

She walks in beauty

DAVID HODGES

*'She walks in beauty, like
this night.'*

Byron

Lustrous beauty
circling bright,
with new, clear shafts
of silver light,
gliding through
the shadows of the night.
How brilliant is
the sweep of stars
that sparkle in her train! –
her veil the brightest
in the heavens.
Tuned to the music
of the spheres,
her song, her beauty
all express
her one, eternal 'yes'.
Reflected glory
of her Sun,
hers of right,
receptive of
his all-embracing light.

Labourers in Christ's Vineyard

*Apostolic Formation in the Thinking and Praxis
of Ignatius of Loyola*

BRIAN O'LEARY, SJ

The Swedish Ignatian review, POLANCO, planned an issue that would be dedicated to the general theme of leadership (and training for leadership) in the Church. Brian, a regular contributor to RELIGIOUS LIFE REVIEW, was commissioned to write on how Ignatius of Loyola approached the question of formation in his day. The piece appeared in POLANCO 1-2/2009, pp 32-39, and is published now for the first time in English, with permission.

CONSTITUTIONS

IGNATIUS' WAY of thinking was inductive rather than deductive; he was more interested in praxis than in theory; above all, he learned from experience. The Spiritual Exercises came into being because he had reflected on his own experience of God, and on his experience of helping others in their search for God. When he came to write the *Constitutions* for the Society of Jesus, the dynamic was similar. While the *Constitutions* were to become normative for Jesuits, in their origins they reflected to a large extent what was already happening in the life of the first generation. This is not to question the creative genius of Ignatius but simply to state that he sought to insert into the *Constitutions* the 'best practice' that the first Jesuits had discovered – often through trial and error.

This explains why Ignatius only gradually promulgated the Constitutions. He sent his colleague Jerome Nadal to different Provinces, primarily to explain them to the communities, but also to check that what he had written genuinely reflected what was happening on the ground.

Central to any understanding of the Constitutions is the recognition that Ignatius and the early companions expressly wished to pass on to later generations of Jesuits the particular experience they had shared with one another. Indeed, the two major decisions that had emanated from the Deliberation of the First Fathers in 1539 (namely, to form themselves into one body and to vow obedience to one of themselves) might together be described as a commitment to continuity and permanence.

The First Fathers regarded their experience over the years since they had come to know Ignatius as their formation, just as Ignatius was understood to have made his novitiate at Manresa. Formation takes place in the Society of Jesus through a pattern of experience closely similar to that of the early companions, and in continuity with that experience, just as their formation was an experience closely similar to, and in continuity with that of Ignatius. Permanence depends on continuity of experience. Continuity of experience is another term for formation.

CARDONER'S BANKS

The adjective that immediately comes to mind in relation to Jesuit formation is *integrated*. While spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral/professional formation may need to be programmatically distinguished, they are never separated. Indeed they are interwoven with each other. This interweaving can be discussed from various points of view but ultimately what lies behind Ignatius' approach is his mystical experience at Manresa — especially the 'great enlightenment' on the banks of the Cardoner. Central to the wisdom granted to Ignatius at

that time was an understanding of the interplay of the divine and the human in life.

As he sat there the eyes of his understanding were opened and though he saw no vision he understood and perceived many things, numerous spiritual things as well as matters touching on faith and learning, and this was with an elucidation so bright that all these things seemed new to him [*Autobiography* 30].

At this point in the narrative his primary aim was not so much to convey *what* he had been taught as simply to assert *that* he had been taught. In a more explicit way he had earlier made the claim that 'During this period God was dealing with him in the same way a schoolteacher deals with a child while instructing him' [*Aut.* 27]. In both cases it is the reality of being taught by God that is most important for him to affirm. This is perhaps the first sign of Ignatius' later tendency to be concerned to establish his personal credibility. By making these declarations in the *Autobiography* he is seeking to legitimise his subsequent decisions and actions.

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INTER-RELATEDNESS

A key element of the Cardoner experience was a grasp of the *inter-relatedness* of the truths whose meaning he saw, bringing together matters of the spirit, of faith, and of (secular) learning. He saw how all things had their source and origin in the creator God. Their guiding principles and causes could be found in the Logos and the Sophia, the Word and the Wisdom of God. They had an order, a meaning, an orientation — but also an inter-relatedness — given them by God.

Such a reading of the text helps us to understand how the Cardoner experience deepened in Ignatius the gift of discernment. Hence it could become the touchstone for all his future discernment and decision-making. Our difficulties with decisions nowadays are often rooted in a lack of knowledge about the relationships, interconnections and interdependencies that exist, not only between the human and secular realities with which we are dealing, but also between these and the divine realities that are accessed only in the darkness of faith.

An understanding of this inter-relatedness also permitted and enabled Ignatius to develop a spirituality which may broadly be called humanistic. I say *broadly* because the words 'humanism' or 'humanistic' are problematical when applied to Ignatius. He was certainly not a humanist in the modern sense, where the term has been hijacked by atheistic secular humanism.

But neither was he a humanist in the Renaissance and sixteenth-century meaning of the term. The New Learning of that period, while not denying the existence of God, wanted to put the human person at the centre of the universe. For Ignatius God was always at the centre and the human person could never usurp that position. So I use the word 'humanism' when speaking of Ignatius simply to indicate his reverence for the whole of creation, his valuing of the human person with all his or her gifts, talents, and creativity, as well as his conviction that there is a need to foster the human as well as being open to the divine.

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

This somewhat lengthy excursus on the Cardoner can serve as introduction to *Const.* 813-814. These are the most profound paragraphs in Part X and among the more profound in the entire text of the Constitutions. Here Ignatius expresses his conviction

of the need for the polarities of the divine and the human to be recognised and then held in creative tension. He begins by outlining three objectives:

1. The preservation and growth of the body of the Society;
2. The preservation and growth of the spirit of the Society;
3. The aiding of souls to reach their ultimate and supernatural end.

He then names four means to attain these objectives:

1. Goodness and virtue, and especially charity;
2. A pure intention of the divine service;
3. Familiarity with God in spiritual exercises of devotion;
4. Sincere zeal for souls.

God's saving and sanctifying action reaches and impinges on his people through the instrumentality of those who, like his Son, are sent into the world.

These are 'the means which unite the human instrument with God and so dispose it that it may be wielded well by his divine hand'. We might pay particular attention to this central image – that of the human instrument. It emphasises the primacy of God's action in the world, and the instrumental nature of our co-operation in that action. The third point of the Contemplation to Attain Love reads: 'This is to consider how God works and labours for me in all creatures upon the face of the earth, that is, he conducts himself as one who labours' [*Exx.* 236]. God is divine energy, powerful, active and creative. God is working, not just 'for me in all creatures' (animate and inanimate) but for all creatures in and through me, just as he worked in and

through the humanity of Jesus, the highpoint of creation. Jesus' humanity and ours thus become instrumental in the hands of God — for the divine redemptive purpose.

We might also link this image with the theme of providence. The human instrument mediates God's providence toward his people; he or she becomes the channel of that providence. 'God will provide' — certainly, but God chooses to do so in large part through those human instruments that are united with him in love and grace. God's saving and sanctifying action reaches and impinges on his people through the instrumentality of those who, like his Son, are sent into the world.

RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS

We now turn to what Ignatius calls 'the natural means which equip the human instrument of God our Lord to deal with his fellow human beings' and which he insists 'will all help toward the preservation and growth of this whole body'.

An instrument has to fit the hand of its user, the artist or artisan, but it also has to be suitable for dealing with the material on which the artist or artisan wishes to work. The most delicate brush, although it feels just right in the hand, will be of little use to a sculptor in marble. Instrumentality is like the Roman god Janus. It faces in two directions — toward the person who makes use of the instrument, and toward the material on which that instrument will work.

Applying this image to the purpose of the Society, 'to help souls', we recognise that both the instruments and the material on which they work are not inert, lifeless substances but vital, autonomous human beings. So we are speaking of 'instruments' who freely agree to be such in God's hands, and of 'material' that has the freedom to accept or to reject the work and influence of the instrument. In this scenario, facing in two directions, we as instruments require to be in union with God so that he can work through us, but we need also to know how to relate easily

and effectively with people. Const. 814, therefore, selects three so-called 'natural or acquired means' for special mention:

1. Well-grounded and solid learning;
2. A method of proposing it to the people by means of sermons and lectures;
3. The art of dealing and conversing with others.

In more contemporary language we might speak of the need to be well educated in line with the academic and professional standards of our time and culture. Such education is to be accompanied by an ability to communicate its fruits effectively to others. Even more foundational (because essential to all ministries) is the need for a certain ease in human relationships. The right use of these natural or acquired means becomes a co-operation with God's work in the world, a sharing in divine providence.

However, the man who composed the *First Principle and Foundation*, the *Two Standards*, and the *Rules for the Discernment of Spirits*, was well aware of human ambivalence. Ignatius knew how we can be seduced and trapped into unfreedom by the very goodness of creation. Natural means easily become ends in themselves, or means to ends other than God and his Kingdom. So he lays down conditions for the right use of these natural or acquired means.

1. They are to be based upon the foundation of the spiritual means that unite the instrument with God, not acquired or exercised independently of them;
2. They are to be acquired and exercised for the divine service alone, not for our own, or the Society's satisfaction, reputation or glory;
3. We are not to put our confidence or reliance on them, but through them co-operate with the divine grace according to the arrangement of the sovereign providence of God our Lord.

The spiritual/supernatural means and the natural/acquired means, while distinct, are not separate. The unifying element for Ignatius is the glory of God. 'For (God) desires to be glorified both through the natural means, which he gives us as Creator, and through the supernatural means, which he gives as the Author of grace'. Our personal relationship with God, fostered by the means outlined previously, is itself apostolic. We seek God in the awareness of being an instrument, and conscious that this instrument will be purified, enlightened and brought into union with God *through being used*. On the other hand, the natural means are amalgamated with a person's growth into union with God as well as serving the effective communication of the word through a wide variety of ministries.

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FORMATION FOR WHAT?

The theological presuppositions contained in the opening paragraphs of Part X of the Constitutions underpin all Ignatius' legislation and praxis in regard to formation. We shall reflect on some of this more concrete material below. But first an underlying question needs to be asked, even if implicitly it has already been answered. What does Ignatius envisage that formation is for?

In the sixteenth-century context it was for something then quite new in the Church: life in a de-cloistered religious order whose sole purpose was mission. It is important to emphasise that formation was for a *life*, not for some specific part or aspect of that life. This unity (life) is what creates the demand that formation be integrated. Formation must assist and nourish

personal growth on the human as well as on the more specifically spiritual levels. It must enable a person to relate and work closely with other 'friends in the Lord' (a term with which Ignatius referred to the early companions). And it must *at one and the same time* fashion men who are at home with all kinds of people and who are professionally trained to meet the demands of the ministries to which they are assigned.

An understanding of priesthood in the Society is also relevant to this discussion. Ignatius chose for himself and his companions not to be incardinated into any particular diocese. He did not want Jesuits to take on pastoral responsibility for any *localised* Christian community.

The Constitutions [588] contain an express prohibition on Jesuits becoming involved in parish work. (This was abrogated by GC31). But Ignatius envisaged them as free 'to be sent', whether by the Pope or the Superior General, to wherever the need was greatest. They were to live (as he once expressed it) 'with one foot in the air'. Availability and mobility were to be essential elements in this way of life. They were called to a universal mission. Hence the descriptions of Jesuits (not always kindly intended) as the 'light cavalry' or 'shock troops' of the Church. This outlook also means that Ignatius places less emphasis on the cultic aspect of priesthood and more on a priesthood of the word. All of this partly answers the question, formation for what? It is primarily formation for a priestly way of life that is fluid, unpredictable, often itinerant, and secondly for the ministries that constitute such a way of life.

EARLY FORMATION

Instead of discussing in detail the later stages of formation I shall concentrate on the novitiate. Ignatius' legislation regarding the novitiate is the clearest application of the insights and principles I have been outlining above. He was aware that candidates to the Society needed a formation that was different

from that offered to candidates to the monastic life. He envisaged a novitiate that would only *in part* consist in a withdrawal from the 'world'. Some withdrawal would be necessary (in order to make the Spiritual Exercises, for example) but there was also need for the candidates to undergo 'experiments' (Spanish *experiencias*), some of which would take them back into the 'world'. He reveals his thinking in an early document preliminary to the writing of the Constitutions. It is his way of answering the question, 'formation for what?'

The reason which impels us to give greater importance to *experiments* and to devote more time to them than is customarily employed in other Congregations is the following: If someone enters a well-ordered and well-organised monastery, he will be more separated from occasions of sin because of the cloister, tranquillity and good order there than he will be in our Society. For this Society does not have that cloister, quiet and repose, but travels from one place to another. Moreover, if one has bad habits and lacks some perfection, it suffices for him to perfect himself in a monastery so ordered and organised. But in our Society, it is necessary that one be well experienced and extensively tested before being admitted. For as he travels about later on, he must associate with men and women both good and bad. Such associations require greater strength and greater experiences, as well as greater graces and gifts from our Creator and Lord [MHSI, vol. 63, p. 60]. This text can be seen as a 'composition of place', an imaginative yet concrete description of where members of the Society live their lives.

We have already seen that the method of formation in the Society not only grew out of, but also was meant to be a re-enactment of, the experience of Ignatius himself and the early companions. This pattern is clear in the sequence of six *experiments* that Ignatius outlines in Const. 65-70. These experiments are as follows:

1. Spiritual Exercises;
2. ministry in hospitals;
3. pilgrimage;
4. humble service in the novitiate house;
5. teaching catechism to boys and the illiterate;
6. the priestly ministries of preaching and hearing confessions. (Ignatius' original expectation was that candidates would already be ordained.)

These experiments re-enact the activities in which the first companions engaged from their time in Paris through to their arrival and residence in Rome. It was through these activities and experiences that they had been formed in apostolic spirituality.

THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES AND THE OTHER EXPERIMENTS

The key dynamic in this formative programme is the relationship between the Spiritual Exercises and the other five experiments. Recalling the graces asked for during the four weeks of the Exercises, and presuming that they have been received, we might describe a novice who has completed the Exercises somewhat as follows: He is a person who knows experientially that he is loved by God, has at least to some degree attained 'indifference', realises that he is a forgiven sinner, has been grasped by the attractiveness and the ideals of Christ and has responded to his call, has learned the art of discernment, knows what it is to suffer with the suffering Christ and to rejoice in the joy of the Risen Christ, is sensitive to God's presence and activity in all of creation, including his own life, and has emerged into the freedom of the Spirit.

This is admirable and much to be desired. However, there is always a risk that the experience of the Exercises might leave a person (more particularly a novice) with a spirituality that is individualistic or even narcissistic. To counter this he is then exposed, through the other experiments, to the actual, complex,

messy, and often painful reality of other people's lives. He is expected to find God in the heart of this reality just as much as he found him in the seclusion and solitude of the Spiritual Exercises. The interplay of the contrasting kinds of experience is vital – they all form part of the one process. In a real sense the Exercises do not end with the thirty days, but are continued and often brought alive in new and deeper ways through the novice's insertion into, and involvement with, the lives of the people to whom he is sent. The novice's indifference is now on trial, his sinfulness and need of God's mercy is experienced in a new and possibly more distressing manner. Christ is shedding light on so many perplexing human situations. The dying and rising of Christ is entered into through accompanying the dying and rising of his people. The need for discernment and for the unction of the Spirit is everywhere present and urgent.

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A complementary viewpoint sees these five experiments as so many ways of seeking confirmation of the graces of the Exercises, of looking for assurance that these graces were real at the time they were first received, and are still active and effective in the person's life. When combined with the *apprenticeship in ministry* element that is also present in these experiments, this confirmation enables the novice to strengthen his conviction that he is truly called by God to this way of life

– one spent on mission among God's people. The experiments thus allow for an ongoing discernment concerning vocation.

MINISTRY IN HOSPITALS

Space will permit our looking briefly at just one of these experiments, that in hospitals. The text of the General Examen places it immediately after the Spiritual Exercises. It reads:

The second experience is to serve for another month in hospitals or one of them. The candidates take their meals or sleep in it or in them, or serve for one or several hours during the day, according to the times, places, and persons. They should help and serve all, the sick and the well, in conformity with the directions they receive, in order to lower and humble themselves more, thus giving clear proof of themselves to the effect that they are completely giving up the world with its pomps and vanities, that in everything they may serve their Creator and Lord, crucified for them [Const. 66].

The novices need to embody in their lives the *kenosis* of Christ, through obedience, charity, and humiliations. They are being tested in character and in faith, being stretched possibly to their human and spiritual limits, but at the same time they are learning the art of dealing with people. This is an apprenticeship. We notice that they are not only to be of help to the sick, but they are to 'help and serve all, the sick and the well'. The goal of the Society of Jesus is expressed many times in the Constitutions but always with a stress on the aid of souls. For example:

The charity and zeal for souls in which this Society exerts itself according to the purpose of its Institute embrace all kinds of persons, to serve and help them in the Lord of all to attain to beatitude [CONST. 163].

SOLIDARITY WITH THE VICTIMS OF SOCIETY

'All kinds of persons' – including, and perhaps especially, society's outcasts and those who are marginalised, people for whom nobody else has a care (to anticipate one of the criteria for the choice of Jesuit ministries). 'All kinds of persons' – including victims of the plague, and those suffering from syphilis who had been abandoned by their families in the stinking death houses ('hospitals') of that time. (It is, I think, worth noting that we lose all insight into the power of this experiment if we are thinking in terms of a modern, well-equipped, antiseptic hospital.) Ignatius sent the novices to serve in these dreadful places, partly because it was what he himself and the early companions had done, but also in order that they would gain a new solidarity with the victims of society in embracing a life of lowliness and humility. They were to empty themselves of their natural clinging to honour and rank in society, to leave aside even their natural sense of modesty and decency as they related to people whose sickness often carried a severe moral stigma. They were to find the poor Christ in these people just as they had found him in the contemplations of his life when making the Exercises. They were to be the compassionate, healing Christ ministering to the broken, dying Christ.

STUDIES

Early in this article I wrote that the adjective that most readily comes to mind in relation to Ignatius' approach to formation is *integrated*. I have tried to use integration as the unifying element in the course of my exposition. It has perhaps been at its clearest in Ignatius' integration of spiritual formation and the art of dealing with people. Intellectual formation (in the humanities, philosophy, and theology, as well as in professional studies) has been mentioned but not developed. The problem in treating Ignatius' legislation on the intellectual component of formation

is the obvious one – he was dealing with the sixteenth century. Much more than the spiritual and pastoral elements, intellectual formation is contingent on the prevailing cultural and educational needs of each particular place and time. One cannot simply take the content of the programme of studies proposed by Ignatius and implement it everywhere today. Somewhat by analogy with his own account of the Cardoner experience, I have chosen simply to stress *that* he includes the intellectual dimension as intrinsic to formation, rather than to discuss *what* he legislated for in his own day.

PRAYER

However, in dealing with the issue of studies in the Constitutions Ignatius has included important teaching on the *prayer* of scholastics during their studies. This teaching is not time-conditioned and is worth at least a brief mention by way of conclusion. It offers an indication of how he approaches the integration of the spiritual and the intellectual. He writes:

But after they have been approved and while they are applying themselves to their studies, just as care must be taken that through fervour in study they do not grow cool in their love of true virtues and of religious life, so also during that time there will not be much place for mortifications and long prayers and meditations. For their devoting themselves to learning, which they acquire with a pure intention of serving God and which in a certain way requires the whole man, will be not less but rather more pleasing to God our Lord during this time of study [Const. 340].

In order to make great progress in these branches [of learning] the scholastics should strive first of all to keep their souls pure and their intention in studying right, by seeking in their studies nothing except the

glory of God and the good of souls. Moreover, they should frequently beg in prayer for grace to make progress in learning for the sake of this end [Const. 360].

It is good to keep in mind that in the sixteenth century long periods devoted to prayer were considered necessary for those living an authentic religious life. On a number of occasions Ignatius had to resist such expectations within the Society of Jesus. So instead of long prayers during studies the scholastics are asked to foster

- purity of soul;
- a right intention of serving God in their studies;
- a total dedication to studies, which require the whole man;
- a conviction that God is more pleased by their rightly motivated studies than by long prayer;
- prayerful petition for progress in their studies as a means of helping others and giving glory to God.

All of this echoes and applies the teaching in Part X of the Constitutions which we have considered earlier. It is in turn confirmed and expanded in Ignatius' letters to Antonio Brandão and Bartolomé Hernández. Of course Ignatius does lay down certain requirements regarding liturgical and personal prayer for the scholastics (in Const. 342-343). Nevertheless, his main stress remains on their finding God in the very activity of study, and on the pre-dispositions that are necessary for that to happen. Clearly, we have here a lucid example of his striving for integration.

Bravery required: leave the boat!

(BUT DON'T ABANDON SHIP)

ANTHONY GITTINS, CSSP

This text has been adapted from a talk given recently to the clergy of the Diocese of Albany, New York, in the context of the major moral crisis currently affecting the Church. Professor Gittins' faith permits him to offer hope, as well as important parameters for the renewal of Church that is widely advocated and desired. This address is an urgent call to conversion.

AMONG THE more distressing criticisms levelled at some bishops and clergy is that, even now, they do little more than react to each new eruption that bursts on the ecclesial landscape. If many laity judge their leadership to be morally bankrupt, some clergy still seem to think they just need to keep their heads down a bit longer until the volcanic dust settles and it is safe to venture out again. Others have the look of startled deer caught in the blinding lights of an oncoming truck, trapped in the panic of indecision. And others again simply have nothing to say and less to show; they react like stroke victims: paralysed, bemused, and deeply frustrated. If they do think about the future it is with deep foreboding and anxiety, hovering as they do between pessimism and hopelessness.

WHAT IS HAPPENING?

From his very soul, Shakespeare's King Lear cried: 'I am bound upon a wheel of fire, that my own tears do scald like molten lead.' The institutional priesthood seems bound and immobilised, some of its ministers slowly turning until carbonised — unless, by grace, we are truly purified and transformed. So what in God's name does all this mean? If not