



GUIDES

The Contemplative Phase of the Ignatian Exercises

Franz Jalics

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We are publishing in this Notebook the article of Franz Jalics entitled "The Contemplative Phase of the Ignatian Exercises", published in German by the journal *Geist und Leben* (1998). In order to give it context and provide some paths which draw us closer to the author and his spirituality, we accompany the article with a presentation by Javier Melloni, theologian and anthropologist, and a member of the EIDES team of Cristianisme i Justícia..

Franz Jalics. A Jesuit, originally from Hungary, he is the author of numerous spiritual books, among which are *Contemplative Retreat: An introduction to the contemplative way of life and to the Jesus Prayer* (2003), and *The Contemplative Way: Quietly savoring God's presence* (2011). His method of giving the Exercises, in part the fruit of the spiritual experience which he lived during his detention under the Argentine dictatorship, is followed by many individuals and groups, which has made it into a point of reference in the area of spirituality and accompaniment.

Presentation: The Contemplative Proposal of Jalics

Javier Melloni

When a pathway is adequately articulated and is capable of getting into the nooks and crannies of a human being, integrating his/her diverse elements and leading the person into the mystery of God, it becomes a point of reference for multiple generations, and because of its richness, allows it to be studied from various perspectives. Such is the case with the Spiritual Exercises (SE), which can be conceived of from at least three points of view: as a school of discernment, as a school for prayer, and as a Christology,¹ that is, as a penetration into the mystery of Christ. In the three cases we are looking at a process and St. Ignatius offers us the necessary elements to go through it.

The Multiplicity of Ways to Access the Ignatian Exercises

In every process, one can place the emphasis on one or another aspect, which not only depends on personal preferences but also on those of groups. In the course of the centuries and of the last decades, the SE have been considered from a devotional aspect, from a doctrinal one, from moral, theological, exegetical, ethical, existentialist and psychological angles, etc. There is room for all of them. In the last few years there has been a perceived necessity or desire to consider them from more contemporary viewpoints. The reasons for that are many. I would like to point out three: the decline of univocal frames of

1. I take this term from Josep M. Rambla in “Nuestra vida escondida con Cristo en Dios (Col 3,3) – (Cristagogía según los Ejercicios de san Ignacio)”, in VARIOUS AUTHORS. *De ‘proyecto de hermano’ a agradecimiento de hermanos simposio con José I. González Faus* [From “Brother Project” to Gratitude for Brothers: A Symposium with Ignacio Gonzalez Faus]. Cristianisme i Justícia (Barcelona, 2002), pp. 91-114.

interpretation, the saturation by noise and words in a hyper-stimulated culture, and the influence of oriental paths of meditation. All that has resulted in a growing acceptance for the type of prayer suggested by Franz Jalics. On the one hand, his method is completely rooted in Christian tradition, and, on the other, it includes oriental elements such as attention to the positioning of the body, to breathing and to the repetition of a mantra or invocation, which we find also in the eastern Christian tradition of the Jesus Prayer or prayer of the heart. The value of the present text is the effort made by Fr. Jalics to form an explicit and detailed relationship between his method of prayer and the *Exercises* of St. Ignatius. As we will see, the viewpoint from which the *Exercises* are discussed here is that which is explicitly contemplative which distinguishes it from both the discursive and affective points of view.

But before moving on to that, it would be helpful toward gaining some perspective by becoming familiar with an episode taken from the beginnings of the SE and of the Society of Jesus that greatly influenced the way in which Ignatian prayer was interpreted in the following centuries. It will shed some light when it comes to understanding the importance of the current proposal.

Polemic Concerning the Method of Prayer in the First Years of the Society

At the beginning of the new Order there was a need to consolidate a type of prayer that was consistent with the vocation and charism proper to the new spirituality that was both active and apostolic. The SE are conceived in order to lead a person to make an act of election in the world and for the world, and all the elements are bent toward this attitude which provides the dynamic for the following of Jesus. They begin with meditation through the application of the three powers (memory, understanding, will) and continue on with the contemplation of scenes from the Gospel in order to learn how to transpose them into one's own life. Each of the prayers end with a colloquy (the returning to words after a silence), and conclude with an examination of the prayer so as to be conscious of what has just happened, receive the grace and correct any distraction. For centuries, this type of prayer within the Jesuit tradition has seemed to be the best way to integrate prayer with an apostolic life, since it activates the affections and the understanding. It fomenta a habit of attention, intention and review that works for both prayer and for action.

But even in the first years there were exceptions. Baltasar Alvarez (1533-1580) and Antonio Cordeses (1518-1601) were two Jesuits with relevant jobs in their provinces who practiced and promoted a more contemplative form of prayer. The former was the confessor of Teresa of Avila for eight years (1558-

1566) and that experience marked him for the rest of his life. He explains that in 1567, after 16 years of doing work in the spiritual life “as one who sowed and did not reap”,² he was given the grace of a prayer of quietude, or “of rest”, as he himself calls it in his writings. We read:

Since our Lord conceded me this great grace, prayer consists in my placing myself in His presence, in both body and soul. This has been permanent like something that has remained like a fixed habit in me, sometimes just enjoying Him.³

The thing that is proper to this prayer of rest is that there is nothing to do in it, but rather you have to let yourself be made by it and in it.

This being silent, resting in His presence, is a great treasure. Because everything speaks to the Lord and are opened to His eyes: my heart, my desires, my goals, my trials, my guts, my knowledge and power. And the eyes of His Divine Majesty are able to rid me of my defects, light up my desires and give me wings to fly, His wanting my welfare and service even more than I want it myself.⁴

Baltasar Alvarez gives four reasons why he thinks that this prayer is so advantageous. The first is that although it seems that it prescind from a relationship with God and with prayer of petition, implicitly it is a prayer imploring God since the whole being of the person praying tends toward Him; the second is because “it is the way with which one feels God in a heightened way”, since the whole person is open before the presence of God and not just particular aspects; the third is that the prayer can be further prolonged since there is no mental weariness; and the fourth is that it deals with the most efficacious method of reforming oneself because it is not done only by relying on one’s own capacity, but rather one allows God to act by surrendering oneself.⁵

On the other hand, Baltasar Alvarez believes that the goal of the spiritual life is the enjoyment of God in this life. He cites to the Song of Songs: “I found him whom my heart loves, I held him fast, nor would I let him go” (Sg 3:4). And he comments:

2. GRUPO DE ESPIRITUALIDAD IGNACIANA (ed.). “Relación sobre su modo de orar” in *Escritos Esenciales de los primeros jesuitas*. [“Notes about his way of prayer” in *Essential Writings of the First Jesuits*] Mensajero-Sal Terrae (Bilbao, Santander, 2017), p. 771.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 774.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 775.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 778–779.

The soul having been embraced by the rest that it took with the things that bring us joy, why should it then be in pain? We ourselves take up the pains with our own hands, searching for things that are full of them and failing to search for those that have life and happiness in themselves. Thus, our desires are our burdens.⁶

St. Ignatius says something very similar in a letter addressed to Francis Borgia:

The persons who go out of themselves and enter into their Creator and Lord have frequent admonition, attention and consolation and they feel as if all of our eternal happiness is in all created things, giving life to all of them and being preserved in it with infinite life and presence.⁷

St. Ignatius is not referring only to prayer, but thinks that the habitual state of a person who is freed from himself is to live continually in the presence of God. Even so, Alvarez is clear that not everyone is called to contemplative prayer and that it cannot be imposed on anyone. He was very prudent in suggesting it. Perhaps that was not the case with Antonio Cordeses, who it seems was more assertive. Alvarez believes that affective as well as intellectual prayer in their first stages depend on the will and the understanding of oneself, but that one should drop any effort to reach contemplation in either case. He held that the empowerment of affections is as prejudicial as fomenting thoughts and understanding in mental prayer. In his *Theoretical-Practical Guide to Christian Perfection*, he clearly expresses the passive character of meditation:

At no time in meditation should we make efforts either of the head or heart or in any other way, because pondering, valuing and judging things is not like orange juice which we should get by squeezing and crushing ourselves. I have said before that such efforts damage us in three ways. The first is that we annul and obscure the serenity and clarity of judgment in order to ponder and judge well. The second is that with these efforts, if we carry on with them for a long time, we damage our heads and breasts and destroy our health and we become so tired that, once we return to meditation, it is with fear and repugnance. Third, we impede and put obstacles to the visitation by God, because such efforts are born more out of pride and confidence in our own

6. *Ibid.*, p. 777.

7. Carta a Francisco de Borja (finales de 1545) [Letter to Francis Borgia (end of 1545)], in *Obras Completas*, BAC (Madrid, 1991), p. 779–780.

strengths and labor than what they should be and out of the lack of trust and subjection to divine aid.⁸

Reading this passage, we can intuit that he is speaking out of his own experience. But not everyone has to experience these excesses, but rather thoughts and affections can be stimulated without their blocking prayer. In truth, St. Ignatius said that “there is not a more pernicious error in the teachers of spiritual things than to want to govern others by what has happened to them and thinking that what is good for them is good for everyone.”⁹

In any case, the General at that time, Everardo Mercuriano (1514–1580), thought that both Jesuits should renounce any further spreading of this type of prayer. So, it was communicated in letters that he sent first to Antonio Cordeses in 1574 and to Baltasar Alvarez in 1578.¹⁰ In the first letter he said:

Prayer is neither our principal goal nor purpose as it is in other religious orders, but rather a universal instrument of which we make use in helping with other exercises in order to obtain virtue and to exercise our ministries. ... It is necessary to carefully observe what is the goal proper to our Institute, because that not only looks to the consolation of one's personal intellect and will, but also principally toward exterior ministries and exercises. ... The other way of praying, meditating and contemplating seems more proper to those institutes whose goal is looking just at God. That distracts and distances the members of the Society from the operation and application of our ministries.¹¹

Another of the important points of the letter of Mercurian is that one ought to not try to move ahead or force contemplative prayer. Rather it is a grace given by God to those whom he wishes and when he so wishes.

The curious thing about this situation is that both Cordeses and Baltasar Alvarez were men of action and government, among those to whom the Society had conferred positions of confidence. The former was the provincial of Toledo at the time of receiving the admonition and was not removed from that position. The latter had been visitor, master of novices, instructor of tertians and was finally named provincial of Peru, an office that he was not able to exercise because he died before he could leave for America.

8. *Obras espirituales: guía teórico-práctica de la perfección cristiana por el p. Antonio Cordeses SJ*, (ed. 1953).

9. *Dichos de san Ignacio* [Sayings of St. Ignatius] collected by Pedro de Ribadeneira.

10. On this point, see the documented and nuanced article by Philip Endean, in Thomas M. McCoog, *The Mercurian Project, Forming Jesuit Culture (1573–1580)*. The Institute of Jesuit Sources (St. Louis, 2004), p. 351.

11. Carta al P. Cordeses (1574), in *Escritos Esenciales*, p. 823–24.

The next general, Antonio Aquaviva (1543-1615), whose term lasted 34 years (1581-1615), nuanced this prohibition in a letter written in 1590. In it he said that, while confirming that the ordinary mode of prayer in the Society is that proposed by the Exercises whose end is eminently apostolic, that is no reason to stop encouraging a more contemplative prayer for those Jesuits who might feel themselves called to it. In this same letter he says that it is just as absurd or imprudent to impose contemplation on all Jesuits as it is to prohibit it to those who feel called to it. The danger that contemplation might lead to escapism, vanity or a strictness of judgment is not a reason to prohibit it. On the contrary, he affirms:

The authority of the Fathers (patristics) clearly guarantees us that true and perfect contemplation is more powerful than any other method of pious meditations to bring down pride, encourage obedience and inflame the zeal of souls.¹²

On the other hand, faced with a “utilitarian” concept of prayer (the argument that prayer is not an end but a means) the General clarifies:

It is not correct to say: I love God with the end of pleasing Him, but rather the opposite. We have to think that we do what pleases God because we love Him.¹³

These beginnings determined the position of the Society concerning contemplative prayer. If it was not banned outright, it was considered to be an exception. It was granted to those who felt called to it, but it was not promoted.

Having presented these historical precedents, we are in a better position to situate the contribution made by Fr. Jalics. But in order to understand it even better, it would be good to know something about his life. Without that it is not possible to grasp what is really at play and what lies behind it: a call to the life of a mystic.

12. Cited by Joseph DE GUIBERT, *La Espiritualidad de la Compañía de Jesús* [*The Spirituality of the Society of Jesus*], Sal Terrae (Santander, 1955), p. 169. To go deeper into this controversy, see pp. 152-159 and 167-174 of this same work.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 169 (#4 of the letter).

Two Key Moments in the Life of Franz Jalics

The biography of Franz Jalics (born in 1927 in Budapest to a wealthy family) is marked by two extreme moments, one of light and the other of an abyss. The light consisted in an experience that he had at age 17 when he was at the front during the Second World War. While seeking protection from an aerial bombardment in the basement of a ruined house, he felt that his life could disappear in a moment. After a moment of panic, he was quickly flooded by a feeling of peace and transcendent joy that came from the presence of God. That gave him a great freedom to accept whatever might come. He survived the bombardment and he always kept with him that anticipation of fullness. For the rest of his life he searched for such a glimmer through contemplative prayer. Once the war was over, he entered the Society of Jesus in Germany because his country had come under Soviet domination and his family's properties were confiscated.

He lived through the hell thirty years later. For two decades he had found himself in Argentina. He had been first missioned to Chile in 1956, but from 1959 he was definitively settled in Argentina. He began to give classes in theology in 1962 in the theologate of San Miguel of the Society of Jesus in Buenos Aires. At the same time that he was a teacher and spiritual director of many of the Jesuit students, he lived in a community in an outlying district, one of the so-called "misery-villes". In this way he integrated teaching, a commitment to the poor and an intense spiritual life. This confluence has been a constant in his teachings: an authentic contemplative experience embraces all these dimensions. Nothing is left out. It was under these circumstances that his dark night arrived. During the dictatorship of General Videla he was captured, sequestered and held a prisoner together with another Jesuit, Orlando Yorio, under suspicion of collaboration with the guerillas that were fighting the dictatorship. For five months (from May 23 to October 23, 1976) both of them were enclosed in a jail, blindfolded and handcuffed to each other. Fr. Jalics explains that what sustained him from falling into madness or committing suicide was the continuous praying of the invocation of the name of Jesus.

After being freed, he returned to Europe and dedicated himself to deepening his contemplative prayer which is what had saved him from desperation during the months of his confinement. During the following years, he dedicated himself to going more deeply into the spiritual path that he was proposing. He had to integrate everything that he had lived and to reconcile it within himself in order to offer to others a complete process of transformation. After accompanying many sessions of Exercises of Contemplation in various places, in 1984 he opened a house of prayer in Germany (in Gries, Bavaria). He has lived there until a few months ago (summer, 2017) when he retired to an infirmary that the Hungarian Province has in Budapest.

In 1994, as the result of twenty years of experience, he published his most mature work, *Kontemplative Exerzitzen*, which has become a classic.¹⁴ He presents in ten stages a method and a path to penetrate into a prayer of silence that is steeped in God at the same time that it changes the way of being in the world and of acting in it. The important thing in his contribution consists in specifying the steps to make this journey to the end. The problem with many Christian teachers and mystics is that they describe the effects of prayer but seldom stop to clarify how to pray. Teresa de Jesus, San Juan de la Cruz and even Meister Eckhart talk about the effects of contemplative prayer, but not how to do it. The exceptions are works like *The Cloud of Unknowing* by an anonymous English author of the 14th century, and the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius. The fact that Eastern meditation has attracted so many followers is based precisely on this; it is very precise in giving norms for the concrete steps to go through. Fr. Jalics filled this gap in the Christian world with his book, which has been translated into many languages and has gone through various editions.

Three years ago, Franz Jalics wrote his last book in which he presents Jesus as a teacher of prayer.¹⁵ In it, he offers a journey through the spiritual life in four stages, each one of which corresponds to a manner of prayer. This advancing through four stages implies that there exists a correspondence between a way of living and a way of praying. And that is that prayer is not an activity separated from life, but rather is a condensation of it, a point of arrival and a point of departure to return to our ordinary circumstances with more energy, openness and clarity. In fact, it grows into a circle according to which the quality of our life depends on the quality of our prayer and the quality of our prayer depends on the quality of our life.

The Text that We Present Here

The present work is a revision of an article which was published with the same name ("*The Contemplative Phase of the Exercises*") in the journal of spirituality of the German Jesuits, *Geist und Leben*, in 1998.¹⁶ With great specificity Franz Jalics expresses in these pages the relationship between the Ignatian Exercises and the contemplative exercises which he has been teaching for more than forty years. The key to his exposition is in showing the relationship between the three classic stages in the spiritual life (the ways of purgation, illumina-

14. *Contemplative Retreat: An introduction to the contemplative way of life and to the Jesus Prayer*. Xulon Press (Longwood, 2003).

15. Franz JALICS, *Jesús, maestro de la meditación (Jesus, Master of Meditation)*, PPC (Madrid, 2015).

16. Franz JALICS, *Geist und Leben*, #71 (1998), Munich. pp. 12–25; 118–131.

tion and unification) and the three stages of prayer, He doesn't deal only with the methods of prayer that Ignatius himself mentions (SE 238-260), but also with understanding in depth the prayerful dynamism that appears throughout the four Weeks, which begins with the meditations of the First Week and continues with the contemplations of the Second, Third and Fourth Weeks, in which the application of the senses is refined and culminates in the Contemplation to Obtain Love. The novelty of this text is in detailing in what this progress consists and in proposing a path to arrive where the Ignatian *Exercises* culminate.

When I use the word "path", I do it intentionally since Franz Jalics doesn't like it when people talk about his proposal as a method. He sees it rather as an integral journey. It does not deal with mastering a technique, but with responding to a call that concerns the whole person and all of the areas of life. On the other hand, to apply a technique concerns one's will while penetrating in the path of contemplation implies allowing oneself to be guided. This is what Fr. Jalics has tried to do for his whole life. Having had the opportunity to see him absorbed in prayer gives a glimmer into the fact that the path that he proposes leads to the heart of God through the invocation of Christ Jesus. The Spirituality Center at the Cave of St. Ignatius at Manresa has had the privilege of welcoming him twice, in the summers of 2007 and 2013. Beginning in 2008, at Manresa they have begun to share this type of prayer. Today, thanks to a renovation of the house that was done some years ago, there is an excellent meditation room that bears the name of Fr. Arrupe. They have placed at the entrance the statue of him in prayer that has become widely known. The case of Fr. Arrupe helps and confirms the idea that silent and contemplative prayer does not distance someone from action nor commitment to the world. It rather serves as a stimulus to be more profoundly, lucidly and serenely present. Following in the tradition of the contemplative Jesuits who have been present in the Society of Jesus from its beginnings of its foundation, the life of Fr. Jalics is also a testimony to it.

Definitely, the prayer pathways that lead to God are endless and each one should find what best suits him or her. The criterion for discernment to know if it is the right one, comes from the Ignatian dictum: "For everyone ought to reflect that in all spiritual matters, the more one divests oneself of self-love, self-will and self-interests, the more progress one will make." (SE 189), This divesting oneself is reflected in being persons who are steadily more unattached to themselves and more capable of focusing on others, both God and human beings. In the measure that one hands over oneself to that Otherness, you become one and the same.

1. Introduction¹⁷

In our days, the search for a contemplative form of prayer has become a sign of the times.

Many people are searching and they turn to oriental religions when their desire does not find fulfillment within the ecclesiastical realm. It was not like that in the time of St. Ignatius. Isn't it surprising that he developed in his *Spiritual Exercises* an introduction to contemplative prayer in such a concise and very clear way?¹⁸ I published my way of giving the exercises several years ago in a book.¹⁹ In that I avoided everything that might have seemed strange or curious to a reader familiar with the *Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola. But this article arises from the necessity of demonstrating what place my exercises of contemplation occupy in relation to the book of Ignatius of Loyola. I limit myself to the book of the SE and to the literary interpretation of its text. First, I clarify the general concept of the Ignatian SE and I show the place which is occupied by the contemporary practice of making the SE individually. After that I review the most important passages of the SE which refer to their contemplative phase. The article ends with a recap and final word.

17. From this point there begins the article of Franz Jalics which gives its name to this Notebook.

18. See Ignatius of Loyola, *Ejercicios Espirituales*, modernized text by Candido de Dalmases, SJ in 1987 and then published by Sal Terrae (Santander). The numbers refer to the corresponding numeration of the text or verse. The text of the *Spiritual Exercises* was approved in 1548 by Pope Paul III. [Translator's Note: For the English text I have used *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius, Translation and Commentary* by George E. Ganss, SJ, The Institute of Jesuit Sources (St. Louis, 1992). The numbering remains the same.]

19. Franz JALICS, *Ejercicios de contemplación. Introducción a la vida contemplativa y a la invocación de Jesús*. [Exercises of Contemplation. Introduction to the Contemplative Life and to the Jesus Prayer]. Translated into Spanish by Beatriz Romero and Helga Heineken. Sigueme (Salamanca, 1998, 2010).

2. The General Concept of the Ignatian Exercises

Ignatius develops in his book of the SE three spiritual levels, which are clearly distinguished from one another and at the same time build upon one another.

2.1. The Three Spiritual Levels

At each level, Ignatius addresses himself to people who find themselves in very diverse spiritual states. By the same token, these people are disposed in diverse ways and therefore have to be treated in various ways. Their ways of praying are different. Even the content of their prayer is varied. Correspondingly, these people should be guided by following different rules. On each level there is a different way of treating the Holy Scripture. Moreover, the processes for making a decision at each level take place differently. Therefore, they should be directed in a corresponding way. Finally, the perspectives with which Ignatius at the end dispatches the retreatants into their daily life are different. These three levels correspond to the division of the spiritual life into the purgative life (SE 10.3), the illuminative life (SE 10.2) and the unitive life. At the time of Ignatius, these concepts designated the three fundamental phases of the spiritual life.

2.2. The Purgative Way

The first level is the purgative way (SE 10.3). In the times of Ignatius, this expression referred to those who lived with more or less serious sins. Ignatius

dedicates to these people the First Week.²⁰ He defines them in the following way: “a spiritually inexperienced person”, “tempted grossly and openly” (SE 9.1), and “people going from one mortal sin to another” (SE 314.1). The majority of people in this state are not interested in the *Exercises*. When they are convinced to try them (like some princes or ecclesiastical authorities at the time of Ignatius), they are only able to agree to the arguments of the intellect. The mode of prayer in the purgative way is meditation (*consideratio*). As far as content is concerned, there certainly appear elements from revelation, such as sin or Hell, but the texts of Sacred Scripture should not be placed in their hands. Ignatius is very clear about this. In the First Week there is no example of a Bible-based meditation.

In the purgative way, people don’t have enough sensitivity for such a meditation. Ignatius proposes for this first spiritual level a group of “rules for the discernment of spirits” (SE 313–327). These correspond to those people who go “from one mortal sin to another”. These rules are used only for those who are truly in the First Week. In the purgative way, no process of election is introduced. (SE 18.11). It is clear what should be chosen: to detach yourself from mortal sin. The typical example of the exercises of the First Week are the popular missions: addressed to those who do not take Scripture in their hands, who don’t have the time for spiritual deepening, but who call themselves Christians. Ignatius foresees that frequently the exercises are ended with the First Week (SE 18). He allows people to return to their daily life with the First Mode of prayer: no meditation on the Bible and the themes are on the Ten Commandments and mortal sins (SE 238–248).²¹

2.3. The Illuminative Way

On this level, the SE are addressed to those who show a capacity to move themselves “from good to better” (SE 315.1). Or as it is often said, for someone who is going along the path of the virtues. With these persons it is possible to deal with “material that is more subtle and advanced” (SE 9.4). To them Christ is presented as King and they are encouraged to follow Him. Such

20. The SE are made up of 4 weeks or phases of exercises with daily meditations. Their content, in brief, is the following: meaning and goal of the Christian life, formation of the conscience, rejection of sins, (1st Week: SE 23/24–90; life of Jesus, decision to follow Him in the “election of life” (2nd Week: SE 91–169); meditation on the Passion (3rd Week: SE 190–209); the Resurrection of Christ (4thWeek: SE 219–229).

21. SE 238: “The first method of praying takes as its subject matter the ten commandments, the seven capital sins, the three faculties of the soul, and the five sense of the body. This method of praying is intended to present a structural form, a method and exercises, so that those praying may prepare themselves, benefit from the exercises and make their prayer acceptable.”

persons deepen their prayer through the Biblical contemplation of the life of Jesus. This second spiritual level includes the exercises from the Contemplation of Christ the King to the Contemplation of the Ascension of the Lord (SE 91-229, 261-362). It also has its own “rules for the discernment of spirits” (SE 328-336). Since here one deals with the following of Christ, the process of decision-making plays an important part. The decision-making process is carried out by means of considerations, distinctions and by means of attention to the consolations and desolations. For those who end the SE at this level, Ignatius foresees the “Second Method of prayer” (SE 249-257).²²

2.4. The Unitive Way

The third spiritual level is the contemplative level, the unitive way. Here one deals with union with God and with the immediacy of the relationship with God.²³ One tries to reach the point where between Creator and creature there is nothing that can disturb that immediacy. Between the Creator and His creature there ought not to slip in “any previous perception or understanding of any object” (SE 330.1-2). It is here where we reach the complete unfolding of the principle that knowing much is not worth anything (SE 2.4). Where would there be less knowing than in the mere act of gazing at the divine Persons?

Finding oneself on this contemplative level is pure grace. A man cannot reach it by using his own powers. God gifts the grace “without cause” to whomever He wishes to give it (SE 175.2-3, 330.2). Thus, He not only can gift it at this level, but also at the first and second. But a person can dispose him/herself to receive this grace. In that lies the difference between the second and the third level. The level of contemplation teaches how the person disposes him/her self for this grace without an intermediary. This occurs on the one hand by the emptying out of mental activities, that is, of thinking, desiring, memory (SE 234.4-5); on the other hand, it is through involving oneself in the mere gazing at the divine Persons (SE 258.4-6).

The Contemplation to Attain Love is a Principle and Foundation for the unitive way. Just as the Contemplation of Christ the King is a Principle and

22. SE 249 (252): “The second method of prayer is practiced as follows. One may sit or kneel accordingly as one feels better disposed or finds greater devotion, but should keep the eyes closed or intent upon one place, and not allow them to wander. Then the person should say the word ‘Father’, and continue to consider the word as long as meanings, comparisons, relish, and consolations connected with it are found. The same procedure should be continued with each word of the Our Father, or of any other prayer which one wishes to use in this manner.”

23. See SE 15.5-6: Accordingly, the one giving the Exercises ought not to lean or incline in either direction, but rather, while standing by like the pointer of a scale in equilibrium, to allow the Creator to deal immediately with the creature and the creature with its Creator and Lord”.

Foundation for the contemplations of the life of Jesus, so this contemplation to obtain love is the Principle and Foundation for the third spiritual level. We will return to this. This foundation demonstrates the way of emptying out the faculties of the soul (memory, intellect, will) until what is left is simple and radical love, to the point that the retreatant is not the one who lives, but rather Christ living in him/her (Gal. 2:20).²⁴

This type of prayer is clearly described in the Third Method of Prayer (SE 258-260). It is the mere gazing at the divine Persons, with a word at each breath, without concerns for thoughts, considerations, comparisons, likes or consolations.²⁵

In each one of the three levels a person can do vocal prayers or Biblical contemplations. Thus, for example, vocal prayers can give an external framework to the times of prayer.²⁶ But what is proper to the person who is moving along the unitive way is the “mere gazing and loving”, just as what is specific to the illuminative way is Biblical contemplation and meditation in the purgative way. The “election”, that is to say the life decision for Christ, in the unitive way is prepared for by the fact that the person is disposed toward the “first time of election.”²⁷ The praxis shows that there might be a pedagogy for this self-disposition and it often happens that one arrives at decisive results that certainly do not totally correspond with the first election, but are close to it.

We can say about the foregoing that Ignatius directs the SE along three spiritual levels, one after the other, that correspond to the classic division of the spiritual life: the purgative way, the illuminative way and the unitive way. From the distinctions mentioned above, the result is that a person only from time to time goes through the three levels in one course of exercises. Since the levels correspond to a lasting state of the soul, the majority of times the person remains for years in the most recently acquired level until s/he can

24. See the prayer of surrender (*Suscipe*), SE 234.4-5: “Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and all my will – all that I have and possess. You, Lord, have given all that to me. I now give it back to you, O Lord. All of it is yours. Dispose of it according to your will. Give me love of yourself along with your grace, for that is enough for me.”

25. See SE 258: “In the Third Method of prayer, with each breath taken in or expelled, one should pray mentally, by saying a word of the Our Father, or any other prayer which is recited. This is done in such a manner that one word of the prayer is said between one breath and another. In between these two breaths one reflects especially on the meaning of that word, or on the person to whom the prayer is being recited, or on one’s own lowliness, or on the distance between that person’s dignity and our lack of it.”

26. See, for example, SE 258.2-3.

27. SE 175: “The first time is an occasion when God our Lord moves and attracts the will in such a way that a devout person, without doubting or being able to doubt, carries out what was proposed. This is what St. Paul and St. Matthew did when they followed Christ our Lord.”

introduce themselves into the next. The person who makes the exercises annually makes them at the level at which they find themselves at that moment.

2.5. The Classic Individually-Made Exercises

If we keep before us the general concept of the SE, it seems clear that the classic individually-made *Exercises* are limited to the second level, therefore the illuminative way. They don't live on either the first or third levels. They don't include the total extension of the SE as they appear in the book. This vision can greatly help us to clarify the relationship between the individually-made exercises and the contemplative exercises. Let's see.

2.5.1. *In individually-made Spiritual Exercises there is no First Week*²⁸

Different reasons lead me to speak in favor of this proposition. In the first place, the persons whom Ignatius would send to the First Week would not be accepted for the individually-made SE. These are the people that "are spiritually inexperienced" (SE 9.1), who are "grossly and openly tempted" (SE 9.2), and who are going "from one mortal sin to another" (SE 314.1). These persons are separated from individually-made exercises by previous conversations. When according to "natural ability" (SE 18.8) they become capable of making them, and the director of the SE has sufficient time for it, they are prepared by weekend retreats, days of reflection and other activities.

Secondly, the "rules for the discernment of spirits" proper to the First Week cannot be used for the participants in individually-made SE. For them, the "Rules for the Second Week" are better.²⁹ You cannot treat a participant who has done individually-made exercises for a long time as you would treat a "great sinner".

Thirdly, for the directors of individually-made exercises, Biblical contemplation is almost the exclusive method of prayer of the SE, which they also use as themes for the First Week. The participant in the First Week as described by Ignatius does not receive Sacred Scripture properly speaking in their hands, because s/he is not prepared for it and so it is only possible to speak to them using intellectual reasoning. As a matter of fact, the directors of individually-made exercises frequently have a tendency to force the use of Sacred Scripture in times of prayer, an important sign that they are only

28. Editor's Note: What Franz Jalics is trying to say is that when one makes the Exercises individually (or personalized), it is not that the First Week is not done, but that it is done from the point of view of the illuminative way and not from that of the purgative way.

29. Cf. SE 314 et seq. (Rules of the First Week) and SE 329 et seq. (Rules of the Second Week)

moving on the second level. Nevertheless, according to Ignatius, in the First Week there is no Biblical contemplation. But it is possible to use to great advantage the themes of the First Week for those persons who find themselves on the illuminative way (second level) as an introduction to the Contemplation of Christ the King.³⁰ But not because of that do the retreatants belong on the purgative way. Isn't it often forgotten that purification is a permanent factor of the SE and a continuous building block of every life of prayer? There is a purification of grave sin in the first level, a purification of lesser dark areas in the illuminative way, and a purification of the spirit on the third level, the level of contemplation.

2.5.2. The individually-made Spiritual Exercises, in practice, exclude the third spiritual level

In the first place, it is widely unknown that Ignatius, in the fourth annotation, gives to the Third Method of praying the status as a part of the exercises with the same rights as the others.³¹ This form of prayer belongs to the Ignatian exercises as equally as the Contemplation on the life of Jesus.³² In second place, there is certainly in individually-made exercises the Contemplation to Attain Love.³³ But its proper meaning, that is, the renunciation of thoughts, desires and memories, is ignored. So that this contemplation remains only as a pious exercise. Its proper meaning as the Principle and Foundation for a subsequent level remains unknown. In third place, in the individually-made SE the Third Method of prayer, which consists in the mere gazing at the divine Persons, is not taught nor practiced. In fourth place, we hardly ever speak about "the first time of election". Even when it is mentioned fleetingly, no means are demonstrated to dispose oneself to this, because the meaning of the Contemplation to Attain Love and the Third Method of praying are still unknown.

30. Cf. SE 91-98.

31. Cf. SE "are appended the Three Methods of Praying"

32. Cf. SE 101 et seq. (Contemplation on the Incarnation, etc.); see also "The Mysteries of the Life of Christ our Lord" (points for meditation) SE 261-312.

33. Cf. SE 230-237, especially point 2 (SE 235): "I will consider how God dwells in creatures; in the elements, giving them existence; in the plants, giving them life; in the animals, giving them sensation; in human beings, giving them intelligence; and finally, how in this way he dwells also in myself, giving me existence, life, sensation and intelligence; and even further making me his temple, since I am created as a likeness and image of the Divine Majesty."

2.6. The Decisive Question

Based on these arguments, I am of the opinion that the usual individually-made SE remain limited to the illuminative way. They do not include the total range of the SE. Neither the first nor the third level are practiced in individually-made exercises. There is nothing to object against this. According to the principle of application by Ignatius, all of the foregoing is good and in order. Even more, it is praiseworthy. One has to recognize that the individually-made exercises have energized the practice of the SE in a very admirable way. But the question arises whether some teachers of individually-made SE are confusing those exercises – limited to the second level – with their extension to the totality of the Ignatian SE. In that case, one has to fear that they, from their point of view, only consider “Ignatian” the SE which are individually-made. The First Week and the contemplative phase of the exercises would not be considered by them to be Ignatian. After this look at the general concept of the Spiritual Exercises, let us see in particular what Ignatius says about the contemplative Exercises.

3. The Three Principles and Foundations

At the beginning of the Spiritual Exercises, after the Annotations (SE 1-22) and before the first exercise, Ignatius writes a fundamental sentence and he gives it the title: Principle and Foundation (SE 23).

Ignatius declares, in the first place, the goal of his exercises: “to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord, and by means of doing this to save their souls” (SE 23).³⁴

Secondly, he demonstrates the difficult road or the difficult task that takes one to this goal. “To attain this, it is necessary to make ourselves indifferent to all created things ... Consequently, on our own part we ought not to seek health rather than sickness, wealth rather than poverty, honor rather than dishonor, a long life rather than a short one ...” (SE 23).

He proposes, thirdly, as a response to this task, the practices that get to this goal, the *Exercises* themselves. This corresponds, according to the structure, to a “school”. At the beginning there is an entrance examination. The person who doesn’t want to reach the goal, doesn’t have to attend the school. Those who have already reached the goal of the SE do not have to visit the school either. The teaching by means of the SE is for persons who want to achieve the goal, but who have not yet reached it. When admission is consented to, the student can begin the SE. This is the natural manner of proceeding when you want to lead someone toward something. This also pertains to

34. The goal of the SE has already been given in the first annotation (SE1). But that was only written for the director of the exercises. For the retreatant it is mentioned in the Principle and Foundation.

the form and manner of Ignatius who frequently proposed to take people to a change of their life.³⁵

But if one looks more closely, one notes that Ignatius in his book of SE repeats again this way of proceeding for a partial goal of the school of the exercises. It is where he wants to guide someone to a new level of the SE, that is from the purgative way, from the path of purification, to the illuminative way. If the retreatant is mature enough to enter into the Second Week, Ignatius gives him/her the sweeping vision of the call of Christ the King, whose new goal is to follow Him. Then he gives to him/her in the prayer of self-giving for this contemplation, the path or the task in order to arrive at the goal (SE 98). He offers a new method of “contemplation” (*contemplatio*) in place of “meditation” (*consideratio*) and new content for the contemplation, that is, the mysteries of the life of Jesus and the election instead of individual considerations. We note that the partial goal is clothed in a great vision (SE 92-97), the path is fixed in a prayer (SE 98), and that afterwards the new style of exercises is introduced (SE 101 et seq.).

Ignatius repeats this procedure in the transition from the second to the third level. He gives a grand vision in the Contemplation to Attain Love; the new goal: to see God in His works (SE 234-237). Again, he points out in a prayer the path to that goal, that is, the task of silencing all of one’s mental capacities and remaining only gazing (SE 234). And he gives for it a new method of praying and a new content for prayer (SE 258). In this way we have the following result: Just as the Principle and Foundation are related to the totality of the SE, in the same way the Contemplation of Christ the King is related to the second level, to the illuminative way, that is the contemplations on the life of Jesus. Equally, the Contemplation to Attain Love is related to the following level, with the unitive way, and therefore with the contemplative level.

35. Ignatius uses the same method of proceeding when he wants to receive a candidate for the Society of Jesus. The candidate presents himself for a “general examen” in which the goals of the Society are confirmed and he is told what he can bring with him upon his entrance. Finally he can enter. St. Ignatius of Loyola, *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, nn. 1-133.

4. Two Completely Different Tasks

On the second level, that is, from the Contemplation of the Kingdom of Christ to the Contemplation on the Ascension of the Lord, the task is to do something for Christ. Ignatius clearly prescribes this in the prayer of the Contemplation of the Kingdom of Christ.

In the beginning of the third level or contemplative level, a new task is given that is essentially distinguished from the previous ones. Let's compare them. In the Contemplation on the Kingdom of Christ it says:

Eternal Lord of all things, I make my *offering*, with your favor and help. I make it in the presence of your Infinite Goodness, and of your glorious Mother, and of all the holy men and women of your heavenly court. I *wish and desire*, and it is my deliberate decision, providing only that it is for your greater service and praise, *to imitate you* in bearing all injuries and affronts, and any poverty, actual as well as spiritual, if your Most Holy Majesty desires to choose and receive me into such a life and state (SE 98).³⁶

We are dealing, then, with an offering of action and doing. The retreatant should follow Christ with the help of grace and with the condition that God “desires to choose and receive” him. But this refers to a following with specific activity: “I make my offering ... I wish and desire ... my decision is ... to imitate you in bearing.” On the other hand, in the Contemplation to Attain Love we find a new task for the retreatant. In that one, the person ought

36. Italics added by the author.

not desire or do anything. A person should surrender to God his/her faculties. They should not promise to use themselves in realizing or achieving anything for the sake of God, but rather should silence their interior faculties in order to let God assume the act of doing.

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and all my will – all that I have and possess. You, Lord, have given all that to me. I now give it back to you, O Lord, All of it is yours. Dispose of it according to your will. Give me love of yourself along with your grace, for that is enough for me (SE 234).

The difference cannot simply be passed over. Because instead of “I make my offering ... I wish and desire ... my decision is ...to imitate you in bearing”, is now written “Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, ... my understanding, and all my will – all that I have and possess ... I now give it back to you ... dispose ... is enough for me”. This prayer says concretely that all the mental capacities should be silenced so that the only thing that is left is radical love and the mere gazing at God. This is a completely new perspective. The Contemplations on the life of Jesus as they have been done to this point should cease, because in them the faculties of the soul are still active, A new method of prayer should take over their place, a simpler method of prayer, in which the understanding, the will and the memory play no part. Yes, this is the transition from the illuminative way to the contemplative level. From this point onward the contemplation of the life of Jesus is transformed into “simply gazing.”

5. The New Method of Praying [SE 238-260]

Each method of praying that St. Ignatius proposes is tied to each one of the levels on which the retreatant finds him/herself.

5.1. The Three Methods of Praying

The First Method of praying (SE 238–248) is adapted to the persons who are found in the First Week or perhaps those who are passing through the purgative way. This is because Ignatius believes that they still have “habits” (SE 242), fall into sin (SE 244), and he recommends that they meditate on the commandments (SE 240–243). This would no longer be acceptable for retreatants who have entered the Second Week. The “Second Method of praying (SE 249–257) corresponds to the goals of the retreatants at the second level, that is, to contemplate the life of Jesus (SE 10.2).

One may sit or kneel accordingly as one feels better disposed or finds greater devotion, but should keep the eyes closed or intent on one place, and not allow them to wander. Then the person should say the word “Father”, and continue to consider the word as long as meanings, comparisons, relish and consolations connected with it are found (SE 252).

This clearly corresponds to the contemplations of the second level. There one looks for significations, makes comparisons and considerations. There the person is concerned with feelings, consolations and relish. The “Third Method of Praying” (SE 258–260) is foreseen for those persons who have reached the third level, the contemplative level.

With each breath taken in or expelled, one should pray mentally, by saying a word of the Our Father, or of any other prayer which is recited. This is done in such a manner that one word of the prayer is said between one breath and another. In between these two breaths one reflects especially on the meaning of that word, or on the person to whom the prayer is being recited, or on one's own lowliness, or on the distance between that person's dignity and our lack of it. (SE 238).

The great difference between this and the previous methods of praying is the absence of all deliberation, all consideration, all search for significance, all desire for "relish" or "consolation" that are proper to the Second Method of praying.³⁷ So, what is left is the mere gazing that corresponds to a genuine contemplation, therefore to the unitive way. We have already seen this in the Contemplation to Attain Love.

5.2. Gazing at the Person

Gazing at the person himself should be underscored in a special way.³⁸ Because one should not think about the activities of the divine Person, nor about the mysteries of the life of Jesus, nor about images or icons, nor even about the characteristics or properties of the Person. The retreatant should look at the Person Himself. Gazing has substituted for the recollection of the memory, the considerations of the understanding, the desire for achievement of the will, and the differences of consolation and desolation.

To this gazing we should add one other observation. A person cannot be contemplated or seen in an objective manner. The person is not an object. A person can only be seen and recognized by being in a relationship with that person. And this is what Ignatius wanted to express when he added gazing at the person, "...or on one's own lowliness, or on the distance between that person's dignity and our lack of it" (SE 258).

With this text, Ignatius did not want to make any kind of comparison, but rather to lead one to look at the relationship that includes in itself both oneself and God. To understand what is discussed here, let's remember some statements of the mystics: "I am nothing; you are everything." Or how Francis prayed for an entire night, "Who are you and who am I?" Or as one person who was praying responded to the holy Cure d'Ars: "I looked at Him and He looked at me." St. Paul expressed the same thing: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20). And even more clearly the fourth

37. Cf. SE 252 and 258.

38. *To perceive, to gaze, to listen, to be attentive*, or simply *to be*, are, in this sense, synonymous.

Evangelist says: “May they all be one, Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you” (Jn 17:21).

Ignatius does not want to recommend a counter-position. This would again activate the thinking of the understanding that the retreatant would have left behind long before. Despite the contrast of highness and lowliness, he is only dealing with a gaze that takes a unique look at the relationship that unites God to the retreatant in the same way. He deals with being conscious of the encounter in humility and mercy. The retreatant should see in him/herself the presence of Jesus Christ. And nevertheless, the counter-position of “highness” and “lowliness” has a special significance. This leads to the last and deepest purification – the dark night of the soul. To experience in the mirror of the presence of God “nothingness” itself, purifies the last dark areas of the soul.

5.3. The Three Exigencies

Ignatius is a practical man and a teacher and he presents all three exigencies of praying so that people can reach their goal in prayer. The first type of praying person is someone who is in the First Week (purgative way). Ignatius withdraws the person from the noise of the world so that s/he can become calm. “Before entering into the prayer, I should briefly recollect myself in spirit, either seated or pacing to and fro, as I find better” (SE 239).

The Second Method of praying corresponds to the person who has arrived at the second level but who does not yet know the third level (contemplation of the life of Jesus). It is possible to require more of this person. Ignatius withdraws him/her from the activities of the external senses, but he leaves the person with the interior faculties. “One may sit or kneel accordingly as one feels better disposed or finds greater devotion, but should keep the eyes closed or intent on one place, and not allow them to wander. Then the person should say the word “Father” and continue to consider the word” (SE 252). Further on he says: “The person will remain for an hour in this manner of praying, going through the whole of the Our Father ... If one is contemplating ... finds ... matter which yields thought, relish, and consolation, one should not be anxious to move forward, even if the whole hour is consumed on what is being found” SE 253,254).

Therefore, the person should bodily silence themselves, disconnect from any activity of the eyes and speak as few words as possible. Ignatius does not require this of those people who are on the first level. This greater concentration will help the retreatant in his/her considerations and other interior activities.

The Third Method of praying corresponds to the third level or contemplative level. Here Ignatius withdraws the retreatant from the activities of the internal faculties – memory, understanding, will and the preoccupation with feeling either consolation or desolation –, as we have seen. Ignatius sends the person exclusively to merely gazing.

5.4. Special Helps

Because this saying farewell to the memory, thought and will, as well as ceasing to pay attention to consolation and desolation, is difficult, Ignatius gives to the retreatant another aid that should support him/her in the renunciation of the activities of the internal faculties. This help is the attention to breathing. “In this Third Method of praying, with each breath taken in or expelled, one should pray mentally, by saying a word ... This is done in such a manner that one word of the prayer is said between one breath and another” (SE 258).

In many cultures and through many traditions it is well-known that attention to breathing is very useful to set thoughts aside and come to a profound recollection in which one can direct one’s attention to gazing without any disturbances. Ignatius did not need to repeat that this word could also be a name. He had already clarified this in the previous method of praying. In the same way, here one can take from the Second Method of praying that the repetition of a word can fill up an entire hour. Because the interior silence of the retreatants is more profound during the contemplative time than on the second level, they will surely remain a much longer time on the name itself than the retreatants of the second level. Perhaps months or even longer.

Looking at it from the perspective of a progressive simplification of prayer, one can recognize that the repetitions of Contemplations (SE 62, 118 etc.) and the application of the senses (SE 121) during the phase of the Contemplations on the life of Jesus are a preparation for the third contemplative level. To reach the state of repose of the memory, the understanding and the will is a labor-intensive task that necessarily requires this previous work.

5.5. The Jesus Prayer

Let us gather together the elements of the Third Method of praying. We begin with the calming of the external senses, which is certainly found in the Second Method of praying, but is just as valid for the Third Method:

- Kneeling or seated (SE 252)
- Eyes closed or fixed on one spot (SE 252)

- Say one word (SE 252)
- Can/should remain for one hour (SS 253)

Then come those things that are proper to the Third Method of praying.

- One should pray the word at each breath (SE 258)
- Upon saying the word, one should place attention on the person to whom one is speaking. (SE 258)
- Instead of considering, comparing or looking for relish or consolations, one should remain simply gazing. (SE 252, 258)

Moreover, if one considers that Ignatius had a very great devotion to Jesus Christ, one can easily imagine that this “word” that he allows the retreatants to say with great frequency is the name of Jesus. So I understand the Third Method of praying of Ignatius and I teach this path in my book about the Exercises of Contemplation with the Jesus Prayer.

6. The Evaluation of the Three Methods of Praying

Ignatius prescribes the three methods of praying as an "exercise" with the same rights as the other parts of the exercises.

We are now approaching the most ignored text, but the one which has great significance for the contemplative phase of the *Spiritual Exercises*. It gives the commission to exercise the three methods of praying. The text says: "Four weeks are taken for the following *Exercises*, corresponding to the four parts *into which they are divided*. That is, the First Week is devoted to the consideration and contemplation of sins; the Second, to the life of Christ our Lord up to and including Palm Sunday; the Third, to the Passion of Christ our Lord; and the Fourth, to the Resurrection and Ascension. To this week are appended the *Three Methods of Praying*" (SE 4.1-3).³⁹

As we have said, Ignatius in this text gives to the Methods of Praying, the same hierarchy that he gives to the other parts of the Exercises. Therefore, the three methods of praying are part of the exercises with the same rights as the other parts. The Third Method of praying is in the last place of all the exercises of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Consequently, if the exercises constitute a process, then the Third Method of praying is the "flower" of the exercises and the final state or final place from which Ignatius bids farewell to the retreatants and sends them into their daily life.

39. Italics added by the author.

7. The Election in Contemplative Time

In the spirituality of Ignatius, the election is decisive. After the monastic orders had always emphasized the withdrawal from the world, Ignatius gave value to the total commitment to the work.

Ignatius wanted for activity to be sanctified and that God be found in daily life. Decisions are the most important components of activity. When they conform to the will of God, that is, they are sanctified, activities flow through the correct channels. Ignatius classifies the processes of election into three models.

In the first model it is God Himself who makes the decision. The person does nothing of him/herself. Ignatius calls this an election “without cause”. Examples of this model are the life decisions of St. Paul and St. Matthew (SE 175.2-3). In the second model, the various created “spirits” are active. These cause consolation or desolation in the person. But the person contributes also to the decision. S/he distinguishes the movements which are caused (*motiones animae*) and discovers toward where the good spirit is leading. The intervention of the person occurs by means of making the distinction between consolation and desolation (SE 176).⁴⁰ In the third model, neither God directly nor exterior forces are active.⁴¹ Only the person is the cause for clarity. It is a peaceful time. The person depends completely on his/her “natural capaci-

40. SE 176: “The second time is present when sufficient clarity and knowledge are received from the experience of consolations and desolations and from experience in the discernment of various spirits.”

41. God goes ahead of any work by a person and accompanies it even in its consequences. Here we are dealing with an extraordinary intervention by God.

ties” (SE 177.3).⁴² For Ignatius, these capacities are the memory, the understanding and the will.

How do these models relate to the spiritual levels? In the first or purgative level there isn’t any process of election properly speaking in the Ignatian sense. The person ought to break away from mortal sins. For that, s/he only needs to be motivated and this occurs through meditations. In the second level, that of the Contemplations on the life of Jesus, there is expressly one election. Preparation for it lasts a long time (SE 134-174) and it is carried out by means of the second and third models. If the spiritual movements are at work, then one proceeds according to the second model. But the person finds him/herself in a peaceful time, they should follow the third model. The two models are mutually complementary.

On the third level or contemplative level we discover something very interesting. Both the “natural capacities” (third model) and also the concern with consolation and desolation (second model) have been silenced. On the one hand, the person is “without causes” with which s/he could work on their decision. On the other hand, s/he can make use of a passive method but without mediation – therefore “without cause” – to reach the grace of the first model. If the grace of the first time is not present, nevertheless this state of gazing at God is very fruitful. It carries one into the depths where the immanent Trinity frequently inspires clarity and leads people to decisive resolutions, without being able to say strictly that a grace of the first time has taken place. But these decisive resolutions are very near to the first time.

42. SE 177: “The third time is one of tranquility. I consider first the end for which human beings are born, namely, to praise God our Lord and to save their souls; then, desiring this, as a means I elect a life or state of life within the limits of the Church, in order to be helped in the service of my Lord and the salvation of my soul. By a time of tranquility, I mean one when the soul is not being moved one way or the other by various spirits and uses its natural faculties in freedom and peace.”

8. Summation in Nine Points

In order to conclude, we could summarize all that has been said in the preceding pages in these nine points.

1. The general concept of the *Spiritual Exercises* shows that Ignatius works fundamentally on three levels that follow one another and which he has in mind in all of the exercises: the purgative, the illuminative and the unitive.
2. Popular missions are an excellent application of the exercises on the first level, the purgative way. There are good reasons to affirm that individually-made exercises – as important and magnificent as they might appear – are limited to the second level. The contemplative exercises are an application of the third level or contemplative level.
3. The Contemplation to Attain Love is the Principle and Foundation for the contemplative level.
4. This leads through love of love to the relinquishment of all activity until in prayer one no longer desires, no longer thinks, no longer is concerned with memories and makes no considerations about consolation or desolation. The only thing left is love and simply gazing.
5. Ignatius prescribes for this a new path of exercises. One prepares by means of the silencing of both the external and internal senses. In the prayer itself, one repeats at the rhythm of breathing a name like “Father”. Attention is directed to the person to whom one is speaking.
6. Ignatius classifies this path of exercises as part of the *Exercises* with the same rights as the rest.
7. Thus, the Jesus Prayer on the third level is a literal realization of what is indicated in the *Spiritual Exercises*.

8. The contemplative level, just as has been described, has an appealing concordance with the first time of election and disposes one for this in that it separates one from the “causes” (SE 330.1-2).
9. In my book *Exercises of Contemplation* (1994)⁴³, I tried to place at one’s disposal a manual founded on theory and praxis for experiencing the contemplative phase of the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* and to guide others to do the same.

Concluding Words

A friend who works in the areas of politics and economics, when he saw the success of the exercises of contemplation, told me: “You have discovered a niche market.” “A niche market?” I repeated to myself in order to place myself in that commercial jargon. I agreed with him. But afterwards I felt embarrassed. “No, my friend, I did not discover a niche market. I am sorry but it was discovered by Ignatius or perhaps not even he was the first. It is easy to imagine that he learned these methods of praying from a monk at Montserrat or Salamanca. They are common property of the Church.”

43. Franz JALICS, *Ejercicios de Contemplacion*. Editorial Sigueme (Salamanca, 2010).

'Guides', with this word Ignatius Loyola modestly expresses his great desire to help others. It is under this motto connoting service and simplicity that Cristianisme i Justícia and its Escuela Ignaciana de Espiritualidad-EIDES (Ignatian School of Spirituality) offers this series of materials.

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