

AN IGNATIAN WAY OF DOING THEOLOGY

Theology Discerning 'The True Life'

Christophe Theobald

IN RECENT TIMES, THEOLOGY HAS BECOME MUCH RICHER, and much more diverse. But this very diversity raises a question: what, in all this wide-ranging intellectual activity, is in fact specifically theology? What holds it all together? What gives it coherence?

We all know the standard answer: the faith of the Church. But just to say that much is not very helpful, given the vast range of human experience, including spiritual experience, that theologians articulate. Another approach to this question begins by recalling the wide variety of spiritualities and traditions of consecrated life within the Church. Some of these have generated quite specific schools of theology. In this article, I would like to argue that there is an Ignatian way of doing theology—one which has so far been largely implicit, but which is coming into its own precisely now, as theological awareness becomes radically pluralist.

This claim requires us to abandon the sense of sharp separation between so-called 'academic theology' and its expression in spiritual literature so sadly characteristic of Christian thought throughout the second millennium. At the outset of the *Summa theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas writes of a 'twofold manner of judging', generating 'a twofold wisdom'. One style of judgment centres on a person's 'inclination': the matter in question *attracts* the virtuous person to make correct judgments. The holy person operates *patiens divina*—out of receptivity to divine reality. The other style is a matter of 'knowledge'; correct judgments come from an awareness of ethical principles. And Thomas specifies that his project is of the second kind.¹

¹ *Summa theologiae*, 1.1.6.

Thomas stops short of saying that a theologian does not need to be a believer, because the 'principles' of this intellectual theology come from revelation. But later Thomists separate the two styles of judgment more radically. Melchior Cano, the Dominican who repeatedly accused Ignatius of illuminism, excludes theologians known as 'spiritual', and even more so spiritual experience, from his catalogue



of the sources of theology. Karl Rahner's theology of the Exercises begins with a trenchant polemic against the habit of seeing Ignatius simply as a spiritual master and not as a theologian.² But not even Rahner's work—or that of figures such as Erich Przywara, Hans Urs von Balthasar or Gaston Fessard—really tackles the question of what the specifically Ignatian or Jesuit way of proceeding in theology actually consists in.

Jesuit theology is not marked primarily by a body of doctrine or by a specific intellectual structure, such as Thomism provides for Dominicans. What one finds, rather, is a 'way of proceeding', a 'way of moving forward', a theological 'knack', a 'style', expressive of a particular experience and understanding of God.

In what follows, I shall try firstly to bring out what is distinctive about this Ignatian or Jesuit approach to theology. I will begin by discussing the act of discernment, something close to Thomas' first style of judgment. Then I want to discuss the idea of an 'authentic way of life'; this is both the criterion and goal of discernment; it also fuses with the New Testament vision of an eternal life that was with the Father and that is now revealed, seen, heard and declared (1 John 1:1-3). Finally, I shall suggest how the present situation in Europe is revealing theological potentials within Ignatian spirituality that have up till now been hidden, and opening up for the first time a particular kind of Ignatian theological vocation. In general, I want to suggest that

² Karl Rahner, 'The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge in Ignatius of Loyola', in *The Dynamic Element in the Church*, translated by W. J. O'Hara (London: Burns and Oates, 1963), 84-170.

Ignatian spirituality enables us to imaging in a new way the inner coherence of theology, and the relationships between the different activities that theology involves.

'Doctrine' and Discernment

The term 'doctrine' occurs twice in the *Spiritual Exercises*, and both uses come during the central phase when the retreatant is preparing an Election. The consideration on Three Modes of Humility aims at arousing the heart to 'the true doctrine of Christ our Lord' (Exx 164), as Jesus is choosing his disciples and sending them out to 'spread his sacred doctrine', to use the phrase from the Two Standards (Exx 145).

'Doctrine' is connected with the 'true life' (Exx 139), with a specific way of relating to God and to human beings. The content of this doctrine is not so important, at least initially. What does matter is that those who teach 'the true life' practise what they preach, model what they are saying. Ignatius focuses on the relationships between Jesus and his disciples, and on the contrast between these and the 'nets and chains' of the enemy chief.

'Doctrine' for Ignatius refers primarily to a process of transformation and conversion, not to a theory which has then to be applied. Like Jesus' parables, Ignatius' 'doctrine' opens us up to a 'style', a 'way of doing things'. To hand this style on is to form another person in this way of life.

The earliest Jesuit texts confirm the point. The papal bull founding the Society speaks of 'the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine and the propagation of the faith'.³ 'Doctrine' is closely connected to 'life', and is situated within a process of formation for people everywhere. In the 1550 version, the emphases are already changing subtly: the faith is to be defended as well as propagated, and the progress of souls in life and doctrine appears as secondary and separate.⁴ In Ignatius' own texts, too, 'doctrine' generally appears in close connection with other aspects of the Christian life,⁵ but there are

³ MHSJ MI Const 1, 16: '*... ad profectum animarum in vita et doctrina christiana, et ad fidei propagationem*' (1539 version of Formula, n.2).

⁴ MHSJ MI Const 1, 376: '*... ad fidei defensionem et propagationem et profectum animarum in vita et doctrina Christiana*'.

⁵ See, for example, *Constitutions* 1.4.5 [198]; 4.7.2.D [622]; 4. Preamble [307]: 'beyond the example of one's life, doctrine is necessary and a method of expounding it'.

places where the term simply refers to ideas and beliefs in an absolute sense.⁶

As the early Jesuits grew in number, a debate arose about these latter references in the *Constitutions* to 'uniformity of doctrine' and to the 'scholastic doctrine of St Thomas'. It lasted for several decades.⁷ Some Jesuits thought there needed to be a list of 'opinions that must be supported and taught by our people as true and to be held';⁸ others preferred general exhortations to prudence. The debate, which has frequently recurred,⁹ turns on whether theology is to be understood as a set of propositions or as a method. The contribution of Alfonso Salmerón, one of the last survivors from the first companions, is a wonderful statement of the original Ignatian position and of its underlying rationale:

Firstly ... I think that it does our Society no good if we choose and embrace as our guide some particular teacher or writer of scholastic theology, in such a way that we all swear by their words and opinions, and that we fight on behalf of them as if for our own hearths and homes. For indeed, up till now no author in the Church has been found (and I certainly don't think there will be one in the future) who has so far excelled in all their writings and opinions as never to have lapsed when from time to time they have suffered human weakness in some respects, or (to put it mildly) as never, at any point, to have argued less defensibly than others. Thus it is no unfairness to them to leave their position aside. ...

I fear that as we want to deal with the disease of dissidence in doctrine, we will merely add to it, and they will say that we have changed by some remarkable process from Jesuits into Thomists or Dominicans. ...

It may one day happen that one of our people will be sent by divine gift to hand on in writing theological doctrine through some new style of argument (*nova quadam ratione*) and in a better way, as

⁶ See, for example, *Constitutions* 8.1.K [672]: 'all will ordinarily follow one doctrine, that which the Society will have chosen as better and more appropriate for its subjects'. Not only Thomas, but also Aristotle, has a doctrine: *Constitutions* 4.12.1,3 [464, 470].

⁷ See Dominique Julia, 'Généalogie de la "Ratio studiorum"', in *Les jésuites à l'âge baroque: 1540-1640*, edited by Luce Giard and Louis de Vaucelles (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1996), 115-130.

⁸ From a heading in a decree by Borja, perhaps the first of its kind in Jesuit history, promulgated in 1565; see MHSJ Mon Paed 3, 384.

⁹ See, for example, Fr General Janssens' letter on the controversial 1950 encyclical, *Humani generis* in *Acta Romana Societatis Iesu*, 12 (1951), 47-72, 72-94.

Blessed Ignatius of happy memory thought would some time happen. It would be wrong to restrain such a person; rather, the matter must be referred to Fr General, who, having taken cognisance of the matter and having consulted others as he saw fit, can encourage the person to the completion of the work that has begun if it is worthwhile and suitable, and foster and help the person to the extent that there is need. For indeed all disciplines have been developed and perfected over the course of time; and human effort is not so exhausted or sterile that it cannot, with God's help, at some point make improvements. Why, then, do we want to deny ourselves this glory, if God deigns to give it to us?

Finally, I do not think that any catalogue of propositions that we should abstain from defending should be compiled. For when this was done some time ago, it was not very successful. ... I think that for us the rules of sacred Scripture, and the definitions of the Church, and the decrees of the popes and the councils regarding right ideas about faith and piety are enough ...¹⁰

We do not know whether the Jesuits at the time were aware of the difference between their founder's use of the term 'doctrine' and Thomas' *sacra doctrina*. But they certainly could have invoked a distinction not only between Thomas' two forms of judgment, but also between speculative and practical disciplines.

For Thomas, human knowledge is merely a means for coming to the true life which is the knowledge of God. This way of thinking is quite different from Ignatius'. We are well into the Third Part of the *Summa theologiae*, at Question 42 in fact, before the *doctrina Christi* appears. At this stage, Thomas deals simply with communication in the abstract, because the content has already been well established in the earlier Parts. Article 40, having introduced the theme of Christ's way of life, invokes the classic distinction between contemplation and action:

... the contemplative life is, absolutely speaking, more perfect than the active life, because the latter is taken up with bodily actions: yet that form of active life in which people, by preaching and teaching, deliver to others the fruits of their contemplation, is more perfect than the life that stops at contemplation, because such a

¹⁰ Salmerón to Acquaviva, 1 September 1582: MHSJ Mon Paed 3, 21-24. Salmerón refers to *Constitutions* 4.14.B [466], where Ignatius explicitly envisages that a future Jesuit textbook can improve on Peter Lombard!

life is built on an abundance of contemplation, and consequently such was the life chosen by Christ.¹¹

We are here at the heart of the *Summa*: Thomas is founding the Order of Preachers on the life of Christ. Jesus, the first friar preacher, is uniting the active and contemplative lives in a higher active life of preaching. Thomas' presentation presupposes that *sacra doctrina* and speculative thought are independent of the practical.

In Ignatius, matters are different. Ignatius discovers Jesus and his apostles 'wanting to help all' (Exx 146) in a way of life that goes quite beyond the classic split between contemplation and action. 'Doctrine' here is no longer contrasted with practice. Ignatius identifies 'doctrine' with the process of 'formation of a true life' that occurs when Jesus or his apostles come into contact with people at large.

The Need for Discernment

There was nothing new in the idea that the 'formation of a true life' involved the reading of Scripture, and that the events of Scripture needed to be re-enacted in the lives of Jesus' followers. What was truly original in Ignatius was his awareness of the historical distance separating the Scriptures from his own cultural and political space. The *Autobiography* shows us how Ignatius in Jerusalem, under threat of death, had given up trying to follow the biblical text literally (today we would speak of fundamentalism). He discovered that the 'formation of a true life', both his own and that of his group, would require inventiveness and discernment.

From now on it is not just the Bible and the reader; there is also the Spirit who mediates the Bible to the reader. The question of interpretation emerges, probably for the first time, as both a practical and doctrinal problem. 'Doctrine' has become a complex process of 'formation in the true life', set in motion and inspired by a reading of Scripture, and culminating in a veritable (re-)creation of the reader.

How did such a bold conception arise? In the context of the *Spiritual Exercises*, the answer is clear. Now that the saving will of God cannot be derived from the text in any straightforward fashion, people are dependent, in a quite new fashion, on their own freedom to search

¹¹ *Summa theologiae*, 3.40.1.

for this will and find it. We are called to root our absolute uniqueness in God's own self, and on that basis to order our lives (Exx 1).

**Ignatius
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Ignatius speaks of the 'whole plain or circuit of the whole world' (Exx 101). Ignatius lived in a world that was becoming much broader; no longer, as in Thomas' day, was the world to be identified with Christendom. No one has better reflected on the significance of this generative moment than Karl Rahner. If the field of God's presence extends to the whole world, then it becomes vital to acknowledge its essential pluralism. We are making a veritable paradigm shift: the locus of God's self-revelation is God's living and working in the diversity of *everything* and *every* person (Exx 235-236). It is this to which Karl Rahner responded by distinguishing the particular empirical patterns of human history from the underlying transcendental structure present in all of them.

The radicality of Ignatius' insight, however, only really comes out when we focus again on how God's will is to be discerned in *this particular situation*, with God as the relationship originating and ordering our freedom. Of course neither the *Spiritual Exercises* nor any of the other foundational Jesuit texts call into question the order of the law and the commandments. The Election puts forward a quite new discovery: the uniqueness of God's design matching the uniqueness of each individual subject, each individual group.

It was, again, Rahner who brought the point out: Ignatius' Exercises presuppose a form of moral decision that is quite individual, not simply the application of universal moral norms. And law is therefore not much use when it comes to discerning such choices; nor is it enough merely to note that all the possibilities are morally legitimate and praiseworthy. The person is instead invited, during the Second Week of the Exercises, to base their discernment on a sense of conformity or resonance with the roots of their liberty in God, in the always unique way in which God is structuring the person's life. Ignatius speaks of peace, repose, quiet and joy in this connection. We should remember that he takes this ultimate criterion of gospel consolation, characteristic of a true life being formed, from an image of Jesus, 'in a humble place, but he himself being very handsome and always looking kindly' (Exx 144, Vulgate). One might easily use this Ignatian reading of Scripture as a basis for speaking theologically about authenticity of life.

The Ignatian Way of Theological Proceeding

In at least three ways, this Ignatian experience of God generates a distinctive approach to theology. The first centres on the kind of regulation exerted by theological reason. The *Spiritual Exercises* and the *Constitutions* are texts 'to be used'—they have their sole justification in the forms of practice they generate. We can extend the point: theological discourse exists only to enable the process of 'human and spiritual formation'. The very genre of the Ignatian 'rule' indicates that theological thought is precisely not there as a *description* or *representation* of the true life, but rather as an invitation *actually to experience* that life.

The Ignatian approach to theology is therefore essentially practical, and as such it remains dependent on the experiences by which the true life is formed. These experiences—here is our second point—occur in history, and in infinite variety. Because the general law cannot regulate how God's immediate encounter will occur within a given process, history, in all its singularity, whether of individuals, groups or whole societies, has to be allowed to have its own influence on the 'regulative system' that is theology. Theology has to remain supple, ready in principle for whatever might be emerging.

Thirdly, this fluid relationship between Christian experience and its regulation in Christian ideas implies a quite new understanding of what is involved in faith. A feedback effect arises: the regulative system is both confirmed and changed as people and groups structure their lives. And this structuring is itself a truly *theological* experience, an experience of God. The retreat-giver disappears; the retreatant becomes free enough to internalise perfectly the 'rules for discernment' in the structuring of his or her own life, to the point of being able to give the Exercises to others. Similarly, the theologian can withdraw as people and groups become the active subjects, not just of their own history but also of their own theological self-understanding.

At the heart of this process lies a kind of theological reciprocity, with biblical roots in such texts as 2 Corinthians 3:17-18:

... where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

Such reciprocity seems beyond Thomas, since for him reason is only a means of arguing, an instrument for something else (*theologia subalterna*). It can occur, however, in styles of theology informed by Ignatian spirituality, if those involved are acting freely and in full awareness of what is at stake.

Discerning the Authentic Life

So far, this article has explored how Ignatius appropriates the gospel. It is time now to move more explicitly to the ways in which an Ignatian theology can engage the range of contemporary ways of life and of Christianity.

'Christian Perfection'

The Second Part of the *Summa theologiae* begins by evoking the purpose of the Christian life, using the biblical term 'beatitude'. Thomas deals with the various 'human acts' that serve as means to this end, and ends with a consideration of the 'states of life', culminating with religious life, the form of life closest to gospel perfection.

In some ways Ignatius is clearly taking up this tradition: he writes of a perfect life that is a happy or blessed life, carried forward by consolation and peace. But its goal is the 'doctrine of Christ'. Ignatius makes a fundamental distinction between spiritual poverty and the ways in which this poverty is actually lived out. The spiritual poverty of the first of Matthew's Beatitudes is a gospel-rooted capacity to orient one's life on God; the other options are specific means of living out this poverty. Ignatius articulates these in terms of the 'states of life'—social institutions that can contain people's life-processes. But, quite surprisingly, Ignatius does not connect gospel perfection with consecrated life. He does, to be sure, imply a hierarchical distinction: the general Christian life of the commandments is linked to the childhood of Jesus (Exx 135), while the life



of the counsels derives from his public ministry. But nevertheless, Ignatius insists that the experience of election must allow us to find gospel perfection 'in *whatever* state or life *God our Lord would give us to choose*' (Exx 135). The various states of life are only means; perfection is for everyone.

The move that Ignatius makes here can help us in our current situation, where the fundamental distinction between 'states of life', which has structured Catholic Christianity in the West throughout the second millennium, is now in crisis. Our societies are becoming more individualistic, and confidence in social institutions is diminishing. Religious traditions in the past protected human beings from the sense of their radical contingency. But they are losing their capacity to fulfil this function. As a French philosopher has put it:

We are doomed from henceforth to live in nakedness and anguish—something which since the beginning of the human adventure has so far been more or less spared us by the good offices of the gods. Each person now has to develop their own responses on their own account.¹²

These personal responses, often quite makeshift, vary: more or less sensitive silence in face of life's tragic riddle; the kind of stoical heroism you can find among some intellectuals who subordinate all individuality to the great cosmic process; the hedonism of those who, faced with the stumbling-block of contingency, try just to live for the present as fully as possible; a life informed by one of the great religious traditions, but inevitably in a new way, conditioned by this contemporary need to develop a personal response to human life and its problems.

All these attitudes, and many others, jostle together in contemporary society. The grand systems of meaning have become fragile, and the lifestyles they offer their adherents—in the Christian case, the 'states of life'—are thus also losing their plausibility and their influence. Individuals and groups have therefore been left to their own devices in order to find their own ways, tossed as they are between the

¹² Marcel Gauchet, *Le désenchantement du monde: Une histoire politique de la religion* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), 302.

various models that the powerful put forward in advertising, and their fragile, personal desire for something creative.

Some philosophers and social critics have spoken of the death of humanity. What they are really referring to is the structural tendency in our societies towards conformism, even if the standards to which we are being pressured to conform are continually fluctuating. It is in this context that the value of an 'authentic life' becomes significant. Faced with the pressures towards conformism, individuals and groups can nevertheless come together and resist the prefabricated models society puts before them. They can seek to live alternatively, wherever they are, in true creativity. Authenticity in this context connotes a coherence between what people or groups say and what they do, a coherence which, simply as such, inspires confidence. Another sign of authenticity is the capacity to be surprised by the bond that is the most fundamental element in human existence: the bond with others.

The crisis of the 'states of life' as developed by Western Catholic Christianity is closely bound up with this situation in the wider culture. And Ignatian spirituality offers two important contributions.

The first of these emerges from the way in which Ignatius, at the dawn of modernity, relativised the distinction between the lives of the precepts and the counsels, and instead highlighted what *Lumen gentium* would name 'the *universal* call to holiness'. Any Christianity worthy of the name is called to a form of excess, to the Ignatian *magis*:

... give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back. (Luke 6: 38)

Now, this call to excess, which Matthew's Jesus calls perfection (Matthew 5:48), is in no way an incitement to heroism. Rather, what is operative is the mystery of God's own self: God's excess. God's movement outwards reaches within human limits, and shows itself to be accessible to us, accessible in an absolutely unique way for each person. This individual touch for each person is not something that can be legislated or codified. Here the traditional term 'counsel' acquires its full significance: the Spirit counsels, indeed consoles, everyone directly; and all need the counsel and consolation of their sisters and brothers within the Church so that each person's full and unique capacity for God can be revealed in mutuality.

Ignatius' second contribution is his awareness of the logic of his foundation as described earlier. The Ignatian texts are written in such a way that those who appropriate them do not seek to reproduce one model or another, but are rather invited to enter into the founder's generative experience. There is a creativity here which is divine and theological in the full sense. For a long time it remained encrusted within the structures of 'religious life'. But now it has been liberated—this is the positive side of our rather bleak cultural analysis. From now on it can shape the lives of individuals, and inspire many different forms of community. The central criterion for this creativity is the unique authenticity of the figure of Jesus. This leads us from the Spirit of counsel and consolation, a wisdom spread in God's mysterious providence over all humanity, to the Christian life's specific form.

Practical Theology and the Human Sciences

In the Ignatian perspective, theology is an open structure, always dependent on how the 'formation of a true life' happens in history. Two consequences follow from this.

Firstly, an Ignatian theology needs to be a *collaborative process*. The 'formation of a true life', of a generative life, is a communal affair: it must be modelled on the communication that took place between Jesus, his apostles, and the persons or groups that they encountered. Often people may weigh pros and cons in best Ignatian fashion, and listen attentively to the movements of the Spirit, but in a way that is still too much influenced by the individualism of our surrounding culture. Theology happens together; theologians, 'formers' of the new life, need to operate in profound reciprocity. This collective approach to theology nevertheless requires the full and inalienable individual participation of all involved, and the counsel or consolation of the Spirit within each. And sometimes there will be no external confirmation or corroboration for an individual's conviction.



Secondly, a theology that goes beyond the dogmatic norms and tries to say something to real human decision-making, and hence becomes involved in the indefinite complexity and pluralism of human

life, will inevitably encounter the human sciences. Linguistics, psychoanalysis, sociology, economics, anthropology—all these have made their marks on biblical exegesis and practical theology, and have provoked a series of important crises. Ignatian spirituality highlights the difference between law and counsel. In doing so, it indicates the point at which theologians can and must learn from the human sciences, and allow these sciences, with their awkward and critical questions, to keep reminding them of how their theology must be structurally open-ended.

The Present Moment

In what is called our 'postmodern' society, people risk losing the capacity for the concentration so essential to real creativity, as they conform to the fluctuations of manipulated fashion. The conflict here is not merely one in secular society; it also—despite what many say—influences contemporary Church life. The proliferation of texts and Church organizations of every kind (something which was already starting at the end of Vatican II), the tendency to legislate about just everything, the habit of talking about more and more things to fewer and fewer people, the attempts being made to reinforce doctrinal structures in face of the perceived threat from modernity—all these things betoken a serious diminishment in one part of the Church's ability to focus on the gospel. It represents an attempt to pass on the gospel-inspired creativity of the last Council by drawing on habits and structures dating from a previous era. But the new wine requires new wineskins.

The contemporary crisis of the Church in Europe must surely be linked to this contradiction. Vatican II's texts presupposed a culturally and institutionally rich Church, in a way that ill matches the poverty of our actual resources. But in the Scriptures true renewal happens in the desert, or on the roads of Galilee. What we are living through today is in fact a quite unprecedented return to the gospel as it presents itself graciously to individuals, both within and beyond Christian communities, in great power and in elemental simplicity.

History and Fundamental Theology

This reading of our contemporary situation brings out strengths in the Ignatian way of doing theology that have so far been only latent, and I

have tried to name these. Ultimately, however, this analysis of our situation puts another and more fundamental question before us, of the kind proper to such desert moments. Is the present crisis of European Christianity the harbinger of its imminent collapse, or rather a sign of profound transformation?

This question leads us to fundamental theology. In the Ignatian theological 'way of moving forward', the question of how faith is grounded is answered, in a quite distinctive way, in terms of experience. The only 'justification' for the Ignatian apostle's desire 'to help souls' in the contemporary Church is an immediate experience of God—one that our society cannot corroborate. And the only thing which can make God's Church credible in the contemporary world is a collective capacity to let itself really be interrogated, to be worked over by the gospel. No doctrine as such can be foundational.

Earlier in this essay, I spoke of how the Ignatian 'formation of a true life' involves a constant process of interplay between doctrine and experience, with experience both confirming and correcting the doctrine. This can only be known 'from inside', as a participant—through Ignatian 'interior knowledge'. It is this dynamic interplay which is foundational, rooted as it is in *God*, God's 'excess', God's 'stepping out', God's being as ever greater—an excess which, paradoxically, lets itself be contained within indefinitely many limited human beings—human beings who become, through this divine action, absolutely unique. And there is also the human experience of shared companionship along the way, with each person moving towards whatever their authenticity will turn out to be. It is hardly surprising that no doctrinal formulation can express this immense test of faith. The theologian's task is to invite those whom they meet to enter freely into the process, and to explore to the utmost their own awareness as it develops within their own life-experience. Then in time, this experience will come to feel reliable and trustworthy, both for the people concerned and for others who encounter them.

What holds theology together, its ultimate principle, necessarily eludes direct description. Precisely for that reason, it can leave its traces on a variety of intellectual disciplines, including the secular ones (indeed especially these), as the early Jesuit *Constitutions* and the *Ratio studiorum* indicate. The Ignatian method specifically in theology can be characterized in three significant ways:

- a cultivation of all forms of human wisdom, reflecting a commitment to the Spirit's work 'in all things';
- a discernment of how 'formation in the true life' can occur, rooted in the life of Christ, and informed by a dogmatic theology which recognises that what its normative force has constantly to be rediscovered in unique situations;
- a fundamental theology which sees faith as centring on a genuinely theological experience of the divine presence within the diverse human life-processes forming the one Church, the one people of God.¹³

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