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## Pedro de Ribadeneira and the Use of Sources: Critical History and Hagiography in the Early Society of Jesus

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# Pedro de Ribadeneira and the Use of Sources: Critical History and Hagiography in the Early Society of Jesus

ROBERT E. SCULLY, S.J.

Where can and should one draw the line between fact and fiction, norms and ideals, history and hagiography? The writings of a gifted Spanish Jesuit, Pedro de Ribadeneira (1526–1611), provide an important example of how we can explore these issues in the early decades of the Society of Jesus, influenced as it was by the currents and at times troubling cross-currents of the Renaissance, with its humanist ideal of *ad fontes* (back to the sources), and the Reformation, with its more apologetic and polemical stance.

Ribadeneira presents an intriguing case as one of the first Jesuit historians, imbued with the goals of Renaissance humanism, who sought to rely upon critical methods and primary sources in order to produce accurate and reasonably objective scholarship. At the same time, over the course of his eighty-five years, he witnessed a range of both remarkable and (for many) troubling developments in the world and in the church, especially the Protestant and Catholic/Counter Reformations, that clearly influenced his own life and writings. These intersecting strands are most obvious in his most important and influential work, and the one that is the focus of this essay: *The Life of Ignatius of Loyola*, correctly characterized as his *magnum opus*. Francisco de Borja, the third superior general (in office 1565–72), commissioned Ribadeneira in 1567 to write the first (and as it proved to be, canonical) biography of Ignatius.<sup>1</sup> Borja had made a wise choice. Ribadeneira was a gifted preacher/wordsmith and diplomat, and, most relevantly, a very skilled writer based on his humanistic formation and command of language.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On Borja and his generalate, see Cándido de Dalmases, S.J., *Francis Borgia: Grandee of Spain, Jesuit, Saint*, trans. Cornelius Michael Buckley, S.J. (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> See *Year by Year with the Early Jesuits (1537–1556): Selections from the Chronicon of Juan de Polanco, S.J.*, trans. John Patrick Donnelly, S.J. (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2004), 443–45 [hereafter *Chronicon*]. As evidence of Ribadeneira’s gifts as a preacher, and the connection to his skills as a wordsmith, Polanco wrote: “Father Ribadeneira preached in the Church of Saint Michael to such a throng that no one still alive had seen such a multitude of students gathered in one place at Louvain. Although the [church] was vast, it was packed two hours before the start of his sermon. It was truly remarkable how delighted the audience was [with his sermon]”; *Chronicon*, 443–44. See also, William V. Bangert, S.J., *A History of the Society of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1986), 61, 77. Among the biographer/historian’s most significant works, see *Flos sanctorum, o Libro de las vidas de los santos*, 2 vols. (Madrid: Luis Sanchez, 1599–1601); *Confessiones, epistolae aliaque scripta inedita*, 2 vols., Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu

In writing his seminal biography, Ribadeneira had, perhaps most significantly, his own personal contacts and first-hand knowledge to rely upon in constructing his *Vita*. He initially met Ignatius in Rome as an impressionable youth of barely fourteen and came to revere him as more than just a spiritual father. The adolescent was welcomed as a companion into a fervent group of “friends in the Lord” within a fortnight of the official confirmation of the Society of Jesus in September 1540. Ribadeneira went on to serve Ignatius and the Society as secretary, administrator, and premiere historian during his seventy years as a Jesuit. As an example of their close relationship, Ignatius chose Ribadeneira “to deliver and explain the *Constitutions* of the Society” to Jesuits in various locales.<sup>3</sup> With regard to additional sources for his later biography, Ribadeneira had at hand Ignatius’s *Acta* (*Autobiography*) and *Spiritual Diary*, the *Memoriale* of Gonçalves da Camara, as well as a profusion of documents from throughout the Society, since Superior General Borja had requested that all of the Jesuit provinces forward relevant materials to Rome for that purpose.<sup>4</sup>

After two years of writing (1567–69) and extensive “peer review,” a Latin biography was published in Naples in 1572.<sup>5</sup> Ribadeneira produced a corrected and expanded Spanish version in 1583,<sup>6</sup> and a definitive Latin edition in 1586 (the source of Claude Pavor’s first full English translation in 2014).<sup>7</sup> It is particularly instructive regarding the use and transformation of sources to note the changes from the original 1572 account to the later editions. While the initial version undoubtedly

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58 (Madrid, 1920); and *Pedro de Ribadeneyra’s Ecclesiastical History of the Schism of the Kingdom of England: A Spanish Jesuit’s History of the English Reformation*, ed. and trans. Spencer J. Weinreich (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Polanco, *Chronicon*, 13, 367–68, 403, quoted at 367. See also John W. O’Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 95, 116, 180, 279; Jodi Bilinkoff, “The Many ‘Lives’ of Pedro de Ribadeneyra,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 52 (1999): 180–96. According to Bilinkoff, Ribadeneira’s “*Life of Loyola* [was] at once history, hagiography, and memoir,” and exemplifies “the creation of hybrid forms by early modern life-writers”; 184–85.

<sup>4</sup> See Joseph N. Tylenda, S.J., trans., *A Pilgrim’s Journey: The Autobiography of Ignatius of Loyola* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1985); and Alexander Eaglestone and Joseph A. Munitiz, S.J., trans., *Remembering Iñigo: Glimpses of the Life of Saint Ignatius of Loyola; The Memoriale of Luis Goncalves da Câmara* (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2004). The *Memoriale* primarily covers the period from January to July 1555 and presents a very human, as well as holy, portrait of Ignatius. With regard to historiographical issues relating to Ignatius’s writings, including the so-called *Autobiography*, see Robert Aleksander Maryks, “Introduction: The Quest for the Historical Ignatius,” in *A Companion to Ignatius of Loyola: Life, Writings, Spirituality, Influence*, ed. Robert Aleksander Maryks (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 1–4; Pierre-Antoine Fabre, “The Writings of Ignatius of Loyola as Seminal Text,” in Maryks, *Companion to Ignatius of Loyola*, 103–22.

<sup>5</sup> *Vita Ignatii Loiolae, Societatis Iesu fundatoris* (Naples: Iosephum Cacchium, 1572).

<sup>6</sup> Concerning this Spanish edition, Cándido de Dalmases, S.J. praised it by noting, “This *Vida*, which created a new type of biographical narrative, has justly been considered one of the most attractive historical works of the sixteenth century, the *Siglo de Oro*,” in *Ignatius of Loyola, Founder of the Jesuits: His Life and Work*, trans. Jerome Aixala, S.J. (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1985), 276.

<sup>7</sup> Pedro de Ribadeneira, S.J., *The Life of Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. Claude Pavor, S.J. (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2014).

held Ignatius in high regard, it did not explicitly attribute any miracles to him, save that of his providential role in the founding of the Society of Jesus.

In contrast, by 1586 the decrees and spiritual currents of the Council of Trent (1545–63), with its more aggressive, Counter-Reformation stance against the tide of Protestantism, were influencing the church in its spirituality as well as in its scholarship. Moreover, a movement had begun for the beatification/canonization of Ignatius, which would require evidence of his miraculous intercession. Thus, we see in the 1586 iteration an implicit and explicit discussion of miracles, as well as a greater emphasis on both Ignatius's and the Society's heroic role in confronting heresy, which was normative in the more militant era of the Tridentine church of the late sixteenth century. While more information undoubtedly became available to Ribadeneira in the intervening years, this is also an instructive example (and caveat) regarding the use and interpretation of sources.

As a dedicated historian of Spain's *Siglo de Oro* (Golden Age), Ribadeneira set himself the goal of continuing in the tradition of Renaissance humanism, with its emphasis on a return to and critical use of sources.<sup>8</sup> At several points in his *Life*, he emphasizes that he is writing his account based on reliable sources, for example, stating with regard to insights and illuminations that Ignatius received: "I could report by name the sources that I am using; but to avoid going on too long, I will let that pass."<sup>9</sup> We see here, implicitly, another aspect of humanist writing and rhetoric, namely *eloquentia*. At the same time, he incorporates into the narrative a number of contemporary documents, including one from 1538 concerning the first companions, dismissing all false charges of unorthodox beliefs or practices, noting, "I have decided that I should add here an exact copy of the ruling by which Ignatius and his companions were acquitted."<sup>10</sup> Moreover, for major sections of his account, Ribadeneira assures the reader that he himself was an eyewitness: "Because I was part of [a] small community of the Society in Rome and, as I have mentioned, I did not leave Ignatius's side, from this point on I will be recounting the subsequent events not on hearsay but as a reliable eyewitness and observer."<sup>11</sup>

Yet, therein lies the paradox of Ribadeneira's biography: as much as he tries to be an objective and reliable historian with regard to the facts, he cannot avoid a certain subjectivity concerning the interpretation of Ignatius's life and, as he perceives it, his protagonist's undoubted sanctity and saintliness. In that sense, the genre is an amalgamation of Renaissance and Christian humanism, combining an adherence to sources and reliability together with the goal of uplifting the reader and presenting a model of Christian life and heroic virtue. As Alison Knowles

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<sup>8</sup> See John W. O'Malley, "Renaissance Humanism and the Religious Culture of the First Jesuits," *Heythrop Journal* 31 (1990): 471–87.

<sup>9</sup> Ribadeneira, *Life*, 99.

<sup>10</sup> Ribadeneira, *Life*, 107–9.

<sup>11</sup> Ribadeneira, *Life*, 152.

Frazier has shown for Renaissance Italy in *Possible Lives*, there was an extensive humanist hagiography that she terms “the hagiographic Renaissance.”<sup>12</sup> As she concludes, “The lives of the saints could be historically true, stylistically beautiful, and profoundly transformative. They could be, in all senses, possible.”<sup>13</sup> Ribadeneira wanted to show others, especially other Jesuits, that his *Life* of Ignatius was “historically true” and that it could also be “profoundly transformative.” By immersing themselves in the life of a saint, they too could become saintly.

At this point, it would be helpful to place Ribadeneira’s own life in the historical context of the sixteenth-century world, especially that of Spain. While his devotion to the church and the Society cannot be seriously questioned, Ribadeneira has been described as “a closet-converso Jesuit,” and his comments about Ignatius’s supposed desire to be of Jewish lineage (in order to identify in flesh and blood with Christ and the Blessed Mother) may have been driven in part by Ribadeneira’s own desire to stress Ignatius’s genuine conviction that Christians of converso background should not be barred from entering the Society.<sup>14</sup> In fact, in addition to Ribadeneira, a number of the most prominent early Jesuits were of converso background—including Diego Laínez, second superior general (in office 1558–65), and Juan de Polanco (1517–76), long-time secretary of the Society and Ignatius’s closest collaborator—which increasingly placed the Society in tension with “purity of blood” statutes in Spain and Portugal as well as with some of its own members.<sup>15</sup>

There is also the question of Ribadeneira’s status as a historian—and hagiographer—both within and without the Society. According to Katrina Olds, at least with regard to his collection of lives of the saints, the *Flos sanctorum*, Ribadeneira was too tied to the uncritical hagiographic traditions of the Middle Ages.<sup>16</sup> For different reasons, Superior General Claudio Acquaviva (in office 1581–1615) was critical of Ribadeneira’s 1588 history of the English Reformation because it touched on affairs of state,<sup>17</sup> which Acquaviva wanted Jesuits to avoid

<sup>12</sup> *Possible Lives: Authors and Saints in Renaissance Italy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 317.

<sup>13</sup> *Possible Lives*, 325. See also Katherine Van Liere, Simon Ditchfield, and Howard Louthan, eds., *Sacred History: Uses of the Christian Past in the Renaissance World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>14</sup> Robert Aleksander Maryks, “Ignatius of Loyola and the Converso Question,” in Maryks, *Companion to Ignatius of Loyola*, 84–102, esp. 84.

<sup>15</sup> See Robert A. Maryks, *The Jesuit Order as a Synagogue of Jews: Jesuits of Jewish Ancestry and Purity-of-Blood Laws in the Early Society of Jesus* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Thomas M. Cohen, “Racial and Ethnic Minorities in the Society of Jesus,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits*, ed. Thomas Worcester (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 199–214; Katrina B. Olds, *Forging the Past: Invented Histories in Counter-Reformation Spain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 87. On Laínez, see Paul Oberholzer, ed., *Diego Laínez (1512–1565) and His Generalate: Jesuit with Jewish Roots, Close Confidant of Ignatius of Loyola, Preeminent Theologian of the Council of Trent* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2015).

<sup>16</sup> Olds, *Forging the Past*, 120–21.

<sup>17</sup> See Ribadeneira’s *Ecclesiastical History of the Schism of the Kingdom of England*.

so as not to interfere with or cause a backlash against their primary, pastoral mission. This in turn raised the issue of censorship, which most early modern churches and states employed to a considerable degree.<sup>18</sup> As for Ribadeneira's *Vita*, despite its centrality in Ignatian iconography, and probably due to late sixteenth-century tensions between Italian and Spanish branches of the order concerning the centralization of authority, some Jesuits and others criticized the biography for being "overly Spanish."<sup>19</sup> Whether or not that was true, if Ignatius was to be eventually canonized, that decision would ultimately have to come from Rome.

In any event, Ribadeneira's *Vita* was part of a long Christian and Catholic tradition of the cult of the saints, involving both writing about and venerating holy men and women, whether in the early church, in the Middle Ages, or in the early modern era of Ignatius.<sup>20</sup> Of course, to some extent sanctity is in the eye of the beholder. In that sense, sanctity as a publicly and officially recognized and accepted phenomenon is as much a subjective social and cultural perception as an objective spiritual and religious one. In his study of historical anthropology, especially as related to early modern religion, Peter Burke stresses the factors of perception and communication. In particular, in his incisive chapter entitled "How to Be a Counter-Reformation Saint," he states that saints were "perceived in a stereotyped manner, or manners; there [was] a relatively small number of saintly roles, or routes to holiness." He goes on to enumerate five central ones: founder of a religious order, missionary, pastor or good shepherd, charitable activity, and mystic.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Olds, *Forging the Past*, 88–92. See also "Engaging in Affairs of State and in Politics Is Strongly and Severely Prohibited to Ours," Fifth General Congregation, decree 47, in *For Matters of Greater Moment: The First Thirty Jesuit General Congregations; A Brief History and a Translation of the Decrees*, ed. John W. Padberg, S.J., Martin D. O'Keefe, S.J., and John L. McCarthy, S.J. (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1994), 200–1. On his part, Ribadeneira tried to place the struggle of English Catholics within the wider context of church history and contemporary concerns. On Acquaviva, see Pierre-Antoine Fabre and Flavio Rurale, eds., *The Acquaviva Project: Claudio Acquaviva's Generalate (1581–1615) and the Emergence of Modern Catholicism* (Chestnut Hill, MA: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2017).

<sup>19</sup> See Silvia Mostaccio, "Debating Obedience in an Early Modern Context," in Fabre and Rurale, *Acquaviva Project*, 59–80, esp. 62–64.

<sup>20</sup> See Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), which was compiled around 1260. This classic work played an important role in Ignatius's own conversion, especially in his admiration for St. Dominic and St. Francis. As an example of this hagiography's wide and ongoing impact in the early modern era, see Morgan Ring, "Annotating the *Golden Legend* in Early Modern England," *Renaissance Quarterly* 72 (2019): 816–62. Among other major studies of saints and their cults, see Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Donald Weinstein and Rudolph M. Bell, *Saints and Society: The Two Worlds of Western Christendom, 1000–1700* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

<sup>21</sup> Peter Burke, *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy: Essays on Perception and Communication* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 48–62, esp. 55–56. See also Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*, 141–65; Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540–1770*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), who enumerates "seven archetypes of saints: founder, reformer, mystic, bishop, missionary, social worker, and

It is intriguing to note that in his biography, Ribadeneira describes how Ignatius manifested, directly or indirectly, all five of these paths to holiness and sainthood. Most obvious is Ignatius as founder. We have come to recognize that the origins and founding of the Society was in many ways a group effort, but for most of its history, the Society looked to Ignatius as *the* founder, a perception that Ribadeneira's *Life* played a significant role in establishing.<sup>22</sup> In fact, so persistent has been the idea that Ignatius was essentially the sole founder of the Jesuit order that even relatively recent writers have emphasized this supposedly unique role in the titles of their biographies.<sup>23</sup> But even among his contemporaries, Ignatius was already being perceived and presented as the founder of the Society and (as discussed in the next category below) a mystic. In promoting Ignatius as the founder, and comparing him to other founders, Polanco wrote: "The less [Ignatius] claimed for himself, the more the divine Goodness exalted him and allowed him to see some things that I do not know whether the founders of other orders were granted [to see] to such a degree."<sup>24</sup>

Another persistent theme in the *Life* is Ignatius as mystic. Ribadeneira mentions numerous occasions when Ignatius received divine illuminations, being almost overwhelmed with the gift of tears and graced with prolonged periods of mystical prayer. He notes, for instance,

with what continual and extraordinary illuminations of the Most Holy Trinity [Ignatius's] mind was filled, about the divine Essence, about the procession of the divine Persons, about their nature and operation. There one gets a glimpse of how he was taught about that most sacred mystery both through the hidden workings of the intellect as well as through sensory images. These illuminations were neither brief nor fleeting, but at times abundant and long lasting. They accompanied him in his room, at table, at home, and outdoors. They were a tide whose great power entirely absorbed him.<sup>25</sup>

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martyr"; 127–43, quoted at 127; Terence O'Reilly, "Ignatius of Loyola and the Counter-Reformation: The Hagiographic Tradition," *Heythrop Journal* 31 (1990): 439–70.

<sup>22</sup> See José García de Castro Valdes, "Ignatius of Loyola and His First Companions," in Maryks, *Companion to Ignatius of Loyola*, 66–83, esp. 67–69, 73.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Dalmases, *Ignatius of Loyola, Founder of the Jesuits*; Philip Caraman, *Ignatius Loyola: A Biography of the Founder of the Jesuits* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990); John Patrick Donnelly, *Ignatius of Loyola: Founder of the Jesuits* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2004).

<sup>24</sup> *Chronicon*, 414. See also J. Carlos Coupeau, S.J., "Juan de Polanco's Role as Secretary of Ignatius of Loyola: 'His Memory and Hands,'" in *Ite inflammate omnia: Selected Historical Papers from Conferences Held at Loyola and Rome in 2006*, ed. Thomas M. McCoog, S.J. (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2010), 109–27.

<sup>25</sup> Ribadeneira, *Life*, 282.

In addition to this and other general descriptions of Ignatius's mystical gifts, Ribadeneira highlights two particularly compelling mystical visions that Ignatius experienced. Paramount was the one at the Cardoner River, a "mental illumination [that] was so abundant and advanced that Ignatius himself claimed that all the rest of the illuminations and divine helps that he had received from God throughout his life [...] could not be compared with this single one."<sup>26</sup> Some years later, Ignatius had another transformative vision at La Storta, near Rome, which proved to be so significant in guiding the first companions to form a lasting spiritual bond and religious order. In an abandoned church, while Ignatius was fervently praying,

his heart changed and the "eyes of his mind" were so filled with brilliant light that he saw clearly how God the Father commended Ignatius and his companions in a loving way to God the Son as he was carrying the cross, and put them under the protection of his invincible right hand.

As to its impact, "This quite amazing divine vision marvelously encouraged and strengthened Ignatius, [...] [who] revealed his entire vision to his companions to raise their spirits and spur them on."<sup>27</sup> One writer well summarized Ignatius's experience at La Storta, while also placing it in the context of his broader mystical spirituality: "The graces of La Storta confirmed Ignatius' Trinitarian, christocentric, service and ecclesial mysticism."<sup>28</sup>

Two of the additional and interconnected saintly roles that Ribadeneira attributes to Ignatius are shepherd of souls and extensive charitable activity. From the time of his profound conversion in 1521, Ignatius was greatly concerned not only with the state of his own soul but also with that of all those around him, as seen perhaps most clearly in his development of the *Spiritual Exercises* and his desire to lead others through this opportunity for spiritual growth and transformation. As Ribadeneira recorded, Ignatius "composed a book of 'spiritual exercises,' as they are now called, based on a careful observation of his experiences. It is clear enough how helpful these exercises have been for Christendom everywhere." Moreover, the "productive impact of the Exercises is not confined to the sphere of religious life, for they embrace every human class, rank, office, age,

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<sup>26</sup> Ribadeneira, *Life*, 30.

<sup>27</sup> Ribadeneira, *Life*, 97–98.

<sup>28</sup> Harvey D. Egan, S.J., *Ignatius Loyola the Mystic* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1987), 55. For more on Ignatius's mysticism, see Darcy Donahue, "The Mysticism of Saint Ignatius of Loyola," in *A Companion to Jesuit Mysticism*, ed. Robert A. Maryks (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 6–35; W. W. Meissner, S.J., M.D., *Ignatius of Loyola: The Psychology of a Saint* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), esp. part 5; Hugo Rahner, S.J., *Ignatius the Theologian*, trans. Michael Barry (New York: Herder & Herder, 1968), which explores Ignatius as both a theologian and a mystic. With regard to the broader impact of Ignatius's asceticism and mysticism, see Rady Roldán-Figueroa, "Ignatius of Loyola and Juan de Avila on the Ascetic Life of the Laity," in Maryks, *Companion to Ignatius of Loyola*, 159–77.

and lifestyle.” Spiritually moved “by the Exercises [many individuals] have either made great corrections in a life that was on its way to ruin or they have brought about substantial improvements in a life that was good.”<sup>29</sup> Yet, as significant as the Exercises were in the lives of so many, Ribadeneira also wanted to emphasize that, despite opposition from various quarters, Ignatius’s spiritual insights were thoroughly orthodox and approved by the church. Thus,

the Apostolic See, after a careful investigation in which the “Exercises” were given a thorough examination, took a stand against the opponents, and by its authority not only permitted the use of the “Exercises” but even praised and encouraged that use. This is clear from the apostolic letter that Pope Paul III issued in 1548. Subsequently, the printed edition of the *Exercises* came out, bolstered by this authorization.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to specifically spiritual ministrations, Ignatius also immersed himself (and the Society) in works of charity, from giving his own clothing and alms to the downtrodden, to establishing houses in Rome and elsewhere for those in need and/or desiring a new way of life, including Jewish converts and other catechumens, prostitutes, orphans, and aspiring students.<sup>31</sup> As a telling example regarding troubled children, Ignatius

worked hard to provide relief for abandoned orphans. And so, by his effort, two residences were founded in Rome in which orphaned boys and girls, deprived of security and livelihood, are being rescued from the dangers of the times and from the troubles of poverty, to be set apart where they are trained in character, and given education and skills.<sup>32</sup>

On a broader scale, working “for the salvation of his neighbors, Ignatius accomplished these and several other [charitable] works in Rome. In achieving them, he kept to this plan: he collaborated with reliable, important, prudent people who were disposed toward every charitable work.”<sup>33</sup> In these and other ways, Ignatius’s charity—and sanctity—were presented as models of Christian living and apostolic outreach.

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<sup>29</sup> Ribadeneira, *Life*, 34–35.

<sup>30</sup> Ribadeneira, *Life*, 37. See also Moshe Sluhovsky, “Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises* and the Modern Self,” in Maryks, *Companion to Ignatius of Loyola*, 216–31.

<sup>31</sup> See Ribadeneira, *Life*, 170–75. See also Polanco, *Chronicon*, 1–6, 27, 59–65; O’Malley, *First Jesuits*, *passim*.

<sup>32</sup> Ribadeneira, *Life*, 174.

<sup>33</sup> Ribadeneira, *Life*, 175.

Even in the fifth category of saintliness (i.e., missionary), Ribadeneira indicates that Ignatius had been and continued to be an aspiring and, especially through his leadership in the Society, inspiring missionary. His primary desire and initiative after his conversion was to travel to the Holy Land in 1523, hoping to preach the Gospel to the Muslim population there. After that initial attempt was thwarted, years later he and the first companions planned to try again in the late 1530s, though once again that did not seem to be in accord with God's greater plans for them. Yet, ironically, although Ignatius himself was to spend most of the last fifteen years of his life working hard at his desk in Rome as superior general (1541–56), he encouraged and oversaw the first great wave of Jesuit missionary outreach across the globe, beginning with his beloved friend and disciple, Francis Xavier (1506–52), the “Apostle to the Indies.”<sup>34</sup> Thus, in all of the above highlighted categories of sanctity, Ribadeneira's *Life of Ignatius* appears to be a blueprint and manifestation of the life of a saint.<sup>35</sup>

At the same time, one of the numerous controversies in the era of the Reformation concerned the status and even the legitimacy of the cult of saints. Protestant reformers generally condemned this practice as, at a minimum, distracting from the sole honor and worship due to God and Christ alone, if not outright idolatry, especially in connection with the veneration of images and relics of saints. The Council of Trent, however, strongly reaffirmed the spiritual benefits of such practices in its decree “On the Invocation, Veneration, and Relics of Saints, and on Sacred Images.”<sup>36</sup> Still, in light of criticism of abuses from within and without, the church in this period clarified and centralized the process of saint-making. It is instructive that for a sixty-five-year span of the sixteenth century (1523–88), no new canonizations occurred. When Rome began to promulgate a new wave of saints in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the requirements were more stringent, including evidence of an individual's sanctity, especially as manifested through his or her miraculous intercession.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> See Ribadeneira, *Life*, 111–13, 333. For a global perspective, see Luke Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit Missions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>35</sup> For additional context, see J. Carlos Coupeau, “Five *Personae* of Ignatius of Loyola,” in Worcester, *Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits*, 32–51.

<sup>36</sup> H. J. [Henry Joseph] Schroeder, O.P., trans., *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (Rockford, IL: Tan Books, 1978), 215–17. See also John W. O'Malley, *Trent: What Happened at the Council* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Harvard, 2013), 243–44. With regard to the malleability and appropriation of saints and their *vitae* by both Protestants and Catholics, see, for example, Jennifer N. Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard: Reading Catherine of Siena in Late Medieval and Early Modern England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), which shows how Catherine's life and writings were appropriated by the famous Protestant martyrologist John Foxe, as well as by English Catholic recusants and exiles.

<sup>37</sup> Burke, *Historical Anthropology*, 48–51. See also Simon Ditchfield, “Coping with the *beati moderni*”: Canonization Procedure in the Aftermath of the Council of Trent,” in McCoog, *Itē inflammate omnia*, 413–39.

As mentioned above, it is interesting to note the changes and additions that Ribadeneira made from the earlier versions of his *Vita* to the critical Latin edition of 1586, on the eve of Rome's resumption of canonizations. In books 1–4, Ribadeneira narrates Ignatius's life from his origins to his "rest in the Lord."<sup>38</sup> These sections include numerous examples of holiness of life, but there are no explicit claims of miracles. A good example of variant interpretations of the power of Ignatius's prayer and intercession involved Simão Rodrigues (1510–79), one of the first companions, and his recovery from a serious illness. In Rodrigues's own account, Ignatius, though sick himself, travelled a good distance to assist his even sicker friend: "On the way [Ignatius] recovered from his fever and sensed in the Spirit of God that [Simão] would not die from the illness that afflicted him. [...] Then when he came to the sick man, he told him to be of good heart, indicating that he certainly was not going to die of his sickness," and Simão did recover.<sup>39</sup>

In the *Autobiography*, Ignatius is not recorded as having mentioned this event, but Ribadeneira describes it in his biography. As he wrote in book 2, on the way to visit his very ill friend, Ignatius

poured out prayers to God for Simão's health, and God assured him that the man would recover. [...] When he had reached Simão, lying in bed and almost consumed by the power of the illness, he embraced him, saying: "There is no reason to fear, Simão. You will be healed." And just so, he got better.<sup>40</sup>

However, in book 5, which is Ribadeneira's thematic account of Ignatius as a "saint," the biographer/hagiographer exclaimed, "Many things that I have recounted above could not have happened without a miracle, as for example, [...] the healing of Father Simão when he was laboring under a very serious illness [and] the prediction of his recovery."<sup>41</sup> But, keeping in mind his capacious view on the nature of miracles and sanctity, Ribadeneira hastens to add:

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<sup>38</sup> See Ribadeneira, *Life*, esp. 326–30.

<sup>39</sup> Joseph F. Conwell, S.J., *A Brief and Exact Account: The Recollections of Simão Rodrigues on the Origin and Progress of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2004), 63. For more on this controverted figure, see José Vaz de Carvalho, S.J., "The Rehabilitation of Simão Rodrigues, S.J.," in *The Mercurian Project: Forming Jesuit Culture, 1573–1580*, ed. Thomas M. McCoog, S.J. (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2004), 421–35.

<sup>40</sup> Ribadeneira, *Life*, 93.

<sup>41</sup> Ribadeneira, *Life*, 431.

Nevertheless, all these things, however great, certain, and wonderful [as] they are, I judge significantly inferior to those higher ones that involve helping the neighbor and that are linked with Ignatius's most pure and holy life. They [i.e., supernatural healings] are lesser miracles when compared with Ignatius's holiness.<sup>42</sup>

Yet, in keeping with the Tridentine church's criteria of sanctity, and even more dramatically than in previous iterations, in the *Illustrated Biography* of 1609 (the year Ignatius was beatified), an engraving of the incident of Rodrigues's recovery is accompanied with this caption: "His companion Simão Rodrigues was close to death, but though [Ignatius] himself was suffering from a fever, he quickly hastens to make a journey of eighteen Roman miles, and *heals him with an embrace*."<sup>43</sup> Thus, we see here a process of interpretation (and apparent amplification), culminating in the sainted Ignatius healing his dying friend simply by means of his physical embrace. This seems to support the contention that "for the Jesuits [and their contemporaries] the line between superstition and a supernatural gift for healing was sometimes thin," evidently even in the case of Ignatius.<sup>44</sup>

In book 5 of the *Life*, sections 1–12 describe Ignatius as a great and holy man, but section 13, the finale, is entitled "The Miracles That He Did." Here, Ribadeneira's approach appears to be twofold. On the one hand, he acknowledges that Ignatius (at least at the time of the writing of the biography) was not credited with a wide array of miracles believed to have occurred through his intercession. But this was also the case, he argues, with other great saints such as Augustine, Chrysostom, and Athanasius. On the other hand, in line with his spiritual perspective and understanding of what constitutes the miraculous, Ribadeneira argues,

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<sup>42</sup> Ribadeneira, *Life*, 432.

<sup>43</sup> James P. M. Walsh, S.J., trans., *Constructing a Saint through Images: The 1609 Illustrated Biography of Ignatius of Loyola* (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2008), engraving 50 (italics added).

<sup>44</sup> O'Malley, *First Jesuits*, 268.

I am so far from believing that there are no miracles to glorify Ignatius's life that I would say that many of the most outstanding ones are quite obvious. [...] Whether we should look at the origins of this Society, or its Institute, or its propagation, and the benefits that have come from it, we will certainly have no need to go in search of miracles: we would recognize that there are many miracles involved, through which God has shown both that this is his own work and that the nature of the root appears in the stem and the fruit.<sup>45</sup>

In other words, Ignatius's sanctity, his pivotal role in founding the Society, and its remarkable growth and increasingly global impact within fifty years of its creation were all manifestations of divine providence and were in their own way miraculous.<sup>46</sup> Many of Ribadeneira's fellow Jesuits clearly believed likewise. Therefore, the Fifth General Congregation in 1594, followed by the Sixth General Congregation in 1608, passed decrees promoting the canonizations of both "Blessed Ignatius and Blessed Francis Xavier."<sup>47</sup> In fact, in the decades after their deaths, Xavier had become more famous and revered than Ignatius in the wider Catholic world outside the Society, which, while greatly desiring the canonizations of both of these outstanding early Jesuits, was ill at ease with the possibility of Xavier being canonized first, even before the "founder."<sup>48</sup> This is apparent in the wording of the decree of General Congregation 5 in 1594:

In the name of a number of provinces and individuals, a proposal was made to petition the Apostolic See to canonize the founder of our Society, Ignatius, of blessed memory. Then the congregation decreed that the petition for canonization ought to be made not only for Father Ignatius but also for Father Francis Xavier; and it committed to Father General this task: If solid grounds exist for it in the judgment of experts, then he should make the petition at an opportune time in the name of the congregation.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ribadeneira, *Life*, 422–23. See also 430.

<sup>46</sup> Already, by 1580, only forty years after its founding, the Society had five thousand members. Moreover, "Jesuits conducted 144 colleges and wound about the world a band of mission stations which stretched from Japan, through the East Indies, Africa, and Latin America"; Bangert, *History of the Society of Jesus*, 96.

<sup>47</sup> Padberg, O'Keefe, and McCarthy, *For Matters of Greater Moment*, 212 (GC 5, decree 71), and 218 (GC 6, decree 3).

<sup>48</sup> Within the wider church, especially in Rome, there were also some tensions and maneuvering regarding the possible canonizations of Ignatius and Philip Neri, founder of the Oratorians; see A. D. [Anthony David] Wright, "'La Sua Santità non inclina niente': The Papacy and the Canonization of Ignatius Loyola," in McCoog, *Ite inflammate omnia*, 441–55.

<sup>49</sup> Decree 71, in Padberg, O'Keefe, and McCarthy, *For Matters of Greater Moment*, 212.

In addition to the spiritual prestige that the beatification and canonization of its two most prominent members would bring to the relatively new religious order, these actions would also serve to unify the Society, which had experienced some divisions by the late sixteenth century. As Simon Ditchfield has astutely noted,

Given the emphasis placed in Ribadeneira's narrative on Loyola as the true shape and model of the Society as divinely-inspired author of the Constitutions, [...] Acquaviva [with the support of the general congregation] sought to unify the Jesuits beneath the twin banners of strong internal governance (Loyola) and vibrant external mission (Xavier).<sup>50</sup>

As it turned out, Ignatius was beatified first, in 1609; Xavier (who died several years before Ignatius, in 1552) was beatified a decade later, in 1619. Both, however, were canonized on the same day—March 12, 1622—along with two other Spaniards, Teresa of Ávila and Isidore of Madrid, and one Italian, Philip Neri.<sup>51</sup> Yet, saint-making involved in no small part image-making, both written and visual. With regard to Ignatius, there was a decided hagiographical shift in the later sixteenth century. In Evonne Levy's interpretation of the Jesuits' propagation ("propaganda") of the sanctity of their founder: "The ideal form of Ignatius's reformed soul was made visible in his hagiography and in visual images starting in the 1580s in the effort to fix his image for the future and to secure his canonization."<sup>52</sup> Ribadeneira's definitive Latin *Vita* of 1586, with its decidedly more hagiographical tone, was clearly central to the Society's canonization project. It is important to note that Ribadeneira's initial de-emphasis of miracles may have "marked a progressive trend in hagiography, a move toward a humanist framework for sacred history, rather than a sign of deficiency."<sup>53</sup> His final version, however, was somewhat more in keeping with traditional hagiography and, in this case, the Society's goal of fostering the cult of Ignatius as a prelude to his canonization.

A preliminary step on the road to the ultimate goal of canonization was beatification, which occurred in 1609. An illustrated life of Ignatius, *Vita beati patris Ignatii Loiolae* (The life of Blessed Father Ignatius of Loyola), was published

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<sup>50</sup> Ditchfield, "Coping with the *beati moderni*," 423.

<sup>51</sup> See Thomas James Dandeleit, *Spanish Rome, 1500–1700* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 160–87, esp. 180–87. See also Franco Mormando, "The Making of the Second Jesuit Saint: The Campaign for the Canonization of Francis Xavier, 1555–1622," in *Francis Xavier and the Jesuit Missions in the Far East*, ed. Franco Mormando and Jill G. Thomas (Chestnut Hill, MA: Jesuit Institute of Boston College, 2006), 9–23. In his classic work on art history, *Civilisation*, Kenneth Clark said of the canonization of all these "great spirits" on the same day: "It was like the baptism of a regenerated Rome"; *Civilisation: A Personal View* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 175.

<sup>52</sup> *Propaganda and the Jesuit Baroque* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 118.

<sup>53</sup> *Propaganda and the Jesuit Baroque*, 140–41.

in Rome in conjunction with and celebration of that joyful (but also in important ways anticipatory) event. A sumptuous collection of eighty-one copperplate engravings accompanied Ribadeneira's reissued *Vita*, "with the images keyed to the text. These prints provided the first real canon of Ignatian images, repeated over and over in various media through the precanonization years and also thereafter."<sup>54</sup>

Among the most significant of the Ignatian images were those produced by one of the greatest image-makers of the Catholic baroque: Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640). As we have seen, by the early seventeenth century pressure was building, with varied degrees of intensity inside and outside the Society of Jesus, for the canonizations of both Ignatius and Xavier. The Jesuits in the Low Countries turned to Rubens, who produced remarkable portraits and altarpieces of both prospective saints—though the emphasis here will be on Ignatius. A portrait of 1616 ("Saint Ignatius of Loyola") presents Ignatius as a visionary, a sole figure dressed in priestly chasuble, augmented with the hagiographic features of a halo and divine illumination breaking through a darkened background, in essence guiding Ignatius, who is absorbed in mystical contemplation. This was followed up by an altarpiece ("The Miracles of Saint Ignatius of Loyola") for the Jesuit church in Antwerp, probably commissioned in 1617 and installed the following year. In the words of art historian Willibald Sauerländer,

Ignatius still looks like the visionary in the 1616 image, but he is no longer a solitary, nocturnal figure. Instead, he has been assigned other, public roles of significance for his projected canonization: he is presented to us as the founder of the order and a thaumaturge—a miracle worker.<sup>55</sup>

The lack of postmortem miracles had weighed against Ignatius's canonization process moving forward. Rubens's dramatic altarpiece, showing Ignatius exorcizing demons and healing the sick, fostered his cult by demonstrating what this saintly figure purportedly had done and would continue to do for those who sought his intercession. It is particularly relevant to note that Rubens's hagiographic source for his depiction of Ignatius as exorcist and healer was Ribadeneira's biography; not that he slavishly followed that text, but rather fused its account of miracles with his own creative artistic imagination and, likely, his patrons' desire

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<sup>54</sup> *Propaganda and the Jesuit Baroque*, 125. See also *Constructing a Saint through Images*, including "The Many Lives of Ignatius of Loyola: Future Saint," 1–34, and the "Annotated Facsimile," 37ff.

<sup>55</sup> *The Catholic Rubens: Saints and Martyrs*, trans. David Dollenmayer (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2014), 78–97, quoted at 82. See also Anna C. Knapp, "Meditation, Ministry, and Visual Rhetoric in Peter Paul Rubens's Program for the Jesuit Church in Antwerp," in *The Jesuits II: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540–1773*, ed. John W. O'Malley, S.J. et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 157–81; and Knapp, "Seeing in Sequence: Rubens's Ceiling Cycle for the Jesuit Church in Antwerp," *Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art* 55 (2004): 154–95.

to promote the cult—and canonization—of Ignatius as founder, mystic, and healer. At the same time, with so gifted an artist as Rubens, there is considerable spiritual tension within the altarpiece’s framework, although good clearly triumphs over evil. As Sauerländer concludes, “this unprecedented, riven picture is more than just a piece of propaganda ordered by the Antwerp Jesuits to promote the canonization of Ignatius. Intellect and nature, spirituality and tempestuous emotion, passion and dispassionate Stoicism—the sainted and the demonic—are played off against one another” in what may well be Rubens’s “most intelligent” altarpiece.<sup>56</sup>

These masterpieces were but a few of the innumerable works of art and architecture that the Jesuits sponsored as part of their expansive religious and spiritual mission, both in Europe and overseas, which included the promotion of prospective Jesuit saints.<sup>57</sup> A clear example, connected, as we have seen, with the campaign for the canonization of Ignatius, was a closely related one on behalf of Xavier. Just as his Jesuit patrons had asked him to do for Ignatius, Rubens produced a portrait of “Saint Francis Xavier” (1616), a mystic in profound contemplation, both drawn to and guided by divine illumination. Rubens also produced a second, counterpart altarpiece for the Jesuit church in Antwerp. Whereas the artist presented Ignatius as founder and healer/exorcist, “The Miracles of Saint Francis Xavier” (probably 1617) stresses the latter’s double role as missionary and thaumaturge—in his case with the gift of even raising the dead.<sup>58</sup> Though it is not clear what role this iconography played, Xavier was beatified in 1619 and, along with Ignatius, canonized in 1622.<sup>59</sup> Yet, as great as Xavier was, comparing Rubens’s portraits and altarpieces, Ignatius emerges as an even more central figure, not only in the Society, but in the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant of the seventeenth century. This is even more apparent in Jesuit art and architecture of the later seventeenth century, seen quite explicitly and dramatically in Rome in the Chapel of St. Ignatius in the Church of the Gesù as well as in the Church of St. Ignatius and the Casa Professa.<sup>60</sup>

We can conclude this study of history and hagiography by returning to the paradox of Ribadeneira’s great and influential but partially flawed biography of

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<sup>56</sup> Sauerländer, *Catholic Rubens*, 80–90, quoted at 89–90.

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, Gauvin Alexander Bailey, *Between Renaissance and Baroque: Jesuit Art in Rome, 1565–1610* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003); and Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America, 1542–1773* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

<sup>58</sup> Sauerländer, *Catholic Rubens*, 90–97. Sauerländer also discusses another great Spanish mystic and saint, Teresa of Ávila, at 104–13.

<sup>59</sup> See Maria Cristina Osswald, “The Iconography and Cult of Francis Xavier, 1552–1640,” *Archivum historicum Societatis Iesu* 71/142 (2002): 259–77, which argues that, in life and in death, the iconography of Ignatius and Xavier were linked.

<sup>60</sup> See Levy, *Propaganda and the Jesuit Baroque*, 130–83. With regard to the “diffusion” of the Chapel of St. Ignatius, see 205–32. See also Heinrich Pfeiffer, S.J., “The Iconography of the Society of Jesus,” in *The Jesuits and the Arts, 1540–1773*, ed. John W. O’Malley, S.J., and Gauvin Alexander Bailey (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph’s University Press, 2005), 199–228.

Ignatius. In his own mind, Ribadeneira very likely planned and probably believed that he had written a reasonably objective historical account of a great man who had become a great saint. Yet, the hagiographic strain is undeniable throughout much of his narrative, and it becomes even more explicit in book 5. Ribadeneira's biography became truly iconic and canonical, both in its depth of valuable historical information on Ignatius and the early Society, and as a definitive model for future accounts of Ignatius—the man whom God had transformed into a saint.