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# STUDIES

## in the Spirituality of Jesuits

The Deliberation That Started the Jesuits



A Commentario on the Deliberatio  
primorum Patrum, Newly Translated,  
with a Historical Introduction

INDEPENDENT PRESS FOUNDATION  
Jules J. Toner, S.J.

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

## THE AMERICAN ASSISTANCY SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

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

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

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## Author's Preface

Communal discernment to find God's will has become one of the predominant features of the renewal of religious life in the Church since Vatican II. The method most commonly used is that first developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola and his other nine "companions of Jesus" when they were led by the Holy Spirit to establish the Society of Jesus as a religious order. Whatever diversity may show up in the several styles of going about such discernment, all are modeled on the method found in a document entitled *Deliberatio primorum Patrum*,<sup>1</sup> which gives an account of how Ignatius and his companions went about their discernment. It is to The Deliberation (as we shall call it) that we have to go whenever we need to refresh and clarify our understanding of this method at its source.

### A. The Value of The Deliberation of the First Fathers

This document, therefore, is of major importance not only to those who are interested in the origin and nature of the Society of Jesus but also to all those others who are interested in an instrument for communal decision making. For, while The Deliberation, like the Spiritual Exercises, is especially valued by Jesuits, the way of communal discernment that is found in it is not exclusively or specifically Jesuit, as are, for example, the Formula of the Institute or *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*. The Spiritual Exercises and The Deliberation belong to all in the Church. They can and have served the purposes of bishops, diocesan priests, laymen and laywomen, as well as contemplative and active religious men and women.

### B. The Limited Scope of the Commentary

Without entirely leaving aside all the other matters of interest to Jesuits which are to be found in The Deliberation, my comments will be focused on the Ignatian method in group discernment of God's will. Further, in my comments on method, I intend, with an exception or two perhaps, to refrain from any theorizing or criticizing or justifying. Rather, I shall merely try to help the reader understand what is in the text but would likely

be missed unless he spent a great deal more time and energy in the study of it than his demanding schedule of work usually allows him. A theology of Ignatian communal discernment is certainly a desideratum; but in this particular article, I shall avoid it in favor of helping busy readers who first of all want to know more clearly how Ignatius and his companions actually went about their work when they were carried by the Spirit through a discernment that resulted in the Society of Jesus.

#### C. The Meaning of "Method" in the Context of Discernment

Some, I find, grow uneasy when method is mentioned in regard to discernment of God's will. On the one hand, what they are fearful of should be feared, the illusion that a set of techniques and rules of procedure will assure the finding of God's will. On the other hand, method, understood as including a great deal more than technique and rules for procedure, is needed; and *The Deliberation* is a methodological document. Its main content is an account of the genesis of a method. Uneasiness should be assuaged by an understanding of what is involved in this method. There are two main parts. The first is taken up with penance, intense prayer, meditation, and Eucharistic liturgy, all in order to attain and maintain purity of heart, freedom of spirit before God and to beg for enlightenment from God. Without purification in adequate measure (who can attain it fully?) and without prayer for God's enlightenment, no one should begin deliberation or long continue in it. The second part of the method is a set of procedures to protect freedom of spirit and mutual openness among the participants while carrying on deliberation, to move the deliberation as smoothly as possible, and to bring it to a definite conclusion.

#### D. The Reason for a New Translation and Paragraphing

As already noted, *The Deliberation* is a document which can be studied with diverse interests. Depending on whether one's main interest in it is to cast light on the men who founded the Society of Jesus, on the origin and nature of that Society, on Jesuit obedience, or on discernment method, one will not only comment in different ways but will likely translate words or phrases in different ways to clarify and emphasize different dimensions of meaning. Even apart from such a consideration, no one

who works very long and probes very deeply into a text can be satisfied with any translation except his own--especially when he intends to comment on it. So, it is with respect and with gratitude to Fathers Maruca and Futrell for their excellent translations<sup>2</sup> that I have made my own and hang my commentary on it.

The mode of paragraphing in the Latin text is uncongenial for contemporary readers and altogether unsuited for my way of commenting. The critically edited Latin text of the *Deliberatio* is found in the *Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu*, on pages 1 through 7 of the volume entitled *Constitutiones et Regulae Societatis Iesu*, I (Rome, 1934). There the text is divided into nine paragraphs, designated by numbers in square brackets which the scholarly editor, Arturo Codina, inserted to make references easier. These numbers have by now become standard and must be retained for ease in verifying references from other books. Some of these paragraphs, however, are much too long for the practical needs of a commentary. Hence we found it advantageous to keep Codina's numbers but also to subdivide his long paragraphs into eighteen shorter ones which are designated by letters from a through r (for example, 1,a; 1,b; 3,f; 9,r). This system preserves Codina's base but also supplements it. The correlation readily appears in the following table:

Codina's paragraphs in <i>ConsMHSJ</i> , I	=	Paragraphs in my subdivision of his
1	=	1,a 1,b 1,c
2	=	2,d
3	=	3,e 3,f 3,g
4	=	4,h
5	=	5,i 5,j
6	=	6,k 6,l
7	=	7,m

Codina's paragraphs in <i>ConsMHSJ</i> , I	Paragraphs in my subdivision of his	(continued)
	7,n	
	7,o	
	7,p	
8	= 8,q	
9	= 9,r	

By means of this arrangement, I can base several successive comments on any one of the new and smaller paragraphs. For example, [1,b]--2 means: in Codina's paragraph 1, my subdivision b, and my comment 2 about it. We shall use the standard abbreviations par. and pars. respectively for paragraph and paragraphs.

#### E. The Main Steps in the Deliberation

It may help the reader to put together what follows if he has in mind beforehand the general movement of the account. I find in it the following four main steps:

- |           |  |  |
|-----------|--|--|
| Step I.   | 1,a<br>b   | The historical setting for the deliberation: the occasion and the norm they had to begin with, the scope of their vocation as they then understood it.                             |
| Step II.  | 1,c<br>2,d<br>3,e<br>f<br>g                              | The method in its first form, and its use to decide the first question raised.   |
| Step III. | 4,h<br>5,i<br>j<br>6,k<br>l<br>7,m<br>n<br>o<br>p<br>8,q | The development of the method into fuller parallel with the <i>Spiritual Exercises</i> , in order to answer the second question when the method as first stated proved inadequate. |

Step IV. 9,r A concluding comment.

F. Integrating References

In order to make it easier for the reader to integrate all the elements in this document which cast light on each other, and further, to facilitate his integration of this document with the *Spiritual Exercises*, I have written parenthetically into the text all cross references and all references to the *Spiritual Exercises* rather than put these into footnotes. Paragraph numbers are used rather than page numbers. *Spiritual Exercises* is abbreviated as *SpEx*.





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### PART I. HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

#### A. The Gathering of the Companions

In 1528 Ignatius of Loyola, age 37, travelling on foot from Salamanca in Spain, his only companion a little donkey carrying his few books, with little to live on save trust in God, arrived at the University of Paris to begin what turned out to be a seven-year stretch of studies in preparation for ordination to the priesthood.<sup>3</sup> Drawn by his charm, kindness, and wisdom, set afire by the flame of his vision and enthusiasm in God's service, there gathered around him six students, all in their early twenties, save one in his late teens: Pierre Favre, Francisco Javier, Simão Rodriques, Diego Laynez, Alfonso Salmerón, and Nicolás Bobadilla. On the feast of Our Lady's Assumption, August 15, 1534, during the mass celebrated by Favre (their only priest at that time) in a little chapel on Montmartre, each of these seven pronounced private vows of poverty and celibacy and a vow to go to Jerusalem. The next year, leaving Favre as leader of the little band, Ignatius left Paris under doctor's orders. Favre drew three more students into their company: Claude Jay, Paschase Bröët, Jean Codure.

All these men were joined with Ignatius at Venice in January, 1537. Here in Venice, all not yet ordained to the priesthood were ordained--save Salmerón, who was still too young. During the next two years, here, at Rome, and elsewhere they preached with amazing power, administered the sacraments, taught theology, shared a life of prayer and poverty (real poverty),

hunger and cold, travel, danger, calumny, together serving the uncared for sick in the hospitals, gathering and feeding and tending those stricken by famine and disease, begging to get the wherewithal for their works of mercy. Through all these shared experiences, bonds of brotherhood grew more strong and manly tender, grew into one of the most splendid friendships in history. It was at this time they decided that when anyone inquired who they were, they should answer that they were the *Compañía de Jesús*. As yet, they were not a religious congregation. They were a group of priests held together by a common love for Jesus Christ, dedication to apostolic work under the authority of the pope and under the leadership of Ignatius, a leadership based solely on personal charism.

B. Impending Dispersal and the Question about Their Future

Then the time came when they were to be sent far apart in all directions; for the pope, seeing the power of the Spirit working through these men, who had offered themselves to him to go anywhere in the world and do whatever he wanted them to do in the service of Christ, now planned to disperse them in response to requests from bishops all over Europe. What was to become of the *Compañía de Jesús*? In the face of this situation they came together to find what God had in mind for them. It was the year 1539. The Deliberation tells us what they found and how they went about finding it.

C. The Role of Ignatius in this Deliberation:  
His Attitude and His Influence on the Others

In the light of this historical background, a crucial question can be raised about the role of Ignatius in this undertaking. That very question has, in fact, been raised in a recent issue of these *Studies*<sup>4</sup> and demands an answer if this commentary is not to be thought naively undertaken. The question is this: Did Ignatius come to the deliberation intending to search along with the others, not yet knowing whether God's will was for the companions to take a vow of obedience and form a religious order; or did he come with an assured vision of where God was leading them, seeking to enlighten the others, not to search? Until that question is answered,

it is said, we cannot read The Deliberation and understand what was happening.

Our aim here is not to decide this issue; it is much less. We submit simply that the nature of this first discernment cannot be stated correctly as long as this historical question is not answered. To answer it, detailed research is necessary in all the documents in order to reconstruct, as far as possible, the mind of Ignatius in the beginning of this deliberation. In one way or another, the answer will shed light on what the deliberation was, a groping from darkness to light in all the companions or the communication to all by means of prayerful considerations, of the light which had been previously given to one.<sup>5</sup>

There are solid grounds for such a way of thinking in the mind of one who knows history, who understands human nature, and who is aware of the complexities involved in the interpretation of historical documents. Nevertheless, I think there are stronger grounds for a different way of thinking. Certainly, no evidence has been found in any documents other than The Deliberation which convincingly or even suavisly answers the question. Not only that, but there is no good reason to expect any such evidence will be found. We should not assume that the competent historians who have studied the documents were uninterested in the question whether and when before the deliberation of 1539 Ignatius knew where God was leading him and his companions. Someone may possibly discover something that escaped attention until now; but it is highly unlikely.<sup>6</sup>

Even if what is altogether unlikely should happen, if we should find evidence that Ignatius could not honestly enter into a search for God's will since he was sure he already knew it and was called to enlighten the others, even then we need not think this would make any difference to the nature of the method described in The Deliberation. The other nine men could be searching by the very same method they would use if Ignatius were searching with them. The enlightenment from Ignatius could be merely input for them to take into account, not the communication by Ignatius of a revelation (or of his own completed discernment) with which they would prayerfully come to agree. If Ignatius pretended to be discerning when, in fact, he was assured he knew God's will, then we have a problem with understanding Ignatius' conscience; but that has no implication about how

to interpret a description of method in the document. If it could be shown that the other nine knew Ignatius was not searching but communicating to them his own conviction and if they were intending only to understand his communication, then we would have to see everything differently in the deliberation. But such an hypothesis appears incredible in the light of what is actually in the document. The document quite clearly describes a painful struggle by men of conflicting views trying to find what God wanted all of them to do together.

Further, even if what seems so clear to me is not really so at all, it would be unwise historical method to decide a priori that we cannot understand the nature of the process described in the document until we have answered the question about Ignatius. That might turn out to be the case, once we have studied the document; on the other hand, it might turn out that the account in the document clearly reveals the nature of the discernment process described there and by so doing, provides an answer (at least the most likely answer we can reach) to the question raised about Ignatius. The Deliberation may itself be the best evidence we can find about whether Ignatius needed to search for God's will regarding the future of the companions of Jesus or already knew. Light from study of earlier events in history obviously enables us to understand later developments; but it is also true that study of later developments sometimes casts light back on earlier events and provides conclusive resolutions to doubts about how to interpret these earlier events.

After prolonged study of The Deliberation, my own view at present is that the document throughout shows all the companions, including Ignatius, searching for God's will. There is not the slightest hint of Ignatius being an exception, beginning from knowledge rather than ignorance of God's will. What is of decisive importance, I think, is a statement at the end (see 9,r). Here it is said that the same method used to decide about the vow of obedience was used successfully for a number of following questions. It is hardly to be thought that God had revealed to Ignatius the answers to all these other detailed questions. So, in these Ignatius could not but begin with the others from darkness, working and praying with them

toward light, rather than beginning from light to which he led the others. If the way of proceeding in these questions is the same as in the prior question about obedience, then we can be sure that the basic method of discernment used by the nine in discerning about obedience is the same whether Ignatius was with them in their ignorance and search or was not. It seems more likely he was; but, if not, his contribution could be no more than giving input, data, for the others, who discerned by the same method they would if Ignatius were with them. In the discernments following on the one about obedience, we can be sure Ignatius also began from ignorance and discerned by the very same method devised for the earlier question.

That Ignatius should enter into the deliberation about forming the Society of Jesus along with the others, as an equal with them (even though he was *primus inter pares* because of his personal leadership), this is surely surprising. Were not most of the great enterprises in the Church's history set in motion by someone who came, even if haltingly, to an assured realization of his prophetic call from God to begin a very definite work or to begin a new way of life and who then drew others in his wake? And how often have we ever seen anyone after years of teaching and leading a group of disciples submerge himself into the group and engage to accept the group's decision as God's will for his life and all their lives together? Where do we find precedent for this?

However, when we put this surprising turn of events into conjunction with what we know of Ignatius' charism, we find it much less surprising, in fact, altogether coherent with the rest of what we know. For Ignatius' charism was first to raise in individuals a desire to find and to do God's will, then to give them in the Spiritual Exercises a way of finding his will *for themselves*, not swayed one way or the other by Ignatius or by anyone else while searching for the right decision. By the same charism, he prepared and led the whole group to search for and to find God's will for the group, he with them in the search. To say he persuaded them to his own conviction would, I am suggesting, miss the special character of the Ignatian charism. If he played a prophetic role, it was as the prophet who calls others to cleanse their hearts to pray for light, and through

religious experience, through use of their reason guided by faith, to find out for themselves what God wants them to do with their lives and to act with freedom in accord with what they find.

PART II. THE TEXT AND COMMENTARYA. The Historical Occasion for the Deliberation

[1,a]. Lent was drawing to a close. The time was approaching for us to be scattered and parted from one another. We were eagerly anticipating this time so that we could the sooner achieve our appointed goal on which we had set our minds and hearts. We therefore resolved to get together for a good long time before our dispersal and to discuss our vocation and covenanted way of life.

Codina's paragraph 1, my paragraph a, my comment 1 (henceforth abbreviated as [1,a]--1). The "appointed goal" is surely the service of the Church under the leadership of the pope, wherever he might choose to send them for the greater glory of God. To this they had already committed themselves (see below, paragraphs 3,e, 4,h, and 7,p near the end). This is central to their "vocation and covenanted way of life," which they are now going to discuss. To fill out the scope of their call from God, the specifics of God's will for them, as they at this time understand it, we have to include along with apostolic service under the leadership of the pope, a life consecrated by private vows to celibacy and poverty (see the "Historical Introduction" above on page 179, and also par. 4,h below).

B. The Norm for Deliberation

[1,b]. Some of us were French, others Spanish, Savoyards, or Portuguese. After meeting for many sessions, there was a cleavage of sentiments and opinions about our situation. While we all had one mind and heart in seeking God's gracious and perfect will according to the scope of our vocation; nevertheless, regarding the more readily effective and more fruitful ways of achieving God's will for ourselves and others, we held diverse views. No one ought to wonder that this diversity of views should be found among us, spiritually infirm and feeble men; even the apostles themselves, princes and pillars of the most holy Church, sometimes thought in opposing ways and handed down in writing their conflicting judgments. So also did many other very perfect men with whom we cannot be remotely compared.

[1,b]--1. It seems clear that these men were sensitive to the difficulty that faces an international group from different social strata when they deliberate together on a common problem, the difficulty of breaking out of diverse perspectives and accepted value-judgments imposed by diverse cultures.

[1,b]--2. The common norm they had to begin with was what they already understood about "the scope of our vocation." What that was has been stated in 1,a above. Each addition to the knowledge of the scope of their vocation will more precisely delineate the norm, making possible further decisions. Thus, given what they now know, they will be able to decide that God wills that they should make their union in the Company of Jesus a lasting reality (see nos. 3,e, 3,f). When that is settled, they will be able to decide that they should vow obedience because it will help preserve their union (see nos. 7,p, 8,q). On the basis of vowed obedience further decisions can be made.

### C. The Two-sided Ignatian Principle

[1,c]. Since we did hold different judgments, we were eagerly on the watch to discover some unobstructed way along which we might advance together and all of us offer ourselves as a holocaust to our God, in whose praise, honor, and glory we would yield our all. At last we made a decision. In full agreement we settled on this that we would give ourselves to prayer, Masses, and meditations more fervently than usual and, after doing our very best we would for the rest cast all our concerns on the Lord, hoping in him. He is so kind and generous that he never denies his good Spirit to anyone who petitions him in humility and simplicity of heart; rather, he gives to all extravagantly, not holding back from anyone. In no way, then, would he who is kindness itself desert us; rather, he would be with us more generously than we asked or imagined.

[1,c]--1. Here we have a first statement of the two-sided and characteristically Ignatian principle<sup>7</sup> which governs their whole approach to communal discernment of God's will, determining the kind of preparation to be made and also the kind of procedure to be used during deliberation. Much will be said about procedure later on; here attention is centered on the principle and on the preparation for discernment of God's will which it implies.

[1,c]--2. The principle is that all their hope of finding God's will together must rest ultimately on God's overflowing kindness: he who is so good will never refuse the desire of those who have done what lies in them and who pray to him with simplicity and humility of heart. Two things must be noted. First, it is not their own intelligence or experience or infor-



mation or even holiness but God's loving-kindness that assures them of knowing God's will--and really does assure them. Second, they must do their best. The best they are talking about, as will appear, can at times be frightening in its demands for self-abnegation, endurance in prayer, and the labor of thought and discussion after wearing hours of apostolic work.

[1,c]--3. Those demands, however, are not only or even primarily for what is involved in searching out reasons, criticizing, and weighing them. Above all else, doing their best is doing what is necessary so that they can petition God "with humility and simplicity of heart." This phrase sounds so harmless; but when read in the light of Ignatian teaching on humility and simplicity in the *Spiritual Exercises*, ([23, 155, 157, 166]), we see what is demanded for discernment: indifference to any motivation for decision other than pure love for God, single-hearted desire for his greater glory in self and in others. It is prayer from such a heart that God will surely answer by the gift of his good Spirit to show the way to knowledge of the Father's will. "Prayer, Masses, meditations," are first of all for the sake of purifying their hearts and after that for finding light on what God's will is in the matter for decision.

#### D. The Initial Method

[2,d]. We began, therefore, to expend every human effort. We proposed to ourselves some questions worthy of careful consideration and forethought at this opportune time. Throughout the day, we were accustomed to ponder and meditate on these and to prayerfully search into them. At night each one shared with the group what he judged to be more appropriate and helpful, with the intention that all with one mind would embrace the truer way of thinking, tested and commended by the more powerful reasons and by majority vote.

[2,d]--1. A cursory reading of this passage might find very little added to what has been said in paragraph [1,c]. Close scrutiny, however, of what is said so briefly uncovers a number of crucially important points.

[2,d]--2. Before turning to these, a clarification is in order about the meditation and prayerful searching that is said to go on "throughout the day." This should not be understood as meaning that they withdrew from all other activity; for par. 6,k, further on in the document, indi-

cates that they were spending a good part of the day in apostolic activity at this time as well as later on.

[2,d]--3. At night, it is said, "each one" shared with the others his judgment on the question and his reasons for his judgment. Already we see what comes out more clearly in the statement of the elaborated method later on, that everyone was to form a judgment and to have reasons and to speak them. Everyone was to be involved, not just a few who were more inclined to urge their views.

[2,d]--4. Each one's judgment was to be grounded on reasons, since the decision of the group would be the way of thinking supported by the more powerful reasons. Failure to be clear about what "reasons" are in this context could lead to a number of misunderstandings. In this document, the general and almost exclusive meaning is the same as that found in the writings of Ignatius when he is using the word in a context of directives for or accounts of discerning God's will, namely, the advantages or disadvantages for the greater service and praise of God.<sup>8</sup> One other sort of "reasons" can be found in par. 3,f below; it will be taken note of there.

[2,d]--5. To conclude the reasoning together, it was their intention that all "with one mind" would embrace the conclusions reached by a majority vote. There are a number of things packed into this brief statement. They can be drawn out if we ask: How can they embrace with one mind a conclusion on which they have a split vote?

[2,d]--6. First, they were ready to accept a conclusion by a simple majority vote, to accept it as that to which God in his infinite goodness had led them (see par. c), as "what the Holy Spirit had inspired" (see par. 3,g and 3,g, comment 1). They did not expect unanimity nor demand it as necessary in order to trust their discernment and bring it to a satisfactory conclusion.

[2,d]--7. Rather, they intended that unanimity would *follow on* the majority vote: all would embrace with one mind (*omnes una amplecteremur*) the conclusion recommended by a majority vote. Now, to have unanimity is not merely to have volitional consent of the intellectually dissenting

majority to do what the majority wants. To have unanimity, the minority must cease to be an intellectually dissenting but volitionally consenting minority; they must now give *assent* to the majority conclusion as truly expressing the will of God. They must believe it is truly the right way, not merely the way which is legitimate because of a practical agreement to abide by the majority rule. This is the one possible position consistent with their belief expressed in par. 1,c (and reiterated more strongly in par. 3,g below). If they really believe that God's goodness leaves no doubt he will teach them his will when they have made the best effort they honestly can, if they believe that their conclusion after such an effort is inspired by the Holy Spirit, then there is no escaping assent (as opposed to mere volitional consent) to the conclusion as truly God's will after it is approved by the majority.

[2,d]--8. Not that there is anything sacred about a majority; but, when unanimity cannot be reached, the only alternatives are: (1) to go by the majority;<sup>9</sup> (2) to go by the minority; or (3) to demand that God bring about unanimity before they would think they had found his will. Neither the second nor the third is ever even suggested in The Deliberation.

[2,d]--9. Does assent to the conclusion of the majority require assent to their reasons for that conclusion? Apart from discernment of God's will, agreement with someone's conclusion does not at all necessarily imply agreement with the reasoning by which he reached it. A true conclusion may follow from true or false premises, from correct or incorrect reasoning. There appears to be no cause for thinking the case is otherwise in discernment of God's will. God can lead our minds to the conclusion truly in accord with his will despite our mistaken understanding of principles and facts, despite our faulty reasoning processes. Certainly the text of The Deliberation says nothing about all assenting to the reasons on which the judgment of the majority is based nor about trusting God to give them the true reasons and preserve them from any faulty logic. Even those among the majority may not accept each other's premises or logic. All that the document asserts is their confidence that God has led them to judgments which express his will for them. Whether in arriving at these judgments

they really did lay hold of the data necessary for justifying their judgments, whether they truly evaluated and interpreted the data they did have, whether they drew the correct implications from it, these questions are not at all the same as the question whether their conclusions express God's will. They did their best; and their *ultimate* trust was not in their information or power of practical judgment, but in God's wisdom and power and overflowing benevolence.

E. The First Question: Its Meaning

[3,e]. At the meeting on the first night, the following question was opened up: given that we had offered and dedicated ourselves and our lives to Christ our Lord and to his true and legitimate vicar on earth so that he might dispose of us and send us wherever he judged it to be more fruitful, whether to the Turks or to the Indies or to heretics or to others of the faithful or pagans--given that, would it or would it not be more advantageous for our purpose to be so joined and bound together in one body that no physical distance, no matter how great, would separate us? The issue can be made clear by a case. The pope is sending two of us to the city of Siena. Ought we to be [especially] concerned about those who are going to that place or they about us? And ought we to have a mutual understanding of this concern? Or should we have no more concern for them than we have for those who are not in this Company?

[3,e]--1. Having settled how they would go about their search for God's will, they then recalled the scope of their vocation as they knew it thus far and settled on their first question: whether they should be so bound together that no geographical distance would separate them. What does this question mean? From their previous history (see the "Historical Introduction" above on pages 179-184) the question could not be whether they would now form a unified body. For years already they had been such, sharing life together as the *Compañía de Jesús* under the leadership of Ignatius. Neither could there be a question as yet of forming a juridical body in the Church; for that matter will only come up in relation to the second question they will deal with. The question now, therefore, can only be whether they should *continue* in their union even when geographically scattered or whether they should now let time and distance dissolve the bonds that constituted them the Company of Jesus. This understanding of the question is confirmed

by the example given. Two of them are being sent to Siena. Should the rest maintain a greater concern for them than they do for others who are not of this company? There is no question of starting something new but of continuing to do what they had done.<sup>10</sup>

[3,e]--2. For many it is shocking to hear these men raise this question. What distorted understanding of God or themselves could be at its source? Some will not believe it really means what it seems to say. Our shock is soothed by the answer quickly arrived at in their deliberation. But if we do not wonder about the source of their question, we miss a chance to realize the meaning of an essential element in discernment of God's will, indifference to all but the greater glory of God. For what underlies their question is something that, when understood, can give us a different and benign shock, that of encountering a faith and love for God and men so heroic as to lay on the altar even the priceless treasure of their friendship, ready to sacrifice it if need be in order to bring Christ into the lives of their fellow men. The sort of shock we get now resembles the one we get when we read Genesis 22. Perhaps trying to hold on to their relationship as it had been would hinder even a little their open-hearted response to the needs of others, make them a little less ready to go anywhere and give themselves without limit to whoever might need them at any time. If so, the endurance of the Company of Jesus would be in conflict with the foundation of all else in the scope of their vocation. Perhaps what God intended by drawing them into bonds of special mutual concern had been achieved and now those bonds would be a hindrance. We have no record of their discussion. It may be their silence tells us how the question drew from them manifestations of their love for God and each other too deep and too personal to put in print as they did their discussion of the following question.

[3,e]--3. The relevance of all this to the study of discernment is twofold. First, we see dramatically illustrated in an extreme case the meaning of "humility and simplicity of heart" as a condition for discerning God's will. Second we see that what is God's will in a "mutable decision" (see *SpEx*, [170]) can later become a hindrance to God's will

and so may need to be brought again to discernment. This turn of events in no way disconfirms or calls into question the conclusion of earlier discernment. It only shows how we have to stay flexible if we are to be always seeking God's will in the flux of human history. Let us see how their discernment turned out.

#### F. The Decision and Their Faith in It

[3,f]. In the end we established the affirmative side of the question, that is, that in as much as our most kind and affectionate Lord had deigned to gather us together and unite us, men so spiritually weak and from such diverse geographical and cultural backgrounds, we ought not split apart what God has gathered and united; on the contrary, we ought day by day to strengthen and stabilize our union, rendering ourselves one body with special concern for each other, in order to effect the greater spiritual good of our fellow men. For united spiritual strength is more robust and braver in any arduous enterprise than it would be if segmented.

[3,f]--1. What weighed most powerfully in their deliberation was their history, that is, the origin of their company and the consequent experience of living and working together. From this history two reasons emerged which were decisive for them.

[3,f]--2. The first reason was based on their origin. That such an assortment of personalities from diverse national origins, social strata, and cultural backgrounds should be drawn together because each experienced a call from God to the same way of life, that from their common calling should grow bonds of deep friendship, this was a sure indication to them that God intended and effected such a union as theirs. So, who were they to end what God had begun--unless, of course, there should be clear and strong evidence to show that it would be more advantageous now for the goal of their basic vocation to do so.

[3,f]--3. The evidence, however, pointed in the opposite direction, to continuing their union as more for the spiritual good of their fellowmen. In fact, it convinced them that they should every day strengthen their union and concern for each other in order to achieve that good more fully.

[3,f]--4. Note that the first reason is not constituted by seeing

an advantage in maintaining their union or a disadvantage in allowing it to lapse. That is the second reason. Neither is it an experience of consolation or desolation as in the "second time for election" (see *SpEx*, [176]). It is an objective event in which they see signs of what God is doing, prior to and independent of any consolation or desolation as a necessary condition for or consequence of seeing the significance of the objective event.

[3,g]. We want it understood that nothing at all that has been or will be spoken of originated from our own spirit or our own thought; rather, whatever it was, it was solely what our Lord inspired and the Apostolic See then confirmed and approved.

[3,g]--1. What is referred to by the phrase "all that has been or will be spoken of"? Certainly not everything spoken of in the document, but only what was finally brought to the Apostolic See and approved. What is meant by "inspired"? Read in the context of this document, it seems to mean that the Lord led them through their memories, observations, conjectures, about the future, individual reasoning and communal deliberation to conclusions he wanted them to reach, those in accord with his will. This passage is a starkly clear and firm declaration of faith in God's concern for us, of his direct dealing with us in our efforts to find and do his will (see *SpEx*, [15]); and, in context, it unmistakably implies that God deals with us in such a way as to actualize our human capacities for seeking and finding his will rather than substituting for them. It makes even more obvious the meaning of par. 1,c above, and explains why these men were ready to stake their lives on the results of their deliberation without hesitation and without wavering, even though they may have had grave doubts about the right decision before and during the deliberation. The next question which they now take up is a question which raises such doubts in them.

#### G. The Second Question: Its Meaning and the Impasse over It

[4,h]. The first question now answered and a decision made, we came to another question more difficult and no less worthy of consideration and forethought. All of us had already pronounced a vow of perpetual chastity and a vow of poverty before the most reverend legate of the pope when we were working among the Venetians. The question now was this: would it be advantageous to

pronounce a third vow, namely, of obedience to someone from among us, in order that we might more sincerely and with greater praise and merit be able to fulfill the will of God in all details of our lives as well as in carrying out the authoritative decision of the pope, to whom we have most willingly offered our all, will, intellect, strength, and the like?

[4,h]--1. The second question is, like the first, not merely a matter of doing or not doing this or that particular act or of setting policy, but rather a matter of filling out the scope of their vocation for life. Their basic intention was to act in accord with God's will, not only in accepting their missions from the pope and in the general style of their lives but also in all details of life. The vow of obedience to one of their own number now appears as a possible way of carrying out that basic intention most fully. Perhaps God calls them to do it. If they had decided negatively to the previous question they would have excluded this possibility. It is their basic intention to do God's will along with their decision to maintain and grow in union that gives rise to the second question and provides a norm for deliberating on it.

[4,h]--2. We must get clearly and accurately the meaning and gravity of the question. Obviously the question as stated directly concerns only a vow to obey one of their own number, thereby providing authority for their company. What would be the scope of that authority? Nothing at this stage of their deliberation is said clearly and directly on that point. However, in the deliberation on this issue, an assumption is clearly detectable (see pars. 7,n and 7,p below) that vowing obedience means forming a religious order and assuming the obligations of that way of life. There is the further assumption in several passages (see pars. 4,h, 7,p, 8,q) that, one way or another, vowing obedience will implicate them in a life of obedience not only in regard to their apostolic missions but in the many details of daily life together. The gravity of the question for them shows in their fear lest such a commitment to obedience conflict with the scope of their vocation as so far understood (see par. 7,n) and in their fear of the renunciation involved, which seems implied in the first "preparation" called for in par. 6,1. Whatever the cause, this question weighed so heavily that the way of preparing and deliberating which served for the first question



broke down under it. How did they meet the situation?

[5,i]. When we had persisted in prayer and thought for many days without hitting upon any satisfactory resolution of our uncertainty, we put our hope in the Lord and started to cast about for better ways of working out such a resolution.

[5,i]--1. The response of the companions to what most men would find a disheartening setback is instructive about discernment of God's will and brings us back to the basic truth governing their whole approach to such discernment. First of all, note their persistence before admitting an impasse and looking for new ways of going on with their task. Only after "many days" of prayer and thought and discussion were they willing to draw back and reconsider the method they had agreed upon and were using. Even after admitting a present impasse, there was no weakening of determination and confidence. There is not even a hint that they ever thought of giving up or deferring their discernment to a later date. Their response is to "put our hope in the Lord" and look about for better ways of continuing, with unshaken resolution, the search to find God's will. Evidently, what they said above about their relationship with God in this project (pars. 1,c and 3,g) they really believed, and it made a practical difference.

[5,i]--2. Almost all the rest of the whole document is taken up with an account of how they developed their method and applied it to the question of obedience. All that remains after that account is a statement that they continued to use the method successfully in answering all the questions they took up afterwards for many wearing weeks.

[5,i]--3. To help the reader keep touch with the movement of their deliberation about method, it will be well to take an overall view of what follows before going into detail. In this account, there are three main steps. The first (pars. 5,j and 6,k) is concerned with the setting in which they should carry on their discernment and the time to be devoted to it. The second step (par. 6,l) is concerned with preparation, with freeing each one from the influence of his own self-centered desires and fears and freeing him from the influence of others in the group before he has found what the Holy Spirit wants him to bring to the discussion. The third step (pars. 7,m-7,p) is concerned with procedures during the deliberation together.

H. Perfecting the Initial Method: the Circumstances for Discernment, the Preparations, the Procedures in Deliberation Together

[5,j]. Our first line of thought went this way. Would it expedite our discernment if we all went away to some hermitage for thirty or forty days, giving ourselves over to meditation, fasting and penance, so that God might listen to our desires and mercifully impress on our minds the answer to our question? Or should three or four undertake this enterprise in the name of all with the same intent? Or would it be better if none of us went to the hermitage but all remained in the city, devoting half of every day to this our one principal occupation and the rest of the day to our customary work of preaching and hearing confessions? The half devoted to our principal concern would be the time less crowded with other concerns, more suitable for meditation, reflection, and prayer.

[5,j]--1. First to be reviewed for revision are the external circumstances in which the discernment has been carried on: the location, the possibly distracting apostolic activity accompanying discernment, the time for discernment. All three suggested ways for revision underline the basic attitude of the companions: It is God alone who can show them his will and who will certainly do so if they do their best (see par. 1,c). What readies a heart to receive God's action is, therefore, the most fundamental part of their effort. Consequently, the first two proposals for changing the setting and other circumstances suggest giving full time and energy to fasting and penance, meditation and prayer. So also, in the third proposal, even if apostolic work is to be continued during discernment, that part of the day when they can give themselves to meditation, reflection, and prayer with greater freedom must be set aside for such activities.

[5,j]--2. What is said also underlines the essential importance they give to discerning God's will about their way of life whenever there is uncertainty about it. Then it becomes their "one principal concern." So, these burning apostles are ready to limit the time given to apostolic work in order to give the more suitable time to discernment; and, if it seems called for, they are ready, all or a delegated few, to withdraw completely from the active apostolate in order to search for God's will.

[5,j]--3. Mention of a delegated few calls attention to another characteristic of Ignatian discernment,<sup>11</sup> one that also flows out of the basic principle of trust in the Holy Spirit. He can be counted on to inspire the

right decision even without the contribution of some of those whose lives are affected by the decision, so long, of course, as delegating discernment is a reasonable and responsible act, not merely an opting out of individual or shared responsibility.

[6,k]. After examining and discussing these possible courses of action, we decided that we would all stay in the city. We had two main reasons for this decision. The first reason (based on the characteristic tendency of men to make rash judgments) was this: We wanted to forestall rumor and scandal in the city and among the people, who would make judgments and think that we had fled or undertaken something new or were unstable and inconstant in carrying out what we had begun. The second reason was this: We did not want by our absence to lose the great results we saw from confessions, teaching, and other spiritual works. So great was the need that even if our number were quadrupled we could not have satisfied all who needed our service any more than we can do so now.

[6,k]--1. Evidently they concluded that leaving the city and withdrawing from their apostolic work were not necessary. Whatever had been lacking in their way of discerning could be supplied without such a step. So, given the one great disadvantage likely to accompany the first two options and the one big advantage certain in the third, they chose the latter.

[6,k]--2. One side remark is noteworthy, the one about apostolic needs being so great that even with four times their number they could never meet them all. This remark strengthens the impact of what was said above ([5,j]-2) about the priority of discernment when in doubt about God's call. Even in the face of such needs and opportunity they considered withdrawing altogether from apostolic service and did actually decide to give the best half of their working hours to their principal concern of searching for God's will.

[6,l]. There was a second line of thought which we set in motion for the sake of resolving the impasse regarding obedience. This was to propose the following spiritual preparations for each and every member of the whole group. The first preparation: Each would ready himself beforehand, would take time for prayer, Masses, and meditation in order to strive for joy and peace in the Holy Spirit regarding obedience, laboring as much as he could to have a predilection for obeying rather than commanding, when the consequent glory of God and the praise of his majesty would be equal.

The second preparation: None of the companions would communicate with any other about this matter at issue or inquire about his reasoning on it. The point of this preparation was to prevent anyone from being persuaded by another and, therefore, biased more toward obedience [by vow to one of their own number] or the contrary. This way each would desire as more advantageous only what he derived from his own prayer and meditation. The third preparation: Each one would think of himself as a stranger to our group who would have no expectation of joining it. Thinking this way he would escape being carried by his emotions more to one opinion and judgment; rather, as if a stranger, he would speak his thought to the group about having or not having obedience, would by his judgment confirm and recommend what he believed would be for God's greater service and would more secure the Company's lasting preservation.

[6,1]--1. After considering the circumstances of place and time, attention is turned to ways of more fully securing the requisite freedom of spirit, ways of countering the influence of inordinate desires and fears in private and in communal deliberation, and ways of countering any influence on each other's thinking which might hamper God's direct dealing with each one during the time of private prayer and reflection on the issue before common deliberation. These are spoken of as "preparations." What is attained in preparation must, of course, be sustained throughout the process as a condition for the possibility of genuine discernment. It is easy to note the parallel between these preparations and the requisite preparations for the "election" in the *Spiritual Exercises*. In fact, what is said about preparation and, after that, about procedure in the statement of a more developed method leaves the impression that the companions decided to revise, point by point, their whole method so as to make it more closely parallel the *Spiritual Exercises*.

[6,1]--2. The statement of the first preparation sounds as if they were loading the scales in favor of vowing obedience--a surprising manner of going about spiritual discernment. If they had already made a decision in favor of obedience by reasoning on the advantages of each alternative for the glory of God, then their search for joy and peace in the Holy Spirit as a confirmation of a decision already reached would make sense. They are, however, preparing for a deliberation about a decision yet to be made. One

way to make sense out of this passage is to assume that some or all had not reached the necessary freedom of spirit, that some or all were not open to the proposal of vowing obedience or were even naturally inclined to ambition authority. When one is in this defective condition for discernment, the *Spiritual Exercises* ([16, 157]) urge aggressive action, to counter inordinate affection by intense prayer that God will call one to what he fears, provided it be for the equal or greater glory of God. So, if the above assumption about the attitude of the companions toward obedience be true, it makes sense for them to be "laboring to have a predilection for obeying rather than commanding, when the consequent glory of God . . . would be equal." In this way, they might even hope to find "joy and peace in the Holy Spirit regarding obedience." But if they are to be truly indifferent to all but God's will, free in spirit for decision, then they must also have peace in the Holy Spirit regarding the rejection of a vow of obedience to one of their number, just insofar as this might also be for the equal or greater glory of God.

[6,1]--3. A passage in Ignatius' Autograph Directory for the Spiritual Exercises suggests that while what is said in the *Exercises* ([16, 157]) is helpful to explain the "first preparation," it is not enough. What is said there applies to all cases in which there is difficulty in attaining indifference. In the Directory, Ignatius goes farther in dealing with the special case of discerning whether God is calling one to live by the counsels or by the precepts (without the counsels). Surprisingly enough, he does, in this case want to load the scales!

In order that he [the exercitant] may be more inclined and more resolute toward God's greater glory and his own perfection, let him be directed to lean more toward the counsels than toward the precepts [only], provided this be for the greater service of God in the future.

Moreover, let [the director] guide and dispose him [the exercitant] in such a way as to require much greater signs from God for following the precepts [only] than for following the counsels: for Christ urged the counsels and pointed out the difficulty involved in having the possessions which may licitly be had while following the precepts.<sup>12</sup>

Now, since Ignatius and his companions saw the kind of obedience freely

undertaken by a religious vow as among the counsels, the application of this directive to the second question in The Deliberation is obvious. It also seems obviously likely that his view would be understood and operative in the minds of all the companions whom he himself had directed through the Spiritual Exercises and likely that he or one of them would have brought it up when they were elaborating their preparations for deliberation on this particular question. In any case, it offers a perfect parallel with and an easy way of understanding par. 6,1 of The Deliberation.

[6,1]--4. The second preparation is to insure that each finds and brings to the common deliberation only what God leads him to in his own prayerful reflection, uninfluenced by the others. This preparation parallels the direction given in *Spiritual Exercises*, [15]. There Ignatius excludes any influence on the exercitant's decision by the director. The exercitant is to be left under God's influence, trusting God will deal directly with him, communicating himself to the exercitant, moving the latter's mind and affections toward God's will for him. The same sort of divine action on the individual seems to be expected in the preparation for communal deliberation as well as on the group while deliberating.

[6,1]--5. It should be understood, however, that Ignatius and his companions did not expect God to lead each one in his private preparation for the deliberation together to the decisive reasons or even to the right conclusion. The whole context of the document makes that clear. What is hoped for is that God will lead each one to make the contribution he should make for the sake of the whole process. In this process, God may for his purposes bring about different ways of thinking and feeling, even opposing ways, that through all of these interacting he may finally lead the group as a whole to the decision he wills for them.<sup>13</sup>

[6,1]--6. The third preparation by each participant is inspired by what is found in the *Spiritual Exercises*, [185]. However, rather than finding light in the *Spiritual Exercises* on this passage in The Deliberation, the latter casts light back on the *Spiritual Exercises*. We have here a fuller statement, one more explicitly reasoned out, one so clear as to need no comment.

[6,1]--7. That some new procedures for deliberation, not explicitly stated as such, were worked out along with these spiritual preparations is clear from what we find going on in the account of their actual deliberations. There is no organized general statement of them, however, as there is for the preparations; we shall have to note them as we go along.

I. Deliberation on the Second Question: New Procedures in Practice, Illustrations of Reasons Given

[7,m]. With the foregoing spiritual dispositions, we arranged to assemble all prepared on the following day. Each one was to declare all those disadvantages which could be brought against obedience [by vow, to one of our group], all the reasons which presented themselves and which anyone of us had found in his own private reflection, meditation, and prayer. What he had gathered, each in his turn was to make known.

[7,m]--1. In this passage, we find two points of method repeated: that each should find his own reasons in his private prayer and reflection, uninfluenced by others and that at the meeting everyone should give his own reasons "in his turn." The repetition of these points time and again in the document suggests their importance in the method (see pars. 2,d, 6,1, 7,o).

[7,m]--2. One new directive is given. As far as procedural techniques during deliberation are concerned, this is perhaps the most important of all. What each person brings from prayerful reflection at this step are reasons for one side only; and all participants are to support the same side, in this case, the negative side. The significance of this directive will be more aptly discussed in the comments made on par. 7,o.

[7,m]--3. Much is sometimes made of the fact that Ignatius and his companions took the negative side first. No emphasis is put on this in the text. Reasons offered by practitioners in Ignatian communal discernment are at least interesting, sometimes persuasive, never fully convincing. Whether Ignatius and his companions would want to insist on always giving the negative first place in the deliberation is something we have no evidence for. All we know is that on this one occasion they did so.

[7,m]--4. This passage, along with pars. 7,n--8,q, throws confirming light back on the meaning of "reasons" as used in par. 2,d and explained

in [3,d]--4 above, that is, advantages and disadvantages for the service of God, according to the scope of their vocation, which would likely or certainly be found in following some course of action. They expected the Holy Spirit to guide them in finding and evaluating these if they brought to the effort humility and simplicity of heart and prayed intensely. We can now read, in par. 7,n, illustrations of the disadvantages they saw in vowing obedience to one of their number.

[7,n], For example, one said: It seems that, on account of our failures and sins, the words "religious" or "obedience" have unseemly connotations among the Christian people. Another remarked: If we wish to live under obedience, we will perhaps be forced by the supreme pontiff to live under some Rule already drawn up and officially established. So it will eventuate that all our desires which we have judged to be from Our Lord will be frustrated; for there will be no opportunity and freedom to work for the salvation of our fellow men, the one very thing, after concern for our own salvation, which we have had in mind. Another observed: If we promise obedience to someone, not so many men will enter our company to labor faithfully in the Lord's vineyard, where the harvest is very great but few true laborers are found. For men in general have so little strength to labor or endure without breaking under it that many look out more for themselves and their own wishes than they do for the wishes of Jesus Christ and the complete denial of self for his sake. So also others spoke to the point in other ways, a fourth, and a fifth, and so on, explaining the disadvantages which occurred to them as reasons against obedience.

[7,n]--1. There is nothing in this paragraph to advance our understanding of their discernment method. A comment on their attitude to religious life at the time may be in place if their reasons are not to be misunderstood. Religious orders were not in good repute; like so much else in the Church at that time, they were in need of the reforms which were soon to come. Nevertheless, the fear these men had of being forced to live under an already established Rule and so having their apostolic call from God frustrated did not imply a criticism of established Rules. They did, in fact labor mightily to bring religious back to observance of their established Rules. They themselves, however, experience a vocation from God which demanded freedom of movement and freedom from some of the altogether admirable activities of established religious orders, e.g., office in choir, in order to go quickly anywhere and to devote a



fuller measure of time and energy to active works. Not that a life of apostolic work should substitute for a life of prayer. That suggestion would have horrified them. Their own lives of prayer and the principal place Ignatius gave to Mass and to prayer in any apostolic life makes such a suggestion absurd. They were to be contemplatives in action, but genuine contemplatives all the same.

[7,o]. On the next day we argued for the opposite side of the question, each one putting before the group all the advantages and good consequences of such obedience which he had drawn from prayer and meditation; each one took his own turn to present his reflections, sometimes showing the positive values of obedience, sometimes reducing the alternative to an impossibility.

[7,o]--1. The phrase "on the next day" has practical implications. They saw no need to run through the steps in deliberation all at one session or even on one day. The steps could take place a day or, for that matter, days apart (see [8,q]--below).

[7,o]--2. Besides other significant repetitions of essentials in their method, the main point here is that each again brings reasons for one side only, all supporting the same side. Now it is the affirmative side. Put together with par. 7,m, we see that the method demands building up the case for each alternative in turn, everyone trying at the same time to discover with God's help what can be said in favor of each alternative. This is very different from having some defend one side and some another, each attacking the other's position, and hoping the truth will appear this way. It is even very different from each supporting one side or the other and listening receptively to what the other side has to say. In this method, everyone has to shake himself loose from his prejudgments and any emotional inclinations which dominate his thinking so as to support every alternative *actively* and *sympathetically*. Only after that process is completed is anyone allowed to put the opposing reasons into the balance in order to arrive at even a tentative judgment. In par. 7,p we are given illustration of how they supported the positive side.

[7,p]. Here are some examples. One man's argument took this form of a *reductio ad absurdum et impossibile*. If without the agreeable yoke of obedience, this Company of ours had

to carry on practical undertakings, no one would have any precise charge, since one would pass off the burden onto the other, as we have many times experienced. Again, if this Company were without obedience, it could not long endure and persevere--a turn of events in conflict with our basic intent of keeping our Company alive in perpetuity. Now, any group is kept alive by obedience more than by anything else. This is especially true for us who have vowed perpetual poverty and are perennially pre-occupied with unremitting labors, both spiritual and temporal; for these make it difficult to preserve fellowship.

In a positive vein, another spoke this way: obedience issues in an uninterrupted life of heroic deeds and in heroic virtues. For one who truly lives under obedience is fully disposed to execute instantly and unhesitatingly whatever is enjoined him, no matter to him whether it be very hard to do or engenders embarrassment and ridicule and public humiliation. Such would be the case, for example, if I were bidden to walk through the streets and avenues unclothed or in strange attire. Although such an order may never be given, nevertheless, so long as any one is readied for such acts by denial of his own will and judgment, he is always acting heroically and growing in merit. A like line of reasoning is: Nothing so casts down all pride and arrogance as does obedience; for pride makes a big thing of following one's own judgment and will, giving way to no one, pursuing grand and extraordinary projects beyond one's reach. Obedience diametrically opposes this attitude: For it always follows the judgment of another and the will of the other, gives way to all, and as much as possible is joined with humility, the enemy of pride. A further argument is: Although we have committed ourselves to obey the supreme pontiff and shepherd in general and in particular, nevertheless, he could not possibly take time for the innumerable details and contingencies of our affairs; nor would it be right for him to do so even if he could.

[7,p]--1. In reading this passage, we have to keep several things in mind. One, these reasons are merely *illustrations* of the two sorts of reasons brought up during the discussion, the disadvantages of not vowing obedience and the advantages of doing so; not all of them are among the reasons on which the decision was finally based (see par. 8,q). Second, they are given by this or that individual; they are not presented here as reasons adopted by the group. Third, none of the reasons can with any foundation be attributed to Ignatius; for all we know, any one of these reasons could have come from any one of the ten men in the group.

[7,p]--2. With that warning kept in mind, it is interesting to note

that someone thought they all knew by experience that without authority and obedience they tended to pass the buck and not get done what needed doing. Even more interesting is the opinion that without obedience to hold them together, poverty and unremitting labor make preservation of fellowship difficult. The dated manner of presenting a couple of the advantages for the individual's Christian growth could be distressing to us in our time unless we penetrate the uncongenial modes of thought and rhetoric to reach the core of what they are saying: Religious obedience helps to humility of heart, to honest and objective practical judgments.

[7,p]--2. Although the stated aim of their discussion at this point was to find all the advantages they could in vowing obedience, the first reasons given are the disadvantages of not vowing obedience. What this brings out is that a disadvantage found on one side and not on the other is the equivalent of a positive advantage for the latter and can be joined to the positive reasons on that side. Ignatius states this matter clearly in the autograph account of his reasons in his deliberation on poverty made while writing the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*: "The disadvantages of not having any revenue are the advantages of having it in whole or in part" and "the disadvantages of having are the advantages of not having" [any fixed revenue].<sup>14</sup>

#### J. Decision Reached with Unanimity: the Place of Majority Vote in Ignatian Communal Discernment

[8,q]. During many days, from this side and that, we worked over a mass of data related to the resolution of our problem; we examined and weighed the more forceful and important reasons and took time as usual for prayer, meditation, and reflection. By the Lord's help, we did at last, not [just] with a majority judgment but without a single dissenting voice, come to this conclusion: Obedience to someone among us is highly advantageous and highly necessary in order to actualize more effectively and exactly our primary desire of fulfilling God's will in all details of life [*per omnia*], in order to preserve the Society more assuredly, and, finally, in order to provide properly for all the detailed matters of spiritual and temporal business which arise.

[8,q]--1. The account first stresses two things, the surprising final result of using the newly devised method and the prolonged, patient

effort required in order to reach a conclusion, many days of private prayer, of meditation and reflection, as well as of deliberating together. The prolonged effort indicates that the earlier tension between conflicting opinions did not easily dissolve. This made the final unanimity all the more surprising.

[8,q]--2. They did not, however, fall away from the realization of their utter dependence on God with which they had begun. They did not now think that the method they had developed was of any value for finding God's will except insofar as it helped them remain open to the Holy Spirit. They did not now think that their own efforts were of any value for finding God's will except insofar as the Holy Spirit, in his overflowing kindness, chose to work through them, leading them to the right judgment. Within the context of the whole document, the phrase "by the Lord's help" carries all this meaning.

[8,q]--3. In speaking of their prolonged effort, two very important points of procedures are mentioned merely in passing and so could be easily overlooked. They deserve stress. The first of these is the examining and weighing of "the more forceful and important reasons." Evidently their practice was to find a lot of reasons, then sift out the really weighty ones and concentrate their prayer, reflection, and discussion on these as they worked toward a conclusion.

[8,q]--4. The second important procedure concerns their way of bringing the deliberation to a conclusion. The text underlines the fact of arriving at a conclusion "without a single dissenting voice." It would, however, be going beyond the text and even against the whole tenor of it to think that they expected or required a unanimous vote for a successful and trustworthy discernment of God's will. In their earlier statement of method, decision by majority vote was explicitly included (see par. 2,d). If such a crucial point of procedure were changed in the more developed method, certainly it would have been mentioned, even emphasized. Further, what is said about the unanimous vote in par. 8,q implies that the decision could have been a majority vote even though in point of fact it was without a single dissenting voice. They intended a decision one way or another, expected a

majority vote, and were happily surprised by unanimity.

[8,q]--5. A later turn of events might cast some doubt on this reading of the text. There is a document which recounts a series of decisions after the one on obedience.<sup>15</sup> Here we find that eleven unanimous decisions were reached before the companions had to face a divided vote. At this point they formally resolved that a majority vote sufficed. Does this imply that they did not think so earlier? Not necessarily. Perhaps by that time they had become so used to unanimity that one or another, forgetful of their earlier statement of method, now assumed it was required. Or, since it was Bobadilla who was holding out against all the others, he might, in character, have insisted that the decision could not stand without his vote. In any case, at this point the others determined explicitly that a majority vote would be decisive for all issues, "no matter how important." One concession is made: For grave decisions with a split vote, three days may be allowed to pass before a final vote is taken.<sup>16</sup> Neither in *The Deliberation* nor in this account of their conclusions after the second question is there mention of anything other than a simple majority needed to settle any question.

[8,q]--6. Powerfully confirming light on how Ignatius and the other companions thought about this crucial question of method in communal discernment of God's will can be found in the instructions on how to carry out a general congregation, which Ignatius later wrote into *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* and the others accepted.<sup>17</sup>

[8,q]--7. If at last, we turn to the statement of the reasons they had sifted out as decisive, a warning is in place to recall that the question was not concerned merely with obedience, as one might think if he read this par. 8,q out of context, but with a *vow* of obedience which would constitute them members of a religious order. The first reason depends on the basic norm, their vocation to do God's will "per omnia," in all things, in all situations in life. They saw obedience to legitimate authority in a religious community within the Church as a way of knowing and doing God's will, even as a necessary way for them to actualize as fully as they could their desire to do God's will in all things. The next two reasons depend

on the prior decision that God wills that the Society of Jesus should be perpetuated: The vow of obedience will help them to conserve the Society and to carry on its life.

K. Completion of the Deliberation

[9,r]. In all our deliberations over the questions just spoken of and others, we followed the order of discussion and the procedure described above, always giving attention to both sides of every question. Our efforts lasted for almost three months, from the middle of Lent until the feast of John the Baptist. On that day, but not without long vigils, much prayer, and labor of mind and body preceding deliberation and decision, all our business was completed and terminated in a spirit of gladness and harmony.

[9,r]--1. The success of the more fully developed method for discernment was not just a happy combination of elements for the one question which occasioned the refashioning of the first method. This is shown by their continued success in using it to reach answers on many different questions over a long period of time and bringing their wearing discernment to a close harmoniously.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 See *ConsMHSJ*, I, 1-7. (The ABBREVIATIONS used in these footnotes are those of the Institute of Jesuit Sources. A list of them can be found in St. Ignatius' *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus. Translated . . .*, by G. E. Ganss, S.J. [St. Louis, 1970], pp. 358-362.)
- 2 Dominic Maruca, S.J., "The Deliberation of Our First Fathers," *Woodstock Letters*, XCV (1966), 325-333. John C. Futrell, S.J., *Making an Apostolic Community of Love* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970), pp. 188-194.
- 3 For a historical introduction more ample than the present account, there are two which are readily available, readable, and reliable: James Brodrick, S.J., *The Origin of the Jesuits* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1940), pp. 32-71, and William V. Bangert, S.J., *A History of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1972), pp. 14-21.
- 4 Ladislav Orsy, S.J., "Toward a Theological Evaluation of Communal Discernment," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, Vol. V, no. 5 (Oct., 1973), St. Louis: American Assistancy Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality.
- 5 Orsy, *op.cit.*, p. 150. In Father Orsy's discussion, his main question, about Ignatius' knowledge or ignorance of God's will before the deliberation, could get confused with a second question, whether all the companions, including Ignatius, contributed equally to making the decision or whether Ignatius had a preponderant influence. This second question can still be asked even if we think Ignatius began the deliberation from ignorance and "indifference." Orsy writes (p. 149): "If the final decision emerged fully from the group, their deliberation must be truly described as a creative process in which each played a role and played it equally, even if each made a different contribution. If, however, Ignatius entered the process with a vision and with a gentle and quiet assurance that God wanted him to be an instrument to enlighten his companions, then the decision originated more in one person than in many. In the first hypothesis, all would have contributed equally throughout the process. In the second, the group would have gradually appropriated the vision of its leader."

Regarding the second and secondary issue, James Brodrick states peremptorily that "so far as this [The Deliberation] or any other available evidence goes, his [Ignatius'] influence counted for exactly ten percent, and no more, of the forces that brought about the great decision" (*Origin of the Jesuits*, p. 71). Father Orsy, on the contrary, while admitting that there is at present no certain answer, clearly leans towards saying that Ignatius had a decisive influence. There is strong reason for thinking that Ignatius had a stronger influence than any other. It was through Ignatius that God had brought the group into existence, given them a characteristic vision, purpose, and enthusiasm, held them together, and protected them from those who would have destroyed them. Very likely, then, his words would carry more weight than anyone else's in the group.

To say that, however, is not at all the same as to say that Ignatius already knew what the others were searching to find out, and that he was there to teach and lead, not to seek and find. There is no reason why one or other of those beginning from darkness in a communal search for God's will should not have more influence than others; or any reason, for that matter, why one who already has a settled conviction should have more influence. What is required in the method set down in the deliberation is not equal contribution but equal opportunity to contribute and equal responsibility to contribute whatever one can.

- 6 In footnote 2 on p. 150, Orsy offers some evidence to support the view that Ignatius already knew God's will in regard to the question about vowing obedience. He first notes movements of growing unity among the early companions, centered around Ignatius. What is the value of such evidence? When we look back after the Society of Jesus has come to be, we can see a continuity between these workings of divine providence and the founding of the Society. That these earlier events, prior to the actual founding, indicated God's plan for the companions to establish a religious order by vowing obedience to one of their number--there is no ground for saying such a thing. Certainly it did not do so for the nine; otherwise they would not have raised the question and struggled with it as they did. Perhaps, Ignatius' visions at the Cardoner and at La Storta gave him a knowledge of God's plan. This is what Father Orsy is inclined to think. Apart from the evidence to the contrary in the *Deliberatio*, which I shall point out, that is a reasonable guess. It is, however, no more than a guess, since there is no documentary evidence to back it up. Ignatius' account of what happened at the Cardoner has no hint of such a revelation. As for the vision at La Storta, surely the Father's placing an individual or even a group with Jesus for a life of apostolic service in no way implies a call to vow obedience in a religious order or to found a new one. Any number of other possibilities occur. On the other hand, if, during the deliberation which came after these visions, Ignatius was enlightening the others about God's plan as shown to him in those visions, we would expect to find at least some mention of it among the most weighty reasons for their decision. Nothing of the sort is found.
- 7 This twofold principle is one application, in the context of discerning God's will, of what Hugo Rahner, S.J., discusses as a "basic trait" of Ignatian theology. See his *Ignatius the Theologian*, trans. Michael Barry, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), pp. 25-29.
- 8 See below, pars. 3,f, 7,m--8,q. See also the *Spiritual Exercises*, [181], and *Deliberatio S.P.N. Ignatii de Paupertate, 1544*, in *ConsMHSJ*, I, (Rome, 1934), 78-79.
- 9 Theoretically, the majority could be a simple majority, a two-thirds majority, or some other arrangement. The document speaks only of a majority, presumably a simple majority therefore. See below, pars. 8,q--4 through 8,q--6, and also fn. 16.
- 10 See *ConsMHSJ*, I, viii-xl.
- 11 For instances of Ignatius' delegating to his confessor discernment about



personal decisions when he felt unable to reach a conclusion himself, see *Fontes Narrativi* MHSJ, I, 16-22, 411, or James Brodrick, S.J., *Origin of the Jesuits*, pp. 89-93 and *St. Ignatius' Own Story*, trans. W. J. Young, S.J. (Chicago: Regnery, 1956), p. 26. Not only does Ignatius see the general congregation as discerning God's will for the whole Society of Jesus but also, within the general congregation, he sees "electors" acting for the whole congregation in choosing a superior general (*Constitutions*, [707-708]), and the "definitors" along with the superior general acting in place of the whole congregation on other matters, (*Constitutions*, [715]).

- 12 *DirSpEx*MHSJ (Rome, 1955), pp. 71-73. Several comments are called for. First, the distinction between following the precepts or the counsels is a distinction between following the precepts *only* or them and the counsels *also*; otherwise, Ignatius would be suggesting that following the counsels excuses one from the precepts.

Second, to avoid grave confusion, it is necessary to emphasize that, for Ignatius, following the counsels constitutes a special state of life within the Church. Along with the mainstream of tradition in the Church, Ignatius does not see the counsels as involved in the vocation of all Christians. He does not equate the counsels with spiritual poverty, chastity according to one's state in life, and obedience to the Church. Such poverty, chastity, and obedience are not just counseled; they are imposed by universal precept. On the other hand, there is no universal Christian precept to be actually dispossessed by free choice, to be celibate by free choice for the kingdom of God, to subject oneself freely to authority within a religious order or congregation. It is these which Ignatius refers to as counsels. If I may interject my own opinion, to say, as is sometimes said, that all are called to follow the counsels, some in one state of life and some in another--this view serves only to turn into counsels the *precepts* to be poor in spirit, chaste, and obedient to the Church, and diminishes also the meaning of the counsels. However that may be, and however one may evaluate Ignatius' way of thinking, the point here is simply to clarify his statement and keep it unconfused with other views.

Third, directors of the Spiritual Exercises will immediately think of annotation 15 and suspect a contradiction between that and the passage I have quoted from the Autograph Directory. A careful consideration of what is being said in each resolves the apparent conflict. In the *Spiritual Exercises*, [15], Ignatius is forbidding the director to persuade the exercitant to decide one way or the other according to the director's judgment. In the Directory, Ignatius is instructing the director to help the exercitant lean more one way than the other before beginning the election, no matter how the director may think about the exercitant having or not having a call in that direction. After that, he is to remain indifferent and avoid influencing the exercitant in making his election.

- 13 One possible reason for God moving us in opposing directions can be seen in the experience frequently noted by those who have engaged in communal discernment of God's will by the Ignatian method: the prayerful and peaceful resolution of tension between opposing views with mutual respect and

openness in the Spirit, with a common trust in God, brings about greater union of hearts than might have been without such opposing views to be worked through. That Ignatius thought the Holy Spirit might not only allow us to have opposing views and purposes in the practical order but even move different persons in opposing directions for his purposes is certain. He states this explicitly in a letter to Francis Borgia. See *Sancti Ignatii de Loyola Epistolae et Instructiones*, IV, (Madrid, 1906), 283-285, and *Letters of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. W. J. Young, S.J. (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1959), pp. 257-258.

14 *ConsMHSJ*, I, 78-79.

15 *Conclusiones Septem Sociorum*, in *ConsMHSJ*, I, 9-14.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

17 First of all, Ignatius is certainly seeing the work of the congregation as a discernment of God's will, carried on under the influence of the Holy Spirit. In all matters taken up, the congregation, he says, is seeking to find what is for God's "greater service, praise, and glory" (*Cons*, [693; see also 711]). Light to decide on that "must come down from the first and Supreme Wisdom" (*ibid.*, [711]). Therefore, Masses and prayers must be offered throughout the Society all during the congregation ([692, 693, 711]). The decisions reached are to be accepted by all "as from the hand of God" ([715]). In all the congregation's discernments, Ignatius is entirely ready to accept a decision by majority vote as coming from God. Thus, in electing a new superior general, each delegate, after prayer, votes for the man he judges most fit for the office ([701]). If no one receives more than half of the votes, three or five electors from among those present should be elected by a majority vote ([707]), i.e., each delegate writes the names of those he thinks would be the best electors, and those (three or five) who get the most votes are the electors ([708]). The man who receives a simple majority, two of the three or three of the five votes from the electors, is superior general. In other matters, when no solution is accepted by "all or nearly all," four "definitors" are to be chosen from among the persons present. These joined with the superior general have authority to settle the matter, either by unanimity or by a majority (i.e., three to two)--"and the whole congregation will accept it [the side the majority chooses] as from the hand of God Our Lord" ([715]). "In this way," Ignatius says, "the matters will be settled point by point according to the opinion of the majority" ([716]).

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