

From the Ignatian Tradition

SPIRIT, CONTEMPLATION AND MINISTRY

Three Early Jesuit Texts

*Alfredo Sampaio Costa's study of the Three 'Times' of Election is a careful piece, and discourages us from easy generalisations. Nevertheless, it shows how the second generation of Jesuits became increasingly cautious about the presence of God in the human heart. This change was important and influential, and one from which we may still be recovering. This issue's **From the Ignatian Tradition** brings together three texts that may help us to understand the issues at stake: one from Ignatius' lifetime, by Jerónimo Nadal; one from 1574, by Everard Mercurian, fourth Superior General of the Jesuits; and finally an extract from a letter written in 1590 by Mercurian's successor, Claudio Acquaviva, on prayer and penance.*

A

JERÓNIMO NADAL REFUTES TOMÁS PEDROCHE, 1554?

Although the Exercises were formally approved by Paul III in 1548, they were controversial in Spain, and appeared suspect to more repressive prelates and theologians. The Archbishop of Toledo, Juan Martínez (known as Siliceo), set up a commission under the leadership of the Dominican theologian, Tomás Pedroche (d.1565), to study the text. Pedroche reported back in 1553, very critically. Shortly afterwards, sometime before 1556, Jerónimo Nadal (1507-1580), who was very close to Ignatius, produced a long counter-attack, which was not published until modern times. The brief passage reproduced here shows

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how robustly and passionately Nadal was prepared to defend the assertion that God deals directly with the human heart.

*An open letter, written by Juan de Polanco, Ignatius' secretary, and placed as a preface to the 1548 edition of the **Spiritual Exercises**, had claimed that Ignatius had written the text 'not so much from books as from the unction of the Holy Spirit and from internal experience, and from his practice when dealing with minds and hearts'. Pedroche had seen an affinity here with groups that by now were falling foul of authority in Spain—the so-called **dejados** (abandoned ones) and the **alumbrados** (illuminated ones, illuminists):*

*This sounds very like the source used by the **dejados** and **alumbrados**, who deposit, write down, what has been revealed to them in books, and then remit themselves, entrust themselves, to what the Spirit says to them within their hearts, and hold as infallible whatever the Spirit of God says to them. However this is against: 'do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God'.¹*

Nadal reproduced the charge both in the original Latin and in Spanish (there are some minor discrepancies in the manuscripts and the translations). Then he made his own case.²

I SEE WHAT YOU ARE MAKING A MISTAKE ABOUT, what you are afraid of. You don't dare experience the spirit of God, or the divine inspirations that the *dejados* followed before falling into errors and ill repute. You're afraid that, if you encourage interior inspirations, you too will be thought to be one of those whom people of your country are so massively frightened of. For the devil, by deceiving some people like the *dejados* of Toledo and Magdalena de la Cruz,³ into whom his spirit instilled well known errors, has made sure that true spiritual exercises have become things of hatred, of ill repute. And among whom? Among

¹ 1 John 4.1.

² The beginning and end of Nadal's quite substantial *Apologia* are to be found in MHSJ MN 4, pp. 820-873, with a break at p.826. The intervening passage is in MHSJ PolChron 3, pp. 527-573. Pedroche's criticisms are reproduced in MHSJ PolChron 3, pp. 503-524, and the passage under discussion here comes on pp. 504-505. For discussion of the general background, see Ignacio Iparraguirre, *Práctica de los Ejercicios de San Ignacio de Loyola en vida de su autor (1522-1556)* (Rome: Jesuit Historical Institute, 1946), pp.91-113.

³ A noted *alumbrada*, who recanted publicly in 1546.

those who are used to doing quite a lot legally because of the fear of ill repute.

But how are you making your case? Out of suspicion, nothing else. For if you tried to make a legal or a logical case, you'd just be laughed at, to say nothing of people becoming indignant and attacking you. What arguments are you using? "More from the unction of the Holy Spirit" as it says above, than from the books that he ignored or neglected."⁴ But who told you that Ignatius deserted his books or put them behind him? Against that you can set what it actually says in that letter, 'he drank of the Spirit, not without books'. Indeed he drew *more* on the Spirit than on books; but your *dejados* don't bother with books at all, and don't submit to anyone what they say is revealed to them by the Spirit, while Ignatius submitted everything to many learned and holy men, and finally to the Apostolic See. Or does he count as a *dejado* because he never consulted *you*?

But just look at what you're saying. If it's supposed to be suspicious when Christians are taught more by unction than by book, what are you going to make of Jeremiah, of John, of Paul, of the holy teachers? How about what is said by your Thomas, and ours, about how the gospel law is established? How was this law infused into the hearts of the apostles and the evangelists? What are you doing restraining the hand of the Lord? Casting aspersions on the prophets? What do you make of what Paul says: 'each one has a psalm . . . a revelation'?⁵ What are you doing forbidding the distribution of the Spirit?

Answer this, please. Can God directly illuminate the hearts of human beings? You can't say no to that. And if God acted in that way, would the person in question be a *dejado*, under suspicion of heresy? But that's what you're saying—rash as you are in doing so. For see this: you're not denying that Ignatius had the unction of the Spirit. But what, then, can you attack him on as suspect, when you're not denying that he had the unction? The attack has no truth in it.

Perhaps you say, 'I'll show you later that it wasn't unction but error'. So you haven't really been able to say anything confirming your

⁴ The actual text runs: 'These documents and spiritual exercises, which our Father in Christ Master Ignatius . . . taught not so much by books as by the unction of the Holy Spirit and from experience within (*experientia interna*) and usage when dealing with minds and hearts, brought together (*composuit*) . . . ' (MHSJ Exx 1969, pp. 79-81). Nadal is quoting directly from Pedroche's attack.

⁵ 1 Corinthians 14.26 (Vulgate).

suspensions so far, with your points about the unction of the Spirit more than letters and so on? What happens when *you* have some inspiration from God? Do you really not say that you receive this more from the Spirit than from letters?

On what basis do you study theology? Surely the books lead you to revelations, to the Spirit? Are you a human theologian, and yet claim you have just *no* inspiration, *no* divine enlightenment? What do I hear you say? That you've got these truths more from books than from the Spirit? Aren't texts meant to be the helps—as indeed more often they are—for the Spirit of truth itself?

Moreover, Ignatius *did* have recourse to books and reflected on the whole structure of theology, at least when he decided to edit those exercises, so that all the theological books and all the sacred texts could confirm what he took more from divine inspiration than from books. Surely he's not a *dejado* just because he took more from the Spirit than from books? Is *that* meant to make him like the *dejados*? If he's a *dejado* because this is what he did or this is what he said, then who among you and the holy teachers *isn't* a *dejado*? Do remember that you preach just the same things to us about your sainted Thomas. And surely these things don't make *that* most holy man one of the dirty effluent of *dejados*?

'But I suspect that this and that in Ignatius is *dejado*.' I can well believe you suspect. But your suspicions are slanderous. Forget your prejudice and your instinctive aversion. Think about what's actually true, about the authority that comes from the Apostolic See, from worldwide agreement, from the good people that are the fruit, from those who live in the Society—how they behave, the quality of their teaching, and so on.

Do you really think Ignatius didn't test the Spirit? He couldn't have done it more carefully—through Scripture, through the Church, through good and learned men.

I don't think you've got anything left on this point that might afflict you with a scruple. For my part, I'm happy. But let's go on to other things.

Given the stress in early Jesuit tradition on mortification and self-control, it is refreshing to witness such a rollicking style in one of Ignatius' closest associates. In the opinion of Ignacio Iparraguirre,

however, Nadal's *Apologia* as a whole is in fact overinfluenced by the mentality of people like Pedroche.⁶ Perhaps even this passage, precisely in its anger and bluster, gives evidence of some insecurity. Moreover, it is an important part of Nadal's defence even here that Ignatius' teaching is confirmed by authority—a line of argument which rather betrays the point really at stake: the ability of the Spirit to speak in ways that can go beyond what authority prescribes, however ecclesial in the richest sense they remain.

B

EVERARD MERCURIAN REBUKES ANTONIO CORDESES, 1574

Our next text comes from thirty years or so later. Antonio Cordeses, who had been in positions of authority for some fifteen years and was now Provincial of Toledo, had been teaching a form of prayer that was affective, contemplative, perhaps influenced by approaches to spirituality that by this stage had been condemned by the Inquisition. Various complaints had been sent to Rome about his style of teaching and government, and the issue came to a head shortly after Everard Mercurian was elected as Superior General in 1573, the first non-Spaniard to hold the post. Mercurian asked for documentation, had it studied, and finally wrote this letter, which at least on the surface seems both repressive and spiritually philistine.

In Ignatius' time, the anxieties about illuminism were being expressed by the Jesuits' opponents. By this stage, however, Jesuit authorities were making some of the concerns behind such attacks their own. The reasons were not entirely bad ones. The question of affective prayer had become mixed up with that of how a way of consecrated life could be dedicated to ministry. Despite Cordeses' seniority in the Society of Jesus, he had probably never made an Ignatian retreat: with a little charitable imagination, Mercurian can be read, not as proscribing the contemplative life as such, but rather as insisting that the Jesuit version

⁶ Iparraguirre, *Práctica de los Ejercicios*, p. 113.

of it be somehow distinctive, somehow Ignatian. Moreover, whereas Ignatius had developed the Exercises and the Society's way of life in a small circle of mature men who already had considerable education behind them, the early Jesuits very quickly had to consider how to form young men whom they had accepted as adolescents and in large numbers. Nevertheless, Mercurian's text contains an unmistakable element of what early modern Church historians now call 'social disciplining', far more emphatically than any document on prayer that Ignatius wrote for formed Jesuits.⁷

ALTHOUGH THROUGH THE LETTER which I have received from you and through what you have written for me about your style which you have in prayer, Our Lord has given me consolation, as I see the promptitude you show in the matter of obedience, I think, having talked with these Fathers⁸ with some thoroughness about the points on which you touch, I should tell you the following.

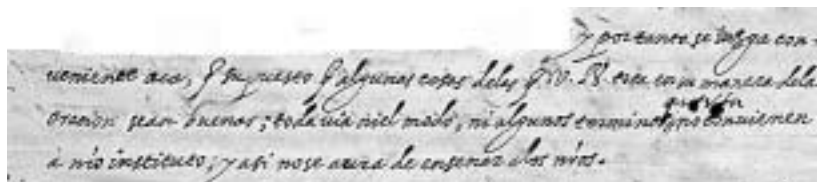
The Virtue of Brevity

Just as every religious institute or order has its own style for attaining its end, so the Society, having its own, could not but stumble if it were diverted away from the right path which guides it to that end, as this seems to be. Therefore, granted that some of the things you touch on in your manner of prayer are good, it is here judged fitting, nevertheless, that neither the style nor some of the terms you use are fitting for our Institute, and so they are not to be taught to our people.

In the chapter in which you talk of the favour, relishes and gentleness which God our Lord gives in meditation, in no way, it seems, should this matter be explained or set out at such length to those who are to pray, or meditate, or contemplate according to the

⁷ The text has never been critically edited; the manuscript is ARSI Tolet. 1, 28r-29v, transcribed in Antonio Astráin, *Historia de la Compañía de Jesús en la Asistencia de España*, 7 volumes (Madrid: Razón y Fe, 1902-1925), vol. 3, pp. 190-193. The text was clearly prepared carefully; an earlier, incomplete and crossed out version, with some interesting variants, can be found on 27v. On the general background, see Philip Endean, "The Strange Style of Prayer": Mercurian, Cordeses and Álvarez, to be published in *The Mercurian Project: 'Forming rather than Reforming' The Society of Jesus*, edited by Thomas M. McCoog (Rome: Jesuit Historical Institute, forthcoming).

⁸ The manuscript is an office copy of only part of the text. It is not clear who 'these fathers' are.



From the manuscript⁹

Society's style, bearing in mind that we have a rule, which is, that the person giving to another the method and structure of meditating or contemplating should propose the points or stories briefly, leaving the rest to God our Lord.¹⁰ It is enough to tell those who need it how the powers of the soul should be applied in order to meditate on the material proposed: that is how we should teach our people prayer and meditation, following what is written as given by Fr Ignatius in the book of the Exercises.

You might say that what you write in the said chapter about the favour given by God our Lord in meditation has happened to some people—not only have they not fallen into error, but they have attained greater light and profit in this matter. However, one should not form a general teaching or rule from the experience of one person or of a few, nor should one teach it. Quite apart from the fact that a doctrine of this kind exposes people to different sorts of illusions and to dangerous errors. The saints, having set out many grades of prayer, conclude, as you well know, that in contemplations, relishes and visions 'evil can be underneath'.¹¹ In this, what Ignatius taught us in the said book is enough; it is sufficiently clear, without anyone taking occasion from one or two words that might be found in the Exercises

⁹ Transcription: Y por tanto, se juzgue conveniente acá, que supuesto que algunas cosas de las que V. R. toca en su manera de la oración sean buenas, todavía ni el modo, ni algunos términos que usa, no convienen a nuestro Instituto, y así no se habrá de enseñar a los Nuestros.

¹⁰ Texts by Cordeses have survived, and there is a volume of his *Obras espirituales*, edited by Antonio Yanguas (Madrid: Consejo superior de investigaciones científicas, 1953). The *Tratado de oración mental* contains a treatment of something very like Second Week contemplation. It begins by mentioning what Ignatius says as very good, but then goes on to say how it could all be done 'more explicitly'. There follows a long theological disquisition in five parts: on the substance of the mystery; on its purpose; on three sorts of cause; on its effects; and on its circumstances.

¹¹ The *Summa theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas contains a question (II-II, q. 1, a. 3), establishing with due caution that error cannot 'subesse' (lie under) true faith. The doctrine is alluded to in the Council of Trent's Decree on Justification, n. 9.

to insinuate another manner of prayer that might not be in conformity with our Institute.¹² Believe me: some of our people may have emerged with some light from a style of prayer not in conformity with our Institute, but they would have emerged with much more profit if they had applied themselves in conformity with the Society's Institute.

I say this all the more because of the appropriateness of what follows in your text: meditation takes us to contemplation, and puts us into a disposition where we can rest in just looking, in contemplation, in lovingly pondering, in feeling, in affection, and in relish for one thing alone, etc.. There is no reason to *teach* this to our people either in public or in private. For, apart from the reasons mentioned, lots of problems with this have become evident. And, moreover, you have to leave this work to God, who gives it when He wants.

What Jesuits Are For

To understand the matter better, you need to look carefully at what the distinctive end of our Institute is. This Institute does not look simply to a person's own consolation in the understanding or will, but principally to external ministries and activities, in which its people employ themselves for their own benefit and that of their neighbours. For this reason it uses its own distinctive manner of prayer, which moves towards the same end, and which should normally be ordered towards it, bearing in mind that the Society's Institute, with prayer, meditation, other exercises and many different experiences, sets about making preparation and provision for its people to make themselves more suitable for ministries—ministries that are ordered towards bringing profit to the neighbour, for the glory of God our Lord.

And the other manner of praying, meditating and contemplating may seem more appropriate for Institutes which, by virtue of their end, look only to their own relationships with God; however, there is no doubt that it commonly diverts and distances those in the Society from the operation and application of our ministries. The more easily a person is contented by being able to rest in vision, contemplation, pondering, feeling, affection, relish for one thing alone, the more they

¹² Cordeses appealed regularly to Ignatius' teaching about not moving on once we have found what we were seeking (Exx 76.4); arguably, however, his account of the grace to be sought was rather different from Ignatius'.

flee from what impedes this rest and contentment, not considering that it is not to this rest that God our Lord has principally called us. And therefore, as I have said, if anyone has that manner of prayer which is alien to our Institute, or if anyone is using our way and ends up in unsuitable places connected with that manner, it is necessary to bring them back into line, and to be careful about illusions, as one of our Constitutions says:¹³ he should not be diverted, as does happen, from the main thing, which is his vocation. There really are many spiritual authors who have been reprimanded for having written and taught to others the ways which God gave them personally.

Nor should a universal rule be given concerning the measure of time for different exercises of virtue, a point on which Cassian is reproached by the Fathers. For this does not consist so much in effort, skill or time, being as it is a work of the special grace and providence of God, 'who divides among each one as he wishes and when he wishes';¹⁴ rather it consists in helping each one to cooperate for their part with the divine direction, and to remove things that impede the grace of the Lord.

Mortification

And as the foundational¹⁵ part of the Christian life is the mortification of our appetites and the abnegation of our judgments and of our own wills, our Father Ignatius therefore places complete abnegation as the foundation of the whole building and of the solid virtues that our Institute demands, as is shown in the *Examen* and *Constitutions*. Therefore, not just our other activities (*ejercicios*) but also our prayer should help towards, and guide themselves according to, our total mortification. This is where Christ our Lord puts the foundation of Christian perfection: 'they should deny themselves'.¹⁶

I have no doubt but that you will see that prayer is neither our chief end nor chief foundation, as it is with some forms of consecrated life; rather, it is a universal instrument with which, alongside other activities, we are helped to obtain virtues and to carry out our

¹³ *Constitutions* III.1.10 [260.1]. Note that both Mercurian's direct references to the *Constitutions* in this letter written to a serving Provincial come from what Ignatius wrote about novices.

¹⁴ The references to early Christian literature here need further research.

¹⁵ *principal*—it could be translated 'most important' or 'initial'.

¹⁶ Matthew 16: 24.

ministries for the Society's end (III.1.20).¹⁷ These virtues and skills are not obtained with prayer or meditation alone. On the contrary, it is evident that many, having put their main effort into the latter, have not got rid of their disordered appetites and affections, and have been very difficult when it has come to abandoning their own judgment at times when superiors have wanted to dispose of them for the greater glory of God in what was not agreeable to them or not in accord with their dictate.

If in time there is need to give some direction in the Spiritual Exercises and in the Society's manner of prayer, it seems it may be more in keeping with the order of divine providence that this be sent to the provinces from here, rather than that it should happen in some other way. Thus I trust in the goodness of God our Lord that you will come to judge that this manner of prayer which you are writing about is not in accord with the Institute of the Society, and that you, as a good religious, will faithfully see to it that Ours do not take a manner other than what I have said above to be in conformity with our Institute. And with this I commend myself greatly to your prayers and holy sacrifices.

From Rome, 25 November 1574.



¹⁷*Constitutions*, III.1.20 [277], and its declarations, set the Spiritual Exercises within other aspects of novitiate formation. 'III.2^o.20' in the manuscript is an error.

C

CLAUDIO ACQUAVIVA TO THE WHOLE SOCIETY OF JESUS, 1590

*Claudio Acquaviva, born in 1543, became Superior General following Mercurian's death in 1580. He made two influential contributions to the discussions about contemplation and ministry: the publication of the Official Directory in 1599, and a long letter to all Jesuits on prayer and penance. In both these initiatives, he appears to be correcting the functionalism that had become dominant under Mercurian. Here is an extract from the 1590 letter.*¹⁸

WE HAVE FROM TIME TO TIME HEARD that a few souls are in doubt concerning the interpretation and practice of the rules and constitutions regulating penances and prayers. Therefore, I have decided that the best thing to do, in the concern which lies with me by virtue of my office, is to explain some principles, as far as possible briefly, regarding this matter.

The goal of our Society is first to attend to our own salvation and perfection, and then carefully to work for the salvation and perfection of our neighbour.¹⁹ But there is a distinction to be made between these two ends: what concerns ourselves is to be considered more important than what is concerned with our neighbour. This is so because of the obligation arising from each person's commitment, because of the structure of well constituted charity, and most of all because care for

¹⁸ Text in *Epistolae praepositorum generalium ad patres et fratres Societatis Iesu*, 4 vols. (Brussels: Belgian Province, SJ, 1908-1909), vol. 1, pp. 248-270. This is the first modern language translation of even an extract to be published. For general background, see Joseph de Guibert, *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*, translated by William J. Young (St Louis: Jesuit Historical Institute, 1986 [1942]), pp. 239-242.

¹⁹ Acquaviva here alludes to *Examen* 1.2 [*Constitutions* 3]. The controversy about the relationship between the two ends has been continued more recently. See François Courel, 'The Single Aim of the Apostolic Institute', *The Way Supplement*, 14 (Autumn 1971), pp. 46-61—originally published in 1966; and Michael C. McGuckian, 'The One End of the Society of Jesus', *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*, 60 (1991), pp. 91-111. Both Acquaviva's separation and Courel's identification of the two goals represent interpretations of Ignatius' text. The published English translation adds to Ignatius' text a suggestion that the grace of ministry is one and the same as that by which a Jesuit's soul is saved; Ignatius himself had simply said that both personal salvation and ministry were dependent on grace.

neighbour comes subsequently, and is supported by a prior care for self as if by a foundation—if care for self is destroyed, care for neighbour will inevitably sink and collapse. Our blessed Father Ignatius, therefore, has taught us as many as he could of the principles that help us attain our own salvation and perfection. But nothing of what he commended to us is more effective than prayer and mortification, about which I am now going to say something. Those of our Fathers with longer memories, very holy men taught by long experience, have left us witness that these principles are very valid.

*Acquaviva begins by discussing the amount of time his people should give to prayer. He repeats the teaching of the Ignatian **Constitutions** (VI.3 [582-594]) and explains that the subsequent decision, stipulating that all should spend a continuous hour in prayer each morning, was not intended in principle to preclude longer periods. Then he moves on to ‘contemplative prayer’.*

Concerning the Mode and Method of Prayer²⁰

For those who have already exercised themselves rather often in those devout considerations, and who by long familiarity have acquired a facility in praying, it does not seem that any fixed rationale or particular approach should be prescribed. For the Spirit of the Lord, who is normally carried through the loosest of regulations along innumerable ways that enlighten souls and draw them tightly to Himself, is not in this way to be held back, as if with a bridle, to preconceived purposes. And we—as Fr Nadal of happy memory once said in this regard both devoutly and prudently—are meant to follow the divine teacher; it is not right that we anticipate.²¹ Therefore it would be absurd, and contrary to prudent lawmaking, to prescribe with any specification for people in our Society that they should penetrate the mysteries of the divine nature, explore in all ways the infinite attributes of the Most High God, or search into and examine the Trinity’s threefold unity of Person and simplicity of nature. But

²⁰ This subheading, unlike the others, comes from the text.

²¹ MHSJ MN *Orationis observationes*, n. 73: ‘do not go before the Spirit, but let yourself be led and moderated by Him in truth, and learn to co-operate with grace’. One surviving manuscript of this text was prepared ‘for our Fr General Claudio in his room’.

similarly it would be most absurd of all to forbid anyone these matters for consideration, as being alien to our Institute.

However, we do not deny that sometimes bad things arise from this style of meditation in those who use it badly and less prudently. I am referring to when they arrive at a result from it which is quite obviously perverse: for example, when they report their own high reputation for speculating on sublime things, and a lower reputation about the one who explores simple, less recondite things; or a stubborn judgment in discerning; or an obstinate mind when it comes to relishing the spiritual pleasures with which the mind is filled in that state. For these things introduce harm into obedience, and a weakening in zeal for souls. People of this sort, therefore, are to be dealt with not as contemplatives but as the opposite—people who are trapped, while they are contemplating, in what are most certainly snares: moreover, for the moment, they are to be kept away from that futile, false contemplation and brought back into line. But contemplation is not on this account to be disparaged or forbidden to our people, or its truth resisted, or the experience of the holy Fathers—authenticated as it is to the highest degree—called into question. For, in the opinion and witness of very many of the Fathers, scrutiny and examination have shown that true and perfect contemplation is more powerful and efficacious than any other method of pious meditation; that it breaks and bruises people's haughty spirits; that it encourages the lazy to carry out more vigorously what their superiors have enjoined; that it fires up the languid to seek more ardently the good of souls.

Prayer and its Fruits

Many often claim that the power and effectiveness of our prayer is to be applied to something else, and that there should be no commitment to a contemplation that is solitary and a good in itself. This view, rightly understood, is beyond all possibility of reproach—and, moreover, my predecessors' replies and writings have also sometimes in some way indicated what I am about to expound.

Virtues

Firstly, our people are not simply to stay in this contemplation, and hold on to that internal relish of prayer, to the tiny sweetness of what has been described, without deriving further fruit from that place for



themselves, for forming their lives and behaviour aright, and for acquiring virtues for themselves. For example: those who previously might have been agitated by impulses of impatience or pride might ponder in thoughtful contemplation the Servant of Humanity. And then, after they have considered the fervour and zeal for souls that so passionately inspired him, and then carefully worked through how he was rejected, they might find

the patience which shone out during the cruellest execution, steadfastly bearing the pains. This real way in which the fruit of prayer is to be applied to something else is one that all religious people share, and needs to be practised by all who give themselves to contemplation.

Radiance

A second way comes when our mind burns during contemplation with the fires of divine love, and is carried by flaming love into God, whom it understands to be supremely good, supremely lovable. And then that flame of sharp desire leaps up from self-love, flying away from its chains and guards, and waiting upon God, the Greatest of All, faithfully in every respect; and at the same time also striving with every effort that a Good that is so great and of such a kind, so much to be sought, should be known thoroughly by all and loved by each one.

However this is subject to the law that they willingly separate themselves from that gentleness, and from that delightful feeling of contemplation, when they recognise that this would please God, that the norm of their Institute requires it, that it would be helpful, or in the ultimate case that they are ordered to do so; then they should apply the after-effects with great spirit to their work. And those ardours that have arisen from that furnace of piety should both inflame the person to action, and fire up with the example of a praiseworthy and religious life those for whom they act. But as for those who have committed themselves to monastic life and who pursue a religious life of solitude—when *they* recognise that this of God is within their heart

in such a way that they should relish it thoroughly in that most peaceful repose, 'empty themselves and see that the Lord is sweet'²² in the way appropriate for that kind of life, they should consider it enough, shut within the confines of their cell, to make their neighbour a sharer in the fervent recourse which is their prayers.

Teaching

Finally, the third way in which this kind of prayer can be applied is this: we may meditate on what is sensed from the sacred pages, or on the true principles of our faith, in such a way that we understand these with the mind, and then by speaking and teaching instil them into the souls of ordinary people.

However, someone may hold that the fruit of our meditation should indeed refer to something else in this final sense, but in such a way that the meditation should not, of its own nature, extend also actually to loving or knowing God. This person would in fact be claiming that it is never right for a person in the Society to love or understand God alone in prayer, but rather that meditation should at all times be organized in such a way that the one praying is always in fact thinking about something else. Nor would the one praying be free to meditate on anything which did not have a direct application elsewhere.

There is no doubt that such a person is wrong. They are twisting this point so as to change its meaning from what the authority of the learned and the nature of contemplation will allow. For no one is speaking rightly who says, 'God is loved by me so that I can accomplish something pleasing to God': on the contrary, it should rather be, 'I shall think I can accomplish something because I love God and I am impelled by the stimuli of God's love to undertake and carry through this deed'.

Acquaviva then develops further the contrast between the prayer of one called to ministry and that of a monk (though few monastics would recognise themselves in what Acquaviva and other Jesuit figures write about the monastic vocation). The text then offers various suggestions for maintaining prayerfulness within a busy life. Mercurian's policy had

²² Psalm 34:8. Some medieval versions of the Vulgate—quoted by Bernard and Thomas—read *vacate* (make space) instead of *gustate* (taste).

been shaped by important considerations about formation and about openness for hard work. Acquaviva certainly recognises that these considerations sometimes specify and limit the life of prayer, but he also vehemently recovers a sense that relationship with God has a value in itself. It is one thing to say that authentic prayer has effects beyond itself in how we live our lives; it is another to reduce prayer simply to a means.

The standard Jesuit textbooks present Acquaviva as restoring balances: Mercurian's overcorrections were providentially rectified by his successor.²³ Clearly, there is much truth in this view. But there is an alternative interpretation, put forward by the French historian of spirituality Henri Bremond. For Bremond, Mercurian's interventions with Cordeses and Baltasar Alvarez mark a profound change. Whereas Ignatius saw the direct touch of the Spirit as almost a normal reality, now the touch of God is something exotic, rarefied—it occurs in 'mystics', honoured exceptions who, as such, are irrelevant to the everyday.

Acquaviva's disagreement with Mercurian on the compatibility of 'higher prayer' with a life of service is, for Bremond, not significant. The real disaster was that for both sides the life of the Spirit had become defined in terms of 'higher prayer', restricted to the extraordinary or even paranormal.²⁴ The creative religious ferment of early modernity hardened, and the holy came to be located outside ordinary experience—in rules, in hierarchies reinforced by a discipline of celibacy, in the unusual. Everyday life became profane, a Godforsakenness to be lived through in faith. In Ignatius' time matters were otherwise. The creator could deal immediately with any creature making the Exercises. Overcoming the dualisms that set in after his death is still our task.

²³ So De Guibert, *The Jesuits*, pp. 239-242; Ignacio Iparraguirre, *Historia de la Práctica de los Ejercicios de San Ignacio*, vol. 2 (Rome: Jesuit Historical Institute, 1955), pp. 531-534—significantly placed at the end of the volume, as if to mark the culmination of an era.

²⁴ Henri Bremond, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France, depuis la fin des guerres de religion jusqu'à nos jours*, 12 vols. (Paris: Bloud and Gay, 1924-1936), vol. 8, pp. 270-271: 'One must not think that Acquaviva's decree . . . purely and simply revoked the indefensible verdict of Mercurian. Rather, it vindicates it—not perhaps its expressed content, but at least its deep philosophy. From now on, of course, contemplation is no longer forbidden to the Jesuit, as something contrary to the Exercises and the spirit of the Society; but that does not make it any less a special prayer, accessible only with difficulty to the average religious. . . .' A fundamental mistake sets in: that of defining mysticism as 'necessarily delightful, fertile in revelations and visions, strewn with ecstasies'. 'Such is certainly not what this great man [Acquaviva] thinks, but as he digs a kind of ditch between contemplation and ordinary prayer, he gives credit, willy-nilly, to this dangerous teaching.'