

THE CARDONER IMPERATIVE

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JESUIT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION in North America and Europe are facing a decline in the number of Jesuits teaching. More and more lay faculty are being recruited—and bringing with them their own distinctive gifts and talents. This significant shift in faculty membership, however, raises the question of how it is possible for teaching staff to share the Ignatian theological vision that lies at the heart of a Jesuit institution. And this question leads to a more fundamental one: is there such a vision? If so, what is it, and how does it inform Ignatian pedagogy?¹

A good place to start looking for a distinctively Ignatian theology might be the river Cardoner. Ignatius' *Autobiography* recounts that, as he walked towards a church in the locality where he had determined to pray, Ignatius sat down to rest on the river bank. And, as he rested, the Lord began to open his eyes.

One time [Ignatius] was going out of his devotion to a church a little more than a mile from Manresa; I believe it was called St Paul's. The road ran next to the river. As he went along occupied with his devotions, he sat down for a little while with his face towards the river which was running deep. While he was seated there, the eyes of his understanding began to be opened; though he did not see any vision, he understood and knew many things both spiritual and matters of faith and of learning, and this was with so great an enlightenment that everything seemed new to him. Though there were many he cannot set forth the details that he understood then, except that he experienced a great clarity in his

¹ This article is the first of two dealing with this issue. The second will deal with the practical possibilities for how this Ignatian vision might inform Ignatian pedagogy.

understanding. This was such that in the whole course of his life, through sixty-two years, even if he gathered up all the many helps he had had from God and all the many things he knew and added them together, he does not think they would amount to as much as he had received at that one time.²

The context of this extraordinary revelation was the period of Ignatius' spiritual formation at Manresa. Here, he later insisted, the Lord took him by the hand and taught him as a teacher teaches a child. He had come to Manresa fresh from his conversion during his convalescence at Loyola. That time of physical suffering and recuperation was a prelude to the intense spiritual preparation he now underwent. The sojourn at Manresa was not part of Ignatius' original plan. He had envisaged spending only a few days there, but when it became apparent to him that the Lord was working profoundly with him, the days extended to weeks and then to months. He lived for ten months outside the town, spending hours each day in prayer and also working in a hospice. It was while he was here that the ideas for what



Ignatius' vision at the Cardoner

² *Autobiography*, 30.

are now known as the Spiritual Exercises began to take shape. In particular he received significant illuminations concerning the Trinity. So significant were these experiences that Ignatius maintained a lifelong devotion to the Trinity.³

The experience beside the Cardoner was the pinnacle of all the mystical graces that Ignatius received at Manresa. Though the details in the *Autobiography* are sparse, there is an indication of the scale of the organic insight which enabled Ignatius to see all the truths he had previously learned in a new and integrated light. From this time onward he adopted the principle of contemplative discernment as crucial for all action. The Cardoner experience formed a touchstone for his whole life, and for the writing of the *Spiritual Exercises* and the later *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus.

This event also contributes, I suggest, to the distinctive ‘way of proceeding’ of subsequent generations formed in the Exercises. In our contemporary context, an ongoing appreciation of the imperative quality of this experience can cultivate a certain disposition that influences behaviour: renew and refine our practice of contemplative discernment; inspire apostolic commitment and deepen theological vision, as we recall the divine initiative made known in Christ for the reconciliation of all creation—and especially of humanity—into the life of the Trinity. Thus I am using the phrase ‘Cardoner imperative’ to mean something derived from the initial experience of Ignatius, something that demands attention and action, and something that cultivates a certain disposition which influences behaviour. The substance of this ‘something’ forms the content of this article.

One person’s mystical experiences cannot, of course, be transmitted to followers. What can be transmitted, however, is a certain perspective on the Christian life, a perspective which is capable of engendering in reflective minds a distinctive type of theology. It is important to recall here that Ignatius himself was not a professional theologian. But as Karl Rahner has written:

The theology hidden in the simple words of the Exercises belongs to the most important fundamentals of contemporary Western

³ *Autobiography*, 28

Christianity. In fact, it has yet to be fully assimilated by the Church's academic theology.⁴

This theological perspective involves a Christological focus, a clear Trinitarian understanding, an expansive theological anthropology, and a rooted ecclesiology.

I should like to start by giving brief consideration to the possible nature of Ignatius' vision itself. I shall then go on to explore how the Spiritual Exercises flow from the Cardoner understanding. This is not a new insight: Hugo Rahner emphasizes that 'the primary effect of the vision was the shaping of the Spiritual Exercises'.⁵ Finally I shall indicate something of the importance of the 'Cardoner imperative' for our contemporary situation.

The Nature of the Experience

Speculation by successive generations concerning Ignatius' Cardoner revelation has produced a consensus that it was an encounter with God focused primarily in the intellect. It was didactic—the acme of Ignatius' experience of being taught by the Lord, unifying heart and mind in a single orientation. Ignatius only hints at what he learned. The important thing was that God had been instructing him, and that when he reflected many years later he realised that this single experience had taught him more than all the other experiences of his life put together.

As a letter from Laínez was concerned to stress, Ignatius did not say that the illumination at Cardoner enabled him to understand 'all things', but rather that the many things he already understood were so transformed that they all appeared new to him. He was able to reflect upon what he knew from a new perspective—the perspective of contemplative discernment—that made them look new. Ignatius began to understand the principle of discernment in relation to his whole experience during this period. 'Cardoner was an insight into and confirmation of all that he had been learning in the light of the

⁴ Karl Rahner, foreword to *Ignatius von Loyola: Geistliche Übungen*, edited by Alois Haas (Freiburg: Herder, 1967), translated in Karl Rahner, foreword to Harvey Egan, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Spiritual Horizon* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1976), xiii.

⁵ Hugo Rahner, *The Spirituality of St Ignatius Loyola: An Account of Its Historical Development*, translated by Francis John Smith (Westminster, Md: Newman Press, 1953), 52.

principle which unified all his experiences into a meaningful whole.’⁶ He began to discern the spirits with greater assurance and awareness than he had at Loyola. And he also began his lifelong practice of reflective living as he came to a deeper perception of his vocation to apostolic service.

Before Cardoner, Ignatius had considered himself ignorant of the ways of God. Afterwards he had a vital guide for his actions and,

... a norm to distinguish between means and ends, accidental from the essential, a principle which involved a definitive conception of Christian perfection; and from which would evolve a definitive method for the attainment of this perfection which from then on meant doing the will of God for him.⁷

This insight, this gift from God—*donum sapientiae et intellectus*—was a grace that motivated Ignatius for the rest of his life as he endeavoured to search for the will of God in all his actions. He became the living exemplar of the grace that he had received, devoting his life to this search for the divine will, both for himself and for those whom the Lord called to ‘the same manner of service in the Church’.⁸

Leonard Silos argues that there were three elements to the Cardoner experience.⁹ First, Ignatius became aware of the principle of discernment that brought coherence to his earlier experiences and with it a new perspective on spiritual matters. Secondly, this principle gave him a fundamental awareness that human existence is, by nature, a vocation. Thirdly, he understood that the ‘method’ of the Spiritual Exercises is ‘an itinerary whose goal is a response to one’s vocation without prejudice to a person’s liberty and God’s design for the individual’.¹⁰ The goal of the Spiritual Exercises became seeking the will of God for each individual personally, so that each person should be open to the mystery of the work of God the Father revealed in Christ, who continues his

***Seeking the will
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individual
personally***

⁶ Leonardo R. Silos, ‘Cardoner in the Life of St Ignatius Loyola’, *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*, 33 (1964), 3–43, here 20.

⁷ Silos, ‘Cardoner in the Life of St Ignatius Loyola’, 27.

⁸ Silos, ‘Cardoner in the Life of St Ignatius Loyola’, 36.

⁹ Silos, ‘Cardoner in the Life of St Ignatius Loyola’, 40.

¹⁰ Silos, ‘Cardoner in the Life of St Ignatius Loyola’, 40.

redemptive work within the Church through the gift of the Holy Spirit. At the heart of the Cardoner illumination, therefore, lies an awareness of the Trinity dynamically at work within the world.

Cardoner and the Exercises

Most scholars believe that the illumination at Cardoner occurred before the final version of the *Spiritual Exercises* was composed. If so, such an unprecedented illumination must have had a significant impact on the writing of the *Exercises*. Ignatius only began to study theology after his time at Manresa; and in the time before Manresa he considered himself ignorant of the spiritual life. During this period of spiritual preparation, however, he was certain that the Lord was leading him—an experience that culminated in the illumination beside the Cardoner. It is in the context of this experience that he derived the schema of the *Spiritual Exercises*:

That is to say, of exercises more circumscribed with regard to duration, more or less of a month; more articulated with regard to their matter, through the practices of perfect purgation and the concentration of all perfection in the knowledge and love of the Word made flesh; more conscious and ordered in the end for which they are to be made, to overcome disordered affections which hinder the perfect finding and fulfilment of the divine will in one's life; more illuminated and sure finally, in the direction of that supernatural light by which Ignatius now felt himself guided, like a pupil by his teacher, in discernment of spirits and in all the steps of the spiritual life.¹¹

According to Ignatius' early companion Juan Polanco, in the *Spiritual Exercises* Ignatius sought to indicate first a method for purifying the soul by contrition and confession, and then meditations on the life of Christ, culminating in 'a right election of a state of life and of all other things, ... progressing in everything which tended to inflame the soul more and more with love of God'.¹² Both the structure of the

¹¹ Ignacio Iparraguirre, *Historia de la práctica de los ejercicios espirituales de San Ignacio*, volume 1, *Práctica de los ejercicios espirituales de San Ignacio de Loyola en vida de su autor (1522–1556)* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1946), 36–37 (translated by Timothy M. Gallagher).

¹² Rahner, *The Spirituality of St Ignatius Loyola*, 53.

Spiritual Exercises and the key meditations suggest an illuminated, organic apprehension of the relationship of all things to the Trinity; of the outworking of the divine initiative in Christ; of the struggle between contending spirits within the heart of the individual; and of the centrality of the Church in any understanding of human vocation.¹³

The Content of the Exercises

In the initial consideration of the Principle and Foundation, Ignatius provides the exercitant with a preliminary ‘mind set’ for what follows. It is a clear statement of the relationship between human beings and God which flows from the illumination that Ignatius had experienced. The first word of the *Spiritual Exercises* is *Homo*, and it is used to recall the human person to the purpose of human creation. All human beings are created to ‘praise reverence and serve’ God our Lord. So the first characteristic of the theological vision of the Exercises is a sense of the holiness and majesty of God: human beings are called to realise their historical vocation in the reverence and service of the Triune God. This creates the need for ‘indifference’, so that every expression of desire in choice should accord with the end for which we were created. At the end of the Exercises, in the *Contemplatio*, this disposition towards reverence and service is taken as an indication of the maturity of the soul.¹⁴ Indeed an appreciation of the mystery of the Trinity lies at the heart of the Ignatian vision, fuelled by the Cardoner experience.¹⁵

An appreciation of the mystery of the Trinity lies at the heart of the Ignatian vision

The praise, reverence and service to which the exercitant is called, however, are made possible by the work of the Trinity throughout creation. The greatest of these works is the creation of the human person, and in it God praises, reverences and serves the human creature

¹³ It is also important to stress at this stage the essential biblical foundation of the theological perspective at the heart of the Spiritual Exercises. The meditations and contemplations employ the key themes of biblical theology drawing from the Old and New Testaments in an understanding of salvation history. It is against this backdrop that the individual exercitant is drawn to appreciate the depths of their own historical existence.

¹⁴ It is perhaps interesting to note that in the *Constitutions*—the enfleshment of the Exercises—the phrase *majestas et bonitas* occurs more frequently than any other single expression.

¹⁵ The testimony of Nadal on this point proves eloquent when he said of Ignatius: ‘He received from God as singular grace freely to engage himself in and rest upon the bosom of the Holy Trinity.’ MHSJ MN, 4, 591.

in turn, in creating and sustaining life. It is this reality which allows human beings to fulfil their own vocations. The illumination Ignatius received enabled him to see that God acts, and that God's actions can be mighty deeds, but also quiet, gentle ones that pass largely unnoticed. In the *Contemplatio* Ignatius speaks of the God who *labours* in all things. All the works of salvation flow from the three Divine persons; and the one who embraces Ignatian spirituality is called to be a fellow worker with God in the works of God.

In order to be an effective co-worker, it is necessary to find and to follow the will of God—*voluntas Dei*. The search for God's will for the individual is the goal of the Exercises (Exx 1). But this idea, as Ignatius framed it, is more subtle and comprehensive than a focus solely on the particular will of God for that individual. Rather it involves seeking the will of God as expressed in the whole unfolding of the divine plan, and then the particular historical vocation of the individual within that unfolding plan. It is this mutual inherence of the historicity of the individual and the sweep of salvation history that I suggest was part of the Cardoner illumination.

Pivotal to an understanding of sacred history is the incarnation. With the appearance of Christ the Kingdom of God is established. For Ignatius the free recognition of the sovereignty and holiness of God by human beings is the glory of God. It is through the mysteries of Christ's life that God is glorified; the purpose of all history is attained; and the world is reconciled to God. These are the mysteries of the Second, Third and Fourth Weeks of the Exercises. Ignatius' understanding, enlightened by the illumination at Cardoner, saw the mysteries of Christ as not merely realities of the past but living and eternal realities. The risen Christ continues to accomplish his reconciling work through all generations. All history is sacred history and Christ's mission of reconciliation is always contemporary. It is in the historicity of each individual life that Christ invites souls that are open and generous to cooperate. History is thus sacred and Christocentric, and, finally, a dramatic history of conflict.¹⁶

¹⁶ Here the *Theo-drama* of Hans Urs von Balthasar (translated by Graham Harrison [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990–96]), is particularly helpful.

For, in contrast to the work of God in history, Ignatius also clearly saw ‘the enemy of our human nature’ fashioning a diabolical world. He saw struggle and conflict at the heart of human history: a struggle about human beings and the very destiny of human life. The diabolical element is the antihuman, everything that is destructive of the human. Ignatius’ sense of this cosmic struggle retrieves the scriptural understanding of the conflict which Paul so eloquently described (see, for example, Ephesians 6).¹⁷ Christ engages the enemy of our human nature and calls disciples to contend with him. This struggle is reflected in the personal history of sin which Ignatius asks the exercitant to contemplate in the First Week meditations.

The graphic depiction of the Two Standards—which is falling out of vogue in some contemporary readings of the *Exercises*—continues this dynamic, focusing on Christ and on the apostolic service of sharing in his redemptive mission.¹⁸ It indicates the manner of the dramatic conflict that Ignatius describes, and the reality of spiritual



The Two Standards

¹⁷ Ephesians 6 gives Paul’s description of the ‘spiritual armour’ necessary for the battle.

¹⁸ ‘[God] moved [Ignatius] to devote himself entirely to the service of God and the salvation of souls. He revealed to him this purpose, especially and in the most signal manner, in the meditation on the Kingdom of Christ and the Two Standards. Íñigo saw in this his life-aim, the goal to which he must give himself wholly and which he must ever keep before his mind in all his undertakings This life-aim is the same as that which the Society of Jesus still professes at this present time.’ (Jerónimo Nadal, ‘Sermon of Father Nadal at Salamanca, 1554’, *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*, 98, cited in Rahner, *The Spirituality of St Ignatius Loyola*, 53–54)

captivity. Ignatius sees that only Christ can liberate the human person. The central insight that freedom is dependent upon closeness to Christ, and that it shows itself in an availability to others in service, underpins the Triple Colloquy.¹⁹ This insight is integral to the meditation and encapsulates the grace for which the exercitant is asking. The freedom to be 'for God' is not possible unless we can give a positive personal value to poverty and humiliation. Riches, honour and pride are lures with which the enemy of our human nature attempts to entrap us.

In the Second Week, the Two Standards, the Three Classes and the Three Degrees of Humility are central to contemplating the life of Christ and to assisting in the election. Here it is clear that any election is to be made within the context of the Church:

The Kingdom of Christ is the Church and in her all the other mysteries coalesce ... at the election, Ignatius points to the 'hierarchical Church, our holy Mother' as the supreme criterion for the discernment of spirits (Exx 170).²⁰

Michael Buckley²¹ argues that the Church has a vital function in the radical encounter with God during the Exercises—indeed that the Church possesses a profound importance in the internal structure of the Exercises as a whole. He emphasizes the crucial importance of the Church at the time of the Election because 'the election is to the Exercises what missions are to the *Constitutions*: their focal purpose'.

In the course of his transformation at Manresa, which culminated in the illumination of Cardoner, Ignatius progressed from a focus on severe penances and thoughts of becoming a Carthusian to realising that the mission entrusted to him by the Lord was that of 'saving souls', in particular (there were other ways) by means of spiritual direction

¹⁹ 'One Colloquy to Our Lady, that she may get me grace from Her Son and Lord that I may be received under His standard; and first in the highest spiritual poverty, and—if His Divine Majesty would be served and would want to choose and receive me—not less in actual poverty; second, in suffering contumely and injuries, to imitate Him more in them, if only I can suffer them without the sin of any person, or displeasure of His Divine Majesty; and with that a Hail Mary. Second Colloquy. I will ask the same of the Son, that He may get it for me of the Father; and with that say the Soul of Christ. Third Colloquy. I will ask the same of the Father, that He may grant it to me; and say an Our Father.' (Exx 147)

²⁰ 'The Church herself is the touchstone for every genuine and 'true sentiment which we ought to have in the Church militant' (Exx 352).

²¹ Michael Buckley, 'Ecclesial Mysticism in the Spiritual Exercises', *Theological Studies* 56 (1995), 441–461.

within the Church.²² There is a movement from a personal insight to an ecclesial reality—ultimately to the founding of the Society of Jesus. This new dynamic in his life is reflected in the meditation on the Call of Christ the King, The Two Standards, the Three Classes of Person and the Three Degrees of Humility. Thereafter for Ignatius the authenticity of any individual choice is legitimated by the manner in which it draws the individual into participation in the struggle that engages the whole Church. The Exercises make no provision for the ecclesially indifferent or the ecclesially hostile.²³

The Third Week contemplations on the passion and death of the Lord look towards a confirmation of the election within the individual—a deepening of union with the Lord. These contemplations foster a sense of companionship with Christ in the most difficult circumstances of life. Then, in the Fourth Week contemplations of the resurrection, there is a call to joy in Christ's joy in being fully alive, in having conquered sin and death and opened the way to eternal life.

At the end of the Exercises stands the *Contemplatio*, which may be seen a reappropriation of the Principle and Foundation, enfolded through the contemplations of the life of Christ and deepened by the other key meditations of the Exercises. The thrust of the *Contemplatio* is outward, turning pragmatically towards the exercitant's own life.

The whole dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises may be traced back, albeit speculatively, to Ignatius' illumination at Cardoner. What they crucially share is the awareness of a Trinitarian initiative which lies at the heart of all things and which never ceases to work on behalf of human beings, drawing individuals into an ever deeper faith and inviting them to a share in the redemptive mission of Christ.

²² 'When he had begun to be consoled by God and when he noticed the great fruits which he gained in souls by spiritual direction, he stopped practising those immoderate penances he had formerly indulged in; he began again to cut his fingernails and hair.' (*Autobiography*, 29)

²³ 'Ignatius frames the subject matter for any election within two criteria: first such subjects must be either indifferent or good in themselves; and second, such subjects must also "militate within holy mother, the hierarchical Church". To further emphasize these characteristics as essential prerequisites for a Christian choice of a state of life, Ignatius restates these same criteria negatively: the subjects for an election should not be evil (as opposed to good or indifferent) nor should they be 'in opposition to her [the Church]'. (Buckley, 'Ecclesial Mysticism in the Spiritual Exercises', 444)

Beyond the Exercises

In today's world, and particularly in Jesuit institutions I would argue, an appreciation of the Cardoner imperative continues to assist in the ongoing refinement of apostolic contemplation and discernment for action. Ignatius' experience seems to have offered him a glimpsed vision of the coherence of the divine dynamic active in the world. This divine initiative is an organic whole, including the unfolding of salvation history and its culmination in the *eschaton*. The perception of this unity and order requires an understanding of the nature and internal harmony of the parts that make up the whole, and of the whole created from the parts.

The profound unity of the whole is centred in the Trinity. Openness to the Trinitarian vision is vital, as the spirit of God leads us further into the understanding of divine truth. This comes about



The Trinity in Glory, by Titian

through an ever-deepening relationship with the person of Christ and an entrusting of self to Christ and through him to the Father. This is the work of the Spirit. It is as though we were making our way through unknown territory with one eye on the distant horizon (the Trinity) and one eye fixed on the ground before us (our immediate situation). Ignatian prayer is in this way contextualised both in the Trinitarian action of God in the world and in the individual's living out of a vocation.

I would argue that the tension involved in

keeping this double context in view lies at the heart of the Cardoner imperative. Far from needing to be resolved, this tension is a source of creativity. Its openness to the Trinity disposes us to receive the divine initiative. At the same time it helps the individual to discover God at work in and through all things, and thus it energizes the work of the apostolate. The importance of this tension is clearly linked to Ignatius' fundamental vision of struggle and conflict at the heart of human history.

The Cardoner imperative is the basis for a 'way of proceeding' rooted in faith and confidence in the work of the Trinity within the world. It emboldens individuals for the risky enterprise of apostolic service. Serene in their awareness of the divine gift of peace, these individuals become bearers of that peace to others. Their outlook towards others is grounded in Ignatius' understanding of all human beings as created in the image of God and thus worthy of reverence. This is the basis of what we might call Ignatius' theological anthropology. It forms an attitude summarised in the Presupposition of the Exercises—that the 'other' with whom we are relating is trying to say something that is good (Exx 22).

Accordingly, our stance towards the other will always be positive, as we endeavour to understand the good that the other is trying to express. Such a disposition helps us to relate to those who espouse very different or even totally opposed views to our own without acrimony and with the possibility of an open exchange. This disposition is neither vague nor unprincipled. It is humble, authentic and reverential, focusing upon the work of the Spirit of God within the other. With such a disposition there are no obstacles of egotism or fear to block the work of the Spirit within and between people. In our twenty-first-century world, fraught with fear and violence, a disposition of peaceful reverence towards others stands as a beacon of hope amid darkness and gloom.

Simultaneously rooted in a living relationship with God and committed to temporal history, the Cardoner imperative also importantly offers a renewed appreciation of the place of the Church in the world. It is clear that after the Cardoner illumination Ignatius saw

the Church, in Hugo Rahner's words, 'as the rule for measuring enthusiasm'.²⁴ The Church is the place of apostolic service, and it would be inconceivable to make any election about a matter that was contrary to Church teaching. For Ignatius a truly authentic election involves coming to a deeper union both with Christ and with the Church which struggles against all that is antihuman.

Many years after the illumination at Cardoner Ignatius wrote to Sr Teresa Rejadella: 'Every internal experience that comes directly from God must be in humble harmony with the prescriptions of the Church and with obedience'.²⁵ It was this conviction, clarified in his experience by the Cardoner, that caused Ignatius to include at the end of the *Spiritual Exercises* his Rules for Thinking with the Church. He was convinced that the Spirit of God promised by Christ to the disciples and to the early Church was still operative within the Church of his own time, and throughout all time. Love of the Church was for Ignatius an extension of his love for Christ.²⁶

Ignatius's use of the terms 'spouse' and 'mother' suggests a very special kind of love, which is the spirit of God at work.²⁷ Thus there is one fundamental, intimate and immediate communion of love in Christ by which the human person is configured to Christ and, through Christ's relationship with the Church, is also brought to union with the Church. The great commission given to the first apostles was to be fulfilled from the community of the Church—a community that was commissioned to be exemplary in its witness to the world. Ignatius had few illusions about the way in which the Church had failed to live up to its calling. The difficulties of the twenty-first century are not a novel

²⁴ Rahner, *The Spirituality of St Ignatius Loyola*, 58.

²⁵ Ignatius Loyola, letter to Sr Teresa Rejadella, 18 June 1536, cited in Rahner, *The Spirituality of St Ignatius Loyola*, 58.

²⁶ 'Between Christ our Lord, the Bridegroom, and the Church, His Bride, there is the same Spirit which governs and directs us for the salvation of our souls. Because by the same Spirit and our Lord Who gave the ten Commandments, our holy Mother the Church is directed and governed.' (Exx 365)

²⁷ To bring into play a Rahnerian distinction, the Spirit governs through the hierarchical authorities, the prophets, preachers, confessors, and teachers in the Church, through commandments and precepts, through sacraments and Scripture and Tradition, through all of those external means which build up the Body of Christ. Transcendentally, the Spirit guides and governs by the change in human subjectivity, especially through the charity or love of friendship that draws and transforms into unity all human affectivity ... It is the greater love that puts order into the lesser loves. And this is itself the effect of the Spirit of God within the human person.

phenomenon. Ignatius was contending with abuses in his own time. And the early Church too had its problems, as the letters ascribed to St Paul clearly indicate. These problems arise because the Church is composed of fallible human beings—like ourselves.

Nevertheless, a vital relationship with the Church is integral to the Cardoner imperative. Amid the scandals of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries such a commitment to the Church is seen by many outside it, and some within, as questionable, particularly when it is associated with an unappealing understanding of obedience. But here we see another dimension of the Cardoner imperative's creative tension: between the freedom of the Spirit operating both in the individual and in the authoritative voice of the Church.

For Ignatius, this tension could not be understood as a conflict: he saw all human beings as individuals in relation to the Church. This understanding was reaffirmed by Vatican II, in *Lumen gentium*.²⁸ All people are in relationship to the Church by the very fact of a common human creation, whether they are members of a Christian denomination, members of other religious faiths, agnostics or even atheists. Thus all have a relationship with the body of Christ.

It is within this understanding of the human person as both a unique individual open to the spirit of God at work and a member of the body that the tension between the individual and the value of obedience is located. Twenty-first-century Western culture does not greatly prize obedience. There is a deep distrust of any commitment which calls for an attitude of obedience; for many the term evokes the spectre of fundamentalism. However, I would suggest that obedience has an honourable Christian heritage, which originates in the obedience of Christ to the Father—a disposition of obedience at the heart of the Trinity.²⁹

Obedience, seen in this light, is clearly an active endeavour rather than merely the result of passivity. Christ was obedient to his own mission; and human beings are called to be obedient to the call and mission of Christ and so drawn in to God's redemptive work. Obedience is a response of love to the invitation of God; it is only true

**Obedience has an
honourable
Christian heritage**

²⁸ *Lumen gentium*, 10.

²⁹ Compare Gill Goulding, *Holy Intimacy: A Trinitarian Dynamic* (forthcoming).

obedience when undertaken out of love in a joyful response to the divine initiative. Love alone prevents obedience from becoming oppressive; love engenders life-giving energy and permanent commitment. It is love that forms our obedience as a member of the Church, Christ's body on earth.

In this context any individual discernment will be subject to the discernment and ratification of the whole body—the Church. Thus the formation of the individual does not lead to individualism, but to the fulfilment of that person's human potential to contribute to the community's flourishing. This way of proceeding values both the individual and the community and prevents the body from being wounded by extremism. In the reality of the Church, which is both holy and always in need of conversion, we touch once more the mystery of God's working with his people. We re-engage with the illumination of Cardoner, an experience in which Ignatius was privileged to glimpse God's creative and redemptive loving desire for human beings. In conclusion I return to my original question. Is there an Ignatian theological vision that might distinguish a Jesuit institution? I affirm that there is, and would root it in what I have termed the Cardoner imperative. It involves a recognition of the centrality of a relationship with the Trinity at the heart of the mission of any such institution. It promotes a practice of prayer centred on Christ that will assist this relationship. It espouses a theological anthropology that promotes a reverential disposition in relationships within Jesuit institutions. Lastly it promotes an attitude of dynamic loving obedience to the Church. Here perhaps the decrees of the 35th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus might assist—in particular the sections dealing with the Society's identity and charism, the relationship with the Holy Father, and the decree on obedience. For these decrees, unlike previous such documents, are not analytical and precise; rather they use the language of affect—not merely of the emotions but involving the deepest place of the spirit—and call for an engagement from the heart of the reader. They use terms such as 'fervour' and 'zeal' and 'fidelity', words that were prevalent in the vocabulary of Ignatius, and they call for a prayerful pondering of their meaning. If we engage with lay faculty at

this level of contemplative interaction then the Ignatian theological vision may be shared, promoted and presented for future generations.³⁰

The Triple Colloquy of the Two Standards encapsulates what I have called the 'Cardoner imperative'. It sets the Ignatian 'magis' in the context of commitment to Christ and service. It disturbs any complacency. It calls for ongoing discernment, conversion and real humility. It asks that we be drawn closer into the experience of Jesus. It challenges individuals to live the radical graces that the colloquy requests. It indicates the way of *discreta caritas*.³¹ It shows the need, in our contemporary world, for 'a theological work which aims without ambiguity to build up the Lord's Church with an openness to the Spirit which always leads to the whole truth'.³² The Cardoner imperative involves that graced Trinitarian understanding made known to us by the Lord and the apostolic directive by which we are called to share in the redemptive work of Christ for the life of the world.

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³⁰ See *Decrees and Documents of the 35th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (Oxford: Way Books, 2008).

³¹ 'Discerning love is essentially response to God's world-loving. It demands mature acceptance of mission and sound judgment as to means. Its conscience is delicate in all circumstances and cultures. It releases spontaneity: it repudiates impetuosity. It thrives on relationships. For it sees all as God given each one coming from him, going to him. Each person is a blessing for the sake of the other. Discerning love leads to God, leads the self to God. Discerning love sees as Christ sees, acts as Christ acts. Seeks as Christ seeks ... union with the Father. It translates human impulses and reactions, desires and aspirations, into those of Christ himself. And yet it is not calculated. It partakes of Christ's liberty. "I am free to lay down my life, I am free to take it again." Discerning love leads me to lay it at his feet. The power he shares with me assures me that he will give it back to me. Discerning love assures me that he is already returning it to me.' (James Walsh, unpublished prose poem, 1982.)

³² Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, 'Pietas et Eruditio', *Review of Ignatian Spirituality*, 115 (2007).