

CHAPTER SIX

IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA (c.1491–1556)¹

Ignatius of Loyola a theologian? On what grounds? The only book that he wrote entirely on his own was the *Spiritual Exercises*, hardly a work of “theology.” His correspondence, though the largest of any single person from the sixteenth century, presents problems with trying to discover in it a theology. The correspondence mainly consists of practical directives and suggestions to members of the newly founded Society of Jesus as to how they might deport themselves in the diverse and sometimes exotic situations in which they found themselves, whether in Paris, Vienna, Lisbon, Brazil, or India, whether as itinerant preachers to peasants in obscure hamlets or as founders of schools in large urban centers.

Moreover, most of the extant correspondence of almost 7,000 letters dates after 1547, when Juan Alfonso de Polanco became Ignatius’s secretary.² The collaboration between Ignatius and Polanco was so close that it is often difficult to know just what to attribute to Ignatius, what to Polanco. Almost the same can be said of the Jesuit *Constitutions*, which Ignatius agreed to draft when elected superior general of the Society a few months after its formal approval as a religious order by Pope Paul III in September 1540. Although the traditional interpretation that Ignatius himself was the principal inspiration behind the *Constitutions* still stands, much of the wording, arrangement, and many of the details must be attributed to Polanco. Everything was submitted to Ignatius for approval and revision, but, as in any case of such close collaboration, the problem of authorship cannot be solved by facilely assigning contents to Ignatius and form to Polanco. In any case, the *Constitutions* are hardly a work of theology in the conventional sense of that term.

¹ Originally published in *The Reformation Theologians*, ed., Carter Lindberg (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 298–310. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

The numbers given in square brackets refer to the standard paragraph/section numbers used in modern editions of the Jesuit *Constitutions*, the *Spiritual Exercises*, and Ignatius’s narrative of his early life, which I will call *Autobiography*. Full details are given in the Bibliography.

² On Polanco see Clara Englander, *Ignatius von Loyola und Johannes von Polanco; der Ordensstifter und sein Sekretär* (Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1956) and now José García de Castro Valdés, *Polanco: el humanismo de los Jesuitas (1517–1576)* (Santander: Sal Terrae, 2012).

Unlike so many Protestant leaders of the era, Ignatius did not emerge to prominence from an academic career. He was a Spanish noble, an *hidalgo*, who had the chivalric and academically sparse education of his class.³ As a youth he learned how to dance and duel but not how to parse a Latin verb. He began to study Latin only when he was about thirty-three, in 1524, and was forced to sit in grammar classes with boys young enough to be his sons.

By that time, three years after the beginning of his religious conversion, he had become convinced that he needed more formal education, even a university degree, in order, as he said, “better to help souls.” Thus, like so many second-career students in divinity schools today, he had his heart set not on academic but on pastoral goals. In that regard, though not in some others, the education that he received at the universities of Alcalá de Henares and Paris would not change him.

He matriculated at the University of Paris in 1527 and received the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1533, the Master of Arts degree in 1535. During his last two years at Paris, 1533–1535, he audited courses in theology at the *studia* of the Dominicans and Franciscans. That was the extent of his formal training in theology. He took no degree in it. By 1534, he had gathered around himself six other students at the university, each of whom he accompanied through a month-long experience of the *Spiritual Exercises*. In that year, they as a group determined they would travel to the Holy Land “to help souls,” thus presaging the missionary character of the order they would later found. The next year, Ignatius left Paris, with the intention of meeting the others within a few months in Venice, whence they would embark on their missionary journey. His departure from Paris marked the end of his academic training. He then and later showed little intrinsic interest in the theological issues that buffeted his age.

He never had any sympathy for “Lutheranism,” but there is no evidence that his dislike derived from reading the Reformers, except possibly in the most cursory manner. The famous, or infamous, “Rules for Thinking with the Church,” a kind of appendix to the *Spiritual Exercises* composed for the most part while he was still at Paris, the last piece added to the book, reflect that antipathy, but they for the most part are guidelines to pastoral

³ The most detailed biography is by Ricardo García-Villoslada, *San Ignacio de Loyola: Nueva biografía* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1986). See also André Ravier, *Ignatius of Loyola and the Founding of the Society of Jesus*, trans. Maura Daly, Joan Daly, and Carson Daly (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987). Valuable for its factual precision is Cándido de Dalmases, *Ignatius of Loyola: Founder of the Jesuits*, trans. Jerome Aixalá (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1985). We await a truly critical biography.

practice, hardly theses for theological debate.⁴ Later commentators, Catholic and Protestant alike, have extolled or excoriated them as a specimen of hyper-orthodoxy when in fact they would have been accepted by most sixteenth-century Catholics as mainline.⁵ To put them in perspective it helps to recall that although the third rule said “long prayers whether in church or outside” should be praised, Ignatius adamantly opposed such prayers within the Society of Jesus, despite much pressure to the contrary.⁶

As superior general of the order, he encouraged other Jesuits like Diego Laínez and Peter Canisius to refute Lutheran errors, but he never attempted the same himself, surely realizing on some level that he was ill equipped to do so. Perhaps more surprising, he manifested little interest in the great doctrinal debates that took place at the Council of Trent in 1545–1547 and 1551–1552. When three members of the nascent Society of Jesus were early on appointed official theologians of the Council, Ignatius, though he was in no way responsible for their appointments, was immensely pleased. It was a significant recognition of the Society of Jesus just five years after its founding.

In early 1546, he wrote to these official theologians with advice as to how they should deport themselves. The letter is as important for what it does not say as for what it does say. In it, Ignatius exhorted the Jesuits to present their opinions modestly, to carry on their usual preaching, catechizing, and visiting of the sick and poor, and to reflect together each evening as to how their work at Trent was proceeding.⁷

Entirely missing from the letter was any word concerning the issues facing the Council. He looked upon the Jesuits more as mediators among the various factions present there than as proponents of any specific agenda—on either doctrine or reform of the church. Even more surprising, he wrote them a few months later asking whether it might not be to God’s greater glory for them to withdraw from the Council and take up some pastoral duties elsewhere. The next year, before the Council adjourned, he actually assigned one of them, Claude Jay, to another post.

⁴ *Spiritual Exercises* [352–370].

⁵ For a judicious counter-statement to this tradition, see Marjorie O’Rourke Boyle, “Angels Black and White: Loyola’s Spiritual Discernment in Historical Perspective,” *Theological Studies* 44 (1983): 241–257.

⁶ *Spiritual Exercises* [355].

⁷ *Epp. Ign.* 1:386–389; English translation in *Letters of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. William J. Young (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1959), 93–96.

Ignatius's most heartfelt interests, we must conclude, lay elsewhere. Although in the last few years of his life he began to raise the religious situation in Germany to a high priority in the Society, "Lutheranism" and many of the issues it entailed were even then only one among many of his concerns. In this, he was not unique among Catholics but, I think, broadly symptomatic. Catholicism early on produced its controversialists like Eck and Emser and, much later, Bellarmine and others. But, the matter of the controversies was ground chosen and defined by the enemy. It did not seize the imagination and heart of many talented Catholics, whose sights were directed elsewhere. Moreover, in Spain, Portugal, and Italy Protestantism, while perceived as a mortal danger by many churchmen, was in fact a geographically distant reality that directly touched relatively few people.

Many of the most talented and devout Catholics directed their gifts to other enterprises and, even on the theological level, often dealt with issues of little concern to either Protestant theologians or Catholic controversialists. I am thinking, for instance, of missionaries like Bartolomé de las Casas and his defense of Amerindian rights, and of Alessandro Valignano and his wrestling with the relationship between (Europeanized) Christianity and cultures as ancient and refined as those of Japan and China. Even Catholic academic theologians like Francisco de Vitoria, Juan de Mariana, Luis de Molina, Francisco de Toledo, and Leonard Lessius moved on ground defined for the most part by Catholic concerns and, hence, they fell off the screen of modern historiography, defined as it has been by the Reformation. Today even specialists in sixteenth-century theology do not recognize their names.

Ignatius is in that regard broadly indicative of the great bias that has distorted the approach practically all historians have taken to Catholicism in the sixteenth century.⁸ That approach wittingly or unwittingly defined Catholicism in relationship to the Reformation and judged it according to criteria that the long, lively, and methodologically sophisticated historiography of the Reformation had established. Instead of asking what Catholicism was like, that approach perforce asked how Catholicism resisted, resembled, caused, reacted to, was affected by and otherwise related to Luther and Calvin. Only recently, have there been signs of change, at least in North American historical writing. The point I am

⁸ See John W. O'Malley, *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

trying to make is that to understand Ignatius, as well as many other Catholics of the early modern era, great effort is required. Many received assumptions and prejudices must be shed if we wish to enter the sixteenth-century Catholic situation on its own terms.

Luther and Loyola—they have been paired for centuries but, we cannot enter the one through the door of the other. At Luther's center, for instance, reigned the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Luther was a theology professor, an academician, and we should not be surprised that a doctrine, that is, an idea, was what brought him the freedom and the comfort he had so long sought. He drew the idea from what is in effect a theological treatise, the Epistle to the Romans.

Rather than of a doctrine, Ignatius spoke of ways—ways of praying, ways of discerning God's will, ways of proceeding in ministry. He spoke of life in the Society of Jesus as "a way to God." The base texts for him were the synoptic Gospels, narratives where the ministry of Jesus was described—precisely the texts that figured among the least in Luther's "canon." To a large extent, Ignatius's "ways" were a refashioning of the medieval *imitatio Christi*, but now qualified through the radical interiority called for by the *Spiritual Exercises*. By the time he wrote the *Constitutions* those "ways" were further refashioned by certain theological and doctrinal assumptions with which he was able to buttress his delineation of the Jesuit "way to God." These assumptions remain for the most part implicit, however, never appearing at center stage.

Is there, then, any justification for including Ignatius of Loyola in a collection of studies about "theologians"? Everything hinges, of course, on how "theologian" is defined.⁹ Ignatius is perhaps best understood as a religious activist, but an activist who reflected on his own experiences and tried to communicate them so that they might be of help to others. It is in that sense that Jerónimo Nadal, the contemporary who perhaps best understood him, called him "a theologian." The passage is worth quoting:

Here, then, you see the necessity for the course of studies in the Society: to be able to preach and become skilled in those ministries that the church deems ordered for the help of our neighbor. [...] Here is our father, the theologian. His desires were always to seek how he might better employ himself in the service of God.¹⁰

⁹ See Avery Dulles, "Saint Ignatius and the Jesuit Theological Tradition," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 14/2 (1982): 1–3.

¹⁰ Jerónimo Nadal, *Monumenta Nadal, Commentarii de Instituto Societatis Iesu* (Rome: IHSI, 1962), 282–285.

In effect, Nadal was describing a “theology” whose scope was the practice of ministry. We might therefore call that theology pastoral, that is, providing a theological horizon or a religious vision, more or less coherent, that gave shape and a certain distinctiveness to practices of ministry. Ignatius was interested, therefore, in what used to be called practical divinity. Although “Ignatius the theologian” can perhaps be studied from other perspectives, he will here be studied from this one.¹¹

In the *Spiritual Exercises* Ignatius created a road map based on his own interior journey from conventional religious practice to a wholehearted commitment to follow the “way” of Christ, a way culminated in a total surrender to God’s love and will. It is important to remember, however, that he kept modifying the text over a twenty-year period, up to 1540, in the light of his experience of guiding others through the four “weeks.” The text reflects, therefore, not only Ignatius’s experience in exploring his own interiority but also his experience in helping others do the same. It is also important to recognize that the *Exercises* themselves became an instrument of ministry for the Jesuits and in effect created a new ministry, the spiritual “retreat.”

Ignatius made no significant changes in the *Exercises* after about 1540, which was just the time he and the others were founding the new Society of Jesus. For him more so than for the others, the founding marked the end of his days as a “pilgrim,” which is how he liked to describe himself up to that point, and it moved him to a position of great responsibility for the ministries of the new order. Through his insistence on frequent correspondence from the members of the order about their ministries, he made himself into an extraordinary recipient of information from widely divergent cultural and religious situations. He seems to have listened well.

In his office as superior general, he showed many gifts of leadership, but one was outstanding: he recognized and utilized in others talents that complemented his own. When he chose Polanco as his secretary in 1547, he could hardly have made a better choice. Among Polanco’s outstanding qualifications was a fine education in both the *studia humanitatis* and Thomistic theology.

At about the same time he began to confide more and more responsibility for directing operations in the field to Nadal. By the beginning of the next decade, this young Majorcan had become Ignatius’s itinerant troubleshooter to Jesuit communities throughout Europe and his interpreter

¹¹ For a quite different approach, see Juan Luis Segundo, *The Christ of the Ignatian Exercises*, ed. and trans. John Drury (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987).

to them of his pastoral vision.¹² He said of Nadal what he never said of any of his companions from Paris: “he altogether knows my mind.”¹³ Nadal, like Polanco, also had an excellent education, which included a licentiate in theology from Paris and a doctorate from Avignon.

Among the many decisions that were taken by Ignatius in the early years of the order, none was more dramatic or had a more profound impact than the decision that gradually evolved between about 1547 and 1550 to take the staffing and management of schools as the Jesuit primary ministry. Under it lay a reconciliation with “the world” and with human culture that had long been evolving in him but that for its articulation required the vocabulary and theological justification that Polanco and Nadal could provide. I cannot imagine that Ignatius would have seized so enthusiastically upon the religious potential of the humanistic ideals of education had he not been schooled in them by Polanco and Nadal. These two, I believe, would have had to point out to him how the *pietas* of the humanistic educational scheme correlated with the inculcation of *Christianitas* that was the aim of Jesuit ministry.¹⁴

It was through interaction with these two men that Ignatius completed his theological education, done in the heat of such practical decisions. Indeed, while it is easy on many levels to differentiate these three voices from each other, on profounder levels they speak almost as one. Polanco and Nadal in fact considered themselves to be nothing more than interpreters of Ignatius, sometimes clarifying, sometimes amplifying on his thoughts and sentiments. I will here feel free to use them occasionally in that way.

What the above implies, of course, is the obvious truth: Ignatius continued to change, as he grew older. That truth needs to be stated, however, because it is contrary to the usual image of him, which tends to be static and which, correlatively, takes the *Spiritual Exercises* as the almost unique source against which to test how he is to be understood. But, the static image flies not only in the face of common sense but even runs contrary to

¹² On Nadal, see especially William V. Bangert, *Jerome Nadal (1507–1580): Tracking the First Generation of Jesuits*, ed. Thomas M. McCoog (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1992) and Miguel Nicolau, *Jerónimo Nadal, S.I. (1507–1580): Sus obras y doctrinas espirituales* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1949).

¹³ *Nadal* 1:144.

¹⁴ On *pietas*, see John W. O'Malley, “Introduction” in *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 66: ix–xxxix. On *Christianitas*, see John Van Engen, “The Christian Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem,” *American Historical Review* 91 (1986): 519–52.

what Ignatius himself implies in his autobiographical account. Here he indicates how God, like a teacher or parent dealing with a little child, helped him, step by step, in the early years of his conversion to ever more profound understanding of what was happening and to behavior consonant with such enlightenment.¹⁵ There is no reason to believe that the process ended when he became general of the Society.

Indeed, few figures from the sixteenth century manifest even on the most superficial level so many shifts in what we might blandly term lifestyle. At age thirteen, he left Loyola for Arévalo to be trained as a courtier in the household of Juan Velázquez de Cuéllar, chief treasurer of King Ferdinand. When he was about twenty-six, in 1517, he moved to another court to become *gentilhombre* to the duke of Nájera, a position that sometimes required taking up arms and participating in military expeditions. (Only in this occasional way can the “soldier saint” be called a soldier!)

During one of these expeditions four years later, he was wounded in battle at Pamplona. For the next two years, until 1523, he became almost a hermit at Loyola and Manresa as his conversion experiences began and continued. Then for a year, he was quite literally a “pilgrim,” begging his way from Barcelona until he reached his goal, Jerusalem. Upon his return he became a student for the next nine years, at Barcelona, Alcalá, Salamanca, and, finally, Paris. From 1535 until 1540 he along with his companions from Paris, who during this period were ordained priests, labored essentially as itinerant preachers or evangelists in northern and central Italy while they awaited passage to the Holy Land. In 1541, he became the chief administrator of the new order, a post at which he remained for the next fifteen years until his death in 1556, never leaving Rome or its near environs ever again. As modern jargon would have it: he invented himself many times.

How unlikely, therefore, that he would not change considerably through the radically diverse situations and cultures in which he found himself: the feudal culture of his early years, the scholastic culture of his time at Paris, the more humanistic culture of Renaissance Italy, the increasingly Counter-Reformation culture of Rome during his last years.

Before we look at how Ignatius changed, however, we need to be aware of two fundamental continuities that underlie his development. The first, as I already suggested, was his desire from the very beginning of his conversion to be of “help to souls.” Even as he lay on his sickbed at Loyola

¹⁵ *Autobiography* [27].

in 1521 when his conversion experiences were beginning, he sought out members of the household to speak with them “about the things of God [...] and thus brought much profit to their souls,” as he later described it.¹⁶ Even during his most eremitical period at Manresa the next year, he similarly “spent time in helping other souls.”¹⁷ With the passing of the years, “the help of souls” became his leitmotif. The expression or its equivalent appears on practically every page of the twelve huge volumes of his correspondence. This constitutes, without doubt, his theological horizon.

The second was his profound conviction that God was active within his soul, guiding, teaching, and comforting him, and that acting in accord with this reality was the key to happiness in this life and the next. The fundamental principle upon which the *Spiritual Exercises* rest is buried away in the Fifteenth Annotation at the beginning of the book: what it is all about is that “the Creator deal directly with the creature, and the creature directly with his Creator and Lord.”¹⁸

How does this divine impulse from Creator to creature manifest itself, how is it detected and assessed? In the *Exercises*, Ignatius gives “rules” to help in this delicate process of discernment.¹⁹ The “rules” derived in the first instance from his own experiences that began in the castle of Loyola when he noted within himself certain “motions” of consolation and desolation, depending on the alternative kinds of future he imagined for himself. The point I want to make is that for him—in his own life, in the whole process of the *Exercises* meant for others, and then later in his life as general of the Society—the ideal for ministers was to act out of their interiority, as tested against what the circumstances seemed to require, not to act out of some rigid adherence to external prescriptions for “what is best.”

As general of the Society, he wrote hundreds upon hundreds of letters offering advice as to how Jesuits might deal with the sometimes perplexing pastoral situations in which they found themselves, but he consistently qualified the advice with, equivalently, “unless some other course seems better to you.” Even more impressive, the *Constitutions*, which lay down the general principles according to which the Society was to be governed, are riddled with similar escape-clauses. Nadal caught the profound implications of this stance when he said the ministries of the Jesuits were to be done *spiritu, corde, practice*, that is, out of a sense of the Spirit’s

¹⁶ *Ibid.* [11].

¹⁷ *Ibid.* [26].

¹⁸ *Spiritual Exercises* [15].

¹⁹ *Ibid.* [313–336].

inner presence and direction (*spiritu*), from the heart and to the hearts of others (*corde*), with a view to what truly is helpful in a given situation (*practice*).²⁰

If these are two big continuities, what are the discontinuities, the changes? To some extent, they consist in making more explicit, more pervasively operative, and more determinative realities present in his life from the early years of his conversion. He was concerned with “helping souls” on his sickbed at Loyola, as I indicated, but that was an aspect of the experience that he singled out for mention many years after the event, when he had already been superior general of the Society for over a decade.

In the *Spiritual Exercises*, which after the “First Week” consists in three other “weeks” that are for the most part contemplations on the life of Christ, he does not often call attention explicitly to Jesus’ ministry. It is true that in the meditation on the banner of Christ, he depicts Christ as choosing disciples to send them throughout the world to spread his sacred message and then recommending to them the “ways” (poverty, humility, etc.) in which this enterprise is to be carried out.²¹ It can thus be said that the *Exercises* have a bias toward active ministry. But, the bias is muted.

In Ignatius’s correspondence, however, most of which dates after 1547, and in the *Constitutions*, substantially composed between 1547 and 1550, ministry is the overriding issue. It is the text and the subtext. The *Constitutions* are all about “the help of souls.” This emphasis is of course due in part to the audience to whom these documents are addressed, exclusively Jesuit for the *Constitutions* and largely Jesuit for the correspondence. Nonetheless, the accent has become newly insistent.

The Jesuits liked to emphasize how they differed from the mendicant orders that preceded them. The fact is that they resembled them in a number of ways, to a large extent even in the kinds of ministries in which they engaged, especially in their earliest years before they undertook the schools. Among the ways they differed from them, however, was in the more explicit, forthright, and self-aware statements in their official and unofficial documents that ministry was what they were all about. Yes, they had become members of the Society in the hope of saving their own souls by following their call, but their salvation was worked out precisely through the practice of ministry, through “the help of souls.”

²⁰ Nadal, *Commentarii*, 227–231. See Nicolau, *Nadal*, 305–313.

²¹ *Spiritual Exercises* [143–148].

Ignatius began with them to forge a new vocabulary for the special approach to ministry they were taking. The most striking instance of this vocabulary was “mission.” It comes as a surprise to learn that this term, without which we can today hardly speak about Christianity, was not current in our contemporary sense until the mid-sixteenth century.²² Instead of missions and missionaries, the traditional expressions were “propagation of the faith” and “journeying to the infidel.” Despite the Vulgate’s employment of various forms of *mittere* in connection with the early disciples of Jesus, medieval authors used that verb and its derivatives almost exclusively for the “missions” internal to the Trinity.

The Jesuits were among the first to inaugurate the new usage and were the group initially responsible for its spread. In the papal bull that founded the order, substantially written by the Jesuits themselves, both the older “propagation of the faith” and then “mission” are used to designate travel for the sake of ministry. By the time of the *Constitutions*, “mission” has displaced the older terms, and it dominates the Seventh Part, the section devoted to “the distribution of members in the vineyard of the Lord,” which some commentators consider the heart of the document.²³

Talk of the *vita apostolica* had circulated in Western Europe since at least the twelfth century, indicating different things to different people depending on just how the life of the early disciples was imagined. Ignatius and companions related it directly to ministry. They were about an “apostolic” ministry, by which they meant a ministry that entailed being sent or being on a journey for the ministry. This is a specification and sharper formulation of the ideal, which Nadal succinctly formulated in his summary of the stories of Jesus’ original band:

Our vocation is similar to the vocation and training of the apostles; first, we come to know the Society, and then we follow; we are instructed; we receive our commission to be sent [on ministry]; we are sent; we exercise our ministry; we are prepared to die for Christ in fulfilling those ministries.²⁴

Among the “apostles,” Nadal further specified Paul as the one who best exemplified the Jesuit vocation.²⁵ He meant to suggest the intense zeal of Paul that knew no limits in the hardship it was willing to undergo, but it

²² See John W. O’Malley, “Mission and the Early Jesuits,” *The Way*, Supplement 79 (1994): 3–10. This article is also part of the present collection (Chapter 13).

²³ *Constitutions* [603–632].

²⁴ Jerónimo Nadal, *Orationis observationes*, ed. Miguel Nicolau (Rome: IHSI, 1964), no. 379.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 414.

also meant going forth and seeking the lost sheep, not waiting for them on the doorstep of a church. It meant being missionaries. Nothing was more fundamental to Ignatius's original vision of ministry.

The special "Fourth Vow" that he and the early companions created for Jesuits, often erroneously described as a vow of "loyalty to the pope," was actually a vow "about missions," as the formula of the vow itself clearly states.²⁶ It was a vow to be a missionary, even though the word "missionary" had in effect not yet been coined. It was a vow that radically distinguished Jesuit ministry from the legislation on ministry enacted at the Council of Trent, which dealt exclusively with keeping local ministers (bishops and priests) in the local situations to minister to Christians in their local parishes.

"The world is our house." This bold statement, drummed into Jesuits again and again by Nadal, captures the radicality of the vision. That house

is altogether the most ample place and reaches as far as the globe itself. For wherever they can be sent in ministry to bring help to souls, that is the most glorious and longed-for house for these theologians [...]. They consider that they are in their most peaceful and pleasant house when they are constantly on the move, when they travel throughout the earth, when they have no place to call their own [...]. Only let them strive in some small way to imitate Christ Jesus, who had nowhere on which to lay his head and who spent all his years of preaching in journey.²⁷

It was in relationship to this ideal that Ignatius elaborated for the Jesuit minister a style of life, a "way," that was a notable break with the traditions that immediately preceded it even for members of religious orders. The symbol for this break was the Jesuits' well-known insistence that, unlike members of all other religious orders, they not sing or recite the Liturgical Hours in common, which, by requiring them to be present in their houses at stated times during the day, would hinder their freedom to minister as need arose. Although that was a decision arrived at by all ten of the founders and cannot be attributed solely to Ignatius, he nonetheless had deeply interiorized it and resisted even popes when he thought it was threatened.

That was only one aspect of his delineation of what we might term a new asceticism for ministers, preachers of the Word, that broke with the

²⁶ *Constitutions* [527].

²⁷ See John W. O'Malley, "To Travel to Any Part of the World: Jerónimo Nadal and the Jesuit Vocation," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 16/2 (1984). This article is also part of the present collection (Chapter 9).

implicit or explicit model of the half-starved John the Baptist that pervaded the previous tradition. It in effect qualified as well even the image of the evangelizing Paul as totally spent in ministry and yearning for a martyr's death. There were two stages in his development here. The first began during his days at Manresa, where in the early months he engaged in a fierce battle against his body and his sensuality by depriving himself of food, drink, and sleep, by allowing his fingernails and hair to grow, by going about in rags. Bit by bit he gave up these practices, suggesting in one place that he did so in part because they hindered him in the help of souls.²⁸ By the time he completed the *Exercises* he had included "Rules with regard to eating," in which he laid down some rather anal-retentive suggestions about how to avoid overindulgence yet be assured of sufficient intake to preserve one's strength.²⁹

The accent on such matters in the *Constitutions* is different. While a certain self-discipline is always assumed for Jesuits, self-care emerges even more strongly as a virtue peculiarly appropriate for them so that they might more effectively minister to others. The essence of the message, repeated again and again, was that, although an "excessive preoccupation with the needs of the body is blameworthy, a proper concern for the preservation of one's health and bodily strength is praiseworthy, and all should exercise it."³⁰ This is not the language or the practice of late medieval preachers like Bernardine of Siena or Vincent Ferrer, this is not the practice of a later bishop like Carlo Borromeo of Milan, who by his fasts practically starved himself to death at age forty-two. Diego Laínez, Ignatius's successor as general, quoted him to the effect that until individuals surrendered to God they took delight in penances and dealing roughly with their bodies, but once that point was past, they treated their bodies with reverence as gifts from God.³¹

Discretion and moderation in labors and in all other practical matters had become for him the ideal. Ignatius learned a hard lesson from the toll the austerities he practiced in his early days took on him, but he found justification for the quite different approach of his later years in the Thomistic-Aristotelian synthesis that either he learned at Paris or that Polanco taught him in Rome. *Virtus in media stat*—virtue, the mean between two extremes, the central principle of Aristotle's and later

²⁸ *Autobiography* [29].

²⁹ *Spiritual Exercises* [210–217].

³⁰ *Constitutions* [292].

³¹ See Cándido de Dalmases, "Le esortazioni del P. Laínez sull' 'Examen Constitutionum,'" *AHSI* 35 (1966): 149–150.

Aquinas's moral teaching, was fully appropriated by Ignatius. *Mediocridad* was the Spanish word that caught this ideal. Ignatius transformed it into a hermeneutical principle for the interpretation of the *Constitutions* themselves, which "do not lean to extremes of either rigor or laxity."³²

What I see in Ignatius is an ever more profound reconciliation with "the world." No "theology of the cross" here, in Luther's sense! This reconciliation was adumbrated in the *Exercises* with the final contemplation "On Divine Love"³³ but it received practical implementation in the *Constitutions* with the advocacy of the use of "human means" in ministry, such as the study of the pagan classics for acquiring the eloquence needed in a preacher.³⁴ It also received a theological foundation that runs quietly as a leitmotif through the *Constitutions*. That foundation was the scholastic, especially Thomistic axiom, that grace perfects nature.

The Jesuit *Constitutions* are not, certainly, a theological document in the conventional sense. Their originality in their own genre of religious literature, however, has never been appreciated. A product of the collaboration between Ignatius and Polanco, the *Constitutions* differed radically from foundational documents of similar groups, which were little more than collections of ordinances. The *Constitutions*, by contrast, enjoyed a rationalized structure in their organization. This structure was based on the assumption of emotional and psychological development of the Jesuit from the time he entered until he reached full maturity; it manifested a new attention to motivation and general principles; insisted in particular and in general on flexible implementation of their prescriptions; conveyed an all-pervasive orientation toward ministry; and, especially, had an implicit but detectable theological leitmotif. Despite the medieval clutter of details that mark them, they are in the features just mentioned a strikingly modern document.

An important aspect of Ignatius's reconciliation with the world was his increasing faith in stable institutions as effective means for helping souls. This is exemplified most dramatically in his work in founding the Society of Jesus and in saying goodbye to what he called his "pilgrim years" to become the chief administrator in that institution for fifteen years until his death. From 1521 until 1540, he was either on the road or leading the rootless life of a student. The founding of the Society, even though there is evidence that he had entertained the idea for some time, can be taken as

³² *Constitutions* [822].

³³ *Spiritual Exercises* [230–237].

³⁴ *Constitutions* [814].

symptom of a psychological development that prepared the way for the Jesuits undertaking formal schooling as their primary ministry.

In that regard, we must keep two facts clearly in mind. First, the ten Jesuits who founded the Society had conceived of an organization consisting primarily of itinerant preachers of the Word, who almost by definition would not remain anywhere very long. They envisaged a pastoral blitz of a few days or weeks as the preferred pattern of ministry. The *Constitutions* indicate that even the “missions” entailed by the Fourth Vow should ordinarily not be longer than three months.³⁵ That vow can indeed be understood as a vow to travel, the polar opposite of the monk’s vow of stability. In the early years, to be on the road was the quintessence of what it meant to be a member of the Society.³⁶

Second, graduates of the University of Paris though all ten of the original founders were, they not only did not foresee themselves as school-teachers but expressly precluded for themselves even teaching the younger members of the Society themselves. Circumstances soon led them to offering some instruction to younger Jesuits, and soon other circumstances led to the founding of the first real Jesuit school in Messina in 1547.

The radical change this decision implied was promoted by Ignatius, who within a year or so became enthusiastic over the potential for good that such schools offered, realizing fully the long-term commitment of personnel that they implied. Ignatius thus drastically qualified the original commitment to “mission” with the reality of resident schoolmasters. Though by no means a humanist himself, he became convinced, probably through Polanco and Nadal, of all that the humanists promised to be accomplished for church and society by means of institutions run according to the *pietas* that was their ideal.

What about Ignatius’s relationship to the most long-lived institution of his day, the Catholic church? Is there anything further to say in this matter, since it is obvious that he was an unquestioning believer in the apostolic authenticity of the papacy and of what he called “the hierarchical church,” that is, pope and bishops? On the conscious level he was in these matters altogether in accord with the thinking of mainline canon lawyers, and he surely understood that a task of the Society was to defend the institutions of papacy and episcopacy against Protestant attacks. But, was there a deeper aspect of his belief-system that somewhat

³⁵ *Constitutions* [615].

³⁶ See Mario Scaduto, “La strada e i primi gesuiti,” *AHSI* 40 (1971): 323–390, now available in an abridged translation, “The Early Jesuits and the Road,” *The Way* 42 (2003): 71–84.

transcended these conventional categories, at least as we today tend to read them back into the sixteenth century?

Polemicists and apologists alike interpret the Fourth Vow as proof positive of Ignatius taking the papacy as the center of his ecclesiological vision. What they fail to take into account is that the idea for it came out of discussions carried on by all ten of the original founders, with no particular indication that Ignatius was its instigator. While he gives it primacy of place in the Seventh Part of the *Constitutions*, he makes it clear that the general enjoys the same authority as the pope to send members on “missions.” In his immense correspondence, he almost never refers to the papal aspect of the vow, and he speaks of kings like John III of Portugal as having almost the same moral authority as the pope to deploy Jesuits “in the vineyard of the Lord.” In comparison with the claims that have been made about how much the papacy meant to him, he speaks of it surprisingly sparingly.

He speaks even of “the church” with the same sparseness. Although the papal bull of 1550 that confirmed the earlier (1540) approval of the Society defined the order as an institution to “serve the church,” Ignatius himself practically never uses the expression.³⁷ Not serving the church but serving, i.e., “helping” souls is what he and the Society of Jesus are about. They do this “in the vineyard of the Lord,” an ecclesiological image that is fuzzy at the edges, for that vineyard extends to where there are not yet any Christians—and certainly no bishops or pope. Was this heritage partly responsible for the reluctance of the Jesuits, who arrived in Japan in 1549, to see a bishop installed there—which did not happen until a half-century had elapsed?³⁸

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³⁷ See Gabriel Côté, “The ‘Helping’ Church: An Operative Ecclesiology in the ‘Help of Souls’ of the Early Society of Jesus” (thesis, Weston Jesuit School of Theology, 1996).

³⁸ M. Antoni Üçerler, “Sacred Historiography and its Rhetoric in Sixteenth-Century Japan: An Intertextual Study and Partial Critical Edition of *Principio y progreso de la religión christiana en Jappón* [...] (1601–1603) by Alessandro Valignano,” 2 vols. (D. Phil. dissertation, University of Oxford, 1998), esp. 1:86–88.

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