

# THE 'TIMES' OF IGNATIAN ELECTION

## The Wisdom of the Directories

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**A**MONG THE MOST BASIC QUESTIONS a person with a vibrant spirituality will always be asking is, 'what do you want from me, Lord?' And perhaps the whole of their life can be summed up as the search for an answer to that question, one which converges with the aim of the Exercises: 'to deliberate over the state of life to be adopted'.<sup>1</sup>

It is in the Election that this loving encounter occurs between the human person seeking to open themselves to the divine will and God's own self—God who, in infinite love, is seeking to make the divine designs known. Hans Urs Von Balthasar, the noted theologian, has eloquently described what is at stake here:

At the core of the Exercises is the *Election*: the central encounter with God is an encounter with an electing God. Not with the Augustinian God of 'rest' for the 'restless heart', not with Thomas Aquinas's God of the 'beatific vision' for the 'natural and supernatural striving . . . for vision', but with the God who, electing in a freedom beyond grasping, descends on the one chosen in order to make demands of them—in a way that cuts right across any 'restlessness' or 'striving'—for purposes that cannot be foreseen.<sup>2</sup>

It would be difficult to find anyone today who dissented from the view that the election process is central to the dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises.

<sup>1</sup> A throwaway line in a defence of the Exercises against charges of error, written by Jerónimo Nadal, reproduced as an appendix to MHSJ, PolChron, 3. 525-573, here p. 573.

<sup>2</sup> A 1948 text reproduced in *Texte zum ignatianischen Exerzitienbuch*, edited by Jacques Servais (Freiburg: Johannes, 1993), p. 143.

**THREE TIMES FOR MAKING  
(IN ANY ONE OF THEM)  
A SOUND AND GOOD ELECTION**

*The first time* is when God our Lord so moves and attracts the will that, without doubting or being able to doubt, such a devout soul follows what is shown; just as St Paul and St Matthew did in following Christ our Lord.

*The second*, when enough clarity and knowledge is acquired through the experience of consolations and desolations, and by the experience of discrimination of various spirits.

*The third time* is quiet, considering first what the human person is born for, that is, to praise God our Lord and save their soul; and, desiring this, one chooses as a means a life or state within the limits of the Church for the purpose of being helped in the service of one's Lord and the salvation of one's soul. I said 'quiet time'—when the soul is not agitated by various spirits and uses its natural powers freely and peacefully.

However, when people set about studying each of the 'times', we come up against a variety of interpretations. And this makes for great confusion when we come to apply Ignatius' teaching on the three 'times'. The renewal provoked by Vatican II led to many new discoveries and initiatives in the ministry of the Exercises. Perhaps influenced by Karl Rahner's study on the 'times' of the Election,<sup>3</sup> several authors regard the first 'time' as an extraordinary experience, so much so as not to fit within normal everyday life. Moreover, they question, or even deny, the possibility that the third 'time' might lead to 'a good and sound Election'. Nor is there any real agreement about what it meant to 'confirm' an election. Many authors state that confirmation could only come through consolation, which effectively reduced the third 'time' to the second. Preferences for one 'time' or the

<sup>3</sup> 'The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge in Ignatius Loyola' (1956), in *The Dynamic Element in the Church*, translated by W. J. O'Hara (London: Burns and Oates, 1964), pp. 84-170. For criticisms of Rahner's position in English, see Jules J. Toner, *A Commentary on Saint Ignatius' Rules for the Discernment of Spirits: A Guide to the Principles and Practice* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1982), pp. 291-313; and Philip Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), pp. 176-181.

other seemed to vary according to the personal taste of one or other author. And note: we are dealing here with the Election, the centre of the Exercises, not with something simply incidental.

This article attempts to move the discussion forward by looking at the variety of interpretations of the Election to be found in the early Directories, manuals of custom and practice developed by Jesuits in the years up to 1599. It begins by tracing the process by which the Directories were written, and then by exploring what the Directories tell us about the Election and each of the three 'times'.

### **The Directories**

Already the first generations of Jesuits were seriously interested in deepening and discussing points that did not seem sufficiently clear in Ignatius' text.

We can trace the development of this attempt at interpretation on the part of the early Jesuits by studying the documents now collected for English-speaking readers in the volume edited by the late Martin E. Palmer: *On Giving the Spiritual Exercises: The Early Jesuit Manuscript Directories and the Official Directory of 1599*.<sup>4</sup> These documents are an authoritative treasure which has not yet been sufficiently explored. By studying the mistakes, the refinements, the nuances of the different documents, we can alert ourselves against particular styles of interpretation that seem to move away from Ignatian teaching, and counteract them.

#### *The Society of Jesus after Ignatius' Death*

Ignatius left some sketches towards his own Directories, including the Autograph Directory, which deals principally with the theme of the Election. He sought to form good directors through direct personal contact.<sup>5</sup> But after his death, these people had to hold down important positions, and did not have the time to give the Exercises. This ministry was thus entrusted to younger Jesuits, whose training and experience were insufficient. The book was not easily available to

<sup>4</sup> (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996). The originals are to be found in MHSJ *Directoría* (vol. 76 of the series).

<sup>5</sup> See Gérard Despatie, 'Le "Directoire des Exercices": sa genèse et son élaboration', *Lettres du Bas-Canada*, 11(1957), pp. 10-27; Ignacio Iparraguirre, *Práctica de los Ejercicios de San Ignacio en vida de su autor (1522-1556)* (Rome: Jesuit Historical Institute, 1946), pp. 149-156.

directors, owing to the limited number of copies that had been made. This contributed to the uncertainties about the interpretation of Ignatius' teaching.

The lack of experienced directors meant that currents of spirituality alien to the Ignatian charism became more influential. The most important of these was the monastic or eremitical spirit which developed among some members of the College community at Gandía, characterized by a marked taste for endless recollected prayer, by serious rigidity in behaviour and in the interpretation of rules, and by an exaggerated practice of penance. There was also a danger of false prophecies and illuminism: witness the case of Gabriel Onfroy, and the influence of Tejedá, a Franciscan friar, which called forth from Ignatius one of his most striking documents, on discernment in connection with cases of prophecy.<sup>6</sup>

The fear of the Inquisition, which was concerned to suppress any trace of illuminism, brought it about that directors acted very cautiously, stressing the cerebral elements in the text, and hiding as much as they could its affective quality.<sup>7</sup>



<sup>6</sup>The text in question has been published as a letter, perhaps misleadingly: Ignatius to Borja, July 1549 (day uncertain), in Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *Personal Writings*, translated by Joseph A. Munitiz and Philip Endean (London: Penguin, 1996), pp. 210-229. For a full account of the incident, see Manuel Ruiz Jurado, 'Un caso de profetismo reformista en la Compañía de Jesús: Gandía 1547-1549', *Archivum historicum Societatis Iesu*, 43 (1974), pp.217-266, especially pp.245-246. One should not exaggerate the importance of this case: not all the Jesuits were involved in the deviations feared or rejected by Ignatius.

*Slow Developments*

Diego Laínez and Francis Borja, Ignatius's two successors, were not able to do anything very specific, even though they did set up commissions of specialists who could begin to compose a Directory. Under the generalate of Everard Mercurian (1573-1580), Borja's successor, there was a sharp polarisation between two ways of conceiving the Jesuit style: one more ascetical, the other more mystical. Another tension was growing, above all in Spain, regarding prayer: some were preferring and teaching a more affective, contemplative style of prayer. Mercurian was to act decisively on this question, in particular against the movement's foremost exponents: Baltasar Álvarez and Antonio Cordeses.<sup>8</sup>

Mercurian began by asking Polanco, who had been Ignatius' secretary, to write a Directory. The result is one of the most balanced and illuminating documents we possess illustrating Ignatius' thought. The comments Polanco makes allow us to see clearly the personal interpretation of one who, perhaps like no other, had assimilated Ignatius' ways of feeling things, and indeed of formulating them. Polanco dedicates two long chapters to the Election: this is the finest part of his Directory.

Mercurian's ideal was that the primitive spirit of the Society should flourish anew. He wanted to secure the growth of the genuine traditions, and to expel mercilessly parasites that had begun to infect the Society over the passage of years. Mercurian found the man whom he could trust to carry out this project in the person of Fr Diego Miró, who promptly set about writing his own Directory. This latter text does not have the theological structure of Polanco's. Nor was Miró even concerned to assimilate the tendencies of his former colleagues on the

<sup>7</sup> See Joseph Veale, 'Ignatian Prayer or Jesuit Spirituality', *The Way Supplement*, 27 (Spring 1976), pp. 3-14: 'the fear of being charged with illuminism, and later the fear of illuminism itself . . . helped to distort Jesuit understanding of Ignatius' teaching' (p. 5).

<sup>8</sup> On the tensions about spirituality during Mercurian's generalate, see the profound essay by Pedro de Leturia, 'Lecturas ascéticas e lecturas místicas entre los jesuitas del siglo XVI', in *Estudios ignacianos*, edited by Ignacio Iparraguirre (Rome: Jesuit Historical Institute, 1957), vol. 2, pp. 269-331; and also two forthcoming pieces by Philip Endean: "'The Original Line of our Father Ignatius': Mercurian and the Spirituality of the Exercises', and "'The Strange Style of Prayer": Mercurian, Cordeses and Álvarez', to be published in *The Mercurian Project: 'Forming Rather Than Reforming' The Society of Jesus*, edited by Thomas M. McCoog (Rome: Jesuit Historical Institute). An important text of Álvarez's has recently been published in English: 'Beyond the Train of Ideas', *The Way Supplement*, 103 (May 2002), pp. 43-54; Mercurian's rebuke of Cordeses is to be found below, on pp. 93-98.

commission appointed by Borja—not only Polanco, but also Alfonso Ruiz. Nevertheless, his Directory was widely circulated among the Jesuits of the time, anonymously and as a semi-official document.

Mercurian was in some respects excessive. He suppressed elements of an affective or mystical kind in the tradition that were nevertheless clearly Ignatian. Because of their affinity with dangerous currents, they were vulnerable to adverse interpretation. But nevertheless, his action was providential: it prevented mystical tendencies of a less correct kind from getting into the official document.

*Completion under Acquaviva*

***The Inquisition  
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It was Acquaviva who was to conclude the work. The situation had become very difficult: several different interpretations of the Ignatian method had begun to be current. Many directors were worried: the Exercises did not seem to be giving the fruits that they had given earlier. There was an atmosphere of distrust and rejection regarding anything that might be affective or mystical. The Inquisition was coming down heavily on anything looking new. In this quite difficult situation, Acquaviva was able to specify the correct doctrine of the Society regarding prayer in a significant letter dated 8 May 1590. It drew on traditions going back to Nadal to show how contemplation could be allied with a more active life.<sup>9</sup>

As regards the Directory, Acquaviva was not content with just revising and correcting the Directory already in existence, the text with semi-official status compiled by Miró. He was conscious of the importance of this business, and took a bold decision: to go back and take up the older documents. Many important values which had not been sufficiently acknowledged in Miró's Directory needed to be reconsidered.

Acquaviva's first measure was to send the documentation in Rome to the most senior members of the Society who were also well versed in the Exercises: Miró, Jerónimo Doménech and Gil González Dávila.

Miró reread his own Directory without opening himself to anything good that might be found in the others. Thus 'his revised Directory

<sup>9</sup> For a significant extract from Acquaviva's text, see 'Spirit, Contemplation and Ministry: Three Early Jesuit Texts', in this number, pp. 99-104.

was not a revision of the first, as the General wanted, but a confirmation of what had gone before'.<sup>10</sup> We have no record of Doménech's contribution.

González Dávila was an educated man, a good theologian, knowledgeable both about the Society and about the spiritual life in general.<sup>11</sup> His preferences tended towards Polanco's Directory—there was a certain affinity of character between the two men. González Dávila traces the lines of an ideal Directory. His commentary on the Election of a state of life is the fullest part of his text.

Acquaviva wanted to finalise the Directory. Much material had now been assembled: the three texts of Polanco, Miró and González Dávila; a brief Directory written in Spanish; a further text 'found in the archive' which Mercurian had written. All this was passed over to a secretary, who made efforts to bring it all together in one text. The General and his Assistants then revised this text to produce what we know as the 1591 Directory. This was sent off to the Provinces for them to make corrections, an appeal which did not meet with many responses. Then a further commission was established, chaired by González Dávila during the sixth General Congregation in 1593. This completed its work, making only tiny changes to the 1591 text. The chapters were redivided, so that the 1599 version came to have 40, as opposed to the 22 in 1591. Because of Acquaviva's many occupations, the final publication of the official Directory had to wait another five years, till October 1599, 43 years after the death of Ignatius.

### ***The Directories and the 'Times' of Election***

As we study these documents, we become aware of how they were interpreting Ignatius' teaching in a context particularly sensitive to charges of illuminism. It is also interesting to note how many of the problems raised in modern commentaries had already been considered by the first generations of Jesuits.

<sup>10</sup> Ignacio Iparraguirre, *Historia de la práctica de los Ejercicios*, vol. 2, *Desde la muerte de S. Ignacio hasta la promulgación del Directorio Oficial (1556-1599)* (Rome: Jesuit Historical Institute, 1955), p. 437.

<sup>11</sup> Gil González Dávila, *Pláticas sobre las Reglas de la Compañía de Jesús*, edited by Camilo M. Abad (Barcelona: Flors, 1964).

*The First 'Time'*

The Directories show a shift in the interpretation of the first 'time' of Election. Initially, there is simply a certain reticence in presenting this matter to the exercitant. There were obvious worries that the teaching could be confused with illuminist currents—there were many who fell into self-deception and subjectivism, claiming that they were experiencing direct communications from God. Gradually this shifts towards an insistence that this first 'time' is extraordinary: the official Directory holds it to be rare. When God's will is made known in this way within a person's life, this is 'most excellent'. God's will is being revealed clearly, in a way that cannot be doubted. What marks it out is the certainty it yields.

In his own Autograph Directory, Ignatius says quite expressly that this this 'time' needs to be explained, as the first of all, to the retreatant. The one giving the Exercises must check whether or not this first 'time' is happening. It is a matter, then, of something to be received from God as a gift, as grace. In this context, the exercitant is not having to handle rules, and so this 'time' is to be mentioned to them only in passing. The terms which the 1599 Directory uses to describe this kind of first 'time' calling—'miraculous', 'such clarity', 'satisfaction of the spirit', 'illumination'—are foreign to the Ignatian texts.<sup>12</sup>

*The Second 'Time'*

In connection with the second 'time', the first contribution made by the Directories is an insistence that it be explained to the exercitant very clearly what consolation and desolation are. The efforts made in the various texts to describe these experiences are very illuminating. The comparison between them helps us understand which of them better follow the ideas already presented by Ignatius. The authors are concerned with how motions influence the affectivity of the person.

<sup>12</sup> In the Directories, see Ignatius Autograph, 1.10-11; Polanco, 20.81; González Dávila, 31.119; Cordeses, 32.129; Official, 43.187 (future references to the Directories will take this form, giving the author before the paragraph numbering established in MHSJ and followed in translations such as Palmer's). On questions about illuminism, see Luis Fernández, 'Íñigo de Loyola y los alumbrados', in *Ignacio de Loyola en Castilla* (Valladolid: privately published, 1989), pp. 155-264, especially p. 251. For interesting further speculation on how to interpret the first 'time', see Jules J. Toner, *Discerning God's Will: Ignatius of Loyola's Teaching on Christian Decision Making* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1991), pp. 107-129.



They establish more clearly the direct contrast between the two experiences of consolation and desolation. They demonstrate what these spiritual experiences are saying regarding the growth or diminution of the life of faith, hope and love within the person.<sup>13</sup>

The Directories witness to a close link between the process of the second 'time' and the contemplations on the Mysteries of the Life of Christ. The confrontation with these mysteries is meant to stimulate spiritual movements within the exercitant, who thus gathers the material necessary for discernment. But the interior movements can also be present outside the times of prayer.<sup>14</sup> Thus the exercitant's attitude has to be one of constant openness and readiness to pick up the signals which the Lord is sending as regards God's will. The texts emphasize the importance of a deep knowledge of the rules for discrimination between spirits, and of the ability to apply these correctly.<sup>15</sup>

As we study the different Directories, it becomes clear how absolutely necessary it is to be precise in the definition of what consolation and desolation are. There are imprecisions and inconsistencies in the 1599 Directory, alerting us to problems that can arise when sloppiness in the use of terms prevents us from understanding the process clearly. It is wrong to say that in the second 'time' there is 'little or no reasoning of the intellect'.<sup>16</sup> The understanding plays a most important part as we discriminate between the different movements.

***It is important  
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The 1599 Directory is also wrong in presenting the first and second 'times' together, contrasting them with the third 'time'. This is a mistake, and contradicts what is said elsewhere. For the 1599 Directory, the first 'time' is extraordinary, and excludes doubt regarding God's will, whereas the second 'time' is more common, and requires us to discern. The 1599 Directory rejects the term 'consolation', and prefers to use 'inspirations and interior motions of the will'. This distorts what the second 'time' essentially is. If consolation is

<sup>13</sup> Ignatius, 1.12,18; Polanco, 20.81; Anonymous, 26.72-76; González Dávila, 31.120; Official, 43.192-193.

<sup>14</sup> Polanco, 20.82; Miró, 23.86; Cordeses, 32.131; Official, 43.218-220.

<sup>15</sup> Höfer, 17.101; Anonymous, 26.78.

<sup>16</sup> Official, 43.188: '*sine ullo intellectus discursu, aut fere nullo*'. For other references in this and the following paragraph, see nn. 188, 190, 192.

understood as ‘a natural passion given supernaturally’, we lose sight of how consolation is essentially dynamic in character, and we lose the sense of how Ignatius conceived the term. The other Directories insist on the need to look for objective criteria in judging the movements that are experienced, helped by the one giving the Exercises. Thus they get us beyond understanding the second ‘time’ as exclusively affective, and of the third ‘time’ as rational in nature.

The warnings given by González Dávila and the authors of the 1599 Directory about the dangers of illusion in connection with the second ‘time’ are exaggerated. The problem arises because they did not really understand the true nature of this ‘time’, and did not understand the regulative function of the discrimination between spirits, carried out under the sure guidance of an experienced retreat-giver. In the end, they paid tribute to the fear of illuminism, and undermined the authority of the second ‘time’, preferring the more rational procedure of the third ‘time’. They virtually ignored the first ‘time’; they lumped it together with the second, and warned against the risks of illusion. They claimed that it was the third ‘time’ that was to be presented most fully and thoroughly.

#### *The Third ‘Time’*

The Directories see the chief characteristic of the third ‘time’ in terms of tranquillity of soul, without movements from different spirits.<sup>17</sup> Polanco is quite clear that this third ‘time’ is fully legitimate. A person can be in this spiritual state as they enter into the Election—a state proper to the third ‘time’, requiring them to seek God’s will using their natural powers freely, with the help of regular grace.

Ignatius’ text gives us two different methods for the third ‘time’. Ignatius’ Autograph Directory presents the second simply as a last resort. Later documents, however, move towards claiming that we must use every spiritual resource, and hence both methods, in order to obtain as much security as possible regarding the Election made. Thus

<sup>17</sup> Polanco, 20.89; González Dávila, 31.131; Official, 43.200. The two versions of Miró contrast interestingly on this point: in his first version (MHSJ edition, p.403), Miró follows Ignatius and everyone else in saying that a soul agitated by various spirits cannot proceed to the Election; in the second (23.90), he insists that ‘tranquillity of mind’ is necessary in *whatever* ‘time’ the Election is taken. We can speculate as to whether this is just a matter of carelessness, or whether it manifests a serious failure of understanding.



Polanco says that after an Election has been made with the first method in the third 'time', the second method should also be used. If the two come up with the same result, this is a good sign that the right conclusion has been reached.<sup>18</sup> Though the Directories emphasize the cognitive aspects of the Ignatian method, this does not mean that they are unbalanced in their presentation of the third 'time'. They do not present it as a purely rational, human method. The weighing up of the different reasons occurs in a climate of patient, affective contemplation of the mysteries of Christ's life—in other words, in prayer. The contemplations are not to be interrupted so that the exercitant can weigh up the reasons, although the number of mysteries each day can be reduced, so that exercitants have the time necessary to give themselves to the Election without haste.

The reasons need to be written out<sup>19</sup> and weighed up outside the times of prayer, so that the possibilities to be considered will appear more clearly, and so that, too, it will be easier to address them with the director. The texts insist that all the reasons which move towards the Election need to come from above, from the love of God.

<sup>18</sup> Ignatius Autograph, 1.20. Contrast Polanco, 20.83; González Dávila, 32.135; Official, 43.223.

<sup>19</sup> Polanco, 20.83; González Dávila, 31.131; Cordeses, 32.137; Official, 43.225.

There is a question as to whether or not interior movements occur during the third 'time'. The Directories tend to say not. The texts suggest that an exercitant should not use the third 'time' when moved by different spirits.

As for whether it is possible for an Election of state of life to be made in the third 'time', all the different Directories answer this question affirmatively.<sup>20</sup> The third 'time', indeed, is regarded more highly than the others, in that it is the safest path towards a good Election.

*Confirmation of the Election.*

The exercitant may receive signs from the good spirit that confirm an Election made in the third 'time'—signs that are in themselves appropriate to the second 'time'. If they examine these signs according to the Rules for Discernment, they are likely to be more satisfied, and more assured that they have found the divine will. If the signs, on examination, point in the other direction, this indicates that there was something wrong with the Election, and that it needs to be redone. Polanco, however, states that it is possible for nothing remarkable to happen at all, and for God to manifest the divine will through reason—a possibility which the 1599 Directory accepts.<sup>21</sup> The search for confirmation needs to be open to any sort of communication that the Lord might want to give, as Ignatius' experience in the *Spiritual Diary* confirms.

*The Relationships Between the Different 'Times'*

There are then questions about how far the three 'times' can be used on their own. The texts regard the first 'time' as quite clearly self-sufficient, on the ground of the certainty it can give; but it is considered also, as we have seen, as out of the ordinary. The position they take up on the second 'time' is more nuanced. When the second 'time' leads the soul to complete peace and satisfaction, it can move forward, since it is being illuminated by a light which is better than that of human reason. Polanco goes as far as saying that it would be superfluous in this case to look for the will of God through the third

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Ignatius Autograph, 1.19-20; Polanco, 20.83,85,88; Official, 43.207.

<sup>21</sup> Polanco, 20.90; Official, 43.229-232.

'time'.<sup>22</sup> However, the 1599 Directory, as we have seen, runs together the first and second 'times', and does so quite explicitly when discussing this particular point. The terms it uses to describe a first or second 'time' Election not requiring recourse to the third 'time' ('soul . . . firmly established and settled . . . no desire for greater certitude') seem in fact proper only to the first 'time'.

If it is not evident that the spirit moving the exercitant is from God . . . then it can be tested by the two methods of the third "time"—so Polanco puts the matter, in a very measured formulation. However, some Directories go further: where Polanco speaks of a possibility or a suitability, and always in the context of the second 'time' not giving sufficient certainty, Miró, González Dávila and the 1599 text state that a person must always move to the third 'time', thereby undermining—at least in practice—any claim that the second 'time' can function on its own.<sup>23</sup>

The Directories are generally optimistic about the self-sufficiency of the third 'time', although there are some statements that seem to put this in doubt. Some say that this 'time' must be confirmed by inspirations or motions proper to the second 'time'. Polanco nevertheless seems to think that this is not necessary.<sup>24</sup>

Ignatius' own Autograph Directory seems to indicate, with regard to the combined use of two or three 'times', that there is no need to move on to another 'time' if enough certainty has been found in one. You only go to the third 'time' if the second has not brought sufficient light—and in this case a person is using the two lights (natural and supernatural) to arrive at a good Election.<sup>25</sup>

What happens if the second and third 'times' yield conflicting results? Then the weight of the reasons has to be judged, and the movements have to be reinterpreted following the discernment Rules. If the reasons are stronger, and the motions are not clearly proceeding from God, it is the third 'time' result that is to be followed. If the reasons are not very strong, and if proper scrutiny of the movements

<sup>22</sup> Polanco, 20.85; González Dávila, 31.129; Official, 43.198.

<sup>23</sup> Miró, 23.87—"elections should normally be made not only in the second but also in the third "time"; Official, 43.203—"it is generally rather dangerous for a person to wish to be guided solely by the movements of their will and particular interior feelings, without adding appropriate reflection".

<sup>24</sup> Contrast Polanco, 20.90, with González Dávila, 31.141; Cordeses, 32.138; Official, 43.229.

<sup>25</sup> Ignatius Autograph, 1.18-20; Polanco, 20.85.

suggests that they are indeed indicating God's will, then the second 'time' result should be followed.<sup>26</sup>

On the question of which method is superior, the principle we find implicit in the Directories is that the 'times' are ranked according to the guiding principle behind each one. The texts do not consider the first 'time' at length, but they do discuss far more the relationship between the second and third 'times'. Polanco states that in the second 'time' God shows the divine will in a more immediate way, and therefore this 'time' is superior to the third.<sup>27</sup>

The Directories do not directly address the question of the kind of certainty that can be attained in each of the 'times', but they do give us some indications which will help us understand better Ignatius' teaching on this point. The first 'time' does indeed give certainty, though its occurrence is quite out of the ordinary. The concern of the Directories is with the different levels of security offered by the second and third 'times'. They claim that the second 'time' is better, and therefore intrinsically able to give a higher degree of certainty, given that the manifestation of God's will is more direct and immediate than in the third 'time'. On the other hand, they then—in actual practice—reduce the certainty that can be attributed to the second 'time', on the grounds that this 'time' is subject to a range of possible deceptions. For this reason, the third 'time' is the one presented as the safest, and to be preferred, or at least to be used to confirm the second time.

On this point, the latest of the Directories (Miró, González Dávila, 1599) move away from the Ignatian teaching preserved by Polanco and in Ignatius' own Directory. Ignatius had confidence that all three 'times' could lead to a good and healthy Election, and that consequently we were in no position to decide which way was better or safer. We simply had to be open to accepting God's will in the 'time' in which God might choose to reveal it. The Directories do not deny this reality, but rather—given the difficult context of the danger of illuminism—stress another point which is not only true but also very

<sup>26</sup> Polanco, 20.88; González Dávila, 31.142; Cordeses, 32.139. The Official Directory puts the same point within a rather confused and unnuanced discussion of why all human decision-making is unreliable (38.203-207).

<sup>27</sup> Polanco, 20.85; Cordeses, 32.132; Miró, 23.87.

**To obtain God's gifts three things are necessary:**

- a generous spirit
- appropriate means or tools
- our co-operation

**ALL THESE come through the EXERCISES***Juan Alfonso de Polanco*

Ignatian: the exercitant needs to do all in their power to find the will of God and embrace it lovingly. Polanco opens his Directory with a fine page describing the sense of working with God out of which an exercitant in search of God's will should be living.<sup>28</sup> The Directories are convinced that if we play our part, God will do what needs to be done to reveal to us the divine will.<sup>29</sup> Everything else rests on this certainty that we derive from our faith.

**Summary and Conclusion**

We can conclude, then, by setting out a number of insights that this study of the Directories yields:

- It is important to be able to distinguish what is characteristic of each of the 'times', and to understand their fundamental rationales.
- It is necessary to get beyond a false contrast between a second 'time', arising from affectivity, and a third that is more rational. In different ways, heart and head are present in both these 'times'.

<sup>28</sup> Polanco, 20.5-6. The saying in the box is a pithier version, found in manuscript (MHSJ edition, p. 277, n. 11).

<sup>29</sup> See for example González Dávila, 31.110; Official, 43.204. For further analysis of the speculative issues, see Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, pp. 274-315.

- It is not for us to decide which 'time' of Election is to be used: we need to accept with humility the 'time' that God chooses to give us.
- To understand Ignatius' teaching, we need to look at his life experience as it comes to us through his writings, and through the testimony of those who were closest to him and could most profoundly grasp his inner life.
- It was when the ascetical tendency predominated, and when people were suspicious of anything mystical, that the third 'time' was privileged. When the mystical tendency was stronger, people preferred the first or second 'times'.<sup>30</sup>

This essay has tried to suggest something of the process by which this spirituality was appropriated, differently in different historical contexts. The questions which preoccupied Jesuit retreat-givers in the sixteenth century are still, as we have seen, topics for discussion today. There are issues about heart and head, about nature and grace, on which we are still uncertain. We need to read and appropriate the Ignatian tradition, and carry on exploring these realities, in an ever new creative fidelity.

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<sup>30</sup> See Manuel Ruiz Jurado, 'El Padre Orlandis, comentador de los Ejercicios', *Cristiandad*, 57 (2000), pp. 107-111.