

# STUDIES

## in the Spirituality of Jesuits

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Saint Ignatius and the Jesuit Theological Tradition

by

Avery Dulles, S.J.



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

## THE AMERICAN ASSISTANCY SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

consists of a group of Jesuits from various provinces who are listed below. The members were appointed by the Fathers Provincial of the United States.

The Purpose of the Seminar is to study topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially American Jesuits, and to communicate the results to the members of the Assistancy. The hope is that this will lead to further discussion among all American Jesuits--in private, or in small groups, or in community meetings. All this is done in the spirit of Vatican Council II's recommendation to religious institutes to recapture the original charismatic inspiration of their founders and to adapt it to the changed circumstances of modern times. The members of the Seminar welcome reactions or comments in regard to the topics they publish.

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

### THE MEMBERS OF THE SEMINAR ARE:

- Joseph A. Appleyard, S.J., Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts 02167. 617-969-0100
- Francis X. Cleary, S.J., Department of Theology, Saint Louis University, 3634 Lindell Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63108. 314-658-2868
- Philip C. Fischer, S.J., Secretary of the Assistancy Seminar, Fusz Memorial, 3700 West Pine Blvd., St. Louis, Missouri 63108. 314-652-3700
- George E. Ganss, S.J., Chairman of the Assistancy Seminar and Editor of its *Studies*. His address is: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, Fusz Memorial, 3700 West Pine Blvd., St. Louis, Missouri 63108. 314-652-5737
- Howard J. Gray, S.J., Weston School of Theology, 3 Phillips Place, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138. 617-492-1960
- Gerald R. Grosh, S.J., Loyola University, 6525 N. Sheridan Road, Chicago, Illinois 60626. 312-274-3000
- Robert J. Henle, S.J., St. Louis University, 221 North Grand Blvd., St. Louis, Missouri 63103. 314-658-3067
- Peter J. Henriot, S.J., Center of Concern, 3700 13th St. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017. 202-635-2757
- Edwin J. McDermott, S.J., University of San Francisco, Golden Gate at Parker Avenue, San Francisco, California 94117. 415-666-0600
- John W. O'Malley, S.J., Weston School of Theology, 3 Phillips Place, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138. 617-492-1960
- Joseph A. Tetlow, S.J., Jesuit House of Studies, 6318 Freret Street, New Orleans, Louisiana 70118. 504-865-2725

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3700 West Pine Boulevard  
St. Louis, Missouri 63108

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## Editor's Foreword

With this issue of our *Studies* we welcome to our pages one already well known to most of our readers from his many books and articles, Father Avery Dulles. He is Professor of Systematic Theology in the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., and a past President of the Catholic Theological Society of America.

During the current academic year of 1981-1982, while on leave from his teaching at the Catholic University, he is lecturing on theology at Boston College as holder of the Gasson Chair. This year, too, the University Chaplaincy there is offering a series of lectures on Jesuit topics to the students, faculty members, and general public. Father Dulles accepted an invitation to be one of the speakers and to treat St. Ignatius. Hence on November 18, 1981, he delivered, to an audience of some 120 persons, a lecture entitled: "Is There an Ignatian Theology?" One of our members who was present suggested that he submit his text to our Seminar. He acquiesced, and consequently we discussed it in our meeting of December 11-13, 1981. Consensus arose that we should publish the paper in these *Studies*. Father Dulles graciously complied with suggestions made by our members about a few revisions. The end result is that, with gratitude to him, we now offer his insights to our readers.

But does this article on theology and a theological tradition fit appropriately into this series of studies on spirituality? Yes, for theological knowledge of the great truths which God has revealed is one of the most important foundations of spiritual doctrine and practice. The four characteristics of Ignatius' thought which Father Dulles singles out as noteworthy influential in the Jesuit theological tradition are equally characteristic of Ignatius' and the Society's spirituality. They are factors which have contributed much toward making that tradition into a spirituality so manifestly Scriptural and theological. Clearly, the reflections can well lead to many fruitful discussions and applications in both areas, theology and spirituality.

George E. Ganss, S.J., Chairman  
The American Assistancy Seminar





# SAINT IGNATIUS AND THE JESUIT THEOLOGICAL TRADITION

by

Avery Dulles, S.J.  
Department of Theology  
The Catholic University of America  
Washington, D.C. 20064

## I. IGNATIUS AS A SEMINAL THEOLOGIAN

The answer to the question "Is there an Ignatian theology?" will depend in no small measure on what theology is held to be. I had best begin, therefore, with some indication of my own point of view. Theology, I believe, is a creative task. It is not just metaphysical photography--although even photography, we know, can be creative. The theologian, using the themes and symbols provided by Scripture and tradition, attempts an imaginative construing that gives meaning and direction to the Christian life. Such a construal cannot be exhaustive or adequate to the potentialities of the Christian sources, but it can be faithful, coherent, and relatively adequate to the experience of a certain number of Christians. Scripture and tradition, as theological sources, may be compared to a musical score. They challenge the creative talents of the interpreter and at the same time direct them.

If these generalizations are correct, it would seem to follow that types of theology rest not so much on agreed sets of theses as on commonalities of experience, outlook, and concern. Theologians of a given stamp are those who share the same radical experience of what it means to be a believer and a Christian.

### A. Assessments of Ignatius as a Theologian

To clarify this evening's question, I should like to suggest that Ignatian theology, if there be any such thing, does not necessarily involve adherence to a body of particular theological positions found in the writings of St. Ignatius. Ignatius, though he had studied theology, was not a professional theologian. Although one can occasionally find him inclining

toward one side or another of a theological controversy, he does not usually argue his positions as theologians do. Whatever academic theology can be detected in his works is very likely an echo of what his professors had taught him and does necessarily not bear the distinctive mark of his own personality.

For all that, Ignatius was accounted by many a theologian. Jerónimo Nadal, who knew Ignatius' mind well and accordingly had his special confidence, referred to him as "our Father, the theologian."<sup>1</sup> A learned doctor of the Sorbonne, recalling the saint as a student at Paris, averred that he had never heard anyone speak of theological matters with such mastery and power.<sup>2</sup> More than four hundred years later Karl Rahner declared: "The theology hidden in the simple words of the *Exercises* belongs to the most important fundamentals of contemporary Western Christianity. In fact, it has yet to be fully assimilated by the Church's academic theology."<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere Rahner expresses the "conviction that the real theological (and not only the spiritual) significance of Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* to this day has not been exhausted by their commentators, and much less by the traditional theology, but presents a not-yet-accomplished task to today's theology."<sup>4</sup>

#### B. Sources of Ignatius' Theological Insights

The theological insights of Ignatius were due in great part to sublime mystical experiences, such as the vision by the banks of the river Cardoner, of which he declared: "I beheld, sensed within myself, and penetrated in spirit all the mysteries of the Christian faith."<sup>5</sup> Such supernatural visions, though they nourished the theology of Ignatius himself, were not transmissible to his followers. What he did transmit, however, was a perspective on the Christian life centered on certain symbols and concerns-- a perspective capable of engendering in reflective minds a certain distinctive type of theology.

Johannes Metz lays down the principle that what is most characteristic of a person's thought is not the explicit statements but the perspective, the point of view, or the horizon in relation to which all statements are made.<sup>6</sup> Harvey Egan rightly points out that this is especially true of a seminal thinker such as Ignatius, whose explicit theology was rather

undeveloped. Egan himself has written admirably of the "mystical horizon" that inspires the thought of Ignatius.<sup>7</sup> In this paper I shall concentrate not simply on Ignatius himself but on what I call the Ignatian theological tradition. My concern is to point out what kinds of themes, emphases, and positions are consonant with the perspectives or horizons of Ignatius.

## II. THEMES AND EMPHASES IN IGNATIAN THEOLOGY

For my illustrations I shall rely principally on Jesuit theologians. This is not because only Jesuits can have the Ignatian spirit, nor because all Jesuit theologians are authentically Ignatian, but because where we find Jesuits gravitating toward views that in some way correspond to Ignatian insights, one may legitimately presume an Ignatian derivation. I am fully conscious, however, that many Jesuits have failed to develop a truly Ignatian theology, and my lecture is partly intended to draw attention to this deficiency.

Nadal, reflecting on the significance of Ignatius' vision by the Cardoner, reminds his Jesuit audience that it is possible to receive "a sublime illumination in which the supreme truths are all united together in one single embracing vision."<sup>8</sup> Since Ignatius himself contemplated the mysteries of the faith in this synthetic manner, one cannot divide the different aspects without some distortion of his thought. For purposes of exposition, however, I shall speak separately of four features which should, in my opinion, characterize Ignatian theology, as they characterized the religious thought of Ignatius himself. Such theology must be Christocentric, anthropocentric, ecclesiocentric, and theocentric. In my concluding remarks I shall attempt to show that these four aspects really coincide.

### A. Christocentrism

Anyone reading the *Spiritual Exercises*, the *Constitutions*, and the letters of St. Ignatius cannot help but be struck by the frequency with which he refers to Jesus as "Creator and Lord." In the solemn oblation of the Kingdom he addresses Jesus as "Eternal Lord of all things."<sup>9</sup> Jesus for Ignatius is the Lord who abases himself, who hangs on the cross, and dies in utter poverty, and all this for the sake of our redemption.

Ignatius cannot withhold his astonishment at the mercy that moved the Divine Majesty to take on our infirmities and suffer a cruel death that we might live.

This focus on Jesus as crucified Creator has theological implications that are worked out not so much by Ignatius as by the tradition. In many Jesuit theologians, such as Teilhard de Chardin and Karl Rahner, creation is seen as intrinsically related to Jesus Christ as its center and crown. Such authors are fond of quoting from Paul's letter to the Colossians, "In him all things were created, in heaven and on earth" (1:16). Teilhard speaks of the cosmic Christ who is at work in the whole universe drawing all things to himself. Rahner insists that creation never had a purely natural destiny, and that all finite reality is oriented to Christ as the highest possible instance of God's self-communication. The Kingdom of God in Christ is the end for which all things have been made.

In the scholasticism of the later middle ages there was a dispute as to whether the Word would have become flesh had it not been for the sin of Adam. Duns Scotus is reported as holding the affirmative and Thomas the negative opinion. Without taking a clear position on this precise point, Ignatius holds that, prior to the Fall, the Incarnation was already in the divine plan, but that only after the Fall was it revealed that the Son would be a figure of suffering.<sup>10</sup> Many Jesuit theologians, working out of the Christocentrism of Ignatius, have maintained that even if Adam had not sinned, Christ would have become man.<sup>11</sup>

The high Christology of St. Ignatius affects also the theology of sin. For him there are two great spiritual forces at work in history, Christ and Antichrist. There are two standards or banners between which we must choose--those of Christ and of Satan. As Piet Schoonenberg, among others, has explained, sin has a history that parallels in reverse the history of redemption.<sup>12</sup> Beginning with the Fall of the angels and our first parents, sin accumulates in history till it comes to a climax at the Crucifixion--the high point of the two histories of salvation and of perdition. Viewed in a Christological perspective, sin appears as a far more serious thing than a mere rejection of right order or even of God's eternal law. At root it is a repudiation of God's loving self-gift in Christ.

In treating of Christ himself, Ignatian theology insists on both the humanity and the divinity, while safeguarding the distinction between the two. In the *Spiritual Exercises* Ignatius made a great deal of the human experience of Christ. Reacting against a certain tendency to neglect the humanity of Christ, Ignatian theology has insisted that Jesus was not a mere mask for the divine person. Truly a man like others, he learned, was surprised, and was disappointed; he hoped, feared, and prayed, as the rest of us do. In all this he became the leader whom we are to follow. In the words of St. Ignatius, "he gave us as example that in all things possible we might seek, through the aid of his grace, to imitate and follow him, since he is the way that leads to life."<sup>13</sup> In the past generation Jesuit theologians such as Galtier, Lonergan, and Rahner, faithful to the implications of Ignatian spirituality, have insisted on the autonomy of Christ's human consciousness. It was as man that he suffered and died.

In meditating on the mysteries of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, however, Ignatius never overlooked the fact that this man is the Creator and Redeemer of the world. In him God's love becomes present in our midst. Karl Rahner, in his retreat conferences and theological essays, depicts Jesus as a living symbol in whom God's redemptive love visibly shines forth. The Sacred Heart, as a real symbol of Christ's innermost being, is not mentioned by Ignatius himself, but the devotion has spontaneously flourished among his followers. It is powerfully defended in many essays of Karl Rahner, whose ideas seem to have directly influenced Pius XII's encyclical on the Sacred Heart, *Haurietis aquas*.

As Jesus is the focus of the Christian's life, so also, according to many Ignatian theologians, he must be the focus of theology. Whereas the Thomists commonly define theology in terms of God himself as its formal object, many Jesuits, with Emile Mersch, prefer to define theology in terms of its integral object as the discipline that deals with the "total Christ."<sup>14</sup> Jesuit theology thus tends to be centered on Christ rather than simply on God as God.

## B. Anthropocentrism

The first word of the *Spiritual Exercises* is *homo*, man. In an earlier lecture of this series,<sup>15</sup> Fr. John W. O'Malley has spoken of the optimistic,

world-affirming spirituality of the Renaissance, and of the deep imprint it made on the early Jesuits, including possibly Ignatius himself. Even before he encountered the Italian Renaissance, Ignatius was intensely engaged in exploring the dynamism of the human subject. In his early writings he already evinces a deep respect for the manifold aspects of human nature: will, reason, emotion, imagination, and bodily senses. Though these powers need to be disciplined and kept in check, each of them is to be preserved and cultivated so that God may be praised the more.

In his directives concerning theological education Ignatius insisted on a strong foundation in the humanities and in philosophy so that the study of the sacred sciences might be enriched by culture and reason. "Since the arts and natural sciences dispose the intellectual powers for theology," he wrote in his *Constitutions*, "and are useful for the perfect understanding and use of it, and also by their own nature help toward the same ends, they should be treated with fitting diligence and by learned professors."<sup>16</sup>

The Jesuit apostolates, from the beginning, have been marked by respect for human culture in its various forms. Jesuit schools cultivated poetry and rhetoric, drama and music. In their missionary endeavors, the sons of St. Ignatius strove valiantly to make Christianity at home in the lands where it was being implanted, as we read in the lives of Matteo Ricci, Roberto di Nobili, and João de Britto. The Jesuit missionaries made it a custom to observe and report on the cultures they encountered, and their optimistic appraisals contributed indirectly to the myth of the "noble savage" that was sometimes used against Christianity during the Enlightenment.

The great voyages of discovery in the sixteenth century raised with new urgency the question of the salvation of persons who had never heard the gospel. Many theologians, building on the Ignatian idea that all creation was affected by God's saving act in Christ, held that grace and salvation were available even before the arrival of the missionaries. Seventeenth-century Spanish Jesuits such as Juan de Ripalda and Juan de Lugo excogitated bold new theories to explain how unbelievers could be saved. Ripalda's opinion that every naturally virtuous act was elevated by the grace of Christ met with considerable resistance, but it has been revived in somewhat new form by Karl Rahner, and has fed into the latter's

theory of anonymous Christianity. A truly Ignatian theology will not look on Christ as the Lord of Christians alone, but will take seriously his role as universal Savior. It will build on the statement of Ignatius: "We must consider all creatures . . . as bathed in the blood of Christ."<sup>17</sup>

The *Spiritual Exercises* show a remarkable concern for human freedom. Ignatius carefully refrains from telling the exercitant what to imagine, remember, or decide; he also forbids the director to intrude between the soul and God. "The Director of the Exercises, as a balance in equilibrium, should permit the Creator to deal directly with the creature, and the creature directly with its Creator and Lord" ([15]). Each individual is expected to find God and reach existential decisions in complete liberty, in that inner sanctuary where the person is directly in communion with its Lord.

Faithful to its founder, the Ignatian tradition has been conspicuous for its zeal to vindicate human freedom in many areas. The first of these areas is the theology of grace. Ignatius himself in the *Spiritual Exercises* ([369]) warned against speaking of grace in such a way "that the poison of doing away with liberty is engendered." Half a century later Luis de Molina produced his monumental tome, *The Concordance of Free Will with the Gifts of Grace* (1588). Although the Molinist system was not a fully satisfying solution, it served as a rallying point for opponents of determinism. Human history, for Ignatian theologians, is not a marionette show in which God pulls all the strings. Grace is a gentle solicitation that respects and even enhances freedom of choice.

A second area in which the followers of St. Ignatius took up the pen on behalf of liberty was moral theology. In the face of any rigorism that would minimize the zone of moral freedom, the Jesuits developed the system of probabilism, memorably defended in the *Epitome of Moral Theology* published by Hermann Busenbaum in 1650. Probabilism said in effect that obligations are to be proved, not assumed, and that in case of doubt the presumption is in favor of freedom. While properly emphasizing the limits of law, the Jesuit tradition in moral theology did not capitalize sufficiently on the Ignatian logic of existential discernment. As Karl Rahner has observed, the *Spiritual Exercises* still remains the only detailed exposition of a method of discovering God's will in individual cases not determined by

God's general legislative decrees.<sup>18</sup>

A third area in which freedom became crucial was the political. In many quarters the Jesuits of the early centuries opposed the divine right of kings, favored government by consent of the governed, and questioned the right of church authorities to intervene in purely political matters. In 1599 Juan Mariana dedicated to King Philip of Spain his work *The Monarch and His Training*, in which he incidentally touched on the question of tyrannicide. His opinion that under certain circumstances assassination could be justified aroused much official anger and was condemned by religious superiors. The theory nevertheless harmonizes with what Dietrich Bonhoeffer was to contend when faced by Hitler's massive tyranny.

In the twentieth century the American Jesuit John Courtney Murray, again in the face of official opposition, did more than any other individual to obtain Catholic recognition for the principle of religious freedom. His axiom that freedom is to be allowed as far as possible, and curtailed only when necessary, written into the documents of Vatican II, stands in the best tradition of Ignatian theology.

Because the establishment of the Jesuit order coincided with the Counter Reformation, Jesuits were inevitably drawn into the polemics of the day. It was an age in which accusations of heresy were venomously exchanged. Fortunately Ignatius himself, who suffered from unwarranted accusations, insisted that the orthodoxy of any Christian writer should be supposed until the opposite was proved. Inspired by a sense of fairness and decency, many Jesuits helped to raise the tone of religious controversy. Robert Bellarmine in his day was considered insufficiently papal and excessively soft on Protestants, but his controversial works have stood up well under the test of time. When the season came for ecumenism in the twentieth century, many Jesuits were prepared to emphasize and, if possible, enlarge the points of agreement with non-Catholic Christians. Ecumenists such as Cardinal Bea, Gustave Weigel, and others showed a moderation and breadth of vision that went far beyond what would have been possible in the time of Ignatius himself.

Respectful of freedom and of the variety of human cultures, Jesuit missionary effort has long included a dimension of dialogue. Teilhard de Chardin, who regarded science as his mission territory, developed close and friendly relations with scientific humanists such as Julian Huxley.



The dialogue with Marxism has been promoted by Jesuits such as Henri de Lubac, Jean-Yves Calvez, Gustav Wetter, and Arthur McGovern. Interreligious dialogue has been carried on by Jesuits in Asia, where they are today in serious conversation with Buddhist and Hindu intellectuals.<sup>19</sup>

Theological dialogue of this kind, while by no means a monopoly of Jesuits, is faithful to the Ignatian tradition. It respects the freedom and integrity of the interlocutor and maintains an atmosphere in which each party can learn from the other, thus building the foundations for greater agreement in the future. Dialogue is a remedy for the spirit of rivalry and self-assertion which Ignatius himself condemned as one of the prime obstacles to truth and unity both within his order and in the Church at large.

### C. Ecclesiocentrism

"What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I to do for Christ?" These questions, which the retreatant is to ask himself in the First Exercise of the First Week, reveal the practical orientation of Ignatian spirituality. For Ignatius, Jesus is not a remote figure to be studied in books, but a living Lord at work in the world today. Contrasting the *Spiritual Exercises* with comparable works of its day, Father Leturia notes the originality of St. Ignatius:

The ideal of the King and the Two Standards was not unknown before, but as a result of this constructive transformation it took on a completely new meaning: henceforth Christ the eternal King was for Ignatius to be a living King actively at work here and now in this world, who has not completely fulfilled the mission given him by his Father to bring the whole world under his rule, and who therefore is here and now seeking noble and generous companions and friends who desire to prove their loyalty in battle.<sup>20</sup>

St. Ignatius was enough of a Renaissance man to see the individual as deliberately choosing whether to follow Christ, but he did not stop on a note of religious individualism. An affirmative response to Christ's call means for him association with others in the Church. Although he wrote frequently about the Church, and even prepared a theological treatise for the use of the emperor of Ethiopia, his lived ecclesiology is more profound than his explicit teaching.

Ignatius speaks with great affection of the "hierarchical Church," a

term which he himself apparently coined,<sup>21</sup> and describes that Church under a variety of metaphors, such as Mother, Bride, and especially Mystical Body. In considering this last image, Ignatius emphasizes that the same Holy Spirit animates both Christ and his Church. In the twentieth century, the theology of the Mystical Body was impressively developed with the help of Jesuit theologians such as Emile Mersch and Sebastian Tromp, the latter of whom played a major role in the drafting of Pius XII's encyclical on the Mystical Body of Christ.

Without prejudice to the image of the Body of Christ, I would think that the underlying vision of the Church in the mind of Ignatius is best conveyed by the term "community of disciples." For him the Church was an association of persons totally dedicated to the establishment of the reign of God in response to Christ's gracious call. Among contemporary theologians Jon Sobrino may be mentioned for his thoroughly Ignatian perception of the link between Christian faith and active discipleship, though Sobrino himself does not exploit the ecclesiological potential of this theme.<sup>22</sup> In several recent articles I myself have tried to sketch the foundations for an ecclesiology of discipleship.<sup>23</sup>

As a disciple of the living Lord, Ignatius wants to give precisely that response which is proportioned to the call of Christ here and now. Pondering what would later be called the signs of the times, he became increasingly conscious of standing at a historical crossroads. The discovery of the New World and of the passage eastward to India opened up vast new possibilities for enthroning Christ in the hearts of millions who had never previously heard his name. The Protestant Reformation in Germany and Switzerland posed a second challenge to which Ignatius and his companions felt called to respond. Thirdly, the decadence of the Church in many parts of Catholic Europe, with the appalling ignorance and worldliness of priests and bishops, called for a vigorous apostolate of religious education and spiritual reform. Into all these channels Ignatius threw his full resources.

In subsequent centuries these three areas of the apostolate were submitted to theological reflection, so that whole new branches of theology came to maturity. Missiology developed by giant strides from its humble beginnings with Francis Xavier to the learned essays of Fathers Pierre Charles and Joseph Neuner in the twentieth century. Apologetics and

controversial literature progressed from Robert Bellarmine in the seventeenth century to Léonce de Grandmaison and a host of others in the twentieth. Catechetical theology and the theory of religious education evolved remarkably from the time of Peter Canisius in the sixteenth century to Josef Jungmann, Johannes Hofinger, Alfonso Nebreda, and Georges Delcuve in our own time. Although Jesuits had nothing like a monopoly in any of these fields, their practical and apostolic orientation made these branches of theology particularly congenial to them. Wherever these disciplines were taught in the Ignatian spirit they were given a distinctive stamp--humanistic, Christological, and ecclesial.

Missiology, apologetics, and religious education are undergoing major shifts at the present time because of the rapid changes in the social and cultural framework and in the media of communication. To negotiate these shifts without loss of the permanently valid features of the Ignatian vision will demand creativity of the same order as that which gave rise to these disciplines in recent centuries. Without a lived relationship to the living Christ, the right combination of fidelity and innovation can scarcely be achieved.

Writing at a time when many Christians were leaving the Catholic Church, St. Ignatius was wary of new opinions and radical criticism. The few references to theology in the *Spiritual Exercises* and the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* emphasize the necessity of following safe and approved doctrinal norms, and especially the teaching of St. Thomas. The Rules for Thinking with the Church, appended to the *Spiritual Exercises*, were apparently directed against Protestant positions, perhaps also, in certain particulars, against Erasmus.<sup>24</sup> In the face of mordant criticism Ignatius, with his knightly instincts, felt it important to insist on complete loyalty to the Catholic Church and to the pope.

For a number of reasons Ignatius wished to put his newly founded order at the disposal of the pope. Devoted to the hierarchical Church, he saw in the papacy, as Hugo Rahner puts it, the "supreme instance of that visibility which was both a mark of the Church and a necessary yardstick for measuring the invisible."<sup>25</sup> Anxious to promote the universal good, he believed that the pope could best discern what was most needful for the Church as a whole. On guard against self-deception, Ignatius was convinced that obedience to

legitimate superiors was the best protection against delusion. His theology of obedience, one might add, was closely connected with his love for Christ crucified, who for our sakes had become obedient even unto death (Phil. 2:8).

To trace the exact relationships between the Society of Jesus and the Holy See would take us far afield. As is well known, Ignatius sometimes strove mightily to prevent popes from making what he regarded as mistakes, but when orders were given, he seems to have given and exacted full compliance.<sup>26</sup> The attitude of the Jesuit order to the papacy is perhaps best summarized by Nadal, who wrote to Laynez: "Although the men of the Society are papists, they are this only where they must be and in nothing more; and even then, only with an eye to the glory of God and the general good."<sup>27</sup>

Jesuit theologians, from Laynez and Salmerón to Franzelin and Kleutgen, made a significant contribution to the papal centralization that occurred between the sixteenth century and the twentieth. Such centralization has greatly helped to make the Catholic Church the unified international body that it is today. But from within the Ignatian perspective it may be asked whether new emphases are needed for our own time. Vatican II accented themes such as pluralism, the local church, and collegiality, all of which were nearly forgotten in the post-Tridentine period. If the world is now passing through a new epochal transition, no smaller than that which happened in the sixteenth century, major shifts in the internal organization of the Church cannot be ruled out. An authentically Ignatian spirit will not cling rigidly to the formulas of a previous age, nor will it recklessly cast off the guidance of tradition.<sup>28</sup>

Since the secular theology movement of the 1960s, it has been frequently asked whether the example and writings of St. Ignatius provide a basis for the apostolate of social action. Some contemporary writers hold that the Church is only one of many institutions working for the Kingdom of God. This radical depreciation of the Church is foreign to Ignatius and to the tradition in which he stood. As I have already said, the Church was for him the community of those working for the Kingdom under the Lordship of Christ. But dedication to the Kingdom, as Ignatius understood it, emphatically called for social justice. Both at Azpeitia in 1535 and at Rome during his generalate, Ignatius threw himself with great energy into what we can only call the social apostolate. He promoted not only charity

toward individuals but the reform of laws and social institutions. Although the theology of social reconstruction did not develop until centuries later, it is highly appropriate that many of the pioneers of this new discipline (such as Heinrich Pesch, Gustav Gundlach, and Oswald von Nell-Breuning) should have been Jesuits.

#### D. Theocentrism

Ignatius was filled with a sense of God's exalted mystery. In his meditation on personal sins he bids the exercitant to consider "what all creation is in comparison with God," and his implied answer is that of Isaiah, "All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness" (Is. 40:17). Again, in the *Contemplation to Attain Love of God*, Ignatius directs the retreatant to ponder how all limited perfections come from the supreme and infinite power above, as rays of light descend from the sun. Ignatius was indeed a God-intoxicated man, and the God whom he adored was infinitely above all that lay within the grasp of human thought and language. Erich Przywara has aptly entitled his three-volume commentary on the *Spiritual Exercises*, *Deus Semper Maior* (the ever-greater God).

Reverent though he was in the presence of God, Ignatius was convinced that God is never distant. God dwells in all creatures, and especially in human persons, giving them being, life, sensation, and intelligence, and making them temples of his Spirit.<sup>29</sup> Ignatian mysticism has the power to find God's majesty present in the very least of things. One of the first companions of Ignatius, Ribadeneyra, said of him:

We often saw how even the smallest things could make his spirit soar upwards to God, who even in the smallest things is Greatest. At the sight of a little plant, a leaf, a flower or a fruit, an insignificant worm or a tiny animal Ignatius could soar free above the heavens and reach through into things which lie beyond our senses.<sup>30</sup>

To the eyes of St. Ignatius every created thing is in its inmost being transparent to the divine. In many ways Ignatian mysticism was joyful and world-affirming.

United to God in the depths of his soul, Ignatius never lost his sense of the divine presence when engaged in daily business. He had, and wished his followers to have, the grace to "find God in all things."<sup>31</sup> In the

famous phrase of Jerónimo Nadal, he was "contemplative in the midst of action" (*simul in actione contemplativus*). That this apparently innocuous principle has a very demanding character has been shown by Jon Sobrino: "It is not a matter of christianizing some action through our contemplation, as is presumed all too often. It is a matter of determining what sort of action will leave room for real contemplation in it. . . . Loyola's aim is to point out the one and only locale where room is left for contemplation in action. It is to be found nowhere else except in the following of Jesus."<sup>32</sup>

This mystical heritage could not help but have an impact on Ignatian theology. The reverence for creation and for nature to which we have already alluded has here its key. The world was aptly called by Teilhard de Chardin, in the title of one of his best-known books, "The Divine Milieu"--a milieu both because it is the environment in which God is to be found and in the deeper sense because God is present in the very heart (*milieu*) of the world. Among Jesuit poets, Gerard Manley Hopkins excels in celebrating the individuality of each particular thing as somehow touched by the divine.<sup>33</sup>

Granted the Ignatian sense of the soul's immediacy to God, it is more than coincidental that transcendental Thomism was evolved by thinkers steeped in the *Spiritual Exercises*. Pierre Rousselot, on the eve of World War I, insisted that the human intelligence is essentially ordered to the divine. Joseph Maréchal, Karl Rahner, and Bernard Lonergan, in their several ways, have all contended that God is subjectively glimpsed as the infinite horizon of the human spirit--a horizon that transcends all actual and possible objects. This orientation of the spirit to the divine, it is held, is the ontological foundation of human freedom with regard to all particular choices.

The immediacy of God, already given in the natural order, is mysteriously intensified in the order of grace. Grace is the immediate self-communication of God to the created spirit. In the *Spiritual Exercises* Ignatius explains that, as the lover communicates himself to the beloved, though in a far more intimate way, God communicates his very self to the persons he loves.<sup>34</sup> Because God is triune, grace has a trinitarian structure. Ignatius speaks in his *Autobiography* and in his *Spiritual Diary* of his own distinct experiences of the three divine persons. This is theologically justified because, as Karl Rahner points out, the tripersonal God cannot communicate

his very self except as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.<sup>35</sup> Contrary to the older scholastic doctrine that grace relates us only to the divine essence, Jesuit theologians such as Emile Mersch, Prudent de Letter, and Karl Rahner, building on the earlier studies of Petavius and de Régnon, have pressed the thesis that in grace we are favored with distinct "triune" relationships to the divine persons. To give an intelligible account of this supernatural immediacy to God, some Jesuit theologians relied on new metaphysical categories such as Maurice de la Taille's "created actuation by uncreated Act."

Drawing on the believer's preconceptual knowledge of the all-encompassing mystery of God, Ignatian theology turns to prayer as a theological source. Ignatius likes to speak of the individual Christian as "conjoined with God."<sup>36</sup> and as enjoying a certain "familiarity" with God.<sup>37</sup> Thanks to this *familiaritas*--this family relationship--holy persons can know by inclination what ought to be believed, said, and done in a given situation. For Ignatius and his followers, therefore, prayer and holiness of life are not mere consequences or applications of a faith-knowledge acquired from books, but are essential means for discerning what ought to be expressed and found in books. Bernard Lonergan stands firmly in the Ignatian tradition when he writes: "In religious matters love precedes knowledge and, as that love is God's gift, the very beginning of faith is due to God's grace."<sup>38</sup>

The Ignatian Rules for the Discernment of Spirits through consolation and desolation have frequently been applied to practical decision-making but are only just beginning to be applied in the sphere of dogmatic theology. Here is one of the areas which Rahner may have had in mind in saying that the *Spiritual Exercises* present the theologian with a "not-yet-accomplished task."

Mysticism, with its sense of the ineffable, can easily degenerate into a vague pantheism or a pallid agnosticism. Authentic Ignatian mysticism, however, is relatively secure against such deviations because of its links with Christ, world, and Church.<sup>39</sup> God is identified with Christ, the "crucified Creator." As Adolf Haas and Peter Knauer have shown, the Ignatian phrase "finding God in all things" must often be understood in the sense of "finding Jesus Christ in all things."<sup>40</sup> All creation, moreover,

is intrinsically qualified by its relation to Christ, for, as we have already seen, Ignatius regards every created thing as "bathed in the blood of Christ." This does not mean that everything is identical with Christ, as some Gnostics might surmise, but that the true meaning of all creation, and especially of human creation, is disclosed by its relation to Christ as the concrete center of everything that is. The Christocentricity of the Ignatian vision thus protects it against the extremes of transcendentalism and immanentism.

The Christocentrism of Ignatian theology, finally, sustains its ecclesial dimension. In the words of Burkhart Schneider, "The Church for Ignatius is not just an external organization or framework within which he sets himself and his order, but primarily the visibility and embodiment of the Lord himself, to whose greater glory he offers his service in the Church."<sup>41</sup> Ignatius therefore wrote to the members of his Society: "We must love the whole body of the Church in its head, Jesus Christ."<sup>42</sup>

In summary, then, Ignatian mysticism takes in the whole of reality architectonically in a single comprehensive glance. As Harvey Egan says of the illumination received at the river Cardoner, "Ignatius mystically tasted that all things hold together in Christ."<sup>43</sup>

### III. UNITY AND TENSION IN THE IGNATIAN TRADITION

If my contentions this evening are correct, the unitive vision of Ignatius has proved its power to inspire a vigorous and distinctive theological tradition. It can be called a mysticism of involvement--even a secular mysticism, provided that the term "secular" is not taken as precluding a deep reverence for the sacred. Ignatian spirituality lives off the sense of God's immediacy, but this immediacy is sacramentally incarnated in the flesh of Jesus and in the visible Church. Ignatian spirituality is a unique combination of world affirmation and world denial, reserve and commitment, personal creativity and obedient submission. It finds the sacred in the secular, God in creatures, grace in nature, contemplation in action, freedom in obedience, and, ultimately, life in death.

In this dynamic synthesis the various elements are always in danger of being played off against each other. Jesuits, seeking to be faithful to the



spirit of their founder, have often found themselves on opposite sides of theological controversies. The Society has spawned modernists and traditionalists, infallibilists and anti-infallibilists. The Ignatian paradigm, while it gives a basic horizon, does not dictate any particular set of theological theses. A variety of competing theologies, bound together by a loose family resemblance, can all legitimately claim, in one way or another, to be Ignatian.

Perhaps the most serious accusation that can be leveled against Ignatian theology is that it tends to instrumentalize the intelligence. The Ignatian devotion to the service of God alone could perhaps lead to a certain supernatural pragmatism. Unlike classical Thomism, which exalts the speculative for its own sake, the Jesuit tradition looks on speculation itself as a form of praxis to be pursued to the extent that it may advance the glory of God and the salvation of humankind. Ignatius himself greatly esteemed St. Thomas and recommended him as a safe guide in doctrine. In the nineteenth century the Jesuits were among the foremost promoters of the Thomistic revival, but their espousal of Thomism was dictated more by practical considerations than by serious conviction. Thomism was held to be orthodox and serviceable to the universal Church. At a later time, under changed circumstances, Jesuits could abandon Thomism as casually as they had previously embraced it.

As Erich Przywara notes, the *tantum-quantum* of personal service in the Church has both a positive and a negative side. Positively, it can stimulate the adaptation of Catholicism to the actual here-and-now situation. On the negative side, it can take the form of "pedestrian thought (*geistige Ungenialität*), lack of creativity, epigonous eclecticism, purely external utilitarianism, and finally the heteronomy of 'scholarship by command.'"<sup>44</sup> At times Jesuit authorities, succumbing to a kind of *raison d'Eglise*, have sought to impose theological positions by decree.

At its best, however, the Ignatian spirit can instill a healthy recognition that intelligence and will, theory and practice, theological conviction and ecclesiastical policy, can never be unrelated. Holy thoughts must arise from a well-ordered love (the Ignatian *discreta caritas*) and must serve to build up the community of love. Theology, then, is not an affair of the mind alone. Its theories and concepts always point beyond themselves

to a reality that is divine.

The most characteristic theological position of the Society of Jesus, according to Przywara, is "the transparency of representation." Such a theology sees the individual in the Church and the Church in Christ, who instrumentally represents the sovereign God, as a sign of his universal and immediate presence. The Ignatian "alone" of personal service toward the ever-greater God turns out, in the end, to be the surest path to truth and freedom. "According to the fundamental principle of the Kingdom of God: *qui perdit, salvat*, all the 'pure truth' of theology and philosophy is actually gained in its apparent loss, for the living sovereign God is truth itself."<sup>45</sup> In order to promote God's glory, which must necessarily be its aim, theology must be a work of reverent service toward him who alone could say, "I am the truth."

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Quoted by H. Rahner in *Ignatius the Theologian* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), p. 1.
- 2 Martial Mazurier, quoted *ibid.*
- 3 Foreword to A. Haas (ed.), Ignatius von Loyola, *Geistliche Übungen* (Freiburg: Herder, 1967), quoted by K. Rahner in his Foreword to H. D. Egan, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Spiritual Horizon* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1976), p. xiii.
- 4 *Ibid.*, pp. xiii-xiv.
- 5 H. Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian*, p. 6.
- 6 J. B. Metz, *Christliche Anthropozentrik* (Munich, 1962), quoted by Egan, *Spiritual Exercises*, p. 6.
- 7 Egan, *Spiritual Exercises*, p. 7.
- 8 J. Nadal, quoted by H. Rahner in *Ignatius the Theologian*, p. 10.
- 9 Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises*, [98].
- 10 "After God our Lord had created heaven, earth and all things, and when the first man was in paradise, it was revealed to him how the Son of God had resolved to become Man. And after Adam and Eve had sinned they recognized that God had resolved to become man in order to redeem their sin . . ." (Ignatius, *Catechism*, quoted by H. Rahner in *Ignatius the Theologian*, p. 78). These words of St. Ignatius correspond closely with Thomas Aquinas in *Summa theologiae*, II-II, Q.2, a.7.
- 11 Such, with individual differences, is the general approach of Suarez, Molina, Galtier, and Karl Rahner. Many Jesuits, to be sure, have held the opposite position, supported by quotations from Aquinas.
- 12 P. Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1965), pp. 89-110.
- 13 Ignatius, General Examen, [101], in *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, trans. G. E. Ganss (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970), p. 108.
- 14 The position of E. Mersch is summarized, with pertinent references, by R. Latourelle in his *Theology: Science of Salvation* (Staten Island: Alba House, 1969), pp. 18-21.
- 15 See John W. O'Malley, "The Jesuits, St. Ignatius, and the Counter Reformation," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, XIV, no. 1 (Jan. 1982).
- 16 *Constitutions*, [450]; trans, in Ganss, *Constitutions*, p. 214.
- 17 Quoted from *S. Ignatii epistolae*, XII, 242, by H. Rahner, in *Ignatius the Theologian*, pp. 65, 84, 126.
- 18 K. Rahner, *The Dynamic Element in the Church* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964), p. 115.
- 19 The work of Hugo M. Enomiya-Lasalle and William Johnston in contemporary

Japan is illustrative of this dialogue.

- 20 P. de Leturia, *Estudios ignacianos*, II (Rome, 1957), pp. 14-15, quoted by H. Rahner in *Ignatius the Theologian*, p. 237.
- 21 Y. Congar, *L'Eglise de S. Augustin à l'époque moderne* (Paris: Cerf, 1970), p. 369.
- 22 Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1978). In his Appendix, "The Christ of the Ignatian Exercises" (pp. 396-424), Sobrino, while recognizing that Ignatius accepted the total Christ of faith and dogma, maintains that "the Christology of the Exercises is a Christology of the historical Jesus that triggers a concrete form of discipleship structured after the activity of Jesus himself" (p. 423).
- 23 See particularly A. Dulles, "Imaging the Church for the 1980's," *Thought* 56 (1981), 121-138; revised version in *A Church to Believe In* (New York: Crossroad, 1982).
- 24 Although the relationships between Ignatius and Erasmus are complex and subject to much scholarly debate, it seems clear that Rules 6 and 7, among others, "dissociate Ignatius from some of Erasmus' sharpest criticism," though Olin, in so remarking, wisely cautions that the Rules should not be read as a kind of anti-Erasman manifesto. See J. C. Olin, "Erasmus and St. Ignatius Loyola," in his *Six Essays on Erasmus* (New York: Fordham University, 1979), p. 85. G. E. Ganss situates the Rules in the context of the reaction against Erasmus in his "Thinking with the Church: The Spirit of St. Ignatius' Rules," *The Way*, Supplement No. 20 (Autumn 1973), 74-77.
- 25 H. Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian*, pp. 219-220.
- 26 R. Schwager, *Das dramatische Kirchenverständnis bei Ignatius von Loyola* (Zurich: Benziger, 1970), pp. 136-146.
- 27 *Epistolae P. Hieronymi Nadal*, II, 263, quoted by H. Rahner in *Ignatius the Theologian*, p. 237. Summarizing the position of Ignatius, H. Rahner remarks that in doubtful cases "to criticize may be good, but to serve and say nothing is better."
- 28 Ladislav Orsy has proposed a contemporary set of "Rules for Thinking with the Church" in his essay "On Being One with the Church Today," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, VII, no. 1 (Jan. 1975), 21-41. See esp. pp. 31-40.
- 29 *Spiritual Exercises*, [235].
- 30 Ribadeneyra, *Vita Ignatii Loyolae*, V, 1, quoted by H. Rahner in *Ignatius the Theologian*, p. 23.
- 31 See the quotations given by H. Rahner in *Ignatius the Theologian*, p. 135, and his further references in note 129.
- 32 J. Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, p. 424.
- 33 The combination of Ignatian and Scotistic elements in the theology of Hopkins is apparent in his unfinished commentary on the *Spiritual Exercises*. See Christopher Devlin (ed.), *The Sermons and Devotional Writings of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959). Hans Urs von Balthasar, in the second volume of his *Herrlichkeit*

(Einsiedeln; Johannesverlag, 1962), devotes a chapter to the theology of Hopkins.

- 34 See *Spiritual Exercises*, [231].
- 35 K. Rahner, "Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise, 'De Trinitate'," *Theological Investigations*, IV (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966), esp. pp. 87-102.
- 36 *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, [813]. In traditional Thomistic theology the term "instrumentum cum Deo coniunctum" had been reserved to the humanity of Christ. The new terminology of Ignatius reflects his intense awareness of God's mystical presence in the Christian and in the Church.
- 37 Ibid., [723].
- 38 B. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), p. 123.
- 39 H. Egan correctly classifies the mysticism of Ignatius as predominantly "kataphatic" insofar as it underscores the incarnational presence of God in the world. It is a mysticism of service rather than a bridal mysticism. On the other hand, as Egan also recognizes, any sound kataphatic mysticism includes an apophatic dimension. See his article "Christian Apophatic and Kataphatic Mysticism," *Theological Studies*, XXXIX (1978), 399-426.
- 40 A. Haas and P. Knauer, *Ignatius von Loyola, Das geistliche Tagebuch* (Freiburg: Herder, 1961), p. 134, n. 52. H. Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian*, p. 135, and Egan, *Spiritual Exercises*, p. 98, both agree.
- 41 B. Schneider, "Die Kirchlichkeit des heiligen Ignatius von Loyola," in J. Daniélou and H. Vorgrimler (eds.), *Sentire Ecclesiam* (Freiburg: Herder, 1961), p. 300.
- 42 Ignatius of Loyola, Letter of July 25, 1553, to the Whole Society, quoted by Schneider, *ibid.*
- 43 Egan, *Spiritual Exercises*, p. 98.
- 44 E. Przywara, "Theologoumenon und Philosophoumenon der Gesellschaft Jesu," Supplement to new edition of *Deus Semper Major*, Vol. 2 (Vienna: Verlag Herold, 1964), pp. 355-378; quotation from p. 372.
- 45 Ibid., p. 377.

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