

STUDIES

in the Spirituality of Jesuits

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**A Jesuit's Account of Conscience—
for Personal and Organizational
Effectiveness**

by

James J. Gill, S.J., M.D.

**Published by the American Assistancy Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality,
especially for American Jesuits working out their *aggiornamento*
in the spirit of Vatican Council II**

THE AMERICAN ASSISTANCY SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

consists of a group of Jesuits from various provinces who are listed below. The members were appointed by the Fathers Provincial of the United States.

The purpose of the Seminar is to study topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially American Jesuits, and to communicate the results to the members of the Assistancy. The hope is that this will lead to further discussion among all American Jesuits--in private, or in small groups, or in community meetings. All this is done in the spirit of Vatican Council II's recommendation to religious institutes to recapture the original charismatic inspiration of their founders and to adapt it to the changed circumstances of modern times. The members of the Seminar welcome reactions or comments in regard to the topics they publish.

To achieve these purposes, especially amid today's pluralistic cultures, the Seminar must focus its direct attention sharply, frankly, and specifically on the problems, interests, and opportunities of the Jesuits of the United States. However, many of these interests are common also to Jesuits of other regions, or to other priests, religious men or women, or lay men or women. Hence the studies of the Seminar, while meant especially for American Jesuits, are not exclusively for them. Others who may find them helpful are cordially welcome to read them.

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FOR PERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

by

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Author's Preface

During World War II I was a navigator of the naval air force in a highly, efficient, successful, and exciting unit of our armed forces. My experience in belonging to that group was, I suspect, an important factor in bringing me, not long after my discharge from the navy, into the Society of Jesus, with the expectation that I would be serving in a very similar "outfit." And from my earliest days in the novitiate of the California Province, I found all around me evidence of great human potential, with all of it being carefully shaped and guided toward future campaigns in the apostolate. But I wondered how the best possible development and use could be made of all that talent and enthusiasm. Then we novices learned about the account or "manifestation" of conscience, and the Ignatian mode of governing became intriguingly clear. God's will could be known; Christ's work could be done; obedience could accomplish this; and the manifestation could aid toward making certain who should be missioned with whom, and what provisions ought to be made to insure victories.

Thirty years of Jesuit life have certainly not dimmed my appreciation of this valuable spiritual instrument which our founder fashioned and bequeathed to us. In fact, the years since our 32nd General Congregation have drawn my thoughts to the subject more frequently and profoundly than at any time before. So when the Assistancy Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality decided that the account of conscience would be a desirable topic for presentation, I welcomed the chance to lead our discussions and prepare this paper for publication. It represents a two-year quest (on a part-time basis, of course) which happened to coincide with trips to give courses,

workshops, or lectures in such far-flung Jesuit-missioned places as Rhodesia, Australia, Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, England, and Ireland, along with most of the provinces in the United States. These gave me opportunities to listen on many different occasions to the observations, attitudes, and experience of both subjects and superiors with regard to the practice of manifestation.

What struck me most forcibly in discussing the account of conscience with Jesuits in the light of the 32nd General Congregation is the extreme views that are held. Some with whom I talked attribute to its effective use their remarkable success in province renewal. Some said the practice has been so long neglected in their region that it is obviously not an element that is essential to apostolic accomplishments. Others, however, expressed a strong conviction that "the future of the Society" depends on whether we use this spiritual device effectively. Many warned against overrating it or exaggerating its potential worth. They were quick to remind me that we are dealing with human beings, many of whom are fearful when the time comes to reveal their deepest selves fully to superiors. The youngest Jesuits, as might be expected, were as a group most enthusiastic about the possibilities of deriving enormous benefit, both personally and organizationally, from using the account universally and well. Some men said they welcome each new opportunity to disclose their minds and hearts and activities to their superiors. Others admitted that they search for excuses for not doing so. The spectrum of attitudes is indeed very wide; but I encountered many converts, I suppose we would have to call them, who have been in the Society for many years and have just recently begun to give the practice a "second chance" to assume a significant place in their Jesuit lives.

My intention in this paper is simply to provide (1) some background material regarding the account of conscience, then (2) some evidence on how it is being used today, and finally (3) a concluding survey of observations and recommendations. Prominent among the observations will be the way I see a proper and conscientious use of the account as something contributing toward fulfilling a very fundamental human need within the Jesuit who shares his life with his superiors by employing this Ignatian means. The human need in question here is that for self-esteem, a sense of personal worth.

Other American Jesuits have written on this general topic in the past. Father John J. McMahon, for example, composed a very helpful paper on "The Technique of Hearing a Manifestation," which has been widely circulated since he first presented it nearly ten years ago. In the early seventies, too, Father James F. Bresnahan wrote a profoundly insightful paper on "The Account of Conscience and Jesuit Obedience."

Members of the Seminar advised me, for the preparation of the present study, to gather into one place selected historical data and also pertinent excerpts from Ignatius' *Constitutions* and from the documents of the 31st and 32nd General Congregations. Hence arose my Part I. Jesuit readers already familiar with this material may well find greater interest in Part II on Present Practice and Part III on my final perspectives.

It is the Seminar's hope that this rather brief paper will stimulate reflection and discussion about the potential usefulness of the account of conscience. In the paper I have focused less on the organizational value than on the personal benefits of the practice. This emphasis corresponds with the area in which I feel more experienced; other Jesuit writers (such as Fathers John Futrell and Jacques Lewis) have described its governmental aspects far better than I could. Some readers may think that I have stressed the psychological at the expense of the theological in this, a presentation on spirituality. I can offer no justification other than to suggest that man does not live by theology alone. Whatever affects the psychic functioning of a Jesuit must affect his prayer life and his apostolic effectiveness as well.

I. HISTORICAL DATA

A. Developments Prior to St. Ignatius

The antecedents of the Ignatian account of conscience extend back at least as far as the beginning of the fourth century and are related principally to the religious practice of seeking spiritual direction. Perhaps even during the closing years of the third century, in the Upper Thebaid of Egypt Abbot Palamon was attracting to himself purposeful men, such as

St. Pachomius, all looking for someone competent and experienced enough to fulfill the function of what was even in that early period known as "spiritual father."¹ At the same time St. Anthony, now generally recognized as the "father of Christian monasticism," was establishing in the Lower Thebaid the manifestation of the state of one's soul as a common custom among the monks who enticed him away from his twenty years of Nile-bank seclusion to serve as their organizer, teacher, and guide. In one of his Epistles can be found specific mention of a monk's seeking and getting advice from a spiritual doctor who was credited with being capable of curing the ills of the soul and prescribing preventive measures against future attacks. Anthony makes reference to the practice of revealing even one's thoughts for the purpose of benefitting fully from such guidance.²

Later, in the fourth century, St. Basil the Great became the first author of a monastic Rule to require manifestation of faults to a *praepositus*, a monk designated to receive such confidences because of his obvious prudence and ability to direct his brethren along the path of virtue. He did not have to be serving in the capacity of "superior" in our contemporary sense of the word. Basil required that each monk fully disclose himself, including even what he was thinking, so that what is erroneous will be corrected, and what is correctly done will be stabilized.³

Abbot John Cassian, one of the most widely known monks of the fifth century and a writer who strongly influenced the content of subsequent Rules, stressed the importance of a monk's revealing his thoughts, words, and actions with complete openness to a senior in the spiritual life so as to gain helpful advice and thereby advance toward "perfection". Moreover, for all time he warned the recipients of such confidential disclosures not to reveal to anyone else what things they have heard, lest self-manifestation become too difficult and serious evils result."⁴

St. Benedict's Rule for Monks, composed a century later, specified that manifestation of one's personal faults should accompany the revealing to one's spiritual director the graces one has received. This practice should be viewed, according to the patriarch of the monks in the West, as an exercise of humility. He considered the obtaining of advice which might further the monk's spiritual progress as only a concomitant aim.⁵

In the *Regula Magistri*, written near the time of St. Benedict, we read that the monk is expected to reveal his temptation to his *praepositus* who is required, in turn, to refer the matter to the abbot. Furthermore, these intermediaries are instructed to take the initiative and inquire of the monks whether they have experienced any temptations, lest any individual neglect to make this disclosure "because of his simplicity or shame."⁶

St. Bonaventure, although he did not compose a "Rule," designated--even as late as the thirteenth century--a new use for the manifestation of conscience. Almost in passing he drew attention to the fact that information gained from this source can be useful for purposes of external government. Three centuries later St. Ignatius stated clearly and boldly in his *Constitutions* that the use of material learned through the account of conscience can be profitably and legitimately utilized for the external government of the Society of Jesus, not just for the spiritual development of the individual Jesuit.⁷

B. Ignatius on Use of the Account of Conscience

Revealing his strong tendency toward eclecticism along with his high regard for tradition, Ignatius chose to preserve in his Society of Jesus the practice of the manifestation of conscience, but he transformed it in four significant ways. First, by Jesuits the manifestation is to be made at stated intervals. Second, it is to be given to the superior or a confessor; the spiritual father is never mentioned. Third, emphasis is placed on a thorough manifestation, so that the entire person becomes known to his superiors. Finally, the purpose of the manifestation is no longer simply the spiritual good and guidance of the individual religious. Ignatius adds to this aim the external government of the individual and also of the whole Society. How justify these changes? Because Ignatius was acutely aware of the great variety of apostolic works in which the Society of Jesus was rapidly becoming engaged.

What would be the content of the Jesuit's manifestation according to the mind of Ignatius? In general, whatever will provide for superiors a complete understanding of their subjects, including their "interior and exterior affairs." The founder mentions specifically the subject's "inclina-

tions and motions" and to what defects or sins the individual is more inclined. He also includes the man's temptations, penances, mortifications, and all of his virtues.⁹

But why manifest? In order that, according to the *Constitutions*, (1) superiors may be able to direct and govern members better, and guide them more effectively into the paths of the Lord; (2) that with greater diligence, love, and care they can help their subjects and guard their souls from various inconveniences and dangers; (3) that the superior may direct them better in their apostolic endeavors, without placing them beyond the measure of their capacity in dangers or labors greater than they could in the Lord endure with a spirit of love; (4) that the superior may be able to arrange what is expedient for the whole body of the Society; (5) that subjects may fulfill a pure desire to be directed if in anything they have gone astray, and may not be guided by their own judgement unless it agrees with the opinion of him whom they have in place of Christ; (6) that by the union of their opinion and will with their superior's, and by proper submission, subjects may be better preserved and make greater progress in the divine service; and, finally, (7) that the rector may grant dispensation from the *Constitutions* in a particular case according to occurrences and necessities.¹⁰

As to the manner in which this annual account is to be presented, Ignatius allows that it be done (1) "in confession or in secret or in another manner which may be more pleasing or spiritually consoling;" (b) "with great humility, integrity and charity;" and (c) "without concealing anything which is offensive to the Lord."¹¹ Ignatius realized that in order to comply with these expectations, the Jesuit must be endowed with courage and strength, coupled with a belief that his membership in the Society is "conducive to greater divine glory and more salutary for his own conscience."¹² The attitude Ignatius hoped his brethren would manifest toward their superiors is clearly revealed in his strong recommendation that "they should have and show great reverence, especially interior reverence, to their superiors by considering and reverencing Jesus Christ in them; and from their hearts they should warmly love their superiors as fathers in Him. Thus in everything they should proceed in a spirit of charity, keeping nothing exterior or interior hidden from their superiors and desiring them to be informed about

everything, in order that the superiors may be better able to direct them in everything along the path of salvation and perfection."¹³

From his somewhat awesome presentation of the duties of the rector of a Jesuit college, it is easy to see that Ignatius believed that "it is a matter of great and even extraordinary importance that superiors should have a complete understanding of their subjects."¹⁴ The rector should "sustain the whole college by his prayer and holy desires, and then bring it about that the Constitutions are observed. He should watch over his subjects with great care, and guard them against difficulties from within or without the house. . . . He should strive to promote their progress in virtue and learning, and care for their health. . . . His subjects ought to hold him in great respect as one who holds the place of Christ our Lord, while leaving to him *with true obedience* the free disposal of themselves and their affairs, not keeping anything closed to him, not even their own conscience."¹⁵

It seems clear from such passages as the two just cited that the manifestation of conscience is an essential element in the Society Ignatius designed with its familiar twofold aim, personal and apostolic. The superior must come to know each of his men thoroughly in order to direct them effectively and apostolically through obedience, and each subject must generously share his self-knowledge with his superior in order to be directed by him in the apostolate and also to be helped personally to achieve progressively greater spiritual maturity.¹⁶ The manifestation of conscience obviously facilitates the attainment of both of these aims.

C. Manifestation of Conscience after Ignatius

The manifestation of one's conscience, originally promoted as an instrument of asceticism, became a canonical institution once Ignatius' *Constitutions* requiring its use gained formal ecclesiastical approval. By the end of the nineteenth century the practice was required by the constitutions of a variety of religious institutes, both clerical and lay. Unfortunately, abuses arose. Liberty of conscience and jurisdiction of confessors were the common focal points for complaints which the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars addressed in the decree *Quemadmodum*

in December, 1890. The document forbade absolutely the exacting of a manifestation of conscience. The practice could be allowed, however, if the manifestation were made voluntarily by the religious and for the spiritual good.¹⁷ This legislation was repeated almost literally in Canon 530 of the Code of Canon Law (1917), which also encouraged subjects to filial openness with their superiors, even in regard to matters of conscience if the superiors are priests. A renewal of approval of what Ignatius' *Constitutions* contain regarding the manifestation of conscience by Jesuits was granted by Pope Pius XI in June, 1923.¹⁸ No other institute in the Church has, to my knowledge, been allowed to resume the practice as a canonical requirement.

D. The 31st General Congregation and the Account of Conscience

It seems highly significant that the fathers of the 31st General Congregation who assembled in May, 1965, went on record as sharing Ignatius' appreciation of the importance of the account of conscience. They had come to Rome resolved to take a very close look at the Society's nature and mission, "in order that, faithful to its own vocation, it can renew itself and adapt its life and its activities to the exigencies of the Church and the needs of contemporary man."¹⁹ The practice, they judged, should be preserved, and all Jesuits should "have a high regard for the account of conscience to superiors, which has been held in such honor by the Society's long tradition. . . ."²⁰

The General Congregation praised the account of conscience (along with conversation with the spiritual father and fraternal gatherings) as a useful means to promote "a common seeking of God's will" and a way of bringing "spiritual joy, encouragement, and apostolic fruitfulness to all."²¹ In their document on "The Life of Obedience," the fathers expressed agreement that "it is the mind of the Congregation that the account of conscience in its proper sense should remain and be strengthened as a general practice." They viewed the account as "the dialogue that is fundamental and essential for the wholesome progress of our Society" and "one that is frankly spiritual and aims at promoting the apostolic objective of our vocation and the religious sanctification of the apostle."²²

To render well the account of conscience, "a friendly and confidential

conversation," the Congregation recommends a "continuing colloquy" rather than a historical review.

The religious, for his part, should try to make himself known, with his gifts and limitations, his desires, difficulties, and ideas, through a continuing, confiding, familiar and candid colloquy, about which the superior is held to strict secrecy. In this way an account of conscience is obtained which is sincere and open in form, and not reduced to a formal, periodic inquiry about actions already performed.²³

Vatican II had just recently declared the Church's awareness of the fact that the Holy Spirit acts in all Christians--in followers and subjects as well as leaders and superiors--to make the will of God known. The 31st General Congregation in turn, expressed a firm belief that "all who work together in God's service are under the influence of the Holy Spirit and His grace." Consequently, "it will be well in the Lord [for superiors] to use their [subjects'] ideas and advice so as to understand God's will better." One convenient and regular occasion for receiving such communications is the regular account of conscience. Moreover, the ability to listen and hear what thoughts and desires the Holy Spirit is generating within the hearts of their subjects is one of the essential requirements of an effective Jesuit superior. The same Congregation specified, regarding the selection of superiors: "What must be looked for . . . is openness of spirit, ease in dialogue . . . in these men whose essential task is to stimulate and attract their brethren by means of new things and old."²⁴

Scholastics are reminded by the General Congregation that they should be taking the initiative with regard to their own spiritual growth, and that they should adapt this growth "more closely to the particular conditions of an apostolic life." But they should not be striving to do so alone. Superiors should be exercising care "that only those works are entrusted to the scholastics which are consistent with their spiritual progress."²⁵ This implies, obviously, that the superior should be a man capable of much more than simply demonstrating the "ease in dialogue" just mentioned. He must also know a good deal about the process of spiritual growth, its progressive stages, and the signs which characterize the various levels of personal and spiritual development.

It seems worthy of note to me that during the years since the 31st

General Congregation we have placed increasing emphasis in the Society upon every Jesuit's assuming personal responsibility and taking initiatives regarding his own spiritual development. Simultaneously, we have been stressing the need for collaborative spiritual discernment in decision making, with mutual involvement on the part of both superiors and subjects alike. Furthermore, we have been providing and encouraging individual spiritual direction, even in retreats, along with one-to-one psychological counseling when required, for those participating in their years of continuing formation, not just for those in the earlier formal phases of their religious development. Initiative, then, but not independence is becoming the rule. We are learning how much we need one another's personal assistance if we are to grow to full spiritual maturity and full apostolic effectiveness. This realistic interdependence, coupled with a healthy degree of autonomy (or capacity for decisiveness) will always be the hallmark of a mature personality and spirituality.

E. The 32nd General Congregation and the Account of Conscience

The recent 32nd General Congregation described our Society as worldwide community of friends, men with a sense of mission, sent wherever there is hope of God's greater glory and the service of mankind.²⁶ Our common apostolic assignment is to "continue Christ's saving work in the world, which is to reconcile men to God, and men among themselves, so that by the gift of his love and grace they may build a peace based on justice."²⁷ Stated in contemporary terms, we seek "the total and integral liberation of man, leading to participation in the life of God himself."²⁸ The execution of this urgent mission demands a very wide dispersion both of Jesuits and of our ministries. This makes unity difficult. But unity is essential if we are to be apostolically effective and accomplish together what all of us separately could never hope to achieve.

Ignatius, as founder, saw clearly that unity among Jesuits is indispensable. He warned us that "the Society cannot be preserved, or governed, or, consequently, attain the end it seeks for the greater glory of God, unless its members are united among themselves and with their head."²⁹ He saw this unity as being ultimately grounded in our union with God, the

Father of us all, in Christ. From this vital root springs our brotherly friendship, which is made apostolically effective by means of a bonding attained through what we call our "Ignatian obedience." This is the mode of reciprocal interaction between Jesuits and God which characterizes the type of religious governance Ignatius designed. The 32nd General Congregation stated dramatically that "today, more than ever before, that spiritual mode of governance is needed."³⁰ And why is there such an urgent requirement for obedience to flourish in our day? Because, the General Congregation is aware, so much contemporary stress is being placed upon individual initiative, and the range of apostolic opportunities open to us is so wide, that the sense of mission so essential to Ignatian obedience is tending to become obscure. In fact, this crucial element in the Society's operation could be eradicated entirely, if we do not "make fuller use of the special instrument for spiritual governance bequeathed to us by St. Ignatius: the account of conscience."³¹

The task of unifying our worldwide community and the many hundreds of local communities which comprise it calls for our major superiors to carry out the very demanding role the 31st General Congregation defined for them. The more recent 32nd General Congregation chose to put itself squarely on record as considering the role of the local (or community) superior as being an equally important one. Among his principal functions, the local superior is expected to assist both the individual members of his community and the community as such in making a true spiritual discernment of their apostolic task. To achieve this aim, the fathers of the General Congregation think that a wider and more intensive use of the Ignatian manifestation of conscience will be helpful or indeed even necessary.

To promote our serious consideration and employment of the manifestation of conscience, the fathers insistently remind us:

The more the account of conscience is genuinely practiced, the more authentic will our discernment be of God's purpose in our regard and the more perfect that union of minds and hearts from which our apostolate derives its dynamism.³²

They further affirm that "both the superior who sends and the companion who is sent gain assurance that the mission is really God's will if it is preceded by the dialogue that is the account of conscience."³³

Notice that the account of conscience is a "dialogue," as the 32nd General Congregation conceptualizes it. Something more has to be happening than just a subject's periodically disclosing his most recently experienced temptations, graces, and behavior. Necessarily, as the General Congregation describes the account, it must be a two-way communication by which

the superior acquires an inner knowledge of those subject to his authority: what they can and what they cannot do, and what help they need by way of counsel or resource to do what they can. The companion, in turn, learns what the mission on which he is being sent involves and what, concretely, he must do to discharge his responsibility.³⁴

The account of conscience, then, is essentially related to Ignatian spiritual governance which emphasizes discernment and obedience, and these elements help to confirm the member's sense of both mission and unity. The practice deserves, therefore, a central place in the apostolic and community life of the Jesuit of today. This is what the 32nd General Congregation is finally recommending to all in one of its most strongly worded Guidelines:

The account of conscience is of great importance for the spiritual governance of the Society, and its practice is to be esteemed and cultivated. Therefore, all should give an account of conscience to their superiors, according to the norms and spirit of the Society.³⁵

II. CURRENT USE OF THE ACCOUNT OF CONSCIENCE

A little more than a year ago I found myself wondering how the account of conscience is being used in the American Assistancy nowadays. One way of getting an answer, I surmised, would be to ask the various provincial superiors how they are dealing with the manifestation issue in these post-32nd General Congregation years. Another would be to ask Jesuit subjects about their reactions to the practice as they are personally experiencing it in their own lives. I resolved to try both approaches.

A. Manifestation to the Provincial

Every one of the American provincials graciously responded to my written inquiry. What I found most impressive about their replies was the

great importance they have obviously attached to the matter. Their letters told me that all are trying to derive full advantage from the practice for the spiritual growth of our members as well as for the best possible government of their provinces and of the Society as a whole. They are striving, too, to help every Jesuit appreciate the potential value of the practice and to recognize the need for all to regard their participation as essential to the successful accomplishment of each man's, community's, and province's apostolate, as well as that of the entire Society. Impressive, too, are the ways in which the provincials are going about helping the members to learn how to derive optimal results from the time and effort and prayer invested in this process.

Only a few provincials state that they employ any sort of formal outline to guide the "conversations," "colloquies," or "conferences" which enfold the account of conscience. A few have prepared and make available a page of topics and questions they hope to cover, but most encourage their men to talk about anything they feel might be relevant or important. "I leave the substance and the form to them," was one superior's reply. The majority of provincials apparently have a list of topics in mind while receiving accounts, and they do not hesitate to ask questions related to these matters if their subjects for some reason neglect to mention them.

Many of the provincials have developed a practice of sending a letter to each house shortly before making their annual visitation. In it they express their understanding of the account of conscience, its purposes and its potential value. They very frankly state how they think the account should be used and what they hope will take place within the context of their upcoming conversations. "I write and tell the community what I hope, and expect, and need to receive from each man," was a typical provincial's statement to me. "Where you stand in your life as a Jesuit" is what most of the superiors appear to be desirous of hearing from each of their men. These letters generally guarantee that the provincial will arrive ready to engage in dialogue, and not just for the purpose of listening. Some promise that a chance to question, explore, and react to the provincial's recent statements, actions, or inactions will be provided. My impression from their replies is that our American provincials are well aware of the fact

that they must approach each Jesuit individually and flexibly, knowing that with some persons they must be ready to listen most of the time, and with other Jesuits they have to come prepared to do a fair amount of questioning and commenting.

In their letters to the members of the houses they plan to visit most of the provincials mention, in some form, the areas for discussion they have in mind. These usually include (1) the individual's relationship to God, (2) his relationship to the Society and the brethren with whom he lives and works, (3) his relationship to the apostolate and the world, and (4) his relationship to himself. These letters most often provide a short list of topics of obvious importance; for example, the man's vocation, prayer life, last retreat, community life, apostolic work, health, relationship with superiors, use of leisure, vows, and the like. In addition to mentioning a number of these topics, many of the provincials provide several questions which they hope will indicate the quality of conversation in which they hope to engage. A few typical questions would be: Is your sense of commitment to Jesus, as a companion, changing in any way? Do you have a spiritual director? Did you have any spiritual experiences during your last retreat? How do you estimate the apostolic value of your work? Are you concerned about social justice? How do you experience the Lord? How are your vows influencing your apostolic life?

As might be expected, I noted in the replies of the provincials that most of the questions they were presenting to their men were aimed predominantly at their interior life. They want to know about the way they are understanding, and feeling, and evaluating, and reaching, and experiencing, and choosing. They are asking about needs, attachments, hopes, attitudes, convictions, commitments, habits, motivations, affectivity, and the unique meanings individual Jesuits find in the relationships and events that comprise their lives. They want to hear about morale, happiness and contentment, disappointment and anger, loneliness and grief, feelings about success, changes being considered, growth desired, and the means being tried--all of these potentially interpretable in terms of spiritual consolation or desolation, and the grist for discerning the will of God.

Several of the provincials who write letters to pave the way for their

visitations select specific and timely topics, issues, or questions they want to converse about in this particular year. For example: How has the 32nd General Congregation affected you personally? Do you feel we are in need of another general congregation? Are you doing anything to promote an increase of religious vocations to meet the needs of the Church? Most of these letters which the provincials send ahead encourage each member to devote a significant amount of prayer and honest self-reflection to the task of preparing for a trusting conversation about himself in giving his account of conscience. Some provincials suggest certain readings which might prove helpful. Generally these selections are from the *Constitutions* or the two most recent General Congregations.³⁶

I heard from several provincials that they find the occasion of the account of conscience an excellent opportunity to provide encouragement and recognition for their men who desire, need, and respond to it so positively. Most said nothing about using the same conversation as a time for commenting on faults noted, complaints received, or admonitions required. My own feeling is that they chose wisely when they decide to separate such distressing elements from what is intended to be a trusting, not fearful, experience of confiding. Any anxiety or resentment-producing move the superior might choose to make is certainly going to risk putting the person on the defensive. And when defensiveness arises, communication is damaged--not just for the moment, but often permanently. There is a time for spiritual surgery, of course, but no Jesuit should have to sit through an hour of sharing, all the while wondering what painful denouement is being saved up for him at the end. Such an experience tends to provoke an avoidance of manifestations in the future.

A few provincials have made it known that they are ready to pray privately with individuals during their colloquies, not just with the full community in a liturgical way. And others have expressed satisfaction that most Jesuits they serve have been able to move beyond the manifestation questions presented in *Epitome* #203 and in the *Rules of the Society of Jesus* published in 1947. They find that even meticulous answers prepared to these questions will often leave much to be desired in relation to governance.

B. Manifestation to the Local Superior

I have had no chance to explore systematically the practice of local superiors in receiving accounts of conscience, but the opportunity to participate in nearly a dozen different provincial meetings on the subject has shown me how seriously these men are undertaking this aspect of their assignment. Just in passing, at this point, I would like to include the instructions provided in the *Guidelines for Local Superiors*, published by our Jesuit Generalate in 1975:

The mode of government in the Society is "spiritual" This mode of government demands sincere and open communication between superiors and companions. The superior makes known his mind to his companions, taking care that they understand him correctly. He shares with them, as far as the matter will permit, his knowledge of and concern for the life and labors of everyone in the community. The companion, for his part, sees to it that through dialogue which is trusting, open, and unreserved, the superior knows him thoroughly: his abilities, limitations, aspirations, difficulties, and inmost thoughts.

The highest form of such a dialogue is known in the Society as the "manifestation of conscience."³⁷

The document goes on to describe this accounting as a "frank and friendly, confidential and continuing dialogue." It recognizes the fact that the Society does not impose upon those who have made their final vows an obligation to manifest their conscience to their local superior, but stresses the point that the practice is recommended to them. Finally, the *Guidelines* reminds the local superior that he must be

and be known to be, an absolutely secure repository of confidences. Not even to a higher superior, and not even by implication, much less explicitly, is he permitted to make known what he has learned in an account of conscience without the companion's express permission. It is presumed, however, unless the person giving the account gives indication to the contrary, that the superior may take appropriate action, while scrupulously preserving the secret, for the good of the Church, the Society, or the person himself.³⁸

C. Manifestation from the Subject's Point of View

During the past few years, I have welcomed repeated opportunities to talk with fellow Jesuits in all of the North-American provinces and in nine other countries. There are seven questions I have been asking, generally

by word of mouth, but at times in the form of an informal written questionnaire. These questions are listed here to invite the reader to consider what his own answers would be, or to save them for reflection or discussion at some further time. They are:

1. How helpful has the account of conscience been to you personally in the past?
2. Have there been some specific ways in which it has been helpful? What are they?
3. Do you really believe that the account of conscience is proving useful in the government of the Society?
4. Do you think the account of conscience has substantially furthered your apostolic endeavors? In what way?
5. Where is there room for improvement in the way the manifestation is being conducted and used?
6. What have you found unsatisfactory in your experience with the account of conscience?
7. Do you think there should be any difference between the account given to the provincial and the account given to the local superior?

On some other occasion an opportunity may present itself for me to comment at some length on the wide variety of replies I have received to the seven questions listed above. Any Jesuit who has lived among his brethren for a decade or so will readily suspect how much evidence I found that the remarkably diversified life experiences of our members have positioned their opinions at various points, from full positive to full negative, all along the sweep of a wide spectrum. But what I want to report here as I approach the final section of this paper is an observation that came as a surprise to me. An overwhelming number of the Jesuits I asked about the account of conscience and what it meant to them revealed that it (1) keeps them thinking about personal growth in a challenging way, (2) helps them to feel known and appreciated by the Society through their superior, (3) enhances their sense of belonging to the Society, and (4) contributes enormously to a sense of self-esteem, or personal worth, which many find difficult to maintain.

III. SOME FINAL PERSPECTIVES FROM A PSYCHIATRIST

A. The Account of Conscience and Self-Esteem

It is the last of these points, that about self-esteem, that I would

like to elaborate now. To me as a psychiatrist this brought the surprise. Most Jesuits appear to be so very capable, so self-confident, so much in control of their lives. Who would guess that so many are in such need of bolstering in the area of their personal sense of worth that an hour or so spent with their provincial, or even his delegate, or their local superior could, by virtue of his receiving their account of conscience, make what they regard as a truly significant contribution to their sense of well-being?

What I heard many Jesuits saying was that the manifestation experience had made them feel good about themselves, their vocation, and their work. They felt appreciated, and able to see more clearly how they fit into the big picture of the Society. They said that they were, as a result, able to sense that their perseverance and their contribution were important. I regarded such comments as strong evidence that the manifestation time a provincial or local superior shares with an individual can pay off heavily in terms of support for the man's sense of personal worth (a psychological benefit), along with providing other more familiar rewards, such as a sense of doing God's will by keeping the rules and contributing to the spiritual governance of the Society.

To feel that they have worth, that they belong, that they are needed, that they are accepted as they are--these are some of the most basic human requirements upon which a person's sense of well-being depends. These are human needs that must be met in a continuous way if an individual is to function in an emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually healthy manner. Contemporary psychologists such as Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, and Eric Fromm attest to this fact frequently in their writings, which reveal the fruits of their vast and profound research into the human person. I found that participation in the account of conscience appears to be helping a large number of Jesuits to fulfill these minimal requirements in their everyday lives. But what was somewhat surprising to me, as I stated a little earlier, was the fact that there is such a substantial contribution that has to be made in the area of self-esteem.

Why pay so much attention to this particular need, self-esteem, and register such alarm over discovering a deficiency in this part of any Jesuit's make-up? Simply because it is impossible to love one's neighbor,

and thereby live out the essence of the Christian life, if one is unable to maintain a solid esteem for, or liking of, one's self. When Jesus reiterated the divine command to love others as we love ourselves, he was undoubtedly referring to the quality of the caring, and also of the relationship he had in mind. But in addition to this, he was certainly implying that there is an appropriate degree of self-love which is in some sense antecedent to our turning outward toward others in a loving or caring way. Psychologists would say that Jesus was touching upon a truth well known in their field, that the ability truly to love another person is dependent upon a well developed capacity to feel that there is real worth in one's self.

People who do not love themselves, or who cannot love themselves, are more than merely impaired in their ability to respond spontaneously to others with love; they are also in a state of pain. This is simple enough to understand theoretically. If one's deepest human yearning to feel loved is for some reason denied gratification (that is to say, frustrated), there is inevitably experienced a feeling of anger, which becomes readily converted into resentment against the outer world. Parents especially are often blamed by their children of any age for supposedly having caused the painful emotional state, the anger and resentment, which they chronically feel. And any pain, whether it be physical or emotional, since it tends to keep the mind (and thus the heart) preoccupied with the *self* and one's own unfulfilled needs, will tend to prevent awareness of the condition of others, the needs of others, the goodness or beauty of others, and thus will make it virtually impossible to respond to them in a caring way.

But why would Jesuits in large numbers give evidence of finding it difficult to maintain an adequate level of self-love? If love of neighbor is so dependent upon this prerequisite self-directed affection, it would seem important to explore more deeply the conditions which prevail in our lives. Our apostolic effectiveness as well as the quality of our community living relies fundamentally upon our capacity for friendship and love. So what can we diagnose about Jesuit life that might suggest a suitable remedy which we could then prescribe?

It might prove helpful to devote a few moments to looking at the way people in general maintain their self-esteem, their feeling of personal

worth, which enables them, in turn, to value, to cherish, and to love others around them. Then we will look at Jesuits who may be having difficulty with self-love because of what might be termed "occupational hazards."

Sociological research in America has revealed that people growing up here are inclined to evaluate their personal worth in terms of *success*. This is true whether the assessment is based upon either material rewards or spiritual satisfactions. Different people measure their success according to different criteria, but each one generally learns early in life, usually under parental and other educational influence, to adopt one of four principal measures of accomplishment. These include power, significance, competence, and virtue.

Power can be defined as possession of control, authority, or influence over others. Significance is the quality of being important and is measured by the signs of attention, affection, and acceptance one receives from others. Competence is possession of the requisite abilities to perform consistently in a successful way. Virtue is reliable conformity to a standard of what is right.

Much could be written about how others find in concrete ways in their own lives the means to maintain their self-esteem through at least one of these four sources. But what about Jesuits? Are these same possibilities not open to us? Let us look at them one at a time. First, power. I think it must be difficult for an American Jesuit to rely on this source for a sense of personal worth in an anti-authoritarian era such as ours, when people striving for independence and personal autonomy strongly resist external control over them, and when influence is so hard to measure since it is in the realm of the spirit and development is slow and intangible. For many reasons clergy and religious have been downgraded in the esteem of others in the United States during recent years, with the result that many Jesuits feel more of impotence than power in their apostolic lives.

It does not matter how significant Jesuits may be in the eyes of people around them; self-esteem can only be enhanced if a person *feels* that he is accepted, holds the attention, or draws the affection of others. Unfortunately, all three of these experiences require expression (or "feedback") that is perceived, and many of our men, I regret having to say, are

not hearing the message, even when others do in fact regard them as significant in their lives. In our own communities there is often too little expression of appreciation of the presence or the loveableness of others. And in their contact with parishioners, students, and retreatants, too many of our men feel they are taken for granted, since so many in our world act as if they were entitled to the ministries of our brothers, our scholastics, and our priests. Many Jesuits, too, do not let themselves get close enough to others emotionally to elicit signs of affection that would be reassuring. In a self-preserving way they shun psychological intimacy, feeling, as many religious do, that their celibate sexuality might be compromised if they were to participate in relationships where affectivity runs high.

In regard to this significance about which we are still speaking, even acceptance is not easily felt by many of our brethren. The term has a special meaning as used here, and it might be useful to look at the way psychologist Carl Rogers defines it in terms of a non-judgemental attitude that requires respect for the individual as a person of worth.

By acceptance I mean a warm regard for him as a person of unconditional self-worth--of value no matter what his condition, his behavior or his feelings. It means a respect and liking for him as a separate person, a willingness for him to possess his own feelings in his own way. It means an acceptance of and a regard for his attitudes of the moment, no matter how negative or positive, no matter how much they may contradict other attitudes he has held in the past.³⁹

If a Jesuit does not feel accepted, even by those with whom he dwells in community, and if blame must be placed somewhere, the fault is often not attributable to those around him. To be accepted, in the sense just defined, one has to let himself be known at some depth, not just superficially. His feelings, his attitudes, his values--his loves, his hates, his fears, his strivings, and his goals--are the sort of things about him others need a chance to understand so that they can demonstrate their acceptance of him, even though these may be undergoing change. Again, the private way many men live their lives--the defensive way they stave off intimacy⁴⁰--leaves them surrounded by people who, not knowing them deeply, cannot possibly accept them in a way that will support their sense of self-esteem. This is a great loss for the psychologically isolated Jesuit, because it is the

experiencing of deep, unconditional acceptance that enables a person to run the risk of changing. And people who cannot change cannot grow.

Then what about competence as a measure of success and a basis for an American Jesuit's sense of personal worth? Certainly most of our men deserve to be appreciated for doing quite well the things they set out to do in their day to day apostolate. That may be true. But again, they need to feel they are performing with some degree of excellence, or else success will never be savored or truly experienced by them. Surgeons know how to feel accomplishment when they have replaced a heart valve. Builders can point with deep satisfaction to a hotel they have constructed. Football players can point to the scoreboard and taste their victory. But when the results are less tangible--from lecture or homilies or work in intractable areas of economic or moral impoverishment--especially when no one says "thank you" or "well done," the Jesuit may not feel that his task has been accomplished so professionally or successfully; he may not feel any personal worth. Insurance salesmen are awarded wall plaques; their managers win trips to Acapulco; bank employees get certificates or pins for years of good service--all these workers for successful performance of the jobs they do with competence. It all contributes to their morale or self-esteem. But who gives the Jesuit a comparable sign which helps him to appreciate fully and be glad about his own abilities? He may tell himself that all he needs is God's approval of his work. But the Lord is too silent for many; they are unable to hear any constant expression of his satisfaction with them which is, however, signified by the daily graces he gives which enable their perseverance. Many hardly ever feel they are truly adept, or competent, even at prayer. Whether teaching, or homilizing, or counseling, or liturgizing, too many of us, I believe, are still not "feeling like a pro."

Jesuits are surely men living virtuously according to the evangelical counsels and a Rule long renowned for its spiritual and apostolic idealism. Since virtue is one of the bases for a feeling of success and, consequently, of a sense of self-worth, one would expect that every Jesuit striving to live an Ignatian life would experience these satisfyingly. But I have found considerable evidence to the contrary; and I have reached the conclusion

that many of us measure our interior and exterior lives in a very destructive way. We were taught in our novitiates to keep track of our faults and even point them out to each other through an "exercitium caritatis," more aptly termed in some places the "lapidatio." In philosophy we learned that goodness is corrupted into evil when any part of the whole becomes defective, so that the whole itself loses its integrity or perfection. We counted the number of times we broke a commandment or a promise, but never totaled the times we succeeded in complying. We frequented a sacrament wherein we declared our transgressions and weaknesses; but where could you find a sacrament received to gain grace by declaring the occasions when you acted virtuously, or a Mass that started with rejoicing over what you had done well? Why even in our academic lives most of us, I suppose, would look at a grade of eighty-four and count sixteen down from a hundred to feel disappointed in our performance, rather than counting up from zero to the eighty-four to find pleasure in the fact that we responded with so many correct answers. What I am saying is that many of us were formed to live our religious lives perfectionistically. Which is not the same as being idealistic, as Ignatius would want us to be. The perfectionist is never satisfied with himself, or happy, if he can find any flaw in the way he has performed or in the way he has striven to live up to his lofty standards. Too many of us, I think, were encouraged for too many years in our Jesuit lives to be perfectionists, even though we were not called that. Then it is no wonder that we find it hard to feel we are virtuous men, and therefore successful men, if we are still finding ourselves consistently falling short of a spiritual or moral mark which we never feel we quite live up to, although we "should."

On the same point, I would want to observe in passing that in the way American Jesuits lived before this most recent decade, it was much easier for a very consistent man to attach his sense of worth to being virtuous, and to maintain his virtue-motivated behavior by a very dependable adherence to prescribed regimen of behavior. By wearing the right cassock and cincture, arising at the sound of the bell, being always present for litanies, and observing silence during the appointed hours, it was a fairly simple matter to feel that one was a worthy religious. But now when so many of our rigid requirements have given way to options, this whole arena of self-congratulation

has been virtually wiped out. Except, of course, for some who still take pride in "the way we have always done it." Resisting change helps them maintain their basic sense of worth.

We have looked at the several ways that most Americans maintain their sense of success, and with it their self-esteem; and we have observed the fact that too many Jesuits appear to lack a well developed sense of personal worth. Perhaps by now the reason has become clear why so many Jesuits are finding the account of conscience a morale building experience for them. Their provincial superior or rector sets aside time and clears away all distractions to give his undivided attention to the man's deepest interior life as well as his best accomplishments. His thoughts, feelings, struggles, crucifixions and resurrections, aspirations and problems are all received as supremely important. He is made to feel, rightly, that the Society needs him, his prayers, his work, his presence, his sharing--all that he is and has. And in the name of the Christ whose place he is taking through obedience, the superior by his appreciative response signifies God's gratitude and approval. The account of conscience has an almost sacramental quality about it. Grace flows from it; a man becomes more free and challenged to grow, because he is able to feel he belongs, is accepted, is estimable, needed, and encouraged to keep striving to unite his heart and efforts more and more closely to Christ's. Ignatius has given us in the manifestation a fantastically supportive instrument to enhance our human development. And all this in addition to its value as a proven means of achieving an effective spiritual and apostolic mode of organizational government.

B. Observations and Recommendations

To conclude this paper I would like to offer five observations which carry within them some rather obvious recommendations or suggestions. The first is related to the very name of the practice, the account of "conscience." It smacks of moralizing. Earlier life experiences with confession of transgressions has left countless Jesuits, naturally, with a disinclination to present personal material to anyone who might sit in judgement and react in a censuring, emotionally traumatic way. The weight of tradition perhaps

prompts us to continue using the term "conscience," at least until a suitable substitute is discovered. But the fact that "account" has been so widely accepted in place of "manifestation," or has at least become interchangeable with it, gives hope that "conscience" may yield to change as well. Some have suggested that we use "consciousness;" but, at least to some ears, the word sounds artificial, inexact, and a little too redolent of pop psychology. What we are really talking about in the ideal account of conscience is a friend-to-friend sharing of one's perceptions of how one is experiencing his Jesuit life. No single word is easily selected to convey such a wealth of meaning.

But rather than worry or quibble about terminology, I would consider it important for us to do all we can to develop and maintain the popular image of the practice as one that is positive. It is true that there is a place in the account of conscience for one's falls, as Ignatius explained, just as there is space for communicating one's laudable accomplishments. The more positively Jesuits regard the experience of manifestation, the less will anticipatory feelings of anxiety or guilt render them uncomfortable, defensive, less communicative, and disparaging in their thoughts or references to the practice in communication with others. The more men feel that they personally have much to gain and nothing to lose through this process of sharing, the more freely will they disclose themselves to their superiors, and the more effective and rewarding will the outcome be.

My second observation is closely related to the first. It stems from realization of the fact that a number of provincials appear to have acted most helpfully when they wrote letters to the Jesuits in their provinces informing them as to what they hoped would occur during each man's account of conscience, and especially what the provincial needs to receive in order to perform his task of governance well. I would hope that local superiors would also communicate to their subjects, orally or in writing, the same sort of information for the same purpose. But I would also think it important for superiors to give each Jesuit a chance to tell them just what content-material and what communication-process he would find most helpful to him in his effort to fulfill the superior's and Society's expectations, and at the same time to derive maximal benefit for himself. What he needs

and hopes to receive from the superior, and how he wants the "continuing conversation" that constitutes the practice of manifestation to be conducted is important for the receiving superior to know.

A third observation centers around a fact of experience. In a community where men are open to each other, sharing their lives at a deep level, and particularly where they share their prayer verbally and spontaneously in small groups, one generally finds that the account of conscience received by superiors reflects the same sort of complete openness and consequently, proves to be more useful. But where men communicate with each other only superficially in their daily lives, and all intimacy is shunned, a disclosure of the whole self to the superior at the level of the heart becomes at least for many, virtually impossible. So whatever the numbers of a community can do to humanize, to render more communicative, and to deepen the sharing of life among themselves, the more are they preparing each one remotely to make a better manifestation. And the reverse is also true. The more the superior of the house or province helps each man learn to make his manifestation well, the more he is assisting the Jesuit to carry his openness and capacity for deeper sharing back into his daily interactions with the other members of his community.

Fourth among my recommendations would be simply that every one of us should try to use the time of our account-preparing reflection on our selves and our lives as a periodic occasion for appreciating the good qualities, the talents and skills, the priceless experiences and the accomplishments God has chosen to make real in and through us. The result would undoubtedly be, at least in part, a boost of self-esteem. And as I stated earlier, a man who likes being himself, who is able to find goodness and loveliness in himself the way he is, has a much better chance of turning outward to others, both people and God, with love. He then has a better chance of being effective in his part of the apostolate. He will be more satisfied with his life and work, more energetic, and more enthusiastic. He will feel worthy and capable of setting goals, hoping for success and making choices. Feeling a sense of personal worth, he will be better able to sense God's affection for him, and thus believe that he really was created out of love, redeemed out of love, and invited personally to live and work

with Christ, and one day "share the reward" with him. It is profitable to compare such a man with one who thinks too little of himself, suffers from self-doubt, lacks self-confidence, and tends to be unspontaneous, unenthusiastic, uncreative, and even disbelieving because of chronic feelings of anxiety or guilt which plague any man who never truly feels in his deepest heart that he is really good, worthy, special, or priceless. When St. Paul exhorted us to "rejoice in the Lord always," he must have been assuming that we would be persons capable of experiencing the affection of joy, people who have received the inestimable gift of a sense of personal worth, a blessing communicated to us through the way others treat us within the Christian community. If we are capable of rejoicing, we have much for which to be grateful to our brethren.

Finally, we need to do more to help all of our members develop a strong belief in the value of the account of conscience for the sake of success in the whole Society's apostolate, and in each province's, and every community's. The practice has for so long been a part of Jesuit life that some rekindling of appreciation seems needed; an old instrument of any sort rarely gets the admiration it deserves. I am assuming that there isn't a Jesuit anywhere in the world who would not want every last one of his brethren to be doing all that he can to make the Society's apostolate as successful as it can possibly be, and so to use this practice just as efficaciously as possible. But to accomplish this, I feel that superiors will have to do more than they generally have been doing to share with those of us who are their subjects what usefulness they are actually discovering in the account as an instrument for good government. If they see enough value in its use really to believe in it, let them communicate this to us, and help us to develop a comparable belief.

This paper has not attempted to demonstrate the ways the account of conscience proves useful to superiors in performing their function of governing. It has stressed, instead, the less widely appreciated fact that a well-prepared and well-shared account of conscience can be of inestimable and ever-increasing worth to every Jesuit who participates in the practice.

One provincial, in a recent letter to all the members of his province expressed agreement with this conviction by stating:

. . . so I am convinced that an honest and simple conversation, insofar as this is possible, about the state of one's life is of immense value to the individual himself and can be the occasion for real personal growth, quite apart from the great value it has as an essential element in making our Society and our Province an ever more effective apostolic body of dedicated men in the hands of the Lord.⁴¹

May we all, with God's help, make the most of every *accounting*, while we can.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Francis N. Korth, S.J., *The Evolution of "Manifestation of Conscience" in Religious Rules, III-XVI Centuries* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1949), p. 17, (abbreviated hereafter as *The Evolution*).
- 2 Letter XVIII in *Patrologia Graeca*, XL, 1048, cited in Korth, *The Evolution*, p. 24.
- 3 Korth, *The Evolution*, p. 33.
- 4 Ibid., pp. 51-52.
- 5 Ibid., pp. 55-56.
- 6 Ibid., pp. 68-69.
- 7 Ibid., p. 97.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 See *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, [91, 92, 263].
- 10 Ibid., [424, 425].
- 11 Ibid., [93].
- 12 Ibid., [98].
- 13 Ibid., [551].
- 14 Ibid., [91].
- 15 Ibid., [424].
- 16 For a more extensive and documented presentation of the relationship which Ignatius desired between superiors and subjects, see footnote 10 on p. 250 of *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus, Translated, with an Introduction and a Commentary* by G. E. Ganss, S.J. (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970); see also the footnotes on pp. 102-105.
- 17 Korth, *The Evolution*, p. 97.
- 18 See *The Constitutions*, trans. Ganss, p. 105.
- 19 Decree on "The Mission of the Society of Jesus Today," no. 1, in *Documents of the 31st and 32nd General Congregations of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1977), (abbreviated hereafter as *DocsGC31and32*, p. 67.
- 20 *The Spiritual Formation of Jesuits*, no. 5, *ibid.*, p. 98.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 *The Life of Obedience*, no. 8, *ibid.*, p. 162.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 *The Spiritual Formation of Jesuits*, no. 11, *ibid.*, p. 100.
- 25 Ibid., nos. 40, 41, on pp. 109, 110.

- 26 Decree of Jesuits Today, no. 13, *ibid.*, p. 404.
- 27 No. 21, *ibid.*, p. 406.
- 28 No. 11, *ibid.*, p. 403.
- 29 *Constitutions*, [655].
- 30 Decree on Union of Minds and Hearts, no. 30, in *DocsGC31and32*, p. 478.
- 31 *Ibid.*
- 32 *Ibid.*, no. 32, p. 478.
- 33 *Ibid.*, no. 31, p. 478.
- 34 *Ibid.*
- 35 *Ibid.*, no. 46, p. 483.
- 36 E.g., *Constitutions*, [91-97, 263, 424, 551].
- 37 *Guidelines for Local Superiors*, nos. 44, 45 (Rome: Jesuit Generalate, 1975), p. 15.
- 38 *Ibid.*, no. 47, p. 16.
- 39 Rogers, Carl E., *On Becoming a Person* (Boston, 1961), p. 34.
- 40 In Erikson's sense of relationships of deep friendship and love, not necessarily erotic.
- 41 Leo F. Weber, S.J., Missouri Province Memo 76/44, September 16, 1976.

SOME REACTIONS TO

"Jesuit Spiritualities and the Struggle for Social Justice"

Editor's Introduction

In our last issue of these *Studies* (September, 1977, page vi), we invited our readers to send in their reactions to the presentation of Fathers William J. Connolly and Philip S. Land on "Jesuit Spiritualities and the Struggle for Social Justice." More specifically we asked: What do you think that the problem--or "problematic"--is?

Two replies have arrived in time to be included already in this present issue. They are printed below. Further replies are still welcome.

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To the Members of the Assistancy Seminar:

I am writing in response to the September issue of *Studies* pertaining to "Jesuit Spiritualities and the Struggles for Social Justice."

I think that Father Bill Connolly furthers this already often discussed relationship between spirituality and social justice by focussing on the realities of "passion" and "conversion." Father Phil Land broadens the discussion more by focussing on the reality of one's "theology." And in his reply to Phil, Bill contributes another important reality concerning the experiential origins of change. It is around these realities that I myself would locate the problematic of spirituality and social justice.

Our human, not to mention Christian and Jesuit, lifetimes are continual processes of change or conversion from one stage or phase to another. The lifetime process of conversion can be seen to take place on four important and distinguishable dimensions, namely, the emotional, the intellectual, the moral, and the religious. These four dimensions, to put it very simply, have to do with our feelings, ideas, actions, and ultimate beliefs. It is somewhere in the concrete realities comprising the human process of this fourfold conversion, I think, that we must locate the problematic of the gap between spirituality and social justice, the response of Jesuits to Decree 4, and many other things.

Many of us do not understand, or are bored by, or are threatened by Decree 4 and action for social justice because of our lack of and need for conversion on all four dimensions. Emotionally, we lack "passion," as Bill has said. Culturally and ascetically we control and cut off

important feelings, such as anger, outrage, compassion, tenderness, sorrow, urgency, or despair leading to hope--the very feelings which, I submit, are integral to social justice spirituality and ministry. Intellectually, we continue practically if not theoretically to operate out of unbiblical and unfruitful dualisms of matter/spirit, individual/society, values/structures, Church/world, religion/politics, divine/human, theology/ministry, and the like--ideas which, I submit, militate against a ministry of faith-justice fully in accord with the gospel unity of love of God and love of neighbors and the Ignatian tradition of being contemplatives in action. Morally, we continue to analyze and theorize about the complexities of things and fail to act, fail to move and live with and listen to those least among us, and most in need, whose suffering and struggle to live will move us passionately and change our ways of thinking. Religiously, we need to be converted back to the original God of Israel and Jesus, the ultimate meaning of existence who showed the Holy Mystery to be One who heard the cries of people suffering (Exodus 3:6-10), and who had table-fellowship with the poor and outcast and held our lifetimes to be evaluated in terms of how we responded to those least and most in need of basic human rights (Matt. 25:31-46).

Once the problematic of Jesuit spirituality and social justice ministry has been located in terms of four-dimensional conversion, the final consideration, I think, is one of the origins or sources of that conversion. I disagree with Bill's location of change "from the inside out." No one lives in a vacuum. In my experience, I have found change come neither from inside out or outside in, but rather in the meeting or interrelationship between my self and others. And more pointedly, I have found this phenomenon for myself, and also in the case of many other who are engaged in social justice ministry and have well-articulated social justice spirituality: The others to whom we related have been sources of emotional, intellectual, moral, and religious conversion; and these "others" have been precisely those who are poor and violated and suffering from injustice. It strikes me as no extrinsic element that Decree 4 stressed solidarity with the poor as an integral part of social justice ministry and spirituality.

In the latest issue of *Studies in the International Apostolate*, (June, 1977), Father General Pedro Arrupe tells the following incident about his visit to the barrios of Central and South America: "After the Mass, many came up to see me, among them a mother of eight children. I shall never forget her face, marked by hunger and suffering. She said to me: 'Father General, I have nothing left to give my children. Pray for me, that God may send us some bread.' In that moment I understood even more clearly than ever before that I had not exaggerated, either at Philadelphia or any other place where I had talked about hunger in the world." I submit that an incident such as this often starts an ongoing lifetime process which touches every dimension of a person. And I think that is the problem or question involved in Jesuit spirituality and social justice: how to foster the conversion process of Jesuits by enabling them to look into, and be touched by, and never forget the faces of human beings, brothers and sisters, who are suffering dehumanizing conditions and struggling to live.

I have written papers on the Church as the Servant of God's Reign in the World and A Theology of Social Justice Ministry which I am willing to contribute to furthering the dialogue on Jesuit spirituality and social justice. Even so, I myself vote for less papers and talk, and I suggest creative action and placement on the part of Jesuits that would contribute to solidarity with those suffering social injustice and the fourfold conversion that would, more likely than not, be one practical consequence of such action and placement.

In companionship,

Hal Dessel, S.J.
St. Francis Mission
St. Francis, South Dakota 57572
November 5, 1977

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To the Assistancy Seminar:

What, you asked, do you think the problem is on faith and justice? Two reactions occurred to me. The first is positive. The second is somewhat negative; and yet it must be faced and thought through.

1. In a real way the decree on justice causes some to focus almost exclusively on the economic and political aspects. If the poor had economic justice, then the world would be bettered.

My problem is that materialism is connected with this--if the *campesino* only had a car, a swimming pool, a suburban home, he would have justice. So why export the philosophy of affluence? Affluence is not the goal, and materialism is not "justice."

In a sense, too, our decree was already out of date when it was composed. The challenge on the horizon is presented to us by science and by technology. Cloning--the world of genetic engineering--presents a more serious threat to authentic Christian life than a mere redistribution of the earth's goods or the reshaping of social structures.

In the hands of a despotic regime, the findings of science can be used for the performance of deeds as yet unmatched even by the discovery of nuclear power. And the reason is that it is the human person who will be reshaped, not just his environment.

The Church has as yet hardly begun to reflect on this coming event. Justice demands that we not leave our posterity in the lurch, the easy victims of an unscrupulous scientific establishment. I suppose this might be called biological justice.

The battle for this type of justice is fought only by someone with a double doctorate--one in science and one in theology--as the director of Institute for Theological Encounter with Science and Technology (ITEST) once said. The hours are long and the glory is not instant, but the future of the Faith depends on someone taking up this critical need.

Along with biological justice is intellectual justice or the type of "conscience" justice a group like Amnesty International has tried to focus on. An example would be Dr. Semyon Gluzman, the Soviet psychiatrist imprisoned because he refused to "commit" sane persons at the request of the police. This man is not in material need of freedom, but in spiritual need of it. Like Socrates, he refused to compromise his conscience and preferred labor camp to unethical behavior. A rigid and narrow concentration on sheer economic justice prevents us from seeing the pursuit of freedom as a higher type of justice--not to mention the pursuit of the biological justice given earlier as an absolute must.

I am not saying that economic justice, the alleviation of hunger, is not valuable. It is imperative. I am saying that the "problematic" for a spirituality-oriented Jesuit is going to take him far beyond a discussion of economics and politics, and into wider areas which are perhaps ultimately more crucial--much, much more crucial.

2. And those reflections about the problems constantly expanding bring the second reaction.

It seems to me that the radical need now is for *mature* faith, to produce a deepened sensitivity of what justice may be about. I am personally involved in researching certain aspects of life in the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe--and I know very, very few Jesuits who are working in this field. However, I know very many who speak of Chile, South Africa, Brazil and, until recently, of Viet Nam. It seems to me that we are experiencing an era of highly selective compassion where we deem some worthy of our attention and while we hardly mention others. In one of his last books, which first appeared in French in 1972, Cardinal Jean Daniélou, S.J., who had much first hand contact with the downtrodden, put the problem well. I would like to leave you with a short citation from the English translation of his *Why the Church?*:

They want to politicize the Church. Her mission would be to direct humanity in its search for justice and peace. But there the old anticlericalism of my Breton ancestors awakens within me. My ancestors had seen too much of those Breton pastors who wanted to direct their parishoners in politics. And this caused them to rise against a Church that interfered with what was none of her business. Despite this, they remained fundamentally Christians--and sometimes even more so than their pastors. Today I feel the same reaction. It is always the same pastors who want to direct politics. They have only changed their political sentiments.

What we are asking of priests is to give baptism, penance,

communion. We are not asking them for political advice. And above all, we are asking them not to lay down political conditions for the reception of the sacraments. They have done this more than enough in the past. They have brandished their threats of excommunication too often. I knew some who refused absolution under German occupation to those who were in favor of DeGaulle. They are beginning to do the same thing again. They are making socialism an article of faith, as they did with the monarchy. They admit to their Catholic action groups only those who display not the white robe of baptism, but the red flag of the revolution. Let them mind their own business!

And what is their business that is so great? They imagine that modern man takes no interest in God any more and that is why they try to relocate themselves in the political arena. Once more, they are a century late. For today the world is thirsting for God. It is searching for where to find Him. And the mission of the Church, and the singular mission of priests is to give God to this world in its longing for Him.

His message seems to be: Let us seek first the Kingdom, and all else will be given to us--including a path toward justice.

Cardinal Daniélou here expresses a problem which, I think, bothers other Jesuits; it goes even beyond politics, into economics, the social order, science, and the like. It seems to be an expansion of the problem expressed by Cardinal Villot in his letter of May 2, 1975 (*Docs 31st and 32nd GC*, p. 545).

Brian W. Van Hove, S.J.
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November 8, 1977

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Editor's Note: The problem just raised is indeed large and complex. Recently in Rome, however, The International Theological Commission, a body advisory to the Holy Father, has at least begun to tackle professionally some of the knotty issues. A summary of its report on "Human Development and Christian Salvation," made by Father Walter J. Burghardt, S.J., is available in *Origins*, Vol. 7, no. 20 (Nov. 3, 1977), pages 305-313.

Noteworthy in this same direction, too, is another professional effort from the Woodstock Theological Center: the volume of 304 pages entitled: *The Faith that Does Justice: Examining the Christian Sources for Social Change* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977). This is a collection of scholarly studies from Jesuits Avery Dulles, William Dych, John R. Donahue,

William J. Walsh, John P. Langan, Richard R. Roach, David Hollenbach, and John C. Haughey (editor).

Finally, another article which will be helpful to many, especially those in social apostolates, is "An Apostolic Spirituality for the Ministry of Social Justice," by Father Max Oliva, S.J., in *Review for Religious*, Vol. 36, no. 4 (September, 1977), pages 687-694. His perceptive reflections grew gradually from his experiences, including presentation of the material in many workshops, as Director of Social Ministries for the California Province.

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