



STUDIES

IN
THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

IES

Five Missions of the Jesuit Charism

Content and Method

JOHN W. O'MALLEY, S.J.

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The Seminar is composed of a number of Jesuits appointed from their provinces in the United States.

It concerns itself with topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially United States Jesuits, and communicates the results to the members of the provinces through its publication, *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS*. This is done in the spirit of Vatican II's recommendation that religious institutes recapture the original inspiration of their founders and adapt it to the circumstances of modern times. The Seminar welcomes reactions or comments in regard to the material that it publishes.

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The first word . . .

"Seen any good movies lately?" used to run my nails across a blackboard. Of course, the innocent inquiry is generally intended merely as a conversation starter. Even more, it represents a gracious attempt to put the ball in play at my end of the field. In planet rec-room, where monologues reign supreme, we should all be grateful when someone actually asks what we think about anything. And of course it's flattering to have someone ask our opinion, even if it soon becomes apparent that the question serves merely as a strategy to provide a launch pad for voicing one's own opinion on some current offering at the multiplex.

Throwing the proverbial wet blanket over the conversation, I usually respond that I'm not much of a movie-goer. I rarely go to the movies, at least not during the school year. On occasion this answer provokes surprise or disbelief: "But don't you see all the new movies to do those reviews for *America*?" With more than the usual puff of pomposity, I explain that I'm really a cultural historian whose area of research happens to be the American film. Movies released after, say, the 1970s hold little interest for me. If that little outburst of pretentiousness hasn't ended the exchange altogether, I'd claim that the occasional film columns have provided a kind of hobby—or even therapy—over the last thirty-five years. After concocting measured, perfectly balanced, dispassionate criticism for classroom and academic journals, it's fun to see some new movie once in a while, let the word processor marinate in vitriol overnight and fire off a few entertaining comments on the decline of the West.

Why so defensive? Maybe it's old-fashioned Catholic guilt at the thought that some people think I earn a living by going to the movies every day. Perhaps it's the irksome sense of inferiority of one in a new academic discipline that clearly is not as "well regarded" around the hauptstube as the traditional fields, like theology and philosophy. Fellow Jesuit academics are likely to ask other colleagues what they think of the latest theologian to come a-grunting out of the Black Forest, not if they ever met Woody Allen or get free tickets. Not that all professorial types despise movies. Not at all. Some still revere Ingmar Bergman's work (from fifty years ago!), and even still use *The Seventh Seal* (1956) in class to get undergraduates cowering on the epistemological diving board to make a leap of faith into Kierkegaard. Here an implied distinction lurks under the surface: Foreign films are better than American films, and are thus tolerable. Getting headaches from reading flickering subtitles can be academically respectable,

but cowboys and gangsters clearly are not, even though, paradoxically, many European directors have been serious students and enthusiastic imitators of Hollywood films.

For us film people, a lot of this esteem problem is a creature of our own cinematic doing, and consciously so. This self-awareness may have made me more tolerant of the "any good movies lately" syndrome. Or resigned. Yes, we do include contemporary popular movies in our work, and yes, a lot of it is junk, but it is still worthy of serious study. Although they are ultimately mistaken, my Jesuit friends are quite justified in presuming that I would be able to give them a line on the latest teenage goof-ball comedy, since several of my colleagues actually do watch that stuff and write learned articles about it.

The movement toward pop culture took place in several stages. Decades ago, when I first started consorting with film historians (who were even then chafing under the term film appreciation), we tried to crack into the ivied groves by following fairly traditional historical methods, at least as I understood them. We combed through the rapidly accumulating literature and did our studies of the "masterpieces" of film art. A canon of must-study films developed rather quickly. If any accounting angel is keeping track of the number of times I've slogged through "Citizen Kane" and "Battleship Potemkin," alone or with others, my temporal punishment in the next life should be significantly reduced. Even outside the shadowy corridors where we denizens of the dark once plied our trade amid the clatter of 16-mm projectors, other academics seemed to agree that some few specimens could be classified as significant "works of art" and therefore worthy of serious study in a university. These were, of course, the rare exceptions to the general principle that all films, especially the American variety, are artery-choking transfats for the mind.

Near the end of the 1960s, under the prodding of several highly opinionated French critics (pardon the redundancy) writing for the journal *Cahiers de cinéma*, we moved a bit away from a masterpiece methodology and adopted a "great man" theory. For several years, we concentrated on great directors, whom we called "auteurs." While outsiders in the university still limited the term "artist" to Bergman, Fellini, Eisenstein, and perhaps a half dozen others, those who did this sort of thing for a living came to appreciate the technical mastery of the medium and underlying values of those working within the Hollywood studio system. Gradually, the scholarly journals turned toward John Ford, Howard Hawks, Alfred Hitchcock, and Orson Welles. Attention shifted from the esoteric and inscrutable to the entertaining, to popular works created for mass audiences by huge corporations. At this stage doctoral candidates might submerge into dissertations involving films with John Wayne and Doris Day, much to the amusement

(scorn?) of their friends in other departments working on a variorum edition of "To a Waterfowl" or "The Leptonic Decay of Pi Mesons."

The "great man" phase marked the transition that helped film history move away from "masterpieces" and into a much-broader conception of its appropriate subject matter. Once historians could turn to any type of film without apology, then new possibilities opened up. They could tell a great deal about the culture by seeing how various genres, like musicals, Japanese monster movies, and gangsters developed and faded away within a particular social context. They investigated the drive-in phenomenon, checked attendance records and learned about the complex relationships between film-going and television, and the impact both had on American society. They ask who really made these movies and got an insight into the corporate world, from the age of the moguls to the rise of the multinational corporate giants to the Sundance phenomenon for independent films. Who actually went to the movies? In what kind of theaters, where, and what does this pattern tell about urban/rural life? What effect did movies have on our perception of women's roles, of gays, of racial minorities? What have the courts, legislatures, and pressure groups done to try to modify their content? What effect did reviewers have on taste, if any? How did the studios operate, who made the decisions and who got the money? Many film historians have even become skilled archival scholars, working through mountains of corporate contracts and annotated shooting scripts to uncover what happened and why during a production cycle. What were Asians and Africans producing at any given time? How was the government involved, and what effect did movies, domestic and imported, have on developing nations?

This more-horizontal, more-catholic approach to a subject area, embracing elements from several of the traditional disciplines, follows the recent trend. Film studies entered the catalogues with Black Studies, Women's Studies, Holocaust Studies, Urban Studies, and the like. Any manner of specialized research that sheds light on the topic can be brought into the picture: sociology, political science, psychology, literature, biology, and, yes, even theology and philosophy. Some may fear that these programs can be a bit superficial in comparison to the more traditional, well-defined vertical approach of the older specializations. The risk is there, to be sure, but so is the possibility of finding relationships that might otherwise escape the notice of scholars. In any event, the "masterpiece" and the "great men" approach to film history seem relics of another life.

This shift in film history reflects a larger pattern. In my high-school and undergraduate history courses, I seem to recall that we put a lot of emphasis on "great men" and if not "masterpieces" then at least significant events that defined particular eras, from the Age of Charlemagne to the

New Deal of FDR. For the most part, we looked at kings and wars, and occasionally a thinker or politician who stirred the European pot: Henry VIII, Descartes, Newton, Hitler, and Einstein, but not Mick Jagger or Edith Piaf. Church history was pretty much the same thing: saints and scholars, popes and decrees, councils and schisms. Good teachers could help us see the connections; the poor ones gave us lists of names and dates. I don't recall paying much attention to poets and artists, to architects or musicians that provided the texture for the Christian churches over the centuries.

As I look over book reviews in recent years, it seems that historians, secular and ecclesiastical alike, have branched out quite a bit since my juniorate days. They seem to be more engaged with the lives of ordinary people: how did they live and worship, how did they earn money, how were the towns and armies and guilds organized, what did families look like, what were the schools teaching, what did ordinary folk do for amusement when they had rare moments of leisure? Of course, I never went beyond undergraduate survey courses in history; perhaps the best professional historians were doing this kind of thing all along, but as an outsider, I find the material they are writing about these days quite a bit different from my recollection of what we did in the classroom.

Jesuit history fell into the same pattern. As I recall the conferences and readings, we kept to the same pattern of great men and masterpieces. We didn't have any of those national workshops that scholastics seem to enjoy. We were pretty much left on our own to read the biographies of Ignatius and the other Jesuit saints, which even as a teenager I suspected of gilding the chasuble a bit. The lives of Stanislaus Kostka, for example, were so soupy that a number of us formed a Paul Kostka club, in honor of the man who grew so exasperated with his brother's piety that he nearly beat poor Stanislaus within an inch of martyrdom. If Stanislaus was anything like the figure in the biographies, who could blame him? And those stories of the North American Martyrs presented more minutely detailed anatomical descriptions of their ordeals than I really wanted to know.

For masterpieces, we had the foundation documents: first of all the *Exercises*, then the daily conferences on the *Constitutions*, and to a lesser extent the *Autobiography*. As the years passed, we gradually assimilated a sense of the development of the Society from periodic but random references to the congregations, the generals, and various decrees. Whether consciously or not, we were doing in our own amateurish way what the professional historians of the period were doing.

I have no complaints. But there is more to Jesuit history than names and dates. How Jesuits lived, how they adjusted to the needs of their times, and how they worked within the guidelines of the *Constitutions* can tell us a lot about our history. In the essay that follows, John O'Malley suggests

looking at the lived experience of the early Society as another important point of access to our self-understanding today. His reflections provide valuable insights into "our way of proceeding." This is more than antiquarian lore. As we prepare for the next general congregation, we are asked once more to reflect on our role in the Church. We have our great men and our documents, to be sure, but we also have four centuries of experience to guide us. John's reflections could not be more timely. I hope you find them as illuminating and inspiring as the Seminar did.

Richard A. Blake, S.J.

Editor

CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION	1
The Relationship of the Society to Its History	4
II. FIVE CHAPTERS, FIVE MISSIONS	8
The Pastoral-Spiritual Mission	11
The Ecclesiastical Mission	14
The Social Mission	18
The Cultural Mission	24
The Civic Mission	28
III. CONCLUSION	31

Author's Prenote

My treatment of this topic here is largely based on my "Introduction: The Pastoral, Social, Ecclesiastical, Civic, and Cultural Mission of the Society of Jesus," in John W. O'Malley et al., eds., *The Jesuits II: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540–1773* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), xxi-xxxiv. I have, however, considerably expanded it and directed it now specifically to a Jesuit readership.

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FIVE MISSIONS OF THE JESUIT CHARISM

Content and Method

As the early Jesuits gained practical experience in their various ministries, they self-consciously revised the foundational documents to reflect their understanding of their evolving role in the Church. Carrying out the mandate to renew themselves by returning to the original sources, Jesuits today should look beyond the documents and include the activities undertaken by the earliest followers of Ignatius.

I. Introduction

Within a short while we will begin preparations for General Congregation 35. If the four previous congregations, from the Thirty-first to the Thirty-fourth, are any indication, the preparation will entail discussion of our charism—its character, its limits, its élan. The congregation itself will have this issue before it all the time, for it will realize that whatever decisions it makes must be expressions of that elusive something that makes us Jesuits, which is what we mean by “our charism.” I think we recognize the charism when we see it in operation, but I also think that it is difficult to put the reality into words and thus easy to speak in a slipshod manner about it.

I offer this essay as an attempt to organize from a historical perspective a few aspects of our charism. I am also trying to do something a little more ambitious, that is, to offer some reflections on method. How do we get at our charism? Where and how is it expressed? What resources do we have at our disposal to assure us that we are more or less on the right track? These are big questions,

and I do not profess to answer them in any comprehensive or profound way. I hope, however, to provide a few reflections about the content of the charism and methods for getting at it that might spark further reflection by others. In this endeavor I will introduce a "source" for helping the Society in its quest, one that we have not up to this point, I believe, made any deliberate and self-conscious use of, namely, the social history of the order.

In its decree on religious life, *Perfectæ caritatis*, the Second Vatican Council reminded orders and congregations that they needed to be faithful to "the primitive inspiration" of their institutes and to the "spirit and aims" of their founders.¹ The reminder was a

In the Church and in the Society, "return to the sources" has consistently been understood as return to official or semi-official documents.

perennial message, to which, I believe, the Society of Jesus has consistently tried to give heed and done so in a new and more intense way beginning after the council with GC 31. Jesuits have, of course, understood that the core of their "primitive inspiration" is to be found in the papal

bull *Exposcit debitum* of 1550, which was a revised version of *Regimini militantis ecclesiæ* (1540), the bull of Pope Paul III establishing the Society as a religious order within the Catholic Church.

Regimini essentially incorporated into itself a slightly revised version of a document drawn up in the spring of 1539 by the original ten companions of Paris, informally headed by Saint Ignatius, to indicate to the papal curia what they hoped for from their new organization. That document, known as the "Five Chapters," might well be called "the five (long) paragraphs" because it fills probably fewer than five pages.² The bull in the expanded form of *Exposcit debitum*, approved by Pope Julius III on July 21, 1550, remains to this day the license allowing the Jesuits to operate within the Catholic Church. It is the charter of the Society, never superseded. As a

¹ *Perfectæ caritatis*, in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott, S.J. (New York: Guild Press, America Press, and Association Press, 1966), 468, no. 2b.

² For text and commentary, see Antonio M. de Aldama, *The Formula of the Institute: Notes for a Commentary*, trans. Ignacio Echániz (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1990).

charter it specifies, among other things, the purposes for which the order was founded and the means it will use to accomplish them.

The Society is free to make whatever changes in its *Constitutions* and “way of proceeding” it deems appropriate if the changes do not run counter to any major provision of the bull. Otherwise, we must, even now, appeal to the Holy See for explicit permission to make the change. Officially known in the Society as the *Formula of the Institute*, the bull could not be more sacrosanct. It is the equivalent of “the Rule” in other religious orders. It is the first place to look on the level of official documentation to discover what the Society is all about. It is the first place to look on the level of official documentation to discover the “primitive inspiration” or the “charism” of the Society.

Important though the *Formula* is, it hardly encompasses everything that Jesuits would understand as constitutive of their “charism.” Even though the *Exercises* belong to the Church at large, most Jesuits, I suspect, would be inclined to see them as almost as constitutive of their identity as the *Formula*. Then there are other documents. The *Constitutions* have to figure into this mix, as well as some of the more important letters of Saint Ignatius. The number of sources or wellsprings of the charism thus begins to expand, perhaps almost to sprawl. This means that, while on one level it is relatively easy to describe “the primitive inspiration” of the Society, on others it is not so easy.

I would like to complicate this issue a little further by adding the other “source” I mentioned above. That source is, unlike the ones just mentioned, not a document. It is the social history of the order especially in its earliest years. It is the story of what the Jesuits *did* rather than what they articulated in their formal documents. I believe that this source, even as it remained true to the official documents, enlarges their scope. I believe it can help us reconcile important facets of our history with our “primitive inspiration” and see with new eyes how “authentic” some of those facets were. I think it can help us justify—for our-

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he set about establishing a
careful archive of all
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correspondence to the
superior general.*

selves and others—some of the work we are engaged in today. More fundamentally, it can give us a more expansive vision of our charism.

This is a new proposal. In the Church and in the Society, “return to the sources” has consistently been understood as return to official or semi-official documents. No doubt, such documents are the foundation. But they cannot express the full reality. They might even truncate it. I would like to illustrate this proposal by an examination of a small but extremely important portion of the *Formula*, the opening lines. The purposes of the Society are there set forth, as are the ministries by virtue of which the Society will accomplish those purposes. Below I will analyze those lines as they develop from the original “Five Chapters,” through *Regimini* to their definitive form in *Exposcit debitum*, but then I will move beyond that point.

In the foundational years of the Society—let us say up until the death of Ignatius in 1556—it is possible to isolate five aspects of what the Society was about. I will call these aspects five “missions” of the Society. They are the pastoral-spiritual mission, the ecclesiastical mission, the social mission, the cultural mission, and the civic mission. The first three are explicitly in the *Formula*, the last two are not. Nor are those last two clearly articulated elsewhere in the Society’s foundational documentation. To find them we must have recourse elsewhere.

The Relationship of the Society to Its History

We are at a propitious time for such recourse. Since the late-nineteenth century, the Society has been engaged in historical research into its earliest years on a scale never attempted before, and we are now experiencing its fruits with an abundance that even fifteen years ago we had no reason to expect. At the moment, to a greater extent that was ever the case earlier, more scholars from more disciplines and from more diverse cultural backgrounds are engaged in researching the history of the Society. Books and articles are flying off the presses almost around the globe, but especially in France, Italy, and North America. The scholarship is of high quality.³

³ See John W. O’Malley, S.J., “Jesuit History: A New Hot Topic,” *America* (May 9, 2005), 8–11; for a fuller treatment, see id., “The Historiography of the Society of Jesus: Where Does It Stand Today?” in *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540–1773*, ed. John W. O’Malley et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 3–37.

Although most of these scholars are not Jesuits, the foundations for their work were solidly laid within the Society. Ignatius himself started things off on the right foot with his insistence on frequent written communication within the Society. It was Juan Alfonso de Polanco, however, who began to build the edifice. When Polanco became Ignatius's secretary in 1547, he set about establishing a careful archive of all incoming and outgoing correspondence to the superior general. After Ignatius died, Polanco continued as secretary to the next two generals and showed the same diligence for the preservation of their correspondence. He both exemplified and stimulated a concern for accurate record keeping that would characterize the order.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, a group of Spanish Jesuits under the leadership of José María Vélez set about publishing the full correspondence of Ignatius and some related documents. The first fascicle rolled off the press in Madrid in 1894. This was the modest beginning of the *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu* (MHSI), a series that eventually reached some 130 volumes that included all documentation related to the *Constitutions* and the *Exercises*, all the correspondence of the first companions, and many other documents from the early years of the Society. At about the same time, other important documents were being published, such as Otto Braunsberger's eight-volume edition of the correspondence of Peter Canisius, Reuben Gold

For its founding years the Society of Jesus has at its disposal documentation that in its sheer mass vastly exceeds that of all the other religious orders put together.

Thwaites's publication of seventy-three volumes of Jesuit documents from New France, the famous *Relations*, and the bibliography of Jesuit writers compiled by Carlos Sommervogel and others. Polanco's foresight in the careful keeping of records thus came to an actualization that he could never have imagined. The result was that for its founding years the Society of Jesus has at its disposal documentation that in its sheer mass vastly exceeds that of all the other religious orders put together.

From the beginning, moreover, the Jesuits showed a very modern concern to promote within the Society the study and presentation of its history, which would also be a characteristic of the

Jesuits and persist through the centuries. As soon as Polanco assumed his office under Ignatius, for instance, he asked Diego Laínez to compose an account of how the Society came to be. As is well known, he and Jerónimo Nadal prevailed upon Ignatius to bequeath his story to the Society, which Ignatius eventually did by dictating it to Luis Gonçalves da Câmara. When Francisco de Borja became general, he commissioned Pedro de Ribadeneira to write a biography of Ignatius, setting off a tradition of Jesuits' "lives" of outstanding members of the Society.

In 1598 Claudio Aquaviva, the fifth general, wrote to all the provincials telling them to make sure the histories of their provinces were written. Two and a half centuries later, in 1829, hardly a

decade after the Society had been restored, the Twenty-first General Congregation decreed that, just as before, documents pertaining to the Society's history continue to be collected and compiled.⁴ The Twenty-fourth General Congregation in 1892 recommended to the newly elected general, Luis Martín, that the writing of the history of the Society, "widely desired by Jesuits throughout the order," be pursued.⁵ We must infer that Martín took vigorous action, for shortly thereafter Jesuit historians, some of whom had been trained in

What we now need to do, I believe, is to make effective use of this rich harvest of scholarship as we reflect on our charism. In order to do so, we need to overcome the tendency to focus exclusively on official documentation—and to some extent overcome focusing exclusively on the first generation.

modern critical methods of research, began ransacking local archives and writing histories of their respective provinces or assistancies. Some fifty such volumes were published under that impulse within three decades and others have continued to appear almost until the present.

Except for the most recent among them, these histories show apologetic and hagiographic traits, yet they are sober and reliable

⁴ See *For Matters of Greater Moment: The First Thirty Jesuit General Congregations: A Brief History and a Translation of the Decrees*, ed. John W. Padberg et al. (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1994), 442 (decree 21).

⁵ See *ibid.*, 487 (d. 21).

narratives, often indispensable to the researcher. As they subscribed to the new faith in historical objectivity promulgated especially by the great German masters of the nineteenth century, and as they adopted the methods that supposedly guaranteed it, they effected a corporate break with the rhetorical traditions of the Renaissance that up to that point had characterized Jesuit writing of history and biography and looked fundamentally to the telling of a good and edifying yarn.

These histories, in conformity with the nineteenth-century model of institutional history, almost totally abstained from dealing with devotion or spirituality. Nonetheless, Jesuits were among the first Catholics to apply the new critical methods to that area, a development clearly under way by the 1920s. The French Jesuit Joseph de Guibert merits special mention, not only for his pioneering history of Jesuit spirituality but also for founding a learned journal specifically dedicated to spirituality, and especially for being one of the founders in 1937 of the magnificent *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* that was finally completed only about ten years ago.

What we now need to do, I believe, is to make effective use of this rich harvest of scholarship as we reflect on our charism. In order to do so, we need to overcome the tendency to focus exclusively on official documentation—and to

some extent overcome focusing exclusively on the first generation. No question, the official documents are the firm and basic guidelines for us on our way, sanctioned by the highest authority in the Church and Society. They are, moreover, much easier to deal with than something as sprawling as the social history of the order. Yet unless we in some measure incorporate that history into our thinking about how we came to be what we are, we not only needlessly narrow our horizons but even distort them.

What we need to reckon with, in other words, is that the charism developed. It was not set in stone in the “Five Chapters,” nor even in the *Formula* of 1550. Yes, the “Chapters” effectively established the basic guidelines that have not changed. These were

Flexibility and adjustment to circumstances were thus inculcated from the very beginning. They were principles explicit in the text of the Exercises regarding the way in which individuals were to be guided in them.

expanded and further elaborated upon in *Regimini*, however, and even further in *Exposcit debitum*, as I will show. Yet the missions of the Society, that is, the Society's roles in the world and the Church, extend significantly beyond the wording of those documents.

I call attention, therefore, to the two adverbs in the description of purpose adopted by the *Formula*—"chiefly" (*potissimum*) and "especially" (*præcipue*). They occur in the "Five Chapters" and are repeated in the two bulls. They are qualifiers, and therefore leave the door slightly ajar. I see in that an anticipation of what I believe to be a characteristic of our charism and style that finds consistent expression in the *Constitutions*. Almost every provision of that remarkable document is accompanied by qualifications. It is a document filled with escape clauses. The same can be said of the directives Ignatius offered to individual Jesuits in his correspondence.

Flexibility and adjustment to circumstances were thus inculcated from the very beginning. They were principles explicit in the text of the *Exercises* regarding the way in which individuals were to be guided in them. The Jesuits were certainly not the only group in the sixteenth century to advocate and practice flexibility in their undertakings. Indeed, flexibility was a quality commended by the humanistic tradition for persons in authority. There can be no doubt, however, that it was notably and strikingly explicit in the Jesuit ethos, even though sometimes in tension with countervailing tendencies. This is a feature of the charism that suggests the possibility of something genuine that is beyond the letter of the foundational documents.

II. Five Chapters, Five Missions

Nonetheless, it is with the documents that we must begin. Here are the pertinent sections of the *Formula*, with indications in boldface type of changes introduced in 1540 and 1550 into this part of the "Five Chapters."

"The Five Chapters" (1539)

"Whoever desires to serve as a soldier of God
beneath the banner of the cross in our Society,
which we desire to be designated by the name of Jesus,

and to serve the Lord alone
and his vicar on earth,
should, after a solemn vow of perpetual chastity, keep what follows in
mind.

“He is a member of a Society founded chiefly for this purpose:
to strive especially
for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine
and for the propagation of the faith
-by ministry of the word,
-by Spiritual Exercises,
-by works of charity, and expressly
-by the education of children and unlettered persons in Christi-
anity.”

The “Formula of the Institute” (1540), in *Regimini militantis Ecclesiae*

“Whoever desires to serve as a soldier of God
beneath the banner of the cross in our Society,
which we desire to be designated by the name of Jesus,
and to serve the Lord alone and the Roman pontiff, his vicar on earth,
should, after a solemn vow of perpetual chastity, keep what follows in
mind.

“He is a member of a Society founded chiefly for this purpose:
to strive especially
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for the defense and propagation of the faith
-by means of public preachings and ministry of the word of God,
-by Spiritual Exercises,
-by works of charity, and specifically
-by the education of children and unlettered persons in Christianity,
-and particularly by the spiritual consolation of Christ’s faithful
through the hearing of confessions.”

The “Formula of the Institute” (1550), in *Exposcit debitum*

“Whoever desires to serve as a soldier of God
beneath the banner of the cross in our Society,
which we desire to be designated by the name of Jesus,
and to serve the Lord alone and the Church, his spouse
under the Roman pontiff, the vicar of Christ on earth,

should, after a solemn vow of perpetual chastity, **poverty, and obedience,**
keep what follows in mind.

"He is a member of a Society founded chiefly for this purpose:
to strive especially
for the **defense and** propagation of the faith, and
for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine,
-by public preachings, **lectures and any other ministries whatsoever**
of the word of God, and further
-by Spiritual Exercises, and
-by the education of children and unlettered persons in Christianity,
-and particularly by the spiritual consolation of Christ's faithful
through the hearing of confessions and
-by the **administration of other sacraments.**

"Moreover, this Society should show itself no less useful
-in reconciling the estranged,
-in devoutly assisting and serving those who are found in prisons
or hospitals, and indeed
-in performing any other works of charity according to what will
seem expedient for the glory of God and the common good."⁶

Before we begin our analysis of the missions or roles of the Society, we need to keep two things in mind. First, the "Five Chapters" was not written by Ignatius, as we often seem to slip into thinking. It was a committee document. Ignatius was surely the inspirational center of the committee. He surely agreed with the contours the document assumed. But he did not write it, and we should not automatically assume that everything in it sprang directly from him.

Second, the five roles I have isolated are interpretative categories. They interpret the concrete reality of Jesuit motivation and action. Each of them is to some extent found simultaneously in every expression of that reality. They inform and permeate one another. The pastoral-spiritual mission is obviously the motivating force for all five. The Jesuits' civic role is an aspect of their commit-

⁶I have used but slightly modified and in places corrected the translations of these foundational documents as found in Aldama, *Formula of the Institute*, 3-23. In all instances, the emphases and indentions are my own.

ment to institutions of social assistance. In all they do, Jesuits operate under a license from the Church. And so forth. Nonetheless, we gain some clarity by distinguishing these roles and elaborating on each one's distinctive contribution to the way we go about our enterprise.

The Pastoral-Spiritual Mission

The papal bull faithfully reproduced the purpose the ten founders set forth in the "Chapters." The new order was to be "a Society founded chiefly for this purpose: to strive especially for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine and for the propagation of the faith." "Progress in Christian life and doctrine" can seem generic and bland, but it needs some explanation to pinpoint its meaning in context. "Christian life and doctrine" can best be read as "Christian life and 'Christian Doctrine,'" so as to make clear that doctrine here most directly indicates "Christian Doctrine" in the sense of the basic truths to be lived and practiced. In the sixteenth century and, indeed, well into the twentieth century, "Christian Doctrine" was a synonym for catechism. In the *Formula*, therefore, the term is not to be understood as an allusion to the advanced education in philosophy and theology that the companions received at Paris. It does not presage the Jesuits' later formal cultivation of those disciplines and their commitment to teaching them in their schools. In 1539 and 1540 schools were not on their radar screen. Far less is it a manifesto of orthodoxy in the era of the Reformation.

The term implies, rather, a practice-related context. It points to a directly pastoral concern, the imparting of basic teachings as a means of spiritual progress. In the sixteenth century the "war against ignorance and superstition" engaged both Catholics and Protestants and helps account for the great upsurge in catechesis that makes that century a turning point for it in the West. As it happened, the Society made an enormous contribution to this educational undertaking at the base level.⁷ For Catholics, catechism retained its traditional relationship to "Christian life" because catechism, whether done by preaching, lecturing, singing, or some other means, was conceived as an introduction to the ordinary obligations incumbent

⁷ Among the more recent studies, see Michele Catto, "Alcune riflessioni sui primi catechismi della Compagnia di Gesù," in *Anatomia di un corpo religioso: L'identità dei gesuiti in età moderna*, ed. Franco Motta, special number of *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 19 (2002): 407-16.

upon every believer, even the humblest. It was, to use an expression common in the era, an introduction into the "art of Christian living and Christian dying."

This meant teaching prayers, especially the Lord's Prayer. It meant teaching the Decalogue, especially as a preparation for confession. It meant teaching the Apostles' Creed, usually in the form of stories taken from the Bible—the stories of Creation in Genesis, the Annunciation from Luke, and so forth. It meant, almost invariably, teaching the seven spiritual and corporal works of mercy as expressions of what it meant to live as a Christian. "Christian life and doctrine" meant precisely what John Van Engen has so helpfully encapsulated with the term *Christianitas*—basic beliefs and practices

shared by Christians of all ages and social classes.⁸ In fact, in this very section of the the Jesuits use the equivalent term—*Christianesimum*—for catechism, that is, "teaching Christianity."

This teaching was for the "progress" of souls. The Latin is *profectum*, which means growth, advancement, improvement, development, and, indeed, progress. We must assume the word was not chosen casually. It is here that

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the "pastoral" and the "spiritual" begin to inform each other. The first Jesuits believed, as did their contemporaries, that knowledge of certain basic truths was necessary for salvation. That persuasion surely animated their dedication to "teaching Christianity." But they wanted to go beyond "salvation." They wanted to lead people beyond the bare minimum to something deeper, something more, even in a pastoral ministry as rudimentary as catechism.

The Jesuits were certainly not the first to want to do so. They were the first, however, to have that concern in an articulated and systemic way. The explanation is, of course, the *Spiritual Exercises*. Unlike any religious order before them, the Jesuits in the *Exercises* had a formal program for their members that, if all went well, led

⁸ See John Van Engen, "The Christian Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem," *American Historical Review* 91 (1986): 519–52.

them into a personal relationship with God that went beyond ritual performance. They wanted to share their experience of that relationship with others and lead them to a deeper spiritual life.

Jerónimo Nadal, in one of his exhortations to Jesuit communities on the *Formula*, made precisely this point. He insisted that “the spiritual consolation of Christ’s faithful” was not restricted to the ministry of hearing confessions but was characteristic of all Jesuit ministries. This meant Jesuits were not to rest content with what was required for salvation but were always to strive for the spiritual improvement and inner consolation of those to whom they ministered. When the *Formula* says “especially the spiritual consolation,” it means, according to Nadal, that spiritual progress and its correlate, consolation, hold first place and must be the Jesuits’ primary intention and goal.⁹

The second purpose indicated in the *Formula* was “propagation of the faith.” Today we can hardly speak of Christianity without using the word *mission*, yet in the sixteenth century mission was just coming into usage in the sense of evangelization of peoples not yet Christian or of Christians lapsed into heresy or schism. The emergence of this usage coincided with the founding of the Society, and the word in fact occurs, somewhat precociously, in other places in the *Formula*. The Jesuits in relatively short order would be largely responsible for its gaining currency and gradually replacing the older term, even though as late as 1622 the Roman congregation founded that year to deal with the overseas missions of the Catholic Church was called the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (*De propaganda fide*).¹⁰

Although the Society was not founded to confute Protestantism, as has so often been asserted, it soon began to take up that cause, and in certain parts of Europe, especially in England and Germany, it would become strongly, sometimes almost exclusively, identified as an anti-Protestant force.

⁹See Jerónimo Nadal, *Commentarii de Instituto Societatis Iesu*, ed. Michael Nicolau, S.J., vol 5. of *Epistolæ et Monumenta P. Hieronymi Nadal*, vol. 90 of MHSI (Rome: Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu, 1962), 862, no. 66.

¹⁰See John W. O’Malley, S.J., “Mission and the Early Jesuits,” *The Way*, Supplement 79 (Spring 1994), 3–10.

In 1540, surely, "propagation of the faith" (or "journeying to the infidel") was still the technical term for the enterprise, so we should not be surprised that the companions here use it to express the fundamentally missionary character of the order they were founding. They had originally banded together, after all, to travel to Palestine as "missionaries," even though the word *missionary* had not yet been coined. As a result of their deliberation in 1539, they specified further on in the *Formula* that they wanted to be bound by a special vow to obey the pope "for missions" (*circa missiones*).

The word suggests a number of facets of the Jesuits' pastoral-spiritual role. It suggests, first of all, that that role is by no means restricted to the faithful. The wording of the *Formula* seems to put the faithful and the "infidel" on the same level of concern. It suggests, therefore, a worldwide vision, in which "the vineyard of the Lord" extends beyond the territories where the Church finds itself established. It also suggests the basically itinerant style of ministry the companions originally envisaged for themselves. The section of Part VII of the *Constitutions* that deals with "the distribution of the members in the vineyard of the Lord" indicates that the missions the pope might impose on individuals by virtue of the vow would be of short duration, generally no longer than three months. In 1540, and even 1550, the members of the order saw themselves as most characteristically being on the road, with lots of comings and goings.¹¹

The Ecclesiastical Mission

Instead of simply "the propagation of the faith," the *Formula* was modified in the 1550 version to read "the defense and propagation." As has often been noted, the addition of "defense" took account of the growing awareness among the Jesuits of the role they more and more felt called upon to assume in confrontation with Protestantism. Although the Society was not founded to confute Protestantism, as has so often been asserted, it soon began to take up that cause, and in certain parts of Europe, especially in England and Germany, it would become strongly, sometimes almost exclusively, identified as an anti-Protestant force. In other parts of Europe

¹¹ See Mario Scaduto, "La strada e i primi gesuiti," *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 40 (1971): 335–90; this article is now available in a much-abridged translation, "The Early Jesuits and the Road," *The Way* 42 (2003): 71–84.

and the wider world, this trait was less operative, sometimes almost wholly absent, as in China and Japan. Unlike other modifications made in 1550 in the original bull and in the “*Chapters*,” this one was not an elaboration or specification of something already present but was something new—which points to the obvious fact that the Society was an ongoing enterprise that in 1540 had not as yet assumed its full identity.

The “*defense of the faith*,” which in the sixteenth century often came down to defenses of papal primacy, does relate to the opening statement of the “*Five Chapters*”: “Whoever wishes to serve as a soldier of God beneath the banner of the cross in our Society, which we desire to be designated by the name of Jesus, and to serve the Lord alone and his vicar on earth. . . .” The bull of 1540 almost verbatim repeats this mention of the pope. In both these instances I think that at those early dates the companions were probably thinking of the pope in his pastoral role as the one who sends on missions. But the 1550 bull indicates a change of emphasis from pope to Church, even though the papal role is still important: “to serve the Lord alone and the Church, his spouse, under the Roman Pontiff, the vicar of Christ on earth.”

Ignatius was pleased when Pope Paul III appointed Laínez and Salmerón as papal theologians for the Council of Trent, which was certainly a way of serving the Church at the highest level. Yet, in the very earliest years of the Society, neither he nor the others saw the Society as serving the Church through theological reflection and publication.

The appearance of the word *Church* in 1550 suggests that the Society was coming to a greater awareness of its role in the larger ecclesiastical scene. It was now professedly claiming for itself an ecclesiastical mission. As Saint Ignatius and the others later elaborated on the character of that mission, however, they made it clear that they would serve the Church according to their own “*way of proceeding*.” Ignatius was adamant, for instance, that Jesuits not assume positions in the hierarchical structure of the Church, and that Jesuits were not to staff parishes, the ecclesiastical unit under the supervision of a bishop. They were to serve the “*hierarchical*

Church," to use Ignatius's term, but in ways and to the degree that would not enmesh them in it.

Jesuits in fact directly served the "hierarchical" Church in a number of ways when bishops welcomed them into their dioceses. They instructed the local clergy and gave them retreats. They examined candidates for ordination, undertook in some places the running of seminaries, and helped in other ways with the discipline and morale of diocesan institutions. In 1552 Ignatius opened the Collegio Germanico in Rome to prepare young Germans for the diocesan priesthood, and similar institutions, such as the Venerable English College, followed in the course of the century. More generally, the Jesuits, like their contemporaries in other religious orders but perhaps with more notoriety, engaged in apologetics and polemics in favor of Catholicism and of its hierarchical structure in those places where such engagement was needed and expected.

Ignatius was pleased when Pope Paul III appointed Laínez and Salmerón as papal theologians for the Council of Trent, which was certainly a way of serving the Church at the highest level. Yet, in the very earliest years of the Society, neither he nor the others saw the Society as serving the Church through theological reflection and publication. Salmerón was incensed when an oration he gave at Trent was published in 1546 without his permission, because he believed publication of books was a distraction from "more excellent works of charity."¹² He and the others soon overcame this scruple and through their example set the Society on a course of serving the Church through the work of theologians like Toledo, Bellarmine, Suárez, and countless others through the centuries. With the founding of Jesuit universities, beginning with the Collegio Romano itself, this reality got a firm institutional grounding.

"To serve the Church." As mentioned, the expression occurs for the first time in the bull of 1550, a document in which Ignatius as general now had a freer hand, presumably, than he had in the "Five Chapters." It succinctly expresses the ecclesiastical mission of the Society, but we should not assume, as so often seems to be the case today, that that expression was often on the lips of Ignatius as a way to describe what the Society was all about. In fact, if we except the bull of 1550, it does not occur a single time in Ignatius's writings, not

¹² *Epistolæ P. Alphonsi Salmeronis Societatis Iesu*, 2 vols., vols. 30 and 32 of MHSI (Madrid: MHSI, 1906-7), 1:46 f.

even in his huge correspondence, the largest extant correspondence of any sixteenth-century figure. The way he habitually described the purpose of the Society was not in service to the Church but in service to "souls."

When he uses the word *Church* (*ecclesia, iglesia, chiesa*), he almost invariably—let's say 98 percent of the time—is referring to a physical edifice such as a church attached to one of our residences or located near it. On the relatively rare occasions when he speaks of the Church in the larger sense, he does so in formulaic ways, as in expressions like "the bosom of the Church." The well-known and notable exception to this norm is, of course, the "Rules for Thinking with the Church." They indicate an aspect of Ignatius's mind-set that would not be so clear if we had to judge it from the rest of his corpus. Twice in those rules he describes the Church as "hierarchical" (nos. 353 and 365) and does so another time in the body of the text (no. 170). Much has been made of those three instances, and with good reason because he pondered over every word in that text over the course of many years. Nonetheless, he never again in his writings uses that description as such.

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Ignatius had a large and somewhat amorphous ecclesiology, which was typical of the sixteenth century. After all, the academic discipline of ecclesiology was in an inchoate state in his day and was not taught in theology courses even at the University of Paris. In the *Constitutions* he typically used a metaphor for the Church, "the vineyard of the Lord." That vineyard in which Jesuits were to be dispersed, of course, reached to mission lands where there in fact was as yet no Church. In his letters in 1555 concerning the possible conversion of "Claude," the emperor of Ethiopia, he could not be clearer that the genuine Church was the Church of the Roman Pontiff. Nonetheless, I think we get our best insight into his habitual way of thinking in the definition of Church he gave in his catechism lessons, for that definition is what he would time after time repeat as

he gave instruction, "the congregation of Christian faithful illumined and governed by God our Lord."¹³

The Social Mission

All three versions of the *Formula* give primacy of place to ministry of the Word. In so doing they fit the Jesuits into the pattern of ministry set by the mendicant orders in the thirteenth century. The bull of 1540 added the hearing of confessions, which fitted the Jesuits even more firmly into the mendicant pattern of ministry: preaching was generally directed to motivating the faithful to receive

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the sacrament of penance for the forgiveness of their sins. The list of ministries begins to diverge from that pattern, however, with the mention of the Exercises, a form of ministry created by Ignatius with no precedent in any of the older orders. That ministry invited people to an inward journey and provided various road maps for making it. Although the practice of

retiring from one's ordinary circumstances for reflection and meditation is older than Christianity itself, the *Exercises* was the first book to organize and codify procedures in a practical, orderly, yet flexible way. In effect, it created the new ministry in Christianity of the spiritual retreat, and the promotion of that ministry contributed to the Jesuits' self-definition and charism.

But also diverging from the earlier pattern was the mention of "works of charity." What the term meant in the concrete was the seven spiritual and the seven corporal works of mercy. The latter were in large part elaborated out of the famous Last Judgment scenario in Matthew 25 and, as mentioned, were generally included in even the briefest of catechetical texts. One of the spiritual works was "teaching the ignorant." This was the first work of charity the

¹³ *Sancti Ignatii de Loyola Societatis Jesu fundatoris epistolæ et instructiones*, 12 vols., vols. 22, 26, 28, 29, 31, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38, 40, and 42 of MHSI (Madrid 1903–11, reprinted in Rome, 1964–68), 12:671: "Essendo la Chiesa una congregatione delli fideli christiani, et illuminata et governata da Dio N.S." Soon to appear is the Institute of Jesuit Sources' edition of many of Ignatius's letters in English translation.

Jesuits specified for themselves; as the “Five Chapters” put it, “the education of children and unlettered persons in Christianity,” that is, in Christian Doctrine. The phrase sends us back to the statement of purpose, “the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine.”

This original grounding of the Society in simple catechesis helps explain how later, for all the Jesuits who moved in high circles, many others continued to be engaged with more humble folk in more humble pastoral enterprises. This grounding also reminds us that the ministries that the Society undertook did not fall into their laps from on high but sprang from the social reality of their times. By the time the Society was founded, Europe was engaged in perhaps the greatest catechetical revival in the history of Christianity, a revival that had been going on since the end of the fifteenth century, and that by the middle of the sixteenth was on the verge of becoming a minor tidal wave. The Society rode that wave and after a certain point gave further energy and force to it. This was a ministry, moreover, that—while members of the mendicant orders surely in some form or other engage in it, especially with the passage of time—those orders did not claim as something they were especially about.

In the bull of 1550, two further specifications of works of charity were added, in recognition of activities in which members had been particularly prominent in the Society’s first decade: reconciling the estranged (“peacemaking”) and serving prisoners in jail and the sick in hospitals. This was by no means a complete list of what Jesuits were doing in this regard and, in fact, it fails to indicate some of their more interesting and innovative undertakings, such as the founding of refuges or asylums for prostitutes and their daughters, works owed to the initiative of Ignatius himself. Moreover, it fails to indicate what is perhaps most important about Jesuit engagement in these works of social assistance, their commitment to establishing institutions to carry on the ministry. Ignatius did not simply offer prostitutes an understanding ear and absolution from their sins, but saw to the establishment of the Casa Santa Marta, a halfway house to nourish and help those who wanted a new way of life, and then went on to establish a corporation to continue to fund and manage the Casa.¹⁴

¹⁴ See Lance Lazar, *Working in the Vineyard of the Lord: Jesuit Confraternities in Early Modern Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).

The mendicants, of course, as well as the monks, engaged in various works of charity. Charity, after all, is intrinsic to being a Christian. In the fifteenth century the Franciscans, for instance, were noted for founding the Monti di Pietà, which provided short-term loans to those in need. Peculiar to the Jesuits was the explicit articulation of works of mercy as an essential element of what they were about. They were not only preachers of the Word and ministers of the sacraments, they were also, and professedly, agents engaged in the construction of institutions of social assistance. One of the most

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interesting of such institutions, though understudied and seldom mentioned, is the Jesuit pharmacies, the first of which was established in Rome during Ignatius's lifetime.¹⁵

It is true that the *Constitutions* assign a priority to spiritual works over corporal (no. 650): "[The members] will also occupy themselves in corporal works of mercy, to the extent that the more important spiritual activities permit and their own energies allow." In actual practice, however, it was sometimes difficult to distinguish

the two categories. Pedro Arrupe saw the work of the Jesuit Refugee Service, for instance, as having a threefold dimension—human, pedagogical, and spiritual.¹⁶ Those seem to have been dimensions operative in the "corporal" works undertaken by the Society from its earliest years. Although, as I said earlier, we might find it helpful to speak of five (or more) missions of the order, we should remember that they are simply aspects of a single charism in which they often in practice cannot be distinguished.

The early engagement of the Society with institutions of social assistance is indicative of another change in our founding fathers and in Ignatius himself, a growing faith in the sustaining power of institutions and a concomitant commitment to them. The very

¹⁵ See *Diccionario Histórico de la Compañía de Jesús*, s.v. "Farmacias" (2:1377–79).

¹⁶ See *Acta Romana* 18 (1980): 320.

founding of the Society was an act of such faith, and especially for Ignatius it meant bidding farewell to his "pilgrim years." By 1541 "the pilgrim" had become a CEO, who would never leave his post from that point forward. Of course, mobility and flexibility would still be an ideal of the Society, but now qualified by a countervailing ideal. A superficial reading of Part VII of the *Constitutions* can leave one with the impression that the chief job of the superior, especially the superior general, is to send members of the Society hither and yon and then back again. But no. 623^{v.13} speaks of certain works and institutions that "continue longer and are more permanently profitable," and it is in these that "the superior of the Society ought to employ his subjects" rather in those that endure for only a short while.

In the bull of 1550 the list of ministries ends by commending anything that contributes to "the common good." Up to that point the vocabulary of the section of the *Formula* we have been considering has been directly or indirectly derived from the Bible or from traditional Christian usage. "Common good" derives not from those sources but from philosophy. It appears for the first time in 1550 after ten years of experience and after Juan Alfonso de Polanco became Ignatius's confidant and aide in "*Formula*-ting" official documents. The expression implies an openness regarding what might be included in future "works of charity." More important, it suggests, I believe, a concern for this world and its betterment, a shift away from exclusively evangelical goals—the common good. The older orders doubtless had this concern and expressed it in various ways, as their histories make clear, but the upfront commitment to it in the *Formula* is what deserves our attention.

I mention Polanco because I believe he would be more likely to think in philosophical terms than Ignatius, and also because of the letter he wrote to Antonio de Araoz in Ignatius's name on December 1, 1551.¹⁷ That is just a year after the publication of the revised version of the papal bull, in the wording of which he played an important role. In the letter Polanco presents fifteen goals the Society hoped to achieve through its schools.¹⁸ The last six are various benefits for the cities or towns in which the schools are located, and

¹⁷ *Ignatii epistolæ et instructiones*, 4:5–9.

¹⁸ I list these in John W. O'Malley, S.J., *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 212 f.

the penultimate one reads as follows: "Jesuits will encourage and help in the establishment of hospitals, houses of *convertidas* [prostitutes seeking to change their lives], and similar institutions." In the mind of Ignatius and the others, therefore, there was a correlation between the schools and works of social assistance, with a clear awareness of benefits for the city.

The fifteenth and final goal Polanco offers is comprehensive and makes a similar point from a different perspective: "Those who are now only students will grow up to be pastors, civic officials, administrators of justice, and will fill other important posts to everybody's profit and advantage." That goal is directed to *this* world, not to a happy life in the next. Significant.

The goal, moreover, could have been written by Erasmus, Pier Paolo Vergerio the Elder, or any of the other theorists about the program of studies promoted by Renaissance humanists. The

In the first and most obvious way, the redefinition entailed a major shift from the Jesuits' being in large measure a group of itinerant preachers and missionaries to their becoming resident schoolmasters.

achievement of that goal is precisely what the humanists promised from their educational program, which they saw in this regard as an antidote to the ivory-tower and strictly speculative program of the Scholastic tradition. As with the Jesuit dedication to catechesis, their philosophy of education did not drop from heaven, nor did they develop it in isolation from their cultural milieu. That fifteenth goal shows how pro-

foundly the early Jesuits had appropriated the humanists' philosophy of education and how easily they correlated it with the evolving mission of the Society.

In that evolving mission there was one change, however, that was of absolutely primary importance and that was already under way in 1550 when *Exposcit debitum* was published. It was the momentous impact on the Society of the decision to undertake formal schooling as a ministry, a decision grounded first in the opening of the *collegio* in Messina in 1548. The decision in short order affected almost every aspect of the Jesuits' self-understanding up to that moment and gave the Society an enlargement of its purpose of mission that was at best only potential at the beginning. In 1550 this

change, though under way, was still too inchoate to make its way into *Exposcit debitum*.

At this point, therefore, we must abandon the *Formula*. Absolutely essential though the *Formula* is for understanding the foundations of the Society, it fails to mention the ministry that would come almost to define the order and that in ways big and small had a transforming effect on all the other ministries and on almost every aspect of Jesuit procedure. With some qualification, the *Constitutions* suffer the same major defect. They were composed at approximately the same time as the *Formula* of 1550 and were never adequately revised regarding the schools before the First General Congregation approved them in 1558, two years after the death of Ignatius. This is a stunning instance of how limited and misleading official and normative documentation can be for understanding a social reality. If we look solely to the *Formula*, we get no guidance for the role the Society had in fact assumed as "the first teaching order in the Catholic Church," and we would do only slightly better with the *Constitutions*.

What we have here is a significant redefinition of the order that was never fully articulated in official documentation and at best was only suggested in most other writings by Jesuits. What did the redefinition entail? In the first and most obvious way, it entailed a shift from the Jesuits' being in large measure a group of itinerant preachers and missionaries to their becoming resident schoolmasters. For the schools, moreover, the Jesuits acquired huge properties. Despite their almost Franciscan avoidance in the beginning of money transactions, they became, in order to sustain the schools, "the first professional fundraisers."¹⁹ More pointedly, they initiated for themselves a new relationship to learning and the arts in the wake of their commitment especially to the humanistic program. All this was initiated with the blessing of St. Ignatius.

¹⁹See Olwen Hufton, "Every Tub on Its Own Bottom: Funding a Jesuit College in Early Modern Europe," in John W. O'Malley, S.J., et al., eds., *Jesuits II: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540–1773* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 5–23.

The Cultural Mission

What kind of schools were these schoolmasters operating, therefore, and for whom? Although some of the schools had the full course of studies eventually prescribed by the *Ratio studiorum* (1599), which culminated in the "higher disciplines" of philosophy and theology, they all taught the "lower disciplines" of the humanistic program—grammar, rhetoric, poetry, oratory, drama—basically the literary works of classical antiquity. They taught these not as a preparation for theology, the traditional clerical rationale for study of such texts, but as a program complete in itself with its own proper goals: providing laymen with the learning and skills they needed to make their way in this world. And to make their way so as to be a help to others and a benefit to the community in which they lived.

This reality entailed a significant enlargement and enrichment of the mission of the order. The religious mission remained fundamental, and the cultural mission had to be integrated into it, even subordinated to it. But because of the schools the Jesuits had a commitment to culture, to urbanity, to *civiltà*, to *conversazione*, and to the *honneste homme* in the world that was new for a religious order.

It was, in fact, this commitment to the *studia humanitatis* that distinguished the Jesuits culturally from the mendicant orders. Those orders, too, as their various programs of study unmistakably reveal, had serious commitment to "learned ministry," as grounded in the institutions of learning they established for their own mem-

It can be safely assumed that, for better or worse, many Jesuits knew their Cicero better than they knew the Bible.

bers. But these orders were founded before the Renaissance, and their programs were already fixed before the humanists' propaganda had reintroduced the *studia humanitatis* in an organized and self-conscious way into the Western World. Those *studia* were not part of the *system* of the Dominicans or Franciscans, though individual Dominicans or Franciscans might be proficient in them. But they were part of the Jesuit *system*, the first studies every member of the order undertook and the subjects that almost every member taught professionally at some stage of his career. The Jesuit commitment to the *studia* was thorough and systemic.

A very large number of Jesuits spent their lives teaching pagan texts like Cicero and Virgil. They taught those texts not simply as models of style but as sources of ethical inspiration. As the *Ratio* puts it, mastery of eloquence is to be developed “in daily readings from Cicero, especially those that contain teaching about how to live uprightly.”²⁰ If Erasmus could invoke “St. Socrates,” I think some Jesuits were ready to invoke “St. Cicero.”²¹ I do not know any who did, but Cornelius a Lapide, the Jesuit exegete, said of a passage from Epictetus, “O wonder, these words ring of the Gospel, not just moral philosophy.”²² I think it can be safely assumed that, for better or worse, many Jesuits knew their Cicero better than they knew the Bible.

The tradition of character formation for the good of the city goes back all the way to Isocrates and fifth-century Athens, and was at the heart of the program that the Renaissance humanists worked so hard—and, ultimately, so successfully—to revive, thanks in significant measure to the Society of Jesus. I find it impossible to believe that teaching, day after day and year after year, the classical authors such as Cicero, who inculcated this ideal, did not have an impact on the Jesuits’ sense of the mission of the Society and thus on their sense even of their own vocation. Did this not give them an anchor in this world and a concern for it that, for their times and particularly in the early years, was special for clerics?

Scholarship on the Society in the past fifteen years has made stunningly clear the cultural repercussions for painting, architecture, music, theater, and dance of the Jesuit schools.²³ It is also making

²⁰ Claude Paur, trans. and annotator, *The “Ratio Studiorum”: The Official Plan for Jesuit Education* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2005), 166: “qui philosophiam de moribus continent.

²¹ Erasmus, *Convivium religiosum* (“The Godly Feast”), in *Opera omnia*, vol. 1/3 (Amsterdam, 1972), 254.

²² Quoted in François de Dainville, *La Naissance de l’humanisme moderne* (Paris, 1940), 223.

²³ See John W. O’Malley, S.J., “Saint Ignatius and the Cultural Mission of the Society of Jesus,” in *The Jesuits and the Arts, 1540–1773*, ed. John W. O’Malley and Gauvin Alexander Bailey (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph’s University Press, 2005), 3–16. The literature on the subject is now so abundant as to be approaching the point of being unmanageable. A place to begin is the two large collections of articles that three colleagues and I edited: *The Jesuits: Cultures, Science, and the Arts, 1540–1773* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), and id., *Jesuits II*. See also Ugo Baldini,

clear in a new and more appreciative way the contribution of the Society to the sciences.²⁴ The Jesuit universities, but also the larger “secondary schools,” taught “natural philosophy” as well as literary subjects. This philosophy was a heritage not from Humanism but from Scholasticism, which was an integral part of the education the Jesuits themselves received, as did their counterparts in the mendicant orders.

Jesuit commitment to “philosophy,” we must remember, was, apart from a relatively few Jesuit universities, most strongly manifested in the study of Aristotle’s works on “natural philosophy,” what we would today call science, to which the Jesuits were, like their contemporaries, bit by bit giving an experimental basis. As is well known, the Jesuits began to operate important astronomical observatories, kept very much abreast of current scientific learning, and produced an abundant literature on scientific subjects, practically the only Catholic clerics to do so. The reason the Jesuits developed this aspect of the “philosophical” tradition while others did not is that the Jesuits were teaching the subject on a systemic basis—and to lay students, who generally evinced more interest in it than students for the ministry.

In making this point I am not trying to make an argument in favor of Jesuit schools today. What I am trying to say is that the commitment of the Society in its early years to formal schooling affected our charism. It affected the Society’s character, its identity, with repercussions down to the present. I think that it, along with the commitment to works of social assistance, gave the Society a concern for this world *qua* this world. That is to say, these commitments were not simply means to a higher end but good things in and of themselves, worthy of Jesuits’ time, talent, and effort. They were contributions to “the common good.”

Saggi sulla cultura della Compagnia di Gesù (Padua, CLEUP Editrice, 2000).

²⁴ Here, too, the recent literature is abundant. Besides the Toronto volumes cited in the previous note, see Mordechai Feingold, ed., *Jesuit Science and the Republic of Letters* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003). See also, e.g., Marcus Hellyer, *Catholic Physics: Jesuit Natural Philosophy in Early Modern Germany* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), and Antonella Romano, *La Contre-Réforme mathématique: Constitution et diffusion d’une culture mathématique jésuite à la Renaissance* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1999).

One of the great difficulties Nadal faced as he met with new recruits to the Society throughout Europe was to drill into them that they had joined an active order, not a contemplative and reclusive one. His most potent words to them in this regard were "The world is our house."²⁵ By this expression he meant to emphasize the missionary orientation of the Society and to insist that Jesuits had to be ready to move to any part of the world. But I think we can legitimately imbue it with a further meaning. While Jesuits of course looked to the world to come, they also had a commitment to *this* house here and now, a commitment to work for the improvement of human society not simply by producing Christians who behaved themselves and performed their religious duties but who were inner-directed to the moral, physical, and civic well-being of the communities in which they lived.

Coordinated with this social reality was the educational theory of the studia humanitatis, affirming that those studies were the apt instrument for producing men dedicated to the public weal, to the common good.

The *Spiritual Exercises* are a classic and thus by definition are open to different interpretations, as, for instance, simply a handbook to teach self-conquest.²⁶ In the context of the era in which they were composed, however, they have three features that are special. First, the meditations on the Kingdom and the Two Standards give them a bias towards action in this world rather than towards withdrawal from it. Second, the Fourth Week is unusual for an era that was largely obsessed with the suffering and death of Jesus, so that most authors would have ended the book with the Third Week. The Fourth Week brings with it not only salvation from sin and death but a newly resplendent creation. Finally, that consideration leads easily to the Contemplation to Obtain Love, which provides a splendid panorama for "finding God in all things."

²⁵ See John W. O'Malley, S.J., "To Travel to Any Part of the World: Jerónimo Nadal and the Jesuit Vocation," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 16, no. 2 (March 1984).

²⁶ See, e.g., *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius Explained by Father Maurice Meschler, S.J.*, 2nd ed. (Woodstock, Md.: Woodstock College Press, 1899).

On November 28, 2005, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach confirmed how important this accent is for our tradition in the Society. He did so in his address to a meeting of Jesuit provincials in Loyola, Spain, in which he said, alluding to Karl Rahner, that Ignatian spirituality is rooted in a positive, amicable, and joyous relationship with the world, that it “does not insist on seeking God outside of created things but rather finding Him in them.” This aspect of Jesuit spirituality elevates the commitment to the common good to a higher plane.

The Civic Mission

If we look at the pre-suppression Society, one specification of that commitment was, as I have already several times suggested, commitment to the city in which the Jesuits found themselves. Historians still tend to look upon Jesuit schools during that era, for instance, as confessional schools, even Counter-Reformation schools. That is an aspect of many of them, more or less important depending on the context. But more fundamental was their role as civic institutions—usually requested by the city, in some form or other paid for by the city, established to serve the families of the city, a service that entailed listening to the expectations of those families and, when feasible, making adjustments to accommodate them—to the extent of sometimes teaching horsemanship and fencing. They were often the leading cultural institution, especially in the smaller cities and towns. They provided library resources in an age before public libraries. They provided public entertainment, sometimes on a grand scale. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Jesuits in Milan, for instance, were in charge of orchestrating for the city the weeklong celebrations of great civic occasions.²⁷

Coordinated with this social reality was the educational theory of the *studia humanitatis*, affirming that those studies were the apt instrument for producing men dedicated to the public weal, to the common good. In the fifteenth reason, quoted above, that Polanco gave for Jesuits running schools, the civic dimension is crucial. The students will grow up to be the leaders in the community for the

²⁷ See, e.g., Giovanna Zanlonghi, “The Jesuit Stage and Theater in Milan during the Eighteenth Century,” in O’Malley and Bailey, *Jesuits II*, 530–49, as well as Bruna Filippi, “The Orator’s Performance: Gesture, Word, and Image in Theatre at the Collegio Romano,” *ibid.*, 512–29.

good of the community as “pastors, civic officials, administrators of justice,” and so forth. In fact, of Polanco’s fifteen reasons, six are “for the good of the locality.”

The apex of the humanist curriculum was rhetoric, the art of public discourse that the great authors of the classic tradition like Cicero and Quintilian explained as developing out of civic institutions like the law courts, the senate or legislature, and public celebrations and as returning to those institutions as to the places where it was exercised. Rhetoric was commonly described as “the civic science by which we speak of civic matters.”²⁸ Rhetoric was the art of winning consensus so as to unite the community behind a common cause for the good of the city or the state.

A text every Jesuit was familiar with and that many of them taught year after year was Cicero’s *De officiis*, which I translate as “On Public Responsibility.” Here is a well-known passage:

We are not born for ourselves alone. . . . Everything that the earth produces is created for our use, and we, too, as human beings are born for the sake of other human beings that we might be able mutually to help one another; we ought therefore to take nature as our guide and contribute to the common good of humankind by reciprocal acts of kindness, by giving and receiving from one another, and thus by our skill, our industry, and our talents work to bring human society together in peace and harmony. (I.7.22, my translation)

Jesuits, I believe, would easily have correlated this passage with the Principle and Foundation of the *Exercises*, which affirms that we were created for the praise, reverence, and service of God. The Jesuits knew well that that praise, reverence, and service could not be divorced from concern for one’s neighbor. Yet the passage from Cicero is directed to the betterment of this world rather than to

I find it difficult to believe that teaching texts like this one from the De officiis year after year did not have an impact on the Jesuits’ sense of their vocation and of the mission of the Society.

²⁸ See, e.g., John Monfasani, *George of Trebizond: A Biography and a Study of His Rhetoric and Logic* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 208. I am indebted to Robert Maryks for this reference.

one's eternal salvation. I suspect that the Jesuits would see this text as an amplification of the message of the Principle and Foundation rather than as a contradiction of it. As an amplification it gave the Principle and Foundation an important new modality. Please note, moreover, that the passage from Cicero speaks of "the common good." Please note, further, that Cicero's "we are not born for ourselves alone" sounds hauntingly like Pedro Arrupe's "men and women for others."

I find it difficult to believe that teaching texts like this one from the *De officiis* year after year did not have an impact on the Jesuits' sense of their vocation and of the mission of the Society. I find it difficult to believe that they did not work their way into the very fabric of Jesuit consciousness by the sheer repetition year after year of the teaching of texts about civic virtue in institutions geared to the welfare, here and now, of the city and its citizens. It is often said of Ignatius that he "loved the cities."²⁹ That is a good insight, but one that I am here trying to take to a deeper level by showing how we can consider it an integral part of our charism even though it cannot be clearly pinpointed in our foundational documents. In making this argument I am not trying to exalt the quantity and quality of our civic and cultural accomplishments in comparison with those of other religious orders. The cultural benefits the Benedictines have conferred upon Western civilization are incalculable. Our Andrea Pozzo is finally getting the recognition he deserves, but, in the estimation of the public, he is no rival of the Dominican's Fra Angelico. For all the importance of the Gesù in Rome, that church never had the civic significance of the Franciscans' Santa Croce in Florence. I am not, therefore, saying that we did more or did it better.

I am saying, rather, that with us the civic and cultural accomplishments assumed a new mode and were undertaken with a new rationale and a more explicit intentionality. I am saying that with the schools the Jesuits produced civic and cultural institutions that were new for a religious order and that had a more professedly this-worldly orientation in large measure because they sprang out of persuasions originating in the classical world, not the Christian

²⁹ See, e.g., Thomas M. Lucas, "Saint, Site, and Sacred Strategy: Ignatius, Rome, and the Jesuit Urban Mission," in id., *Saint, Site, and Sacred Strategy: Ignatius, Rome, and Jesuit Urbanism* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1990), 16–45.

world, even though they were now revived for the Christian world and were considered consonant with it. I am saying that the schools meant that most Jesuits spent most of their day in a secular space, not in the pulpit, the confessional, or the cloister. They taught secular subjects—indeed, pagan literature, as well as mathematics and the equivalent of physics and astronomy, and sometimes botany and natural history. This meant that in the vast majority of cases they taught secular students, not clerics or members of religious orders. This meant they were drawn into music and dance in ways unheard-of for clerics. “Ecco, i preti delle commedie.”³⁰ This meant that by such engagement with science and the arts they surprised many people and later on, with dire consequences, scandalized the Jansenists.³¹

I am proposing, therefore, that our charism, and thus our spirituality, has a civic and cultural mode. This is a mode that in our history has for the most part been implicit rather than explicit. It has manifested itself in deeds rather than in words, by what we can infer rather than by what we can directly verify. This mode or dimension, not clearly found in our normative documents, can be retrieved only by looking beyond them to see how they were modified, amplified, and enriched in the actual lived reality.

III. Conclusion

I am not arguing for a reinstatement in our schools of the tradition of Latin and Greek classics. I am not even arguing in favor of schools as a preferred instrument of Jesuit ministry. I am arguing, rather, that this tradition and the schools which appropriated it gave a shape to our charism that, independent of them, helped make us what we are as Jesuits. I am arguing that somehow the charism as modified by those realities has worked its way into the fabric of our corporate soul, and we therefore make our contemporary decisions in some conformity with it almost without reflec-

³⁰ See O'Malley, *First Jesuits*, 224.

³¹ See, for instance, the two articles by Marc Fumaroli, “The Fertility and Shortcomings of Jesuit Rhetoric: The Jesuit Case,” in O'Malley and Bailey, *Jesuits*, 90–106, and “Between the Rigorist Hammer and the Deist Anvil: The Fate of the Jesuits in Eighteenth-Century France,” in O'Malley and Bailey, *Jesuits II*, 682–90.

tion. I am arguing, most fundamentally, that we need to be expansive in our quest to locate and understand our charism and to continue to appropriate it today.

If we need to test our fidelity in that quest, I think our eccentrics can be of help. By eccentrics I mean those Jesuits whose lives were "out of the center" in that they are beyond the ordinary, beyond what we meet in most Jesuits, including ourselves. It is in the exaggeration, paradoxically, that the norm is found. The saints and martyrs of the Society are obviously the first to fall into this category, and we have always exalted them as being preeminent instances of what our charism means when it is fully realized. By being "too much," they are just right when it comes to understanding what we are about.

It is important, however, to move beyond the saints. In seventeenth-century France, Gerard Manley Hopkins would not have been considered an eccentric, because many Jesuits were writing and publishing poetry.³² In the nineteenth-century Society of Jesus in Britain, however, he certainly was an eccentric and suffered accordingly. But today I think most of us would recognize what he did as preeminently Jesuit. The same could be said of those eccentrics in the Chinese mission like Matteo Ricci and others like him. In the eighteenth century Ruggiero Boscovich, probably the greatest scientist the Society ever produced, tried to come to terms with the new science, and thus with the Enlightenment, and was accepted as an equal among the learned of his day.³³ Even more, I think the corporate effort that resulted in the Paraguayan Reductions is even more characteristic of the Society and its effort to alleviate injustices and to provide for the common good.³⁴ Coming closer to our own times, do

³² See, e.g., *La Lyre jésuite: Anthologie de poèmes latins, 1620–1730* (Geneva: Droz, 1999), and Yasmin Annabel Haskell, *Loyola's Bees: Ideology and Industry in Jesuit Latin Didactic Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

³³ See, e.g., the two articles on him: Ugo Baldini, "The Reception of a Theory: A Provisional Syllabus of Boscovich Literature, 1746–1800," in O'Malley, and Bailey, *Jesuits II*, 405–50, and Larry Wolff, "Boscovich in the Balkans: A Jesuit Perspective on Orthodox Christianity," *ibid.*, 738–71. See also the suggestive study by Antonio Trampus, *I gesuiti e l'illuminismo: Politica e religione in Austria e nell'Europa centrale, 1773–1798* (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 2000); in this work the author shows how Jesuits in Central Europe tried to come to terms with the Enlightenment.

³⁴ See, e.g., Ramón Gutierrez and Graciela María Viñuales, "The Artistic and Architectural Legacy of the Jesuits in Spanish America," in O'Malley and Bailey,

we not want to claim Teilhard de Chardin as preeminently one of our own, and, even if we may not agree with his theories, do we not find that the image of him digging away at archeological sites in China captures an important aspect of the adventure of our vocation?

Although I do not want to try to list authentic articulations of our charism today, I will adduce one contemporary institution founded, funded, and staffed by Jesuits that indicates how new modalities express the tradition in a way appropriate to our times. That institution is the Jesuit Refugee Service.³⁵ Did not Pedro Arrupe speak for us all when he said in connection with the JRS, "The plight of the world so deeply wounds our sensibilities as Jesuits that it sets the inmost fibers of our apostolic zeal a-tingling"?³⁶ I think, finally, that it is important to keep in mind what Michel de Certeau, S.J., provocatively remarked several decades ago about religious charism: everything that injects the poison of the present into such a tradition is what saves it from inertia and ossification.³⁷

Jesuits, 269–310, which ranges beyond what the title suggests.

³⁵ See Kevin O'Brien, "Consolation in Action: The Jesuit Refugee Service and the Ministry of Accompaniment," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 37, no. 4 (Winter 2005).

³⁶ Pedro Arrupe, "Rooted and Grounded in Love," in *The Spiritual Legacy of Pedro Arrupe, S.J.* (New York: New York Province of the Society of Jesus, 1985), 188.

³⁷ See Michel de Certeau, "Le Mythe des origines," in *La Faiblesse de croire*, ed. Luce Giard (Paris: Seuil, 1987), 53–74, esp. 69.

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