THE INFLUENCE OF THE IGNATIAN TRADITION

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This article records some instances where the Ignatian spiritual tradition has had an influence in the past beyond the Roman Catholic Communion. In an age such as ours, when the Spiritual Exercises increasingly enjoy an ecumenical influence, it is tempting to look for historical precedents. But the desire for precedents has its dangers. Firstly, we may be tempted to find examples of influence on rather flimsy evidence. I therefore note where the question of Ignatian influence is contentious or inconclusive. Secondly, comparisons between different ages and cultures are notoriously difficult because underlying conditions and assumptions have changed considerably. This essay, therefore, does not attempt to draw any practical conclusions from the past for application in the present. However, the evidence does reveal that we need to revise the traditional emphasis on historical discontinuity and total divergence between Roman Catholic and other Christian traditions because there has always been some inter-confessional osmosis even during centuries of public antagonism.

The essay has three sections. Firstly, I shall consider the Anglican tradition where there appears to be the most substantial evidence of Ignatian connections at different points. The Anglican Communion, while a Church of the Reformation, has been particularly open to its own pre-Reformation roots and to movements and emphases beyond its boundaries, not least in the Roman Catholic Communion. Secondly, and more briefly, I shall look at a few examples in the Reformed traditions. Here I include John Wesley, one of the founders of Methodism, even though he was an Anglican priest who only reluctantly accepted the gradual separation of the Methodist movement from his parent Church. Finally, and perhaps most surprisingly, there are some examples of Ignatian influence in the Orthodox Churches.

The Anglican tradition

Remarks about the influence of Catholic post-Reformation spirituality, and the Ignatian tradition in particular, on seventeenth-century Anglican poetry and spiritual writing are common in

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histories of spirituality. This was treated in some detail by Louis Martz, writing in the early 1950s. His strongest arguments concerned John Donne who had a Catholic background and Jesuit connections and whose Divine poems and Devotions upon emergent occasions were said to be dependent on the Ignatian Exercises in their tripartite meditative structure. Martz pointed to similarities of subject matter (e.g. the life of Christ, the Passion and the state of the sinful soul) and of structure (e.g. composition of place, the imaginative process, the colloquy, the use of reason and will and the emphasis on the affections). Martz also considered that George Herbert may have been influenced indirectly, perhaps through the writings of Francis de Sales (which Herbert seems to have known). It was also suggested that Ignatian meditation influenced those Anglicans who attempted to provide the Church of England with forms of meditation to aid their private devotions.

Some later commentators, such as Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, take issue with Martz and the overall ‘medieval’ and ‘Catholic’ approach to seventeenth-century religious literature. They argue that this owed more to Protestant influences, which Martz ignored, than to medieval or Catholic Reformation sources. Lewalski suggests that Anglican meditation, which was important for poets such as John Donne, Henry Vaughan and Thomas Traherne, was not primarily influenced by the Ignatian tradition but stemmed rather from the several emerging Protestant kinds—deliberate meditation on scripture texts, meditation on the creatures, occasional meditation, meditation on personal experience, heavenly meditation.

Thus, Donne’s Devotions relate more obviously to Protestant meditation upon experience (in this case, serious illness) than to Ignatian structure. With regard to Herbert’s meditative poems on the Passion (e.g. ‘The Sacrifice’ and ‘The Thanksgiving’) she argues that, in a typically Protestant way, Herbert focuses on his own response to the events of Jesus’s suffering and their significance for his salvation rather than on the Catholic emphasis on human identification with and imitation of the Cross.

The American scholar, John Booty, also questions whether it is valid to assume Ignatian influences in the sermons of Bishop Lancelot Andrewes, who undoubtedly read broadly in the Christian tradition, or in Bishop Joseph Hall’s meditations. While Andrewes
used the technique of imagination and invited his hearers to ‘see’ the events of the Passion, the influences could as easily have been medieval Passion devotion, the *devoio moderna* or the Holy Week liturgy itself (Catholic and Anglican) as the Spiritual Exercises. Bishop Joseph Hall (1574–1656) had a great influence on Anglican approaches to meditation in the seventeenth century, particularly through his *Arte of divine meditation* (1606). He also influenced the meditative poetry of Herbert, Vaughan and Traherne. But it is questionable whether Hall was dependent on Ignatian sources. Hall was, in fact, explicitly critical of what he saw as the excessively methodical approach to meditation and a clinging to the senses, ‘to the increase of carnal devotion’, in the Ignatian tradition. Any Ignatian ‘echoes’ in Hall, such as his emphasis on the affections and on ‘tasting’ and ‘relishing’, probably stem from sources common to himself and Ignatius, such as John Mombaer’s *Rosetum exercitiorum spiritualium*, pseudo-Bonaventure’s meditations and à Kempis’ *Imitation of Christ*, rather than from any direct dependence.

We do not, however, have to discount entirely Ignatian influences on seventeenth-century Anglicanism. Even such a thorough revisionist as Lewalski does not deny Anglican familiarity with Catholic spiritual writings and admits some direct inspiration. Thus, the first important Anglican treatise on meditation, included in Richard Rogers’ *Seven treatises* (1603), was a deliberate counterpart to two Jesuit manuals of meditation, Robert Parsons’ *Christian directory* and Gaspar Loarte’s *Exercise of a Christian life*. Indeed, Lewalski comments that some Anglican writers even produced adapted versions of Parsons’ book with references to suspect Roman doctrine deleted. There is some evidence, too, that the *Preparatory meditations* by the well-known New England Puritan Edward Taylor reflected to some degree the Ignatian approach.

With regard to the Anglican poets, Lewalski suggests that Herbert was conscious of Ignatian method but his meditative poems on the Passion were critiques of its emphasis on imaginative identification and imitation. She is suspicious of any influence on Traherne. She acknowledges, however, that the early Donne did rely on standard Ignatian themes and that some at least of his ‘Holy Sonnets’ (e.g. Sonnet VII ‘At the round earth’s imagin’d corners’) may exhibit a fairly full dependence on Ignatian structure. Indeed, John Donne continues to be the best candidate for substantial Ignatian influences despite a necessary revision of Martz’s over-enthusiasm. J. A. W. Bennett’s important study of
English Passion literature, *Poetry of the Passion*, while critical of Martz, admits the influence of the Exercises on Donne—especially echoes of the Colloquy to Christ on the Cross in the First Week in the poem ‘Good Friday, Riding Westward’.12 Anthony Raspa, in his introduction to a recently revised edition of Donne’s *Devotions* suggests that we can now balance a ‘Catholic’ interpretation with the ‘Anglicanisation’ of the revisionists. The latter are correct to deny a direct influence of Ignatian meditative structure on Donne not least because his *Devotions* and the Exercises had quite different dynamics and purposes. However, there is more than one way in which, devotionally, the Exercises could have left their trace on Donne. This, Raspa suggests, was a general meditative experience which Donne then synthesized with his own structure and mainstream Anglican theology.13

Seventeenth-century Anglicans undoubtedly saw themselves as ‘Protestants’. This makes a purely ‘Catholic’ interpretation of their spirituality invalid yet, equally, to be ‘Protestant’ at the time did not necessarily exclude a sense of continuity with the past nor an interest in contemporary Catholic devotion. However, we must carefully distinguish between a general consciousness of Catholic spirituality and explicit dependence on Ignatian material.

The second period when Ignatian spirituality had some explicit influence on Anglicanism began with the Oxford Movement in the middle of the nineteenth century, the restoration of religious communities, the birth of theological colleges (or seminaries) and the giving of retreats and missions by Catholic-minded clergy. Some of the influential figures in the Catholic movement in the Church of England had contacts with Roman Catholic orders on the continent and read some of the post-Reformation spiritual classics. However, for a variety of reasons which need not detain us here, there was no equivalent to Roman Catholic ‘apostolic’ orders. The new religious communities in the Church of England from the 1840s onwards adopted a conventual or monastic lifestyle even when they were not cloistered and were committed to some active ministry. However, one or two Anglican communities were to some degree influenced by Ignatian spirituality even if their structures of community life owed little or nothing to Jesuit models.

The most striking example was the Society of St John the Evangelist (S.S.J.E. or ‘Cowley Fathers’), founded in 1866 by Richard Meux Benson who had travelled widely on the continent
and visited both Monte Cassino and the places associated with
Ignatius Loyola. Some people referred to the Cowley Fathers as
‘Anglican Jesuits’ because they saw themselves as ‘Mission Priests’
and emphasized study and the ministry of retreats, but this compari-
son cannot be pushed very far. Their life-style was semi-monastic
and Benson relied on traditional monastic rules in drawing up their
way of life. Yet, the annual long retreat for members of the
S.S.J.E., as well as shorter retreats given to clergy and lay people,
were inspired partly by the Exercises. Later, W. H. Longridge’s
*A month’s retreat for religious* (Oxford, 1931) had a great influence,
and several other retreat publications of his contained echoes of
the Exercises. In 1919 he published a translation of the Exercises
from the Spanish Autograph with commentary which had numerous
editions up to 1950 and which was even translated back into
Spanish! Paradoxically, therefore, Longridge influenced gener-
ations of Jesuits in different parts of the world who were brought
up on his edition of the Exercises. His commentary, although now
somewhat dated, is still one of the most thorough.14

Two other communities were influenced to a much lesser degree
by Ignatian spirituality. The Sisters of Bethany, founded by Etheld-
reda Anna Bennett in 1866, were from their foundation involved
in retreat work and in this were influenced and assisted by the
Cowley Fathers and so may be said, indirectly, to have been
touched by the Exercises.15 In a more general sense, Brooke Foss
Westcott, later Bishop of Durham, was concerned that Anglican
religious life should adapt in order to be more actively engaged in
evangelization. In a famous sermon at Harrow School in 1868 he
used Ignatius Loyola as one of his examples and this seems to
have had some influence on Charles Gore, later founder of the
Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield. Although the community
had a conventual life-style, members often used Fr Longridge’s
work in their retreats.16

The beginnings of the religious life among the Episcopalians in
the United States was more or less contemporary with the Oxford
Movement in England. Bishop Jackson Kemper used the model of
Jesuit missions when he appealed to the seminarians at General
Theological Seminary in New York to volunteer to evangelize the
North West. However, those who set off in 1841 to form the short-
lived Community of Nashotah in fact lived a rather romantic
monastic life in the woods.17 The Community of Companions of
the Holy Saviour, founded in 1895, were influenced by the Cowley
Fathers (who also had houses in the United States and Canada) and their founder, Fr McGarvey, made the month's retreat at Cowley. Their Rule was inspired by the Jesuit Constitutions with some Sulpician features. They engaged in preaching, parish-work, missions, retreats and writing but, like all Anglican communities, also recited Office in common. The Community was disbanded in 1908 when the superior and some members joined the Roman Catholic Church.18

Apart from the influence of Fr Longridge's work on the Exercises, it seems fair to say that the development of a retreat movement in the Church of England, as a result of the Oxford Movement, was in certain respects dependent on Jesuit retreat practice even if not directly on the Exercises. Retreats were mainly of the preached variety as this was the norm amongst Jesuits and other Roman Catholics at the time. In general terms, these had an influence on many clergy with the development of retreats for ordinands. At least in the more Catholic-orientated theological colleges, generations of ordinands were also introduced to the practice of meditation often based on manuals with an Ignatian flavour.19 The Society of Retreat Conductors, which came into being in 1923 after some years of exploration and visits to Jesuit retreat houses in Belgium, had a specific commitment to promoting the Spiritual Exercises. Initially some of the members lived together but without vows. The Society is now a dispersed association of priests (31 active members and 5 in training) which maintains a retreat centre, St Ignatius House, in Kent. Ecumenical contacts, especially with members of the Ignatian family, have increased considerably in recent years and members of the Society are involved in individually-directed retreats and in the training of spiritual directors and retreat-givers.20

The Reformed tradition

There are few definite contacts between Ignatian spirituality and the other Churches of the Reformation. John Wesley (1703-91), one of the main founders of Methodism, is a possible example, although it should be noted that he was an Anglican priest and would have seen himself as primarily within that tradition. The apparent 'enthusiasm' present in the early Methodist movement led to accusations that Wesley was a disciple of Loyola in the satire, 'The Fanatic Saint Displayed' and his stress on the necessity of good works led to a Calvinist attack entitled 'The Jesuit Detected'. Wesley's preachers were often compared to the friars
or described as crypto-Papists and Jesuits in disguise. However, there seems to be no evidence of any conscious borrowing here.\textsuperscript{21}

Is there any solid evidence that Wesley was directly influenced by the Ignatian tradition? Although I was once told by a Methodist that Wesley knew of the Spiritual Exercises and was familiar with imaginative scripture prayer, I have not found any evidence for this assertion. In fact, Wesley was a person in whom an astonishing number of spiritual tributaries converged and were synthesized. This makes it difficult to unravel the various threads with certainty. However, it is possible to say one or two things.

Firstly, Wesley quotes \textit{The life of Ignatius Loyola} (whose?) in his diary for August 16th 1742. He mentions that he read ‘that surprising book’ and judged that Ignatius was ‘surely one of the greatest men that ever was engaged in the support of so bad a cause!’\textsuperscript{22} A listing of Wesley’s reading during 1725–34, compiled from entries in his diaries, reveals other Ignatian works. He read Robert Parsons’ \textit{Christian directory} in 1726–27 and again in 1734 but whether this was in a Protestantized version is not clear. In 1733 it is recorded that he read Alonso Rodriguez and a life of Robert Bellarmine and in 1734 the letters of Francis Xavier. He also read \textit{The spiritual warfare} of Lorenzo Scupoli which was inspired by the Ignatian Exercises although the work moves in a different direction. Wesley respected Francis de Sales’ \textit{Introduction to the devout life} and this was partly influenced by elements of Ignatian spirituality.\textsuperscript{23} Jean Orcibal has examined in some detail the continental Catholic influences on Wesley. \textit{The imitation of Christ} and Francis de Sales were important as well as the French seventeenth-century mystics, Quietists and Jansenists but not, it seems, the Ignatian tradition.\textsuperscript{24} Overall, therefore, the evidence for direct Ignatian influences on John Wesley is slight except to some degree through secondary sources.\textsuperscript{25}

Evidence for direct Ignatian influence in continental Protestantism is sparse. Lutheran ‘orthodoxy’ produced a theological scholasticism which was particularly influenced by Jesuit sixteenth-century writings. However, the spirituality of the ‘Pietists’ which emerged in reaction to this in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was influenced rather by Catholic mysticism and the \textit{devotio moderna}. Johann Arndt, the so-called ‘father of German Pietism’ (1555–1621), produced a popular prayer-book, \textit{A paradise garden full of Christian virtues} in 1612 which seems to have been unusual in that, amongst other Catholic and Protestant sources, it drew on
some Jesuit writings.\textsuperscript{26} The only other connection I can find is that Dietrich Bonhoeffer began to practise daily scripture meditation from about 1932. Professor Eberhard Bethge, the eminent Bonhoeffer scholar, notes that Bonhoeffer called his first attempts at scripture meditation \textit{Exerzitien}.\textsuperscript{27} Bethge believes that, for Protestants of that era, the use of the word \textit{Exerzitien} had clear connotations of Ignatius Loyola. This would have been controversial, but it seems that Bonhoeffer believed that an important element had been lost by Lutherans and needed to be revived. Bethge himself possesses part of Bonhoeffer’s library which includes a copy of the \textit{Spiritual Exercises}, published in Regensburg in 1932. So Bonhoeffer had access to the Exercises at the time when he began his own experiments with meditation. It seems that he did not read the whole of this volume as some of the pages are uncut. However, it is also possible that he first encountered Ignatius Loyola while a student in Berlin.\textsuperscript{28}

Although forms of religious life have re-emerged in Lutheran and Reformed Churches in Germany, Switzerland, France and Scandinavia, some of which are orientated towards charitable or social work, most have a monastic flavour and none seem to be inspired by Ignatian models. The birth of a retreat movement in the continental Protestant Churches may, however, be said to have been influenced indirectly by the Spiritual Exercises. This is partly the consequence of present-day ecumenical contact with Roman Catholics but the Anglican Cowley Fathers and Mirfield Fathers were also involved in the past in spreading retreats in the Protestant Churches.\textsuperscript{29}

As a final, odd, note, the noted American Baptist pastor and reformer, Walter Rauschenbusch (1861–1918) was not only a striking protagonist of the social gospel as he worked among the urban poor of New York but also had a strong commitment to the development of personal prayer and spirituality. Both of these concerns led him to found the ‘Little Society of Jesus’ with Leighton Williams and Nathaniel Schmidt in 1887. Williams’ father had earlier, in 1838, given an address to Baptist students on ‘The Jesuits as a Missionary Order’ and exhorted them to emulate the zeal and burning enthusiasm of the first Jesuits. The companions desired to form ‘a union which should have the strength and cohesion of the Jesuit order without its danger to individual initiative’. The idea was a voluntary association which would ‘endeavour to realize the ethical and spiritual principles of Jesus,
both in their individual and social aspects' and would combine Catholic devotion with Protestant faith. In the longer term this small group expanded in 1893 into what became known as the Brotherhood of the Kingdom with both strong social and spiritual values.30

The Orthodox Churches

Jesuit contacts with the Orthodox in Eastern Europe and in other places from the sixteenth century onwards were often proselytizing and antagonistic in tone. There were, of course, some more amicable contacts through Jesuit schools, for example in the Russian Empire in the eighteenth century, and there are some indications that Jesuits preached missions (probably based on the Exercises) in the Greek islands to Catholics and Orthodox alike. However, my concern is with evidence for any influence of Ignatian spirituality within Orthodoxy itself. I have found only one significant example and another that is more tenuous.

St Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain (1749-1809), a monk of Mt Athos, is best known for his cooperation with Metropolitan Macarius of Corinth in producing the Philokalia which had a great influence in preserving and disseminating the hesychastic tradition of prayer. He had a broad knowledge of western languages and culture. While he adhered firmly to traditional Orthodoxy, and professed a radical anti-Catholicism, he nevertheless popularized western spirituality within Orthodoxy. Two works are especially significant. His Spiritual Exercises used to be thought to be a radical adaptation of Ignatius along unambiguously Orthodox lines. Nowadays it is increasingly accepted that while Nicodemus's work is not derived directly from Ignatius, neither is it so radically adapted from its western source. It relies closely on different texts written by the Italian Jesuit J-P. Pinamonti (1632-1703), particularly his own Spiritual Exercises which closely follow the method of Ignatius. The influence of the Ignatian Exercises is thus indirect and yet, at the same time, more substantial than once thought. Another work of Nicodemus, the Unseen warfare, was the most popular of his writings. Nicodemus talked himself of translating and altering the work of an anonymous 'wise man'. It is now generally accepted that this was the Spiritual combat of Lorenzo Scupoli (1529-1610). While not a Jesuit but a Theatine, Scupoli was much influenced by the Exercises.31
A more tenuous connection between Orthodoxy and Ignatian spirituality is provided by the Russian St Tikhon of Zadonsk (1724–1783) who became Bishop of Voronezh but retired because of ill-health in 1767 and lived at Zadonsk monastery until his death. He too was open to western influence while remaining firmly rooted in the Orthodox tradition. His popular collection of meditations, *A spiritual treasure collected from the world*, was probably more influenced by the works of the Anglican Bishop Joseph Hall than by anything else. Hall, as we have seen, is nowadays not thought to have been directly dependent on Ignatian spirituality but rather on Mombaer's *Rosetum* and on other works of the *devotio moderna* which were likely sources too for Ignatius Loyola. However, it is worth noting that Tikhon had received his seminary training at Novgorod from 1740 onwards and this new seminary was strongly influenced by Jesuit models. It is likely that he had some exposure not only to western theology but also to western spiritual manuals.32

**Conclusion**

These few examples of the influence of Ignatian spirituality have an intrinsic interest for those of us who are encouraged by contemporary ecumenical convergences, even if they are not precise precedents for this. Their value is, I believe, three-fold. Firstly, our sense of history, as Christians of different traditions, continues to play a powerful role in our sense of identity and attitudes to each other. Evidence of a spiritual osmosis in the past demands some reconsideration of our historical myths. Secondly, they are an encouragement to those today who believe that a dialogue of spiritual experience is as vital as theological debate. Finally, they remind us that, even during periods of public antagonism, the Spirit of God has woven together some delicate but vital threads at a deeper level which have undoubtedly had a longer-term effect on our present ability to rediscover common roots and a more public fellowship.

**NOTES**

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5 Lewalski, pp 10-11.
6 Ibid., p 168.
7 Ibid., p 171.
9 Lewalski, pp 147-49.
10 Ibid., p 464 n 142.
11 Ibid., pp 171, 253 & 268.
15 Perchenet, pp 59-60.
16 Ibid., pp 77-78. I am also grateful to Fr Christopher Lowe C.R. for comments on the influence of Longridge at Mirfield.
17 Perchenet, p 117 and Anson, p 533.
18 Anson, pp 544-47.
19 I am grateful to Fr Christopher Lowe C.R. for his comments on the development of retreats.
20 Fr John Arrowsmith of the Society of Retreat Conductors provided me with information about the history, objects and present state of the Society. See also, Donald Nicholson: 'The Society of Retreat Conductors' in *Ignatian spirituality since GC 32* (Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis: Rome, 1976), pp 93-95.
21 Satires quoted in Richard P. Heitzenrater: *The elusive Mr Wesley*, vol II, 'John Wesley as seen by contemporaries and biographers' (Nashville, 1984), pp 111 & 97-102. I am also grateful to Dr John Walsh of Jesus College, Oxford for further light on these accusations and, more generally, for some helpful references to Wesley's Catholic sources.
25 Particular thanks are due to Rev. Leslie Griffiths, the Superintendent Minister at the Methodist West London Mission, for his enquiries on my behalf about John Wesley.
28 This information was provided in a letter to me from Professor Bethge, 20th December 1989.
29 See, for example, Perchenet, op. cit., for the rise of Protestant religious life and for a reference to retreats in the section on the Cowley Fathers, pp 60-65. Fr Christopher Lowe
C.R., who has worked with Evangelicals in Germany, also commented on the indirect connections between Protestant retreat movements and the Exercises.

