"HUMAN INSTRUMENT UNITED WITH GOD:" THE DYNAMIC OF GRACE AND FREEDOM IN THE CONSTITUTIONS OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

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The cooperation of God's grace and human freedom is an essential theme in the Constitutions and Jesuit spirituality in general. The creative tension between God's grace and human freedom is worth pondering, not only theologically but spiritually as well. God's grace empowers humans to be free for human action according to God's design is not deterministic. At the same time, without God's grace, humans can do nothing; God's grace retains its primacy over nature. Grace builds on and works with human freedom.

This paper aims to highlight the dynamic of grace and human freedom in the Constitutions. In the contemporary world, there is so much emphasis on human freedom and responsibility. What makes human existence specifically human is freedom. Freedom is the defining characteristic of humans; human beings are freedom. This freedom constitutes human existence with three interrelated relations: personal, social, and transcendent. In other words, human freedom is related to the self, to the world, and to God.[1] In connection with this, humanity in the twenty-first century has become more and more conscious of the ambiguity of human freedom: human freedom can be creative and humanizing and, at the same time,

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[1]Roger Haight, *An Alternative Vision: An Interpretation of Liberation Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 6-7.

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can be destructive and dehumanizing. "Concrete human beings live out this drama of being simultaneously graced and dis-graced: 'Every human is Adam, every human is Christ.'"[2] What does it mean, then, to be interiorly free?

Interior freedom is exercising our human freedom in cooperation with God's grace. Through "the interior law of charity" (Cons. 134), which can be translated into God's grace dwelling in us, our human freedom is graced. Thus, we have the capacity to "cooperate with Divine Providence" (Cons. 134) for "the salvation and perfection of souls" (Cons. 3). Interior freedom demands attachment to God. The human person is fully and authentically free as long as he or she cooperates with God's grace. For Ignatius, attachment to God is compatible with the exercise of human freedom. God works in the world by means of our human freedom and he respects how we use this precious gift. Paradoxically, a proper and responsible exercise of human freedom in furthering God's values in this broken world is always under the influence of God's loving and sustaining grace. God's grace is humanizing and freeing. God empowers us as he acts through us. It follows that God still needs our free response.

The first section deals with the Ignatian worldview to set the tone and background. The worldview Ignatius offers makes a difference on how spirituality is embodied in our world. The image of God in the Contemplation to Attain Love is included because our image of God influences Christian living. Afterwards, Ignatius' reliance and dependence on God's loving grace is tackled. It is my contention that interior freedom cannot be properly understood without reference to God's grace. Then I proceed to the dynamic of grace and freedom found in the Constitutions. I particularly emphasize the phrase

[2]Leonardo Boff, *Liberating Grace* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 5.

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"human instrument united with God" (Cons. 813). How I read interior freedom in the Constitutions has resonances with the notion of cooperative grace—the creative tension and relationship between God's grace and human freedom. I conclude with concluding reflections by weaving the principles laid down.

I agree with Roger Haight, SJ, that there is a need to reinterpret Ignatian spirituality for our contemporary context, for there exists differences between Ignatius' worldview and ours. The process of interpretation, despite its difficulties, strives to be faithful to the founder's fundamental principles and values while adjusting them to be intelligible to the contemporary situation. Interpretation is demanded by the nature of the text. However, there is no exact certainty that the reinterpretation will be faithful. The result is a plurality of interpretations; no one reinterpretation is definitive.[3] The need for hermeneutics arises.

This type of reinterpretation can be construed as a "sapiential reading" or what Andre de Jaer, SJ calls a "Spirit-infused reading."[4] This reading, for Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ strives to assimilate existentially and spiritually the wisdom of the Constitutions.[5]

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[3]Roger Haight, "Foundational Issues in Jesuit Spirituality," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 19, 4 (September 1987): 4. In this challenging essay, Fr. Roger Haight, SJ, a renowned American theologian, reinterprets the tenets of Jesuit spirituality, especially the Spiritual Exercises, in light of the philosophy of action. His attempt is to translate the wisdom derived from Ignatian tradition to the contemporary context so that it will be more relevant, intelligible, and transformative. Ignatian spirituality is timeless and revolutionary. I've been personally inspired by the theological project of Roger Haight.

[4]Andre de Jaer, *Together for Mission: A Spiritual Reading of the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2001), 4. This book is a very good example of this kind of reading.

[5]de Jaer, *Together for Mission*, 4.

Since Ignatius neither specifically and explicitly devoted a section on the dynamic of grace and human freedom in the whole Constitutions nor wrote a work on this subject matter, I also attempt in this paper to explicate this dynamic and how this is operative in the Constitutions themselves. With this in consideration, the perennial wisdom of the Constitutions becomes truly relevant.

As an important note, the Spiritual Exercises are indispensable in understanding the Constitutions, for it is intertwined with them. The two documents form a unity; they are the two major wings of Ignatian spirituality. To borrow from Pope Benedict XVI, the Spiritual Exercises are the "fountain" of our spirituality and the "matrix" of the Constitutions.[6]

Ignatian Worldview: Grace-Filled World

Grace and Nature are United

In his companion volume to the newly updated Constitutions, Parmananda Divarkar, SJ comments on Ignatius' worldview present in Part X of the Constitutions, which is regarded as "the whole of the Constitutions in a nutshell."[7] At the heart of this is an Ignatian vision of reality: there is no dichotomy between nature and grace, sacred and profane, supernatural and natural, for everything is a pure gift coming from God. [8] Faithful

[6]Pope Benedict XVI, "Address of His Holiness Benedict the Sixteenth to the 35 General Congregation of the Society of Jesus" (February 21, 2008) in *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 31st– 35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009), 825. The citations from General Congregations also come from this collection.

[7]Parmananda Divarkar, *Faithful and Free: A Companion to the Updated Jesuit Constitutions* (New Delhi: Gujarat Sahithya Prakash, 1997), 77-78.

[8]Divarkar, *Faithful and Free*, 78.

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to his Ignatian roots, Pope Francis beautifully defines the whole universe as embraced by God: "The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face" (Laudato Si n. 233).[9] Creation is graced.

If in the Ignatian worldview, there is no dichotomy between nature and grace, and the whole universe unfolds in God, we are "exhorted to seek God our Lord in all things, removing from themselves as far as possible love of all creatures in order to place it in the Creator of them, loving him in all creatures and all creatures in him, in conformity with his holy and divine will" (Cons. 288).[10] The grace-filled universe serves as the horizon for the human person's exercise of interior freedom. Human existence is graced, and so is our God-given freedom.

The Image of God in the Contemplation to Attain Love

We need to take note of this crucial principle: How we perceive God affects how we perceive interior freedom. Our image of God matters, for this has consequences for our Christian living. I will construct an image of God found in the "Contemplation to Attain Love" in the Fourth Week of the Spiritual Exercises, which I believe will be helpful in the discussions that follow.

The image of God provided by the "Contemplation to Attain Love" is the God who dwells in and labors creation (Spiritual Exercises nos. 235-236). God dwells in creation, thereby sanctifying it – making it grace-filled. God is an empowering and loving presence; the "interior law of charity and love which the

[9]Pope Francis, *Laudato Si, Encyclical Letter on Care for Our Common Home*, May 24, 2015.

[10]Citations from the Constitutions abbreviated as Cons. come from "The Constitutions of The Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms" (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996)

Holy Spirit writes and imprints upon hearts" (Cons. 134) can be interpreted in this light for theologically the symbol of God the Spirit corresponds to the image of God as empowering and loving presence. This has a bearing on how interior freedom among humans is understood. Consequently, Ignatius does not see God as a cosmic puppeteer who pulls strings to control everything, nor a Deus ex Machina who rectifies things at the end.[11] Ignatian theologians understand human history not as a marionette show in which God pulls all the strings, for they give precedence to the role of grace as gentle solicitation that respects and enhances human freedom.[12] Divine Providence and human freedom do not cancel out each other.

The traditional image of God, who operates outside creation as another entity, was influenced by the traditional image of a three-tiered universe in the medieval world. For Ignatius, as seen in the "Contemplation to Attain Love," God is a self-giving God who works within the universe, within human hearts, empowering men and women the grace to be self-giving as well. The incarnate God continues to "help souls"—feeding the hungry, healing the sick, releasing captives, and reconciling people, but with human hands.[13]

God is not "interventionist" in the sense that he acts in the world by empowering and accompanying our interior freedom

[11]Ronald Modras, *Ignatian Humanism: A Dynamic Spirituality for the 21st Century* (Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 2004), 296.

[12]Avery Dulles, "Saint Ignatius and the Jesuit Theological Tradition," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits XIV*, 2 (March 1982): 7.

[13]Modras, *Ignatian Humanism*, 296.

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through the divine assistance of grace—Divine Indwelling.[14] We are "human instruments united with God" (Cons. 813).

Ignatius on the Primacy of Grace

From the outset, it should be mentioned that St. Ignatius was not technically an academic theologian. In his lifetime, he never wrote a single treatise on theology. Nevertheless, in both his writings and testimonies about him, it is undeniable that he underscores the primacy of grace. This theological principle underpins his spirituality, emphasizing the paramount importance of God's grace. Apart from God and his grace, we can do nothing (John 15:5).

Definition of Grace

In the Christian tradition, the meaning of grace is the simplest, yet at the same time, the most complicated. The word grace has acquired multiple connotations throughout history. However, one can simplify the meaning of grace; it essentially refers to God's love for human beings. All Christians will no doubt agree on this: Grace is God's love for us regardless of its technical formulations. What perfectly captures the meaning of grace is no less than God's love.[15]

For Karl Rahner, SJ, grace is "God's self-communication," which means "that what is communicated is really God in his own being, and in this way, it is communication for the sake of

[14]"The idea that God acts in history, however, is not understood naively in such a way that God is a doer in history, or that God does for human beings what human beings are themselves called upon to do. God has left the running of the world to human freedom; but God is present as an empowering force as Spirit." Haight, Alternative Vision, 85.

[15]Roger Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 7-9.

knowing and possessing God in immediate vision and love."[16] In a similar vein, St. Ignatius of Loyola states that "love consists in a mutual communication between two persons. That is, the one who loves gives and communicates to the beloved what he or she has, or a part of what one has or can have; and the beloved in return does the same to the lover" (SpEx 231). God primarily and with full gratuity gives Godself to humanity, and this is appropriately named grace, while humans, out of gratitude, give themselves to God in return by means of human freedom.

The definition of grace mentioned above is not far from how St. Ignatius understands God's grace. Grace is God's unconditional love for us. This is a foundational grace from the Spiritual Exercises.

Grace in the Constitutions

In the Constitutions, St. Ignatius obviously gives sheer importance to God's grace, to "the grace of the omnipotent hand of Christ our God and Lord (Cons. 812)." In fact, the entire document is replete with the word "grace," mentioning the term approximately forty times. It is clear that for Ignatius and his first companions, God is at the origin of and the one who continues to sustain this least Society of Jesus.[17]

Here are some sample citations from the Constitutions:

> The end of this Society is to devote itself with God's grace not only to the salvation and perfection of the members' own souls, but also with that same grace to labor strenuously in giving aid toward the salvation and perfection of the souls of their neighbors (Cons. 3).
>
> Although God our Creator and Lord is the one who in his Supreme Wisdom and Goodness must preserve, direct,

[16]Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 117-118.

[17]de Jaer, *Together for Mission*, 15.

> and carry forward in his divine service this least Society of Jesus, just as he deigned to begin it...(Cons. 134).
>
> In the formula of the first vows, the last line begs for God's grace: "Just as you gave me the grace to desire and offer this, so you will also bestow abundant grace to fulfill it" (Cons. 540).

Ignatius on Interior Freedom

It is important to distinguish between *human freedom* and *interior freedom*. Both terms are not equivalent in the strictest sense. A human person possesses freedom, yet it does not follow that he or she is interiorly free, for human freedom, as already mentioned, is ambiguous. Ignatius is not naïve on this. In fact, in the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises, he includes the reality of personal and social sin for our consideration. The meditations and considerations from this week are geared towards one's encounter with his or her sinfulness. On the other hand, human freedom has the capacity to follow and love Christ, thanks to the liberating grace of God.

Spiritual Exercises

The Spiritual Exercises altogether exhibit the principle of flexibility. Remarkably, the Spiritual Exercises are respectful to and concerned for human freedom. The exercitant is not told what to imagine, remember, or decide. It is forbidden for the director to interfere between the exercitant and God. The 15th annotation clearly states: "...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" (SpEx 15). The expectation and goal is that the individual will encounter God in order for

him to reach a decision with interior and complete freedom.[18] Deducing from these observations, Ignatius positively appreciates human freedom. What is presupposed here is that human freedom can cooperate with God's grace.

On a deeper level, the primary purpose of St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises is for one to attain interior freedom: "the name of spiritual exercises given to any means of preparing and disposing our soul to rid itself of all its disordered affections and then, after their removal, of seeking and finding God's will in the ordering of our life for the salvation of our soul" (SpEx 1). The Spiritual Exercises were devised to bring the retreatant into a position of freedom in relation to themselves, other human beings, and God. In this way, the Holy Spirit is manifested in the exercise of this freedom.[19]

The Principle and Foundation located at the beginning of the Spiritual Exercises is indispensable in understanding the place of the human person in God's created world. In other words, it presents Ignatius' theological anthropology. Basically, the Principle and Foundation outlines a vision of life with basic criteria for discerning in life. Fundamentally, it says that by loving God above everything else we will attain our ultimate purpose. This requires us to freely choose the most loving choice, to always choose God.[20] Complete attachment to the Absolute One, who is no other than God, makes us interiorly free. Indifference is a by-product of interior freedom. Indifference is a passionate commitment to God who is our

[18]Dulles, "Saint Ignatius and the Jesuit Theological Tradition," 7.

[19]John English, *Spiritual Freedom: From an Experience of the Ignatian Exercises to the Art of Spiritual Guidance*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 1995), 19.

[20]Dean Brackley, *The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times: New Perspectives on the Transformative Wisdom of Ignatius of Loyola* (New York: Crossroad, 2004), 11.

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ultimate goal that we are willing to sacrifice anything out of love. This makes one available for the mission out of generosity to offer one's self to God.[21]

We are created out of love by God and sustained by the same love. To experience this immense and unconditional love will certainly lead us into interior freedom. God's loving grace is freeing—it frees us for others and for the world.[22] This is consistent with how St. John understands the relationship between God's love and human love: "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Falling in love with God is an attachment to God. God's love empowers us to love God in return and others.

Roger Haight, SJ reinterprets the Principle and Foundation for the contemporary world with a sharp focus on the power and creativity of human freedom. For him, we have been bestowed the gift of freedom, which is our creative power to fashion new being and the world. Therefore, we are highly responsible to God. Eschatological salvation cannot be conceived in abstraction from our use of God-given creative and free human action in the world.[23] We must not underestimate human freedom. Ignatius himself warns us against overemphasizing God's grace at the expense of human freedom: "Similarly, we ought not to speak so lengthily and emphatically about grace that we generate a poison harmful to freedom of the will" (SpEx 369).

The Constitutions

The Constitutions, although containing legal elements, must not be seen, read, and implemented as a purely juridical document. Similar to the nature of the Spiritual Exercises,

[21]Brackley, *The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times*, 12.

[22]Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace*, 153-154.

[23]Haight, "Foundational Issues in Jesuit Spirituality," 25.

the prescriptions of the Constitutions are to be implemented "according to the circumstances of persons, times and places." (Cons. 136) There is room for flexibility and no room for legalism. Ignatius prefers the "order of execution" to the "order of consideration" for the latter has the tendency to be rigid. The way of the "order of consideration" rejected by Ignatius first considers the end and then descends to the means to attain it (Cons. 137). As a realist and practical man, Ignatius prefers the concrete to the abstract, praxis to theory. He looks to the means in constant contemplation of the end, while attention is fixed on the end which is being sought.[24] This shows once again how Ignatius values learning from experiences and the exercise of human freedom.

The foundation of interior freedom in the Constitutions is found in Cons. 134: "the interior law of charity and love which the Holy Spirit writes and imprints upon hearts..." Antonio Aldama, SJ, explains this as follows:

> The interior law of charity, which is the Holy Spirit, infuses into a person an interior principle of action, moving him to do good and avoid evil out of love. A human being is free, then, because, though he submits to the exterior law, he holds to an interior principle of action that moves him to comply with the requirements of the external law.[25]

The Constitutions were written and codified "to aid us to proceed better, in conformity with our Institute, along the path of divine service" (Cons. 134). The exterior constitutions are useful and important as a means to the end, but Ignatius wants us to go beyond the external following of precepts.

[24]Joseph Veale, "How the Constitutions Work," *The Way Supplement* 61 (Spring 1988): 11-12.

[25]Antonio Aldama, *An Introductory Commentary on the Constitutions*, trans. Aloysius J. Owen (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1989), 69.

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After mentioning the primacy of God's sustaining love and the interior law of charity dwelling in the human person, there follows the need to cooperate with grace which "frees one from all objective law because the very ideal that the law points to becomes internalized; the Spirit of love is the generating force of behavior. Quite simply, grace is the force of God working in human existence moving it in love."[26] In this way, interior freedom means following the lead of and being divinely empowered by the Holy Spirit through the appropriate and responsible exercise of human freedom. There are two presuppositions at work here. First, the human person can freely cooperate with God who interiorly dwells in the human person as Spirit. Second, human and natural means are helpful to the process of interiorizing God's values. Ignatius' primary concern in the Constitutions is not to force, rather, it is to open up a path to God through following Jesus in the Society of Jesus with the Constitutions as light and direction.[27]

In the General Examen, which gives expression to certain permanent values and spiritual attitudes and dispositions required of a companion of Jesus,[28] interior freedom is highly valued. In chapter four, the candidate must be informed first of all "that the intention of the first men who joined themselves together in this Society was that those received into it should be persons already detached from the world and determined to serve God totally" (Cons. 53). This demands living a life of poverty (Cons. 53-59). Also, following the counsel of Christ to detach from one's family, "he should take care to put aside all merely natural affection for his relatives and convert it into spiritual, by loving them only with that love which rightly ordered charity requires. He

[26]Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace*, 157.

[27]de Jaer, *Together for Mission*, 16.

[28]Ibid., 26.

should be as one who is dead to the world and to self-love and who lives only for Christ our Lord, while having him in place of parents, brothers, and all things" (Cons. 61). Furthermore, "for the sake of his greater progress in the spiritual life, and especially for his greater lowliness and humility," he must be willing to accept fraternal corrections within the religious community (Cons. 63). Towards the end of the General Examen, the candidate is reminded of the importance of rejecting the values of the world by accepting and desiring "with all possible energy whatever Christ our Lord has loved and embraced" (Cons. 101). True followers of Christ "desire to clothe themselves with the same garb and uniform of their Lord because of the love and reverence owed to him" (Cons. 101). They "desire to suffer injuries, false accusations, and affronts, and to be held and esteemed as fools because of their desire to resemble and imitate in some manner our Creator and Lord Jesus Christ" (Cons. 101). Jesus Christ is the supreme example and "the way which leads men and women to life" (Cons. 101). To sum up, interior freedom is attachment to the poor and humble Christ. The desire to embrace the lot of Christ is the pinnacle of Ignatian spirituality and the fullest expression of interior freedom not because humiliation and suffering are positive in themselves. On the contrary, these are consequences of imitating the Master.[29]

"The Human Instrument United with God"

Cooperative Grace

"The interplay between God's grace and human effort (human freedom) is an important dynamic in the

[29]Edward Kinerk, "A Model of Formation," *The Way Supplement* 61 (Spring 1988): 92.

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Constitutions."[30] Theologically, this dynamic is termed as cooperative grace. The Thomistic theological principle of the compatibility between "grace and nature" coincides very well with the Jesuits' conviction that in pastoral activities they should not only rely on God's grace but also use all the "human means" at their disposal as prescribed in the Constitutions (Cons. 147-162). Closely connected to this principle is the positive understanding of the relationship between grace and human freedom. Human activity can be influenced by grace despite its woundedness. Grace, always the primary factor, allows human freedom to cooperate with it, so that mysteriously human responsibility played its part in the process of salvation. This understanding of cooperative grace is much more easily reconciled with the language and theology of the Spiritual Exercises and the Constitutions.[31]

Cooperative grace means that there is no either/or between grace and human freedom. God's grace is preeminently the initiator and sustainer of all self-transcendence by human freedom. However, since God works in creatures according to their natures, God's loving and sustaining presence through grace is at work precisely within human freedom.[32] There is an important distinction between "operative grace" and "cooperative grace." The operations of God's grace and human freedom occur on radically different levels; the two do not operate as equal partners for God is God and humans are humans.[33] The former refers to the effects of grace within the human person,

[30]Richard Baumann, "Our Jesuit Constitutions: Cooperation as Union," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 49, 4 (Winter 2017), 17.

[31]John O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 249-250.

[32]Haight, *An Alternative Vision*, 154. This understanding of cooperative grace is Thomistic in nature.

[33]Ibid., 154.

namely God's justification and sanctification. "Cooperative grace," as already explained, refers to the effects of grace as it is seen passing through the exercise of human freedom out into the world and the public sphere in action. There is no danger of Pelagianism in the case for the whole dynamic of grace and human freedom from start to finish is initiated and sustained by the impulse, force, and drawing of God's grace. As a corollary, through the witnesses of prophets, saintly figures, and self-transcending persons God's grace breaks through into the public sphere of everyday life and history and becomes visible, tangible, and concrete; God's grace is incarnated through the exercise of human freedom.[34]

The dynamic of cooperative grace is evident from the very beginning of the Constitutions. In the Preamble, particularly in Constitutions n. 134 "lies the first and vital reference to an idea that constitutes the heart of the Constitutions and the Jesuit charism: cooperation with God our Lord."[35] Cooperating with God requires our human freedom. The phrase "*ayudar a las almas*" or "to help souls" has solid historical roots for it dates to the earliest writings of the First Companions and this is the best description of what the Jesuits were trying to do. Helping souls needs the responsible exercise of freedom—a hallmark of the Jesuit charism.[36]

The Dynamic of Grace and Human Freedom in the Constitutions

In this section, I will attempt to briefly explicate how the dynamic of grace and human freedom is at work in some parts of the Constitutions.

[34]Haight, *The Language and Experience of Grace*, 170.

[35]Baumann, "Our Jesuit Constitutions: Cooperation as Union," 14.

[36]Baumann, "Our Jesuit Constitutions: Cooperation as Union," 14.

General Examen

"We are God's fellow workers" (1 Corinthians 3:9). Labor, which is the stuff of cooperation, is apparent in the Constitutions (Cons. 149, 159, 216, 243, 308, 339, 603, 659, 732, 769, 797). The purpose of the Society of Jesus is to labor with God for the salvation and perfection of human persons.[37] God, with his loving grace, requires our free cooperation no matter how limited and frail we are. Ultimately, the labor belongs to God; humans are merely co-laborers. "God invites us to join with him in his labors, on his terms, and in his way. To discover and join the Lord, laboring to bring everything to its fulness, is central to the Jesuit way of proceeding" (GC 34, D 26, n. 8).

The General Examen mentions essential testing experiences or experiments future Jesuits must undergo for their formation (Cons. 64-70). The first experience is the month-long Spiritual Exercises followed by the hospital experiment, pilgrimage, community service in the house, and apostolic ministry. "Primacy in the novices' formation should be given to the Spiritual Exercises, since of all the experiments they are the chief and fundamental one" (CN 46 §2). The graces received during the Spiritual Exercises ought to be actualized and lived out during the subsequent experiments and beyond. The Spiritual Exercises don't just end in the Fourth Week because there is the so-called Fifth Week – the everyday life of the Jesuit. Exercising human freedom within the worldly sphere complements exercising the heart. The use of one's freedom ideally should flow from the intimate experiences and encounters one had with God and the interiorized values of Christ during the long retreat. The experiments outside the novitiate serve as testing grounds for whether a Jesuit can freely cooperate with God's grace. Truly, the experiments are "circumstances

[37]Ibid., 21.

wherein they (novices) can give evidence of what they really are and show how they have made their own the spiritual attitudes proper to our vocation" (CN 46 §1).

Part III – The Preservation and Progress of those who remain on probation

For Ignatius, as expounded in the Constitutions, formation is holistic. Progress in Spirit (244-276), progress in virtue (276-279), and preservation of the body (292-306) are interrelated and have the specific aim of forming effective laborers in Lord's vineyard (Cons. 243). Formation, as elaborated in the Constitutions, reflects an incarnational spirituality. Grace is not purely disembodied, for it builds on the total human person. Formation helps the novices enter into this incarnational dynamic and encounter with the real.[38] Cooperation with God's grace demands being grounded. God's grace does not bypass the exercise of human freedom for the sake of development.

Part V – Admission or Incorporation into the Society

Paradoxically, "our religious vows, while binding us, also set us free" (CN 143 §2). In the context of being a Jesuit, the religious vows are a means towards interior freedom. Every person is gifted with the capacity for self-transcendence – the capacity to go beyond one's self. Self-transcendence is possible since the human person is free.[39] The "abundant grace" of God is necessary "to fulfill the vows" (Cons. 540) because God's grace, in the first place, causes self-transcendence to occur in each one. Obviously, this requires the exercise of human freedom. Pronouncing vows is one way of cooperating with God's liberating grace, which liberates one for God, for humans, and for

[38]de Jaer, *Together for Mission*, 45.

[39]Divarkar, *Faithful and Free*, 54.

the world. In living out the vows, we rely on God's "infinite goodness and mercy" while freely leading our entire life in the Society in freedom (Cons. 540).

Part VI – The Personal Life of those already admitted and incorporated into the Body of the Society

After a long time of formation, "it is presupposed that those so admitted will be men who are spiritual and sufficiently advanced that they will run in the path of Christ our Lord" (Cons. 582). In this regard, "Ignatius is much more concerned with the spiritual makeup of the companion fully formed and with the depth of his commitment to the Lord than he is with the spelling-out of precise norms or rules."[40] There is an element of trust in the Holy Spirit's inspiration present in this dynamic. At the heart of formation is being conformed to Jesus Christ—the supreme exemplar of interior freedom and "the way which leads to life" (Cons. 101). The Spirit plays a pivotal role in the process of formation. On the other hand, as humans graced with freedom, we must cooperate with the promptings of the Spirit. Formation involves both God and the formand.

Part VII – The Relations to their neighbor of those already incorporated into the Society when they are dispersed into the vineyard of Christ our Lord

Part VII is "the nucleus of the Constitutions. Everything that goes before, from the General Examen to Part V, is actually a preparation; and what comes after, Parts VIII to X, is in response to it."[41] This description speaks forcefully of the centrality of mission for Ignatius and for the Society. The spiritual vision behind the "missions" is derived from the Spiritual Exercises, particularly the Contemplations on

[40]de Jaer, *Together for Mission*, 102.

[41]Ibid., 136.

the Incarnation, the Kingdom and the Two Standards. The confirmation at La Storta is of great importance as well.[42] The Constitutions contain a deeply apostolic spirituality. Jesuit life is oriented towards greater service of God by means of serving others in the world. Borrowing the language of the Jesuit theologian Juan Luis Segundo, Jesuits are involved in the project of God centered on the Reign of God—project of spirituality. Prayers, studies, and the vows are all for the mission.[43]

Based on the phrase "with that same grace" written at the beginning of the Constitutions (Cons. 3), grace for Ignatius serves two functions: it converts us to the love of God (Spiritual Exercises) and then empowers us to love our neighbor (Constitutions). This grace impels us to a world-affirming, apostolic, historically oriented spirituality—the spirituality of a project coined by Juan Luis Segundo, SJ.[44] God's grace empowers and inspires us to be agents of liberation in history by means of participation in building the Reign of God. God's grace is socially manifested in a "building of the earth" in history, among people, and in public institutions that shape human lives. Withdrawal from the world is alien to this conception of grace, for it pushes us to immerse in the processes of history.[45] In updating the contours of mission in today's world,

[42]Michael Amaladoss, "Sent on Mission" in *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus: Incorporation of a Spirit* (India: Gujarat Sahithya Prakash, 1993), 330.

[43]Peter Schineller, "The Pilgrim Journey of Ignatius: From Soldier to Laborer in the Lord's Vineyard and Its Implications for Apostolic Lay Spirituality," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 31, 4 (September 1999): 21. The main point of Schineller in this study is there was a shift on Ignatius' spirituality: from a spirituality where the main concern is for the salvation of one's soul as expressed in the Spiritual Exercises to a spirituality that is apostolic by laboring with the Lord for the salvation of others as expressed in the Constitutions.

[44]Schineller, "The Pilgrim Journey of Ignatius," 40.

[45]Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace*, 182.

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the Complementary Norms is on the right track: "The mission of the Society today is participation in the total evangelizing mission of the Church, which aims at the realization of the Kingdom of God in the whole of human society, not only in the life to come but also in this life" (CN 245 §).

Part IX – The Society's Head and the Government which descends from it

"In regard to the qualities which are desirable in the superior general, the first is that he should be closely united with God our Lord and have familiarity with him in prayer and in all his operations" (Cons. 723). The Jesuit must develop an intimate relationship with God so that he can better cooperate with God's grace. Personal prayer is a foundational means towards interior freedom.[46] However, if prayer is not translated into action, union with God is incomplete. Personal prayer must nourish one's exercise of loving human freedom motivated by God's love. The praxis of love unites us with God. Without this, any spiritual act is an offense to God. Acts of love and prayer are inseparable.[47]

C. The Human Instrument United with God (Part X – How the Whole Body of the Society is to Be Preserved and Increased in Its Well-Being)

According to George Ganss, an expert on Ignatian spirituality, "to be a closely united instrument in the hands of God from whom the true efficacy comes is a prominent and characteristic aspect of Ignatius' concept of an apostolic worker (nos. 30, 638, 814). This concept flows naturally from his desire to

[46]Baumann, "Our Jesuit Constitutions: Cooperation as Union," 23.

[47]Brackley, *The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times*, 246.

be cooperatively associated with Christ toward achieving God's redemptive plan."[48]

Here are citations from the Constitutions which mention "instrument:"

> "...in order to be good and faithful sowers in the Lord's field and to preach his divine word will be instruments the more apt for this purpose..." (Cons. 30.)
>
> "...that God may dispose them all to receive his grace through the weak instruments of this least Society" (Cons. 638).
>
> "...the means which unite the human instrument with God" (Cons. 813).

Roger Haight, SJ explains that the phrase "(human) instrument united with God" found in the Constitutions (813-814) "carried considerable weight in Ignatius's understanding of apostolic Jesuits."[49] He concludes his thought-provoking yet highly substantial re-interpretation of some aspects of Jesuit spirituality by using that phrase to summarize as a whole his theological point. It is worth quoting:

> The Jesuit should be an *instrumentum conjunctum Deo* (an instrument united with God). The instrument here is not a lifeless and dead tool, but a human person whose action is free and genuinely creative... We exercise this freedom in a secular world, and we must respond to this world like everyone else in a secular way in planning our categorical actions. But for Christians this transpires against an horizon and within a context of a transcendent faith vision. Our action is responsive to a personal God revealed in Jesus... Thus our action in the world is not only coaction with the world and other human beings,

[48]George Ganss ed., *Ignatius of Loyola: The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 473.

[49]The comment is from a footnote in his "Foundational Issues in Jesuit Spirituality," 44.

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> but also as (Maurice) Blondel says the-ergy, work with God, a notion completely in line with tradition of the notion of cooperative grace.[50]

Spiritual means are needed to cooperate with God's grace for the preservation and growth of the body and the fulfilment of its mission. "The first and most appropriate means will be the prayers and Masses" (Cons. 812). Then, the cultivation of virtues and spirituality: "Thus it appears that care should be taken in general that all the members of the Society devote themselves to the solid and perfect virtues and to spiritual pursuits, and attach greater importance to them than to learning and other natural and human gifts" (Cons. 813). This requires the exercise of human freedom.

Natural means are also needed to cooperate with God's grace for the preservation and growth of the body and the fulfillment of its mission. "The human or acquired means ought to be sought with diligence, especially well-grounded and solid learning, and a method of proposing it to the people by means of sermons, lectures, and the art of dealing and conversing with others" (Cons. 814).

For Ignatius, supernatural means are more effective than natural means, yet both are still needed. "For he desires to be glorified both through the natural means, which he gives as Creator, and through the supernatural means, which he gives as the Author of grace" (Cons. 814). The preeminence of God's grace doesn't wipe out the need to cooperate using spiritual and human means. The "omnipotent hand of Christ our God and Lord" (Cons. 813) requires the cooperation of human hands.

There will always be a creative tension between God's grace and human freedom in the life of a Jesuit. This can be creative and life-giving as long as the two trusts are present in the

[50]Haight, "Foundational Issues in Jesuit Spirituality," 44.

human person.[51] The extreme overreliance on one's human freedom negates and relativizes the unique and preeminent role of God's grace. Simply put, it is idolatry: worshiping one's capacities, gifts, and freedom. The Constitutions reminds us that "the natural means which equip the human instrument of God our Lord to deal with his fellow human beings" should be "acquired and exercised for the divine service alone" and "not so that we may put our confidence in them, but so that we may cooperate with the divine grace according to the arrangement of the sovereign providence of God our Lord" (Cons. 814). The reason, I suppose, why the "means which unite the human instrument with God and so dispose it that it may be wielded well by his divine hand are more effective than those which equip it in relation to human beings" (Cons. 813) is that these supernatural and spiritual means purify the human and natural means. The exercise of human freedom and the utilization of natural means can be destructive, selfish, and disordered without the light of virtues and spirituality. For example, history has been traumatized by the invention of the atomic bomb. The other extreme is a blind and fanatical dependence on God's grace that strongly marginalizes the role of human freedom. For example, in preparing a homily, the preacher is not excused not to consult a biblical commentary because one will rely solely on the Spirit.[52] One can go extreme and fall into determinism: human freedom is unreal, and God is controlling us and the world like a puppet.

The strict separation between grace and nature affects how we view human and natural means. There is a tendency to exalt the supernatural means at the expense of human and natural means. True, the former is greater than the latter. However, a

[51]William Barry and Robert Doherty, *Contemplatives in Action: The Jesuit Way* (New York: Paulist Press, 2002), 23.

[52]Barry and Doherty, *Contemplatives in Action*, 23.

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purely supernatural view of the human and the world can lead to a world-hating spirituality. While a purely naturalistic view of the human and the world risks being dangerous and unlivable. In the Ignatian worldview, grace and nature are intimately united. Ignatian spirituality is incarnational.

We trust primarily in God's loving and empowering grace, and we also trust in our God-given freedom. We are free, creative, responsible, and graced instruments of God. The supernatural and human means are for us to be closely united with God so that as His instruments, we can contribute to the preservation and growth of the body of the Society and the aid of souls to reach their ultimate and supernatural end (Cons. 813-814).

Concluding Reflections

Formation is Freely Cooperating with God's grace

In his letter "The Jesuit Formator Today," Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ stated that "God is the educator par excellence, and he makes use of human instruments."[53] I was particularly struck when he continued his letter by stating that "the second 'formator' is the one being formed himself. He learns to take responsibility for his own formation and to live as a Jesuit in creative fidelity."[54] Only after this does he mention the actual "formator who is God's instrument and the instrument of the Society in transmitting our way of proceeding and communicating a profound desire to serve God and 'help souls,' like St. Ignatius, mainly by the witness of his life."[55] What's the

[53]Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, "The Jesuit Formator Today" in *The Formation of Jesuits: From the Letters of Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ* (Rome: General Curia of the Society of Jesus, 2003), 2.

[54]Kolvenbach, "The Jesuit Formator Today," 3.

[55]Ibid., 3.

meaning of this arrangement? Curiously, the formand or the one being formed is considered as the second formator and not the formator himself. Formation is first and foremost the divine work of the Spirit who is "the interior law of charity" written and imprinted upon the heart (Cons. 134). The designated formator is the instrument of God in guiding and accompanying the formand towards growth in interior freedom. But all the efforts of the formator will come to naught if the formand will not take responsibility for his own formation through the proper exercise of his human freedom. At the end of the day, without denying the crucial role of the formator, the success of formation highly depends on the formand's own cooperation with the Spirit of God and with the formator, one of God's human instruments.

The title of the fifth chapter of Part VI: Personal Life of Those Admitted tells us: "the Constitutions do not oblige under pain of sin" (Cons. 602). Ignatius, in composing the Constitutions, did not intend to make it like a penal code. He preferred a regime of desire, love, and interior freedom instead of one of fear and obligation.[56] The Jesuit ideal is living in the Spirit: "For freedom Christ has set us free" (Galatians 5:1) and "now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Corinthians 3:17).

Closeness to God/Intimacy with Jesus Enhances and Fulfills Human Freedom

In the Contemplation on the Incarnation during the Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises, the grace to beg for is the grace of the "interior knowledge of Our Lord, who became human for me, that I may love him more intensely and follow him more closely" (SpEx n. 104). This deep personal love for Jesus Christ

[56]de Jaer, *Together for Mission*, 104-105.

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is "the foundational grace that binds Jesuits to Jesus and to one another. 'What is it to be a Jesuit today? It is to know that one is a sinner yet called to be a companion of Jesus as Ignatius was'" (GC 34 D. 26, n. 4). Intimacy and closeness with Jesus results in discipleship, the following of Jesus Christ as His companion, and "those who proceed spiritually and truly follow Christ our Lord love and intensely desire to clothe themselves with the same garb and uniform of their Lord because of the love and reverence owed to him" (Cons. 101). "For the one who enters the Society, following Christ will consist in a genuine desire to put on the garment of Christ; this means that the sum of his desires must be centered on and unified around the person of Jesus, who is loved and faithfully followed as the One and Only."[57]

In the eyes of the world, following Jesus and imbibing his way of proceeding is counter-cultural. One common reason is that it's constrictive for the values of Jesus prevent one from being absolutely free—doing anything one wants to do. On the contrary, the Constitutions provide a spirituality of attachment to the poor, humble, self-emptying, and servant Christ, who is the way that leads to life (Cons. 101) and authentic freedom. To love and to "put on the garment of Christ" (Cons. 101) is to reject the values that wreak havoc on the world, such as obsession with power, strong pride, inhuman greed, selfishness, disregard for human dignity, and oppression. Rather, it consists of embracing the way of proceeding of Jesus Christ out of personal love for Him. Christ-likeness is being interiorly free—free to be a servant for others, free to selflessly love, free to be rejected and to suffer, free to die for Him and for the well-being of the neighbor. In opposition to those who see a relationship with God as a source of unfreedom, Karl Rahner

[57]Ibid., 36.

counters with a theological principle: "Nearness to God and genuine human autonomy grow in direct and not inverse proportion."[58] The grace of the intimate knowledge of Jesus enhances and fulfills human freedom. "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

We are an Extension of the Divine Caring for all Humanity

In the spirit of the Constitutions, we are "an instrument in his (God's) hands—not a passive tool but a living limb, an extension of the divine caring for all humanity"[59] (Cons. 813-814). Christ, the Eternal King, continues to call us "to labor strenuously in giving aid toward the salvation and perfection of souls" (SpEx 95-98, Cons. 3) by "caring for the neediest" and "(extending) God's mercy to where injustice, suffering or despair seem to thwart the divine plan" (GC 36 D. 1, n. 40). "For the attainment of the objective it (the Society) seeks, which is to aid souls to reach their ultimate and supernatural end (Cons. 813), "or what might be called, in contemporary terms, the total and integral liberation of (human), leading to participation in the life of God himself" (GC 32 D. 2, n. 11) as "human instruments united with God" (Cons. 813-814) it is required of us to "cooperate with the divine grace according to the arrangement of the sovereign providence of God our Lord (Cons. 134, Cons. 814)." Let us beg for the grace of interior freedom so that we may exercise our human freedom in cooperation with God's salvific and liberating grace.

Pedro de Ribadeneira, a biographer of Ignatius, recounts an interesting conversation that took place in July 1541 between Ignatius and Diego Lainez. According to Ribadeneira, he was

[58]Quoted from Elizabeth Johnson, *Consider Jesus: Waves of Renewal in Christology* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 29.

[59]Divarkar, *Faithful and Free*, 30.

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present during the conversation. When Ignatius asked Diego Lainez if he would die on the spot and be given a choice between receiving eternal life or remaining in this life to serve God in history, Lainez responded that he would prefer to see God and be assured of salvation. The reply of Father Ignatius was striking: "Now, I certainly should not have done so. Rather, had I judged that, remaining in this life, I could have rendered some singular service to our Lord, I should have besought him to leave me in it until I should have performed that service. And I should place my eyes on it and not on myself, having no regard for my danger or security.'"[60]

This short account demonstrates Father Ignatius' openness to serve God in history by being His instrument on earth. His spiritual legacy lives on.

[60]This story is quoted by Peter Schineller in his study The Pilgrim Journey of Ignatius from Juan Luis Segundo's challenging essay "Ignatius Loyola: Trial or Project?" in *Signs of the Times* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1993), 169f. The original story, in Spanish, is found in Pedro Ribadeneira's sixth-century *Vita Ignatii Loyola* (Rome, 1965).