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The Incarnational Dynamic
of the *Constitutions*

JÁNOS LUKÁCS, S.J.

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THE INCARNATIONAL DYNAMIC
OF THE CONSTITUTIONS

János Lukács, S.J.

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The first word . . .

Sometime during the festivities surrounding an ordination, a beefy relative or longtime family friend will approach the new priest with a broad grin, and searching for an appropriate expression of congratulations will boom out, "Well, you made it!" From his perspective, the sentiment really hits close to the bull's-eye in many ways. For people used to a more normal educational flight path, our decade-plus of looping the academic loops must seem an incredible ordeal. Priesthood comes as a reward if not for survival, then at least for endurance. For an outsider looking in, it means a transition from an endless hitch in boot camp to a seat at officers' mess.

From the perspective of a Jesuit looking down the golden barrel of a fast-approaching jubilee, concluding that someone "made it" at ordination seems a bit premature, to say the least. In the thick chronicle of a Jesuit's life, the event fits more properly into preface than afterword. Undeniably, of course, it does mark a transition of sorts and does call for a celebration, but it's worth reflecting on the nature of the change in the life experience of the men making the transition. It provides opportunities for new sacramental ministries, to be sure, but in a way that would surprise most guests at the first-Mass reception, little else really changes. Most go back to studies of some kind for a while, continue to live in a community, and face continued evaluations by superiors, tertian instructors, thesis directors, principals, provincials, and pastors. And of course the holy oils do not make a wise, compassionate minister out of a self-centered fool. The newly ordained may get a seat at officers' mess, but he still takes his turn at washing the dishes and putting out the garbage.

Before angrily casting this aside as one more screed of a self-hating anticlerical cleric from the lost generation, please read a bit more. The suggestion I'm trying to insinuate into our thinking about formation and ordination is a retrieval of a sense of the continuum of Jesuit life. Our discourse has been imperceptibly dominated by a rhetoric of segmentation. We think of different phases of Jesuit life as "milestones." Some are met and passed with joy, as in the case of first vows and ordination; others with dread, as in the case of stepping down from a leadership role or retirement; from moving up to being moved out. Note the change to passive voice. We emphasize the transitions, and downplay the continuities. In a word, it's really quite difficult for us to think of Jesuit life as a whole, and as a result, we have to cope with several unarticulated consequences, like resentment and frustration.

This conceptual fragmentation of Jesuit life probably stems from the stark ruptures that mark our early years. After a prescribed number of years, usually two or three, we go through a process of rigorous evaluation, and if approved, move to a different community in a different city and begin an entirely different form of activity. We think of it as inevitable progress to move from one predetermined stage to another through the course of training to some readily definable goal like ordination. Unfortunately, the process can lead to a contest model. Ask anyone with experience in formation. Moving on can be understood as a right that is due me, but superiors can block me through some insidious abuse of power. In such an atmosphere of confrontation, it becomes easy to function with a presumption of sinister intent. Superiors must be acting from prejudice, ignorance, or malice; protesters from wounded pride. It's hard to feel that everyone is on the same side, trying to choose the greater good for the Church, the Society, and especially the individual. The segmentation model readily provides the seedbed for divisiveness and resentment.

The toughest transition of all for many young Jesuits, I'm convinced, takes place sometime after ordination, when the young priest or brother receives his first permanent assignment. The support of a peer group of contemporaries is gone, and he may be the youngest man in the house by thirty years or more. The older men will surely welcome him as a sign of the province's commitment to the apostolate, but in many insidious ways, they can marginalize him as an inexperienced kid who can't change the community's time-tested way of proceeding. He's cheeky for trying. In the past, in a tough situation, the young Jesuit could take strength from the fact that in a couple of years, he'd be moving on to the next phase of his training. This time the assignment is for keeps. The mind-set of the fragmentation model runs into the reality of the continuum, and the result can take the form of enormous frustration and alienation.

Many older men can experience the mind-set of segmentation in an oddly contrarian fashion. Transition from one state to another is something that took place in the past, and today belongs to the world of younger Jesuits, especially those in formation. In their training, these Jesuits happily made all the prescribed transitions, but at some point they enter into a would-be final segment and stop. They've made it, and no further adjustments are necessary. If any further transitions do come, as they must inevitably, the result can be traumatic.

Like many a haustus-room bloviation, this has been long on pointing to a perceived problem, and short on indicating solutions. And perhaps its provocative generalizations may lead to a further reflection and conversation in both boot-camp barracks and officers' mess.

If so, the fulminations have served their purpose.

However, we won't end this introductory phase of conversation with merely a description of a problem. At this point, I'm delighted to introduce János Lukács, a Jesuit from the Hungarian Province, who proposes a way to think about Jesuit life in terms of its unities rather than its segments. Taking his lead from developmental psychology, he proposes a way to link the *Spiritual Exercises* with the *Constitutions* and read both documents in terms underlying continuity of the various stages a Jesuit encounters in his own growth in holiness, from the novitiate to the period after tertianship and through the years of one's active ministry. He recognizes the fact that most Jesuits have spent little time with the *Constitutions*, and thus uses the more familiar *Exercises* as a key to unlock the document that Ignatius intended as a guide for Jesuits in their lifelong ministries.

This essay is not a translation. In the tradition of Vladimir Nabokov and Jerzy Kozinski, János has taken English as his adopted language and made it his own, much to the embarrassment and admiration of us native speakers who still wrestle with syntax and metaphor. His clear, graceful prose is a pleasure to read, and his elucidation of the Ignatian documents provides much to think about.

Richard A. Blake, S.J.
Editor

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X	Theory and Practice in Understanding the Constitutions

János Lukács, S.J., has been serving as director of novices for the Hungarian Province since 2002. After earning a degree in computer science, he studied theology for two years and then entered the newly reconstituted Hungarian Province in 1991. After doing philosophy in Munich and theology in Paris, he became socius to the novice director. He came to Weston Jesuit School of Theology, in Cambridge, Mass., where he received his S.T.L. in spiritual theology. He has translated a new Hungarian edition of the *Autobiography of Saint Ignatius*. He can be reached at his e-mail address: Lukacs@jesuits.net.

THE INCARNATIONAL DYNAMIC OF THE CONSTITUTIONS

Both authored by St. Ignatius, the Spiritual Exercises and the Constitutions propose an identical path to holiness. The first outlines the steps leading to a life commitment, and the other proposes concrete means for bringing it to fulfillment. Their common dynamic manifests itself in the stages of development Ignatius prescribes for those who have been called to a life of service and contemplation in the Society.

The Ailing Wing of Contemporary Ignatian Spirituality

As a child, I remember once catching sight of a bird that impressed me by its size and by its sleek silhouette; I could easily imagine it taking pleasure in flying high up in the sky, confronting the elements and reaching high speeds with ease and gracefulness. But the bird—I could not tell what kind it was—was visibly not well. It was flying with great difficulty from one tree to the other. As I took a closer look, I observed one wing full of life, the other lame, hardly having the strength to glide even for a few seconds.

In some ways, this appears to be an apt image of contemporary Ignatian spirituality, some forty years into an unparalleled movement of renewal in the Society of Jesus. In accord with the intention of the Second Vatican Council to renew religious life in the Church, the Thirty-first General Congregation (1965–66) initiated a thorough transformation of Jesuit life. By adopting the double goal

of "adaptation and renewal,"¹ the congregation confirmed the insight of the council that there is a necessary correlation between returning to the founding charism and opening new windows to the modern world.² A fresh look at Ignatian sources was seen as a necessary condition for an authentic *aggiornamento*: in the Society governance, formation, and ministries were to be adapted to "modern ways and necessities of living" in a way that in the meantime would ensure that "the very spiritual heritage of our Institute . . . [was] to be purified and enriched anew according to the necessities of our times" (GC3132, 74, nos. 20f.).

In the subsequent sweeping renewal the *Spiritual Exercises* played a key role. A return to the practice of the first generation of Jesuits of giving the Exercises to individuals rather than to groups

Although scholarly interest has not been lacking, practical reception of the Constitutions lags behind that of the Spiritual Exercises.

served in an exemplary way the double goal of the congregation, being more rooted in the Ignatian tradition on the one hand and offering pertinent support to our contemporaries on the other. The fruit of this renewal has become manifest by now, and contemporary Jesuits are by and large familiar with them. The book of the *Spiritual Exercises* has become a

favorite "lifeline" to our Ignatian roots.³ It is often in our hands, and it is a "living" text. We consult it habitually and find it quite meaningful in a variety of personal or pastoral situations, including areas like spiritual direction, our understanding of religious life, integra-

¹ *The Renewal of Our Laws*, in *Documents of the 31st and 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1977), 73, no. 18. Hereafter this source will be abbreviated to GC3132, followed by the page number and the boldface marginal number.

² *Perfectæ Caritatis: Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life*, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1975), 612, no. 2.

³ *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, ed. with notes and commentary by George E. Ganss, S.J. (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992). Hereafter this source will be abbreviated to *SpEx*, followed by the boldface marginal number, sometimes a superscript "verse number," and then the page number in parentheses. All emphases in the quotations have been added to the original text.

tion of psychological insights into Ignatian spirituality, support offered to lay co-workers, and the like. In the midst of a postmodern culture and a post-Vatican II Church, the book of the *Spiritual Exercises* has returned to being foundational for our Jesuit identity.

In comparison, the other principal Ignatian source, the *Constitutions*, is less a favorite. Although scholarly interest has not been lacking, practical reception of the *Constitutions* lags behind that of the *Spiritual Exercises*.⁴ Apart from being an important theme in the novitiate and in the tertianship, the *Constitutions* remain relatively insignificant in our daily lives as Jesuits. We seldom declare today that our identity is in the *Constitutions*, and we rarely refer to this text when talking about our belonging to the Society. In practical matters there is a tangible reluctance to rely on this Ignatian text, in sharp contrast to the central role that we tend to attribute to the book of the *Exercises*. For example, although several parts of the *Constitutions* describe in detail Ignatius's idea of Jesuit formation, this book has hardly been a reference in the meetings of formators that I attended in various provinces in recent years. We seem to draw on our two major Ignatian sources in a very uneven way, as if one wing of our contemporary Jesuit spirituality were full of life and the other lame.

We might be flying on just one Ignatian wing because our approach to the Constitutions is in some ways unsatisfactory.

I will begin this essay by sketching out our heritage of a troubled relationship with the *Constitutions*. I will then examine more in detail how in the case of our other primary Ignatian source, the *Spiritual Exercises*, we have become skilled at using this Ignatian text in a contemporary cultural environment. Next, I will propose a way to use the wealth of our experience in giving the *Spiritual Exercises* as an approach to the *Constitutions*. The nature of these consider-

⁴See Ignacio Iparraguirre, S.J., *Contemporary Trends in Studies on the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus: Annotated Bibliographical Orientations* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1974), and an updated bibliography in Carlos Coupeau, "Beginning, Middle, and End: A Rhetorical Study of the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus as a Classic of Spirituality" (S.T.D. thesis, Weston Jesuit School of Theology, 2001).

ations will be suggestive rather than probative; some possible ways of developing a more systematic approach will be proposed in a subsequent chapter.

I. The Constitutions in Jesuit Life, Present and Past: A Lame Wing

Several recent general congregations addressed the question of how pertinent the *Constitutions* are to our daily Jesuit lives. The promulgation of the *Complementary Norms* by the most recent congregation was a major effort to promote “an ever more perfect observance of our Constitutions and our Institute.”⁵ In the meantime, Father General directed the attention of the participants of the Thirty-fourth General Congregation to the original Ignatian text: “Without this book of challenges and reminders, our desire to go forward remains without perspectives and without energy.”⁶ In the course of our continuing Ignatian renewal, we are called to give a more prominent place to the *Constitutions* in our Jesuit lives than before.

Yet, in a postmodern culture, a more immediate use of the *Constitutions* is not necessarily seen as a realistic or desirable goal. The bias for the *Exercises* in our contemporary Jesuit life, the enthusiasm for the one text and the distance from the other, seems to result from a deep-seated suspicion that the two texts are of unequal value. The question is often asked whether or not the book of the *Constitutions* is simply much more dependent on a sixteenth-century cultural context than the *Exercises*. The tacit assumption we seem to make is that the Ignatius of the *Exercises* was interested in personal freedom and encountering the Spirit, whereas the Ignatius of the *Constitutions*

⁵ *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Translation of the Official Latin Texts* (Saint Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 57. Hereafter this source will be abbreviated to *ConsCN*, followed by C and the boldface paragraph number when the reference is to the text of the *Constitutions*. Sometimes the paragraph number is followed by a superscript “verse number.” All emphases in the quotations have been added to the original text.

⁶ “On Our Law and Our Life,” third introductory discourse of Father General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., delivered on January 7, 1995, in *Documents of the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (Saint Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources), 278. This latter source will hereafter be abbreviated to *GC34*.

was concerned with organizational development and prescriptions. As if the author of the two were not the same man, in the *Exercises* we intuitively sense freedom, while in the *Constitutions*, we tend to perceive regulations that go against our desire for freedom.

As Father General said during his introductory discourse to the Thirty-fourth Congregation, modern readers of the *Constitutions* are confronted with “the eternal problem that brings the letter into conflict with the Spirit, the institution in conflict with the charism” (278). Our current perspective differs from that of Ignatius, for whom particular details of the *Constitutions* were apparently not in opposition to the freedom he desired Jesuits to acquire. When describing Jesuit formation in the *Constitutions*, he writes with an “assurance that those who are not yet sufficiently advanced will be able to discover in the *Constitutions* advice and instruction for making progress on the way” (276). In the Ignatian vision, there seems to be no antagonistic opposition between Spirit and Letter:

Nicolás Bobadilla expressed his reservations by claiming that “the Constitutions were a ‘prolix labyrinth’ that neither superiors nor subjects would ever be able to understand.”

It is important to learn from Ignatius’s experience. . . . All one has to do is to open up the book of the *Spiritual Exercises* and to leaf through the book of the *Constitutions* to come face to face with Ignatius and his great inspirations, his wide horizons, his worldwide measures; and also with an Ignatius who goes into the least detail and particulars of conduct and process. We do not have a double personality here, or two parallel records of activity. Ignatius allows himself to be taken over by the logic of the Incarnate Word in whom true infinity and actual finiteness are joined together. (278)

In other words, as we take a closer look at the two Ignatian texts, we discover that both imply a sense of freedom and a multitude of meticulously articulated details. The difference could be lying not in the texts but in the way we understand them. We might be flying on just one Ignatian wing because our approach to the *Constitutions* is in some ways unsatisfactory.

Recent history of Ignatian spirituality suggests that this suspicion is quite plausible. Until about fifty years ago, our use of the *Spiritual Exercises* was unsatisfactory in the sense that we did not

recognize this text as a handbook for directors of individually directed retreats. Although Jesuits certainly used much of the *Exercises* as a basis for preached retreats, the intended function of the book was not quite understood. It was not clear how the text described a specific relationship between a director and a directee, and a series of ingenious exercises to introduce individuals into a personal experience of God. As a result, particular details (like many of the annotations) were overlooked because they did not appear pertinent to retreats that were not individually directed. Similarly today, while we are aware of the significance of the *Constitutions*, we read them, and often enough have even prayed over them, but we have yet to learn how to use this text. It looks as if history may be repeating itself.

Our contemporary difficulties are not unrelated to similar difficulties in the past. Even before the promulgation of the *Constitutions*, Nicolás Bobadilla expressed his reservations by claiming that “the *Constitutions* were a ‘prolix labyrinth’ that neither superiors nor

subjects would ever be able to understand.”⁷ In fact, the text never served as a practical rule for life in Jesuit houses. For practical purposes, as John O’Malley informs us, both Ignatius and local superiors compiled sets of rules, based on excerpts from the *Constitutions*, that were to be observed in particular residences and by persons holding specific offices in the house (337). In 1580 Mercurian published an official *Summary* that became a common set of rules to be observed throughout the Soci-

By putting Ignatian means, including minute details of the “letter” of the text, at the service of a dynamic progression toward God, we become spiritual guides with some quite extraordinary competencies in a contemporary cultural context.

ety. Summaries were welcomed because they served well the immediate objective of offering “traffic regulations for larger communities,” allowing Jesuits “to adapt easily and feel at home as they moved from house to house, from country to country” (338).

⁷ See John O’Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 334.

In an indirect way, however, summaries contributed to obstructing the reception of the *Constitutions* in the Society. Summaries conserved many elements of the Ignatian text but did not reproduce the context of the Ignatian vision within which particular details were to be interpreted. The official *Summary* presented universally valid prescriptions, prescinding from an individual's progress in religious life and of his degree of incorporation into the body of the Society.⁸ Although specific elements of the *Constitutions* were commonly known, they were not necessarily seen as being in the service of a dynamic progression toward God, in growing freedom in the Spirit.⁹ Bluntly put: in the early history of the Society, the door was opened for a vital feature of the *Constitutions* to be missed. As a result, the understanding of the Institute of the Society could be determined—in a more or less domineering way—by a flat legalistic interpretation. Up to the Second Vatican Council, such legalistic use of excerpts from the *Constitutions* played an important role in maintaining a preconiliar Jesuit lifestyle, which in many aspects proved to be deficient in leading Jesuits to greater freedom in the Spirit in the modern world. As we open the book of the *Constitutions* today, our efforts to understand the text seem to be still burdened by this heritage: we do not tend to marvel at and to explore this Ignatian text with the same inner openness that we bring to the study of the *Spiritual Exercises*.

II. The Dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises

The book of the *Spiritual Exercises* envisages a dynamic progression toward greater freedom in the Spirit to love and serve under the Standard of Christ; in contemporary Ignatian spirituality, this purpose of the *Spiritual Exercises* is self-evident. This self-evident statement has been the basis for a profusion of research on the text of the *Exercises*, for the simple reason that its particular

⁸ Coupeau, "Beginning, Middle, and End," 26 f.

⁹ "The *Summary of the Constitutions* served us well, but it was defective. It was as though someone took *King Lear* and extracted the great speeches and lyrical passages, arranged them in some rough logical order, dismembered the text, dislocated the dramatic structure and destroyed the story. And then said, there you have the essence of *King Lear*" (Joseph Veale, "How the *Constitutions* Work," in *The Way*, Supplement 61 [Spring 1988], 9).

details could be studied under the specific angle of how they fostered a dynamic progression toward God. Similarly, in our practice of giving the Exercises, we are confident that particular Ignatian exercises and teachings will help a retreatant who is seeking greater freedom in the Spirit. Our familiarity with the overall purpose of the *Exercises* enables us to apply the Ignatian exercises specifically or to adapt them freely according to what seems best in a particular situation. In other words, both in scholarly research and in giving the Exercises, we are spontaneously capable of understanding the "letter" as being in the service of growth in the Spirit.

As we quite spontaneously relate particular elements of the text (like the "requirement" to feel sorrow over one's sins during the First Week) to the overarching horizon of a progression toward God, we rely on our implicit sense of the psycho-spiritual process that we call the "dynamic of the Exercises." Those giving the Exercises

progressively develop a sense of this mysterious dynamic that becomes an almost tangible reality in the intensive days of a retreat. This is one of the most surprising features of the Exercises: "Despite all differences, and the enduring uniqueness of each exercitant, there still exists a *fundamental dynamic* which is the same for all."¹⁰

Once we become familiar with this dynamic, particular details in the book of the *Spiritual Exercises* be-

We are well aware that no one will mechanically receive a grace by doing an exercise: we know, and we experience, that grace is always a gift, and there is always an element of surprise and freshness in this gift.

gin to make sense, because we can see their fruit in our practice of helping others. By putting Ignatian means, including minute details of the "letter" of the text, at the service of a dynamic progression toward God, we become spiritual guides with some quite extraordinary competencies in a contemporary cultural context.

First, when giving retreats we can set up a favorable physical, psychological, and spiritual environment that optimally serves the needs of a person in search of God. For example, we see the impor-

¹⁰ Alex Lefrank and Maurice Giuliani, *Freedom for Service: Dynamics of the Ignatian Exercises as Currently Understood and Practiced* (Rome: World Federation of Christian Life Communities, 1989), 12.

tance of the annotations, and we are able to adapt them flexibly to particular circumstances.

Second, with a sense of the dynamic of the Exercises, we are capable of going right to the heart of the matter in a great variety of human situations. In a respectful way, we examine individuals from a specific angle and assess where they are situated along the trajectory of the psycho-spiritual process of the Exercises or indeed whether they are on that path. Once we answer this question, we can identify the most basic and most pressing spiritual needs of the person (that is, the grace of feeling loved by God or seeing one's sinfulness or perceiving similar experiences). As directors of the Exercises, we turn towards these needs, convinced that no real progress is possible until the grace of this particular stage has been truly asked for and received.

Third, we become able to help a person by means of specific exercises. These exercises, we firmly believe, will dispose the person to receiving a desired grace. We are well aware that no one will mechanically receive a grace by doing an exercise: we know, and we experience, that grace is always a gift, and there is always an element of surprise and freshness in this gift. Yet we are quite certain that the desired gift *will* arrive quite soon, and that the particular exercise is likely to open the door to it in some way. We cannot read the mind of God, but our experience, together with the authority of the *Spiritual Exercises*, tells us what we can reasonably hope to happen.

Fourth, as a result of these steps, retreatants can enjoy recurring periods of consolation that confirm, in retrospect, the sometimes quite strenuous struggle that preceded these consolations. A renewed sense of freedom, meaningfulness, and trust in God is such a precious experience that it generally leads to an increased desire for God. Thus, the dynamic of the Exercises itself is confirmed, and the retreatant is called to engage more fully in it. The dynamic of the Exercises, once it has taken off, is usually self-sustaining. If the retreat goes well, then the director of the Exercises can progressively

Both texts capture a single Ignatian vision of a progression toward God, and we can—in theory—expect our familiarity with the Exercises to be of help in grasping the dynamic of the Constitutions.

retire to the background and leave the guidance more and more directly to the Spirit.

Fifth, the director of the Exercises enjoys a rare privilege in the midst of a pervasively anti-authoritarian postmodern culture: one has surprisingly little difficulty exercising authority. Overt or repressed conflicts between the retreatant and the director are relatively rare. This is quite remarkable because, from a third person's point of view, the director can be quite authoritarian; little details of one's daily routine—sleeping and eating habits, rest and physical exercise—can all be subject to the director's judgment. Why does one submit oneself so eagerly to such an authority? The Exercises certainly do not eliminate all conflict in a dreamlike, undisturbed atmosphere. But the primary place of conflict is not between the retreatant and the director. Conflict is stirred *within* the retreatant, who experiences a more-or-less manifest clash of mighty *internal* forces. With the help of the rules for the discernment of the spirits, these internal forces can be identified as influences of the good or the bad spirit, supportive of or contrary to "what I want." Consequently, the retreatant develops a deep sense of whether he or she is moving "forward" or not. Someone who is engaged in the dynamic of the Exercises will thus perceive the director's more or less authoritative or even somewhat clumsy support as a valuable, most welcome assistance in moving toward the desired direction in the midst of strong, conflicting spiritual motions.

These examples show the extent to which our awareness of the psycho-spiritual dynamic of the Exercises is constitutive of a practical Ignatian spirituality. This dynamic is what makes the book of the *Exercises* special: it weaves various meditations, considerations, methods of prayer, and conversations with the director together in a way that the whole enhances the meaningfulness of each element. The significant difference between our practice of using Ignatian elements within the Exercises and outside them can be explained by this central feature of the Exercises. At present, our efforts in the area of formation seem to lack the synergy that we know from the Exercises precisely because we do not have a comparable sense of the spiritual (and also psychological) process of transformation that will take place during the long years of Jesuit formation.

III. A Dynamic of the Constitutions?

Is there a way to conceive of our entire Jesuit life as a whole, as a coherent, dynamic process, enabling familiar Ignatian elements to work in synergy in the same way as they do within the Spiritual Exercises? There are indications that Ignatius did have an implicit sense of such a dynamic. His letters suggest that when dealing with fellow Jesuits, he was in possession of the remarkable “competencies” that we know from our practice of giving the Spiritual Exercises: going right to the heart of the matter and being authoritative, yet perceived as supportive. In an era when religious life was so corrupted that it had little if any appeal, Ignatius was able to accompany young men beyond the intensive days of the Spiritual Exercises into a life choice that they found—even in the midst of extreme hardships—grace filled, meaningful, and satisfying, rather like a person engaged in doing the Spiritual Exercises.

The text of the *Constitutions* also gives some hints about a dynamic movement toward God. Expressions like “progress” and “progressing in the Spirit” are not rare, and some commentators suggest that “we can detect in the *Constitutions* a dynamic similar to that of the Spiritual Exercises.”¹¹ Regrettably, these authors tend to remain within the limits of a “spiritually insightful or “sapientielle” reading,”¹² giving little information about how this dynamic is to be conceived. The most direct evidence for the significant role of a developmental dynamic can be found by recalling that Ignatius intended to follow a developmental pattern in the very way he organized the *Constitutions*:

The Constitutions concern themselves with the question of how an initial, fragile, and often quite volatile spiritual movement can be embodied in concrete situations of daily life.

¹¹ André de Jaer, S.J., *Together for Mission: A Spiritual Reading of the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* (Saint Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2001), 75. See also Dominique Bertrand, *Un Corps pour l'Esprit: Essai sur l'expérience communautaire selon les Constitutions de la Compagnie de Jésus* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1974), 11–41.

¹² De Jaer, *Together for Mission*, vii.

In fact, the originality of the *Constitutions* was nowhere more striking than in the developmental design according to which they followed the Jesuit from entrance into the Society through to his commissioning. . . . Like the *Exercises*, the *Constitutions* were based on a presupposition that psychological or spiritual growth will take place, and they provided for it by prescribing certain things as appropriate for beginners and suggesting others as appropriate for more seasoned members.¹³

Ignatius chose to organize the material of the *Constitutions* in such a way that its very structure reflects a basic concern for the development of individuals. Although “in the order of [his] intention” the actual focus of the *Constitutions* was “the body of the

Society taken as a whole” (*ConsCN* C 135^{v.1}), this theme is covered only in the second half of the text, since “this body is composed of its members; and . . . that which takes place first is what pertains to the individual members, in the sequence of admitting them [and] fostering their progress. . . . Therefore our treatise will deal first with these individual members” (C 135^{vv.2-3}).

The initial reactions of a novice who finds himself in the unusual milieu of the novitiate will be mixed. On the one hand, he is likely to be consoled by the promise of a new start in community. On the other hand, he will find that his usual ways of finding joy and security in daily life have been seriously reduced.

Ignatius explicitly included this point in the Preamble of the *Constitutions* so that the idea of successive stages of progression would not be lost. Consequently,

it seems reasonable to assume that the *Constitutions* are to be opened, not unlike the *Spiritual Exercises*, as a handbook for those who are familiar with an underlying developmental dynamic.

At this point however, we encounter a major dilemma. If a sense of an underlying developmental dynamic is the key to understanding the *Constitutions*, then how can one develop a sufficiently strong sense of this dynamic? Can it be “extracted” from the text? If the *Constitutions* work in the same way as the *Exercises*, then the answer is yes and no. No, because an awareness of the developmen-

¹³ O'Malley, *First Jesuits*, 336 f.

tal dynamic is the very precondition for understanding the text; it cannot be a priori extracted from it. And yes, because with however limited an initial sense of the underlying dynamic, the text can be expected to open up and reveal itself, very much as the text of the *Exercises* reveals more and more fully the astounding richness of its spiritual dynamic for a director who has given the thirty-day retreat once, twice, or several times.

To get out of the Catch-22 dilemma, we can turn to the *Exercises*. Commentators often refer to the *Exercises* when faced with the problem that the *Constitutions* are hard to understand:

The *Constitutions* are unintelligible apart from the experience of making the *Exercises*. There is an organic relationship between the two. It is helpful, as one reads the *Constitutions* and tries to live them, to see the *Exercises* coming through and to see the differences, to see how they cast light on the *Exercises* and how the *Exercises* cast light on them.¹⁴

Both texts capture a single Ignatian vision of a progression toward God, and we can—in theory—expect our familiarity with the *Exercises* to be of help in grasping the dynamic of the *Constitutions*. Surprisingly, the central aspect that we are interested in—a progressive development in growing freedom in the Spirit—is by and large missing from commentaries that compare the *Constitutions* to the *Exercises*. Antonio M. de Aldama, for example, gives a range of reasons why the *Exercises* can be called the “soul of the *Constitutions*” (the testimony of the First Companions, the similarity of basic dispositions formed by the *Spiritual Exercises* and expected by the *Constitutions*, a similar vocabulary, and other such examples), without emphasizing that the common purpose of both texts is to foster a progression toward God through well-defined stages.¹⁵ Secondary

Retreatants often spontaneously express this by beginning to reflect in the last days of a retreat about how it will be possible to incarnate in daily life the graces received.

¹⁴ Veale, “How the *Constitutions* Work,” 6.

¹⁵ Antonio M. de Aldama, S.J., “¿Los ejercicios espirituales son el alma de las constituciones?” in *Recherches Ignatiennes Communications*, III-74/1.

literature offers only some rather vague hints of a similarity between both Ignatian texts and developmental processes:

[In the Constitutions] the [General] Examen and Parts I-V, treating the formation of the individual, can be compared to the first two Weeks of the Exercises. . . . Formation is like a practical daily implementation of the process shown in the Exercises. Part V, dealing with definitive incorporation through the vows, corresponds to the Election, while Parts VI to X, which concern the life of the companion fully formed . . . can be clarified by the contemplation of the paschal mystery in the Third and Fourth Weeks.¹⁶

The insight that there is a parallelism between the *Exercises* and the *Constitutions* is quite inspiring, and a closer look at the structure of the *Constitutions* suggests that one can go further in exploring this parallelism. Of the ten parts, Parts I to VI mirror the developmental vision of Ignatius:

Part I discusses questions of admission to the novitiate.

Part II deals with eventualities of dismissal.

Part III treats life in the novitiate.

Part IV speaks about issues concerning scholastics.

Part V discusses final incorporation into the Society including tertianship.

Part VI is entitled "The Personal Life of Those Already Admitted or Incorporated into the Society."

For our purposes, Parts III to VI are of immediate interest. Parts VII to X will not be considered here because these leave behind the idea of individual development and turn toward issues concerning the whole of the body of the Society (missioning, fostering unity, governance, and preservation of its well-being). For reasons of simplicity, Parts I and II, which do not refer to extended periods of time, can also be set aside, allowing a clearer focus on Parts III to VI. These four parts are unique in the sense that they describe four distinct phases of Jesuit life—the novitiate, scholastic years, tertianship, and professed life—that are sufficiently long for "progress" to be made in a developmental dynamic. For a given

¹⁶De Jaer, *Together for Mission*, 76.

individual, these four parts flesh out what Ignatius called, when presenting the Institute of the Society, a “pathway to God.”¹⁷

Between the two forms of the Ignatian “pathway to God,” that of the *Constitutions* and that of the *Exercises*, there are some obvious similarities. The fact that the way to God consists of separate phases is a familiar Ignatian feature: “[H]e was very aware of the distinctiveness of each stage on this long journey.”¹⁸ The number of these stages is identical: both the *Spiritual Exercises* and the *Constitutions* dedicate, as we have seen, four distinct sections to describing four different phases of a progression toward God. At each phase the individual is placed in front of a new set of challenges, and it is by means of facing these challenges that progression toward God can be made: much as in the *Exercises*, “[I]n the *Constitutions* Ignatius wishes each to be able to advance towards God according to the particular demands of each stage” (276).

*Just as the book of the
Spiritual Exercises talks to
those who give the Exercises
rather than to the person
doing them, Part III talks for
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facilitate the intended
transition.*

The difference is that in the *Spiritual Exercises*, one is expected to advance by “spiritual actions” like “examining one’s conscience, meditating, contemplating, praying vocally and mentally,” and so on: this is the very reason why we talk about “spiritual exercises” (*SpEx* 1^{v.1} [p. 21]). In the case of the *Constitutions*, there is a noticeable change. The progression demanded here can be characterized as “incarnational”:

[Ignatius] introduces the novice into a personal incarnational process and an encounter with the real. . . . The spirit is allowed to immerse itself in the concrete details of daily life by means of spiritual and corporal exercises. . . . Perceptible here is an allusion to the descent of Christ, who took the path of the poor and humble servant. . . . A dynamic of incarnation gets under way.¹⁹

¹⁷ *Exposcit debitum*, by Julius III, known as “The Formula of the Institute of the Society of Jesus,” in *ConsCN* p. 4, no. 1, col. 2.

¹⁸ Kolvenbach, “On Our Law and Our Life,” 276.

¹⁹ De Jaer, *Together for Mission*, 54 f.

Although Ignatian spirituality in its entirety can be characterized as “incarnational” and it would be impossible to understand the *Spiritual Exercises* without assuming an incarnational concern, the word designates a distinctive feature of the *Constitutions*. From the *Exercises* to the *Constitutions*, there is a significant shift of focus. In the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius concentrates on an intensive time spent exclusively with God, which implies the delicate beginnings of an incarnational movement (“preparing and disposing the soul” [*SpEx* 1 (p. 21)]). The main concern here is a dynamic development of spiritual movements like inner dispositions, thoughts, feelings, memories, and desires, and so forth. In this sense, the *Spiritual Exercises* are “spiritual” before being “incarnational.”²⁰ Retreatants often spontaneously express this by beginning to reflect in the last days of a retreat about how it will be possible to incarnate in daily life the graces received. In contrast, in the *Constitutions*—although this book is not less “spiritual” than the *Exercises*—progression towards God unfolds through a multitude of situations where the primary focus is not on spiritual movements, but rather on using material objects, relating to human beings, investing oneself in studies, and the like. The *Constitutions* concern themselves with the question of how an initial, fragile, and often quite volatile spiritual movement can be embodied in concrete situations of daily life. Progress toward God is made when an initial desire, insight, or attitude—a spiritual reality—becomes incarnated in acts that bring a Jesuit into actual contact with objects, persons, or even ideas that are to be found in this created world. Throughout the *Constitutions*, there is a distinctive concern that the incarnational movement does not stop at the stage of a devout feeling, desire, or conviction, but instead advances to the point of imprinting the historic reality of the world, whether in a Jesuit community or in an apostolic work.

These are the criteria that I am going to take into consideration when invoking the *Spiritual Exercises* as a canon of interpretation for the *Constitutions*, in the hope of being able to develop an initial sense of a presumed “incarnational dynamic.” At each stage of

²⁰ Throughout this essay these two terms, each with a considerable theological history, will be used in a specific sense, “spiritual” referring to interior movements and “incarnational” meaning the realization, the embodiment, of a spiritual reality in the sense that de Jaer uses the word. A theological interpretation (“perceptible here is an allusion to the descent of Christ”) would be possible, but it is not the topic of this essay.

formation, I am going to evoke some instances where the practice of giving the Exercises sheds light on the text of the *Constitutions* and on the developmental dynamic of Jesuit life.

Part III of the *Constitutions*: The Novitiate

The first paragraph of Part III of the *Constitutions* explains that the goal of the novitiate is to advance “along the path of the divine service.”²¹ This opens a developmental perspective, where a person can be expected “to make progress” (*ConsCN* C 243); in other words, he goes through some kind of transformation. There are two aspects of this transformation, a spiritual and an incarnational one, and the two are connected: one should advance “both in spirit and in virtues” (C 243). Progress in spirit refers to the “spiritual” exercises explained in the First Annotation (*SpEx* 1 [p. 21]). Progress in “virtues” indicates a more explicit incarnational concern; the dispositions formed by spiritual exercises are expected to manifest themselves in a visible way. The aim is to increase the ability of expressing a disposition by means of concrete acts: “[A] virtue is a disposition to act, desire, and feel that involves the exercise of judgment and leads to recognizable human excellence, an instance of human flourishing.”²² It is within this overarching dynamic of progressing in spirit and in virtues that particular details of Part III are to be understood.

How do the *Constitutions* introduce novices into this movement of progress? A number of elements are strikingly similar to the First Week of the *Exercises*. First, the person going through a dynamic of transformation is not to carry the ultimate responsibility for the process itself. Just as the book of the *Spiritual Exercises* talks to those who give the Exercises rather than to the person doing them, Part III talks for the most part to those who facilitate the intended transition: “[D]ue consideration and prudent care should be employed toward preserving in their vocation those who are being kept and tested” (*ConsCN* C 243^{v.4}). Little progress can be made without a

²¹ For reasons of simplicity, I am going to concentrate on chap. 1 of Part III. Chap. 2, “The Preservation of the Body,” which concerns matters of health and clothing, will be ignored, as will the General Examen, which describes the six novitiate experiments (C 64–79).

²² William C. Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 28, quoting from Lee H. Yearly, “Recent Work on Virtue,” *Religious Studies Review* 16 (1990): 2.

competent guide: “It will be beneficial to have a faithful and competent person,” a novice director who facilitates the developmental movement (C 263^{v.1}).

The novice director has to fulfill two basic functions, supporting and challenging. This double role is familiar from the *Exercises* (6f., 12f. [pp. 23, 24f.]). In the novitiate, support is essential: novices need “a person whom all those who are in probation may love . . . to [have] recourse [to] in their temptations and open themselves [to] with confidence, hoping to receive from him in our Lord counsel and aid in everything” (ConsCN C 263^{v.2}). The use of authority for challenging individuals is also indispensable, just as it is when giving the Exercises. Part of the novice director’s role is to instruct the novices “how to conduct themselves . . . , to encourage them to this,

to remind them of it, and to give loving admonition” (C 263^{v.1}). The seemingly opposing functions of confirming and challenging are intrinsically interconnected, much as in our practice of giving the Spiritual Exercises, where we do not tend to have major difficulties bringing these two aspects together.

Realistically, respect for others is hard to maintain because, as community life gets intense, misunderstandings, power games, all kinds of weaknesses give way to more-or-less subtle hostilities.

A second similarity is that for growth to take place, a favorable environment, a safe “milieu,”

has to be set up.²³ This environment is defined primarily by a number of separations (C 244–49). In the Exercises, the secluded environment helps a person to become more “apt . . . to approach and to reach his Creator and Lord” (*SpEx* 20^{v.9} [p. 29]). In the case of the *Constitutions*, a rather close group is formed where individuals will have contacts—for the most part—with one another.²⁴ Similarly in the Exercises there is a single focus on God; in the novitiate there is a rather strong focus on a relatively small number of relationships.

²³ De Jaer, *Together for Mission*, 55.

²⁴ Some separations also exist within the group. This is how the group can be “organ-ized,” transformed into a “body,” an organic unity, which is a major concern of the *Constitutions*: “[T]he consideration which comes first and has more weight is that about the body of the Society” (C 135^{v.1}).

This is where practically all “relational energies” are to be invested. In the novitiate, a protected environment is a precondition for the spiritual and incarnational dynamic to set in: “[I]t is of great importance . . . [for] their spiritual progress” (C 244^{v.1}). To create this environment is one of the first areas where authority is to be used, both in the novitiate and in the beginning of the Spiritual Exercises.

The initial reactions of a novice who finds himself in the unusual milieu of the novitiate will be mixed. On the one hand, he is likely to be consoled by the promise of a new start in community. On the other hand, he will find that his usual ways of finding joy and security in daily life have been seriously reduced. For example, the satisfaction drawn from using once familiar objects of comfort is gone: “[T]hey must not have the use of anything as their own” (C 254^{v.1}). The result is a tension, which is probably not explicit at the beginning but will manifest itself in a series of “ups and downs.” In other words, powerful conflicting movements of consolations and desolations can be anticipated, just as when things go well in the First Week of the Exercises (SpEx 6).

A third key similarity between Part III of the *Constitutions* and the *Exercises* is that in this disconcerting situation, unconditional respect and service are asked for. The attitude of respect and service rings a bell for those familiar with the *Exercises*. The Third Annotation explains that “greater reverence is required of us” when we want to speak to God—enter a relationship with God—rather than simply making reflections about God (3 [p. 22^{v.3}]). “Service” of God is part of the grace asked for in the preparatory prayer of every single meditation throughout the four Weeks: “[A]sk for the grace of God our Lord

Similarly, the Constitutions identify two ways of escaping the challenge of interpersonal relationships. The first is by retreating into a kind of passivity, by refusing to be drawn into common life. Ignatius is unambiguous on this point: “[I]dleness, which is the source of all evils, may have no place in the house.” The other way to harm a relationship is by dominating interpersonal situations with overt or covert aggression. Here, Ignatius is just as firm: “[P]assion or any anger of some toward others should not be permitted.”

that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to the service and praise of His Divine Majesty" (46 [p. 40]). The *Constitutions* ask for a very similar attitude to be developed toward everyone in the community: "In everything they should try and desire to give the advantage to the others." By this, more is asked than simply doing things for others; there is question of relating to, of being in the presence of, the other person in a particular way: "showing outwardly, in an unassuming and simple religious manner, the respect and reverence appropriate to each one's state" (*ConsCN C 250^{v.4}*). Simply put, novices are asked to be responsible for the quality of their relationships with their companions in the house. The *Constitutions* are not satisfied with a spiritual feeling or desire: there is question of a richer, incarnational meaning of "respect" and "service." Respectful attention is to be fleshed out by concrete acts whenever appropriate: in the intensive context of a close community, interpersonal relationships are to mirror Gospel values.

Reality is sure to fall short of ideals. The *Constitutions* foresee this likelihood, and this is a fourth analogy with the *Spiritual Exercises*. Realistically, respect for others is hard to maintain because, as community life gets intense, misunderstandings, power games, all kinds of weaknesses give way to more-or-less subtle hostilities. The result is the disappearance of respect for others, and some kind of harm caused to a number of relationships.

Intensive community life can help individuals to recognize these motivations to the extent that their effects become visible; since they damage interpersonal relationships, inclinations receive a moral evaluation, and they can be labeled as "evil."

One can harm a relationship basically in one of two ways, both of which will be familiar to an experienced retreat director, because these are the very ways of breaking a relationship with God in prayer. One is by giving up, more or less consciously ("this meditation is not helping me, why

should I be sitting here?"), and the other is by becoming aggressive, more or less consciously ("I have been waiting long enough, I want this to happen"). A retreat director's job in such cases is to help a person remain attentive in a developing relationship with God (*SpEx 3, 12f.* [pp. 22, 24f.]). Similarly, the *Constitutions* identify two ways of

escaping the challenge of interpersonal relationships. The first is by retreating into a kind of passivity, by refusing to be drawn into common life. Ignatius is unambiguous on this point: "[I]dleness, which is the source of all evils, may have no place in the house" (C 253^{v.3}). The other way to harm a relationship is by dominating interpersonal situations with overt or covert aggression. Here, Ignatius is just as firm: "[P]assion or any anger of some toward others should not be permitted" (C 275^{v.1}).

A primary job of a novice director is to be a guardian of human relationships, just as he is the guardian of a progressively developing, fragile relationship with God when giving the Spiritual Exercises. As long as the ideal of maintaining quality relationships with everyone in the house is upheld under all conditions, he finds himself in a position that is very similar to that of a retreat director: he can help in very personal ways, in issues that matter most to a given individual, always respecting the delicate dynamic that is setting in. By assuming responsibility for creating the proper conditions, he will become able to use his full spiritual and psychological arsenal to help novices toward the desired developmental goal.

A fifth important similarity to the First Week of the *Exercises* is that relationships can be fostered primarily through increasing the awareness of a divided heart. Part III of the *Constitutions* challenges novices to get beyond the very same obstacles that manifest themselves during the First Week; hence the prevalence of a traditional "ascetic" vocabulary here.²⁵ With competent and compassionate help, a novice can become aware of the negative motivations that are in fundamental opposition to a basic desire to be in harmony with others: prejudices, overt or repressed anger, fears, possessive tendencies, lack of trust, laziness, impatience, and many other obstacles will be discovered. These motions stem from the grey area where sin (for which the person is responsible) and original sin (for which there is no personal responsibility) intermingle; hence the neutral term: these are "inclinations" (C 265^{v.1}). At the outset, such inclinations are usually hidden, because they are to some extent unconscious and "automatic": they spring from the "old self," which was conditioned by childhood experiences or by later successes and failures in interpersonal relationships. Intensive community life can help individuals to recognize these motivations to the extent that their effects become

²⁵ Bertrand, *Un Corps pour l'Esprit*, 103.

visible; since they damage interpersonal relationships, inclinations receive a moral evaluation, and they can be labeled as “evil” (C 265^{v.1}).

In the terminology of the *Exercises*, these evil inclinations are elements of one’s sinfulness that keep a person “imprisoned” (47^{v.5} [p. 40]), unable to maintain close relationships in a habitual way. A person incapable of discerning inner tensions will spontaneously project these on others and will live with a deep sense of loneliness. An insufficiently differentiated self-image is manifested in being

It is also crucial to keep a space open where the divided heart can be brought into an intimate relationship with God and healed in the atmosphere of the absolute and unconditional forgiving love of God.

upset about “the speck of dust in someone else’s eye while not noticing the plank in one’s own.” In the dense interpersonal milieu of the novitiate, the most direct way to progress from imprisonment toward freedom is by recognizing and naming internal tensions. Through recurring acts of reconciliation, accompanied by reflections on how particular interpersonal situations were spoiled, self-knowledge can grow, and novices

can discover their particular way of being a “sinner yet called to be a companion of Jesus” (GC34, 236, no. 538). With a new sense of freedom, such a person is liberated to choose acts that are different from what would have been motivated through unconscious, “automatic” inclinations. Such acts advance the incarnational dynamic of the *Constitutions* in the novitiate toward growing freedom in the Spirit.

In a group where individuals recognize Gospel values as a norm of behavior, their deep yearning for communion will be met. To the extent that individuals make progress toward God, they begin to perceive others with increasing empathy and become capable of relating to them without fear or rivalry; in other words, intimacy can permeate interpersonal relationships. This grace is evocative of the First Week of the *Exercises* which leads—through the meditation on one’s sin and the recognition of a divided heart—to an intimate, emotionally moving, and existentially transforming encounter with Christ (*SpEx* 52 [p. 42]). One of the fruits of the First Week is liberation from the loneliness inherent in sinfulness. Inter-

estingly, both the *Exercises* and the *Constitutions* express this through allusions to the book of Genesis: at the beginning of this week, one has the image of oneself as a person “exiled among brute beasts” (*SpEx* 47^{v.6} [p. 40]), and when progress is made, one can begin to perceive “God our Lord, whom each one should strive to recognize in the other as in his image” (*ConsCN* C 250^{v.5}).

In the delicate process of increasing awareness of self, instructions are one way of helping (C 277). One can clarify, for example, how one of Ignatius’s favorite expressions, “humility,” consists in a basic openness to the experience of the divided heart. It is also good to invite novices to express themselves about First Week issues (C 280). More personalized and concrete hints to discover actual signs of a divided heart can come either from the novice director or from other members of the community (C 269–71). It is also crucial to keep a space open where the divided heart can be brought into an intimate relationship with God and healed in the atmosphere of the absolute and unconditional forgiving love of God (C 261).

To foster the incarnational dynamic, the novice director can make use of a special feature of his relationship with novices: obedience. Obedience, at this point, is an exceptional instrument for leading persons to the critical place where a clear choice can be made between conflicting motivations:²⁶ one that is “automatic” because it satisfies one’s immediate needs and desires, and the other that is the incarnation of a spiritual effort, of a struggle not to break the relationship with the novice director or the commitment made to God (C 284). Obedience can be of great help for persons who are “stuck” or not fully engaged in the incarnational dynamic of the first stage of Jesuit formation, similar to what happens in the *Spiritual Exercises* when the director challenges a retreatant with the authority implied in his function. In this perspective, an act of obedience is comparable to the small “victory” of a retreatant who is able to persist in prayer in

The point where one should endeavor to recognize God is not given in the first place; it is to be created in the community through dispositions and acts that embody an attitude of respect and service.

²⁶The obedience of professed Jesuits is part of a different dynamic (C 547–52).

a period of desolation, choosing to value the ongoing relationship with God and with the director over the option of acting upon his or her immediate needs and desires.

Both the *Spiritual Exercises* and the *Constitutions* offer much to think about in the first phase of progressing toward God, so much so that attention can be scattered. A sixth similarity between the two texts is that both place strong emphasis on the responsibility of individuals to maintain a sense of unity and focus. In both cases, the intentionality of the person who is willing to make progress is called for. The *Spiritual Exercises* proposes a recurring preparatory prayer: “[A]sk God our Lord for the grace that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be ordered purely to the service and praise of the Divine Majesty” (46 [p. 40]). In the *Constitutions*, the term “right intention” expresses a similar emphasis with a variation that allows space for things other than God to be in the immediate focus of attention: “All should make diligent efforts to keep their intention right, not only in regard to their state of life but also in all particular things” (*ConsCN* C 288^{v.1}). In both cases, regularly refocusing the intention, making an effort “fully to be there,” is indispensable for making progress.

In the *Constitutions*, where concrete “virtuous” acts are seen as integral parts of a progression toward God (who is to be sought “in all things” (C 288^{v.3}), the context of the incarnational dynamic removes the suspicion of an unhealthy voluntarism. What is at stake when relating to others is that “by consideration of one another they may thus grow in devotion and praise God our Lord, whom each one should endeavor to recognize in his neighbor as in His image” (C 250^{v.5}). The point where one should endeavor to recognize God is not given in the first place; it is to be created in the community through dispositions and acts that embody an attitude of respect and service. In the novitiate, virtuous acts are seen both as the fruit of a progression toward God and as a means of promoting it.

A final parallel between the two Ignatian texts is that in both cases, Ignatius gives a host of seemingly minor details about how a dynamic movement toward God can be better fostered. For example, in the *Constitutions*, a general sense of union is presented as of importance: “[U]nion and agreement among them all ought to be sought most earnestly, and the opposite ought not to be permitted” (C 273^{v.5}). Divisions are to be healed, so that the novitiate is a place where trust can develop. In some cases, individuals have to be

moved to another community if sensitivities make peaceful living together impossible (C 245). A special warning applies to two areas: discussions of a theological nature on the one hand, and disputes about everyday practical issues on the other; in the particular context of the novitiate, Ignatius seems to assume, such discussions can become a pretext for hidden or overt hostility. Fruitless controversies in these areas should be avoided (C 273).

To summarize: in the powerful interpersonal milieu of the novitiate, a number of Ignatian means work in synergy to help individuals toward the developmental goal, namely, to acquire a capacity to embed oneself in a concrete web of mutual relationships. Individuals are expected and helped to maintain a high quality of relationships through preserving a reconciled heart and an attitude of respect and service toward others. To the extent that there is developed a corresponding habitual manner of behaving and speaking, even of spontaneously perceiving particular interpersonal situations, less and less conscious effort is needed to live in a reconciled way in one's community: the tension felt in the novitiate at the outset can ease. Growing awareness of self and attention to others foster empathy; this is how sufficient affective maturity and adequate emotional intelligence can be attained in the protected environment of the novitiate, where sufficient attention can be paid to these issues.

Accordingly, the second phase of Jesuit formation seems to aim at fostering a transformation of the person in a way that this autonomy is actualized in concrete life situations.

After the novitiate, individuals can be admitted to the next stage of Jesuit life on the condition that "proper abnegation of themselves is seen to be present" (C 307^{v.3}). In the perspective of the incarnational dynamic, "proper abnegation of themselves" can be recognized as a relatively well-defined degree of inner freedom that is manifested in the ability to live in a close community and to invest oneself fully in its common activities. Sufficient inner freedom at this stage enables the person to deal habitually with impulses that hinder a desire to live according to Gospel norms in a demanding interpersonal milieu. To the analogy of the *Spiritual Exercises*, where it is useless to begin the Second Week unless there are clear signs that

the First Week has been accomplished, Ignatius considers that the “edifice of learning” which is to be put up during the next stage of Jesuit life will not hold unless this “foundation” has been laid (C 307).

Part IV of the *Constitutions*: Scholastic Life

The first paragraph of Part IV explains that the next phase of Jesuit formation is also to be seen in the context of “helping [Jesuits in formation] to attain the ultimate end for which they were created” (C 307^{v.2}). In addition to becoming a virtuous person, a goal which was predominantly aimed at in the novitiate, “learning and a method of expounding it are also necessary.” This developmental goal intertwines an intellectual and an incarnational aspect, both of which are repeated in the same paragraph in slightly different terms: “[I]t will be necessary to provide for the edifice of learning, and of skill in employing it.” Studies are to be done in a way that what has been appropriated becomes a resource, both in giving account of it verbally and as a principle of action in a variety of situations. In developmental terms, the goal is to become a person who can talk and act, shape his relationships according to insights and convictions acquired during the time of studies.

The demanded transformation, “to provide for the edifice of learning, and of skill in employing it so as to help make God our Creator and Lord *better known and served* (C 307^{v.4}), evokes the grace of the Second Week of the *Spiritual Exercises* which grants “an *interior knowledge* of the Lord . . . that I may *love him more intensely and follow him more closely*” (104 [p. 56]). In the *Exercises*, this grace of the Second Week transforms radically the way reality is perceived. Not unlike what was the case in the First Week, which also changed the retreatant’s perception of reality through introducing or increasing an awareness of the divided heart, aspects of reality that could not be seen before begin to appear. In the Second Week, light is received from contemplations on Jesus’ life, and part of each exercise is “to reflect upon myself to draw some profit” (114^{v.3} [p. 59]). The words and actions of Jesus, his relationships and his manner of being in the world are in some ways projected to the retreatant’s perception of reality, correlating known elements in new ways, inspiring associations and leading to a new sense of meaningfulness even in familiar situations. This new way of seeing reality is the source of a new freedom to act, and gives rise to a new sense of

autonomy: Jesus' way of behaving inspires acts that would have been impossible in the past.²⁷ With an inner sense of security, a person becomes able to see what a "right" act is. This autonomy is very different from the kind of self-government that had to be left behind during the First Week ("[f]or let each one think that he will benefit himself in all spiritual things in proportion as he goes out of his self-love, will and interest" [189^{v.10} (p. 80)]). The autonomy that is the fruit of the Second Week is a grace-filled one, with a sense of responsibility and freedom. Accordingly, the second phase of Jesuit formation seems to aim at fostering a transformation of the person in a way that this autonomy is actualized in concrete life situations.

To facilitate progress through this phase, Part IV of the *Constitutions* demands several elements to work in synergy. First of all, a suitable environment has to be set up where learning can take place. Most chapters of Part IV, therefore, describe how colleges are to be organized and under what general conditions students can begin their studies. The following areas are addressed: issues related to benefactors, material questions, lay students, subjects to be studied, conditions for accepting universities, setting up a program of studies, the complex task of the rector, and similar concerns. For the purpose of my argument, chapter 6 is of special interest: "Means for Their Learning Well the Aforementioned Subjects." For reasons of simplicity, this chapter is going to be our primary reference in Part IV.

Both the Exercises and the Constitutions demand a constant interplay between receiving the Word of God or new insights about God and the world on the one hand, and reframing them within a personal context of meaning on the other.

In the new milieu of a college, a scholastic who has just left the novitiate finds himself exposed to intellectual challenges. The academic environment places a host of demands on his shoulders, generating a new field of tension. One of the principal tasks of the rector is to maintain an intensive exposure to this new milieu and to keep the resulting tension within reasonable limits: "Just as it is necessary to hold in those who run too rapidly, so is it proper to spur on, push, and encourage those who need it. For this purpose

²⁷ Spohn, *Go And Do Likewise*, 40.

the rector ought to keep informed" (*ConsCN* C 386^{vv.1-2}; cf. 374). A way of maintaining an intensive atmosphere of intellectual work is by setting a limit to interpersonal relationships. Even conversations that have a pastoral character are considered as likely "impediments which distract from study" and "should be removed" (C 362^{v.1}). As in the novitiate, the environment in which a scholastic lives is defined, first of all, by a number of separations. These apply to human relationships, but also to the necessary separation from the world of ideas for the time of rest, spiritual activities, and community life.

Once the proper formational environment is set up, a series of exercises foster movement toward the goal of this phase, an autonomous and committed way of perceiving reality and responding to it. Among the usual exercises of studying (using libraries, memorizing what was said in lectures, taking notes (C 372, 375 f.), *disputations* are explained more in detail: they seem to have a distinguished role in advancing the incarnational dynamic. Scholastics are asked to engage in them whenever possible, "because of the utility there is in the practice of disputation" (C 378^{v.1}). This activity, which was considered useless in the novitiate, is of great importance here "espe-

cially . . . for those who are studying arts and . . . theology" (C 378^{v.1}). The exigency of expressing regularly whatever has been learned in the context of disputations is similar to what happens in the Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises where insights gained from contemplations on Jesus' life are to be brought into the "collo-

Right intention seems to imply both being aware of a deep desire to advance toward God and expressing it.

quy," where the retreatant enters a dialogue with the Lord "as one friend speaks to another" (*SpEx* 54^{v.1} [pp. 12f.]). Both the *Exercises* and the *Constitutions* demand a constant interplay between receiving the Word of God or new insights about God and the world on the one hand, and reframing them within a personal context of meaning on the other. A particular feature of disputations is that they can—and should—be interesting, that is, both intellectually and affectively involving, rich in spiritual motions, which is indicative of an intensive activity of searching for meaningfulness. In contrast to a casual conversation about theological theories, in a disputation a person is challenged to identify with ideas and values implied in these theo-

ries. This is how the individual is to find *his* particular way of “loving wisdom” (doing philosophy) and of “talking about God” (doing theology), which is in harmony with his specific charisms and with the historical development of his personality.

Three kinds of disputations are to be held (C 378–80]. First, scholastics should participate in the disputations—both at special events of greater importance and in ordinary “circles” of discussion—organized by the schools, “even though these schools are not those of the Society itself” (C 378^{v.1}). Second, Jesuit communities are to organize regular disputes, based on a talk prepared in advance by a scholastic (C 378). Third, somewhat more spontaneously, Jesuit communities are to reserve “an hour . . . each day” (C 379^{a.1}) to dispute “difficult matters” in the

presence of a mature Jesuit who can speak with authority about the given question. Why does Ignatius insist that there be three types of disputations? It seems that the context in which an individual “defends” a scholarly assumption influences the *way* this is done. In a school setting, the emphasis is on intellectual integrity; in a more casual discussion in the

Studying is not simply useful because of what is factually gained: in the dynamic of the Constitutions, the very activity of studying plays an instrumental role in advancing toward God.

Jesuit community, the focus can be shifted more explicitly towards what is at the heart of an autonomous and dedicated reasoning, the personal commitment to Christ, and its implications in existentially significant situations. Disputations organized in the community with a more official character can create opportunities to integrate two previous aspects of communication, namely, personal dedication and intellectual integrity, which may appear disparate in the beginning. Ignatius seems to consider all three kinds of disputations as indispensable means of support for scholastics making progress along their way to God. This is how the initial commitment to Christ, once expressed in spiritual movements, feelings, desires, and insights, is to become incarnated in a variety of situations, both by what is said and what is done by the person who is making progress in the incarnational dynamic of Jesuit formation.

In the midst of a multitude of philosophical and theological concepts and theories, a precondition of progress is that “scholastics

should strive *first of all* to keep their souls pure and their intention in studying right" (C 360^{v.1}). This demand is once again evocative of the "usual" preparatory prayer (*SpEx* 101 [p. 56]) in the Second Week and throughout the *Spiritual Exercises*: "[A]sk God our Lord for the grace that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be ordered purely to the service and praise of the Divine Majesty" (46 [p. 40]). The *Constitutions* retain a focus of attention on the service of God and enrich it by the incarnational aspect of helping human beings: "seeking in their studies nothing except the glory of God *and the good of souls*" (C 360^{v.2}). Right intention seems to imply both being aware of a deep desire to advance toward God and expressing it. Much as is the case in the *Exercises*, there is no straightforward progressing toward God without intending to do so.

Studies, according to the *Constitutions*, are not a simple acquisition of pieces of information, just as contemplating Jesus' life in the Second Week is not simply an affair of collecting new data. Both require individual effort—throughout a series of exercises—but whether this brings fruit is ultimately a matter of grace: "[T]hey should frequently beg in prayer for grace to make progress in learning" (C 360^{v.3}). This means that movements of consolation and desolation can be significant; beyond the intellectual aspect, affectivity is also of interest. To study with hostile feelings is to refuse to be transformed by what is being learned. Right intention means studying with a reconciled heart, open to identifying with the values encountered. If intellectual work is done with a graced motivation, progress is made in the unfolding incarnational dynamic: "[E]ven if they never have occasion to employ the matter studied, their very toil of study, duly undertaken because of charity and obedience, is itself a very meritorious work in the sight of the Divine and Supreme Majesty" (C 361^{v.2}). Just as in the *Spiritual Exercises*, where the "success" of a prayer time is not measured by the number of workable insights that one can harvest in it, so studying is not simply useful because of what is factually gained: in the dynamic of the *Constitutions*, the very activity of studying plays an instrumental role in advancing toward God.²⁸

²⁸ Simone Weil develops this idea beautifully: "Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God," in *Waiting for God*, trans.

Chapter 8 of Part IV, "The Instruction of the Scholastics in the Means of Helping Their Neighbor," turns toward an explicitly incarnational aspect by describing the pastoral training of scholastics, who are to become acquainted with "the spiritual arms that they must employ in aiding their fellowmen" (C 400^{v.2}).²⁹ Much as in the novitiate, where "virtues" are indispensable for incarnating spiritual realities in concrete situations, the careful acquisition of pastoral skills is seen fully "[i]n view of the objective which the Society seeks in its studies" (C 400^{v.2}). These preparations foster progress along the Ignatian pathway to God by making a person ready to cooperate more fully with grace: "Although all this can be taught only by the unction of the Holy Spirit and by the prudence which God our Lord communicates to those who trust in his Divine Majesty, nevertheless the way can at least be opened by some suggestions which help and prepare for the effect that is to be produced by divine grace" (C 414^{vv.3-4}).

Paradoxically, although toward the end of their studies scholastics are becoming capable of a close cooperation with the grace of God, they might feel relatively little indication of this. In a way that is familiar from the *Spiritual Exercises*, progression toward God is not continuously accompanied by an affective confirmation. Studies can become a "duty in our Lord" (C 377) to be fulfilled, and one can come close to burnout. The activity of studying is sustained to an increasing extent by faith: "[T]hey should *have a firm resolution* to be genuine and earnest students, *persuading themselves* that while they are in the colleges they cannot do anything more pleasing to God our Lord than to study with the intention mentioned above (C 361^{v.1}). In times of no affective confirmation, obedience can top off the ailing sources of motivation: studying is "duly undertaken because of charity and obedience" (C 361^{v.2}). In these times, scholastics are to be held firmly

Compassion and pain are further indications that the retreatant is coming closer to perceiving reality as it really is.

Emma Craufurd (New York: Harper and Row, 1951), 105–16.

²⁹Regency, which is a weighty element of formation today, is mentioned in chap. 9 as the possibility "to lecture [philosophy] before [a scholastic] studies theology" (C 417^{v.2}).

and supported gently, rather like a retreatant going through a period of dryness. A precondition for helping, both in the *Spiritual Exercises* and in Jesuit formation, is that one has to be familiar with the entire developmental dynamic in order to be able to provide competent support. Only in this larger perspective can a time of crisis appear as a necessary passage towards the place where God is waiting to meet the person more intimately than ever before.

To summarize: the developmental goal of the second phase of Jesuit formation is a transformation of the person so that one becomes able to incarnate Gospel values in a particular historical and cultural context. Part IV of the *Constitutions* describes a number of Ignatian means that work in concert to help individuals toward this goal. The result is a growing freedom that enables individuals to behave with confidence even beyond a protected group of Jesuit peers, because a new sense of autonomy offers an inner principle of action in yet unfamiliar conditions and interpersonal situations. To make progress according to the demands of this phase implies choices that can be expected to be difficult; yet a person toward the end of this phase of the developmental dynamic is likely to have developed a deeply satisfying sense of living a life that is genuinely valuable.

Part V of the *Constitutions*: Tertianship

The developmental goal of this “last probation” is once again to make “progress” toward God, by means of arriving at “greater humility, abnegation . . . and also greater knowledge and love of God our Lord” (C 516^{v.5}). This goal is complemented by an unusually strong emphasis on an apostolic, incarnational aspect: “that when they themselves have made progress they can better help others to progress for the glory of God our Lord” (C 516^{v.6}). Apart from evoking the notions of humility and abnegation that are familiar from the novitiate, the *Constitutions* say astonishingly little about this phase of Jesuit formation. In the light of the Third Week of the *Spiritual Exercises*, however, it can be elucidated to some degree.

Proportionally, the Third Week also occupies relatively little space in the book of the *Exercises*. Its basic dynamic is a progressive opening up to feelings of “sorrow . . . regret . . . confusion” (*SpEx* 193 [p. 189]) and “sorrow . . . a broken spirit . . . and interior suffering” (203 [p. 83]). This week transforms once again the retreatant’s

ability to perceive reality by proposing episodes to be contemplated that do not make sense in the same way as those do in the Second Week. The scene of Jesus healing a blind person who cries out for help makes eminent sense, and it is a deep source of revelation of how God wants to be in relationship with us. The scene of a crown of thorns being put on the head of Jesus, who is clothed in purple in the midst of a group of soldiers, is not meaningful in the same way. There is no intelligible answer to the "why" question; what is contemplated does not directly make sense. God is not manifested straightforwardly in the scenes of the Passion: "[T]he divinity hides itself" (196 [p. 82]). Theological arguments about redemption cannot undo this hiding of the divinity; all they can do is confirm that these scenes are worth being contemplated at great length and detail, and fruit can be expected from familiarizing oneself with the workings of suffering. Whoever desires to be with Christ in this situation has to go beyond the "why" question. When "confusion" (193 [p. 81]) sets in, this is a good sign that a step has been made. Compassion and pain are further indications that the retreatant is coming closer to perceiving reality as it really is. As the person is becoming acquainted with the pain inherent in his or her situation, a new freedom to behave differently is being brought forth, a freedom to "stay with" painful situations that are frightening at first sight because they do not make sense, but where one knows God to be present. Beyond the "why" question and beyond the pain, beyond the periodic changes of consolation and desolation, these contemplations lead to a radically new way of perceiving reality through a quiet, peaceful, sustained, loving awareness in an unfulfilled desire for God, which we know to be the point of stillness where the spiritual dynamic of the Third Week intends to lead.

Tertianship, the "school of the heart" (*ConsCN* 516^{v.4}), places Jesuits in a Third Week milieu by sending them among the poor, into hospitals, or other situations of despair. The place has to be such that Jesuits feel frustrated; more exactly, progression toward God can be made on the condition that this probation can "engender in them greater humility, abnegation of all sensual love and will and judgment of their own" (C 516^{v.5}). In this new situation of tension, individuals spend their time "exercising themselves in spiritual and corporal pursuits" (C 516), among people in miserable conditions to ease their physical, mental, or spiritual suffering. For the desired dynamic to unfold, sufficient time, about a "year" (C

514^{v.2}), is to be spent in this environment (“[h]owever, just as this period may be prolonged, so too . . . it may be shortened in some cases and for important reasons. But this power should be used rarely” [C 515]).

“Humility” (C 516^{v.5}) sets in with the progressive recognition that one is unable to help the way one would like to. To endure the dumbness of the heart under the gaze of a mother holding her dead baby is a moment of profound humiliation, because after many years of theological studies and in some cases professional training, after having read dozens of books, one is still unable to help, let alone to respond to the compelling question: “Why is this happening? How

can God let this happen?” Feeling like running away can be compounded with feelings of anger and disappointment or uselessness in a general sense of confusion.

The fruit of tertianship is a deep conviction that God is to be found beyond the ideas and expectations that one may have of this world, even if one's desire to serve is fatally frustrated.

Yet for a person who persists in seeking God's presence, such critical moments are close to becoming moments of grace. Beyond the humiliation a new, yet unfamiliar option can open up, accessible through spiritual effort

and the grace of God: a peaceful stillness can set in, a strength to choose to stay in the place of pain, to endure the deadly silence of the heart, in the midst of the meaninglessness, beyond the temptation to revolt and the temptation to give up, with no other support than faith in the living God and an unfulfilled desire for God's presence. Little by little there can emerge an unusual sense of union with the person whose presence had caused so much frustration to the learned Jesuit so eager to help, exposing him to the temptation of considering himself a failure. It becomes clear that no theological considerations and no actions are needed, at least nothing beyond small gestures of support and a few words of prayer that arise from the depth of the heart. Yet this “not doing anything” is unmistakably different from a selfish, careless, disappointed, or fearful immobility. It is the passivity of the servant who is waiting even at the second or third watch of the night, akin to what happens in times of contemplative prayer during the Spiritual Exercises. After such timeless moments, one might be surprised to hear the other person say,

“Thank you,” as if her problem had been solved, as if one’s presence really mattered, or as if part of her burden was taken away. Looking back to what happened, the awareness can emerge that God’s presence was experienced in the very place where it had been so unimaginable to find God. God was witnessed, not simply as a spiritual desire, feeling, or thought, but as a reality offering peace and healing in an interpersonal situation that was not long ago so hopelessly overshadowed by death.

As a result of a series of similar—yet amazingly varied—experiences, one can “make progress” (C 516^{v.6}) along the incarnational dynamic of the Third Week. In retrospect, one can understand how each choice to persist in a situation of misery entails a moment of giving up insisting on usual ways of thinking and helping others, like efforts to comfort the person, praying that God would undo the situation, or theologizing in an attempt to justify God. The price for the Third Week dynamic to set in was to say no to all this, or in the words of the *Constitutions*, the “abnegation of all sensual love and will and judgment of their own” (C 516^{v.5}). After a number of such experiences, one can begin to look at oneself from a new perspective: *my desperate efforts to do something* were actually the greatest obstacle for God’s presence to be manifested! This is a revolutionary discovery, and to the extent that one is helped to realize how this is a regular pattern in a variety of life situations,³⁰ the yearlong stay among the poor will be seen as a highly meaningful probation, in agreement with the modest formulation of the *Constitutions*: “[I]t will be helpful” (C 516^{v.4}). With a sense of gratitude, the person will acknowledge that he had been led, in ways that were radically new, to “greater knowledge and love of God our Lord” (C 516^{v.5}). This is how the person gets ready to enter the fourth and final phase of the incarnational dynamic of the *Constitutions*.

To summarize, tertianship brings about a familiarity with the limits of one’s capacity to love; it exposes the limitations of one’s power to change the world for the better; and it brings about a profound awareness of the boundaries of one’s thinking about God, the world, and oneself. The fruit of tertianship is a deep conviction

³⁰ Supervision or spiritual direction that is open to the contemplative dimension is of immense help in recognizing subtle ways of not being receptive to grace. See W. A. Barry and W. J. Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1982).

that God is to be found beyond the ideas and expectations that one may have of this world, even if one's desire to serve is fatally frustrated. Compassionate, patient, and loving attentiveness becomes a familiar way of seeking God in situations of distress and apparent meaninglessness, resulting in a growing awareness of how a vain effort of action or reflection can hinder the manifestation of God's presence. The result is a previously unknown sense of freedom, identity, and union with human beings and with God.

Part VI of the *Constitutions*: After Final Vows

Correlations between the first three stages of Jesuit life and the first three weeks of the *Spiritual Exercises* hint that the fourth stage of both dynamics could also be compared to each other. Yet is it not too daring, is it not just an illusion to look for a Fourth Week dynamic in "ordinary" Jesuit life after the years of formation? How does one imagine the incarnational, "everyday" equivalent of the joyous immediacy of contemplating "how God labors and works for me in all things" (*SpEx* 236^{v.1}) at the culmination of an intensive thirty-day spiritual experience? At this point one is not compelled to go ahead by some new theory on the *Constitutions*, but to continue the quest to rediscover the original charism of the Society: "[A] direct and ongoing sense of God's presence, practically the same thing as consolation, . . . was what Jesuits hoped for themselves and tried to excite in others."³¹ Jerónimo Nadal explains that a favorite saying of Ignatius, "finding God in all things," is to be understood as the manifestation of a Fourth Week dynamic in daily life: "To him was given an order of prayer by which he, a contemplative even while active, was led to a sense of God's presence and spiritual reality in all objects, in all activities, in all conversations. He used to clarify it this way: God is to be found in all things."³²

Nadal describes here a radically new way of perceiving reality which evokes the Contemplation on the Love of God in the *Spiritual Exercises* (230^{v.1} [p. 94]), where God is discovered in all things, in

³¹ O'Malley, *First Jesuits*, 371.

³² Quoted in William Bangert, *Jerome Nadal, S.J., 1507–1580: Tracking the First Generation of Jesuits* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1992), 214.

human beings and in every creature. He then continues by explaining that this charism of Ignatius is that of the whole of the Society of Jesus.

Much to the intense wonder and consolation of us all, we have seen this interior light-giving grace break in a kind of radiance that enveloped his face and manifested itself in the shining sureness of what he did in Christ. We have an inkling that something of that grace—I do not know exactly what—has been turned toward us. What therefore we understand to be a privilege given to Ignatius, we believe has been granted to the entire Society. We feel sure that prayer and contemplation of this mode have been given in the Society for all of us. We affirm that this prayer is tied to our vocation. (214)

Does Nadal speak about “prayer and contemplation” or about everyday life? At this point in the discussion the two are hard to distinguish. The privilege to find God in all things in everyday life is evocative of the Fourth Week of the *Spiritual Exercises* with its contemplations on meeting the risen Lord in a variety of situations. In some cases the Lord was sought and in others he was not; he was met by people praying or working, being at home or on the way, and so forth. The grace to be prayed for is “to ask for what I want. . . . to rejoice intensely because of the great glory and joy of Christ our Lord” (*SpEx* 221 [p. 91]). The focus of these contemplations is the consolation brought by Christ (224 [p. 92]) or the way the Divinity appears (223 [p. 93]). The contemplations of the Fourth Week open the retreatant to a new way of perceiving reality: the world is revealed to be a sacred place where Christ can manifest himself on unexpected occasions and where the presence of God can be sought with confidence. Accordingly, in the Contemplation on the Love of God (230–237 [pp. 94f.]), after a long series of meditations and contemplations with strictly focused spiritual topics, the horizon opens up to everyday activities and to the entire created world. At the end of the thirty days spent in a series of spiritual

A new form of life becomes possible as the Fourth Week dynamic is progressively embodied in a variety of everyday-life situations; this is how one becomes fully receptive to the grace of being contemplative even while active, a privilege that according to Nadal “has been granted to the entire Society.”

exercises, one can return home with a new way of perceiving reality and with a new freedom to act in response to God's action in the world.

In a similar manner, after an arduous developmental trajectory where God might have often appeared distant and even excessively harsh in the midst of the demands of successive milieus of formation, Part VI of the *Constitutions* envisions a convergence between "everyday" and "spiritual" life. Jesuit life opens up to an intimacy with God that was previously only accessible in privileged moments of prayer; at this stage "it is presupposed that [Jesuits] will be men who are spiritual and sufficiently advanced that they will run in the path of Christ our Lord" (C 582^{v.3}). A new form of life becomes possible as the Fourth Week dynamic is progressively embodied in a variety of everyday-life situations; this is how one becomes fully receptive to the grace of being contemplative even while active, a privilege that according to Nadal "has been granted to the entire Society."

The goal of this phase of Jesuit life is to bring fruit: "to apply themselves more fruitfully according to our Institute in the service of God and the aid of their neighbors" (C 547^{v.3}). At this point, the dynamic of the *Constitutions* becomes self-sustaining, somewhat like what tends to happen toward the end of the thirty-day Exercises. There is no formational environment, no formator to facilitate the process, and there is no—more or less artificially maintained—field of tension. Formed Jesuits enjoy great freedom and autonomy, coupled with a new responsibility: "[T]hey need to observe certain things" (C 547^{v.3}).

Among the things to be observed, "the most important . . . are reduced to the vows" (C 547^{v.4}). For reasons of simplicity, we are going to summarize this phase of Jesuit life by focusing on the vows.

The Vows

What is the role of the vows in fostering the incarnational dynamic of the *Constitutions*? The Fourth Week dynamic is characterized by a high degree of inner freedom that allows reality to be perceived in its full richness, enabling the individual to see with relative ease how God's presence transcends the created world. The vows address major areas where this inner freedom can be compromised and a narrowness of vision can set in. First of all, the vow of

poverty concerns ways of relating to impersonal objects. The *Spiritual Exercises* speaks about this issue in the context of a war metaphor. In the meditation on the Two Standards, the question of “riches” is the “first step” in a battle where the Lord recommends spiritual and actual poverty, while the tactic of Lucifer is to “set up snares and chains” (*SpEx* 142^{v.1}, 146^{v.5}). The *Constitutions* also rely on a war metaphor to describe this area: “The enemy of the human race generally tries to weaken this defense and rampart which God our Lord inspired religious institutes to raise against him and the other adversaries of their perfection” (*ConsCN* C 553^{v.3}). Images of combat seem to reflect the fact that freedom in this area can be gained at the price of more or less painful detachments, whether from objects of comfort or from a self-forgetful immersion in the administration of material goods. Due to the pain inherent in every act of detachment, poverty in the initial stages of progressing toward God could often be seen as a nuisance. From the perspective of the spiritual freedom proper to the Fourth Week, however, it becomes a supportive ally in defending the precious gift of spiritual freedom: “Poverty, as the strong wall of the religious institute, should be *loved* and preserved in its integrity as far as this is possible with God’s grace” (C 553^{v.2}).

The second area where inner freedom can be compromised is that of interpersonal relationships. In the meditation on the Two Standards, this is the second “step,” where diametrically opposed choices are being offered, “honor” by Lucifer and “reproaches or contempt” by Christ (*SpEx* 142^{v.2}, 146^{v.5}). When talking about the vows, the *Constitutions* address the area of interpersonal relationships by making a succinct mention of the vow of chastity. The common feature is that the spiritual freedom proper to the Fourth Week dynamic can be diminished and the corresponding richness of perceiving reality can be narrowed down if a self-forgetful immersion in interpersonal relationships entails the development of unordered attachments. Ignatius seems to presuppose that this is a very common human experience: “What

In contrast, a person who has made progress in the Fourth Week incarnational dynamic begins to understand how the observance of the vows dynamically leads back to seeking the immediacy of the presence of God.

pertains to the vow of chastity requires no interpretation, since it is evident how perfectly it should be preserved" (*ConsCN C 547^{v.5}*).

The third area where spiritual freedom can be endangered involves a person's relationships with ideas and ideals. In the meditation on the Two Standards, choices are to be made between "pride" and "humility." This is the third, last, and decisive step in advancing toward God. Pride implies a sense of power, while humility implies a sense of gratitude. Pride, or excessive self-esteem, is the unconscious identification with an attractive ideal, in contrast to humility, which implies a realistic awareness of self. "If we are relatively free from mistaking image for reality in other areas, we at least idolize our self-images."³³ The *Constitutions* addresses the issue of relating to ideas and ideals by talking about obedience as something that applies not simply to what is being done ("the execution") but also to the way one is motivated and one thinks ("the willing, and the understanding" [547^{v.10}]). In times when a self-forgetful immersion in ideas and ideals might risk a serious narrowness of vision, Ignatius asks us to "[apply] all our energies with very special care to the virtue of obedience" and thus to go beyond this limitation of the perspective: "They should keep in view God our Creator and Lord, for whom such obedience is practiced" (547^{vv.8-7}).

In the Fourth Week perspective, the vows are seen as means of support for maintaining an ongoing relationship with God rather than as reminders of sore privations. Since a previously unknown richness of perceiving reality makes it possible to "understand" (*SpEx 235^{v.2}* [p. 95]) in a new way, Part VI can offer a fresh look at the vows, which "may be further explained and commended" (*ConsCN C 547^{v.4}*) to professed Jesuits. At earlier phases of the pathway to God, the vows were something to accept in faith, supported by companions who were also accepting them, and by a limited understanding which was always possible. They were part of life but they remained on the horizon, beyond reach, since they contributed to imposing the fields of tension that kept a Jesuit working at the limits of his capabilities in a given formational environment. One might even have been tempted to see them as perhaps necessary but quite "unnatural" inventions rather than gifts of God. In contrast, a person who has made progress in the Fourth Week incarnational dynamic

³³ Gerald G. May, *Will and Spirit: A Contemplative Psychology* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982), 111.

begins to understand how the observance of the vows dynamically leads back to seeking the immediacy of the presence of God. For someone who is to direct himself along the Ignatian "pathway to God" in a world where there is little social support for religious life, this understanding is vital. However, "understanding" is not meant in a rationalistic sense, as it does not supplement faith. Once again there is an analogy to giving the *Spiritual Exercises*, where we can lead retreatants with a great sense of security because our understanding of what happens is based upon our own experience, on the authority of the Ignatian text, on the Gospels, and on our trust in the immeasurable generosity of the Lord. Whenever such wisdom yields fruit, we perceive it as an unexpectedly fresh gifts of God, whether directing others or ourselves.

To summarize: after final incorporation into the Society, the goal is to become more fruitful in serving God and helping human beings. This can be done with a degree of inner freedom that makes an intimate sense of God's presence relatively easily accessible in any life situation. Precondition for such a life is the "observance" of the vows, which at this stage is to be done both in the sense of their being *obeyed* and in the sense of their being *meditated upon*. Over time, less and less conscious reflection on self will be needed. A growing ease in putting the vows at the service of an intimate and committed relationship with God leads to increasing freedom and to an ever-greater openness to reality and to God, whose presence shines through "all things" more and more compellingly.

IV. Possible Methods for Continuing the Exploration

The preliminary presupposition of this essay was that the Ignatian "pathway to God" as laid out in the *Constitutions* can be conceived as a dynamic psycho-spiritual development analogous to the familiar dynamic of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Based on this insight, we have sketched out an initial understanding of the gradual development of Jesuit life in growing freedom in the Spirit. Although a sweeping initial portrayal of the Ignatian "incarnational dynamic" probably brings up more questions than answers, we have drawn up some of the principal traits of the process of growth that, according to the *Constitutions*, characterizes Jesuit life.

In addition to having found a number of instances where elements of the *Spiritual Exercises* “shine through” the *Constitutions*’ depiction of Jesuit life from the novitiate through scholastic years to tertianship and beyond, we have also observed many signs of a stronger linkage between the two texts. Consequently, we can advance the hypothesis that the Ignatian pathway to God is captured in the *Constitutions* as a dynamic of incarnation that follows closely the Four Week structure of the *Spiritual Exercises*. The three major demanding transformations that a Jesuit goes through during the years of formation are familiar from the *Exercises*. The fruit of each stage of formation is a whole set of competencies that enable the individual to deal with the challenges of the given formational environment. These competencies stem from the graces of the *Spiritual Exercises*, and can be seen as their incarnation in a person’s habitual ways of perceiving reality and responding to the typical challenges of the milieu where the particular transformation takes place.

The insight that there is an intrinsic correlation between spiritual development in the *Exercises* and “incarnational” development in the *Constitutions* is in need of further confirmation. As possible focuses for a continuing discussion, I am quickly evoking three promising ways of exploring in a more systematic manner the Ignatian “pathway to God.”

Seeing the Constitutions in the mirror of various human developmental models could also help us to appreciate the extraordinarily steep and rewarding developmental trajectory implied in Jesuit formation.

First, a structural similarity with the dynamic of the *Exercises* would place the *Constitutions* in the ancient context of Western Christian mysticism that habitually divides human progression toward God into three “Ways,” the purgative, the illuminative, and the unitive.³⁴ For Ignatius, this was a self-evident background for interpret-

ing the *Exercises*: “[I]lluminative life . . . corresponds to the exercises of the second week . . . purgative life . . . corresponds to those of the

³⁴ See Javier Melloni, *The Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola in the Western Tradition*, trans. Michel Ivens (Leominster: Gracewing, 2000.)

first" (10^{v.7-8} [p. 24]).³⁵ Familiarity with the spiritual tradition of the "three ways" could be of significant help in understanding the *Constitutions* and in increasing our capacity to support Jesuits in formation. For example, the basic insight that in the illuminative phase, "theological virtues"—faith, hope, and charity—are challenged to grow could shed light on how scholastics tend to perceive their situation, and how further dynamic growth in the Spirit can be better fostered in the particular conditions of this stage of formation.

Another field of research would open to us by examining the stages of formation described by the *Constitutions* in light of contemporary human developmental theories. There are a surprising number of correlations with higher-level (meaning adult) stages of established developmental models, and these correlations could shed much light on the anthropological foundations of Ignatian spirituality. For example, at each stage of Jesuit formation, the developmental goal appears to correlate with successive "basic needs" or deep human desires described by A. Maslow.³⁶ This evokes the "id quod volo" of the *Spiritual Exercises*, where the graces to be prayed for at each stage correspond to profound desires of the individual who is moving through the Exercises. Since the conception of the incarnational dynamic of the *Constitutions* is solidly rooted in the fundamental Ignatian concern of a progression toward God, psychological aspects can be studied without fearing an unjust reduction of spirituality to psychology. As a result, developmental models could contribute significantly to describing in contemporary terms the characteristics of each stage. Seeing the *Constitutions* in the mirror of various human developmental models could also help us

In terms of human development, the Constitutions seem to give surprisingly pertinent insights to some of our chief questions and needs in a postmodern world.

³⁵ The 1599 *Official Directory to the Spiritual Exercises* explains how the three ways are both successive and overlapping, and also how the four "weeks" correspond to three "ways." See *On Giving the Spiritual Exercises: The Early Jesuit Manuscript Directories and the "Official Directory of 1599,"* trans. and ed. Martin E. Palmer, S.J. (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), chap. 39, pp. 346–48.

³⁶ A. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1954).

to appreciate the extraordinarily steep and rewarding developmental trajectory implied in Jesuit formation. In terms of human development, the *Constitutions* seem to give surprisingly pertinent insights to some of our chief questions and needs in a postmodern world.

Perhaps the most interesting area of research opens out into a third field, that of Ignatian and general Christian anthropology. As a relatively recent trend in developmental psychology, mainstream theories of psychological and moral development can be discussed in a single comprehensive framework that is capable of integrating previously isolated (psychodynamic, cognitive, existential, moral, and so on) aspects of human development.³⁷ In recent years, several authors have found this comprehensive model to be well in tune with a Christian and, more specifically, with an Ignatian perspective. It has been applied fruitfully in areas like spiritual direction, analyzing the *Spiritual Exercises*, and conceptualizing the psycho-spiritual development implied in Jesuit formation.³⁸ Although this model is still evolving, the perspective of discussing spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and moral issues in an integrated way is extremely promising. On the horizon, one can discern the outlines of a Christian anthropology that is compatible both with our Western spiritual tradition and with the best achievements of psychological research during the past century. This anthropology would be in many ways comparable to the Thomist model, which integrated Aristotelian anthropology into Christian spirituality in the thirteenth century. The major difference is that, in contrast to a static Greek anthropology, a modern dynamic paradigm would be more appropriate for

³⁷ Robert Kegan, *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), and id., *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).

³⁸ Regarding spiritual direction see Wolski Joann Conn, *Spirituality and Personal Maturity* (New York: Paulist, 1989), and Elizabeth Liebert, *Changing Life Patterns: Adult Development in Spiritual Direction* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000). Regarding the analysis of the *Spiritual Exercises*, see David C. McCallum, S.J., "Growing in Wisdom and Grace: Constructive-Developmental Theory as a Heuristic Framework for Interpreting the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola" (S.T.L. thesis, Weston Jesuit School of Theology, 2001). Regarding the conceptualization of psycho-spiritual development, see János Lukács, S.J., "A Postmodern Twist in the Jesuit Novitiate: Developmental Anthropology and Ignatian Formation" (S.T.L. thesis, Weston Jesuit School of Theology, 2002).

seamless integration into the Christian conception of a human being's dynamic progression toward God.

Theory and Practice in Understanding the *Constitutions*

I hope that even in its present fragmentary form, the concept of the "incarnational dynamic" of the *Constitutions* will prove to be useful in promoting Jesuit formation in a contemporary world and in integrating a vital Ignatian source into our reflections and discussions about Jesuit life. A more explicit use of the *Constitutions* would allow a more precise identification of Ignatian goals at each stage of formation, enabling us to evaluate our current goals and to establish them more clearly where necessary. Clearer goals could foster more fruitful exchanges among formators about how to promote these goals and how to apply Ignatian means more purposefully in a contemporary cultural context. Eventually, one could be introduced into the art of accompanying persons along the incarnational dynamic of the *Constitutions*, much as one can already become skilled in giving the *Spiritual Exercises* under supervision or in thematic workshops.

Although many details of the *Constitutions* still remain to be interpreted in a contemporary context, there is hope that these elements will begin to fall into place as we begin to see them in correlation with the underlying developmental dynamic. Our understanding of the Ignatian text can be expected to deepen through a more precise attention to the praxis of Jesuit formation, rather like what happened in the case of the *Spiritual Exercises*, where attention to the text and attention to the practice of applying it have proved to be mutually beneficial since the beginning of our modern Ignatian renewal.

Engaging in this renewal means, according to the *Constitutions*, close cooperation with God who "will preserve and carry forward what He deigned to begin" (C 812^{v.3}). In giving the *Spiritual Exercises*, we have been experiencing the abundant graces of cooperating with God who "communicate[s] Himself to the devout soul" (14^{v.4} [p. 25]) in amazingly powerful ways. We can reasonably hope that the continuing integration of the *Constitutions* into our common Jesuit life will become a graced experience to a similar extent. In our movement toward God, we can trust to be carried "on eagles' wings" (Exod. 19:4), while God's glory can continue to be manifested more plainly in this least Society.

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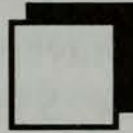
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