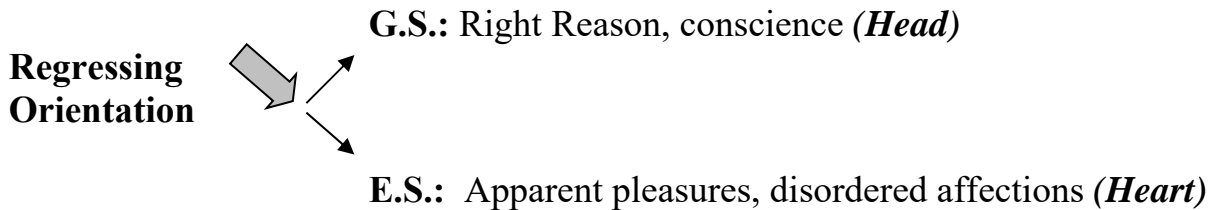


## GUIDELINES FOR BASIC DISCERNMENT

### SPIRITUAL ORIENTATIONS:

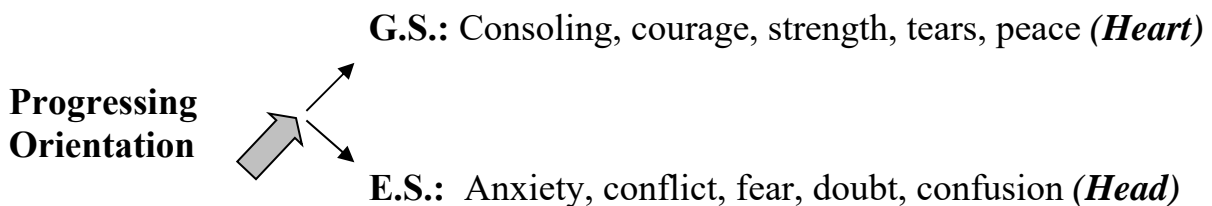
#### **I. Spiritually Regressing Persons: (from Bad to Worse)**

The *evil spirit* often tempts individuals who are living in sinful unfreedom with continued apparent pleasures, enslaving them in their *disordered affections* (i.e., sinful tendencies, attitudes, behaviors, gratifications, compulsions, addictions, etc.) with the sole purpose to lead them away from God toward desolation. On the other hand, the *good spirit* often appeals to *right reason* (conscience) to help them experience the purifying grace of God which leads them toward God in the experience of consolation.



#### **II. Spiritually Progressing Persons: (from Good to Better)**

The *evil spirit* often tempts individuals who are striving to grow spiritually and deepening their relationship with God with sadness, turmoil and confusion (*disordered affections and false reasoning*). Whereas, the *good spirit* will console by giving them courage, strength, trust, peace, joy (*right-ordered affections*). In the spiritually progressing or maturing Christians, the good spirit often impresses more effectively the heart rather than the head. This means we grow in awareness and sensitivity of how we are touched by God's love and grace in the stirrings of our hearts.



### IN TIMES OF CONSOLATION:

- **Remember** that desolation will follow consolation (an inter-relationship exists between consolation and desolation), so **be prepared** and not be surprised when it comes.
- **Be meek and humble** because any authentic spiritual consolation comes wholly from God and not of our own doings (not to inflate ourselves with false pride).

### IN TIMES OF DESOLATION: Rely on the Counter-Attack Principle

- **Do not make any decision** because it will be influenced by the evil spirit. Do not get discouraged and change any good decision made in consolation.
- Take **courage** and **resist** the temptations experienced (**Counter-Attack Principle**).
- Continue to **trust** in God's goodness and mercy (God's grace continues to be present even when we do not have felt-experience of grace). **Persevere** in hope and faith. **Remember** that consolation will follow desolation.
- **Examine** if the root cause of the desolation is some disordered attachments that need to be purified or external forces outside our control (as in a test).

### 3 WAYS OF THE EVIL SPIRIT: Apply the Counter-Attack Principle

1. **Spoiled Child Dynamic:** The enemy (evil spirit) is like a spoiled child who will grow stronger (**temper tantrum**) if we are afraid of it and, vice versa, weaker when we stand up to it with courage and trust in the Lord.
2. **False Lover Dynamic:** The enemy is like a false lover who wants to keep the disordered attachment a **secret**. In secrecy, it will continue to have control over us. The action of the good spirit is to bring what is hidden and its deceitful designs out into the light to be purified.
3. **Shrewd Commander Dynamic:** The enemy probes for our weaknesses like a cunning commander who probes where best to attack a fortification. He knows where the weakest, most vulnerable part of the defense is to spearhead the attack (**weakest link**). He will continue to attack there until it falls. The good spirit helps us to recognize, reinforce and to be on guard where we are most vulnerable to attacks.