

## Why the Jesuits Joined 1540-1600

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*Why the Jesuits Joined*  
*1540-1600*

The Society of Jesus, by writing, by preaching, and above all by instructing future members of the elites of Catholic Europe, was to spin many threads for the fabric of baroque taste, piety, and sensibility. The Order was at its foundation in 1540 in many ways an innovation and must have seemed to those who contemplated joining it not just one congregation among many, but something different. Which of the Jesuits' several departures from tradition had caught the eye of prospective recruits? Why had its adherents joined? Was it the very well publicized apostolate to the Indies, the championing of an embattled orthodoxy, the militant defense of papal claims, or the commitment to service of the Church that attracted new members? Or was it rather the erudition of the Company, its bent for founding and staffing schools for boys, and its involvement in learned controversy? Was the Order, rather, attractive because of its relative worldliness, its very moderate austerity and freedom from the traditional obligation of more cloistered monks and friars to sing the canonical hours? This paper argues that, if one believes the words of the Jesuits themselves, none of these characteristics of the new Society was uppermost in the minds of most new novices. Rather, the Company, for all its varied engagement in the *seculum*, most often appeared to its recruits as a haven from the world outside; despite the daring of its missionaries, many men who elected the religious life sought with the Jesuits safety from temptation and adverse fortune and the solaces of life in a well-ordered and pious community.

There were several reasons for this. We hope to show that the Jesuits cultivated a life-style which made their houses attractive refuges from a turbulent world. More importantly, many of the recruits had been pupils in the Society's schools and most were young. A Jesuit vocation could therefore offer an alternative to uncertainty. The fathers profited from the adolescent hesitancy and inexperience of their students, some of whom they courted assiduously. In addition, many novices on entering knew relatively little about the workings of the Society. Motives for entry therefore often had little bearing on a candidate's future career as teacher, confessor, or missionary. Thus, although there was much novelty in the workings of the Society of Jesus, to those who joined, it often had a more traditional face than modern scholarship usually acknowledges.

This eremitical impulse is not at all what one expects of recruits to the Society of Jesus. Scholars both Jesuit and lay concur that what was most distinctive about the new congregation was the depth of its involvement in the world.<sup>1</sup> In histories Loyola figures as a cavalier who, thwarted in his youth by a battle wound, channeled his crusader's zeal and romantic ethic of a courtier's service into the defense of the Lady Church and the conquest of new lands for the faith, while the Jesuits usually appear as militants imbued with a soldier's sense of purpose learned from their founder. According to this standard view, which though not wrong is incomplete, the Jesuits because of their ambitions for the transformation of this world turned some of their attentions away from the traditional monastic preoccupation with the next, replacing the cloistered discipline of monks with what Max Weber called "worldly asceticism".<sup>2</sup> Thus, utilitarian apostles, they gave up the singing of canonical hours in order to husband their time and energies for more productive undertakings. Such a group should hardly, one would think, appeal to its recruits as a place of cozy shelter. Nevertheless, it often did.

One reason the Company of Jesus could at once be very active in the world and yet feel protected from menaces to salvation was that it adhered to a very strict cult of obedience. The Jesuits imprinted this doctrine, a heritage of Benedictine and Franciscan traditions, with Loyola's own character by giving extraordinary prominence to the mortification of the will.<sup>3</sup> For them, self-mastery, self-assured submission to the dictates of the superior, supplanted to a degree the mortification of the body. Thus, the fasts, vigils and other trials of some congregations and, indeed, of the primitive Jesuits figured little in the mature Company, which banned or forsook some austerities and relegated others to the probations of novices.<sup>4</sup> The surrender of the will, the Order's most characteristic form of asceticism, seems to have built an invisible wall between a Jesuit and the spiritual perils he believed encompassed him, thus permitting him to remain immersed in secular activity without endangering his salvation. The moral self-assurance of the Jesuits thus supplanted the safety of the cloister.

The Company of Jesus strove not only for engagement but also for accomplishment. Zealots for success, the fathers and brothers observed attentively their Society's achievements. They therefore destined the widely distributed, printed *Annual Letters* and *India Letters* for internal use as well as for the edification of the public.<sup>5</sup> Like the work of the missions, the spread of the Society in Europe awoke eager concern. Thus, the Jesuits became avid cataloguers of their houses, members, pupils, saints, and martyrs. Characteristically, Loyola himself, who harboured a fascination with the Order's growth, according to his first biographer once called several companions together and commanded them to find the exact number of the

brethren. Complying, the fathers enumerated more than 900.<sup>6</sup> How often were the Jesuits' future recruits also aware of the deeds of the Society? How much did the missions preachings and teachings of the Company weigh in the deliberations of a young man pondering a request for admission?

The complete analysis of any religious vocation requires the art of a biographer and a rich store of documents such as exists for only the most famous, least typical Jesuits. Yet there survive, fortunately, two extensive manuscripts which allow at least a glimpse into the motives of the obscurer rank and file. Of these the earlier and more massive is the corpus of replies to a 30-point questionnaire administered in the Jesuit Provinces of Portugal, Castile, Andalucia, and Aragon in 1561-1562.<sup>7</sup> One Jerome Nadal, a friend and confidant of the late Ignatius Loyola, had designed this interrogation form as an aid to his thorough visitation of the houses of the Iberian peninsula. Nadal inquired after, among other things, the name, birthplace, age, family, career, date and place of entry, vows, diseases, talents, experiences, studies, and feelings of each occupant of all houses of the two nations. Fourteenth among his questions was:

With what motives or inclinations he [the respondent] entered the Company and who received him, and where?

The 695 surviving replies to this query, some terse, others elaborate, permit a statistical study of Jesuit vocations.

The second source in age is a collection of 92 spiritual autobiographies penned and dictated by the residents of the Polish Province between 1574 and 1580. Now well edited and published, this corpus of narratives ranging in their printed form from one to 37 pages in length makes up in subjectivity and wealth of detail what it lacks in extensive scope.<sup>8</sup> There exists as well other Jesuit vocation literature, less useful to the social historian, which consists mostly of posthumous biographies of famous martyrs, scholars, or administrators. It is one of the advantages of the Polish collection that, unlike such encomia but like Nadal's questionnaire, it catches the obscure as well as the famous. Both these sources, because autobiographical, have escaped at least one sort of pious falsification. Thus the two documents are at once representative and largely untainted by flattering rhetorical embellishment.

The Iberian questionnaires constitute an unusually valuable source for the study of opinion. Every Jesuit who answered Nadal in writing replied to an identical set of questions. His declarations were thus, in the words of behavioural science, responses to a 'controlled stimulus'. The statements about motives for entry are therefore sufficiently comparable to be counted

and subjected to statistical operations. Comparison with catalogues of the inhabitants of Spanish and Portuguese houses suggests that the surviving manuscripts are nearly complete. There is thus no need to determine possible biases on a sample. Yet while counting is useful and suggestive, it is important not to endow numerical results with misplaced concreteness, for the declarations of the Jesuits to the touring father *Commissarius*, a stern and formidable official, were no more equivalent to their subjective experience than are the "opinions" of respondents to a political poll identical with their complex feelings. In both instances, one must accept the utterances as mere "signs" of an underlying reality.

The choosing of a life's vocation, whether clerical or lay, is necessarily both elusive and complex. It is important not to mistake the "reason" of the written record, in this case a Jesuit's autobiography, with the operating cause of the decision. The stated motive may have been a motto, a sort of shorthand, for an elaborate dialectic, only part of which ever surfaced into consciousness. Also the remembered, stated motive may indeed have been more a justification, to friends, colleagues, and onlookers, for the act of choice than it was the real thought and feeling of a recruit. The historian cannot hope always to discriminate between cause and rationalization. Yet when, as often happens with the Jesuit documents, one can begin to trace in detail the evolution of individual decisions, the psychological context emerges; one can detect the mood of the young man's deliberations, the imagery with which he clothed his options, the feelings with which he greeted the resolution of an often painful crisis. Likewise, the social setting of the decision, the place, duration, character, and intensity of the candidate's contacts with the Order may also emerge. At their best, the records of the Society of Jesus are a source of enormous value for the social history of emotional life. The remarks which follow constitute only the beginning of the kind of analysis to which the documents are susceptible.

The interpretation of the Jesuit manuscripts of 1561-1562 labours under one difficulty almost unknown to contemporary surveyors; Father Nadal used his *formula interrogationis* not only as a convenient source of information about the houses he was about to inspect and reform, but also as a preparation for an interview with each inhabitant, to be followed by a general confession. Few modern polls are conducted so formidably. The imminence of confession may have assured the veracity of the replies. At the same time the dual function of the questionnaire caused some Jesuits to treat it more as a sort of catechism than as an inquiry. There were precedents for such a use of lists of questions in both the Spiritual Exercises and the formal interrogation of aspirants to the novitiate.<sup>9</sup> Examination, and

self-examination, were standard Ignatian spiritual devices. Therefore, some accounts of the motives for entry could easily be formulae.

The chief themes in the Jesuits' accounts of their motives for entry are the flights from sin or temptation and from the uncertainty and vanity of the world. The Company's works seldom figure prominently in the narratives. To give a few examples from the replies to the Nadal questionnaire:

I entered the Company because it seemed to me I could not save myself or free myself of my sins. I was brought by a strong desire to be really good and to employ myself wholeheartedly in what they commanded me to do. I think that what at the time consoled me was to think that I would have to live in obedience, and that I did not have to govern myself by my own lights, or follow my own will. Concerning the company, it seems that I was moved because it was a group which seemed to me was in conformity in its works and life with the evangelic teachings that I heard them and others preaching at the time.<sup>10</sup>

The first time I entered the Company it was for the bad opinion I had of the world, the second [time] was for the disappointments of the same world, and its little faith, and for believing that only in God would I find peace and consolation [*sollego*, port] and for believing that only inside it could I console and save my soul.<sup>11</sup>

I was moved to enter the company seeing myself so lost and entwined in vices that thinking of death made my hair fall out and so it seemed to me there was no penance or mortification [*aspereza*] I would not undertake to satisfy our Lord, and so I spoke to a father of the company and got them to receive me in Simancas. Father Portillo [did it].<sup>12</sup>

When I was in Seville, on the way to Peru, our Lord moved me by means of no person to serve in a religion, for I saw the traffic of the world and the tranquility of religion. I sold at once everything I owned and went at once to Lisbon to be received . . .<sup>13</sup>

One could multiply such citations many fold, for the sentiments they express were widespread. The image these statements project is curiously negative, for they describe less what one would do inside the Order than what one would refrain from. Thus, in this literature, "India" and its "infidels", "Germany" and its "Lutherans" almost never appear. The obedience that marked the Society seemed in the eyes of its recruits more a device for salvation through self-restraint than an instrument for the accomplishment of goals. If the Order's activities caught the attention of these men, it was not because of the utility of such undertakings so much as because of their demands on flesh and will. In Weber's terms, the Jesuits appear to have drawn aspirants less through worldliness than through asceticism.

The longer autobiographies from the *Provincia Poloniae* prove that the meditation upon mortality and upon the vanity and danger of life in the world was no mere product of Iberian moroseness. The Poles, Saxons, and Baltic Germans who staffed the houses of this northeasternmost Jesuit Province were no less given than their peninsular colleagues to dwelling on the brevity of secular happiness. For instance, one Georg Schretel<sup>14</sup> recalled that for two years love of music had distracted him from a religious calling. One day, playing with a group of friends, he broke a string. Unable to continue, he tumbled into a sudden meditation on the evanescence of worldly joy and, bursting into tears, resolved at once, he wrote, to take the cloth.

From the imagery of Polish vocation stories, one can construct a dualistic typology which pits the world against the Company.

<i>Society of Jesus</i>	<i>World</i>
harmony	chaos
restraint	unleashed sensuality
safety	peril
eternal life	fatality
love untrammelled by attachments	egotism (of kin, especially)
freedom from avarice and pride	marriage, office, entanglements
renunciation	vain ambition

The list could go on. There is nothing especially Jesuit about these traditional dichotomies. Yet the persistence with which they recur in the rhetoric of vocation stories is significant. While the Society was in the world, it was clearly in its own eyes not of it.

Juridically, the Society of Jesus was a congregation of clerics; its professed were usually ordained priests. Thus, although the Jesuits lived in common and according to a rule, they omitted the usual monastic routine and habit and in their duties and dress differed little from seculars. Not only were numerous entrants to the Society already priests; many others were young men clearly long destined for the clergy but not yet ordained. In the Belgian Province (1585-1600), for instance, many recruits had received first tonsure, an almost sure sign of an intended ecclesiastical career, in their early teens, perhaps eight years before joining the Jesuits. Not a few had studied theology.<sup>15</sup> Because so many entrants were destined for sacerdotal orders, it is hardly astonishing that more than one retrospective explanation for choosing the Company dwelt on the pitfalls of a priestly life in the world.<sup>16</sup>

When however I considered the secular priesthood, I thought of the many dangers this is exposed to because one must live among corrupt and depraved people and I leaned ever more to the life of a regular.<sup>17</sup>

The recurrent theme of the risks of a priesthood not in rules suggests that the matter was a frequent topic in discussions between Jesuit confessors or teachers and those of their pupils who intended or had recently begun a life in the Church, but who had not yet decided on the form their careers might take. The idea that the soul of a cleric is in constant peril may have been a commonplace. More probably, however, the Society itself often implanted this stock argument in the mind of a likely seeming pupil or young and talented churchman of the neighborhood in order to sway him toward a Jesuit career.

Recruits had positive as well as negative reasons for entry. The vocations sometimes lauded the virtues of the Order as well as, or rather than, deploring the vices of life outside. Yet, if the vocational literature is accurate, the activities of the Society seldom struck the imagination of future adherents, for the records far more often dwell on the tenor of life, the bearing, mood, and manners of the fathers and brothers than on their works. Stanislaus Niewiaskowski, formerly a law student in Posnan, recalled,

Meanwhile, considering the two kinds of [priestly] status, I abhorred the secular completely, and at first my mind was torn between two congregations, the Jesuits and the Franciscans. I leaned more toward joining the Jesuits and what led me to them was that I saw in them refinement [*elegantia morum*] and modesty of bearing [*modestia*], and brotherly love [*charitas fraterna*].<sup>18</sup>

Stanislaus's Latin terms are not easily translated. He, like others, was referring to the almost courtly gentility of the Society, its air of active, open, willing, even cheerful morality. The Jesuits must have exhibited a delicate equipoise of liberality and restraint, of generosity and self-mastery, a balance which left a strong impression on the sixteenth-century observer. Twenty-six of the ninety-two vocations from the Polish Province mentioned the virtues of the Company; of those, most cited traits reflecting the Jesuits' air of graciousness.

Table 1. *Attractive Traits of the Society: Polish Province\**

Modesty	12
Erudition	8
Refinement of Manners	7
Deeds, activities	7
Piety	6
Friendliness	4



Charity	3
Affability	2
Teaching activity	2
Mode of saying Mass	1
Habit	1
Robust countenance	1

\* One man may appear more than once.

Even erudition, the productive attribute of the Society which drew most attention, was a state of being, a stance, a form of refinement, as much as it was an occupation. The Company, despite its activism, its interest in achievement, attracted recruits, because it had a style of life less utilitarian than aristocratic.<sup>19</sup>

The harmony of bearing, dress, speech, and action which impressed visitors to a Jesuit house corresponded to a principle which influenced the Society's writings, art, architecture, politics, pedagogy, and recruitment practices, and which is best expressed by a word which often escaped its members' pens, "edification". The Order, very much in the humanist tradition, looked to the senses to impress the soul. So in its schools it applied a largely pagan curriculum to Christian ends by raising classical decorum into an ethical principle. The psychology of this pedagogy has a Ciceronian ring; the beholder, struck by the merits of a good example, would naturally strive to rival it. Thus, benign competition, *aemulatio*, became a pillar of the Jesuits' educational theories and practices.<sup>20</sup> Teachers accordingly divided classes into rival factions, "Romans" and "Carthaginians," held grammar bees, and awarded prizes for the best composition or disputation.<sup>21</sup> Emulation and edification were closely linked, for both entailed inspiration by the example of virtue. Similar motives underlay the Society's treatment of guests and of potential members. The good manners, friendliness, and dignity of the inhabitants of a house were meant to strike the faculties of the observer's soul and to inspire him to a similar virtue.

The Jesuits' preoccupation with edification had roots not only in Renaissance psychology, but in Loyola's thought as well. The idea derived in part from his concern with self-mastery, discretion, modesty, courtliness, and utility. But most important was a trait of the founder's mysticism, his predilection for using the senses, or in meditation the imagination of the senses, to underscore a spiritual truth. The following very typical passage from the *Spiritual Exercises* illustrates very well this literal, almost theatrical mysticism.

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The fifth Exercise is the Meditation on Hell . . .

Prayer. The preparatory prayer should be the usual one.

1. Preamble. The first preamble is composition, which is here to see with the vision of the imagination the length, breadth, and depth of the inferno.
  2. Preamble. The second is to ask for what I desire: it will be here to try to imagine what the damned suffer, for if for my faults I forget the love of the eternal Lord, at least the fear of pains will help me not to fall into sin.
- 1st Point: The first point will be to see with the vision of the imagination the great fires, and the souls as if they were burning bodies.
- 2nd: The 2nd: To hear with the ears cries, shouts, voices, blasphemies against Christ our Lord and against all the saints.
- 3rd: The 3rd: To smell with the sense of smell smoke, sulphur, sewage, and putrid things.
- 4th: The 4th: To taste with the sense of taste bitter things, like tears, sadness, and the worm of conscience.
- 5th: The 5th: To touch with the sense of touch that is to know how the fires touch and enwrap the souls.<sup>22</sup>

Loyola's meditations treat of blessedness and its pleasures as well as of the pains of damnation. Just as he relied on the contemplation of delights to inspire to holiness, so he insisted that his congregation forswear extravagant and unseemly devotions and by modesty of bearing and grace of demeanor evoke the consolations of divine favour.<sup>23</sup> In such a way, the Society assimilated sanctity to decorum.<sup>24</sup>

Many were the ramifications of the Company's concern for appearances. The Jesuits were prone to spectacle. They wrote and directed Latin plays on pious themes to be performed by their pupils before admiring parents and patrons. Nor did the Society confine theatricality to the stage. The "Jesuit style" in church architecture was as dramatic as it was economical. To celebrate new relics with fitting pomp, the Company marshalled through triumphal arches sumptuous processions saluted by the blast of 150 cannon shots.<sup>25</sup> There were also more subtle aspects to the pursuit of edification. The Society desired recruits who would impress the public favourably. Consequently, its rules for admission urged rectors to prefer aspirants with a pleasing visage, good figure, and resonant voice.<sup>26</sup> Deformities, except under extenuating circumstances, barred admission. The

Company's records name men turned away for blackened teeth, a deformed nose, a scarred forehead, or a missing eye.<sup>27</sup> Likewise, nobility of lineage, because it edified, argued for acceptance into probation.<sup>28</sup> The Jesuits had abandoned in the 1540's most of their early, extreme austerity in the name of two interlocking goals, utility and edification, and turned to acquiring solid colleges at best furnished with the commodious gardens the fathers valued so highly.<sup>29</sup> Life in a Jesuit house was to be seemly, measured, chaste, attractive. It is thus no wonder that those who joined remarked so often on the *suavitas morum* of the Company.

It is clear from the autobiographies of recruits that one of the strongest and most decisive impressions one received of the Society was of the cordiality of its welcome. The Jesuits, whom Montaigne so delighted in visiting as he journeyed to Italy,<sup>30</sup> were seemingly excellent hosts. Setting precedent, Loyola himself kept an elegant table when he entertained guests in Rome.<sup>31</sup> What caught the eye of wayfarers was the courtesy of the greeting, the readiness to wash weary feet, the cheerful bustle of the community. The young Peter Fabricius, who had come on foot through rain and mud to the house at Pultusk in Poland, recalled his first meeting with the Company:

That evening, when a lay brother came to wash my feet, I long besought him not to do it; finally, overcome by the charity and the entreaties of the brother, I let him. He washed my feet and by that deed first excited me to enter the Society. I wondered how I could repay him with a service of equal value.<sup>32</sup>

A Netherlander, a parish priest, recalled his first encounter with a house of the Society on an unaccustomed trip to Cologne.

I joined them [the fathers] and was not a little edified by their modesty and wonderful unity of spirit and charity and liberality and enthusiasm for morning and evening prayer, and especially by the simplicity and patience of one lay brother. Yet more, it moved me a great deal to see how the lay brothers embraced and received the others as they came home from the journey with great signs of rare, true love. In the exercises I admired the graciousness [*suavitatem*] and religious modesty of the father administering the exercises and likewise the good cheer [*hilaritatem*] and pleasing friendliness [*gratam familiaritatem*] of those who served meals.<sup>33</sup>

First meetings were not the only nor, as shall appear below, the chief occasions for impressing a potential adherent. Yet quite often, it seems, the initial encounter left a lasting impression.

As the accounts of warm welcomes attest, the decision to enter the Society was often a very impulsive, emotional experience. Curiously, the

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language the Jesuits used to describe their conversions often bore close kinship with modes of discourse more commonly reserved for tales of romantic infatuation and courtship. Often the mind was “inflamed with desire”.<sup>34</sup> The young man was despondent;<sup>35</sup> he felt unworthy of the object of his love and hung back for a year or more in silence, fearing to declare to anyone his feelings;<sup>36</sup> or, on seeing the object of his love, he burst into tears because he could not often enough be near it, but then he consoled himself, thinking that after entry he could consort with it all he wanted.<sup>37</sup> Sometimes, as with the young Philip Widmanstadius, love banished his appetite and sapped his habitual interests.

When however in 1552 I came to Vienna, soon in the school of the Society, I often admired the sanctity of life of our fathers, . . . whose faces were robust and manly, the hands not white and delicate but hard and black, burned by the sun; finally, the entire constitution of the body seemed to bear travail and difficulties. And at the same time, such erudition, such liberty of spirit, so much candour and piety glowed in them, that they won the admiration of all Vienna; and I thought I saw not common men [*vulgares homines*] but Apostles of God. And so gradually I began to change my mind to revere and love them and to confess to them more often, and after 2 years I was so fond of the Society that nothing would do save to be with them, nor could I anywhere find joy, tranquility, or solace, save in the college. And so I had no heart to study, eat, or do almost anything, so constantly was the Society on my mind . . . <sup>38</sup>

For nuns, as is well known, the rhetoric of the very rite of profession underscores the extended parallel between taking the veil and the sacrament of marriage.<sup>39</sup> For men, the analogy between courtship and entering a religious order, while less sharply defined, was nonetheless very real. Like the liturgy of a nun’s profession, the genre of vocation literature thus appears to owe some of its vocabulary to romance. The extent to which the real transaction, like the semi-fictionalized record, conformed to the conventions of secular courtship is an interesting subject for further inquiry.

As we have seen, the decision to enter the Society of Jesus was thus usually an emotional one, prompted by a mixture of revulsion from a secular world seen as tiresome or menacing and of attraction to the Order itself. The pull of the Company seemingly had to do less with its deeds than with its considerable charms. These, as will appear below, were at times the product of deliberate recruiting policies, as well as the fruits of the spirituality of Loyola. It remains to put a statistical foundation to these qualitative generalizations.

Enumeration of the Portuguese and Spanish Jesuits’ stated motives for entry shows how the majority of these recruits cared more to leave the world

than to transform it. As appears in Table 2, the reason most commonly given was a stock formula of ambiguous import, *por servir a Dios*, "to serve God". After that, the reason most often brought forward was to separate oneself from the *seculum* and leave its troubles behind. The third most frequent motive was the special virtues of the Company. There followed, in close succession, "self-mortification" and "a call from God". Explicit interest in the service of one's fellow man came only sixth among the stated causes for a remembered vocation; only a little more than one in twenty among Portuguese and Spanish Jesuits gave such an explanation for his entry into the Society. More than four times as many recorded that they had opted "to leave the things of this world behind".

If one disaggregates these figures, as in Table 3, one finds among the various, more specific explanations for the choice of a Jesuit career remarkably little mention of the practical activities of the fathers and brothers. The admired traits of the congregation usually had little to do with work. Rather recruits felt attracted by the "piety", "modesty", or "charity" of the Society. Life-style, the ambience of a community, counted for more than deeds. The specific tasks of a Jesuit — teaching, preaching, caring for souls — seldom appeared in discussions of the decision to seek membership. What is more, even among the Portuguese and Spaniards, who staffed the missions, the most spectacular works of the Order almost never figure as inducements; as Table 3 shows, only 10 out of 695 stated that they had joined in order to go to the Indies, while 9 wrote they had been moved by reading the *India Letters* from the missions and four claimed aspirations to martyrdom. Among the Iberians, no more than two declared that they had joined the Society in order to combat heresy.

The reader might here retort that the expression "to serve God" subsumes all the Jesuits' secular activities under a single formulaic heading and that therefore pragmatic work was probably first rather than last in the minds of many recruits. While this pointed objection cannot be disproven flatly, there are nevertheless several good reasons for believing it untrue. For one, the "service of God" denoted not only working in His vineyard, but living in community, poverty, chastity, and obedience as well. The expression's referent is vague. So strikingly little specific, concrete reference to work appears in the Jesuits' recollections of their decisions to apply for admission that it seems unlikely that "*por servir a Dios*" very often meant practical activities alone. A second reason is even more persuasive; the 92 extensive autobiographies emanating from the Polish Province, far more elaborate and specific in their detail, seldom mention either the formula or any attempt to transform the secular world.

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Table 2. *Reasons for Entering the Society of Jesus: Spain and Portugal.*

The Most Common Motives*	% of 695
To serve God	38.4%
To leave the world	23.9%
The virtues of the Company	18.4%
Self-mortification	12.7%
A call from God	12.4%
To serve man	5.3%

\*One man may appear more than once.

Table 3. *Stated Reasons for Entry, a more detailed breakdown: Spain and Portugal*

	<u>Statements</u>	<u>% of 695*</u>
1. To serve God	267	38.4%
2. To save oneself	108	15.5%
3. Called by God	86	12.4%
4. To leave the world	82	11.8%
5. Long inclined to religion	69	9.9%
6. The piety of the Jesuits	64	9.2%
7. Conversations with the fathers	61	8.8%
8. Distaste for secular life	60	8.6%
9. The modesty of the Jesuits	34	4.9%
10. The charity of the Jesuits	31	4.5%
11. To serve man	31	4.5%
12. To do penance	30	4.3%
13. To mortify oneself	23	3.3%
14. Sermons of the Jesuits	20	2.9%
15. To obey	13	1.8%
16. To go to the Indies	10	1.4%
17. Reading <i>Cartas de las Indias</i>	9	1.3%
18. To live in obedience	8	1.2%
19. To fulfill an old vow	8	1.2%
20. To die a martyr	4	.6%
21. To surrender the will	3	.4%
22. To live in congregation	3	.4%
23. To combat heresy	2	.3%

1026 replies by 695 respondents.

\*The percentage figures are non-additive  
because many men gave several motives.

Table 4. *Reasons for Entry: Polish Province\**

A.	The most common	
	1. To escape the world and its dangers	37
	2. To save one's soul	27
	3. Admiration for the Society	26
B.	Selected others	
	— To serve God	6
	— To serve man	4
	— To protect the Church	2
	— Because the Company teaches heretics	1
	— To avoid the temptation to heresy	1
	— The Company's work in the Indies	1

\*One man may have given several motives.

As appears in Table 4, the members of the *Provincia Poloniae* were far more preoccupied with their own salvation and with withdrawal from the temptation which menaced it than they were with any kind of missionary work.

Yet one more indication of the reclusive instincts of the Jesuits comes from a questionnaire applied by the same Jerome Nadal in France, the Low Countries, and Germany immediately after his departure, in the spring of 1562, from Spain. There, while not inquiring into the motives for entry, he asked all the residents of the houses he inspected what kind of work, all things being equal, they most preferred. By far the commonest answer was "to study". Preaching, teaching, and the care of souls appealed less.<sup>40</sup>

While the explanation for the unexpected other-worldliness of the Jesuit recruits is undoubtedly complex, the key factor was certainly youth. Novices were usually adolescents or very young adults. Most had had little experience of the world, but rather came to their vocations straight from school. By 1570 a very considerable number, probably more than half, had been students of the Jesuits themselves, and of these, many had come to the Society at the prodding of their teachers or confessors. It is thus little wonder that from the shelter of the gymnasium, and above all of the *convictus*, the

boarders' school, the Society seemed a safe haven in a little known, but forbidding, world. The quietism of many Jesuit recruits was the outcome of both of immature hesitancy and, at times, of the urgings of eager instructors anxious to retain a promising young scholar.

Collectively, those who sought admission into the Company of Jesus were overwhelmingly youthful.<sup>41</sup> In the 1560's the median age of recruits was 19. Only one applicant in ten had passed his thirtieth birthday. Almost none had reached the age of forty. While the number of the very immature varied from country to country – in Spain only 9.8%; in Portugal 25.6%; in Germany 31.8%, were 16 or younger – everywhere, most recruits were not yet grown men. This had not always been so. In its beginnings, the Society of Jesus had been a voluntary association of adults able to undertake strenuous works of abnegation, discipline, and charity. Thus, the Jesuits remained from the bull of their foundation in 1540 until only 1548, when in Messina they opened their first college for boys.<sup>42</sup> So successful was this venture and so rapid its imitation that 8 years later, at Loyola's death, the Society owned 39 schools.<sup>43</sup> In the succeeding decades the spread of Jesuit schools continued unabated, until it was a rare residence that did not have a gymnasium attached. This transformation of the Society of Jesus from a preaching and serving order into one which taught enabled it to absorb young men who had not yet completed their education for they could continue their studies during and after the novitiate. It also made available a large student body from among whom the Company could select and try to recruit the most talented.

While the exact number of Jesuits who emerged from the Society's own schools is uncertain, the proportion was certainly high. The sign-in book of the novitiate at Rome, a house which took men from every corner of Europe, indicates that, excluding lay brothers, in the late 1560's and early 1570's at a minimum 51.2% of the arrivals were young men who had at some time studied with the Jesuits.<sup>44</sup> The real figure was probably in the vicinity of 75 percent. The *album novitorium* of the house at Tournai in French Flanders shows that in the 1590's a full 89.5 percent of the "scholastic" (non-lay) novices had been pupils of the Society. Surer of their literary training and of their morals, the Society preferred its own students. Also, close contact with the fathers was itself probably the source of many a vocation.

The autobiographies from the Polish Province give ample proof of the importance, for students and non-students of the Order alike, of traffic with the members of the Society. The Jesuits were models and, often, counsellors, for while some decisions to seek entry came unprompted, few indeed arose in solitude. Consultation with a Jesuit teacher or confessor figures prominently



in the recollections of those who joined. A poll shows that the decisive conversation was more often with one's confessor than with one's teacher. Almost 20 tales attribute influence to the former and only 8 to the latter. The influence of familiarity with the Jesuits on a young man's decision to enter is very natural. It must have been strongest on that minority among the Society's students, perhaps 5 percent, who boarded at the college. It was from this privileged minority, admitted to the "convict" because of their skill in letters or their family name, that the Order probably drew a large number of its effectives. To a boarder contemplating the end of school the outside world must have seemed a place of licence, temptation, and danger. The well-regulated college must have appeared, by contrast, a very snug haven.<sup>45</sup>

The role of the Jesuit teacher in a pupil's vocation, while usually discreet, was not always entirely passive. The Society, consistent with the voluntarism of its moral theology, was loath to direct the will of a potential adherent, but at the same time was not averse to artful deflection. There were canonical grounds as well as theological ones for discretion, for a novice, as in any congregation, had to be able to declare that he was entering by his own choice.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, prone as always to formulating rules, the Jesuits even produced written instructions on how to ease a young student into a vocation. These had the status of memorandum, not of statute. They issued from the prolific hand of the ubiquitous Dr. Nadal, the author of the visitation questionnaires. These directives merit citing in some detail, because they contribute enormously to understanding the rhetoric and the psychology of the average Jesuit's decision to seek entrance.

Nadal began by recommending that the rector of each house choose a special officer, called a *Promotor*, for the task. The job, he said was too delicate to be left to all and sundry. All teachers were to observe their students for signs of gifts of character and intellect and to notify the rector if they found a likely subject. The rector must inform the *Promotor*, whose task it was to encourage the young man to frequent confession and communion and to ply him with pious books, the titles of which the instructions supplied. Nadal's directives continued:

Indeed these books are not to be thrust upon them but with consideration and gradually, at the proper time. And if they seem to draw benefit from one book, he [sic] will be ordered to keep that book until he seems to have profited enough from it and desires another. Then the confessor will be able to instil love of spiritual things. Thus, first hate of sins, and then contempt for human affairs, and then fear of the dangers which those who live in the *seculum* constantly undergo, and then of death, and of the secret judgments of God, and of Christ's judgment of individuals and of the universe, fear of the inferno, love of paradise, desire of the same; to install love of God and perfection, of purity of life, of imitation of Christ and of

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the saints in general. And these things will be proposed to him if it seems that his judgment can be led with divine grace to a perfection in his life. Almost all of these things which the confessor will talk about in confession, the *Promotor* can at the same time discuss when the occasion arises.<sup>47</sup>

Much in the rhetoric of this prescription recalls the language of the *Spiritual Exercises*. The conversation of the *Promotor* with the young man holds up, much in the fashion of Loyola's book, two options dramatically opposed, on the one hand safety and on the other the risk of perdition. The idea that the Company is a place of shelter comes explicitly to the fore.

It is natural that the imagery of the *Spiritual Exercises* surfaced in Nadal's instructions for Ignatius's handbook was a prominent instrument of recruitment. Formally, the exercises themselves, the retreat and the meditations, were a device for choosing a way of life. While they required no single kind of decision, it is abundantly clear from the wording of the little book that they were better suited to those who contemplated entry into religion and best adapted to those who desired a career in a congregation like the Jesuits. Recognizing this, Nadal himself stipulated,

“ . . . we can, if we find someone suitable to the Society who is not a boy but an adult, who seems not to be able to be led to the Society in any other way, give him the spiritual exercises with the “Elections” in which he should choose his future way of life”.<sup>48</sup>

Clearly, rectors, confessors, and *promotores* followed this suggestion, for vocation stories abound with accounts of decision in the exercises themselves. Only sometimes had a Jesuit, perhaps a *Promotor*, suggested the retreat; elsewhere the initiative had been the supplicant's. On occasion the experience was a formality, but often it was a critical turning point in a young man's career. One tale, typical of a great many, suffices to show how this was so. Albertus Praevodius, a Polish student, had undergone a sudden conversion to a more devout life when attacked in the woods by ax-wielding peasant bandits and almost killed. Having decided to become a Franciscan, he resolved first to go in pilgrimage to Czestochowa and then to journey on to Krakow to enter a religious house. Before setting out, he stopped to take the counsel of an old teacher of his who had since joined the Jesuits and become the rector of their college in Posnan.

He, when he found out I wanted to enter an order, advised me that, abandoning the pilgrimage to Czestochowa, I should go to Braunsberg [in Prussia] to do the spiritual exercises, saying that I could easily find out there to what order God wanted to call me. I followed his advice and went with four companions to Braunsberg. But while I am wondering in the exercises how I might know what congregation God wants me to embrace, lo, the Holy Spirit suggest I stay, and not seek another order . . . .<sup>49</sup>

One surmises that the rector in Poznan had anticipated this outcome. The book of *Spiritual Exercises* and the meditations it enjoined were indubitably a major influence on the thoughts and feelings surrounding many vocations. How much, then, did they contribute to the relative quietism of the subsequent explanations?

This question is vexatious, for Loyola's book does contain images of a life that is apostolic and active. In the very first exercise the participant is enjoined to imagine Christ crucified. He is then to ask himself,

“What have I done for Christ”?

“What am I doing for Christ”?

“What ought I to do for Christ”?<sup>50</sup>

Later on, in “A Meditation on Two Standards” (the banner of Christ and the banner of Satan), the exercitant is to picture to himself “the sovereign and true Commander, Christ our Lord”, chief of an army of missionaries.

FIRST POINT. Consider Christ our Lord, standing in a lowly place in a great plain about the region of Jerusalem, His appearance beautiful and attractive.

SECOND POINT. Consider how the Lord of all the world chooses so many persons, apostles, disciples, etc., and sends them throughout the whole world to spread His sacred doctrine among all men, no matter what their state or condition.<sup>51</sup>

Nevertheless, the predominant motif of the handbook is not action but rather self-denial. In the same meditation, Christ addresses his soldiers, asking of them not deeds but poverty, the willingness to accept insults, and humility.<sup>52</sup> These are the three elements, according to Loyola, of a goal to which his writing reverts continually, the imitation of Christ. Likewise, in the crucial section of the *Spiritual Exercises*, the “Election”, where he who is taking the retreat is to choose a future life, there appears the admonition, “I must consider the end for which I am created, that is, for the praise of God our Lord and the salvation of my soul”.<sup>53</sup> Here, as in the older monastic traditions, preparation for the afterlife overshadows improvement of earthly

conditions. On the whole, the Ignation exercises, while not implying a cloistered withdrawal, do not predispose to utilitarian thoughts.

The institutional context of Loyola's meditations changed rapidly in the decades after 1522, the year, a solitary pilgrim, he first recorded them at Manresa. From then until the bull of their foundation, in 1540, the followers of Ignatius had been an informal, devout circle dedicated to austerity and pious works. Humility, for them, meant the care of lepers, begging, the conversion of prostitutes, and preaching in street corners. Formal recognition brought in its train first monastic obedience and then, swiftly, property in the form of houses. Within two years the new order possessed walls within which its novices could shelter. Thus, probably, for many who in succeeding years joined them, life with the Jesuits could more easily imply a separation from things of this world. Nadal's directives mark this change for they make specific reference to separation from the world, an idea never fully enunciated in the *Exercises* themselves.

The lessons of the Jesuit vocational literature for the interpretation of the cultural history of the baroque age are several. For one, these autobiographies reveal clearly how often behind the facade of counterreformation pomp there lurked anxiety. Assertiveness and doubt stood to one another not in polar opposition but in complementarity. The paradox of an activist congregation composed of men who wanted most of all to escape the world is in the eyes of the beholder of the twentieth-century. It was foreign to the men of the sixteenth. As is often said, there is no necessary conflict between mysticism and effectiveness. Nevertheless, to create from the raw youths who entered the novitiate a corps of confident and dedicated teachers, preachers, and missionaries required considerable acculturation. Many of the distinctive traits of the Society of Jesus were therefore not brought to it by its recruits, but rather imposed upon them by rigorous training. This does not mean that the spirits of veteran Jesuits were free of tensions. There is evidence enough in the talk of scruples, the reports of migraines and fits of melancholy, and the tallies of men who left after five or even ten years to seek a living elsewhere that the Order's formulae for Christian activism did not always succeed. Yet, by first provoking and then assuaging doubt, the Society's ethos produced a tension which may have been the source of much of its energy and drive.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Joseph de Guibert S.J., *La Spiritualité de la Compagnie de Jésus*, (Rome, 1953), p. 163, p. 182; Hugo Rahner, S.J., *Servir dans l'Eglise*, (Paris, 1959), p. 24, p. 31, p. 52, p. 58; Max Weber, *Sociology of Religion*, (Boston, 1963), p. 120 on the "rationalism" of the Jesuits.

<sup>2</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, (New York, 1958), pp. 95 ff., uses the term in his chapter, "The Foundations of Worldly Asceticism".

<sup>3</sup> David Knowles, O.S.B., *From Pachomius to Ignatius*, (Oxford, 1966), pp.72-93.

<sup>4</sup> Guibert, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-182, treats the controversy over mental prayer, in which the pragmatists in Rome gradually overcame the contemplatives of Spain and Portugal.

<sup>5</sup> Donald Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, (Chicago, 1965), I, pp. 316-326, gives a good chronology of the published letters from the Asian missions.

<sup>6</sup> Luis González de Camara, "Memoriale seu Diarium P. Ludovici González de Camara", *Fontes Narrativi de S. Ignatio de Loyola*, Dionysius Fernandez Zapico, S.J., and Candidus Delmases, S.J., ed., (Rome, 1943), I, pp. 579-580 (*Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu*).

<sup>7</sup> The manuscript replies are in the Roman archive of the Society of Jesus (Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, henceforth ARSI). They are listed as F.G. 77.1-77.4, "Responsa ad Interrogationes P. Nadal". Henceforth, they will be abbreviated as Nadal R.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Warszawski, S.J., *Unicus Universae Societatis Iesu Vocationum Liber Autobiographicus Poloniae Provinciae Proprius (1574-1580)*, (Rome, 1966).

<sup>9</sup> Ignatius Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, Louis J. Puhl, S.J., ed., (Chicago, 1951), pp. 15-17, for the "Daily particular examination of conscience". For the *Examen Generale*, see any edition of the Jesuit Constitutions, of which it forms the first part.

<sup>10</sup> Nadal R. I, f. 43.

<sup>11</sup> Nadal R. I, f. 77.

<sup>12</sup> Nadal R. II, f. 333.

<sup>13</sup> Nadal R. II, f. 232.

<sup>14</sup> Warszawski, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

<sup>15</sup> Figures taken from the novice book of the house of the Jesuits in Tournai, now in the Section Manuscrits of the Bibliothèque Royale in Brussels, call numbers 4080-4082 and 4543, "Album Novitiorum Domus Probationis Societatis Iesu Tornaci".

<sup>16</sup> Nadal R. IV, f. 162, f. 250; Warszawski, *op. cit.*, p. 155, p. 176.

<sup>17</sup> Warszawski, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

<sup>18</sup> Warszawski, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

<sup>19</sup> The Jesuits themselves were usually not of aristocratic lineage. The composition of the Society was very mixed, with the sons of office-holders the largest single group.

<sup>20</sup> Mabel Lundberg, *Jesuitische Anthropologie und Erziehungslehre in der Frühzeit des Ordens (ca. 1540-ca. 1650)*, (Upsala, 1966); Georges Snyders, *La Pédagogie en France*, (Paris, 1964), p. 49.

<sup>21</sup> Snyders, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

<sup>22</sup> My translation, from *Obras Completas de San Ignacio de Loyola*, Candido de Delmases, S.J., ed., rev. ed., (Madrid, 1963), p. 214.

<sup>23</sup> Rahner, *op. cit.*, p. 32, associates the Jesuits' aristocratic bearing with the courtly training of Loyola. The suggestion that terrestrial gracefulness was evocative of heavenly grace is mine.

24 The "Rules of Modesty" of 1549, which held not only for the Roman house but for the rest of the order as well, appear in Cámara, *op. cit.*, pp. 540n-542n.

25 Henri Platelle, *Les Chrétiens Face au Miracle, Lille au XVIIIe Siècle*, (Paris, 1968), p. 75, for the 150-gun salute.

26 "Constitutiones, Part I, cap. 2, par. 9, 10, 13; cap. 3, par. 1, "*Obras Completas*, p. 451, p. 455.

27 Mario Scaduto, S.J., *L'Epoca di Giacomo Lainez, Il Governo*, (Rome, 1964), p. 386; Alfred Poncelet, S.J., *Histoire de la Compagnie de Jésus dans les Anciens Pays-Bas*, (Brussels, 1927, 1928), p. 436n.

28 "Constitutiones, Part I, cap. 2, par. 13, *Obras Completas*, p. 451.

29 Jerome Nadal, "Epistolae et Instructiones", E. Cervos, S.J., ed., *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu*, (Madrid, 1898-1905), I, p. 603. Henceforth, Nadal, *Epistolae*. This is one of many discussions of the need for a good garden.

30 Michel de Montaigne, *Journal de Voyage*, (Paris, 1909), p. 117, p. 130, p. 262.

31 Rahner, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

32 Warszawski, *op. cit.*, pp. 279-280.

33 *IBID.*, p. 23.

34 "*inflammatus desiderio*", Warszawski, *op. cit.*, p. 165-166; See also, *ibid.*, p. 112, p. 116, p. 181, p. 298, p. 330; "*occulata flamma desiderii mei et voluntatis erupit*", p. 219; *me accendit et desiderium meum mirum in modum auxit*", p. 181.

35 *IBID.*, p. 240.

36 *IBID.*, p. 283, p. 327.

37 *IBID.*, p. 327.

38 *IBID.*, p. 308.

39 See for instance a manuscript ceremonial appended to a copy of the *Reigles de Jainct Augustin a l'Usage des Religieuses de Sainte Ursule*, (Nantes, 1643), held in the rare book room of St. Michael's College Library, Toronto, where the rite of vesture appears as "nopces d'une felicite qui ne finira jamais". I would like to thank my wife, Elizabeth Cohen, for this reference.

40 *Preferred Work of Jesuits: France, Netherlands, Germany, 1562.\**

1. Studies	33
2. Preaching	20
3. Teaching	17
4. "indifferent"	12
5. Care of souls	7
6. Humble tasks	3
7. Missions	2
8. Administration	2
	<hr/>
	96

\*No double counts.

41 Both the Nadal responses and the many novice-books and catalogues offer thorough documentation for the youth of applicants.

42 Gabriel Codina Mir, *Aux Sources de la Pédagogie des Jésuites, Le Modus Parisiensis*, (Rome, 1968), has an unusually good account of the founding of the first school, in Messina.

43 Allen P. Farrel, "Colleges for Extern Students opened in the Lifetime of St. Ignatius", *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*, VI, (1937), pp. 287-291.

44 ARSI, *Historia Societatis 171c*. "Novitii qui Romae Tirocinium Posuerunt 1565-1586". A photocopy of a manuscript in the possession of the Jesuits in Florence.

45 Snyders, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-42, on the closed world of a Jesuit school, and on the attempt to prevent contamination of the boys by a corrupt world outside the walls.

46 “Examen Generale, cap. 3, par. 14”, *Obras Completas*, p. 425. “If he says he was not moved by anyone of the Company, go on to the next question. If he says “yes”, (given that it is right and meritorious that the Company can move him), it seems it could cause greater spiritual good to give him some time to think it over and to commend himself in the whole matter to his Creator and Lord, as if no one of the Company had moved him; because with greater spiritual forces he can go on in greater service and glory of the divine Majesty”. Nadal in his instructions on admission made the same point, *Epistolae*, IV, pp. 547-552.

47 Nadal, *Epistolae*, IV, pp. 547-552.

48 *IBID.*, p. 552.

49 Warszawski, *op. cit.*, p. 298.

50 Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, (Chicago, 1951), p. 28.

51 *IBID.*, p. 61.

52 *IBID.*, p. 62.

53 *IBID.*, p. 71.