelling of the Trinity in the human soul**. If the Revelation of God cannot be anything else than a supernatural Revelation, then the faith aroused by such revelation is indeed “salvific” faith [and not only a speculative faith], and this faith can live only in the atmosphere of a vital divine exchange. In other words, salvific faith can survive only in divine grace, under the “spiration” of the Holy Spirit. A basic difficulty lies in the transmission of the truths of faith on the part of God – and the reception of these truths on the part of humanity.

[b] This action of the Spirit does not supplant human activity; the action of the Spirit does not lead to an absorption in God, which would annihilate the personality of the believer. Rather, this action of the Holy Spirit inspires a confession that Christ has indeed come in the flesh.

Therefore, the faith of the believer is measured, appropriated to each one’s personality and natural traits. The response of the believer leads one to the community of the **EK-KLESIA**. The response in faith really can only be given in the community of the Church, in the community of those who love the coming of the Lord [cf. 2 Tm 4:8]. This response, like that of the intended spouse awaits the eschatological fulfillment.

[c] Faith, therefore, places one before the Father, Who is in all things, Whose immediacy has been opened by the Mediator – Jesus is the Mediator to the loving God. This is achieved by the believer through the faith, a genuinely “theological” virtue.

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[III] Toward the Personal God: Sources of Faith

1. *Credere Deum*: God: The Object and End of Faith

a. Classical theology, perhaps from St. Augustine on, offered these formulae:

- ***credere Deum***: God is the object of faith;
- ***credere in Deum***: God is the ultimate end of faith;

- ***credere Deo*** : God is the Witness, the ultimate motive for faith.

These would be the principal objectives of the faith in the personal order.

b. **The Primary and essential Object of the faith** is not some abstract truth, but rather a personal Being, God Himself. God as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier – God the Father, His Son, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. “To have faith” means to accept this One and Tri-personal God in a very loving manner:

... Now it is impossible to please God without faith, since anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and rewards those who try to find him... [cf. Heb 11:6]

c. **The Essence of the Faith:** may be expressed this way: in the divine Being, there are included all the eternal riches which constitute our ultimate happiness; and in His Providence, are included all of the temporal organization of salvation [as Church], all the means [as Sacraments] leading to it – and, above all, the very Person of Jesus Christ. All this opens the way for the believer to achieve his/her final end. Should faith be defined in relation to the beatific vision, as a power which tends toward that end and prepares for it [***inchoatio vitae aeternae: the beginning of eternal life***] – then faith demands necessarily to be specified by this same Object common to both faith and the Beatific Vision. This Object which is ‘believed’, even before being ‘known’ in the Vision, is the One and Tri-personal God:

... and eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent... [cf. Jn 17:3].

d. These reflections might shed some light on the classical formula: the object of Faith is the First Truth. This precise formulation has given rise to rather abstract interpretations. The word ‘Truth’ is abstract perhaps in philosophy, but has much more ‘life’ in Scripture. The word “First” places this Truth in the highest rank, on the absolute plane. The understanding of the intellect and the divine ‘Intelligible’ are united through the gift of faith.

e. Earlier theology often may have insisted on the abstractions present in the formulation. Some might make of it a purely mental object among others – even though admitting of a privileged situation for the “**First Truth**”. This made of those reflections more of a mental exercise, a study of logic, or metaphysics; at least, the danger was always there. However, classical theology also made it very clear that this First Truth is ‘subsistent’, is Someone. So it can still be stated: “**God, in so far as He is ‘First Truth’, is the Object of our Faith.**”

f. In faith, more than in any other knowledge, it happens that the intelligible world – images, concepts, articles of the Creed – in the strict sense of the word – is not the prime object of Christian Faith: the act of the believer is not terminated in what is enunciated, or in the statements – but much more in the One

Who is expressed by all these. All the material surrounding the expression of faith is merely the ‘means’ to achieve the luminous Object, hidden to our sight, because of the excesses of divine light, that totally surpasses the human ability to grasp It. For this reason, because of human limitation, the divine truth is ‘fragmented’ in statements that shed some light on the divine object.

g. It might not be out of place to recall here the story of St. Augustine and the lad on the beach of Ostia trying to put the ocean into the hole in the beach: a distant example of trying to place divine truth in the human mind. Therefore, divine truth will never be ‘**comprehended**’ by the human intellect, as **It totally surpasses all created capacities, even the mind elevated by grace and faith**. Nonetheless, through the faith, and its eschatological tension, the human spirit tends toward the ever fuller possession of the truth. The perception of the faith is, therefore, a dynamic perception [as ‘**tending**’]. This **striving forward** is that which defines the spiritual activity of the believer. Not being able to ‘see’ the First Truth, the human intellect, aided by the Gift of Faith, forms a judgment, and binds itself to this Truth. By means of this intelligible affirmation, the believer tends toward the First Truth.

2. **CREDERE IN DEUM** [to believe in God, is to **tend toward Him**]:

a. This First Truth is also the Last End of the Believer, of all of creation. God is the supreme intelligible, and **the most desirable Being**: faith is, therefore, a striving forward toward God. God, as the First Truth, is the object of the faith – and as **Supreme Good**, He is its end. While the words “First Truth” indicate being infallible and an adorable Person, it is necessary to say at the same time that the First Truth is the proper end of the human will. These aspects are not separable – and all the more is this true when they are affirmed in connection deep within by the indissoluble unity of a single act: considering God as the First Truth, one tends toward Him as the source of happiness. St. John refers to Him as “the One true God” – and St. Paul calls Him “the God of all blessing”: these are one and the same divine Person.

b. All the truths of the faith remain **in relationship to the Trinity** – as First Truth, but perhaps even more so, **as God as the ultimate Happiness** possible for humanity. An article of faith is the ‘more essential’ the more it is identified with God Himself. A truth is, therefore, the more essential – the more it is associated with human Happiness, **the Last End**. St. Thomas had stated that those truths which order, direct the believer directly to eternal life pertain to the Faith. These are the truths the vision of which will render human beings ‘happy’¹⁴². More exactly, the object of faith is the Personal Being who is both Truth and Happiness. Therefore, the act of faith is an affirmation and a love which seeks a person and which affirms Him, in order to share in His life forever.

¹⁴² cf. 2-2,q. 3, a. 5, c; q. 1, a. 6, ad 1 um; a. 8 c

3. *CREDERE DEO*: this means: Faith because of God's Witness, Testimony, His Word:

a. God is not only the Object and the End of Faith, but He is also its Witness. The act of faith is always a believing because of God: one believes simply because God has spoken. One believes because God has given witness concerning Himself and His Plan of salvation: no one can come to Him unless the Father draws him/her – the Father, “the One who has sent Jesus.”

b. First of all, there is an interior vocation to the faith: a call which is characteristic and essential aspect of the divine witness: between God and each human being there is a personal relationship, a vocation. Only God knows the eternal name of each individual – this grace which establishes one's deepest reality. When God calls an individual in a special manner, He makes this name heard: God directs an individual from deep within.

c. It is rightly said that “grace” is what “illuminates and attracts”. However, the deeper meaning of this is: it is God Himself Who calls – in His personal reality, He illuminates and attracts us, through His grace. So, God does not remain aloof in the excessive brilliance of His light and love – but, as it is a property of light to shine – and a property of goodness to share, it is God Himself who takes the initiative. It is God Himself Who causes the faith in the believer, inclining one's will and illuminating one's mind.¹⁴³

d. It is here that theology seeks to come to grips with the “leap” to the world above, which is faith. The believer does not make this “jump” on his/her own, nor is the move an irrational one. The human being who comes to the faith transcends his/her own reasoning by finding support in the divine Guide. With trust [already the result of grace], the believer does not go out toward a vacuum, but is confident in the “arms” which await. And since each human being is a sinner, this call to the soul on its journey is at one and the same time an invitation to renunciation and to the gift of oneself. This call is never precisely the same for two individuals. The grace that is given by the Lord is above all a grace that is **personal** and ‘**personalizing**’:

- it is “personal”, because grace is directed toward this particular individual, person, in his/her particular differentiation;

- it is “personalizing”, because grace that is bestowed is destined to make one realize his/her unique vocation. Grace is but the means, and only God is the Agent.

¹⁴³ cf. St. Thomas, De Ver., 27,12

4. The Word of God and the Human Word:

a. This particular aspect of the faith is one in which the believer at times is called to struggle. **The truths of the faith are communicated by God Himself by means of human lips.** The Prime Witness is God made man. And the necessary second witness – that which prolongs and represents Him in the midst of humanity and history, is the Church. Through the “Mystical Christ” God speaks to all human beings, and will until the end of time. While this human word may not be looked upon as the Word of God, yet, the Church is the representative of Christ. Normally, allowing room for extraordinary divine interventions – the Word of God is God Who speaks through other human beings. And this special “word” has been called a “grace” - in the words of St. Thomas, a grace of locution.¹⁴⁴

b. The “seed planted” by Jesus and His Apostles is transmitted to the **Church**, its **Magisterium** – the **Pope** and the **Bishops** in union with him. The voice of the **Liturgy** brings the Word of Christ to those who are attentive to it, hungering for it. The authentic “Christian” becomes a channel of God’s grace, His Word. Thus, the “Word of God” is shared even when His whisperings are not heard in one’s heart. [The Church is sometimes called a “condition without which the Word would not be handed on “in its integrity”].

c. The “formal motive” of the faith, in the most rigorous sense of the term, is the Witness of God Himself. The First Truth, Who speaks to the believer through human lips: those of Jesus Himself, His Apostles – and then, through the Church – remains alive, and in constant dialogue with the People of God. Jesus, a Divine Person, says that which He knows and attests to that which He has seen [cf. Jn 3:12]. The Apostles – and some ‘apostolic contemporaries’ – who were privileged witnesses of Jesus Christ – transmit their inspired experiences of the Incarnate Word [cf. I Jn1: 1ff.] and God manifests in them His own Word [cf. Tt 1:3]. The Church, then, continues their witness, preserving and guarding it – the Church is thus a permanent witness. Since the Word of God is alive and personal, He has sought out human intermediaries – apostles and others – in that salvation is modeled on the great Mystery of the Incarnation. These weak human witnesses present the truths of the Faith through their contemplation, study, heeding the Magisterium and their own spiritual experience [cf. DV 8].

d. Something similar might be said concerning the signs which God employs to communicate His message. In their essence, these signs are not technically “proofs”, or abstract material intending to bring about conviction, as principles of demonstration. His “signs” could be this, but this does not seem to be their main intent. The “signs” are interventions of God that are directed toward a human being,

¹⁴⁴ cf. CG III, 154

or a group. The “sign of signs” perhaps would be the resurrection – but, the signs themselves also require a conversion and a faith.

e. Those “signs” from the outset establish with the body of teaching certain unity for witnessing. They are not elements added to the teaching as some kind of an after-thought – and much less, simply a manifestation of wondrous power. The signs are the manifestations of that which the personal God already is in Himself – these signs do indicate that the Word has its ultimate root in Him.

f. The believer is called to come to understand those signs – since they are not principles upon which one may then logically establish faith: “... **blessed are they who have not seen, and yet believe...**” [cf. Jn 20:29] However, the “signs” are always deeds that have their meaning. Further, these “signs” form a unity with the witness. In Jesus, the signs refer both to His Person, as well as to His Doctrine, and His deeds – all unfolding the Father’s Plan. In the last analysis, they are all manifestations of His Person – and this Divine Person is at one and the same time, the Witness and the Object of the response in faith. The “signs” or the “marks” of the Church [One, Holy Catholic, and Apostolic] are certain indications of the Mysterious Divine Person Who established the Church, and who has recapitulated all of creation in Himself, and is the Head, the Spouse of this Church. Through the various members of the Church, each called to “witness”, the Lord has entrusted Himself and rendered Himself “knowable” to them.

g. Along with being “personal” in their very origin, the “signs” are always directed to persons. God does not act, nor speak, in general, but always on the level of personal intimacy. Therefore, a “miracle” performed in public, is not intended merely for the masses, but has a message for each individual who sees it, reflects upon it in prayer. The Word of God is directed to the human ear, and grace brings this to the human heart: the union of these two [the exterior sign – and the interior grace] – achieve the act of faith. These two elements of one and the same divine action are two manners of elevating the human being and of leading each person to faith.

h. From this point of view, there may be explained the character of many real motives for conversion. The motives of credibility are signs directed by God to a human person. One must come to appreciate their worth, their ultimate meaning – simply as a means chosen by God to show that the divine message is ‘credible.’ The manner of sign really matters little in the long run: they are simply elements, at times rather tenuous, at least in the eyes of critical rationalism, which have their meaning. From the moment that God gives them a meaning, they are at least valid as motives of credibility – faith itself always remains a gift of God. Faith cannot be “proven.”

i. The enunciation of truth within the Church must assume a social character [cf. **Redemptor Hominis**]; it will always be incumbent on the Church to offer

a clear witness in this regard. Nonetheless, since the access to the truth always has a very personal and unique history, there are, and there always will be, signs that spring almost exclusively from one's personal nature. [Hence, there are criteria interior to the faith itself, as the sublimity of the teaching – and others that are more exterior, as being converted by a Liturgy, or music accompanying the prayer of the Church]. All this gives some insight into the “marvelous condescension” of God in bringing the gift of faith.

j. In the matter of faith, there will always be need of **renunciation and conversion**. An attentive study of apologetics might enumerate a good number of ways in which one is moved by divine revelation. But, all signs are directed to lead to the manifestation of a Unique Presence: God must become the reason of their human existence.

5. Faith as Personal Relationship to Jesus Christ:

a. The faith of the Church is defined in its entirety by relationship to Jesus Christ: “... *I am the Way, the Truth and the Life...*”. Christ indeed is the pathway, but He is always the “object” and the “end”, the purpose of all faith. To know Him, is to know the Father – to see, to love Him, is to see and love the Heavenly Father. The “possession” of Him is through the Resurrected Christ and the Holy Spirit, the mutual love between the Father and the Son. Hence, Christian faith is of its very nature, Trinitarian.

b. “**Christian**” faith is **totally specified by Jesus Christ**. It is a participation in the very life of a Person, in the mystery of His death and resurrection. It is in all this, that the believer comes to grasp in some way, the Most Blessed Trinity. The Father and the Spirit act through the grace of Jesus Christ. The entire human existence of Jesus is the “ex-pression” of the life of the Trinity, the “Self-giving” on the part of God. The call of the Triune God to a human person, by means of Jesus Christ, is the faith in its objective principles.

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[IV] THE “HEART” OF FAITH: A FREE HUMAN RESPONSE

1. Christian Faith is “personal/ personalizing”: it is often said that Christian faith is not only “personal”, but that it “personalizes” – establishes the personality of the Christian. At times, it might seem that to insist on the personal character of faith is to forget its intellectual character of adherence to a truth, which would open the way to objections from a rationalist perspective against the faith. Faith travels the rarified atmosphere between both “rationalism” on the one hand, and “irrationalism” on the other. Faith responds to the requirements of the human mind, as well as to the human

will, seeking the supreme good. The ultimate purpose of a human being is to be sought in the requirements of each person.

2. Human Reason is elevated by Christian Faith: basically, each person tends toward a totally satisfying truth and goodness. Every individual is called to communion – and the lasting communion which is God is the ultimate reason for human beings.

a. The rational aspect of each human being is elevated through faith to the First Truth. The human mind is offered endless vistas in its contemplation of the Triune God, Who has given of Himself, and offers Himself for all eternity.

b. The appetitive aspect of each person finds its ultimate response in the First Good, which is God. All the lesser goods and blessings of God are but a stone on the highway to the God of all blessings.

3. Faith is never “irrational”: therefore, the act of faith is both “personal” and “personalizing”. Faith could never be an irrational complex rooted in the basic instincts of humanity. Faith finds a profoundly responsive chord in the spiritual, transparent, liberated yearnings of each person – and faith also complements, totally satisfies the human person, by liberating each one through eternal union with God. The giant step from incredulity to faith demands the hard road of renunciation – it requires the sacrifice of our closed autonomy. And even when faith is granted, it demands the daily dying to self – the awesome spiritual purification to keep it. The most admired human values, such as lucidity, courage, loyalty, faithfulness – are immanent to the act of faith, and therefore, “personalization”, truly Christian character-building, demands the on-going struggle to live the faith in the routine of each day.

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[V] THREE APPROACHES TO FAITH

Since faith is indeed essentially a very personal response, the normal questions concerning it might be presented from at least three separate positions: the non-believer; the mystic; and the simple believer

1. The non-believer and the way to Faith:

a. This approach to the faith begins at the lowest possible level, the total absence of faith, and the arduous “accompaniment” [by the “**EMMANUEL**”], a **journey toward God**. Beginning with the non-believer who has never even heard the Gospel proclaimed – the Church has worked out an absolute “minimum”: to believe that God exists and that He rewards anyone who seeks Him. This minimum is sufficient because it presents the essential core of the truths that should be believed. The eternal riches of the Divine Being and the temporal economy of salvation are protected by the statement that “God does exist and that He responds to the good that human beings

perform.”

b. Every judgment is a synthesis of affirmation and representation. Each judgment presupposes a representative element which is then placed in relationship with the First Truth. In the act of faith, there is elicited the profound yearning for truth and love. This spiritual plenitude, which cannot really be translated into words, concepts or rational judgments, goes beyond all formulae, even though [since faith is a “human” act] it needs some expression, “incarnation.” Faith leads one to the ultimate reality.

c. The concepts and the formulae which translate into explicit affirmations this spiritual commitment can be extremely limited and maybe even limiting. However, the profound affirmation of Christian faith and that which represents it in human language can be quite incomplete, and far from ever being adequate one to the other. At times, it might even be that the formula, the representation of the faith, may not really translate except in a rather distant, inadequate sort of way, the Absolute in Whom the believer expresses profound faith. Because of the infinite distance of the Object of faith – and coupled now with the wound of original sin on the faculties of a human being, there is pressing need for some kind of expression of one’s faith, no matter how incomplete the formulation might be.

d. The human being expresses him/herself in the best way possible – even on the natural level, one’s thought is hardly ever fully rendered by one’s words. And when it is a matter of a non-believer being elevated to the level of divine revelation, through the medium of images, concepts and human deeds, it can easily be seen the infinite disproportion between the conceptual material employed to express faith, and one’s own spiritual capacity. On the other hand, there is deep within each person, **a perennial restlessness, dissatisfaction, a seeking, a searching, a yearning.** Furthermore, the merciful God never asks the impossible - He looks at the human heart and fans the spiritual hunger and thirst for the Absolute. He takes the initiative always, and through a marvelous balance of interior inspirations and exterior contact, the gift of faith takes root. For this reason, too, the salvific impulses experienced deep within, expressions of the activity of grace, seek some human verbalization: even though the formulae may be incomplete, they do respond to the need to understand.

2. The Mystic and the Culmination of Faith: this is the vocation of all the Baptized:¹⁴⁵

a. At the other end of the spectrum, mystical knowledge is presented as a “faith knowledge”, and one that has become more “personal” and “personalizing.” When mystical knowledge is examined from the exclusive theological point of view, it

¹⁴⁵ cf. K. Wojtyła, *Faith according to St. John of the Cross*. S. Francisco: Ignatius : 1981 - tr. by Jordan Aumann, OP

would be said that such knowledge is verified under the influence that is ever more and more profound, of the Holy Spirit. The role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian is that of bringing to completion the divine interventions of creation and redemption through sanctification. It is the Holy Spirit Who crowns the development of a truly loving personality. And if it is generally accepted that a personality develops through self-knowledge, self-possession, and self-oblation, it is through the Holy Spirit that all this is achieved.

b. It is through the Holy Spirit that the Christian becomes aware of the great benefit of divine grace and what Christian personality really is [cf. I Co 2:10-16]. It is through the Spirit that one comes to understand the more the power of the flesh and the Spirit assists one to be more self-possessing, self-giving and liberated [cf. Rm 7:8]. Since the Holy Spirit is Love Itself, He leads us to God through charity [cf. Rm 5:5].

1.] Consequently one's spiritual personality is formed in humble but strong docility to the Spirit, and the entire passive aspect of faith [its "**obedience**"] finds here its essential explanation. It is through the Holy Spirit that Christians are constituted as authentic "persons", true images of Jesus Christ.

2.] One of the essential areas where the Spirit is particularly active is that of faith. If faith indeed is the encounter between two persons, the role of the Holy Spirit will be that of deepening the encounter and of making this union more intimate. It is through the Holy Spirit that faith more and more dominates a human life, and leads one to the ever more profound possession of God. It is the Spirit Who gradually changes faith to vision, to contact – and it all is accomplished through the mediation of grace, the human intellect and will. The very scope of the Holy Spirit is to convert the Christian more and more into other Christ's, thus it might be understood how, under the Holy Spirit, mystical knowledge is ever more "personal" and "personalizing."

c. This reality has been attested to through the centuries by many mystics, such as St. John of the Cross, It is always most important that mystical knowledge should not become lost in the undetermined – remembering the old adage that so many heresies have come to the Church through "false personal choices": these often began in the "**mists**", ended in "**schism**" because of **the BIG "I" in the middle!**¹⁴⁶ Mystical faith does submerge one in the infinite mystery of the Divine Persons, always for the benefit of the Church.¹⁴⁷

d. Mystical knowledge is one which from the very beginning is situated on an extremely personal level. It is elevated to the Triune God precisely as Father, Son

¹⁴⁶ Comment of Fr. Paul Murray, OP

¹⁴⁷ cf. Letter of the Congregation of the Faith, *Christian Meditation, to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of Christian Meditation*. October 15, 1989.

and Holy Spirit are revealed. Jesus Christ is very clearly the Center, the Mediator of the entire spiritual life. Mysticism can never transcend Jesus Christ, nor His humanity, By means of His sacred humanity, the Word in Whom the Father and the Holy Spirit are not, contains all the divine secrets. This is the Mystery of God for humanity, the unique Word in which God gives His all, once and for all, in this only-begotten Word – after Jesus, there is no more to say – other than penetrating, pondering, treasuring this mystery in one's heart, and life.

e. The whole effort of transformation is the personal intervention of God Himself, the “supernatural artificer”. It is God Himself Who continually intervenes with the purification in the depths of one's being, leading to progressive union, mystical espousals”. The activity of the individual is that of following this divine guide. The various stages of this “ascent” correspond to an ever deepening personalization. Intellect and will are equally elevated and gradually purified by God. The will and the intellect proceed in harmony and conjointly in this spiritual journey. The Spirit does not purify intellect or will alone, separately – it is the whole person.

f. The whole *Ascent of Mount Carmel* describes in poetic and theological terms, the silent and hidden entrance into sublime contemplation, the life-long quest gradually lead the believer to overcome some of the concepts that pertain to initial faith, but never sacrificing faith itself. The true mystic, therefore, will always be most loyal to the Church, while he/she might go beyond some of her formulations – but, will never be in opposition to them.

g. The essential aspect of faith is not so much the formulations in which the faith is expressed [as these at best can only be ‘part’ of the First Truth, and no description can ever say it ‘all’] – but, much more **the Person toward Whom faith tends**. It is true that faith might be ‘installed’, ‘incarnate’, expressed in words, formulae – but, the Church has always realized the radical insufficiency of any single expression. Through the centuries, the Church remains in constant dialogue with the Holy Spirit, for the deepening, the perfecting of faith. There is involved here an enormous progress, a most painful ‘passover’ at times, from human thought and expression, for an ever deeper contact with ‘the mind of Jesus Christ’ [cf. Ph 2:5,ff.].

h. At the same time, there is in all of this the enormous danger of a ‘false mysticism’, to come to the conclusion that one is in a ‘privileged’ position of no longer needing sacraments, magisterial structures. Human ideas do not ‘re-present’ God comprehensively, nor will the human mind ever totally ‘grasp’ Him, or the human will ever totally ‘possess’ Him: at best, these are analogies to offer some distant description of union with God. Formulae can also be something of an obstacle – if one ever deduces from any one of them that he/she truly ‘understands’ the mystery [e.g. St. Augustine's brilliant analogy of the mind, word and will for the Trinity], or has already ‘achieved’ God: perhaps, as mystical progress increases, it becomes more and

more true that one not know so much what God is, but more rather what God is not!

i. Yet, mystical faith can never be a leap into an impersonal vacuum – the most sublime faith, if it is to remain truly ‘Christian’, will always be a loving encounter with ‘Someone’, on behalf of the whole Church. One of the surest signs of genuine contemplation is precisely the loving knowledge and attention given to God and those He loves. The ultimate purpose of all mystical gifts is perfect union with God, for the eternal benefit of the individual and the Church, and the elevating of this communion still further. Mystical gifts lead to a living relationship, that is ever more vital, vibrant and alive. The human personality is perfected by one’s communion with the Divine Persons through faith.

3. The Every-day Example, Witness and the “Irradiation” of the Faith:

a. The transmission of the faith is verified through “witness”, example. Faith is based on “testimony”, more of life than of words, There is also a precise incarnation of this witness: the message, the signs, grace, doctrine.

b. The Christian gives “witness” in the manner that he/ she is committed totally to God and to His work: the Truth, the Reign of God, the Good News. One’s testimony implies radically a personal self-giving to the Word of God, and the Incarnation of this Word in one’s daily living. The Incarnation of the Lord, His life on earth, His death, His judgments – translated in clear human terms, understandable to all, of the Mind of God. Jesus is the “Great Witness”, Who has given good, truthful, faithful testimony – in fact his entire earthly existence and His activity on earth irradiated the fact that He was one intimately united to the Father, and totally given over to humanity. In the words of Paul, Jesus is ‘consecrated’, “separated” for the service of the Gospel – and the Apostle is called to be the “slave”, the “ambassador” of Jesus Christ.

c. In this manner, the faith is transmitted: through the testimony of human beings, in whom the witness of God Himself is resplendent, transparent. From this ‘subjective’ point of view, the essential factor is the dedication of the individual. God could intervene directly, without human mediation – however, a central mystery of this faith is the Incarnation: God has chosen to work through the instrumentality of weak human beings. God could intervene without the mediation of the “permanent witness”, the Church - but, through the institution of Jesus Christ Himself, the Church is the universal Sacrament of Salvation.

d. Each believer is offered in total sufficiency, the strength, the life and the joy that comes through faith. In the ideal, faith is meant to permeate one’s inner life, and irradiate this life to others. This is a spiritual impulse which ‘totalizes’ one’s earthly existence – it elevates one’s human nature, in-forms it, models it, orientates it,

unifies it. It is faith that imparts to every human existence a meaning. It serves as the basis for one's thoughts, and responses – for charity and fidelity, and animates one totally for God. Through one's life, the action and presence of God are 'revealed'. Since each human being is in 'tension' because of basic incompleteness, each person is tending forward toward fulfillment. The ultimate role of witness is to realize a Presence, and to transmit a divine call.

e. The function of "witness" is so necessary to the Church that it defines the Christian state¹⁴⁸. It is a serious responsibility for every believer. The believer receives a particular spiritual capacity for this through the Sacrament of Confirmation, as noted in Pope Paul's *Divinae Naturae Consorts*, and renewal of the Ritual of Confirmation. This is the "**sharer in the divine nature**" [cf. 2 P 1:4]. Confirmation is the Sacrament of Witness, of Christian maturity, and personality. To enable one to engage in the demanding roles of witness, the Holy Spirit is bestowed. The Holy Spirit here initiates, and in some way, completes this aspect of Christian existence. Faith demands the constant conversion to becoming authentic witnesses. Faith is an essential force in the process of personalization – it is the basic root for witness. Hence, the Holy Spirit makes of the Christian a "person", by perfecting grace, faith, hope and charity.

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SUMMARY

[1] The Ecclesial Character of the Faith:

[a] Faith is based on the Word of God and is transmitted through the Church. The Word of God has been given over by Christ – His words were 'repeated' by the Apostles and registered in the NT writings. However, this 'word' expressed in human terms will remain always a divine word – it comes from God and is a gift of the Father. The divine word revealed God Himself and His plan - it has come to us from God made man, the very Word of God Incarnate. This Mystery of the Word, Who is eternal, 'substantial', 'subsistent', 'personal' – is, at the same time, expressed in human affirmations.

[b] This mystery is in some way 'prolonged' in the Church. The Apostles preached this word so that it might lead to salvation. They enjoyed a fullness of experience that was really incommunicable – because they saw, heard and touched with their own hands, the Word of Life. However, this experience of theirs nourished in them a permanent, necessary, indestructible function: they were called to transmit in absolute fidelity, and with full authority, the Word of God. This function is now prolonged by the successors of the Apostles, and will continue with the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁴⁸ cf. A.A. Trites, *The NT Concept of Witness* Cambridge University Press 1977

[c] Consequently, the Church is at the service of the Word, and can only authentically preach this word that has been spoken: the Church has been formed to propose, guard, explain, and defend this precious gift. This preaching must be contemplated and studied, experienced and translated into action [DV 8] – and for this:

- the charism is kept alive in the Magisterium, gifted as it is, with the divine truth. Vibrant faith and contemplation are always alive in the Church: in the Shepherds who are called to be a believing, learning, and teaching Church;

- the truth is kept alive in the long succession of the saints, in whom the light and love develop, spread and permeate the Church in every age;

- the Word is kept particularly alive in the Sacraments, most specially in the Eucharist: during the entire period of pilgrimage, the death and resurrection of the Lord will be proclaimed and communicated – until He comes again. The eternal and subsistent Word will be shared under the veil of symbols until the end of time;

- therefore, in the very bosom of the Church, the Incarnate Word is continued, as the principle and the root of all Catholic unity: the mystery of the Body presents the mystery of the Word: this is the one and the same Divine Mystery, under different signs and in different states.

[d] In this sense, the most personal faith of the believer is placed on the Word of God, as this is transmitted through the Church: faith hears the Word of God in the spirit of religious obedience. Faith is communicated through the hearing of the Word of God – even more than it is through the communication of the Church. Nonetheless, by divine institution, the Church becomes the usual means [or the ‘extraordinary’ means, when one considers the small number actually enrolled in the ‘Church’].

[e] Faith is ‘ecclesial’ in the strict sense because it is realized by one’s entrance and remaining with the Church. Entrance into the Church is achieved through Baptism. Baptism is that act of Jesus Christ in His Church, which associates one intimately with the mystery of His Death and Resurrection: death to sin, and resurrection to new life with Jesus. “To keep the faith” is to believe not so much in some distant and purely invisible power of the Resurrection and in some sense of ‘life’ in the Church - rather, it is to believe in this awesome power, expressed in the ‘humility’ of the Sacraments, in which Christ and the recipient meet. Salvation through the faith is fully identified with salvation through Baptism and salvation through the Church. Salvation begins through adherence to the Word of God as this is proposed by the Church. Fidelity to the teaching that has been received is faithfulness toward what has been taught from the beginning, a conformity to the Word of God with all of

its moral, spiritual and social demands. The ‘obedience of faith’ includes fidelity to the Magisterium, the Church, as established by Jesus Himself.

[f] Faith is also ‘ecclesial’ because it leads to community: faith is not meant to be closed up in on an individual, but it opens one up, it communicates to the whole reality of Jesus, and the Mystical Body, the Sacrament of Salvation. Faith of its nature is orientated toward a common object and hope, based on the divine word, which is hierarchical and mystical – and is achieved in the ‘assembly’, in the ‘membership’. The act of faith asks for union with the others similarly called, and it is a share in the knowledge of the whole mystical body. Faith culminates, with the assistance of hope, in the ever deepening rooting in charity, leading to ‘union with all the saints’ [cf. Ep 3:18]. All are assisting and being assisted in one and the same salvific event.

[g] Faith that is expressed in communication with others is the activity which constitutes the Mystical Body. Through visible testimony, through direct influence, as well as in its mysterious communication, faith is the activity which constitutes the Body, and increases its membership. All become united in one and the same tension, impulse, toward the same term, which is the entrance of all into the mystery of Jesus Christ. Through Faith, there is achieved the insertion into the one Body of Christ, the incorporation of all in the one being of Jesus.

[2] Faith and the “Experience” of God:

[a] In all of this, there is implied that the treatise speaks of ‘living faith’ – and this theological gift remains even in those who lack charity and grace, but not in the living manner that leads to eternal life. If one understands the word ‘experience’ in the current and empirical sense, as the designation of a vivid contact, a ‘felt’ presence, an ‘emotion’, or a direct impression- then perhaps faith is better not called an ‘experience’ of God. It is true that in some truly ‘gifted’ individuals, faith may assume manifestations that far surpass the ordinary faith of most people – which faith is what leads to sanctification. There is no necessity ever for the ‘extraordinary.’ Faith is simply the fruit of a divine grace, which moves one from within to desire and affirm, to know and to love God as Savior. However, most often this grace of faith is not revealed, or discovered – it is most often not perceived, but simply takes over one’s life, gives it its precepts. Faith gives new understanding, new appreciation – it does not reveal itself in itself, nor in its mystery – but only in its fruits, in what it produces and in what it leads to - through the efficacy of its activity. Faith is the adherence in obscurity of a person seeking the radical response for human existence – it roots one in the First Truth and Ultimate Goodness.

[b] Nonetheless, faith does communicate a unique experience of God. The reason is that faith transforms, tends toward union forever with God, from the very instant that it is implanted in one’s mind. The subsequent contemplative and mystical

life find their root in the faith. The ‘experience’ of God in the faith will not be something empirical in every instant, something that would be perceptible on the level of ordinary ‘experiences.’ Rather, faith is a spiritual reality, a kind of profound impulse, in which the spiritual instincts occupy the first place.

[c] Consequently, there is no authentic ‘experience of the Spirit’ in the Church that would close one in on him/herself, to separate one definitively from the ‘institutional’ Church, established by Christ. Authentic dialogue with the “beloved” in the mystical life is only assured in its full truth, its integral power and profound joy – through an absolute fidelity to the teaching of the Church, to her dogmatic decisions and moral requirements.¹⁴⁹

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¹⁴⁹ cf. J. Mouroux, “*Carácter personal del la fe*”, in: *Comentarios a la constitución ‘Dei Verbum’*. Madrid: BAC 1969, pp. 194-217, *passim*.

B. LG 25

... Bishops who teach in communion with the Roman Pontiff are to be revered by all as witnesses of divine and Catholic truth; the faithful, for their part, are obliged to submit to their bishops' decision, made in the name of Christ, in matters of faith and morals, and to adhere to it with a ready and respectful allegiance of mind. This loyal submission of will and intellect must be given in a special way, to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff, even when he does not speak *ex cathedra* in such wise, indeed, that his supreme teaching authority be acknowledged with respect, and sincere assent be given to decisions made by him, conformably with his manifest mind and intention, which is made known principally either by the character of the documents in question, or by the frequency with which a certain doctrine is proposed, or by the manner in which the doctrine is formulated...¹⁵⁰

Presentation: the appeal of Pope Paul VI, in: *Humanae Vitae* [nn. 28, f.]:

28: Beloved priest sons, by vocation you are the counselors and spiritual guides of individual persons and of families. We now turn to you with confidence. Your first task – especially in the case of those who teach moral theology – is to expound the Church's teaching on marriage without ambiguity. Be the first to give, in the exercise of your ministry, the example of loyal internal and external obedience to the teaching authority of the Church. That obedience, as you know well, obliges not only because of the reasons adduced, but rather because of the light of the Holy Spirit, which is given in a particular way to the pastors of the Church in order that they may illustrate the truth [cf. LG 25]. You know, too, that it is of the utmost importance, for peace of consciences and for the unity of the Christian people, that in the field of morals as well as in that of dogma, all should attend to the magisterium of the Church and all should speak the same language. Hence, with all our heart we renew to you the heartfelt plea of the great Apostle Paul: *I appeal to you, brethren, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment* [cf. 1 Co 1:10].

29: to diminish in no way the saving teaching of Christ constitutes an eminent form of charity for souls. But this must ever be accompanied by patience and

¹⁵⁰ ... *Episcopi in communione cum Romano Pontifice docentes ab omnibus tamquam divinae et catholicae veritatis testes venerandi sunt; fideles autem in sui Episcopi sententiam de fide et moribus nomine Christi prolatum concurrere, eique religioso animi obsequio adhaerere debent. Hac vero religiosum voluntatis et intellectus obsequium singulari ratione praestandum est Romani Pontificis authentico magisterio etiam cum non ex cathedra laquitur; ita nempe ut magisterium eius supremum reverenter agnoscatur, et sententiis ab eo prolatiis sincere adhaereatur, iuxta mentem et voluntatem manifestata ipsius, quae se prodit praecipue sive indole documentorum, sive ex frequenti propositione eiusdem doctrinae sive ex dicendi ratione ...*

goodness, such as the Lord Himself gave example of in dealing with men. Having come not to condemn but to save [cf. Jn 3:17], He was intransigent with evil, but merciful toward individuals.

In their difficulties, may married couples always find, in the words and in the heart of the priest, the echo of the voice and the love of the Redeemer.

And then speak with confidence, beloved sons, fully convinced that the spirit of God, while He assists the magisterium in proposing doctrine, illumines internally the hearts of the faithful inviting them to give their assent. Teach married couples the indispensable way of prayer; prepare them to have recourse often with faith to the sacraments of the Eucharist and of Penance, without ever allowing themselves to be discouraged by their own weakness...¹⁵¹

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¹⁵¹ cf. Ermenegildo Lio, *'Humanae Vitae' e infallibilit . Il Concilio, Paolo VI e Giovanni Paolo II. Vaticana 1986*; Bernadito Cleopas Auza, *The Non-infallible Magisterium and Theological Dissent*. Roma: ANGELICUM 1990.

C. CCC ## 331, ff.; 375, ff.

331: The Bishop of the Church of Rome, in whom resides the office given in a special way by the Lord to Peter, first of the Apostles, and to be transmitted to his successors, is head of the College of Bishops, the Vicar of Christ, and Pastor of the universal Church on earth; therefore, in virtue of his office he enjoys supreme, full, immediate and universal ordinary power in the Church, which he can always freely exercise.

375 § 1: Through the Holy Spirit who has been given to them, bishops are the successors of the Apostles by Divine Institution; they are constituted pastors within the Church so that they are teachers of doctrine, priests of sacred worship and ministers of governance.

§ 2: By the fact of their Episcopal consecration bishops receive along with the function of sanctifying, also the functions of teaching and of ruling, which by their very nature, however, can be exercised only when they are in hierarchical communion with the head of the college and its members.

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D. Recent Pontifical Documents

- [1] *Mysterium Ecclesiae* [1973]
- [2] International Theological Commission [June 1976]
- [3] *Donum Veritatis* [May 24, 1990]
- [4] *Ad Tuendam Fidem* [May 1998]
- [5] Doctrinal Note [1998]

§§§§§

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH**1. *Mysterium Ecclesiae***

Declaration in Defense of the Catholic Doctrine on the Church Against Certain Errors of the Present Day

Issued by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

June 24 1973

The mystery of the Church, upon which the Second Vatican Council shed fresh light, has been repeatedly dealt with in numerous writings of theologians. While not a few of these studies have served to make this mystery more understandable, others, through the use of ambiguous or even erroneous language, have obscured Catholic doctrine, and at times have gone so far as to be opposed to Catholic faith even in fundamental matters.

To meet this situation, the bishops of several nations, conscious both of their duty of “keeping pure and intact the deposit of faith” and of their task of “proclaiming the Gospel unceasingly,”⁽¹⁾ have, through concurring declarations, sought to protect the faithful entrusted to their care from the danger of error. In addition, the second General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, in dealing with the ministerial priesthood, expounded a number of important points of doctrine regarding the constitution of the Church.

Likewise, the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, whose task it is to “preserve the doctrine of faith and morals in the whole Catholic world”, ⁽²⁾ intends to gather together and explain a number of truths concerning the mystery of the Church which at the present time are being either denied or endangered. In this it will follow above all the lines laid down by the two Vatican Councils.

1.] The Oneness of Christ's Church

One is the Church, which after His Resurrection our Savior handed over to Peter as Shepherd (cf. Jn. 21:17), commissioning him and the other apostles to propagate and govern her (cf. Mt. 18:18ff.) (and which) He erected for all ages as “the pillar and mainstay of the truth” (cf. 1 Tm. 3:15). And this Church of Christ, “constituted and organized in this world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the Successor of Peter and the bishops in union with that Successor.”(3) This declaration of the Second Vatican Council is illustrated by the same Council’s statement that “it is through Christ’s Catholic Church alone, which is the general means of salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained,” (4) and that same Catholic Church “has been endowed with all divinely revealed truth and with all the means of grace” (5) with which Christ wished to enhance His messianic community.

This is no obstacle to the fact that during her early pilgrimage the Church, “embracing sinners in her bosom, is at the same time holy and always in need of being purified,”(6) nor to the fact that “outside her visible structure,” namely in Churches and ecclesial communities which are joined to the Catholic Church by an imperfect communion, there are to be found “many elements of sanctification and truth (which), as gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ, possess an inner dynamism towards Catholic unity.”(7)

For these reasons, “Catholics must joyfully acknowledge and esteem truly Christian endowments derived from our common heritage, which are to be found among our separated brethren,”(8) and they must strive for the re-establishment of unity among all Christians, by making a common effort of purification and renewal,(9) so that the will of Christ may be fulfilled and the division of Christians may cease to be an obstacle to the proclamation of the Gospel throughout the world.(10) But at the same time Catholics are bound to profess that through the gift of God’s mercy they belong to that Church which Christ founded and which is governed by the successors of Peter and the other Apostles, who are the depositories of the original Apostolic tradition, living and intact, which is the permanent heritage of doctrine and holiness of that same Church.(11)

The followers of Christ are therefore not permitted to imagine that Christ’s Church is nothing more than a collection (divided, but still possessing a certain unity) of Churches and ecclesial communities. Nor are they free to hold that Christ’s Church nowhere really exists today and that it is to be considered only as an end which all Churches and ecclesial communities must strive to reach.

2.] The Infallibility of the Universal Church

In His gracious goodness, God has seen to it that what He had revealed for the salvation of all nations would abide perpetually in its full integrity. (12) For this reason He entrusted to the Church the treasury of God's Word, so that the pastors and the holy people might strive together to preserve it, study it and apply it to life. (13)

God, who is absolutely infallible, thus deigned to bestow upon His new people, which is the Church, a certain shared infallibility, which is restricted to matters of faith and morals, which is present when the whole People of God unhesitatingly holds a point of doctrine pertaining to these matters, and finally which always depends upon the wise providence and anointing of the grace of the Holy Spirit, who leads the Church into all truth until the glorious coming of her Lord.(14) Concerning this infallibility of the People of God the Second Vatican Council speaks as follows: "The body of the faithful as a whole, anointed as they are by the Holy One (cf. 1 Jn. 2:20, 27), cannot err in matters of belief. Thanks to a supernatural instinct of faith which characterizes the people as a whole, it manifests this unerring quality when, 'from the bishops down to the last member of the laity' (St. Augustine, *De Praed. Sanct.*, 14, 27), it shows universal agreement in matters of faith and morals."(15)

The Holy Spirit enlightens and assists the People of God inasmuch as it is the Body of Christ united in a hierarchical communion. The Second Vatican Council indicates this fact by adding to the words quoted above: "For, by this instinct of faith which is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, God's People accepts not the word of men but the very Word of God (cf. 1 Thes. 2:13). It clings without fail to the faith once delivered to the saints (cf. Jude 3), penetrates it more deeply by accurate insights, and applies it more thoroughly to life. All this it does under the lead of a sacred teaching authority to which it loyally defers."(16)

Without doubt the faithful, who in their own manner share in Christ's prophetic office (17), in many ways contribute towards increasing the understanding of faith in the Church. "For," as the Second Vatican Council says, "there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts (cf. Lk. 2:19, 51), through the intimate understanding of spiritual things they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through apostolic succession the sure charism of truth."(18) And the Supreme Pontiff Paul VI observes that the witness the pastors of the Church offers is "rooted in Sacred Tradition and Holy Scripture and nourished by the ecclesial life of the whole People of God."(19)

But by divine institution it is the exclusive task of these pastors alone, the successors of Peter and the other Apostles, to teach the faithful authentically, that is

with the authority of Christ shared in different ways; so that the faithful, who may not simply listen to them as experts in Catholic doctrine, must accept their teaching given in Christ's name, with an assent that is proportionate to the authority that they possess and that they mean to exercise. (20)

For this reason the Second Vatican Council, in harmony with the first Vatican Council, teaches that Christ made Peter "a perpetual and visible principle and foundation of the unity of the faith and of communion" (21); and the Supreme Pontiff Paul VI has declared: "The teaching office of the bishops is for the believer the sign and channel which enable him to receive and recognize the Word of God." (22) Thus, however much the Sacred Magisterium avails itself of the contemplation, life and study of the faithful, its office is not reduced merely to ratifying the assent already expressed by the latter; indeed, in the interpretation and explanation of the written or transmitted Word of God, the Magisterium can anticipate or demand their assent. (23)

The People of God has particular need of the intervention and assistance of the Magisterium when internal disagreements arise and spread concerning a doctrine that must be believed or held, lest it lose the communion of the one faith in the one Body of the Lord (cf. Eph. 4:4, 5).

3.] The Infallibility of the Church's Magisterium

Jesus Christ, from whom derives the task proper to the pastors of teaching the Gospel to His people and to the entire human family, wished to endow the pastors' Magisterium with a fitting charism of infallibility in matters regarding faith and morals. Since this charism does not come from new revelations enjoyed by the Successor of Peter and the College of Bishops, (24) it does not dispense them from studying with appropriate means the treasure of divine Revelation contained both in Sacred Scripture which teaches us intact the truth that God willed to be written down for our salvation (25) and in the living Tradition that comes from the Apostles. (26) In carrying out their task, the pastors of the Church enjoy the assistance of the Holy Spirit; this assistance reaches its highest point when they teach the People of God in such a manner that, through the promises of Christ made to Peter and the other Apostles, the doctrine they propose is necessarily immune from error.

This occurs when the bishops scattered throughout the world but teaching in communion with the Successor of Peter present a doctrine to be held irrevocably. (27) It occurs even more clearly both when the bishops by a collegial act (as in Ecumenical Councils), together with their visible Head, define a doctrine to be held, (28) and when the Roman Pontiff "speaks ex cathedra, that is, when, exercising the office of Pastor and Teacher of all Christians, through his supreme apostolic authority he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the universal Church." (29)

According to Catholic doctrine, the infallibility of the Church's Magisterium extends not only to the deposit of faith but also to those matters without which that deposit cannot be rightly preserved and expounded. (30) The extension however of this infallibility to the deposit of faith itself is a truth that the Church has from the beginning held as having been certainly revealed in Christ's promises.

The First Vatican Council, basing itself upon this truth, defined as follows the matter of Catholic faith: "All those things are to be believed by divine and Catholic faith which are contained in the written or transmitted Word of God and which are proposed by the Church, either by a solemn judgment or by the ordinary and universal Magisterium, to be believed as having been divinely revealed." (31) Therefore the objects of Catholic faith—which are called dogmas—necessarily are and always have been the unalterable norm both for faith and theological science.

4.] The Church's Gift of Infallibility Not To Be Diminished

From what has been said about the extent of and conditions governing the infallibility of the People of God and of the Church's Magisterium, it follows that the faithful are in no way permitted to see in the Church merely a fundamental permanence in truth which, as some assert, could be reconciled with errors contained here and there in the propositions that the Church's Magisterium teaches to be held irrevocably, as also in the unhesitating assent of the People of God concerning matters of faith and morals.

It is of course true that through the faith that leads to salvation men are converted to God, (32) who reveals Himself in His Son Jesus Christ; but it would be wrong to deduce from this that the Church's dogmas can be belittled or even denied. Indeed the conversion to God which we should realize through faith is a form of obedience (cf. Rom. 16:26), which should correspond to the nature of divine Revelation and its demands.

Now this Revelation, in the whole plan of salvation, reveals the mystery of God who sent His Son into the world (cf. 1 Jn.4:14) and teaches its application to Christian conduct. Moreover it demands that, in full obedience of the intellect and will to God who reveals (33), we accept the proclamation of the good news of salvation as it is infallibly taught by the pastors of the Church. The faithful, therefore, through faith are converted as they should to God, who reveals Himself in Christ, when they adhere to Him in the integral doctrine of the Catholic faith.

It is true that there exists an order as it were a hierarchy of the Church's dogmas, as a result of their varying relationship to the foundation of the faith. (34) This hierarchy means that some dogmas are founded on other dogmas which are the

principal ones, and are illuminated by these latter. But all dogmas, since they are revealed, must be believed with the same divine faith. (35)

5.] The Notion of the Church's Infallibility Not To Be Falsified

The transmission of divine Revelation by the Church encounters difficulties of various kinds. These arise from the fact that the hidden mysteries of God “by their nature so far transcend the human intellect that even if they are revealed to us and accepted by faith, they remain concealed by the veil of faith itself and are as it were wrapped in darkness.”(36) Difficulties arise also from the historical condition that affects the expression of Revelation.

With regard to this historical condition, it must first be observed that the meaning of the pronouncements of faith depends partly upon the expressive power of the language used at a certain point in time and in particular circumstances. Moreover, it sometimes happens that some dogmatic truth is first expressed incompletely (but not falsely), and at a later date, when considered in a broader context of faith or human knowledge, it receives a fuller and more perfect expression. In addition, when the Church makes new pronouncements she intends to confirm or clarify what is in some way contained in Sacred Scripture or in previous expressions of Tradition; but at the same time she usually has the intention of solving certain questions or removing certain errors.

All these things have to be taken into account in order that these pronouncements may be properly interpreted. Finally, even though the truths which the Church intends to teach through her dogmatic formulas are distinct from the changeable conceptions of a given epoch and can be expressed without them, nevertheless it can sometimes happen that these truths may be enunciated by the Sacred Magisterium in terms that bear traces of such conceptions.

In view of the above, it must be stated that the dogmatic formulas of the Church's Magisterium were from the beginning suitable for communicating revealed truth, and that as they are they remain forever suitable for communicating this truth to those who interpret them correctly. (37) It does not however follow that every one of these formulas has always been or will always be so to the same extent. For this reason theologians seek to define exactly the intention of teaching proper to the various formulas, and in carrying out this work they are of considerable assistance to the living Magisterium of the Church, to which they remain subordinated.

For this reason also it often happens that ancient dogmatic formulas and others closely connected with them remain living and fruitful in the habitual usage of the Church, but with suitable expository and explanatory additions that maintain and clarify their original meaning. In addition, it has sometimes happened that in this

habitual usage of the Church certain of these formulas gave way to new expressions which, proposed and approved by the Sacred Magisterium, presented more clearly or more completely the same meaning.

As for the meaning of dogmatic formulas, this remains ever true and constant in the Church, even when it is expressed with greater clarity or more developed. The faithful therefore must shun the opinion, first, that dogmatic formulas (or some category of them) cannot signify truth in a determinate way, but can only offer changeable approximations to it, which to a certain extent distort or alter it; secondly, that these formulas signify the truth only in an indeterminate way, this truth being like a goal that is constantly being sought by means of such approximations. Those who hold such an opinion do not avoid dogmatic relativism and they corrupt the concept of the Church's infallibility relative to the truth to be taught or held in a determinate way.

Such an opinion clearly is in disagreement with the declarations of the First Vatican Council, which, while fully aware of the progress of the Church in her knowledge of revealed truth (38), nevertheless taught as follows: "That meaning of sacred dogmas...must always be maintained which Holy Mother Church declared once and for all, nor should one ever depart from that meaning under the guise of or in the name of a more advanced understanding." (39) The Council moreover condemned the opinion that "dogmas once proposed by the Church must, with the progress of science, be given a meaning other than that which was understood by the Church, or which she understands." (40) There is no doubt that, according to these texts of the Council, the meaning of dogmas which is declared by the Church is determinate and unalterable.

Such an opinion is likewise in contrast with Pope John's assertion regarding Christian doctrine at the opening of the Second Vatican Council: "This certain and unchangeable doctrine, to which faithful obedience is due, has to be explored and presented in a way that is demanded by our times. One thing is the deposit of faith, which consists of the truths contained in sacred doctrine; another thing is the manner of presentation, always however with the same meaning and signification." (41)

Since the Successor of Peter is here speaking about certain and unchangeable Christian doctrine, about the deposit of faith which is the same as the truths contained in that doctrine and about the truths which have to be preserved with the same meaning, it is clear that he admits that we can know the true and unchanging meaning of dogmas. What is new and what he recommends in view of the needs of the times pertains only to the modes of studying, expounding and presenting that doctrine while keeping its permanent meaning.

In a similar way the Supreme Pontiff Paul VI exhorted the pastors of the Church in the following words: "Nowadays a serious effort is required of us to ensure that the teaching of the faith should keep the fullness of its meaning and force, while

expressing itself in a form which allows it to reach the spirit and heart of the people to whom it is addressed.”(42)

6.] The Church Associated with the Priesthood of Christ

Christ the Lord, the High Priest of the new and everlasting covenant, wished to associate with His perfect priesthood and to form in its likeness the people He had bought with His own blood (cf. Heb. 7:20-22, 26-28; 10:14, 21). He therefore granted His Church a share in His priesthood, which consists of the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood. These differ from each other not only in degree but also in essence; yet they are mutually complementary within the communion of the Church. (43)

The common priesthood of the laity, which is also rightly called a royal priesthood (cf. 1 Pt. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:9ff.) since through it the faithful are united as members of the messianic people with their heavenly King, is conferred by the sacrament of Baptism. By this sacrament “the faithful are incorporated into the Church and are empowered to take part in the worship of the Christian religion” in virtue of a permanent sign known as a character; “reborn as children of God they are obliged to profess before men the faith which they have received from God through the Church.”(44) Thus those who are reborn in Baptism “join in the offering of the Eucharist by virtue of their royal priesthood. They likewise exercise that priesthood by receiving the sacraments, by prayer and thanksgiving, by the witness of a holy life, and by self-denial and active charity.”(45)

Moreover, Christ, the Head of the Church, which is His Mystical Body, appointed as ministers of His priesthood His Apostles and through them their successors the bishops, that they might act in His person within the Church,(46) and also in turn legitimately hand over to priests in a subordinate degree the sacred ministry which they had received.(47) Thus there arose in the Church the apostolic succession of the ministerial priesthood for the glory of God and for the service of His people and of the entire human family, which must be converted to God.

By means of this priesthood bishops and priests are “indeed set apart in a certain sense in the midst of God’s people. But this is so, not that they may be separated from this people or from any man, but that they may be totally dedicated to the work for which the Lord has raised them up”(48) namely, the work of sanctifying, teaching and ruling, the actual execution of which is more precisely specified by the hierarchical communion.(49) This many-sided work has as its basis and foundation the continuous preaching of the Gospel,(50) and as a summit and source of the entire Christian life the Eucharistic Sacrifice.(51)

Priests, acting in the person of Christ the Head, offer this Sacrifice in the Holy Spirit to God the Father in the name of Christ and in the name of the members of His Mystical Body. (52) This sacrifice is completed in the holy supper by which the faithful, partaking of the one body of Christ, are all made into one body (cf. 1 Cor. 10:16ff.).

The Church has ever more closely examined the nature of the ministerial priesthood, which can be shown to have been invariably conferred from apostolic times by a sacred rite (cf. 1 Tm. 4:15; 2 Tm. 1:6). By the assistance of the Holy Spirit, she recognized more clearly as time went on that God wished her to understand that this rite conferred upon priests not only an increase of grace for carrying out ecclesiastical duties in a holy way, but also a permanent designation by Christ, or character, by virtue of which they are equipped for their work and endowed with the necessary power that is derived from the supreme power of Christ. The permanent existence of this character, the nature of which is explained in different ways by theologians, is taught by the Council of Florence (53) and reaffirmed by two decrees of the Council of Trent. (54)

In recent times the Second Vatican Council, more than once mentioned it (55), and the second General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops rightly considered the enduring nature of the priestly character throughout life as pertaining to the teaching of the faith. (56) This stable existence of a priestly character must be recognized by the faithful and has to be taken into account in order to judge properly about the nature of the priestly ministry and the appropriate ways of exercising it.

Faithful to Sacred Tradition and to many documents of the magisterium, the Second Vatican Council taught the following concerning the belonging to the ministerial priesthood: “Though everyone can baptize the faithful, the priest alone can complete the building up of the Body in the Eucharistic Sacrifice.”(57) And again: “The same Lord, in order that the faithful might form one body in which ‘all the members have not the same function’ (Rom. 12:4), appointed some ministers within the society of believers who by the power of Orders would be capable of offering the Sacrifice and of forgiving sins.”(58)

In the same way the second General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops rightly affirmed that only the priest can act in the person of Christ and preside over and perform the sacrificial banquet in which the People of God are united with the oblation of Christ (59). Passing over at this point questions regarding the ministers of various sacraments, the evidence of Sacred Tradition and of the sacred magisterium make it clear that the faithful who have not received priestly ordination and who take upon themselves the office of performing the Eucharist attempt to do so not only in a completely illicit way but also invalidly. Such an abuse, wherever it may occur, must clearly be eliminated by the pastors of the Church.

Conclusion

It was not the intention of this Declaration, nor was it within its scope, to prove by way of a study of the foundations of our faith that divine revelation was entrusted to the Church so that she might thereafter preserve it unaltered in the world. But this dogma, from which the Catholic Faith takes its beginning, has been recalled, together with other truths related to the mystery of the Church, so that in the uncertainty of the present day the faith and doctrine the faithful must hold might clearly emerge.

The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith rejoices that theologians are by intense study exploring more and more the mystery of the Church. It recognizes also that in their work they touch on many questions which can only be clarified by complementary studies and by various efforts and conjectures. However, the due freedom of theologians must always be limited by the Word of God as it is faithfully preserved and expounded in the Church and taught and explained by the living magisterium of the pastors and especially of the Pastor of the entire People of God (60).

The Sacred Congregation entrusts this Declaration to the diligent attention of the bishops and of all those who in any way share the task of guarding the patrimony of truth which Christ and His Apostles committed to the Church. It also confidently addresses the Declaration to the faithful and particularly, in view of the important office which they hold in the Church, to priests and theologians, so that all may be of one mind in the faith and may be in sincere harmony with the Church.

Pope Paul VI, by divine providence Supreme Pontiff, in the audience granted to the undersigned Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on May 11, 1973, has ratified and confirmed this Declaration in defense of Catholic doctrine on the Church against certain errors of the present day and has ordered its publication.

Given in Rome, at the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, on June 24, 1973, the feast of St. John the Baptist.

Franjo Cardinal Seper Prefect

Abp. Jerome Hamer Secretary

Footnotes

1. Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Quinque iam anni*, AAS 63 (1971), p. 99.
2. Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution, *Regiminis Ecclesiae Universae*, AAS 59 (1967), p. 897.
3. Vatican Council II: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 8; *Constitutiones Decreta Declarationes*, editio Secretariae Generalis, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1966, p. 104ff.
4. Vatican Council II: Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 4; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 250.
5. Ibid., 4; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 252.
6. Vatican Council II: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 8; Const. Decr. Decl., p.106.
7. Ibid., Const. Decr. Decl., p. 105.
8. Vatican Council II: Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 4; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 253.
9. Cf. ibid., 1; Const. Decr. Decl., pp. 255-258.
10. Cf. ibid., 1; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 243.
11. Cf. Paul VI, Encyclical Letter, *Ecclesiam Suam*, AAS 56 (1964), p. 629.
12. Vatican Council II: Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, 7; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 428.
13. Cf. Ibid., 10; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 431.
14. Cf. Ibid., 8; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 430.
15. Vatican Council II: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 12; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 113ff.
16. Ibid., Const. Decr. Decl., p. 114.
17. Cf. Ibid., 35; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 157.
18. Vatican Council II: Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, 8; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 430.
19. Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, *Quinque iam anni*, AAS 63 (1971), p. 99.
20. Cf. Vatican Council II: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 5; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 138ff.

21. Vatican Council II: *Ibid.*, 18; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 124ff. Cf. Vatican Council I: Dogmatic Constitution, *„Pastor aeternus“*, Prologue; *„Conciliorum Ecumenicorum Decreta“* 3, ed. Institute per la Scienze Religiose di Bologna. Herder, 1973, p.8. (DS 3051).
22. Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, *„Quinque iam anni“*, AAS 63 (1971), p. 100.
23. Decree of the Holy Office *„Lamentabili“*, 6, AAS 40 (1907), p.471 (DS 3406). Cf. Vatican Council I: Dogmatic Constitution, *„Pastor aeternus“*, ch. 4 ;Conc. Oec. Dec. (3), p. 815ff. (DS 3069, 3074).
24. Vatican Council I: Dogmatic Constitution, *„Pastor aeternus“*, ch. 4; Conc. Oec. Decr. (3), p. 816 (DS 3070). Cf. Vatican Council II: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *„Lumen Gentium“*, 25, and Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *„Dei Verbum“*, 4; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 141 and 426.
25. Cf. Vatican Council II: Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *„Dei Verbum“*, 11; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 434.
26. Cf. *ibid.*, 9ff.; Const. Decr. Decl., pp. 430-432.
27. Cf. Vatican Council II: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *„Lumen Gentium“*, 25; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 139.
28. Cf. *ibid.*, 25 and 22; Const. Decr. Decl., pp. 139 and 133.
29. Vatican Council I: Dogmatic Constitution *„Pastor aeternus“*, ch. 4; Conc. Oec. Decr. (3), p. 816 (DS 3074). Cf. Vatican Council II: *ibid.*, 25 Conc. Oec. Decr. (3), pp. 131-141.
30. Cf. Vatican Council II: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *„Lumen Gentium“*, 25; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 139
31. Vatican Council I: Dogmatic Constitution, *„Dei Filius“*, ch. 3; Conc. Oec. Decr. (3), p. 807 (DS 3011). Cf. C.I.C., can. 1323, Sect. 1 and can. 1325, Sect. 2.
32. Cf. Council of Trent. Sess. 6: Decree on Justification, ch. 6; Conc. Oec. Decr. (3), p. 807 (DS 3008); cf. also Vatican Council II: Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *„Dei Verbum“*, 5; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 426.
33. Cf. Vatican Council I: Constitution on the Catholic Faith, *„Dei Filius“*, ch. 3; Conc. Oec. Decr. (3), p. 807 (DS 3008); cf. also Vatican Council II: Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *„Dei Verbum“*, 5; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 426.
34. Cf. Vatican Council II: Decree on Ecumenism, *„Unitatis Redintegratio“*, 11; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 260.
35. Reflections and Suggestions Concerning Ecumenical Dialogue, IV 4 b, in the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity: Information Service, n. 12 (December 1970, IV), p. 8.

36. Vatican Council I: Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius*, ch. 4; Conc. Oec. Decr. (3), p. 808 (DS 3016).
37. Cf. Pius IX, Brief “*Eximiam Tuam*,” AAS 8 (1874-75), p. 447 (DS 2831); Paul VI, Encyclical Letter, *Mysterium Fidei*, AAS 57 (1965), p. 757ff. and *L’Orient cristiano nella luce di immortalis Concilii*, in *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, vol. 5, Vatican Polygot Press, p. 412ff.
38. Cf. Vatican Council I: Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius*, ch. 4; Conc. Oec. Decr. (3), p. 809 (DS 3020).
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid., can 3; Conc. Oec. Decr. (3), p. 811 (DS 3043).
41. John XXIII, “Alloc. In Concilii Vaticani inauguratione,” AAS 84 (1962), p. 792. Cf. Vatican Council II: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*, 62; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 780.
42. Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Quinque iam anni*, AAS 63 (1971), p. 100ff.
43. Cf. Vatican Council II: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 10; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 110.
44. Ibid., 11; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 111.
45. Ibid., 10; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 111.
46. Cf. Pius XI, Encyclical Letter, *Ad Catholici sacerdotii*, AAS 28 (1936), p. 10 (DS 3735). Cf. Vatican Council II: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 10, and Decree on the Priestly Life and Ministry, *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 2; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 110 ff., 622ff.
47. Cf. Vatican Council II: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 28; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 625.
48. Vatican Council II: Decree on the Priestly Life and Ministry, *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 3; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 625.
49. Cf. Vatican Council II: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 24, 27ff.; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 137, 143-149.
50. Vatican Council II: Decree on the Priestly Life and Ministry, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 4; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 627.
51. Cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 11; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 111ff. Also Council of Trent, Sess. 22: *Doctrina de Missae Sacrificio*, ch. 1 and 2; Conc. Oec. Decr. (3) pp. 732-734 (DS 1739-1743).
52. Cf. Paul VI, *Sollemnis Professio Fidei*, 24, AAS 60 (1968), p. 442.

53. Council of Florence: *_Bulla unionis Armenorum_*, *Exsultate Deo*, Conc. Oec. Decr., (3) p. 546 (DS 1313).
54. Council of Trent: Decree on the Sacraments, can. 9 and Decree on the Sacrament of Order, ch. 4 and can. 4; Conc. Oec. Decr. (3) p. 685, 742, 744 (DS 1609, 1767, 1774).
55. Cf. Vatican Council II: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *_Lumen Gentium_*, 21 and Decree on the Priestly Life and Ministry, *_Presbyterorum ordinis_*, 2; Const. Decr. Decl., pp. 133, 622ff.
56. Cf. Documents of the Synod of Bishops: I. “The Ministerial Priesthood,” part one, 5, AAS 63 (1971), p. 907.
57. Vatican Council II: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *_Lumen Gentium_*, 17; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 123.
58. Vatican Council II: decree on the Priestly Life and Ministry, *_Presbyterorum ordinis_*, 2; Const. Decr. Decl., p. 621ff. Cf. also: 1) Innocent III, Letter *_Eius exemplo_* with *_Professio fidei Waldensis imposita_*, PL, vol 215, col. 1510 (DS 794); 2) Lateran Council IV: Constitution *_De Fide Catholica_*; Conc. Oec. Decr. (3), p. 230 (DS 802); passage quoted on the Sacrament of the Altar to be read together with the following passage on the sacrament of Baptism; 3) Council of Florence: *_Bulla unionis Armenorum_*, *_Exsultate Deo_*; Conc. Oec. Decr. (3), p. 546 (DS 1321); passage quoted on the Minister of the Eucharist to be compared with nearby passages on the Ministers of the other sacraments; 4) Council of Trent, Sess. 23: Decree on the Sacrament of Order, ch. 4; Conc. Oec. Decr. (3), p. 742ff. (DS 1767, 4469); 5) Pius XII, Encyclical, *_Mediator Dei_*, AAS 39 (1947), pp. 552-556 (DS 3849-3852).
59. Documents of the Synod of Bishops: I. “The Ministerial Priesthood,” part one, 4, AAS 63 (1971), p. 906.
60. Cf. Synod of Bishops (1967), *_Relatio Commissionis Synodalis constitutae ad examen ulterius peragendum circa opiniones periculosas et atheismum_*, II, 4: De theologorum opera et responsabilitate, Vatican Polygot Press, 1967, p. 11 (L’Osservatore Romano, Oct. 30-31, 1967, p. 3).

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2. International Theological Commission, # 6 [June 6, 1976]

[Texts and Documents, pp. 129-143]

THESES ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ECCLESIASTICAL MAGISTERIUM AND THEOLOGY

The Ecclesiastical Magisterium has the mandate to **protect divine revelation** – the task given to theologians is to **investigate and explain the doctrine of Faith**.

Two tasks: hearing the Word of God and proclaiming it by **word and life**. A special witness is expected of those equipped by official ministry, or by scientific qualifications.

It might be said that the theologians' primary task is the hearing of the Word of God, in a qualified scientific way - the primary task of the Magisterium is more than proclaiming the Word of God, it has heard with the help of theological experts.

THESIS I: Definition of Terms:

Ecclesiastical Magisterium: the **task of teaching** by Christ's institution is proper to the College of Bishops or to individual bishops linked in hierarchical communion with the Supreme Pontiff.

Theologians: those members of the Church who by their studies and life in the community of ecclesial faith are qualified to pursue, in the scientific manner proper to theology, a deeper understanding of the word of God and also to teach that Word by canonical mission.

Both have a teaching office in different ways – in earlier times the office of bishop and the exercise of theology were in one and the same person – presently it is more by way of **cooperation**.

Part I considers what is common between the two.

Part II concerns what is specific to each.

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Part One: Elements in Common

THESIS 2: in analogous and distinct ways, both Magisterium and theology are to preserve, examine more deeply, explain, teach and defend the Deposit of Revelation for the salvation of God's People. Each must safeguard the certainty of faith by a deeper understanding and scientific defense of the Faith, by proclaiming it, and defending it.

THESIS 3: there are certain obligations:

1. Both are bound by the **Word of God** – Magisterium is not above it [DV 10] – and theology relies on the written word along with Tradition.
2. Both are bound by the 'sensus fidei', the supernatural appreciation of the faith. The word of God lives through the ages – and the whole People of God cannot err in it [LG 12]
3. Both are bound by the **documents of Tradition**.
4. Both are bound by pastoral and missionary concern for the world.

The authority of each differs – but, one that is not absolute but exercised as a **service of 'the obedience of faith'**. Both draw on 'the common sense of the faithful', the common patrimony of the Church. Neither side is undertaken for merely academic reasons – the goal is always pastoral and missionary. On the 'negative' side, care must be taken not to damage the faith of believers. Yet, 'positively' it must be made known as their work affects the life of the ecclesiastical and human community.

THESIS 4: Common, and yet different in both, is the manner both collegial and personal in which their task is carried out. Infallibility is promised to the whole body of the faithful, to the College of Bishops in communion with the Successor of Peter, and to the Pope himself – and hence, needs to be exercised corresponsibly, cooperatively and collegially.

This communion and collegiality needs to be exercised by fostering community – both sides need to pay attention to the other, and theologians need to heed their own colleagues.

Part Two: Specific Elements to Both Magisterium and Theology

THESIS 5: There are functions proper to each:

1. It is the Magisterium's task to **defend** Catholic integrity and unity of faith and morals – this includes task of authoritative interpretation – censuring of opinions endangering the faith and morals - proposing of truths of particular contemporary

relevance. It must consider individual truths in the light of the whole, integrating what is particular into the whole.

2. The function of theology is to **mediate** between the Magisterium and the People of God - it is a midway point between the Faith of the Church and the Magisterium. Theologians lend their help to **the spreading, clarifying, confirming and defending the truth** that the Magisterium authoritatively expounds.

In the ideal, there is cooperation in the service of God's Word – theology is called to be of assistance in communicating the thought behind the proclamations of the Magisterium. The Magisterium surely needs the serious cooperation of theologians who need to be aware of this ministry.

THESIS 6: They differ in the quality of their authority:

1. The Magisterium **derives its authority from sacramental ordination** which confers the task of **sanctifying, teaching** and **ruling** [LG 21]. This 'formal authority' is at once **charismatic** and **juridical**, founding the **right** and **duty** of the Magisterium, sharing in the authority of Christ. Both the personal authority, and that inherent in the matter being proposed, needs to be brought to bear.

2. Theologians authority derives from **their scientific qualifications** – and all needs to be carried out as a living experience and practice of Faith. This is truly "ecclesial", not profane and not merely scientific, but one derived from the Word of God, confirmed by **canonical mission**.

The Magisterium would have no meaning outside the Church – it is exercised in the manner of a judge who discerns the truth or falsehood of proposed opinions. Faith ['quae'] can only be investigated by those who live in the Church with a living subjective faith ['qua'].

THESIS 7: Both work in and for the Church, with differences in their ecclesial reference:

1. The Magisterium is an official task conferred **through the sacrament of Orders** – and institutional element of the Church, and its authority has as its purpose the building up of the flock in truth and holiness.

2. Theologians do have a "canonical mission", but **need to be in living communion with the Faith of the Church**. All the **baptized** can be theologians provided they have competence – a force derived from the Holy Spirit, communicated by the sacraments, the preaching of the Word of God and a communion of love.

Theology is not a personal research project, but remains **linked to the Church**, and is carried out in the context of the Church's faith.

THESIS 8: there is a difference in freedom and critical function:

1. The freedom of the Magisterium is **an enormous responsibility** – respect for the Magisterium must always be a part of Catholic theology. Contemporary democratic sentiments often oppose ‘power blocs’.
2. The scientific responsibility of theologians is **not unlimited freedom – personal and social responsibility** needs to be observed in its exercise. The critical function of theology needs to remain positive: they share the task of interpreting the documents of the past and present Magisterium, putting them in the context of the whole of revealed truth, finding a better understanding of them.

Scientific freedom of theologians can never be incompatible with Ecclesiastical authority. The Magisterium also enjoys a God-given freedom. Freedom of either is never ‘license’ – it is difficult to preserve both ‘freedoms’ – there can be a constant struggle within the Church.

THESIS 9: There will be inevitable tension never to be fully resolved on this earth – it is an aspect of life. It should not degenerate into hostility, opposition – but needs to be a vital force.

This provides a transition to the third part where there is constant effort for harmony – dialogue is a central means.

Part III: The Relationship between the Magisterium and Theologians

THESIS 10: the basis for the possibility of dialogue is that both start from the same source, is their shared community in the Faith of the Church, and service of up building. Habitual association is part of their vocations – strengthened and enlivened by its practice of mutual assistance.

Their basic “solidarity” is their **common Faith**. Dialogue arises out of their common basis – and their proper functions are not confused. There can be no exclusive claim for theology to competence in matters of faith and morals.

THESIS 11: the whole vast field of truth is unlimited by faith – this always must be sought as faith is unknown. Dialogue and truth can be endangered. Pressure may not be exerted for political ends. On the one hand, this happens when the instruments are coercion, threat and sanction – or, on the other, when public fora are employed, such as mass media.

If faith is preserved, there are no limits to dialogue – but dialogue ends where the truth of faith is harmed. Today, very often, areas of conflict draw publicity. Care needs to protect the atmosphere of dialogue.

THESIS 12: Prior to official examination of one’s writings, ordinary possibilities should include correspondence. Then, if not successful, there is a whole stock of responses: warning, sanctions. “Heresy” technically is only present where there is “proven obstinacy.”

The importance and manner of dialogue remain important – the C.D.F. has published two methods of acting in the examination of doctrines [1974; 1997].

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3. C.D.F., *Donum Veritatis*, May 24, 1990 [Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian]

The Document [a booklet of 42 small pages in English] presents a very simple format:

Introduction [# 1]

1. The Truth, Gift of God to His People [## 2-5]
2. The Vocation of the Theologian [## 6-12]
3. The Magisterium of the Church’s Pastors [## 13-20]
4. Magisterium and Theology [## 21-41]
 - a. Collaborative Relations [## 21-31]
 - b. The Problem of Dissent [## 31-41]

Conclusion [# 41].

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[I] The Text Itself

1. For the People of God:

“... Never forgetting that he is also a member of the People of God, the theologian must foster respect for them and be committed to offering them a teaching which in no way does harm to the doctrine of the faith. The freedom proper to theological research is exercised **within the Church’s faith**. Thus while the theologian might often feel the urge to be daring in his work, this will not bear fruit or ‘edify’ unless it is accompanied by that patience which permits maturation to occur...” [# 11]

“... By virtue of the divine mandate given to it in the Church, the Magisterium has the mission **to set forth the Gospel’s teaching, guard its integrity, and thereby protect the faith of the People of God**. In order to fulfill this duty, it can at times be led to take serious measures as, for example, when it withdraws from a theologian, who departs from the doctrine of the faith, the canonical mission or the teaching mandate

it had given him, or declares that some writings do not conform to this doctrine. When it acts in such ways, the Magisterium seeks to be faithful to its mission of **defending the right of the People of God to receive the message of the Church in its purity and integrity**, and is not to be disturbed by a particular dangerous opinion...” [# 37]

2. A Quest for the Truth

“... Revelation in fact penetrates human reason, elevates it, and calls it to give an account of itself [cf. 1 P 3:15]. For this reason, from the very beginning of the Church, the ‘standard of teaching’ [cf. Rm 6:17] has been linked with baptism to entrance into the mystery of Christ. The **service of doctrine**, implying as it does **the believer’s search for an understanding of the faith**, i.e., theology, is therefore something **indispensable for the Church**...” [# 1].

“... Among the vocations awakened in this way by the Spirit in the Church is that of the theologian. His role is to pursue in a particular way an ever deeper understanding of the Word of God found in the inspired Scriptures **and** handed on by the living Tradition of the Church. He does this in communion with the Magisterium which has been charged with the responsibility of **preserving the deposit of faith**... Theological science responds to the invitation of truth as it **seeks** to understand the faith. It thereby aids the People of God in fulfilling the Apostle’s command [cf. 1 P 3:15] to give an accounting for their open to those who ask it...” [# 6].

“... The theologian’s work thus responds to a dynamism found in the faith itself. Truth, by its nature, seeks to be communicated since man was created for the perception of truth and from the depths of his being desires knowledge of it so that he can discover himself in the truth and find there his salvation [cf. 1 Tm 2:4]. For this reason, the Lord sent forth His apostles to make ‘disciples’ of all nations and teach them [cf. Mt 28:19, ff.]. Theology, which **seeks** the ‘reasons of faith’ and offers these reasons as a response to those seeking them, thus constitutes an integral part of obedience to the command of Christ, for man cannot become disciples if the truth found in the word of faith is not presented to them [cf. Rm 10:14, ff.].

“Theology, therefore, offers its contribution so that the faith might be communicated. Appealing to the understanding of those who do not yet know Christ, it helps them to seek and find faith. Obedient to **the impulse of truth which seeks to be communicated**, theology also **arises from love and love’s dynamism**. In the act of faith, man knows God’s goodness and begins to love Him. Love, however, is **ever desirous of better knowledge of the beloved** [St. Bonaventure]. From this double origin of theology, inscribed on the interior life of the People of God and its missionary vocation, derives the method with which it ought to be pursued in order to satisfy the requirements of its nature...” [# 7].

“... The Church, which has for her origin in the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is a mystery of communion. In accordance with the will of her founder, she is organized around a hierarchy established for the service of the Gospel and the People of God who live by it. After the pattern of the members of the first community, all the baptized with their own proper charisms are to strive with sincere hearts for a harmonious unity in doctrine, life and worship [cf. Ac 2:42]. This is a rule which flows from the very being of the Church...” [# 39]

“... The Church is like a sacrament, a sign and instrument, i.e., of communion with God and unity among men [LG 1]. Consequently, to **pursue** concord and communion is to enhance the force of her witness and credibility. To succumb to the temptation of dissent, on the other hand, is to allow the leaven of infidelity to the Holy Spirit to start to work.

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3. “Sensus Fidei”

“...Dissent sometimes also appeals to a kind of sociological argumentation which holds that the opinion of a large number of Christians would be a direct and adequate expression of the ‘supernatural sense of the faith.’

“Actually, the opinions of the faithful cannot be purely and simply identified with the ‘sensus fidei’. The sense of the faith is **a property of theological faith**; and as **God’s gift** which enables one to adhere personally to the Truth, it cannot err. This personal faith is also the faith of the Church since God has given guardianship of the Word to the Church. Consequently, what the believer believes is what the Church believes the ‘sensus fidei’ implies then by its nature, a profound agreement of spirit and heart with the Church, **‘sentire cum Ecclesia’**

“Although theological faith as such, then, cannot err, the believer can still have erroneous opinions since all his thoughts do not spring from faith. Not all the ideas which circulate among the People of God are compatible with the faith. This is all the more so, given that people can be swayed by public opinion, influenced by modern communication media. Not without reason did the Second Vatican Council emphasize **the indissoluble bond between the ‘sensus fidei’ and the guidance of God’s People by the Magisterium of the Pastors**. These two realities cannot be separated [LG 12]. Magisterial interventions seek to **guarantee the Church’s unity in the truth of the Lord**. They aid her to ‘abide in truth’ in face of the arbitrary character of changeable opinions and are an expression of obedience to the Word of God. [DV 10]. Even when it might seem that they limit the freedom of theologians, these actions, by their fidelity to the faith which has been handed on, establish a deeper freedom which can only come from unity in truth...” [# 35].

4. Prayer and Sacrifice

“...The People of God respond to this calling [of **bearing witness to the truth of Christ which sets us free**], ‘above all by means of the life of faith and charity, and by **offering to God ‘a sacrifice of praise’**. More specifically, as far as the life of faith is concerned, the Second Vatican Council makes it clear that ‘the whole body of the faithful who have an anointing which comes from the holy one [cf. I Jn 2:20, 27] cannot err in matters of belief.’ And ‘this characteristic is shown in the supernatural sense of the faith of the whole people, when ‘from the bishops to the last of the faithful’, they manifest **a universal consent in matters of faith and morals.**’ [LG 12] [# 4].

“... In order to exercise the prophetic function in the world, the People of God must continually reawaken or ‘rekindle’ its own life of faith [cf. 2 Tm 1:6]. It does this particularly by contemplating ever more deeply, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the contents of the faith itself and by dutifully presenting the reasonableness of the faith to those who ask for an account of it [cf. I P 3:15]. For the sake of this mission, the **Spirit of truth** distributes among the faithful of every rank **special graces ‘for the common good.’** [I Co 12:7-11] [# 5].

“... Since **the object of theology is the Truth which is the living God and His plan for salvation revealed in Jesus Christ**, the theologian is called to deepen his own life of faith and continuously unite his scientific research with prayer. In this way, he will become **more open** to the ‘supernatural sense of faith’ upon which he depends, and it will appear to him as a sure rule for guiding his reflections and helping him assess the correctness of his conclusions.” [# 8]

“Through the course of the centuries, theology has progressively developed into a true and proper science. The theologian must therefore be attentive to the epistemological requirements of his discipline, to the demands of rigorous critical standards, and thus to a rational verification of each stage of his research. The obligation to be critical, however, should not be identified with the critical spirit which is born of feeling or prejudice. The theologian must discern in himself the origin of and motivation for his critical attitude and allow his gaze to be purified by faith. This commitment to theology requires a spiritual effort to grow in virtue and holiness...” [# 9]

[II] A Few Comments

1. **Service to the Church**: Service to doctrine always implies the believing research into the understanding of the faith, a need that the Church can never surrender. Theology responds to a dynamism that is within faith itself, as this tends toward intelligence and there is thus satisfied the yearning for truth inscribed in the human spirit. Theology pertains to the evangelizing mission of the Church. The People of God

require the utmost respect in this enterprise. Boldness of research requires patience of maturation. [Georges COTTIER, OP].

2. The Truth is Jesus Christ, Who sets us free [cf. Jn 8:32]: “truth” means that revelation of the salvific plan of God. – synonyms would be: mystery, what is hidden, unveil, reveal. This truth is not to be sold – it is wisdom, discipline and intelligence [Pr 23:23]. There is a Christological concentration of truth centered on His Person, His Mission. [I. DelaPOTTERIE, SJ.]

3. Central Characteristics: Christ did not draw His origins from Himself – the truth is not “His.” The Father generated Him, not out of necessity – but freely, to share Him with us. The Holy Spirit comes to remind us of His Truth. The fullness of Revelation pours forth from the open side of Jesus Christ [cf. Jn 14:17; 19:34. [Raul TREMBLAY, CssR].

4. Theology as Dialogue: with God, with the Magisterium, with the People of God: the truth is Divine – faith is obedience for all, who are the service of God’s word. The vocation of the Magisterium is rooted in Holy Orders – that of the theologian is rooted in Baptism, Confirmation. All are joined in and through the Eucharist, the Bread of Wisdom. There are no others more called to dialogue than the Magisterium and the theologian: first of all with God – the signs of the times – with one another. Theology cannot be closed in as archeology, philology, or any ideology. Its full realization will require fidelity to God’s Word – written and in the living Tradition of the Church. [M. OUELLET].

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4. “Ad Tuendam Fidem”
[John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, May 18, 1998]

A Doctrinal Note illustrating the Concluding Formula of the *Professio Fidei*

[A Few Reflections]

Introduction:the matter of the relationship between the Magisterium of the Church and her theologians needs to be seen in the light of Vatican II – particularly, the two Dogmatic Constitutions – and a brief bibliography that flows from these Conciliar statements:

[1] Lumen Gentium:

[a] **# 12 a**

... The holy People of God shares also in Christ’s prophetic office: it spreads abroad a living witness to him, especially by a life of faith and love and **by offering to God a sacrifice of praise**, the fruit of lips praising his name [cf. Heb

13:15]. **The whole body of the faithful** who have an anointing that comes from the holy one [cf. I Jn 2:20 & 27] **cannot err in matters of belief**. This characteristic is shown in the supernatural appreciation of the faith [*sensus fidei*] of the whole people, when "from the bishops to the last of the faithful", they manifest a **universal consent** in matters of faith and morals. By this appreciation of the faith, aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, the People of God, guided by the sacred teaching authority [*magisterium*] and obeying it, receives not the mere word of man, but truly the word of God [cf. I Th 2:13], the faith once for all delivered to the saints [Jude 3]. The People unfailingly **adheres** to this faith, **penetrates** it more deeply with right judgment, and **applies** it more fully in daily life...

[b] **# 25 a- d [*in toto*]:**

... Among the more important duties of bishops that of **preaching** the Gospel has pride of place. For the bishops are **heralds** of the faith, who draw new disciples to Christ; they are authentic teachers, i.e., teachers endowed with the authority of Christ, who preach the faith to the people assigned to them, the faith which is destined to **inform** their thinking and **direct** their conduct; and under the light of the Holy Spirit they make that faith shine forth, drawing from the storehouse of revelation new things and old [cf. Mt 13:52]; they make it bear fruit and with watchfulness they **ward off** whatever errors threaten their flock [cf. 2 Tm 4:14]. **Bishops who teach in communion with the Roman Pontiff** are to be revered by all as witnesses of divine and Catholic truth; the faithful, for their part, are obliged to submit to their bishops' decision, made in the name of Christ, in matters of faith and morals, and to **adhere to it with a ready and respectful allegiance of mind**. This **loyal submission of the will and intellect** must be given, in a special way, to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff, even when he does not speak *ex cathedra* in such wise, indeed, that his supreme teaching authority be acknowledged with respect, and that one sincerely adhere to decisions made by him, **conformably with his manifest mind and intention**, which is made known principally either by the character of the documents in question, or by the frequency with which a certain doctrine is proposed, or by the manner in which the doctrine is formulated.

Although the bishops, taken individually, do not enjoy the privilege of infallibility, they, do, however, **proclaim** infallibly the doctrine of Christ on the following conditions:

- when, even though dispersed throughout the world, but preserving for all that amongst themselves and **with Peter's successor the bond of communion**, in their authoritative **teaching** concerning matters of faith and morals, they are in agreement that a particular teaching is to be held definitively and absolutely.

- this is still more clearly the case when, **assembled in an ecumenical council**, they are, for the universal Church, teachers of and judges in matters of faith and morals, whose decisions must be adhered to with the loyal and obedient assent of faith.

This infallibility, however, with which the divine Redeemer wished to endow his Church in defining doctrine pertaining to faith and morals, is **co-extensive with the deposit of revelation**, which must be **religiously guarded and loyally and courageously expanded**. **The Roman Pontiff, head of the College of Bishops, enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office**, as Supreme Pastor and Teacher of all the Faithful – who **confirms his brethren in the faith [cf. Lk 22:32]** – he proclaims in an absolute decision a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals. For that reason his definitions are not to be reformed by their very nature and **not by reason of the assent of the Church**, in as much as they were made with the assurance of the Holy Spirit promised to him in the person of blessed Peter himself; and as a consequence **they are in no way in need of the approval of others, and do not admit of appeal to any other tribunal**. For in such a case, the Roman Pontiff does not utter a pronouncement as a private person, but rather does he expound and defend the teaching of the Catholic faith **as the supreme teacher** of the universal Church, **in whom the Church's charism of infallibility is present in a singular way**. The infallibility promised to the Church is also present in the body of bishops when, **together with Peter's successor**, they exercise the supreme teaching office. Now, the assent of the Church can never be lacking to such definitions on account of the same Holy Spirit's influence, through which Christ's whole flock is maintained in the unity of the faith and makes progress in it.

Furthermore, when the Roman Pontiff, or the body of Bishops together with him, define a doctrine, they make the definition **in conformity with revelation itself**, to which all are bound to adhere and to which they are obliged to submit and this revelation is transmitted integrally **either in written form or in oral tradition** through the legitimate succession of bishops and above all through the watchful concern of the Roman Pontiff himself; and through the light of the Spirit of truth it is scrupulously preserved in the Church and unerringly explained. The Roman Pontiff and the Bishops, by reason of their office and the seriousness of the matter, apply themselves **with zeal to the work of inquiring by every suitable means** into this revelation and of **giving apt expression to its contents**; **they do not, however, admit any new public revelation as pertaining to the deposit of faith...**

[2] Dei Verbum

[a] # 5:

The ‘**obedience of faith**’ [Rm 16:26; cf. Rm 1:5; 2 Co 10:5-6] must be given to God as he reveals himself. By faith man **freely commits his entire self to God, making ‘the full submission of his intellect and will to God who reveals’, and willingly assenting to the Revelation given by him.** Before this faith can be exercised, many must have **the grace of God** to move and assist him; he must have **the interior helps of the Holy Spirit** who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind and ‘makes it easy for all to accept and believe the truth’. The same Holy Spirit **constantly perfects the faith** by his gifts so that Revelation may be more and more profoundly understood...

[b] # 8 b:

... The Tradition that comes from the apostles makes **progress** in the Church, with the help of the Holy Spirit. There is **a growth in insight** into the realities and words that are being passed on. This comes about in various ways. It comes through the **contemplation** and **study** of believers who ponder these things in their hearts [cf. Lk 2:19 & 51]. It comes from the intimate sense of spiritual realities which they **experience**. And it comes from the preaching of those who have received, along with their right of succession in the episcopate, **the sure charism of truth**. Thus, as the centuries go by, the Church is always advancing towards the plenitude of divine truth, until eventually the words of God are fulfilled in her...

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The Ample Documentation of the Magisterium

since Vatican II: In General¹⁵²

1. THE FUNCTION OF THE MAGISTERIUM IN GENERAL

a. The Magisterium **teaches authentically** the revealed truths. It also has the function of **keeping distant** those errors which threaten the faith. **The Magisterium guides the “sense of the faith” of the Christian People.** The formal definitions of the Magisterium are in accord with divine revelation, but they do not imply a new public revelation.

b. The Magisterium is assisted by the Holy Spirit. Biblical exegesis develops under the vigilance of the Magisterium and supplies precise data for its guidance. The

¹⁵² cf. Index of EV, S 2, pp. 862-868

theological realities upon which human life depends cannot be understood without referring to the ecclesiastical Magisterium. The object of the Magisterium are the problems of our time considered in the light of the Word of Christ.

c. The freedom of the Magisterium of the Church is capable of determining the authenticity of doctrine and the Catholic tradition. There is needed a spirit of love and reverence for the Magisterium of the Church. The Council asked for a loyal deference, both internal and external, for the Magisterium of the Church. The Magisterium is a sign of the love of Christ for His Church. The Church conserves, transmits and interprets the positive law revealed and the natural principles, affirming the absolute and unchangeable value of some of these. Theology is also bound to the Magisterium.

d. The Church is not subject to statistics, but seeks always the truth. In a mentality that is against life, the Church stands for life. The Word of God is entrusted to the Church. Catechesis expresses the faith of the Church. The “sense of the faith” is developed in the entire Church. The Magisterium of the Church is not the teaching of doctors, nor an authoritarian power, but needs always to be bound to the Word of God. The Magisterium is an authority in the Church but one that is at the service of the Word of God.

e. The Magisterium **guards** and **authentically interprets** the deposit of the Faith. The Magisterium is assisted by the discernment of the signs of the times. There is a union between the Magisterium and the tradition of the Church. The Magisterium fixes and determines the permanent needs of the Church. The Magisterium of the Church is that task of teaching as in the College of Bishops, and of the single bishops in union with the Supreme Pontiff. The Magisterium of the Church is necessary for her catechesis.

2. THE EXERCISE OF THE MAGISTERIUM

a. The hierarchy teaches in the name and with the authority of Jesus Christ. While the teaching of the Roman Pontiff is not always infallible, it is always authentic, and extends over the entire revealed deposit of faith. The Episcopal order succeeds the apostolic college in the Magisterium. The entire priestly body has the mandate of Jesus Christ to announce the Gospel. The office of teaching is conferred with priestly ordination.

b. The definitive teaching of the authoritative Church body is infallible. The authentic Magisterium is exercised both singly as well as collegially. In the exercise of the Magisterium, the pastoral aspect must be evident. Believers are challenged to accept the Magisterium of the Pope out of obedience. The Magisterium is one of the fonts of conscience that may not be considered as of one’s free choice.

Our separated brethren think differently than we do concerning the place of the Magisterium in their lives. One may not use the texts of the Magisterium to support some social model or other.

3. THE MAGISTERIUM AND THEOLOGAINS

a. There is a mutual relationship between the Magisterium of the Church and theology. Among the duties and challenge of theologians is to act in union with the Magisterium of the Church. There has to be a bond between the ecclesiastical faculties with the Magisterium of the Church.

b. The teachers of the materials concerning faith and moral are to be in communion with the Magisterium. All the freedom in research enjoyed by theologians is within the ambit of the revealed Word of God at the service of which the Magisterium teaches.

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5. Doctrinal Note of Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith [June 29, 1998]

The Doctrinal Note explains a bit more in detail the three “Propositions” of truths of concern here:

[1] Divinely Revealed: believe everything in the Word of God, either written or handed down in Tradition. These are the divinely and formally revealed truths – these doctrines require **assent of theological faith**. Refusal to do so could lead to the censure of **Heresy**. The assent here is based directly on the Faith. [cf. **Canon 750, ¶ 1**].

Examples would be: the Creed; Christology; Mariology; Sacraments; Eucharistic Presence; Sacrifice of the Mass; Church; Roman Pontiff; Original Sin; Immortality; Murder.

[2] To be held definitively: these are truths that are also infallibly taught, and must be accepted and held as definitively proposed by the Church. This would include all that is necessary for keeping, expounding the Deposit of Faith. Such truths can be defined and they are to be **definitive tenenda [definitively to be held in faith]**. Rejection would mean one is no longer in communion with the Catholic Church. These are truths necessarily connected historically, logically with the Deposit of Faith. There can be **no difference in the full and irrevocable character of the assent required of the Faithful**. The assent here is **based on the Faith in the Holy Spirit’s Assistance to the Magisterium**.

Examples: Papal Infallibility; Primacy; His Election; Reservation of Valid Subject for Sacrament of Holy Orders; Illicitness of Euthanasia [not in Scripture, but natural law]; Illicitness of Prostitution, Fornication; Canonization of Saints; Invalidity of Anglican Orders.

[3] Religious Submission of Will and Intellect: all those teachings presented as true, or sure – even if not defined. These are authentic teachings of the Ordinary Magisterium. They are set for three reasons:

- to arrive at a deeper understanding of the Deposit of Faith;
- to recall conformity with the teachings of faith;

- to warn against ideas incompatible with Deposit of Faith.

Rejection: would qualify one's opinions as **Erroneous, Rash, Dangerous**.

Examples: the requirement of degrees of adherence differentiated:

- according to the mind and will manifested;
- the nature of the documents;
- the frequent repetition of the same doctrine;
- the tenor of the verbal expression.

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CONCLUSIONS

[1] The specific role of the Magisterium is described by two sets of verbs:

A. **DEFEND** ["Negative"?]

bind censure
conserve judge
keep maintain
preserve protect
reject retain
ward off
watch over

B. **DEFINE** ["Positive"]

apply authenticate
clarify decide
direct expand
explain expound guard
guide herald
inform interpret
penetrate preach proclaim
serve

[2] There is an interesting "Curial Style" in the order between Intellect and Will – Will and Intellect – which comes first:

A. **INTELLECT AND WILL**

DV 5; Canon 752

B. **WILL AND INTELLECT**

LG 25; Donum Veritatis 23; C.D.F. # 10

The quote in DV 5¹⁵³ is based on Vatican I [D-S 1789 [3008] which places the "intellect" first. This may be due to St. Thomas Aquinas, who taught that the subject of faith is the intellect – as nothing can be loved unless first known. As the Theological Commission for LG 25 discussed the matter, what had been this original order: "the religious assent of the intellect and will" found this order reversed to "will and

¹⁵³ cf. Rev. Bernardito Cleopas AUZA, *The Non-Infallible Magisterium and Theological Dissent*. Angelicum Doctoral Thesis 1990, pp. 608, ff.

intellect” - In mid-July 1963, the work of revision was complete. The comments made by the central commission were communicated to the doctrinal commission. The theological commission made its response to the observations, and this was drawn by Fr. Sebastian Tromp, SJ. The re-written text was presented as based on the comments [cf. U. Betti, *L’ossequio al magistero pontificio non ‘ex cathedra’*, pp. 431m f,]. The emended text read:

*“... A religious assent [**obsequium**] of the **will and intellect** is to be supplied to the authentic Magisterium of the Roman Pontiff, also when he does not speak ex cathedra, by which namely his supreme magisterium is acknowledged with reverence, and the decision made by him is sincerely adhered to, and this according to his **mind and will**, which is revealed either from the character of the documents, from his frequent repetition of the same doctrine, or from his manner of speaking...”*

There are significant changes made between the provisory text discussed by the central commission and the text as noted above. The first is the inversion of the order of the two faculties involved in the due assent. The priority of the “will” over the “intellect” was given to indicate that the assent is dictated by motivations of faith rather than commanded by the personal understanding of the doctrine taught. [cf. U. Betti, p. 432.]. It was now made clear that the motive of such an assent is not really the convincing power of the arguments forwarded but rather the recognition that this magisterium teaches in the name of Christ.

There are some differences of translation in the Abbot edition as compared with the Flannery rendition:

ABBOT: [LG 25 b]: “...This religious submission of **will and of mind** must be shown in a special way to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff even when he is not speaking ex cathedra. That is, it must be shown in such a way that his supreme magisterium is acknowledged with reverence, the judgments made by him are sincerely adhered to, according to his manifest **mind and will**. His **mind and will** in the matter may be known chiefly either from the character of the documents, from his frequent repetition of the same doctrine, or from his manner of speaking.”

FLANNERY [LG 25 b]: “...This loyal submission of the **will and intellect** must be given, in a special way, to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff, even when he does not speak ex cathedra in such wise indeed that his supreme teaching authority be acknowledged with respect, and that one sincerely adhere to decisions made by him, conformably with his manifest **mind and intention**, which is made known principally either by the character of the documents in question, or by the frequency with which a certain doctrine is proposed, or by the manner in which the doctrine is formulated.”

[3] A major word in this discussion is the Latin **obsequium** - found in the Latin Vulgate for Rm 12:1, ff.: Think of God's mercy, my brothers, and worship him, I beg you, in a way that is worthy of thinking beings, by **offering your living bodies [lives] as a holy sacrifice**, truly pleasing to God...."

a. Just looking at the various translations of this term would indicate the wide divergence of interpretation: some Romance languages leave it as **ossequio**, which does not help the English translation. Both Abbot and Flannery editions have translated this as either "religious," or "loyal" submission – which is the French rendition.

b. English speaking theologians express wide views

- Orsy, SJ, maintained that the Council chose this word specifically to leave the matter vague – awaiting later clarification;
- C. Butler stated it means only 'due respect';
- F. Sullivan, SJ interprets it much more strongly, as "to follow, to yield to, to comply, to obey".
- Msgr. Colombo translates it as "to obey, to submit. To assent." [cf. AUZA, *The Non-Infallible Magisterium and Theological Dissent*. Pp. 92-106].

c. Some light [or maybe just more smoke!] might be cast on the issue by pondering the way St. Thomas Aquinas uses the expression **obsequium** – [humbly noted (?!?!?): J. Henchey, *La Formula 'In Obsequium' nel linguaggio di S. Tommaso*. In: ANGELICUM LXIX (1992) pp. 453-470] – the term is used to describe Christ's relationship to His Father: the Blood of Christ is offered for the spiritual **obsequium** offered to God [cf. *In Heb.*, c. 9, l. 3]. In the *Summa*, St. Thomas notes that the Passion of Christ is the cause of our reconciliation in two ways: first, it distances sin by which humanity has become the enemy of God; and secondly, Christ's Passion becomes the most highly acceptable **obsequium** to the Father. [cf. III, q. 49, a. 4, c]. The believer imitates Christ most intimately by living the "obedience" of faith [cf. DV 5], and by this suggestion: "the People of God respond to this calling 'above all by means of the life of faith and charity, and by offering to God a **sacrifice of praise**.' [cf. *Donum Veritatis*, n. 4]. This might offer some insight for the ultimate motive for the assent of will and intellect – and the **oblation** of intellect and will to God and to the Magisterium.

[4] The three propositions of the recent documents of the Holy See might be of some help here:

- 1st Proposition: those doctrines contained in the Word of God, written or handed down, and defined with a solemn judgment as divinely revealed truths – all

these doctrines require **the assent of theological faith** by all the members of the faithful [cf. Commentary, # 5]. A contrary view is “heretical” [cf. **Can. 750, ¶ 1; 1371, ¶ 1**].

- 2nd Proposition: those teachings belonging to the dogmatic or moral areas, which are necessary for faithfully keeping and expounding the deposit of faith even if they have not been proposed by the Magisterium of the Church as formally revealed. Every believer is required to give **firm and definitive assent to these truths, based on the faith in the Holy Spirit’s assistance** to the Church’s Magisterium [cf. Commentary # 6]. A contrary view is no longer in full communion with the Catholic Church [cf. **Can. 750, ¶ 2 (the “recent addition to the Code”)**].

- 3rd Proposition: all those teachings on faith and morals presented as true, or at least as sure, even if they have not been defined with a solemn judgment proposed as definitive by the ordinary and universal magisterium. Such teachings are an authentic expression of the ordinary Magisterium of the Roman Pontiff, or of the College of Bishops and therefore require **a religious submission of will and intellect** [cf. Commentary # 10]. [cf. **Can. 1371, ¶ 2**].

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[2] Brief Bibliography of Recent Documents

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- **Dichiarazione sulla «Chiesa ovingne» nella Repubblica Ceca**, February 11, 2000
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- **Regulations for doctrinal examination – *Ratio Agendi*** (*Agendi ratio in doctrinarum esame*), May 30, 1997
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- **Notificazione con la quale si dichiarano di nuovo le pene canoniche incorse dall'Arcivescovo Pierre-Martin Ngô-diñh-Thuc e complici per le ordinazioni illecite di presbiteri e vescovi** (*Notificatio qua poenae canonicae Episcopis qui illicite alios episcopos ordinaverunt illisque hoc modo illegitimo denuo comminantur*), March 12, 1983
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**PART IV – REFLECTIONS ON ST. GASPAR BERTONI’S CORPORATE, ‘DOMESTIC’,
COMMUNITY OBEDIENCE [CF ## 138-151]**

**FOURTH SECTION:
ON THE MANNER OF OBEDIENCE**

[cc. 1-2, ## 138-151]

[Corporate & Missionary Obedience]

Premise:

[1] It should be kept in mind, that the **Constitutions** of St. Ignatius contain two vows of Obedience, noted in the **Formula**:

- **Chapter 1** of the **Formula** [i.e., **n. 1**] treats of the aim of the Society;
- **Chapter 2** speaks of the special Vow of Obedience to the Pope [cf. **Formula n. 3**] – this might be considered **Christological; Apostolic; Missionary**;
- **Chapter 3** [i.e., **Formula n. 6**] speaks of the vow of obedience to the Superiors of the Society – this might be called **Community; Corporate; Collegial**.

[2] In the initial approval of the Society, officials at the Holy See first thought it pointless to have a special vow to obey the Pope, as this is the obligation of every Christian. Thus, in response, the “Companions” offered a special justification for this unique vow: *...The Gospel does indeed teach us, and we know from orthodox faith and firmly hold, that all of Christ’s faithful are subject to the Roman Pontiff as their head...Yet, for the sake of greater devotion in obedience to the Apostolic See, of greater abnegation of our own wills, and of surer direction from the Holy Spirit, we have judged it to be extremely profitable if each of us.... to be bound by a special vow....* [cf. **Formula n. 3**]. This “justifies” the saying that the Society is bound **more than others** to obey the Pope.

[3] Then, there is the more “usual” vow of religious life regarding obedience: *All should likewise vow that in all matters that concern the observance of this Rule they will be obedient to the one put in charge of this Society...* [cf. **Formula n. 6**].

[4] In Fr. Bertoni’s “Plan”, he treats of obedience within the Community in the **Seventh Part, Fourth Section, [cc. 1- 2, ## 138-151]** of his **Original Constitutions**. Fr. Bertoni then will treat of the **Stigmatic special Missionary obedience** to the Bishops in the Apostolic Mission, **On the Grade of the Professed**, in his **Ninth Part, cc. 1-7, ## 158-186**. Fr. Lenotti will speak of the Stigmatines being called to an obedience to the Bishops that will be **more than others**, without any sense of “triumphalism”.¹⁵⁴

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¹⁵⁴ cf. Fr. Lenotti, “**more than others**”: Apostolic Missionaries, determined and dedicated in a totally special manner to the service and submission to Bishops “- [in: **CS III, p. 438, f.**].

A. Corporate Obedience

Fourth Section

cc. 1-2, ## 138-151

c. 1: Obedience in General [## 138-141]

CF # 138: [The rules, precepts, or simple commands of the Superior do not bind under sin – as Ignatius notes in n. 602: all should be free from anxiety and aided against falling].

All the Rules and in this Institute do not oblige under any sin, either mortal, or venial. Similarly the simple command of the Superior is not considered to include an obligation under sin [cf. **CF # 150**], unless he should add ‘in virtue of obedience’, or something similar.

The Ignatian ideal asked for great respect for the rules and regulations of the community:

- nn. 18; 98; 198; 430; 547: each member prior to final acceptance, must see and take into consideration the Apostolic Documents of the Society, and the Constitutions and rules he is to obey – either every six months, or once a week;
- n. 136: the qualities of *Constitutions*: complete, clear, brief;
- n. 199: if one does not know Latin, he should have a ***compendium, summarium***;
- nn. 396; 428: the Rules for the Roman College can be adapted for other places; the Rectors should have their own rules;
- n. 654: conclusion to the Chapter “On the Missions”, speaking of the Rules of the Houses;
- n. 811: the last number of Part IX, speaks of the Rules of Provincial, Local Superiors, Rectors – as well as those of the General.

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CF # 139: [cf. **CF # 81**: speaks of obedience to subordinate superiors; **# 149**: states that as far as the intelligence is concerned, obedience should be rendered as though to God].

All the confreres will offer obedience, as though to Christ Himself, also the subordinate Superior, and to anyone who has responsibility of an office, and to him who has from Superiors the faculty of commanding.

[NB: The fundamental principle is that the superior stands in the place of Christ, as St. Benedict wrote in his Rule. This principle is found in the **Formula 6: ... obey the General in all matters pertaining to the Society's Institute but also to recognize and properly venerate Christ as present in him...** This idea is perhaps the one most often repeated in the Constitutions [cf. Examen, nn. 84-85]. Superiorship govern by virtue of the authority received from Christ].

- nn. 284; 286; 424; 547; 551; 618; 619; 627; 661; 765: all present this principle.

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CF # 140: The confreres will take care so that they might not obey only in act, but that they will conform their own will and mind to the order of the Superior.¹⁵⁵

- 273: mutual conformity will be striven for;
- n. 284: the members are challenged to bring their wills wholly into conformity with what the superior wills;
- n. 292: after exposing one's view, contrary to an earlier decision of the superior, the confrere will abide by what the Superior decides;
- n. 547: the command of obedience is fulfilled in regard to the willing when the one who obeys wills the same thing as the one who commands;
- n. 627: in the Part "On the Missions of the Superior of the Society", each confrere will try to feel and will what the Superior has felt and wills in the place of Christ our Lord.

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CF # 141: [This is read in the light of CF # 138, excusing from sin – the qualities of obedience noted here will then be developed in **Chapter 2** of this **Fourth Section**:

- "integral" – cf. **# 142**; -cf. n. 547: "in omnibus"
- "prompt" – cf. **# 143**;
- "humble" – cf. **# 144**;
- "strong" – cf. **# 145**.

¹⁵⁵Fr. Stofella explains in a footnote here that these two Constitutions ## 140, 141 are from the *Summarium Constitutionum S.J.*, n. 31.

This obedience is to be in all matters which are not contrary to the precepts of God, or of the Church, or the Rules of this Institute, but is to be integral, prompt, strong, and humble, with the perfect abnegation of one's will and own judgment.

[NB: a part of the *obsequium* seems to be **the constant denial of one's own will**, and bringing oneself into conformity with that of the superior:

- “denial” of one's own will: cf. nn. 9; 38; 111; 131; 178; 550; 585; 611; 652;
- “will in conformity with Superior”: cf. nn. 55; 273; **284; 547** [‘blind’]; 551; 552; 661; 671.

This “style” of obedience is noted by St. Ignatius:

- **Formula, n. 3**: among the reasons for the special obedience to the Roman Pontiff: **greater devotion** in obedience to the Apostolic See, of **greater abnegation** of our own wills, and a **surer direction** from the Holy Spirit [comparatives, to explain **the “greater” glory of God**, obedience “more than others” – this is not triumphalism, but asceticism];
- nn. 284; 547: speak of the qualities of obedience; and the three levels obedience in [I] **Execution** [## 142]: promptness [## 143]; humble [## 144]; strong [## 145] – [II] In the **Will**: [## 146]; loving the Superior as a Father [## 147]; joyful [## 148] – [III] **Intellect** [## 149]; without discussion [## 150]; listen to one's elders [## 150].

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c. 2: Concerning the Specific ‘Grades’ of Obedience [## 142-151]: this Chapter, with its ten Constitutions, presents obedience in a rather highly developed outline, compendium, as follows

- First, in **Execution** [## 142];
 - **Integral** [## 142];
 - **Perfect**;
 - **Universal**;
 - **Prompt** [## 143];
 - **Humble** [## 144];
 - **Strong** [## 145]:
 - **Constant**;
 - **Perseverance in difficulty** [cf. also # 148].

- Second, with regard to the **Will** [# 146];
 - **Pure** [# 146];
 - **Willing** [# 147]:
 - i.e., most free,
 - diligent;
 - **Joyful** [# 149]:
 - **Constant**;
 - **Persevering** [cf. above, # 145].
- Third, with regard to the **Intellect** [# 149]
 - **Simple**;
 - **Respecting God**;
 - **Without discussion** [cf. # 150];
 - **Conformity with Superior's counsel, judgment** [# 151].

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CF # 142: First of all, as regards the **execution**, or the act of obedience, all the confreres will take care that it be shown in an **integral** manner, not only in the obligatory matters, which is but their due, but also to the height of perfection in all other upright areas whatsoever. For it is a **perfect** obedience, which is **universal**, and excepts nothing, other than that which is displeasing to God [cf. **CF # 141; 149**]. It will further be more **prompt** when it anticipates an express precept by obeying, but after having understood what the Superior's will is.

These many qualities regarding the Act of Obedience permeate much of the Ignatian ideal:

- **n. 547:** a major Ignatian [his *magna charta??*] concept is presented in this long Constitution – with its many references to other Jesuit ***Constitutions*** :
 - not only in obligatory matters, but also in others
 - as though to our Lord, to Christ;
 - with constancy – in execution, in will, in intellect;
- **n. 550:** all pertaining to execution, will and intellect.

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CF # 143: Promptness also in the act of obedience must be especially apparent, in that no one rather lazily should accede to the carrying out of the mandates in a slow and late way. Rather, rivaling the heavenly spirits on earth, putting aside every delay and all that one might be doing, each should hasten, and even fly to do the will of his Lord, even before the precept of the Superior is known or any sign given. Perfect obedience lays aside unfulfilled one's own matters.

- n. 284: To make progress, it is very expedient and highly necessary that all should devote themselves to complete obedience, by recognizing the superior, whoever he is, as being in the place of Christ our Lord, and by maintaining interior reverence and love for him. They should obey entirely and promptly, not only by exterior execution of what the superior commands, with becoming energy and humility, and without excuses and murmurings even though things are commanded which are difficult or repugnant to sensitive nature; but they should try to main in their own wills and judgments, by bringing their wills and judgments wholly into conformity with what the superior wills and judges, in all things in which no sin is seen, and by regarding the superior's will and judgment as the rule of their own, in order to conform themselves more completely to the first and supreme rule of all good will and judgment, which is the Eternal Goodness and Wisdom.
- n. 547: [a major Ignatian Constitution on Obedience: the only one that speaks of 'blind' obedience, noted above] - one should obey even though no explicit sign of the Superior has been given – leaving unfinished one's own letter [cf. n. 435].

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CF # 144: The act of obedience will also be humble, when prior to its execution, there is not employed any excuse. However, should an authentic impediment arise, or at least one is considered present, or there is some doubt concerning its probability, this will be humbly referred to the superior and the decision will be left up to him.

St. Ignatius' view on what is called **representation**:

- nn. 131, 292: when there is a difference of opinion, after prayer, it might be proposed to the Superior, committing all to his judgment;
- n. 543: one can propose, but then trust in the superior's judgment;
- n. 552: no will approach the Holy Father directly – but, leave it to the Superior;
- n. 627: one can propose to the Superior regarding the Missions – but, then trust in his judgment.

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CF # 145: Finally, the execution of obedience should be **strong**, that is, constant and with due perseverance [cf. **CF # 148**], so that it may not be lacking in any matter or time, no matter how difficult [cf. **CF # 185, *ardua et difficilis***] this may be a challenge, and repugnant to nature.

- nn. 18; 156: the candidates' constancy must be proven;
- nn. 53, ff.: this Examen, c. IV, nn. 53-103, describes the **difficulty** of the Jesuit vocation [cf. our **CF # 185**];
- nn. 129; 193: stability and constancy must be scrutinized;
- n. 547: in a constant spirit...spiritual joy and perseverance.

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CF # 146: In the second place, with regard to the affection of the will, in obeying, it should be primarily **pure**, and the formal intention of obedience is on account of the observance of the precept, and on account of the will of the Superior to be fulfilled, or more sublimely on account of the will of God [cf. **CF # 139**, where the motive is Christ], which is applied in this, and because of it.

St. Ignatius' views are clear on this:

- nn. 284; 424; 661: the Superior, the Rector **take the place of Christ the Lord**;
- n. 547: obedience is before the eyes of God, the Creator and our Lord, on account of Whom obedience is offered;
- n. 619: in the matter of Missions, the Superior **takes the place of Christ**, interpreting God's will;
- n. 765: **the Father General takes the place of Christ**.

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CF # 147: [cf. also **CF # 149**]

Obedience must also be voluntary, so that most freely and most diligently the confrere might consider the Superior of the Monastery, fearing him as one's Lord, and loving him as a Father – the Ignatian principle as **Father [*suaviter*]** – **General [*fortiter*]**.

- n. 551: superiors should be loved as **fathers** – the only time in the Ignatian **Constitutions** that this title is used. His words were ***Praelatus, Praepositus, Superior***.

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CF # 148: Lastly, obedience should be given with **happiness**, and that it be given with spiritual joy, with a constant and persevering spirit, and with every spirit of humility.

- n. 547: obedience should be perfect from every side, with spiritual joy and perseverance.

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CF # 149: In the third place, with regard to the **intellect**, all will take care and give every effort that their obedience be entirely **simple**, that it not simply respect the Superior as a man, but as God [cf. **CF # 139**], and that each receive his precept not as human, but as divine.

[This has been treated under **CF # 146** – this is the “theology” of St. Ignatius, modified somewhat in our own time – through meetings, councils, chapters and more dialogue].

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CF # 150: The confreres will not ask for the reasons for the command, nor discuss them, nor ponder them, when what is commanded is free from sin [cf. **CF # 138**]. No one will pass judgment on the view of the Superior, as the duty of each is to obey and to carry out what is ordered, according to that saying of Moses: *Listen Israel, and be silent*. Full wisdom is precisely in this that in this matter, this is not the goal, as the Apostle says: *Who wishes to be wise, let him become a fool*. [1 Co 3:18]. [**NB:** this same citation is found above in **CF # 124**].

St. Ignatius’ true military background might be noted here! - n. 547: freedom from sin is noted here – as well as “**blind**” obedience – that of a cadaver – that of the ‘**blind man’s cane**’ – this is Divine Providence in one’s life.

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CF # 151: Everyone should be persuaded to allow himself to be governed by the counsel and judgment of the Superiors, in accord with that warning of the Fathers of the Church, found in Cassian [*Coll.* 2, c. 11]: that by no other vice does the Devil succeed so well in leading the monks onward toward perdition as in persuading them to neglect the counsels of their **Elders**, and persuade them to follow instead their own judgment.

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B. Missionary Obedience
CF ## 184-185

CF # 184: as in the Jesuit Constitutions, in the section pertaining to the Apostolic Mission, there is a careful delineation of the principle placed in the **Formula** - known as ***gratis omnino***. It is a value often repeated in Fr. Bertoni's Original Constitutions [cf. **CF ## 3; 67; 102; 184**]. This value is powerfully defended in the Constitutions of St. Ignatius – his broad apostolic mission was to be offered ***gratis omnino***:

Formula 1: ... by means of public preaching, lectures, and any other ministration whatsoever of the Word of God, and further, by means of the Spiritual Exercises, the education of children and unlettered persons in Christianity, and the spiritual consolation of God's faithful through hearing confessions and administering the other sacraments. Moreover, this Society should show itself no less useful in reconciling the estranged, in holily assisting and serving those who are found in prisons or hospitals, and indeed in performing any other works of charity, according to what will seem expedient for the glory of God and the common good. Furthermore, all these works should be carried out altogether free of charge [*gratis omnino*] and without accepting any salary for the labor expended in all the aforementioned activities...

CSJ 7: In addition to the three vows mentioned, the Professed Society also makes an explicit vow to the Sovereign Pontiff, as the present, or future Vicar of Christ our Lord. This is a vow to go anywhere [*quocumque*]. His Holiness will order, whether among the faithful, or the infidels, without pleading an excuse and without requesting any expenses [*gratis*] for the journey, for the sake of matters pertaining to the worship of God and the welfare of the Christian religion [*quodcumque*]. [cf. also CSJ nn. 573, 574, 609, 610].

CSJ 573: When the Sovereign Pontiff or the Superior sends such Professed and Coadjutors to labor in the vineyard of the Lord, they may not demand any provision for the journey, but they should generously present themselves that these superiors may send them in the manner which they think will be for the greater glory of God.

CSJ 574: that is to say, on foot, or on horseback, with money, or without it, and they should be ready to carry out in deed what the sender judges to be more fitting and for greater universal edification.

CSJ 609: Moreover, he who has been designated by His Holiness to go to some region should offer his person generously, without requesting provisions for the journey, or causing a request for anything temporal to be made, except

that His Holiness should order the member to be sent in the manner that His Holiness judges to be a greater service of God and of the Apostolic See, without taking thought about anything else.

CSJ 610: Representation may well be made, and even should be, through the agency of the prelate, or person through whom His Holiness issues the command to go anywhere, by asking how he desires him to accomplish the journey and to remain in the destination, namely, by living on alms and by begging for the love of God our Lord, or in some other manner. This is asked that what seems better to His Holiness may be done with greater devotion and security in our Lord.

These seem to be the main Jesuit Constitutions regarding the *gratis omnino...* in the living out of the ideal involved in the terms: *quocumque... quodcumque...* The type of poverty Ignatius chose is closer to that of Francis and Dominic, and somewhat removed from those following cenobitical life. For Ignatius, this was the poverty Jesus lived and which He taught His apostles to practice when He sent them out to preach [cf. Mt 10:8-10]. **This ‘evangelical poverty’** taught by the Lord Himself to His Apostles consists in these three elements:

- **non-possession – no gold or silver;**
- **not receiving remuneration: give freely of what you have freely received;**
- **living on alms: the laborer is worthy of his hire.**

Ignatius learned the distinction between ‘pure alms’ and stipends, or alms in remuneration from Mt 10: the Jesuit is asked to give freely of all that he has received. This **gratuity of ministries** has other values as well, as ‘the greater liberty and edification of one’s neighbor’ [cf. CSJ 565]. It is principally based, though, on the poverty that Jesus Himself lived – this is the ideal. This is a value in the **Spiritual Exercises**¹⁵⁶. In this ideal, living on alms is not any sign of incompetence, or inability – but rather, the gospel value of offering a witness to disinterestedness and indifference and to one’s **trust** and **abandonment** to Divine Providence. These are central values to Fr. Bertoni. This is a perennial value, due to the recurring temptation to materialism. In the fullness of pride, and in times of technical progress, many think they can be, live and do without God.¹⁵⁷

Therefore, in the Ignatian charism and Jesuit history, apostolic journeys and poverty are meant to go hand in hand. ... **You have received without charge.... Provide**

¹⁵⁶ Cf. n. 281, # 3: ...Third Point: He tells them they should go, ‘**Do not possess gold or silver.**’ ‘**Freely you have received, freely give.**’ **And He told them what to preach, saying: ‘The kingdom of God is at hand...’** [cf. Mt 10:1-16]

¹⁵⁷ cf. Antonio deAldama, ... **An Introductory Commentary on the Constitutions....**o.c., pp. 225, ff., *passim*.

yourselves with neither gold nor silver... the workman deserves his keep... [cf. Mt 10:8-10]. This is an ancient reality in the Church: the itinerant ‘prophets and apostles’ of whom the ***Didache*** speaks, were forbidden to take anything but bread when they left one mission station for another. Accepting money was the mark of a false apostle¹⁵⁸. These ancient customs came alive again in the 12th century in his Apostolic Movement: preaching and poverty were its characteristic features – which St. Ignatius tried to re-invigorate in the life of the Church, through his ‘Company’.¹⁵⁹ How vital it is for Church progress that her **Apostolic Missionaries** should go without gold or silver, as a most Christ-like ideal. The Jesuit principle is to engage in poverty in the service of God our Lord and the help of our neighbor, preaching and serving the Church. This explains the rather arduous “Election of Poverty” that Ignatius saw in the **Apostolic Mission** initiated by Jesus Christ, sent by His Father. For Ignatius, **the ideal was always the apostolic circle around Jesus**, called to Himself, and sent out on **His Mission**. They could receive ‘help for the journey’ – the Apostles were able to receive ‘bread’ when leaving one church for another. The early Jesuits were not allowed to take anything for Masses, confessions, sermons, lessons, and for administering the sacraments – but they could accept help for the journey.¹⁶⁰

The ideal for Fr. Bertoni in **CF # 184** summarizes these values for those who have received the Grade of Apostolic Missionary –

- **When the ‘Professed’ are sent somewhere:**
- **or, are ordered to reside somewhere –**
- **they should not ask for any provision for the journey;**
- **nor for where they are to live –**
- **from the Bishops;**
- **or the Pastors;**
- **or from their own Superiors**
- **but they should freely offer themselves;**
- **and totally give themselves to this.**

¹⁵⁸ ***Didache*** XI, 6.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Gunter Switek, ‘*Praedicare in Paupertate*’. *Estudios sobre el concepto de pobreza según Ignacio de Loyola*. ROMA: CIS 1972.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Antonio deAldama, ...*Missioning...*, o.c., pp. 43, *passim*.

This is the *obsequium* lived fully – an abandonment to God and a total availability to the Church – which seems to be the ideal promulgated by Fr. Bertoni in this manner.

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<u>Chapter VII of Part IX:</u>
<u>The Principal Scope of the Professed Members</u>
[CF ## 185-186]

This concluding chapter of Fr. Bertoni's all-important **Part IX** would require its own commentary – which hopefully, will develop.

Research is continuing in the quest for the broad presentation of the Apostolic Mission, as presented by Fr. Bertoni in his opening numbers of chapters 6 and 7 of this central Part IX of his Constitutions, describing the duty of the 'Professed' and the *scope* of his community:

CF # 182: Eorum munus est docere non solum in concionibus, exercitiis, lectionibus, quae ad vitam aeternam consequendam necessaria vel utilia sunt, sed etiam rudimenta fidei et morum, praesertim ridibus et pueris...

CF # 185: Cum ejusdem Sodalitatis scopus sit, Ecclesiae sub Episcoporum directione obsequium praestare per varia et propria suae vocationis munera...

These two Constitutions: **CF ## 185 & 186** are considered by Fr. Stofella as taken from Suarez, Book I, c. 6: *Whether it is fitting for the Society of Jesus to make use of those means that are suited for the instruction of external students [scholastics]*¹⁶¹. On further analysis, however, one may also cite **Suarez, Book VI, c. 4, n. 25**, which asks the question: '*Whether the [Fourth] Vow of Obedience directed toward the Supreme Pontiff, which the Professed of the Society emit, is solemn, and distinct from the other three vows?*'¹⁶² The Jesuit Theologian offers a lengthy analysis of the Fourth Vow – and Fr. Bertoni's **CF ## 185-186** are copied *verbatim* from this section, and adapted – except for the introductory phrases for **CF # 185** noted in the table above.

¹⁶¹ cf. *Costituzioni del Ven. Servo di Dio, D. Gaspare Bertoni. Fondatore dei Preti delle Sacre Stimite di N.S.G.C.*, o.c., p. 122, footnote.

¹⁶² Cf. Suarez, o.c., pp. 854-866, a lengthy discussion of this Fourth Vow.

To understand this better, it is useful to reflect on the development of Suarez' thought. In **Book I, c. 4**, Suarez asks the question whether the community of the Society of Jesus was fittingly instituted and approved ¹⁶³. In his affirmative response, the Jesuit theologian notes three aspects of the original Foundation of the 'Company':

- **Historical: St. Ignatius** was the Founder of the Society of his Companions, chosen as God's instrument in a providential manner and time, for the assistance of souls in the Christian life and doctrine for the propagation and defense of the faith. This purpose has proven to be most opportune, as the defense of the faith is supremely necessary, its propagation most opportune and the perfection of morals most useful for the Church.

- **Principal: the Holy Spirit**, however, is considered to be the primary cause of the Society. In St. Ignatius' view, the Holy Spirit teaches his Church through the Vicars of Christ. Fr. Bertoni adapted this thought in his **CF # 185**, that the Stigmatine is called to follow the direction of the orthodox Bishop whom the Holy Spirit has placed to rule the Church of God [cf. Ac 20:28]. For St. Ignatius, this provides the reason for the Fourth Vow:

... But we have judged nevertheless that the following procedure will be supremely profitable to each of us and to any others who will pronounce the same profession in the future, for the sake of our greater devotion in obedience to the Holy See, of greater abnegation of our own wills, and of surer direction from the Holy Spirit. In addition to that ordinary bond of the three vows, we are obliged by a special vow to carry out whatever the present and future Roman Pontiffs may order which pertains to the progress of souls and the propagation of faith... [**Formula 3**].

CSJ 605 [De Missionibus]: The intention of the Fourth Vow pertaining to the Pope was not to designate a particular place but to have the members distributed throughout the various parts of the world. For those who first united to form the Society were from different Provinces and realms and did not know into which regions they were to go, whether among the faithful or unbelievers; and therefore, to avoid erring in the path of the Lord [ne in via Domini errarent], they made that promise or vow, in order that His Holiness might distribute them for the greater glory of God. They did this in conformity with their intention to travel throughout the world and, when they could not find the desired spiritual fruit in one region, to pass on to another and another, ever intent on seeking the greater glory of God and the greater aid of souls.

¹⁶³ Cf. Suarez, o.c., pp. 575, ff.

Therefore, the role of the Holy Spirit is central – Fr. Bertoni phrases it this way: **ad non errandum in via Domini...** It is here that Suarez cites **Ph 1:6: I am convinced that He who has begun a good work in you will bring it to perfection until the day of Christ...**¹⁶⁴. And this is the text cited by Fr. Bertoni here. Suarez brings this text up¹⁶⁵ in connection with his explanation of **the Holy Spirit being the primary and principal author of the Society of Jesus**: St. Ignatius and his companions simply could not have done this work of the Lord unless the Holy Spirit began and perfected such an undertaking. The Spirit would be behind the foundation of the Society either by communicating a certain inspiration; or through some extraordinary motion from within; or with that infallible direction, such as would have been given to the Prophets and the other Sacred Writers of God's Word: for Suarez, this is where this Institute got its beginning. For a believer, in simple terms, no work of piety such as this could ever have been begun without the precise inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Thus, in Jesuit circles, it was commonly believed that Ignatius and his companions were moved and assisted by the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁶

- **Authoritative**: the **third cause** of the Society according to Suarez is the **Apostolic See** – which, as the Papal documents noted that it was by the Apostolic authority, by the protection of the Apostolic See, that this Society came into being for its apostolic purposes proposed, for the glory of Jesus Christ and in full harmony with the needs of humanity.

Suarez goes on, then, to specify what is so **distinct** about the Society of Jesus in order that it would be approved by the Holy See:

- it is a **clerical** community – made up of priests, with a priestly function – which goes back **to the style of life of the Apostles and Jesus Christ Himself**. When Augustine came along, he simply restored and reformed this kind of life;
- hence, St. Augustine did not so much institute a new religious community, as he assumed **the purpose** of the **union of the Apostles around Christ**. What Ignatius wanted to do was to give life to a way of religious life that would be **most similar to the Apostolic way of life** in all that pertains to what is **substantial**, i.e., regarding the end and the means, the manner of living, of imitating Christ, with a view to the salvation of souls. The Apostles professed that they had left all to preach the Gospel. So it is with the Jesuits: they consecrated themselves to Christ in a particular manner, to go anywhere that He would choose to bring about the salvation of souls – and that after the death of Christ, they would keep alive their obedience to Peter. Pius IVth

¹⁶⁴ Douay version.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Suarez, o.c., p. 580 a.

¹⁶⁶ cf. ib., p. 580 a.

described the Jesuits in this way: as they assumed the name of Jesus, so in their work, doctrine, and example, they wanted to **imitate Jesus Christ, and set out to follow in his foot-steps.**¹⁶⁷

Therefore, the principal task of this Society is to work for the salvation and perfection of their neighbors, and to achieve this purpose, they would make use of all congruous means. The longer and more diligent studies prepare for this variety of services [*obsequia*] [CF ## 57; 62]. Since therefore, spiritual activities are intimately joined to the doctrine regarding divine realities – this would be done:

... non solum per publicas lectiones, et conciones, sed etiam in secreta confessione, et in secreto colloquio ac instructione traditur... [cf. CF ## 182, 183; cf. also Part XI, *De Familiari Conversatione...*].

In harmony with the Stigmatine seal – ***Euntes Docete*** [cf. Mt 28:19, the **Apostolic Mission**] reflected in Fr. Bertoni's own words:

... Eorum ['Professorum'] munus est docere non solum in concionibus, exercitiis, lectionibus, quae ad vitam aeternam consequendam necessaria, vel utilia sunt... [CF # 182].

Suarez then asks the difficult question how is it possible to balance ***contemplata aliis*** and ***tradere*** [cf. CF # 49] – how is the Society able to satisfy these many activities with contemplation?¹⁶⁸ This is the ***special grace of vocation***¹⁶⁹ that makes what is ***arduous and difficult*** [cf. CF # 185] possible, because one does ***not rely on human strength*** [*...non humanis viribus, sed Spiritus Sancti gratia...*]. To bring this multiple activity in line with contemplation is not impossible with divine grace. And even though it might seem difficult, nonetheless perfect virtue for such difficulty is poured out so that this real difficulty, through the providence of religion and its perfect institution, with the ***special grace of this vocation*** can be overcome.

This ***special grace of vocation*** is surely necessary, because no one by reason of his state of life could live piously, let alone perfectly, without ***the special grace of God***. It is piously believed, or rather, it is morally certain that God would communicate a special grace for every religious community, which He communicates to all who are called by the Holy Spirit to that community, if He is not hindered by them, so that they might be able to fulfill the end, the purpose, scope of this institute. Therefore, **Ph 1:6** speaks **of a grace, assisting, exciting, assisting**, which it is believed that God offers a

¹⁶⁷ cf. Suarez, o.c., p. 586; cf. M.-H. Vicaire, OP, *L'imitation des Apôtres. Moines, chanoines, mendiants*. Paris: du Cerf 1963.

¹⁶⁸ cf. Suarez, Book I, c. 6, n.6 - pp. 592, ff.

¹⁶⁹ cf. website www.st-bertoni.com, under Original Constitutions: 'NADAL: Grace'.

major and more special grace for those who would be a part of such an institute. Suarez quotes St. Thomas for all this.¹⁷⁰

Therefore, all approved religious communities, according to Suarez, by right maintain that they have been instituted by a special Providence of God. Hence, it is not to be doubted that each one of these have a **special help** prepared for them, **proportionate to their vocation**. Therefore, the more challenging, difficult the scope is for a religious community, the more sublime and hard its purpose is, and since it has been instituted so much the more for the **obsequium** of God and the greater utility of the Church, then these communities are ordered and assisted by Him. It is piously believed that the Society of Jesus came into existence through the instinct of the Holy Spirit, and it was established for the intention of divine worship and giving Him glory, through the most grave [*graviora, gravissima munera*] ministries in the task of procuring the salvation of souls. As a result, it cannot be doubted that the Society would have from God a **special grace of vocation** prepared specifically for it. Therefore, the **arduous and difficult** challenge of bringing together a most varied apostolic program, and a life of intense contemplation, needs a **special grace of vocation** to overcome this and all challenges inherent in the life. Suarez has already made clear the purpose of this community,¹⁷¹ and this is that it has been established directly that it might undertake the challenges of both the contemplative and the active life, for the sake of **teaching and preaching, and for those other spiritual works to be exercised in behalf of our neighbors, with the greatest perfection and impulse**.¹⁷²

The Society of Jesus has been specially established to offer its ministry to the Apostolic See. This is based on an unusual comparison made by St. John Chrysostom¹⁷³, where he says that the priest is called to be the heart, or the stomach [!] of the Church – since it is through their priests that the Christian people receives the positive influence for life, and their spiritual nourishment. In the Jesuit vocation to assist the Holy See, the early Jesuit tradition saw the Society as the ‘right hand of the Apostolic See’. The purpose of the Society, as instituted by Ignatius, was indeed most sublime, and is the same as the institution of the Apostles – the Jesuits being called to do all that possibly can be done in their level of service to bring about the coming of the reign of God into this world.

This is **the special grace** of the Jesuit vocation, behind the inspiration of St. Gaspar Bertoni, which he adapts for the Stigmatines in **CF ## 185, 186**. He copied this ideal from Suarez, paraphrasing to fit his own needs. **Grace is accommodated**

¹⁷⁰ St. Thomas Aquinas. IV Sent., d. 4, q. 1, a. 2, ad 9 um; d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, ad 2 um; III, q. 27, a. 5 ad 1 um

¹⁷¹ cf. Suarez, Book I, cc. 1 & 2

¹⁷² cf. Suarez, o.c., p 594, b.

¹⁷³ In Mt., Hom. 38 - cited by Suarez, o.c., p. 594 a.

according to the need in each approved religious community. Therefore, grace will be all the more copious and all the greater in accord with the more elevated effects that will be hoped for. The belief is that God confers **a special grace** according to the measure of the obligation and the task at hand. Grace is given to increase in accord with the disposition of the recipient. To such grace there pertains to intensify that affection by which the recipient encounters **the greater difficulty** for the sake of the reign of God. The Society was seen to have this unique excellence **in the grace of the Founder**. The Society was founded on the influence of the Holy Spirit to bring about the more excellent effects of divine grace, included in the ideals set down by Ignatius: **the propagation of the Church, the defense of the faith, the conversion and perfection of souls.**

On the part of the individuals called to this form of religious life, there is demanded of them an exquisite abnegation so that they might never have any place, or office, or any other security for themselves. Rather, the Jesuit ideal set down by the Founder was that all the members of the Society would be called for any change, exposed to many difficulties, and they must keep this disposition alive. As far as God is concerned, **the special grace** of the vocation will meet any challenging difficulty that it confronts. The members who are properly disposed and prepared will be perfected through **this special grace**. The Society is founded¹⁷⁴ both for the spiritual benefit of its members in their communicating to their neighbors, for whose salvation they are called, in overcoming evils, in surpassing obstacles, and spiritual impediments. In Book VIII, Suarez will discuss the spiritual means that Ignatius suggests for the sanctification of the Jesuits – and in Book IX, those **varied and proper ministries [CF # 185], those more serious apostolates [graviora – CF # 158], always accommodated [CF # 262] to the changing times, places and needs**, which make up the **Apostolic Mission** for the Society of Jesus, as well as being adapted for the Stigmatines¹⁷⁴.

All of this is in explanation of the “Fourth Vow”. Suarez proposes the objection that either this vow is distinct because it brings with it a new obligation concerning the same matter as the other vow of obedience that Jesuits take – or, it obliges to **something entirely new**. In the Jesuit tradition, this Fourth Vow was approved as **something special, and totally distinct from all others**.¹⁷⁵ St. Ignatius expresses the unique nature of this Vow:

In addition to the three vows mentioned, the Professed Society also makes an explicit vow to the Sovereign Pontiff as the present and future Vicar of Christ our Lord. This is a vow to go anywhere His Holiness orders, whether among the faithful, or the infidels, without pleading any excuse and without requesting any

¹⁷⁴ cf. Suarez, o.c., p. 597.

¹⁷⁵ o.c., pp. 854, ff.

expenses for the journey, for the sake of matters pertaining to the worship of God and the welfare of the Christian religion [CSJ 7].

In this paragraph, the emphasis is on *quocumque... gratis omnino*, with a hint of the *quodcumque*. The matter of this vow, then, is not simply the matter of all religious obedience, but **the special matter of the apostolic mission**. This vow of obeying to go anywhere requires in one's mind **that obedience of remaining even to the end of the task**, always in accord with the intention of the one sending, which **accommodates** this to the matter at hand [cf. **CF # 262**]. The 'Mission' would prove useless unless one would see it through to the end, in so far as this would be necessary for the end to be accomplished for the carrying out of the mission. This vow, then, does not only oblige the Professed to go on these Missions, but also to be totally committed to carrying out those actions, or services which are included in them. By the name of 'Missions' according to the true sense and common use of those using this word, there should not only be understood those journeys, or residences in those places to which these journeys are ordered – but, also the activities and ministries to be undertaken. **The obedience, then, regarding the 'Missions' implies the journeys to the assigned places, and also the actual ministries, services to be undertaken there.** The Companions, then, vow not only to **go anywhere** they have been sent, but also that they carry out there **whatever** they may have been ordered to achieve: **both of these aspects, then, are the matter of the vow**. The Jesuits are not obligated to journey just anywhere for other purposes – the sole goal of the Apostolic Mission is to work for the salvation of souls and the propagation of the faith, using **various and proper, the more serious, the accommodated ministries** to accomplish this.

It would be unrealistic to claim the vow authorizes travel in various places for other purposes. Religious pilgrimages, for example, to the Holy Places, would not be included. **The Apostolic Mission has a specific purpose: the salvation of souls and the propagation of the faith.** For St. Ignatius this is developed in Part VII of his Constitutions, and for Fr. Bertoni in Part IX, presently under discussion. Under the 'matter' of this vow are included all the spiritual ministries which the Society exercises in behalf of their neighbors – the Apostolic Mission includes all those tasks to which the Roman Pontiff could send missionaries, in accord with the Jesuit Constitutions. Under the word '**Apostolic Mission**' would also include residence, the existence of the Jesuit in some specific place. One would be sent so that he could **preach, teach, or perform some other like ministry** – it involves **whatever ministry of the Word of God [quodcumque Verbi Dei ministerium]** to which the Roman Pontiff might send one for the progress of souls and the propagation of the faith. There are various accompanying "circumstances" of the Apostolic Mission ¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ cf. Suarez, o.c., pp. 855-858, *passim*.

- ***gratis omnino***: when the ‘Professed’ are sent on these missions there will be no requesting expenses for the journey [cf. **CF # 184**]. All must be undertaken in the ***Jesuit manner of Mission, under the Vow of Mission***. The only reward that one would seek would be from God;
- **without making excuses**: in the Saint’s ***Letter on Obedience***, this is one of his emphases. This circumstance is also included under the vow – unless silence would run counter to the Pontiff’s ultimate intention for the command;
- **to go wherever one is sent [*quocumque*]**: the content of the vow is geographically indifferent regarding place, people to whom one is sent. This is why the vow is in the hands of the Pontiff with his universal apostolic mission. It is in the Pope’s own Mission to work for the ***obsequium*** for the entire Church, for the assistance of souls. As head of the entire Church the Pope would have a better knowledge of the needs of the entire Church looking toward the future.

There is great insistence on the fact that the choice of ministries needs to be ***accommodated*** [cf. **CF # 262**] to the salvation of souls. The Fourth Vow, then, concerns an excellent reality, and is carried out for an excellent goal. This Vow has nothing else in view other than the greater glory of God, the more common good of the Church, the broader salvation of souls, and the more intense defense and propagation of the faith. This is part of the excellence of the Vow: the choice of ministries, apostolic services, **depends on the present challenge** of the salvation of souls wherever one may be sent. All of the Ministries, Apostolic Services of the Society are oriented by their very nature to the salvation and sanctification of souls, such as through various aspects of the *preaching* of the Word of God in its broadest acceptance of the term, and all other services that might accompany this. One cannot ‘engineer’ his service here, as all is done under the direction of the Holy Spirit, acting through the supreme Pontiff. The most excellent ***Ignatian manner*** under which one can be sent by obedience is this **holocaust** most pleasing to God: thus we see in Fr. Bertoni such almost liturgical terms [cf. *Rm 12:1 ff.*] as ***liberaliter se offerant omnino et praestent*** [**CF # 184**]... ***praestare obsequium*** [**CF # 185**].

Therefore, the Holy Father is the Supreme Prelate of every region of the Church. The ‘***Professed***’ of the Society, on the strength of this Fourth Vow, can be sent by him, precisely in the strength of the primary task of the ‘***Professed***’ [cf. **CF ## 182-184**] to **preaching the Word**, in the broad sense of the word as used by Ignatius, as for any other exercise of the Word of God whatsoever, as listed in the Constitutions, in behalf of their neighbors for their spiritual needs. This is what is ‘new’ in the Fourth Vow – all religious are bound to obey the Holy Father. As the Franciscan **manner** of poverty was a new insight for the entire Church, so also the Society of Jesus has this novel insignia,

this mark that sets it apart within the Church, for a **specific manner of Obedience in the Apostolic Mission, in the strength of the Fourth Vow**. Every approved religious community has a certain scope, purpose, or “end” which identifies it in a particular manner throughout the Constitutions. In the Society of Jesus, this ministry regarding the salvation of souls, **under a special obedience to the Supreme Pontiff**, constitutes its special **scope, end or purpose**, to which it is called and is ordained by the special institution of the Holy Spirit. This ‘singularity’, individuality is not based on the human reasoning of the Founder, but came into being **by the special grace of vocation from the Holy Spirit**, for the sake of disseminating the faith in the most remote regions and to defend the Church from the incursion of heretics.

Suarez’ summary here¹⁷⁷ provided the background of St. Gaspar Bertoni’s thought, and was then copied and adapted by him, to serve as his concluding **Chapter VII** of his **Part IX, De Professorum Gradu**, [CF ## 158-186]: even though Fr. Bertoni’s **universal Apostolic Mission** is expressed in somewhat general tones:

*... ad exercitium Apostolici Muneris...gratis omnino servire Deo et Ecclesiae ... quocumque euntes in diocesi et mundo ... Perfectum Opus Sacerdotum ... assumentes Apostolicam Missionem [cf. Compendium Rude], ... ad Verbi Dei Quodcumque Ministerium [under the Grade of the Professed, for the means to be employed ***ad extra*** for the salvation of our neighbors]. This is Fr. Bertoni’s ***obsequium***, a holocaust, noted in expressions such as: **obsequium praestare per varia et propria suae vocationis munera** [cf. CF # 185].*

Suarez’ text, copied almost word for word, but adapted and somewhat abbreviated, provides for Fr. Bertoni his two concluding Constitutions of Part IX, **CF ## 185, 186** – beginning mid-way through line five of his **CF # 185**:

*... Quamvis autem hoc votum sit de re valde ardua et difficili, et, si ad fragilitatem hominum comparetur, periculis expositum [id enim non negamus], non tamen propterea imprudens aut temerarium. Primo quidem, quia non humanis viribus, sed Spiritus Sancti gratia implendum creditur; qui autem coepit et inspiravit illud, ipse perficit [cf. Ph 1:6], si per nos non steterit, nam [ut in superioribus, Lib. I, cap. 6, numero nono – Suarez pp. 592, ff – et cap. Septimo, numero decimo - Suarez, pp. 597, ff.] diximus – haec est specialis gratia hujus vocationis, quae potentior est omnibus periculis et difficultatibus. Deinde per hoc votum [Fr. Bertoni renders this as follows: ***per hanc intentionem***] non promittimus [Fr. Bertoni renders this: ***non proponimus***] nos periculis exponere, nec has vel illas regiones [Fr. Bertoni renders this: ***nec hunc vel illum locum***] adire, aut has vel illas actiones exercere, sed obedire Christi Vicario [Fr. Bertoni renders this: ***sed directionem orthodoxi Episcopi, quem Sanctus Spiritus posuit regere Ecclesiam Dei*** – cf. Ac 20:28], quo medio nullum potest esse certius [Fr. Bertoni renders this: ***quod medium satis cautum***]*

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Book VI, c. 4, nn. 25, ff. - pp. 862 a, ff.

est] ad non errandum in via Dei. Accedit tamen religionis providentia, tum in disponendis et probandis personis, tum etiam in eis eligendis....¹⁷⁸

NB: [Very significantly, Fr. Bertoni adds these concluding words to his **CF # 185**, not found in the Suarez text here: ***... et omni ope suffulciendis et confirmandis.***

It would be very helpful to note here the significant particular differences that Fr. Bertoni either omits, changes or adds to this important text:

- Fr. Bertoni does not include Suarez' comment in line 2 above: ***si enim non negamus;***
- Fr. Stofella omits in the printed edition, the two biblical quotes here: **Ph 1:6; Ac 20:28;**
- Fr. Bertoni does not include Suarez' parenthetical note here: ***ut in superioribus, Lib. I, cap. 6, numero nono*** [cf. Suarez, pp. 592, ff.], ***et cap. Septimo, numero decimo*** – [Suarez, pp. 597, f.]
- Fr. Bertoni alters Suarez' text:
 - in place of Suarez' ***per hoc votum*** – Fr. Bertoni writes: ***per hanc intentionem;***
 - in place of Suarez' ***nec has vel illas regiones*** – Fr. Bertoni writes: ***nec hunc vel illum locum;*** [This seems the logical corollary from Fr. Bertoni's omitting the seventh ministry of the word of God, under **CF # 163**: Fr. Bertoni, a priest of the Diocese of Verona, does not include ***ad quascumque orbis partes ... etiam remotissimas, et inter barbaras nationes...***
 - in place of Suarez' ***obedire Christi Vicario*** – Fr. Bertoni writes: ***directionem orthodoxi Episcopi, quem Sanctus Spiritus posuit regere Ecclesiam Dei*** [cf. Ac 20:28];
 - in place of Suarez' ***quo medio nullum potest esse certius*** – Fr. Bertoni writes: ***quod medium satis cautum est;***
 - then, as noted, very significantly, Fr. Bertoni adds his own conclusion about on-going formation: ***et omni ope suffulciendis et confirmandis.***

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¹⁷⁸ cf. Suarez, o.c., p. 862 a.

C. DOCTRINAL OBEDIENCE

[Early Sermons, Epistolario and Original Constitutions]

Presentation:

[A.] In a **Parish Sermon on the Epiphany of 1806**, Fr. Bertoni makes a fervent appeal:

1231: ...*O Timothy, keep what is committed to your trust...* [1 Tm 2:20]. So it is that the lips of the Priest of the Church guard its knowledge: ...*they shall seek the law at his mouth...* [Ml 2:7]. Note well, my brothers and sisters: And the people will seek the law, i.e., the rule, not from the law, nor from the rule itself, but from the lips of the priest, from the mouth of the Church that possesses it: from his mouth.

1232: In fact, in the controversy between Paul and those of Antioch [Ac 15:1, ff.], regarding the matter of faith, they did not appeal directly to the Scriptures to define the matter. The appeal was made rather to the Apostles and the Elders of Jerusalem. The Apostles did not, neither did the Elders, make the Scriptures the judge, but themselves and the Holy Spirit: ...*it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...* [Ac 15:28]. The Holy Spirit does not dwell in the letter, but in the spirit; not in the syllables, but in hearts. There is a most sublime reflection on the part of that noble theologian, Melchior Cano ¹⁷⁹. The Church is the column and the firmament of the truth: ...*the pillar and the ground of the truth...* [1 Tm 3:15].

1233: And by the word Church here, there are not to be understood the lowest members of the Mystical Body of Christ, but the Bishops and the Supreme Shepherds of Christ's flock. In fact, the Bishops in the Church are the sole judges authorized by God. The custom of the Church confirms this. And besides, not all are doctors, according to St. Paul [1 Co 12:29]. Furthermore, to feed with the knowledge and the doctrine is proper to the Shepherds, that is, the Bishops [Ac 20:28]. Finally, a certain doctrine, contrary to this one, one cannot and should not in these times be ignorant of it. Such has already been condemned with an authentic censure.¹⁸⁰

1234: From these Shepherds, therefore, that the Holy Spirit has placed to rule the Church of God, that He purchased with His Blood [Ac 20:28] – from these Shepherds, who are legitimate, we must depend. We need to await from them that there be proposed and explained, and in its true sense, declared God's Word

¹⁷⁹ cf. *De locis theol.*, 2, 7 [93].

¹⁸⁰ Pius VI, Errors of the Synod of Pistoia. Errors about the Church, *Auctorem Fidei*, n. 10, August 28, 1794 - Denz. 1510.

revealed in the Scriptures and in Tradition, as the unique and infallible rule of our thinking and operating. And we must follow this faithfully, constantly if we wish to arrive at the knowledge of the truth, and at the possession of supernatural beatitude, eternal happiness, that we hope in God and with God. ...*And whosoever shall follow this rule, peace on them...* [Ga 6:16].

1235: This is the rule, this is the star that we must follow. Let us walk, then, let us walk worthily toward the goal to which we have been called. St. Paul tells us: ... *I ... beseech you* [by the very chains with which he was held bound in his apostolate] ...*I beseech you, a prisoner in the Lord; that you walk worthily of the vocation in which you are called...* [Ep 4:1]. ... *with all simplicity and mildness, with patience, supporting one another...* [v. 2].

1236: It is necessary to work worthily in this vocation, submitting our intellects with humble obsequiousness to believe the divine Word: *with all simplicity* [ib., v. 2]. We are not to resist with obstinate contradiction the authoritative judgments of those legitimate Shepherds, who have the right from God Himself to propose this and to explain this. *With mildness* [ib.]. This is done by overcoming with invincible patience calumnies, derision, opposition, that come from the enemies of the faith and of peace and of the Church. *With patience* [ib.]. We must support with reciprocal love, to walk together, bearing the burdens of one another, all of us who have the same vocation together: *supporting one another with charity...*

1237: ... *careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace...* [Ep 4:3]. By the grace of God, this unity of spirit, or faith, we do possess it. It is enough for us to conserve it: *to keep*. For this, though, there is necessary vigilance, concern, diligence to keep it: *careful* [ib.]. One is kept in the bond of peace, charity, if we are well united and bonded among us with love, and all are thus joined together and united. When this is so, we will have a great attachment to the Shepherds of the Church, whom we must follow. This is especially due to the supreme Shepherd, the Center of unity: ...*careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace...* [v. 3].

1238: *One body* [v. 4]. We are one sole Body, of which Christ is the Head, and all of us are its members. Among the members of this Body, some have the office of presiding and guiding, like the eyes and the tongue. Others have only the office to obey, to follow, as the hands and the feet: *One Body and One Spirit* [v. 4]. There should not be among us diversity of sentences, division of parties: but one sole spirit of faith should animate all, as we are one sole body. One sole supernatural end to that to which we all tend: ... *as you are called to one hope of your calling...* [ib.].

1239: One sole is the Author of this end and the Director toward this end. If many Shepherds do indeed rule over us, they rule only in His authority, in His Name: *One Lord* [v. 5]. One only is the rule, only one is the star that points out the way: the divine Word, object of our faith: *one faith* [ib.]. Only one is the Orient in which our star appears, and from whom we all equally take our movement, which is our Baptism. This is called the Sacrament of Illumination and of Faith¹⁸¹: *one Baptism*.

1240: One sole God, object of our Beatitude: *One God* [v. 6] and the Father of all, who invites us to this Beatitude: ... *and Father of all* [v. 6]. He is above all with His truth, to illumine all to come to know it:*who is above all...* [ib.], and He is through all things with His Providence to direct all to find this: ...*and through all...* [ib.]. And finally, He is indwelling all with His Grace, as the Intimate Principle, to move all to seek this: ...*and in us all...* [ib.].

To Whom be glory forever!¹⁸²

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[B.] Fr. Bertoni's Ideal of the Church as the Model of Holy Abandonment from his Letters¹⁸³:

... This is the way the matter should proceed according to that order hinted at by St. Gregory: taking a step when one sees the way before him clearly, while waiting to take the second, until clarity goes on before him.¹⁸⁴

The hope that the Lord gives, the expectancy of his Charity, in a word – his Divine consolation – when this pertains to the points of our cooperation and we are still somewhat in the dark, it is necessary to wait for the light in order to commit ourselves to the task: and if we already do see clearly, this animates its execution.

This seems to have been the practice of His Spouse which is the Church. As she has already been assured by the divine promise of the assistance of the Holy Spirit, she never ceases seeking the light in order to work, either in the defense of the Truth entrusted to her, or of Church Discipline. And when she does see clearly, she does not permit herself to intervene and to study the matter at hand, to consult, in order to proceed further in the light and in her activity.

¹⁸¹ Translator's Note: cf. # 244, of St. Gaspar Bertoni's Catechetical Instructions on Baptism.

¹⁸² cf. **Parish Sermons**, web-site: www.st-bertoni.com

¹⁸³ *Epistolario*, n. 39, pp. 98, f. October 26, 1813. [cf. Fr. Nello Dalle Vedove, *Il Modello di s. Abbandono*.

¹⁸⁴ Fr. Stofella offers a footnote here, citing St. Gregory the Great's *Primum Regum Coram Christo ambulat qui... ut rectos gressus ponat in opere, intus ad Christum respicit quem per considerationem intus potat in corde* [Book II, c. 3, n. 24]. a.) *Pastor egrediditur cum a secreto meditationis ad publicum operas venit*; b.) *Antequam dilucescat foras non prodeat*. [c. 4, n. 62].

And in both of these matters, her abandonment in God is always uniform. This, if I am not mistaken, is the perfect model of our abandonment in the Lord. This is a beautiful virtue, when we cannot set to work ourselves, being abandoned to the Omnipotent arms of Divine Providence; however, it is a more perfect and consummate virtue, when we are also capable and when we should – according to the order established by Providence – set to work with our own initiative, and nonetheless still not cease from conducting ourselves in this way, while being totally abandoned to His Plan. This seems to have been the idea of the one who said: *I live [and consequently, ‘I work’], no longer I, but there lives in me [and consequently, He is at work] in me, Jesus Christ [Ga 2:20]. And if any man speak, let him speak the words of God ... [1 P 4:11]...*

†

[C.] From Fr. Bertonì's insistence upon Unity of Hearts [Part X] as the Basis of the Juridical Union of the Congregation:¹⁸⁵

Chapter 2

Contrary Opinions to be avoided as much as possible

197. Nothing would prohibit that certain confreres, while maintaining charity among themselves, could disagree in certain opinions: this is not repugnant to peace. Nevertheless, this practice and experience itself shows that **the diversity of opinions and frequent contradiction contribute not a little to obstructing the union of charity, and often open the way for dissension, or at the very least, lessen its fervor and diminish its perfection.** This is so, either:

- because, even though opinions pertain to the intellect, yet they often depend greatly on one's sensitivity and good inclination of will;
- or, because the contradiction of opinion is often grasped as a certain lessening of one's own self-image and reputation, which affords the occasion that one's affection for the other is much diminished;
- or, finally, because this contrary mind-set often proceeds from a certain sense of competition concerning the estimation one's learning is held in, and the honor extended to him, and other certain human comforts that proceed from this. Thus, the Abbot Joseph, as quoted by Cassian stated: as the enemy himself divides carnal and weak brothers over lowly and earthly values: in like

¹⁸⁵ cf. Part X, Section I, Chapter II - CF ## 197-201

manner, among spiritual brothers he brings about discord from the diversity of opinions. [*Coll.16, 8*]

As a result, differences of opinion, disagreement and disputes are much to be feared, and, in so far as this is possible, are to be avoided by all.

198. Therefore, as far as solid doctrine is concerned, especially regarding that approved by the Church, there can be absolutely no diversity admitted among our members, since new opinions repugnant to such doctrine are not to be admitted.

However, in those opinions in which the Catholic doctors have varying, or contrary views among themselves, **every care is to be taken so that even here there be conformity among our members, in so far as this is possible.**

It is particularly necessary that this diversity, should there be any, be not regarding the entire body of doctrine, so that there would seem to be among our confreres **divergent schools of thought: for this most often brings about the division of souls.**

199. Above all, every care must be taken so that any **diversity of doctrine which proceeds from our feelings and personal choice in no way be permitted:** because to oppose the view of another, if this is by set purpose, is a very strong indication that the **dissent is more by choice than by any reasoning process.** Such a state could not help but damage the very core of charity.

200. In this matter it is of utmost importance that the doctrine of another should not be opposed in public lectures, preaching, or written books: because this would not only offend the spirit of the other person, but further very often brings real scandal, especially when this is done harshly and contentiously. As a result, it is very important to have before one's eyes the saying of St. Gregory Nazianzen: 'It is disgusting that in disputations on divine matters, anyone would ever vindicate for himself superiority, or tyrannical domination, or would never give in on any point to another, but rather shut his eyes regarding all the Doctors of the law, where humility not only holds sway, but also security.' [*Or. 26, De moderatione in disputationibus*]

201. Furthermore, **diversity in practical matters of judgments is likewise to be avoided.** For this occasion of **dissension is more frequent and general**, and is exposed to even greater disturbances. The reason is that this is found not only among the learned, but also among those who are not - it crops up between the great and the small alike. In fact it can be discovered in almost every matter that is undertaken and in all activities. Therefore, it can be **the seed-bed of even greater dissension**, and this is all the more the case when we pour more of

ourselves into these human and exterior activities, the more we are attached to them. Pope Boniface addressed these matters: ‘Dissensions and scandals prepare the avenue for depravities, and arouse rancor and hatred, and provide the opportunity for illicit morals.’ [*In Clementinis*, Book 3, tit. 7, *Dudum...De Sepulturis*].

†

There follows here a commentary on these Constitutions:

c. 2: The Avoidance of the Contrast of Opinions which may occur

[CF ## 197-201]

CF # 197: This Constitution covers an entire page in the Stofella edition of the Original Constitutions. St. Ignatius’ very strongly worded CSJ n. 273 dominates this part of Fr. Bertoni’s Constitutions.¹⁸⁶

As far as possible, we should all think alike and speak alike, in conformity with the Apostle’s teaching [Ph 2:2]; and differing doctrines ought not to be permitted, either orally in sermons or public lectures, or in books; [and it will not be permissible to publish books without the approval and permission of the superior general, who will entrust the examination of them to at least three persons of sound doctrine and clear judgment about the field in question]. Even in regard to things which are to be done, diversity, which is generally the mother of discord and the enemy of union of wills, should be avoided as far as possible. This union and agreement among them all ought to be sought with great care the opposite ought not to be permitted, in order that being united among themselves by the bond of fraternal charity, they may be able better and more efficaciously to apply themselves in the service of God and the aid of their fellow men. [cf. also CSJ nn. 358; 464; 671; 672; 821].

Suarez cites St. Thomas here ¹⁸⁷ where the Angelic Doctor, quoting Aristotle, points out that harmony in opinion, of itself, does not pertain to friendship: intelligence grasps this by its parts, virtues and properties - whereas love looks more at the totality. Thus, opinions are in the intellect, which precedes the love in the appetite - out of peace, these may be united. Suarez quotes Decree 41 of the Vth Jesuit General Congregation, held from November 3, 1593-January 18, 1594 ¹⁸⁸:

Decree 41: The teaching of St. Thomas is to be followed by our professors in scholastic theology. [cf. below Decree 56,¹⁸⁹ and CSJ n. 464]. The rules for

¹⁸⁶ cf. Part X of the *Original Constitutions*, Interior Uniformity.

¹⁸⁷ cf. I-II, q. 27, a. 2, ad 2^{um}.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. *For Matters of Greater Moment. The First Thirty Jesuit General Congregations. A Brief History and Translation of the Decrees*. Eds John w. Padberg, SJ, Martin D. O’Keefe, SJ, John L. McCarthy, S.J. St. Louis MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources 1994, pp.187-215 - Decree n. 41 is found on pp. 198, ff.

¹⁸⁹ o.c., pp. 207, ff..

the choice of opinions in theology and philosophy are to be printed in the *Ratio Studiorum*. ...

... Since the Commission on revising the *Ratio Studiorum*, after careful discussion and comparison of ideas over a period of some days had reported to the Congregation their judgment regarding the speculative part and the choice of opinions, the Congregation approved their judgment. And in the first place, by unanimous opinion, the Congregation decreed that our professors were to follow the teaching of St. Thomas in scholastic theology as being more sound, more secure, more approved, and more in accord with our Constitutions. Then the Congregation decreed that some rules developed by the same Commission for the choice of opinions both in theological matters and in philosophical ones should be printed in the Book of the *Ratio Studiorum*, so that they might be precisely observed by our teachers. Those rules are as follows:¹⁹⁰

For the most part, Fr. Bertoni substantially follows **Suarez' n. 8**, of his **Chapter VII, in Book VIII**¹⁹¹ - the concern throughout is that the variety of intellectual opinion could indeed proceed from a defect of union of wills. Therefore, admitting the real possibility of a contrast of opinions, particularly in some theological matters, it is noted by the traditional authors in the Church that these differences often derive from a lessening of fervor in charity, leading to a decline in one's own self-esteem. Such intellectual varieties of opinion may be an enrichment to the grasp of faith - but, must always be weighed against fraternal charity.

So, this Constitution notes:

- in itself, a difference of intellectual opinion is not repugnant to peace;
- however, very often it is harmful for the union of charity - as dissension often leads to a lessening of fervor and perfection - because so much depends on the choice of will in discussions;
- sometimes the contradiction in opinions leads to a diminution of another's self-esteem, and leads to a lessening of the acceptance of others;
- and also very often this divergence flows from a certain competition regarding the opinion one holds for his own learning, and the yearning for honors.

After the quote from the Abbot Joseph, cited by Suarez, Fr. Bertoni adds these words:

¹⁹⁰ o.c., pages 198-199 - Rules for Theologians and Philosophers regarding choice of opinion; cf. also pp. 207, f.

¹⁹¹ cf. Suarez, o.c., p. 951 a-b.

... Quare opinionum dissensio et contentio et disceptatio maxime pertimiscenda, et quod fieri potest, ab omnibus est vitanda...

These words seem to paraphrase what Suarez concludes in the previous column:¹⁹²

Tria ergo prohibentur: contrarietas opinionum, exterior contentio et contradictio verborum, dissensio in judiciis de rebus agendis...

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CF # 198: this Constitution also seems to flow from the Ignatian *Examen*, c. 3, n. 47, CSJ n. 274, and offers a commentary on it:

[The candidate] should be asked whether he has held, or holds any opinions or ideas different from those which are commonly held in the Church and among the teachers whom she has approved; and whether he is willing, if at some time he should hold any, to defer to what will be determined in the Society as to what ought to be held about such matters. [CSJ, n. 47]

Novel doctrines ought not to be admitted; and if there should be opinions which diverge from what is commonly held by the Church, and its teachers, those holding them ought to submit to what is determined in the Society, as was explained in the *Examen*. Furthermore, an effort should be made to obtain conformity in the Society in regard to the divergent or contrary opinions which Catholic teachers hold. [CSJ, n. 274]

Fr. Bertoni simply copied Suarez here, where he is explaining various negative rules for the defense of charity - these all are fleshed out, then, to become Fr. Bertoni's Constitutions:¹⁹³

- the first rule, not to injure one's brothers;
- the second rule, not to think negatively regarding other nationalities;
- the third rule, not to manifest a spirit of ordering, or dominating;
- the fourth rule, not to contend with another, by holding on to one's own opinion, disputing, or judging.

This **CF # 198** is Fr. Bertoni's editing of Suarez' n. 9 here, showing three ways in which charity can be furthered:

- first, let there be no diversity where there is the more solid Church doctrine;

¹⁹² Suarez, o.c., p. 951 a.

¹⁹³ l.c., pp. 949, a, ff. - cf. **CF ## 191, ff.**

- secondly, where the Catholic doctors are not in accord, every effort should be made that there be conformity within the Society;
- thirdly, every effort needs to be made that this diversity should not extend to the entire body of doctrine - there should not be different 'schools' within the society, which is so harmful to charity.

These comments of Suarez, copied in **CF # 198** by St. Gaspar, flow from the Jesuit Constitutions, and also the Vth General Congregation,¹⁹⁴ as noted:

Decree 56: The Preface to the Rules on the choice of opinions, now corrected and approved, is included:

Prefatory Remarks for the Rules of Choosing an Opinion, developed by the Commission for the *Ratio*.

1. The Fathers selected from various national groups and appointed to see to the revision of the Book of the *Ratio Studiorum* had thought it best first to treat the choice of opinions, and they set forth as a basic premise that the doctrine of the Society ought to be uniform, safe and solid following CSJ nn. 273, 358. After a careful discussion and comparison of views over a number of days, they set forth the following agreement.

1. By all means, Ours should consider St. Thomas as their special teacher, and they should be obliged to follow him in scholastic theology, first, because our Constitutions commend this to us [cf. n. 474], and the Supreme Pontiff, Clement VIII, has indicated that he desires it; and second because CSJ n. 672 admonishes us to select the doctrine of one writer, and at this time there can hardly be a doctrine more solid and more safe. St. Thomas is deservedly regarded by all as the Prince of Theologians.

2. Nonetheless, Ours are not to be understood as being so bound to St. Thomas that they may not deviate from him in any respect. For those very ones who so strongly profess themselves to be Thomists differ from him at times. And it is not fitting that Ours be more tightly bound to St. Thomas than are the Thomists themselves.

3. In questions that are purely philosophical and also in those pertaining to Scripture and the canons, it will also be permissible to follow others who have professedly been engaged in those areas.

4. But lest perchance someone may, from what has been said, take occasion to depart from the teaching of St. Thomas, we think the order should be issued

¹⁹⁴ cf. *For Matters of Greater Moment...*, o.c., pp. 198, f., 207, f.

that no one should be called to teach theology who is not truly devoted to the teachings of St. Thomas.

- And, by all means, those who are positively opposed to him should be removed from teaching. For those who are genuinely devoted to him will not, it is certain, depart from him unless reluctantly and very rarely.
- With these principles settled, the fathers have developed the following rules to be understood in the light of the above; and they have offered them to the General Congregation for its approval...

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CF # 199: this particular rule is taken *verbatim* from Suarez¹⁹⁵ - this is his n. 10 of this same Chapter VII. The idea here is any diversity of doctrine which proceeds from the affective side of a human being, is mostly forbidden by this rule. What is most intended by this rule is that that **diversity of doctrine**, which proceeds from **one's affectivity and direct choice of will**, is in no way to be permitted. The reason behind this is: that to oppose the doctrine of another out of a foregone set purpose, is a very strong indication of **dissenting more by will than by intellect**, and therefore it cannot help but seriously harm charity.

CF # 200: This Constitution of Fr. Bertoni picks up where his previous rule leaves off in the text of this same n. 10 of Suarez, and continues on the next page¹⁹⁶. The gist of this rule is in public expressions: as in lectures, sermons, or books, the members of the Society should not oppose one another. Conduct to the opposite would not only offend the spirit of another; but as a general rule would bring with it serious scandal, particularly when this is done harshly and contentiously. Suarez suggests a text from Nazianzen but skips the first few lines and just includes the underlined section:

... Turpe est profecto in veste, ac vestitus ratione, non sublimiorem, sed viliorē eligere, ac genūum calo, lacrimarum fontibus, ieiuniis, vigiliis, chameuniis, labore, atque omnis corporis maceratione humilitatem prae se ferre, ac propriam inbecillitatem agnoscere; in divinis autem disputationibus principatum et tyrannidem sibi vindicare, nec cuiquam omnino cedere, verum supra omnes leges Doctores supercilium efferre, ubi humilitas non solum gloriam habet, sed etiam securitatem.

This is taken from the Cappadocian's: *De Moderatione in Disputationibus*, Orat. 26, 27, t. 1, 400 C., as Fr. Bertoni points out. With these words, Suarez' n. 10

¹⁹⁵ o.c., p. 951 b.

¹⁹⁶ l.c., pp. 951 b-952 a.

ends. The next Constitution picks up where this leaves off, eliminating a few connective words.¹⁹⁷

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CF # 201: now, this diversity is applied to practical matters - it is not enough to procure unity in doctrine, but we should also avoid diversity in matters of practicality, for such is the mother of discord and the enemy of the union of wills. The fact is that this occasion of dissension is more frequent and more general in the diversity of judgments that occurs concerning matters to be attended to rather than in doctrine - and hence, even more so exposed to disturbance. The reason for this is that this diversity takes place not only among the learned, but among the unschooled as well, and is found among the great and the small alike, and can come to the fore in even minute matters and activities. And it is a fact that we deal more with human matters and exterior activities. Thus Pope Boniface very elegantly exaggerates, as is quoted in Clement's work *On Burials*, at the word *Dudum*, where among other things, he says: Dissensions and scandals prepare the way for depraved actions, and arouse rancor and hatreds, provide the access to illicit actions.

With this quote from Clement, citing the Pope, Fr. Bertoni's Chapter 2 comes to a close.

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Further insights into the ideals of St. Gaspar follow here:

1. The Church administers the Goods of Christ:¹⁹⁸

... It is not licit to disregard a matter, to the prejudice of the legitimate owner, which, in the case before me, is Christ Our Lord, and the Church is His administrator ...

2. Careful Attention to Church Discipline:

... Do not be concerned at all in going to confession: even when it is a matter of defects and negligence. These are such that while it would be useful and pious to confess them, it is not however necessary, according to the Doctrine of the Council of Trent [Catechism, Part II, 255]. Indeed, Holy Communion itself remits these, according to the teaching of the Catholic Church. And even more, any act of fervent charity whatsoever would suffice to remove them, according to the teaching of St. Thomas; this is because these have as their effect a certain lessening of charity, and so any fervent act of charity remits them totally [cf. II-II, q. 24, a. 10; q. 79, a. 4]. So, love the Lord with all your mind, with all your soul,

¹⁹⁷ cf. Suarez, o.c., n. 11, p. 952 a. [cf. also **CF ## 72; 163**].

¹⁹⁸ Epistolario, n. 119, p. 214 – July 20, 1827.

with all your heart, with all your strength, as is commanded you in the first Precept...¹⁹⁹

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... I thought about the painting. And since the circumstances have changed, especially with regard to Reverend Mother Serafina and the Government, it does not seem to me that there should be impeded that there be fulfilled the express wish of the Holy Church, that such religious objects should be returned to those places where they once were, as the monasteries can no longer sustain them...²⁰⁰

3. The Need for Church Approval:

... You really should not show this Plan to anyone before it has been approved by the Roman Church...²⁰¹

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... I have pondered this matter, prayed it over, sought counsel about it, especially with Fr. Guerreri ... and I have also given that advice which before God I believed I should give, as being the most fitting with the rules of the Church, and what was the most useful in the Lord's interests ... Mr. Bongiovani was not much persuaded by my view... and I could not accept his views... as they seemed less fitting according to the rules of the Church...²⁰²

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... It is with utmost pleasure of soul that I have heard from you the most happy news that the much desired approval through that final Apostolic Blessing which establishes the works of God and makes them increase and be perpetuated in the Church ...²⁰³

4. The Wisdom of the Church

... But how could anyone put into the hands of someone who is unintelligent the plans for such a surprising building? Could the Lord illumine me; and why would He not even sooner enlighten you, Reverend Mother? Thus, He will further illumine you and also me; He will enlighten me, so that I might by chance dispose you, Reverend Mother, from afar to receive His lights; and once having received them, in order to insure their fulfillment by comparing them with an insight from the Divine Scriptures, from the Holy Catholic Church, from her Saints

¹⁹⁹ ib., n. 8, pp. 39, f. December 1812.

²⁰⁰ ib. First Appendix, p. 294

²⁰¹ ib, Letter 98, p. 188.

²⁰² ib, Letter 102, pp. 194, f,

²⁰³ ib., Letter 187, October 18, 1833, p. 288.

and Doctors; as a result of all this there might be fulfilled in you, with you and for you, that which He has begun; so that, *the One Who has begun this work, will bring it to completion...* [Ph 1:6].²⁰⁴

5. The Church is the Interpreter of the Gospel

... The matter is very serious: I have thought it over, and prayed it over. Nor does any other solution come to my mind that one should wait in order to change it, unless, of course, some solid reason would appear contrary to my view. The Gospel text [Mt 19:21 ... *give all you have to the poor...*] is clear, open; and what I place before all of my own reasoning, as long as as the Holy Church, or very clear arguments should not clearly show that it should explain it in our case ...²⁰⁵

6. The Church is the Sure Guardian of Doctrine

... The doctrine of the Holy See does not change as do the uncertain and timid teachings of men. Benedict XIV has defined [Denz. 1475-1479] the principles, and the rules, with which the Theologians ought to examine the particular contracts, as these come up. Pius VIth, Pius VIIth always referred back to these principles, and to these rules; and Benedict XIV, and his successors, protest that the Holy See does not define particular cases, for just reasons: but only proposes the principles from which the Theologians ought to discuss these as the need arises.... This is a great charity for penitents and for the poor Confessors. And the Holy Church, Who is a mother, goes as far as she can in kindness for the salvation of souls. The Church does condescend, but does not contradict herself, nor does she remove the necessary discretion or prudence necessary in order to be saved: *Be simple as doves and wise as serpents.* [Mt 10:16]. This also includes being silent and speaking up, according to the times and circumstances...²⁰⁶

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... I found that the review, *l' Ami*, has taken some steps [Gallicanism] with the Archbishop of which they should all regret. Here it is not a question of metaphysical, nor political controversies. This is a matter of truths that we ought to believe – not on the authority of an Archbishop and his magazine, but on the authority of the Head of the Church upon which is founded the House of God, who is the column and the firmament of truth. Rome is silent; it is silent, because it has already spoken, it has corrected, annulled, rejected all those doctrines, because they are no more than human opinions, even if these include those of Bossuet [cf. Denz. 1322-1326]. Rome is silent because she speaks only after having spoken through ten or twelve Pontiffs, and there remains only

²⁰⁴ ib, Letter 28, pp. 80, f.

²⁰⁵ ib., Letter 133, p. 228.

²⁰⁶ ib. Letter 110, pp. 204, f.

excommunication of them; and the Church waits, just as God does awaiting for the recognition of the error, and for our Penance.

Do not fear those who can kill the body; but rather fear those who can cast both body and soul into Gehenna [Mt 10:28].

Let us listen to Christ and His Vicar; and if we remain alone as was Noah, who remained *alone against all*, the few of us and only those will be saved in the ark, outside of which we know there is no salvation. Here the words of St. Paul fit well, even though they were quoted by the Archbishop outside of context, where he, to his shame. And perhaps many others, is found: *If even an Angel comes to preach another doctrine from that which is taught by Peter in his successors, do not believe it* [Ga 1:8]. The penalty is eternal death and deparation from God...²⁰⁷

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²⁰⁷ ib., Letter 162, p. 262.

APPENDIX 1

Constitutional Filiation

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger has written an insightful book (***Behold the Pierced One***, San Francisco: Ignatius 1986) in which he presents Christology also from the aspect of Jesus' Prayer:

a. In the Trinity everything is one and the same where there is not the opposition of relationship – this is an old principle (from St. Anselm?) defined by the Council of Lyons (in 1442) in its Decree for the Jacobites (cf. D-S 1330; ***The Catholic Faith***, n. 325). In a certain sense, Jesus' "personality" is **established, made manifest, in his constant communication with His heavenly Father**. Of all of Jesus' titles, those which seem to predominate are: the Christ, the Lord, and "Son". **Jesus' most intimate communion and distinction with/from the Father are clear in His constant "going aside" to pray in solitude, as well as in public**. The Church imitates this in her praying the Creed – the confession of faith is not merely a "shopping list" of articles of faith, but a genuine prayer of adoration, praise and hope. Jesus' "Person" is contained in His prayer.

b. Jesus died – praying: His death was the ultimate commendation of His soul, His existence, unto the Father – by breathing forth His holy spirit. Jesus' last words are eloquent testimony of His devotion, infinite trust, love, for the Father. He had previously groaned: *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?* But, He concludes His earthly sojourn by commending all of His work, life, Self, to the Father. (cf. Mt 27:50, f.. p.; Rm 12:1, ff., I P 2:4, f.).

c. By his divine power, he has given us all the things we need for life and for true devotion, bringing us to know God Himself... In making these gifts, he has given us the guarantee of something very great and wonderful to come: through all this, we share in the divine nature (cf. 2 P 1:3, ff.). Agreeing, then, that the core of Jesus' own Person is His prayer, the expression, revelation of His relationship to His Father – we need to share in His prayer. There is no other way to be one with Him. All knowledge is a certain union between the knower and the known. The fundamental response of the religious person is always prayer. Christian prayer, though, is unique in that it is entirely based on the Father's Will: ultimately, it is the act of self-giving, surrender to God.

d. Jesus' own summary of Prayer opens with "OUR" Father – sharing in this prayer will always demand communion with all those He loves: forgive US; give US; lead US not into temptation: deliver US from evil. We are in-grafted INTO the body of Christ (cf. Rm 6:1, ff.). It is in prayer that the past is future and the present is simultaneously tradition and hope, preparing us for eternity. History becomes

prophecy and presence becomes promise based on sacred memories of the wonders of God extended to His People. We become one with the Trinity in Whom all time is NOW. Jesus' Plan is simply to carry out the Father's Plan for a New Creation, a new heavens and a new earth (cf. Is 51:16; 65:17; 66:12; Rm 8:19 +; Mt 19:28| Rv. 21:1, ff.). In establishing the Church, Christ intends to renew the People of God.

d. In order for faith to develop in the Church, we need to heed the words of the Council:

... The Tradition that comes from the apostles makes progress in the Church, with the help of the Holy Spirit. There is a growth in insight into the realities and words that are being passed on. This comes about in various ways. It comes through:

- the contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things in their hearts (cf. Lk 2:19, 51);
- it comes from the intimate sense of spiritual realities which they experience;
- and it comes from the preaching of those who have received, along with their right of succession in the episcopate, the sure charism of truth.

Thus, as the centuries go by, the Church is always advancing towards the plenitude of divine truth, until eventually the words of God are fulfilled in her... (cf. DV 8).

f. The heart of the teaching of the Church is that "Jesus is Lord!" He is the true Son of God, and is truly man - Jesus is of Nazareth, of Galilee – the Lord of heaven and earth in the catharsis of the Paschal Mystery. This has become known to the Church which was "let in on" the messianic secret, enabled to listen in on the eternal conversation of the Father and the Son, with the Holy Spirit.

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APPENDIX 2

A. EPISTOLA S. P. N. IGNATII

DE VIRTUTE OBEDIENTIAE²⁰⁸

Ignatius Loyola Fratribus Societatis Iesu qui sunt in Lusitania, gratiam et amorem Christi Domini sempiternum.

1. Magnam animi voluptatem capio, Fratres in Christo carissimi, cum affertur ad me quam acri studio conatuque ad summam virtutis ac divini obsequii perfectionem enitamini; beneficio illius qui vos, ut ad hoc vitae institutum vocavit, sic in eodem pro sua clementia retinet dirigitque ad beatum finem, ad quem qui sunt ab ipso electi perveniunt.

2. Atque ego sane, cum vos omnibus donis ornamentisque spiritualibus perfectos, tum vero, quod alias ex me cognovistis, in primis obedientiae virtute praestantissimos esse cupio; idque non solum ob eximia quaedam ac singularia eius bona, quae tot tamque illustribus Sacrarum Litterarum testimoniis atque exemplis in Testamento aequae Novo ac Veteri comprobantur; sed etiam, quo, ut est apud St. Gregorium, *obedientia sola virtus est quae virtutes ceteras menti inserit, insertasque custodit.*²⁰⁹ Haec dum floruerit, florebunt procul dubio reliquae, edentque fructus, quales et ego in animis vestris exopto, et suo iure postulat is qui humanum genus, neglectae obedientiae scelere afflictum ac perditum, salutari ipsemet obedientia reparavit, *factus obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem Crucis* [Ph 2:8].

3. Ab aliis religiosis Ordinibus facilius patiamur superari nos ieiuniis, vigiliis et cetera victus cultusque asperitate, quam suo quique ritu ac disciplina sancta suscipiunt; vera quidem ac perfecta obedientia, abdicationeque voluntatis atque iudicii maxime velim, Frateres carissimi, esse conspicuos quicumque in hac Societate Deo Domino nostro deserviunt, eiusdemque Societatis veram germanamque sobolem hac quasi nota distingui qui numquam intueantur personam ipsam cui obediunt, sed in ea Christum Dominum, cuius causa obediunt. Si quidem Superiori, nec si prudentia, bonitate ceterisque quibuslibet divinis donis ornatus instructusque sit, propterea obtemperandum est; sed ob id solum quod vices gerat Dei, eiusdemque auctoritate fungatur, qui dicit: *Qui vos audit, me audit; et qui vos spernit, me spernit* [Lk 10:16]; sed contra, sive consilio aut prudentia remittendum, quatenus ille Superior est; quando illius personam refert cuius sapientia falli non potest, supplebitque ipse quidquid ministro defuerit, sive probitate aliisque ornamentis careat. Siquidem disertis verbis Christus Dominus, cum dixisset: *Super cathedram Moysi sederunt Scribae et Pharisei,*

²⁰⁸ Cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, **CF ## 138-151**.

²⁰⁹ *Moralium*, Lib. 35, c. 14, n. 28.

protinus addidit: *Omnia ergo quaedumque dixerint servate et facite, secundum vero opera eorum nolite facere.* [Mt 23:2, 3].

4. Quocirca sedulo vos in eam curam atque exercitationem incumbere cupio ut Christum Dominum quolibet agnoscere studeatis, in eoque divinae Maiestatis reverentiam atque obedientiam summa cum religione praestare. Quod vobis minus mirum videbitur, si animadverteritis praeceptum esse ab Apostolo ut Superioribus, etiam secularibus ethnicisque, pareamus, ut Christo ex quo omnis potestas bene instructa descendit; sic enim scribit ille ad Ephesios: *obedite dominis carnalibus cum timore et tremore, in simplicitate cordis vestri, sicut Christo; non ad oculum servientes, quasi hominibus placentes, sed ut servi Christi, facientes voluntatem Dei ex animo, cum bona voluntate servientes, sicut Domino, et non hominibus* [Ep 6; 5-7]. Atque hinc existimare poteritis ipsi, cum se Religiosus quispiam regendum ac moderandum alteri tradidit, non solum ut Superior, sed etiam nominatim ut Christi partes agent, quo illum loco apud animum suum habere, utrum ut hominem an ut Christi vicarium debeat intueri.

5. Iam vero illud etiam vobis clare compertum esse ac in animis vestris penitus insidere vehementer cupio, infirmam et valde imperfectam esse illam obedientiae formam quae mandata dumtaxat opere exsequitur; nec virtutis nomine dignam, nisi ad alterum gradum ascendat qui voluntatem Superioris suam efficiat, et cum ea ita concordet ut, non solum in effectu exsecutio appareat; verum etiam in affectu consensio; sicque idem velit uterque, idem nolit. Atque propterea in Sacris Litteris legimus; *Melior est obedientia quam victimae* [1 K 15:22]; siquidem, ut S. Gregorius docet, *per victimas aliena caro, per obedientiam vero voluntas propria mactatur*²¹⁰; quae quidem pars animi, quoniam est adeo praestans, sic fit ut eius oblatio, Domino ac Creatori nostro per obedientiam facta, magni sit aestimanda.

6. Quanto in errore, quamque periculoso versantur, non solum ii qui in iis quae ad carnem et sanguinem pertinent, sed illi etiam qui in rebus alioquin admodum sanctis ac spiritualibus, ut ieiuniis, precationibus aliisque quibusvis pietatis operibus, fas putant a praescripto Superioribus ac voluntate discedere! Audiant quod sapienter annotat Cassianus in Collatione Danielis Abbatis: *Unum sane, inquit, atque idem inobedientiae genus est, vel propter operationis instantiam, vel propter otii desiderium, senioris violare mandatum; tamque dispendiosum est pro somno quam pro vigilantia Monasterii statuta convellere; tantum denique est Abbatis transire praeceptum ut legas quantum si contempnas ut dormias.*²¹¹ Sancta fuit actio Marthae, sancta contemplatio Magdalenae, sancta paenitentia, et lacrymae, quibus pedes Christi Domini rigabantur; sed haec omnia nimirum oportuit fieri in Bethania, quam vocem domum obedientiae interpretantur, ut ea re, quemadmodum ait S. Bernardus, nobis

²¹⁰ Moraliū, Lib. 35, c. 14, n. 28.

²¹¹ Collationes, Lib. V, c. 20.

significare voluisse Dominus videatur, nec *studium bonae actionis, nec otium sanctae contemplationis, nec lacrymas paenitentias extra Bethaniam illi accepta esse potuisse*.²¹²

7. Quocirca voluntates vestras, Fratres carissimi, quoad eius fieri potest, omnino deponite; libertatem Conditori vestro, quam vobis ipsemet elargitus est, in eius ministriis libere tradite ac dicite. Nolite exiguum vestri liberi arbitrii fructum putare quod liceat vobis illud, a quo id accepistis, eidem per obedientiam plene reddere. Quod enim facitis, non modo non perditis ipsum, verum etiam augetis atque perficitis; quippe qui vestras omnes voluntates certissima rectitudinis regula moderamini voluntate divina, quam videlicet interpretatur is qui vobis Dei nomine praesidet.

8. Itaque diligenter illud etiam cavendum est ne Superioris ullo unquam tempore voluntatem, quam ducere pro divina debetis, ad vestram detorquere nitamini; id enim esset, non vestram divinae conformare, sed divinam vestrae voluntatis norma regere velle, eiusdem divinae Sapientiae ordinem invertentes. Sane quam magnus est error, et quidem eorum quos amor sui obcaecavit, obedientes existimare sese, cum Superiore ad id quod ipsimet volunt aliqua ratione pertraxerint! Sanctum Bernardum, in hac re praeclar exercitatum, audite: *Quisquis, inquit, vel aperte, vel occulte satagit, ut, quod habet in voluntate, hoc ei spiritualis pater iniungat, ipse se seducit, si forte sibi quasi de obedientia blandiatur. Neque enim in ea re ipse Praelato, sed magis ei Praelatus obedit*.²¹³ Quae cum ita sint, quisquis ad obedientiae virtutem velit pervenire oportet ad hunc secundum obedientiae gradum ascendat ut Superioris non solum iussa exsequatur, sed etiam eius voluntatem suam faciat, seu potius suam exuat ut divinam, a Superiore expositam, induat.

9. Qui vero se totum penitus immolare vult Deo, praeter voluntatem, intelligentiam quoque, qui tertius et summus est gradus obedientiae, offerat necesse est; ut non solum idem velit, sed etiam ut idem sentiat quod Superior, eiusque iudicio subiciat suum, quoad potest devota voluntas intelligentiam inflectere. Quae vis animi, tametsi non ea qua voluntas pollet libertate praedita est, atque ipsa natura fertur eius assensu in id quod sibi veri speciem praebet, tamen multis in rebus, in quibus videlicet cognitae veritatis evidentia vim illi non infert, potest voluntatis pondere in hanc potius quam in illam partem inclinari. Quae res cum incidunt, debet quisquis obedientiam profiteretur inclinare sese in sententiam Superioris. Etenim, cum obedientia sit quoddam holocaustum, quo totus homo sine ulla prorsus imminutione Conditori suo ac Domino per manus ministrorum in caritatis igne immolatur; tamquam sit eadem renuntiatio quaedam integra, per quam omni suo iure sponte decedit Religiosus, ut divinae Providentiae Superioris ductu gubernandum ac possidendum ultro sese addicat ac mancipet, negari non potest quin obedientia comprehendat, non solum executionem

²¹² Sermo ad milites de Templo. c. 13.

²¹³ Sermo de tribus ordin. Eccles., n. 4.

ut imperata quis faciat, et voluntatem ut libenter faciat; sed etiam iudicium, ut quaecumque Superior mandato ac sentit, eadem inferiori et recta et vera esse videantur, quatenus, ut dixi, vi sua potest voluntas intelligentiam flectere.

10. Utinam hanc mentis et iudicii obedientiam ita et intellegerent homines et exercerent, ut grata Deo est ac omnibus qui in Religione vivunt necessaria! Nam ut in corporibus globisque celestibus, ut alius alium afficiat moveatque, requiritur ut certa quadam convenientia et ordine inferior orbis superiori subiciatur, sic in hominibus, cum alter alterius auctoritate movetur, quod per obedientiam fit, oportet ut is qui ab alterius nutu pendet, subserviat et obsecundet, ut virtus ab imperante ad eum devietur et influat. Haec autem obtemperandi obsecundandique ratio constare non potest, nisi voluntas ac iudicium inferioris voluntate ac iudicio congruat.

11. Iam vero, si finis et causa obedientiae spectatur, quemadmodum voluntas, ita et iudicium in eo quo nobis convenit decipi potest. Ergo, sicuti ne voluntas erret, cum Superioris voluntate coniungitur, sic intelligentia, ne fallatur, ad Superioris intelligentiam conformanda est. *Ne imitaris prudentiae tuae* [Pr 3:5], Sacrae Litterae monent; atque in rebus etiam humanis censent sapientes vere prudentis esse sua ipsius prudentia minime fidere, praesertim in rebus suis, quarum homines animo perturbato fere boni iudices esse non possunt. Quod si in rebus nostris alterius, etiam non Superioris, iudicium atque consilium nostro anteponendum est, quanto magis ipsius Superioris, cui nos ut Dei vicem gerenti ac divinae voluntatis interpreti, moderandos tradidimus? In causis vero personisque spiritualibus eo maior etiam cautio procul dubio est necessaria, quo gravius est spiritualis viae periculum, cum sine frenis consilii discretionisve in ea decurritur. Qua de re commode Cassianus in Collatione Abbatis Mosi ait: Nulla alio vitio tam praecipitem diabolus Monachum pertrahit ad mortem, quam cum eum, neglectis consiliis seniorum suo iudicio persuaserit definitionique confidere.²¹⁴

12. Praeterea, nisi haec obedientia iudicii existat, fieri non potest ut vel consensus voluntatis vel executio talis sit qualem esse oportet; natura enim ita comparatum est ut animi nostri vires quae appetitivae dicuntur sequantur apprehensivas; et, nisi adhibita vi, voluntas, iudicio repugnante, diu obtemperare non poterit. Quod si forte quis aliquo temporis spatio obediat per communem illam apprehensionem qua censetur perperam etiam praecipienti parendum esse, certe id stabile ac fixum esse non potest; atque ita perseverantia deficit, vel saltem obedientiae perfectio, quae in prompte et alacriter obediendo consistit; non enim ibi potest esse alacritas ac diligentia ubi est animorum sententiarumque dissensio. Perit etiam exsequendi studium et celeritas, cum ambigitur expediat necne facere quod iubemur; perit celebris illa obedientiae caecae simplicitas, cum apud nos ipsos in quaestionem vocationis rectene praecipiat an secus; atque etiam fortasse damnamus Superiorem

²¹⁴ *Collationes*, Lib. II, c. 11. cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni – **CF # 151** [Concluding number on the vow of Obedience].

quod ea mandet quae nobis non ita iucunda sunt; perit humilitas, quoniam etsi ex altera parte paremus, ex altera tamen nosmetipsos Superiori praeferimus; perit in rebus arduis fortitudo; perit denique, ut summam complectar, virtutis huius vis omnis ac dignitas. Succedunt autem in eorum locum dolor, molestia, tarditas, lassitudo, obmurmurationes, excusationes aliquae vitia non sane levia, quibus obedientiae pretium ac meritum prorsus extinguitur. Itaque S. Bernardus, de iis qui graviter ferunt imperata minus sibi suavia, sic ait: *Haec si moleste coeperis sustinere, si diiudicare Praelatum, si murmurare in corde, etiamsi exterius impleas quo iubetur, non est haec virtus patientiae, sed velamentum malitiae.*²¹⁵ Quod si pax et tranquillitas animi quaeritur, certe hac non fruatur is qui habet intra sese causam perturbationis atque tumultus dissensionem videlicet iudicii proprii ab obedientiae lege.

13. Atque idcirco, tuendae concordiae causa, quae societatis omnis est vinculum, tantopere hortatur Apostolus ut ad ipsum omnes sapiant et dicant²¹⁶, nimirum, ut consentientibus et iudiciis et voluntatibus, mutuo foveantur et conserventur. Iam si unum eundemque oportet esse membrorum sensum et capitis, facile cernitur utrum sit aequius, caput membris an membra capiti consentire. Atque ex his quidem, quae dicta sunt hactenus, satis apparet obedientia iudicii quam sit necessaria.

14. Quam vero sit eadem ipsa perfecta grataque Domino, inde primum ostenditur, quod per eam praestantissima pars hominis ac pretiosissima Domino consecratur. Deinde, quod obediens ita fit holocaustum vivum gratumque Maiestati divinae, cum nihil suimet omnino retineat; postremo, quod magna est certaminis difficultas: frangit enim sese Dei causa obediens ipsemet, resistitque naturali propensione quae omnibus hominibus insita est, ad suam complectendam sequendamque sententiam. Ex his igitur rebus efficitur ut obedientia, tametsi proprie voluntatem perficere videatur, quippe quam reddit ad nutum Superioris promptam ac paratam, nihilominus ad intelligentiam quoque ipsam, ut diximus, pertinere debeat, eamque inducere ad sentientium id ipsum quod sentit Superior; sic enim fiet, ut omnibus connixi viribus et voluntatis et intelligentiae, ad executionem celerem atque integram veniamus.

15. Vedeor mihi vos, Fratres carissimi, audire dicentes de virtutis quidem huiusce necessitate iam non ambigere; illud vero ut cognoscatis vehementer optare quo pacto eius perfectionem pervenire possitis. Huic ergo quaestioni cum S. Leone ita respondeo: *Nihil arduum est humilibus, et nihil asperum mitibus;*²¹⁷ modo non desit vobis humilitas, non desit mansuetudo, non utique derit Deo benignitas ad vos adjuvandos, ut, quae sibi promisistis, ea praestare possitis, animo non solum aequo, sed etiam libenti.

²¹⁵ Sermo III, de Circumcisione, n. 8.

²¹⁶ Rm 15:5; 1Co 1:10; 2 Co 13:11; Ph 2:2.

²¹⁷ Sermo V, de Epiphania. C. 3. PL 54, col. 252.

16. Praeterea, vobis tria nominatim propono quae ad obediendum iudicii comparandam multum iuvant.

Primum illud est ut, quemadmodum initio dixi, non intueamini in persona Superioris hominem obnoxium erroribus atque miseriis, sed Christum ipsum, qui est sapientia summa, bonitas immense, caritas infinita, qui nec decipi potest nec vos vult ipse decipere. Et quoniam conscii vobismet estis vos Dei amore iugum obedientiae subiisse ut in Superioris voluntate sequenda voluntatem divinam certius sequeremini, nolite dubitare quin pergat fidelissima Domini caritas, eorum ministerio quos vobis praefecit vos deinceps gubernare, et rectis itineribus ducere. Itaque Superioris vocem ac iussa, non secus ac Christi vocem, excipite siquidem Apostolus etiam scribens in hanc sententiam ad Colossenses, cum ad obtemperandum Praepositis subditos adhoratur, ait: *Quodcumque facitis, ex animo operamini, sicut Domino et non hominibus; scientes uod a Domino accipietis retributionem hereditatis. Domino Christo servite*²¹⁸. Sanctus vero Bernardus: *Sive Deus, inquit, sive homo, vicarius Dei, mandatum quodcumque tradiderit, pari profecto obsequendum est cura, pari reverentia deferendum; ubi tamen Deo contraria non praecipit homo*²¹⁹. Atque ita, si non hominem externis oculis, sed Deum inspexeritis internis, haud sane grave fuerit voluntates vestras atque iudicia conformare ad eam regulam actionumstrarum quam ipsimet elegistis.

17. Altera est ratio ut, quod Superior mandat vel sentit, defendere semper apud animos vestros studiose nitamini, improbare autem nequaquam. Atque ad eam ipsam rem proderit bene animatos affectosque esse ad id omne quod ipse iusserit; sic enim fiet non solum ut sinere molestia, sed etiam ut cum voluptate laetitiaque pareatis; nam, ut est apud S. Leonem, *non dura ibi necessitate servitur, ubi diligitur quod iubetur*.²²⁰

18. Postrema subiciendi iudicii ratio est, cum facilius tutiorque, tunc etiam apud sanctos Patres in more posita, ut statuatis vobisqu岸 ipsi quidquid Superior praecipit ipsius Dei praeceptum esse et voluntatem; atque, ut ad credenda quae catholica fides proponit toto animo assensuque vestro statim incumbitis, sic ad ea facienda quaecumque Superior dixerit caeco quodam impetu voluntatis, parendi cupidiae, sine ulla prorsus disquisitione feramini. Sic egisse credendus est Abraham, filium Isaac immolare iussus; sic, Novi Testamenti tempore, aliquae e sanctis Patribus iis quod commemorat Cassianus, ut Ioannes Abbas, qui, quod erat ei imperatum, non reputabat utilene esset an inutile, ut cum aridum lignum tanto ac tam diuturno labore per annum irrigavit; nec utrum fieri posset necne, ut cum conatus est tam ex animo ingens saxum solus dimovere loco quod ne multi quidem simul homines impellere

²¹⁸ Col 3:23, 24.

²¹⁹ *De précepte et dispensation*, c. 9, n. 19. PL 182, col. 871.

²²⁰ Sermo de ieiunio septimi mensis IV. PL 54, col. 444.

potuissent.²²¹ Quod obedientiae genus ipsis interdum miraculis divinitus comprobatum videmus. Nam, ut alios taceam quos ipsi non ignoratis, Maurus, S. Benedicti discipulus, mandato Superioris lacum ingressus, nec mersus est²²²; alius quidem, a Superiore iussus laeneam ad se ducere, illam cepit atque perduxit²²³. Est igitur haec ratio subiciendi proprii iudicii, ac sine ulla questione sancienti et collaudandi apud se quodcumque Superior iusserit, non solum sanctis viris usitata, sed etiam perfectae obedientiae studiosis imitanda omnibus in rebus quae cum peccato manifesto coniunctae non sunt.

19. Nec tamen incirco vetamini, si quid forte vobis occurrat a Superioris sententia diversum, idque vobis, consulto suppliciter Domino, exponendum videatur, quominus id ad Superiorem referre possitis. Verum in hac re, ne vos amor vestri iudiciumque decipiat, illa cautio est adhibenda et animo sitis et ante et post relationem aequissimo, non solum quod pertinent ad eam rem de qua agitur vel suscipiendam vel deponendam; sed etiam ad approbandum rectiusque putandum quidquid Superiori placuerit.

20. Atque haec quae de obedientia diximus, aequae privatis erga proximos Superiores, atque rectoribus Praepositisque localibus erga Provinciales, Provincialibus erga Generalem, Generali denique erga illum quem Deus ipsi praefecit, nempe suum in terris Vicarium, observanda sunt; sic ut et ordinum perfecta distinctio, ac proinde pax retineatur et caritas, sine qua nec Societatis nostrae nec alterius cuiuslibet sodalicii posset recta gubernatio conservari. Nimirum hoc modo Providentia illa divina disponit omnia suaviter²²⁴, infirma per media, media per summa, suos ad fines cuncta perducens. Hinc illa videlicet series; hinc et caelestium et aliorum omnium quae cientur corporum certis locis, ac sedibus inter sese apta connexio, quorum conversiones ad motus ab uno movente supremo gradatim omnes usque ad infirmos rite proveniunt. Idem in terris cum in omni civitate bonis instituta legibus, tam vero in hierarchia ecclesiastica cernitur, cuius omnia membra et functiones ab uno generali Christi Domini nostri Vicario derivantur; et quo accuratius haec dispositio et collocatio custoditur, eo rector est gubernatio et melior. Contra vero huius ordinis negligentia quam gravia incommoda multis hominum societatibus importentur, nemo non videt. Atque idcirco in hac cuius mihi nonnullam procurationem ac curam Dominus tradidit, tam diligenter hanc virtutem execeri vegereque percupio quasi in ea Societatis nostrae bonum ac salus universa consistent.

21. Quae cum ita sint, ut, unde exorsa est, ibidem terminetur epistola, vos ego per Christum Dominum nostrum obtestor, qui sese nobis non modo praeceptorem, sed

²²¹ De institutes renuntiantium. Lib. IV, c. 24. PL 49, col. 183.

²²² S. Gregorius, *Vita S. Benedicti* c. t PL 66, col. 146.

²²³ De vitis Patrum, Lib. 3, c. 27. PL 73, col. 756.

²²⁴ Ws 8:1

etiam exemplar praebuit obedientiae, ut ad eam virtutem toto pectore incumbatis; et, gloriosae victoriae appetentes atque avidi, vosmetipsos superare, id est excelsiorem et difficiliorem animi partem, voluntatem dico atque iudicium, expugnare et subicere studeatis; quo Dei Domini nostri solida veraque cognitio atque amor vestros ad se animos superare, id est excelsiorem et difficiliorem animi partem, voluntatem dico atque vestros ad se animos penitus trahat, totoque vitae huius et quasi peregrinationis curriculo usque eo gubernet ac regat, dum vos demum, aliosque complures vestra opera exemploque adiutos, ad ultimum et felicissimum finem, nimirum ad beatitudinem sempiternam perducatur.

Roma,

septimo kal. Aprilis,

millesimo quingentesimo quinquagesimo tertio.

Omnium in Domino

Ignatius

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B. Conclusion to the

Exercitia Spiritualia

[nn. 352-370]

[352] AD SENTIENDUM

vere, sicut debemus, in Ecclesia militante, servantur regulae sequentes.

[353] PRIMA: deposito omni iudicio proprio, debemus tenere animum paratum at promptum ad obediendum in omnibus verae Sponsae Christi Domini nostri, quae est nostra Mater Ecclesia Hierarchica.

[354] SECONDA: laudare confessionem, quae fit Sacerdoti, et susceptionem sanctissimi Sacramenti semel in anno, et multo magis quovis mense, et multo melius octavo quoque die, cum conditionibus requisitis ac debitis.

[355] TERTIA: laudare Missae auditionem frequentem; item cantus, psalmos, et longas orationes in Templo et extra illud: item horas ordinatas tempore destinato ad omne officium divinum, et ad omnem orationem, et omnes Horas canonicas.

[356] QUARTA: laudare multum Religiones, virginitatem et continentiam, et non adeo matrimonium, quantum ullum ex istis.

[357] QUINTA: laudare vota Religionis, obedientiae, paupertatis, castitatis, at aliarum perfectionum supererogationis. Et advertendum est, quod, cum votum sit circa res quae propius accedunt ad perfectionem Evangelicam, in iis quae ab illa elongantur, non debet fieri votum; v.g., de negotiatione exercenda, vel de matrimonio ineundo, etc.

[358] SEXTA: laudare reliquias Sanctorum, praestando illis reliquiis, venerationem, et faciendo orationem ad illos; laudando stationes, peregrationes, indulgentias, iubilaea, cruciatas, et candelas accensas in Ecclesiis.

[359] SEPTIMA laudare statuta circa ieiunia et abstinentias, ut quadragesimae, quattuor temporum, vigiliarum, feriae sextae, et sabbati; item paenitentias, non solum internas, sed etiam externas.

[360] OCTAVA: laudare ornamenta, et aedificia Ecclesiarum, item imagines, easque venerari secundum id quod repraesentant.

[362] NONA: laudare denique omnia praecepta Ecclesiae, animum gerendo promptum ad quaerendas rationes in eorum defensionem, et nullo modo in eorum impugnationem.

[362] DECIMA: debemus esse magis prompti ad probandum et laudandum tam statuta, commendationes, quam mores nostrorum Maiorum, i.e., Superiorum, quam ad reprehendendum; quia, etiamsi aliquando ea non sint, vel non essent talia, i.e., quae laude digna sint, tamquam loqui contra illa, sive praedicando in publico, sive sermonem habendo coram personis vulgaribus, generaret potius murmuraciones et scandalum, quam utilitatem; atque its indignaretur populus contra Maiores suos, sive temporales, sive spirituales. Itaque sicut damnosum est, male loqui ad plebem de Maioribus absentibus; ita potest utile esse loqui de malis eorum moribus ad illas ipsas personas, quae possunt iis remedium adferre.

[363] UNDECIMA: laudare doctrinam Positivam et Scholasticam: quia sicut magis proprium est Doctorum positivorum, ut Sancti Hieronymi, S. Augustinii et S. Gregorii, etc., movere affectus ad amandum in omnibus Deum Dominum nostrum, eique serviendum; ita est magis proprium, ut S. Thomae, S. Bonaventurae, et Magistri sententiarum, etc., res ad salutem aeternam necessarias definire vel declarare pro nostris temporibus, et ad magis impugnandum, et declarandum omnes errores, et omnes fallacias: quia Doctores scholastici, cum sint recentiores, non solum fructuose utuntur vera intelligentia sacrae Scripturae, et positivorum ac sanctorum Doctorum, sed etiam ipsi illuminati cum sint, et illustrati virutute divina, auxilium sumunt a Conciliis, canonibus, et constitutionibus sanctae nostre Matris Ecclesiae.

[364] DUODECIMA: debemus cavere a faciendis comparationibus inter nos qui adhuc vivimus et Beatos vita functos; quandoquidem non parum in hoc erratur, e.g., cum dicitur: iste plus scit quam. S. Augustinus; est alter vel maior S. Franciscus; est alter S. Paulus virtute, sanctitate, etc.

[365] DECIMA TERTA: ut in omnibus veritatem assequamur, debemus semper tenere, ut album quod ego video, credam esse nigrum, si Ecclesia Hierarchica ita illud definiat: credendo inter Christum Dominum nostrum, Sponsum et Ecclesiam eius Sponsam, eundem esse spiritum, qui nos gubernat et regit ad salutem animarum nostrarum; quia per eundem spiritum, et Dominum nostrum qui dedit decem mandata, regitur et gubernatur sancta nostra Mater Ecclesia.

[366] DECIMA QUARTA: licet verissimum sit, neminem posse salvari, quin sit praedestinatus, et quin habeat fidem et gratiam; tamen valde attendendum est in modo loquendi et disserendi de his omnibus.

[367] DECIMA QUINTA: non debemus loqui multum de praedestinatione per modum consuetudinis; sed, si aliquando et interdum sermon de illo habebitur, ita habeatur, ut plebs non veniat in errorem aliquem, ut quandoque solet, dicendo: si debeo salvari vel damnari iam determinatum est, et propter mea bona vel mala opera, iam non potest aliud evenire; et inde torpescunt negligent opera, quae conducunt ad salutem, et profectum spirituales animarum suarum.

[368] DECIMA SEXTA: eadem ratione advertendum est, ne multum loquendo de fide, et cum multa intensione, sine ulla distinctione et declaratione, occasio detur plebi torpescendi et pigritandi in operando, sive ante fidem charitate formatam, sive post.

[369] DECIMA SEPTIMA: item non debemus loqui tam copiose insistendo tantopere gratiae, ut generetur venenum quo tollatur libertas. Itaque de fide et gratia potest sermo haberi quantum fieri potest, cum auxilio divino, ad maiorem laudem divinae sua Maiestatis; sed non ita, neque iis modis, maxime in nostris temporibus tam periculosus, ut opera et liberum arbitrium capiant detrimentum aliquod, vel pro nihilo habeantur.

[370] DECIMA OCTAVA: licet super omnia aestimandum sit servire multum Deo Domino nostro ex puro amore; tamen debemus multum laudare timorem suae divinae Maiestatis: quia non solum timor filialis est res pia et sanctissima, sed etiam timor servilis, ubi qui aliud melius et utilis homo non assequatur, iuvat multum ad emergendum e peccato mortali; et postquam ex hoc emersit quis facile pervenit ad timorem filialem, quia totus acceptus et gratus est Deo Domino nostro, quia est simul cum amore Divino.

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ⁱ There is a two fold reason why the Society of Jesus was founded:

- that the men who become Jesuits might find within the Community the means to become saints;
- and secondly, the Company of Jesus is founded to be a missionary company, offering the means of salvation to their neighbors.

In both cases, there may be obstacles – and the Society should prepare the means to over come any difficulty in obtaining eternal salvation.