



# STUDIES

IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

“A CONTINUAL SACRIFICE TO THE  
GLORY OF GOD”:  
IGNATIAN MAGNANIMITY  
AS COOPERATION WITH  
THE DIVINE

WILLIAM A. MCCORMICK, S.J.

50/3 AUTUMN 2018

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THE GLORY OF GOD”: IGNATIAN  
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**WILLIAM A. McCORMICK, SJ**

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## *a word from the editor...*

In the last thirty years, certain expressions have become standard in Jesuit schools to promote the essentials of Ignatian spirituality. *Magis, cura personalis*, “contemplatives in action,” “union of minds and hearts,” “men and women for others,” and “go set the world on fire,” to name but a few, capture well certain key emphases of Ignatius when understood and applied correctly.

And yet it seems a little ironic that, on the one hand, Ignatius himself never used most of those expressions; while, on the other hand, there are other expressions that he used repeatedly but that go relatively unknown in Jesuit schools today.

For example, a wealth of spiritual wisdom still awaits to be mined in these favorite expressions of Ignatius:

- *caritas discreta*—a discerning charity that understands the value of saying “no” on occasion, both to oneself and to others;
- *agere contra*—it is not enough to resist a temptation, one must counter-attack it;
- *zelo non secundam scientiam*—an enthusiasm that is well-intentioned but short-sighted;
- “the more universal good”—which Ignatius used to define the greater glory of God;
- “all else being equal”—a reminder that Ignatian discernment presupposes a certain objective criterion—namely, the more universal good—as its prime consideration;
- “pure intention”—when one chooses a course of action based not on self-interest, but on what will serve God’s greater glory; and
- “from good to better”—a recognition that implies that not to make a conscious effort to improve one’s spiritual life every day is already to begin sliding backwards.

But of all Ignatius's bywords, I suggest that the one which promises the most fruit for Jesuits and friends today is *magnanimity*. The English word comes from the Latin *magna anima*, and it means literally a "great soul" or "big soul."

Perhaps for some people, magnanimity simply denotes the quality of being generous to others. But the classical meaning was far more nuanced. After all, a person can be generous for many different reasons, and with many different subjective dispositions. Magnanimity means that one's predilection to give to others is inspired by a specific kind of noble personality. This type eschews pettiness and meanness, and is willing to endure the sufferings and irritations of life patiently. Furthermore, such a person is generous not only in a material sense, but also in the spiritual sense that entails giving lavishly of one's tolerance and forgiveness. It denotes a person who "thinks big" — who recognizes that he or she is called to greater things, but who helps others to recognize the fullness of their potential as well.

St. Ignatius's description of magnanimity in the general superior was, of course, a description of the magnanimity that he expected of every Jesuit:

Magnanimity and fortitude of soul are likewise highly necessary for him, so that he may bear the weaknesses of many, initiate great undertakings in the service of God our Lord, and persevere in them with the needed constancy, neither losing courage in the face of the contradictions, even from persons of high rank and power, nor allowing himself to be deflected by their entreaties or threats from what reason and the divine service require. He should be superior to all eventualities, not letting himself be exalted by success or cast down by adversity, and being quite ready to accept death, when necessary, for the good of the Society in the service of Jesus Christ our God and Lord.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Constitutions 728; The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Translation of the Official Latin Texts*, ed. John W. Padberg, SJ (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources [IJS], 1996), 359.

Magnanimity was important to Ignatius because the defining characteristics of the Jesuit way of proceeding require this virtue specifically. For example, if one is going to dedicate oneself explicitly to the *greater* glory of God, then one must be prepared to bear accusations of elitism and pride with patience. There is a reason, after all, why Ignatius is so preoccupied in his life and writings with vainglory, and with the difference between true and false humility.<sup>2</sup> The very nature of the Jesuit mission makes this distinction critical.

In this same vein, if a Jesuit is habitually dedicated to the *greater* glory of God, then he is acting in a manner that is more likely to make himself the center of attention and praise. For that reason, a Jesuit dedicated to God's greater glory must constantly be on guard, asking himself whether he chooses a given course of action for the glory of God or for the glory of himself. But here is the catch: if a Jesuit knows that a particular course of action will serve God's greater glory, then Ignatius is clear that he should choose it, even if the Jesuit knows that it will bring him greater honors!<sup>3</sup> In other words, a Jesuit must be free and willing to be praised as much as to be ridiculed, provided that his sole motive—his *pure intention*—is to give greater glory to God.

I am reminded of a beautiful scene from the play *A Man for All Seasons*. Sir Thomas More's daughter Meg was trying to convince him to sign the Oath of Supremacy that declared King Henry VIII, and not the pope, to be the head of the church in England. In an effort to save her father's life, she used an ingenious argument against him, to this effect: *if you refuse to sign this oath, and go to your death, you know that everyone will consider you a saint. So that's why you are really refusing to sign: not for God's glory, but because you want to make yourself a hero.*

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<sup>2</sup> For example, see Ignatius's letter to Sr. Teresa Rejadell on true and false humility; *Monumenta Ignatiana. Sancti Ignatii de Loyola Societatis Jesu fundatoris epistolae et instructiones*, 12 vols. (Madrid: 1903–1911), I: 99–107; in *Ignatius of Loyola: Letters and Instructions*, trans. Martin E. Palmer, SJ, John W. Padberg, SJ, and John L. McCarthy, SJ (St. Louis, MO: IJS, 2006), 18–22. For Ignatius and vainglory in the "Autobiography," see John M. McManamon, SJ, *The Text and Contexts of Ignatius Loyola's "Autobiography"* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 11–51.

<sup>3</sup> *Spiritual Exercises* 351.

To which Meg's father replied:

That's very neat. But look now . . . If we lived in a State where virtue was profitable, common sense would make us good, and greed would make us saintly. And we'd live like animals or angels in the happy land that *needs* no heroes. But since in fact we see that avarice, anger, envy, pride, sloth, lust and stupidity commonly profit far beyond humility, chastity, fortitude, justice and thought, and have to choose, to be human at all . . . why then perhaps we *must* stand fast a little—even at the risk of being heroes.<sup>4</sup>

In the present issue of *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS*, Mr. William McCormick presents a masterful exposition on the nature of Jesuit magnanimity, what it owes to earlier classical notions, and how it diverges from them. Perhaps equally importantly, Mr. McCormick shares a personal example of how his own desires to serve the Lord resulted in unexpected misgivings and temptations regarding his own motivations.

It is my hope that Mr. McCormick's contribution helps to place *magnanimity* in the center of the modern parlance of Ignatian spirituality. If Jesuits wish to be heroes in the Lord's service, and if they wish those whom they serve to be heroes in the Lord's service, then everyone must begin by asking what a real hero looks like.

*Barton T. Geger, SJ*  
*General Editor*

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Bolt, *A Man for All Seasons* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1960), 83–84.



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*William A. McCormick (ucs) entered the Society of Jesus at Grand Coteau in 2013, and is a regent at Saint Louis University in the departments of political science and philosophy. Before entering the Society, he earned degrees in politics from Chicago and Texas, and served a year with JVC Northwest. He is a writer and editor for The Jesuit Post.*

## “A Continual Sacrifice to the Glory of God”: Ignatian Magnanimity as Cooperation with the Divine<sup>1</sup>

Ignatius, the young and proud soldier, had great desires to do things for glory and honor, and went to considerable lengths both at court and in war to prove his *bona fides* as a chivalrous young *hidalgo*. One might think that a cannonball to the leg would have frustrated those plans, left as he was with broken bones and shattered dreams. But no. Before those bones mended, Ignatius was already planning his next chivalrous deeds. Through an increasingly adept discernment of spirits, Ignatius finally learned what a cannonball could not teach him: his desires were mere vainglory. True glory was in serving God, not in serving himself. After this, Ignatius’s dreams were no longer vainglorious: he was becoming humble. Yet if Ignatius had overcome his pride and vainglory, he did not abandon his grand dreams. For he was also becoming magnanimous.

This is not just a story: it is a lesson. For this story is to be appropriated by each Jesuit as a model for both the discernment of spirits and how the *Spiritual Exercises* ought to shape us as companions in and disciples of Christ. There is also a puzzle within this lesson: how did Ignatius combine these traits? For it would be no surprise were Ignatius’s conversion to lead him from vainglory to humility. But somehow his conversion led him to be both humble and magnanimous. Why did he maintain his desire to do great things—a desire that in many ways still looks like his former pride? And how did he reconcile that great desire with his new-found humility?

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<sup>1</sup> For their kind help in the writing of this article, the author would like to thank Barton Geger (UCS); Andrea Bianchini (UMI); Nicholas Courtney (UCS); Brian E. Daley (UNE); Joseph T. Lienhard (UNE); Michael Mohr (UCS); Mark Thibodeaux (UCS); William Woody (MAR); and the members of the Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality.

This puzzle about Ignatius is also a puzzle about Christian ethics and spirituality. Early Christians esteemed humility as an exemplary virtue and as the most important virtue disposing one toward charity. Indeed, these Christians dismissed pre-Christian traditions of magnanimity, especially the Roman and Greek traditions, as nothing more than pride. In the Scholastic era, St. Thomas Aquinas laid out an impressive argument for the compatibility of humility and magnanimity. But it was perhaps only in the early modern period that the two virtues were first presented as a lived, harmonious synthesis in the life and thought of the early Jesuits, and pre-eminently in that of St. Ignatius. But how did Ignatius achieve their harmony?

This puzzle is more than just an intellectual curiosity: it is also a lived question, and one that I have experienced myself. When I entered the Society in August 2013, I had only four months prior defended a dissertation in political theory. I was grateful for the wonderful education I received under the mentorship of several professors at the University of Texas, most notably my dissertation chair, J. Budziszewski. Moreover, I had experienced academia at its best, surrounded by encouraging and accomplished peers who were passionate about their work and supportive of mine.

Yet I entered the novitiate in Grand Coteau with many questions about my graduate studies. Had I become too ambitious and proud in academia, more concerned with my reputation than my character? Had I placed my career advancement above relationships? Had I cultivated skills more suited to tearing others down than building them up? Still worse, had the expectations for scholarly production and research trends led me to pursue questions with no relevance to the world, becoming more interested in advancing my reputation than doing meaningful work? Had I unwittingly, in other words, accepted the terms of a game that was bound to lead me into pride and ambition, distancing me from the reality of a world in need of real wisdom? As I pondered these questions, I at times wondered if I could enter re-enter higher education as a Jesuit. After all, I had entered the Society to be of help to others, not to further my own agenda. And Ignatius preaches humility, not pride. How could I be humble were I a haughty and proud academic?

To be sure, pride and ambition are risks in all Jesuit ministries: I single out higher education here only because it is the ministry I know best. But as I worked through these questions with my novice master, Fr. Mark Thibodeaux (ucs), I experienced the paradox of Jesuit ministry: while I entered the Society of Jesus in part to avoid the self-aggrandizing and proud attitudes that so often led me to strive for accomplishments and prizes, the Society could very well call me to just such great works. Only I am now being asked to do great works for Jesus, not for myself. How am I to do this? How am I to undertake acts of seeming pride and ambition in a spirit of humility?

For Ignatius, the answer to these questions is magnanimity—the virtue that allows Christians to do great things in the world without becoming proud and ambitious. At its core, Ignatian magnanimity refers to a disposition to “initiate great undertakings in the service of God our Lord.”<sup>2</sup> The love of God roots this magnanimity in divine service rather than in proud or falsely-humble human purposes. Magnanimity also depends upon the ancient virtue of fortitude, persevering through obstacles even unto death in the divine service. Ignatian magnanimity thus offers a way to live in the vineyard of the Lord.

In this article, I place the Jesuit concept of magnanimity in the context of the history of the Western moral tradition: both the Aristotelian tradition that elevated a pride-like magnanimity in its scorn of anything approaching humility, and the early Christian traditions that rejected magnanimity in the name of humility. I hope to illuminate how magnanimity works only in coordination with humility and charity, each in its own way the foundation of all the virtues.

## 1. Athens and Jerusalem: A Clash of Cultures

To grasp just how unique Ignatian magnanimity is in the history of ethics, one might consider the conflict between two pictures of human excellence: classical Greek magnanimity and Biblical humility.

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<sup>2</sup> *Constitutions* 728, hereafter *Const.*; *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Translation of the official Latin Texts*, ed. John W. Padberg, SJ (St. Louis: The Institute for Jesuit Sources [IJS], 1996), 359.

First, classical Greek magnanimity. The English word *magnanimity* comes from the Latin for “great-souled,” and the magnanimous man is indeed great. Aristotle describes him as a person who “thinks he deserves great things and actually does deserve great things.”<sup>3</sup> He lives life on a grand scale: “His actions are few, but they are great and distinguished.”<sup>4</sup> Because he devotes his life to noble actions, he thinks himself worthy of great honor. As only the honor of his own peers is worth his while, however, most forms of honor and praise do not satisfy him. Moreover, he dislikes owing anyone anything, but reflects with pleasure upon the good he has done for others. In general, he thinks little of others: “He is not given to admiration, for nothing is great to him.”<sup>5</sup> Overall this picture emphasizes self-sufficiency, a pre-occupation with greatness, and detachment from others.

Aristotle’s treatment of magnanimity emphasizes how the virtue shapes the entire life of the person characterized by it. Indeed, while one thinks of virtues in multiple forms—like justice, courage, and moderation—for the ancient Greeks, *virtue* also had a more general meaning of the overall excellence of the human person. In the spirit of virtue as a general excellence, Aristotle identifies magnanimity as one of two “peaks” of virtue.<sup>6</sup> While the individual virtues were important, they were also expected to somehow cohere within that vision of general excellence of the human person.

But the virtues that a society attributes to the excellent human being do not always mesh so easily, and Aristotle masterfully indicates such difficulties in the case of the magnanimous man. For while the magnanimous man thinks himself a demi-god, he can only maintain that illusion by denying his dependence upon other persons. To reject that dependence, however, is to reject the virtue of justice, a deeply social virtue exercised “in relation to our fellow men,” and

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<sup>3</sup> Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1123b16; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Martin Ostwald (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999), 94.

<sup>4</sup> Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1124b25; trans. Ostwald, 97.

<sup>5</sup> Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1125a2; trans. Ostwald, 98.

<sup>6</sup> Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1124a1–2; trans. Ostwald, 95.

thus to deny that humans are naturally social and political animals.<sup>7</sup> If Aristotle did not consider humility a virtue, he nevertheless understood that magnanimity, as conventionally understood by the Greeks, did not sit well with other virtues.<sup>8</sup>

The notion of the unity of virtues helps us see why Christian humility cannot cohere with the conventional Greek notion of human excellence.<sup>9</sup> As magnanimity is a “peak” or “crown” of the virtues, it is not just one among many virtues that would have to be reconciled with humility: rather, it is a fundamental way of viewing human excellence that excludes humility from what it means to be a human being.<sup>10</sup> Magnanimity thus shapes the person to the exclusion of anything like humility, rejecting the very notions of relationality, sociality, or gratitude.

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*When the practice of a virtue crowds out or contradicts the practice of another virtue, then one must re-examine the broader understanding of human excellence at stake behind those virtues.*

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The problems presented by magnanimity show us that the notion of the unity of virtues is not a pedantic abstraction, but a practical concern. When the practice of a virtue crowds out or contradicts the practice of another virtue, then one must re-examine the broader understanding of human excellence at stake behind those virtues. Twenty-first-century US popular culture, for instance, places a high value upon the modern virtues of authenticity and autonomy. A pervasive paradigm of the human in our culture, however, is the consumer: the person in a commercial who is fulfilled by the purchase and consumption of a material object. But how is a dependence upon material objects for one’s happiness a manifestation of autonomy?

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<sup>7</sup> Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1129b30; trans. Ostwald, 114.

<sup>8</sup> See Kevin Spinale, SJ, “The Intellectual Pedigree of the Virtue of Magnanimity in the Jesuit Constitutions,” *The Journal of Jesuit Studies* 2 (2015): 457–59.

<sup>9</sup> For example, Brian E. Daley, SJ, “‘To Be More Like Christ’: The Background and Implications of ‘Three Kinds of Humility,’” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits [SSJ]* 27, no. 1 (January 1995): 5–7, and 56–57.

<sup>10</sup> Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1124a1–3; trans. Ostwald, 95.

And is the rush to buy the latest widget a fulfillment of our authentic desires? At stake in such questions is how the diverse virtues that a culture values can be lived in one integral human life.

Given the classical exaltation of magnanimity, it is not surprising that the early Christian tradition opposed magnanimity and valorized humility. This judgment has strong roots in the Old Testament, which presents humility as human beings' abasement to and dependence upon God, often with correlations to material poverty. Note here that the noun *ταπεινός* (*humility*) appears in the Septuagint more prominently in its verbal form, the Hebrew original for which means "to stoop" or "to stoop low."<sup>11</sup> Then, the archetype of humility is Israel, weak as it is in relation to earthly empires and thus dependent upon God. In this vein, Fr. Brian Daley (UNE) notes that the *'anawim* are the privileged bearers of humility: they are without food, shelter, security and justice, and yet they are the just ones who will receive God's mercy.<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, the New Testament depicts humility primarily through the life of Christ, who, in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, exhorts his listeners to abandon their attitude of smug superiority toward the downcast and to help them (Lk 10:25–37). Likewise, he urges his audience to present the other cheek to the enemy (Mt 5:39), and in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, he calls them to be the humble younger son seeking forgiveness rather than the self-righteous older son in the (Lk 15:11–32). Elsewhere, Christ promises the kingdom to the humble: "Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven," (Mt 18:4). Furthermore, he embodies humility as well as preaching it, thus intensifying the relationship between love and humility: for God is loving and loveable, or rather love itself, and yet Christ is both humble and humbled on the cross.

In addition, humility in the Epistles tends to offer a model of discipleship for Christians. For instance, in Philippians 2, Paul presents the humility of Christ as central to the events of the Passion and

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<sup>11</sup> Walter Grundmann, "ταπεινός," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 6.

<sup>12</sup> Daley, "To Be More Like Christ," 8.



thus as central to the imitation of Christ: “Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped” (Ph 2:5–11). This Pauline humility becomes key to the willingness to serve Christ found in the Call of the King meditation and thus becomes key to Ignatian spirituality.<sup>13</sup>

This rapid review of the traditions offers us a sketch of the two paradigms of Greek magnanimity and Biblical humility. For the Greeks and their philosophical successors, magnanimity is a celebration of what is great and even divine in human beings, from which perspective humility could only be a denigration of that divinity. On the other hand, for early Christians, humility is how human beings orient themselves to God, such that magnanimity can mean nothing but pride. As St. Augustine writes: “Two cities, then, have been created by two loves: that is, the earthly by love of self, extending even to contempt of God, and the heavenly by love of God extending to contempt of self.”<sup>14</sup>

But if Christian humility is so opposed to Greek magnanimity, then how did Ignatian magnanimity develop?

## 2. Two Christian Humilities: Asceticism and Monasticism

Christian magnanimity was born of humility and another virtue: charity. Indeed, charity even more so than humility serves in Christian ethics a role analogous to that of magnanimity in Greek ethics: as the crowning virtue to which the other virtues must be aligned.<sup>15</sup> But the early Church had to struggle with practicing a humility that did not exclude charity. This struggle is particularly manifest in the ascetic and monastic movements.

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<sup>13</sup> *Spiritual Exercises* 91–98, hereafter *SpEx*; *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius: A Translation and Commentary*, trans. and ed. George E. Ganss, SJ (St. Louis: IJS, 1992), 53–55. All quotations from the *Exercises* are from this edition. See Hugo Rahner, SJ, *Ignatius the Theologian*, trans. Michael Barry (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 54.

<sup>14</sup> Aug. *Civ.* 14.28; Augustine, *The City of God*, ed. Robert W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 632.

<sup>15</sup> Servais Pinckaers, OP, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans. Mary Thomas Noble, OP, (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 27–30.

*Asceticism* can be defined as practices of renunciation that bring one closer to God, and by analogy as a way of life disciplined by those practices.<sup>16</sup> A primary source of our knowledge of early asceticism comes from the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*—collections of anecdotes, quotations, and stories about ascetic figures in fourth- and fifth-century Egypt.<sup>17</sup> A classic of ascetic spirituality, the *Sayings* accord humility a central place, which is not surprising. Asceticism can easily adopt an understanding of humility as an act of submission, a willingness to obey the divine and deny the worldly in all things:

Antony also said, “I saw the devil’s snares set all over the earth, and I groaned and said, “What can pass through them?” I heard a voice saying, “Humility.”<sup>18</sup>

The humility of the *Sayings* often takes the form of a refusal of ministries. In one comic saying, a monk conspires with a man to trick a hermit into praying for the man’s possessed daughter. “No one can cure your daughter except some hermits I know: and if you go to them, they will refuse to do it from motives of humility.”<sup>19</sup> The daughter is eventually healed, but not without chicanery: the hermits’ strange humility means that they have to be hoodwinked into healing the daughter. The hermit’s humble obedience to Christ, in other words, did not willingly extend to imitation of him.

The ascetics’ humility was a powerful weapon for the salvation of themselves and of others. Because ascetics’ humility emphasized the kind of self-control that aided them in their ascetic practices, however, their humility was cultivated with respect primarily to their own interior lives, not their relationship with others. Ascetic humility seems to be caught in the tension between love of neighbor and the desire to be self-sufficient and athletically virtuous. The ascetics avoided a life of

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<sup>16</sup> Richard M. Price, “Introduction,” in Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *A History of the Monks of Syria*, trans. Richard M. Price (Trappist, KY: Cistercian Publications, 1985), xxiii–xxvii.

<sup>17</sup> See, for instance, *The Desert Fathers: Sayings of the Early Christian Monks*, trans. Benedicta Ward (New York: Penguin Books, 2003).

<sup>18</sup> *The Desert Fathers*, trans. Benedicta Ward, 148, no. 3.

<sup>19</sup> *The Desert Fathers*, trans. Benedicta Ward, 153, no. 14.

service, and so tended to lack something very much like magnanimity: an other-regarding desire to do great deeds for neighbor and God. To the extent that ascetic humility was not well-coordinated to *caritas*, it thus lacks something as a description of human excellence.

The monastic tradition continued the early ascetic attention to humility, but with a shift in emphasis. As communal structures of religious life became more formalized through religious rules, monastic wisdom came to see humility less as an individual form of spiritual athleticism and more as a communal virtue of obedience to a superior.<sup>20</sup> The early rules made room for individual strengths and weaknesses, but they also emphasized conformity of spiritual practices far more than the early ascetic traditions did. The humility of the monastics thus becomes less heroic than that of the early ascetics as it became more oriented toward the holy mediocrity that was possible for all members of a community.

One of the most influential monastic rules, the Rule of St. Benedict, trains its focus on obedience: “the first step of humility is unhesitating obedience.”<sup>21</sup> Governance naturally rises to considerable importance as religious life becomes more communal, and the Rule reflects this, in that the selection of the abbot is the first main topic of the Rule. The abbot’s office is a humble one of service that depends upon the wisdom of all the community, even of those monks not thought to be wise: “the Lord often reveals what is better to the younger.”<sup>22</sup> The humility of the abbot begins with his election: the “guiding principle” for the election must be that his electors are guided “in the fear of God.”<sup>23</sup> There too is a humility in the selection criteria: community rank is irrelevant, so long as the monk possesses “goodness of life and wisdom in teaching.”<sup>24</sup> Unlike the ascetics, for whom rank and reputation were avoided as violations of humility, for the Benedictines their form of governance only confirms-

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<sup>20</sup> David Knowles, *From Pachomius to Ignatius: A Study in the Constitutional History of the Religious Orders* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 69–94.

<sup>21</sup> *The Rule of St. Benedict*, ed. Timothy Fry, OSB (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 14.

<sup>22</sup> *The Rule of St. Benedict*, ed. Fry, 11.

<sup>23</sup> *The Rule of St. Benedict*, ed. Fry, 62.

<sup>24</sup> *The Rule of St. Benedict*, ed. Fry, 62.

the love of humility. And unlike the ascetics, who had to live with the painful tension between seeking humiliation and being sought-after sages for their spiritual wisdom, the Benedictines embraced humility through obedience as their own form of perfection.

Chapter seven in the Rule explicitly treats humility with its famous twelve degrees of humility. According to this chapter, the monk must proceed in humility from “fear of God” to the “perfect love of God which casts out fear.”<sup>25</sup> Or, more precisely, it casts out all “servile fear” that God will punish one, retaining only the “filial fear” of being separated from God as the beloved.<sup>26</sup> Growth in humility is thus at once a purification that removes fear and engenders love. Indeed, when one arrives at the twelfth step of humility, all of the virtues become effortless: “he will not begin to observe without effort, as though naturally, from habit, no longer out of fear of hell, but out of love for Christ, good habit and delight in virtue.”<sup>27</sup>

The Rule, in short, confirms the centrality of love for humility, although is not wholly clear how individual gifts and talents are to be developed within its framework. In this sense, the monastic tradition relates humility directly to charity and articulates the question of how all these virtues are to be instantiated in communal life, while leaving unanswered or ambiguous how a religious community can grow in both unity and individual gifts. This, in turn, limits the possibility for magnanimity in such a community. To summarize, in their efforts to avoid pride, ascetic and monastic forms of humility tended to starve charity. Later Christian attempts to found magnanimity attempt to maintain the close connection between humility, magnanimity and charity.

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<sup>25</sup> *The Rule of St. Benedict*, ed. Fry, 20.

<sup>26</sup> Terence O'Reilly, “El tránsito del temor servil al temor filial en los ‘Ejercicios Espirituales’ de san Ignacio,” ed. Juan Plazaola, *Las Fuentes de los Ejercicios Espirituales de San Ignacio* (Bilbao: Mensajero-Universidad de Deusto, 1998), 223–41. Translations mine.

<sup>27</sup> *The Rule of St. Benedict*, ed. Fry, 62.

### 3. The Thomistic Synthesis

As discussed above, Greek and early Christian cultures set a definitive choice between humility and magnanimity, since an emphasis on one almost necessarily implies a rejection or demotion of the other. From this perspective, to over-valorize magnanimity yields pride, while to over-emphasize humility risks losing a sense of human greatness. Successful syntheses of the two virtues are rare.<sup>28</sup>

However, Thomas achieved such a harmonization of humility and magnanimity.<sup>29</sup> One of Thomas's most helpful expositions on magnanimity comes in his *Summa Theologiae*, where he responds to the objection that magnanimity and humility contradict each other. Thomas argues that, far from contradicting each other, humility and magnanimity tend to the same goal, but from different directions: while humility, as a part of the virtue temperance, "restrains the appetite from aiming at great things against right reason," magnanimity, as a part of fortitude or courage, "urges the mind to great things in accord with right reason."<sup>30</sup> Thomas goes on in that response to argue that magnanimity works against despair and for hope, as it bolsters the soul where it might find doing good works too difficult.<sup>31</sup> Humility, on the other hand, has a "moderating and restraining" effect on hope.<sup>32</sup> Thus, humility and magnanimity work together in a kind of pincer movement, where humility restrains humans from aiming too high and magnanimity keeps them from aiming too low.

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*The humility of the Sayings  
often takes the form of  
a refusal of ministries.*

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<sup>28</sup> "Humilité: Aristotélisme intégral et idéal évangélique," in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité: Ascétique et Mystique*, vol. 7 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1969): 1135–87, at 1169.

<sup>29</sup> Spinale, "The Intellectual Pedigree," 462–63.

<sup>30</sup> *ST IIaIIae.161.1 ad 3.*

<sup>31</sup> *ST IIaIIae.161.1 ad 3.*

<sup>32</sup> *ST IIaIIae.161.1.*

When Thomas asks a similar question about the compatibility of magnanimity and humility, he answers more forcefully, reconciling magnanimity and humility by taking direct aim at the question of the excellence of the human person. Considering the claim that magnanimity is opposed to humility, since “the magnanimous deems himself worthy of great things, and despises others,”<sup>33</sup> Thomas responds:

There is in man something great which he possesses through the gift of God; and something defective which accrues to him through the weakness of nature. Accordingly magnanimity makes a man deem himself worthy of great things in consideration of the gifts he holds from God. . . . On the other hand, humility makes a man think little of himself in consideration of his own deficiency, and magnanimity makes him despise others in so far as they fall away from God’s gifts: since he does not think so much of others as to do anything wrong for their sake. Yet humility makes us honor others and esteem them better than ourselves, in so far as we see some of God’s gifts in them.<sup>34</sup>

Rather than emphasizing one virtue over the other, Thomas thus holds them in tension, showing how humility helps us to see what is weak in us, and magnanimity what is great in us. Indeed, Thomas understands magnanimity as working with humility to counteract pride.<sup>35</sup> Specifically, humility counteracts pride’s tendency to “scorn subjection, and magnanimity opposes pride when it “tends to great things inordinately.”<sup>36</sup> While for Thomas the magnanimous man might “despise others in so far as they fall away from God’s gifts,” “humility makes us honor others and esteem them better than ourselves, in so far as we see some of God’s gifts in them.” And in both cases, God forms the link between the two people.

In this way, while for Aristotle magnanimity is a primarily active virtue, with Thomas it takes on an additional aspect of receptiv-

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<sup>33</sup> *ST IIaIIae.129.3* obj. 4.

<sup>34</sup> *ST IIaIIae.129.3* ad 4.

<sup>35</sup> Spinale, “The Intellectual Pedigree,” 461.

<sup>36</sup> *ST IIaIIae.162.1* ad 3.

ity and passivity. From this perspective, while one still yearns to do great things through magnanimity, one does such great things despite the obstacles and difficulties, accepting that God's providence will prevail. Indeed, Thomas considers magnanimity to be a kind of fortitude, the greatest act of which is martyrdom: "standing firmly to truth and justice against the assaults of persecution."<sup>37</sup>

This emphasis on God as creator and governor will have a profound effect on Christian ethics. While the gods were not particularly relevant to ethics for the Greeks, the Christian God, Thomas argues, reveals the sphere of human action. For the Christian innovation is to see magnanimity within the context of creation—not the pagan *kosmos*—and God as man's purpose and goal. Christians can therefore have hope in the end that God directs them through his creative and governing providence, and fortitude in their striving toward their reward in him.

Thomas relates magnanimity and humility to two vices: pusillanimity and vainglory. A traditional way to articulate virtue is as a mean between two extremes. For Thomas, magnanimity is a mean between the extremes of pusillanimity and vainglory.<sup>38</sup> Pusillanimity, which means "small-souled," is a deficiency of magnanimity: "For just as the magnanimous man tends to great things out of greatness of soul, so the pusillanimous man shrinks from great things out of littleness of soul."<sup>39</sup> Pusillanimity is often called *false humility* in English. While humility is a virtue, a deficient regard for one's own gifts can frustrate the development of those gifts.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, the person with false humility can deny his own dignity as a child of God. Pusillanimity is of great concern in Scripture, as reflected for instance in the parable of the light under a bushel (Luke 8:16–18). As Jesus says in Matthew's version of the parable, "Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father."

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<sup>37</sup> ST IIaIIae.124.1.

<sup>38</sup> ST IIaIIae.129–33.

<sup>39</sup> ST IIaIIae.133.2.

<sup>40</sup> Dean Brackley, SJ, "Expanding the Shrunken Soul: False Humility, Ressentiment, and Magnanimity," *SSJ* 34, no. 4 (September 2002).



As false humility is a deficiency in magnanimity, so vainglory is an excess in magnanimity. Thomas describes vainglory simply as “the desire for empty or vain glory.”<sup>41</sup> As such, vainglory is fundamentally “the drive toward the good that was lesser” — the desire for human glory rather than God’s glory.<sup>42</sup> Vainglory thus bears a close relation to pride, with which it is often confused. But the distinction is crucial. For Cassian, vainglory is the “desire to be esteemed highly by others,” whereas pride is a “high esteem of oneself.”<sup>43</sup> Like vainglory, pride can involve a disordered “desire for inordinate exaltation,” but that desire is predicated upon an excessive love of one’s own accomplishments and worth, rather than a sense that others ought to acknowledge one’s excellence.<sup>44</sup> From this perspective, vainglory and pride are two different stages of the same excess, in that vainglory is the disordered desire to be recognized as great, while pride is the disordered sense that one is great. Viewed this way, vainglory is perhaps more common, although no less deadly, than pride.

In addition, vainglory and pusillanimity play important roles in the Ignatian tradition. As the following section explains, Ignatian magnanimity properly understood combats both the vainglory that fails to serve God by overvaluing human glory, and the pusillanimity that inhibits loving service to God by undervaluing human goodness.

Note too that Thomas has reconciled humility and magnanimity by relating the human person to God, in that there is something God-given in us that is great, but there is also something small in us that leads us away from God. The fundamental element of the relationship between these terms, of course, is charity, or love.<sup>45</sup> In this

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<sup>41</sup> *ST IIaIIae*.132.1.

<sup>42</sup> Marjorie O’Rourke Boyle, *Loyola’s Acts: The Rhetoric of the Self* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 122.

<sup>43</sup> Barton T. Geger, SJ, “Hidden Theology in the ‘Autobiography’ of St. Ignatius,” *SSJ* 46, no. 3 (Autumn 2014), 24.

<sup>44</sup> *ST IIaIIae*.162.1 ad 2; see also John M. McManamon, SJ, *The Text and Contexts of Ignatius Loyola’s “Autobiography”* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 46.

<sup>45</sup> *ST IIaIIae* 23.6–7.



way, the knowledge and love of God that leads one to humility is the same that leads one to magnanimity in God's service.

#### 4. Ignatian Magnanimity

Thomas was a Scholastic, and Scholastic theology has incurred criticisms for being more philosophical than scriptural.<sup>46</sup> In the *devotio moderna*, humility often appears in anti-intellectual terms, as in the *Imitation of Christ*, a work often said to have inspired Ignatius:

What good does it do to speak learnedly about the Trinity if, lacking humility, you displease the Trinity? Indeed it is not learning that makes a man holy and just, but a virtuous life makes him pleasing to God. I would rather feel contrition than know how to define it.<sup>47</sup>

This early modern desire to abandon sterile abstractions in the search for the face of God leads us naturally to the life and thought of Ignatius.<sup>48</sup> For Ignatius made an apostolically-oriented synthesis of much that went before him. Almost osmotically gathering up the Thomistic, Renaissance, and ascetic traditions, Ignatius's teachings present notions of humility and magnanimity that cohere in loving service to God. The key to this synthesis is the alignment of these virtues with love.

If Ignatius was no professional theologian, he nevertheless learned a great deal through his life and reflection upon it. From a theological perspective, God seemed pleased to bestow upon Ignatius these insights, which he no doubt clarified through his time at leading Europe-

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<sup>46</sup> John Berkman and Craig Steven Titus, eds., *The Pinckaers Reader: Renewing Thomistic Moral Theology*, trans. Mary Thomas Noble, OP (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 65–66.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas à Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, trans. Aloysius Croft and Harold Bolton (Milwaukee, WI: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1953), 6.

<sup>48</sup> John W. O'Malley, SJ "Jesuit Spirituality: The Civic and Cultural Dimensions." *Review of Ignatian Spirituality* 35 (2004), 40 ff.; cf. Spinale, "The Intellectual Pedigree."

an universities and with the counsel of learned companions like Fr. Juan Alfonso de Polanco (1517–1576) and Fr. Jérôme Nadal (1507–1580). The greatest fruits of that wisdom, of course, appear the *Spiritual Exercises* and the *Constitutions* of the Society. In this section, we will first look at the “Autobiography,” a few of Ignatius’s letters, and the testimony of Fr. Pedro de Ribadeneira (1527–1611). Then, we will examine more closely the *Exercises* and *Constitutions* as a school of magnanimity.

The “Autobiography” portrays Ignatius’s gripping education in the perils of vainglory and pride. In the early pages of the “Autobiography,” we see at least three instances of vainglory: as a pretext to write the text; with regard to his famous recovery from the cannonball; and its role in the discernment of spirits. The discussion that precipitated the writing of

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*In Ignatius’s letters to Sister Teresa Rejadell, he speaks of false humility as the devil’s snare for people advanced in spiritual life who are no longer susceptible to the lure of vainglory.*

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the “Autobiography,” Fr. Luís Gonçalves da Câmara (1519–1575) notes in the “Preface,” began with Gonçalves asking Ignatius about vainglory. Gonçalves relates that Ignatius offered a “remedy” to vainglory: to “refer all my affairs to God, to aim at offering Him all the good that I find in myself, to acknowledge that these are all His gifts, and to thank Him for them.”<sup>49</sup> Ignatius’s advice led to consoling tears for Gonçalves—a show of emotion that then prompted Ignatius to share that he himself had “struggled against this vice” of vainglory for two years. Ignatius eventually came to “great peace of soul” with it.<sup>50</sup>

Although a familiar text, aspects of it continue to be strikingly fresh. First, Gonçalves chooses to emphasize the importance of vainglory from the beginning of the “Autobiography,” a momentous choice when we consider that the work was meant to shape Jesuits through a certain image of the founder.<sup>51</sup> Second, we see from Ignatius’s remedy

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<sup>49</sup> *Auto.* 1; Ignatius of Loyola, *A Pilgrim’s Journey: The Autobiography of Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. Joseph N. Tylenda, SJ (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2001), 29.

<sup>50</sup> *Auto.* 1; trans. Tylenda, 30.

<sup>51</sup> Geger, “Hidden Theology,” 4.

that he intends for vainglory—the desire for human glory—to be converted into a desire for God’s glory through gratitude. Note here that Thomas considered gratitude, in addition to being a critical virtue of Ignatian spirituality, to be a part of justice.<sup>52</sup> In this way, Ignatius responds here—perhaps unwittingly—to Aristotle’s fear that the magnanimous man is not just. Third, and finally, Ignatius admits that he suffered profoundly from vainglory. Ignatius was controlled by the love of human glory in the same way that he would later be controlled by the love of God’s glory—a love manifest in the opening sentence of the “Autobiography”: “Up to his twenty-sixth year he was a man given to worldly vanities, and having a vain and overpowering desire to gain renown, he found special delight in the exercise of arms.”<sup>53</sup>

The most famous example of this vainglory is Ignatius’s recovery from the Battle of Pamplona. As is well known, Ignatius voluntarily endured great pain to have his leg reset. His leg bones set in an unsightly way from the initial surgery, and, as “he was determined to make a way for himself in the world, he could not tolerate such ugliness and thought it marred his appearance.”<sup>54</sup> This vainglory continued in his convalescent reveries, as he imagined the great things he could do in pursuit of a great lady. But Ignatius came to see that the “worldly things” that had so long held him captive now left him “dry and unhappy.”<sup>55</sup> Through reflection on the relative greatness of the objects of his desire, he realized that some were truly good, and some only apparently or qualifiedly so. Thus, as Fr. John McManamon (UMI) writes, “the struggle against vainglory taught Ignatius the subtleties of sound methods of discerning.”<sup>56</sup> I will say more about this in my discussion of the *Exercises* and *Constitutions*.

It was also vainglory that Ignatius withstood when his brother, upset by Ignatius’s impending departure, “led him from room to room” to show Ignatius all that he would be giving up in adopting a religious

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<sup>52</sup> *ST IIaIIae*.106

<sup>53</sup> *Auto.* 1; trans. Tylanda, 37.

<sup>54</sup> *Auto.* 4; trans. Tylanda, 42; see also McManamon, *Text and Contexts*, 18–19.

<sup>55</sup> *Auto.* 8; trans. Tylanda, 48.

<sup>56</sup> McManamon, *Text and Contexts*, 47–48.

life.<sup>57</sup> And it was surely with such a background in mind that Pedro de Ribadeneira memorialized Ignatius's later lack of vainglory:

By the mercy of God, he attained the gift of living for many years before his death without any thought at all of empty glory. Indeed, he was so filled with divine light, so thoroughly full of self-knowledge and self-contempt, that he said he feared no vice less than that of conceit and vainglory.<sup>58</sup>

But what is the antidote to such vainglory? Not false humility. In Ignatius's letters to Sr. Teresa Rejadell, he speaks of false humility as the devil's snare for people advanced in spiritual life who are no longer susceptible to the lure of vainglory. People "concentrating on their weaknesses," Ignatius reasons, will be easily brought to believe that any use of "gifts that God our Lord has given them" is actually just "another sort of vainglory."<sup>59</sup> They will not be tempted to vainglory, in other words, but they will be paralyzed by the fear of vainglory. Afraid to talk or think about the good things they have received from God, such persons starve their own gratitude and deny others the consolation and encouragement of learning how God works in saintly people. This is an "exaggerated and perverted humility," not the kind of humility that brings people closer to God.<sup>60</sup>

False humility leads one to doubt one's very desire to serve God, because that desire itself appears as an arrogant, proud self-assertion. But if one doubts such desires, then one cannot cooperate with God, and thus one rejects the cornerstone of Ignatian spirituality.<sup>61</sup> Ignatius thus urges Teresa to remember that "these desires of serving Christ Our Lord are not from you, but given by the Lord."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> *Auto.* 12; trans. Tylenda, 53.

<sup>58</sup> Pedro de Ribadeneira, SJ, *The Life of Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. Claude Pavur, SJ (St. Louis: IJS, 2014), 357, no. 544.

<sup>59</sup> Ignatius of Loyola, *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, trans. Joseph H. Munitiz and Philip Endean (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 130–31.

<sup>60</sup> Ignatius of Loyola, *Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. Munitiz and Endean, 131.

<sup>61</sup> The centrality of this cooperation is made clear in the Preamble to the *Constitutions* (*Const.* 134.), as we shall shortly see.

<sup>62</sup> Ignatius of Loyola, *Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. Munitiz and Endean, 131.

By “counting the benefits we have received” from God, we can “raise ourselves up in true faith and hope in the Lord,” and thus persevere in faith and good works.<sup>63</sup> Again, humility before God should not lead to inertia and paralyzing self-loathing, but rather to a magnanimous disposition to do great things for God and for others.

Christian magnanimity is hopeful because it trusts in God, not in humans. Indeed, this hopeful vision of the world works against any tendency toward false humility or pusillanimity. Dean Brackley raises this point regarding those to whom Jesuits minister.<sup>64</sup> The poor and oppressed often do not need to be taught humility: they are desperately aware of their limitations and powerlessness. Rather, they need to cultivate the magnanimity to seek what is good and necessary for themselves and their communities, to see themselves as worthy of the spiritual and material riches which they are so often denied.

In this sense, Ignatius’s movement beyond vainglory and false humility to magnanimity is a movement from “self-absorbed asceticism to service to others.”<sup>65</sup> This “service to others” raises the question of love, which here as in other places lies at the center of Ignatius’s concern. Ignatius cultivated a disposition of humble and magnanimous love: the fusion of two seeming incommensurable virtues in God’s service. Magnanimous love for Ignatius is neither proud nor vainglorious, for it is virtuously other-regarding. But if it is also humble, it is not pusillanimous.

One need not look far to argue for the primacy of love in Ignatius’s work: love begins and ends the *Spiritual Exercises* and suffuses the *Constitutions*. Ignatius thought that love ought to express itself more in deeds than words.<sup>66</sup> For this reason, the contemplation of this love ought to impel the Christian to greater cooperation with God. This appears clearly in the preamble to the *Constitutions*:

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<sup>63</sup> Ignatius of Loyola, *Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. Munitiz and Endean, 131.

<sup>64</sup> Brackley, “Expanding the Shrunken Soul,” 1–2.

<sup>65</sup> Geger, “Hidden Theology,” 5.

<sup>66</sup> *SpEx* 230; ed. Ganss, 94.

Although God our Creator and Lord is the one who in his Supreme Wisdom and Goodness must preserve, direct, and carry forward in his divine service this least Society of Jesus, just as he deigned to begin it; and although on our own part what helps most toward this end must be, more any exterior constitution, the interior law of charity and love which the Holy Spirit writes and imprints upon our hearts; nevertheless, since the gentle disposition of Divine Providence requires cooperation from his creatures, and since too the vicar of Christ our Lord has ordered this, and since the examples given by the saints and reason itself teach us so in our Lord, we think it necessary that constitutions should be written to aid us to proceed better, in conformity with our Institute, along the path of divine service on which we have entered.<sup>67</sup>

Here, God governs as well as creates the universe, for which reason Christians must accept with humility the providence of a God active in the world. And so Ignatius affirms, even in a document about the human governance of the Society, the supremacy of divine governance. Yet somehow humans are still called to act in cooperation with that divine governance. What might seem like a considerable undertaking, the fashioning of a rule for a religious order, thus becomes a still-greater one, insofar as it involves formulating a rule for serving God. Indeed, the gravity of this undertaking is very clear from purpose of the *Constitutions*: “The purpose of the Constitutions is . . . for the divine glory and the good of the universal Church.”<sup>68</sup>

Ignatius begins the *Constitutions*, in other words, with a call to humility: humans are dependent upon God for their very existence and for their continuing-in-being.<sup>69</sup> Thus, there can be no question here of pride or vainglory; yet that humility does not limit humans. Rather, it allows them to enter into God’s service, so that they may serve “for the divine

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<sup>67</sup> *Const.* 134; ed. Padberg, 56; Antonio M. de Aldama, SJ, *An Introductory Commentary on the Constitutions*, trans. Aloysius J. Owen, SJ (St. Louis: IJS, 1989), 66–69, and 300–305.

<sup>68</sup> *Const.* 134; ed. Padberg, 56.

<sup>69</sup> J. Carlos Coupeau, SJ, *From Inspiration to Invention: Rhetoric in the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: IJS, 2010), 160–62.

glory and the good of the universal Church.”<sup>70</sup> Far from pride, that service is characterized by magnanimity: the inclination to do great things. In this way, the humility that allows the Jesuit to acknowledge his dependence upon God grounds his magnanimous service to God. And we see that it is *caritas*—the “interior law of charity and love” of the Holy Spirit—that draws together humility and magnanimity, for it is that Spirit who guides the Society, and it is that Spirit who encourages us to cooperate. As Fr. Joseph de Guibert (1877–1942) writes, “In such an ideal [of love] there is a force powerful enough to evoke every sort of magnanimity.”<sup>71</sup>

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This dynamic of love, humility, and magnanimity allows us to sketch the role of magnanimity in two oft-cited references to magnanimity from the Ignatian corpus—namely, in the description of the superior general from the *Constitutions*, and in annotation 5 of the *Exercises*. First, the portrait of the superior general as a paragon of virtues is fitting, for it corresponds to Aristotle’s procedure in the *Nicomachean Ethics* of illustrating magnanimity as a “crown” of virtues through a depiction of the magnanimous man: Ignatius, like Aristotle, shows rather than tells what the magnanimous man looks like. Ignatius’s description of the superior general begins and ends with love.<sup>72</sup>

The most important attribute of the general, in fact, is that “he should be closely united with God our Lord and have familiarity with him in prayer and in all his operations.”<sup>73</sup> Ignatius then argues that he be an “example in all the virtues,” and singles out charity and humility.<sup>74</sup> Ignatius concludes this section with the proviso that, “If any of the

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<sup>70</sup> *Const.* 136; ed. Padberg, 58.

<sup>71</sup> Joseph de Guibert, SJ, *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice, A Historical Study*, trans. William J. Young, SJ (St. Louis: IJS, 1964), 590; see also 570.

<sup>72</sup> Aldama, *An Introductory Commentary*, 286–87.

<sup>73</sup> *Const.* 723; ed. Padberg, 358.

<sup>74</sup> *Const.* 725; ed. Padberg, 358.



aforementioned qualities should be wanting, he should at least not lack great probity and love for the Society” — a love of the Society, we saw from the Preamble to the *Constitutions*, born out of relationship with the Holy Spirit.<sup>75</sup> Between these references to loving service to God, Ignatius places perhaps his most famous passage on magnanimity, where he comes closest to defining term:

Magnanimity and fortitude of soul are likewise highly necessary for him, so that he may bear the weaknesses of many, initiate great undertakings in the service of God our Lord, and persevere in them with the needed constancy, neither losing courage in the face of contradictions, even from persons of high rank and power, nor allowing himself to be deflected by their entreaties or threats from what reason and the divine service require. He should be superior to all eventualities, not letting himself be exalted by success or cast down by adversity, and being quite ready to accept death, when necessary, for the good of the Society in the service of Jesus Christ our God and Lord.<sup>76</sup>

As one of a few virtues mentioned in his description of the general, we know that Ignatius puts great stock in magnanimity. But what is he saying about it? First, he links it closely with fortitude, as evident in the Spanish, where *la magnanimidad* and *fortaleza de animo* both contain the root *animo*, “soul.”<sup>77</sup> This connection between magnanimity and fortitude appears in Thomas, as we saw above, and it colors Ignatius’s ensuing description.<sup>78</sup> According to Ignatius, the general must “initiate great undertakings” and “be superior to all eventualities,” and in this way he reflects the Aristotelian emphasis on the active nature of magnanimity, for whom the magnanimous man does few but great things.<sup>79</sup> Even the general’s indifference to the opinions and threats of others has an Aristotelian ring to it.

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<sup>75</sup> *Const.* 735; ed. Padberg, 360.

<sup>76</sup> *Const.* 728; ed. Padberg, 359.

<sup>77</sup> *Const.* 728; ed. Padberg, 359.

<sup>78</sup> *ST IIaIIae*.124.1.

<sup>79</sup> Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1124b25; trans. Ostwald, 97.



There is also, however, a receptive aspect to this magnanimity, just as we saw in Thomas. The general must “bear the weaknesses of many” and “persevere in them with needed constancy”—a fidelity to mission that might end in death. Ignatius thus specifically underlines the connection between magnanimity and martyrdom in a manner analogous to Thomas. Ignatius’s magnanimous man is not the Aristotelian magnanimous man, who seeks great acts to perform but must accept tragically that there are few such actions worth of him. Rather, he is a humble servant of God who is happy to act or not to act as God wills, and even simply to bear the acts of others when he is called to do so. Most importantly, this description occurs within the architectonic dynamic of the *Constitutions*: human beings’ cooperative response to God’s initiative. Thus, even “being quite ready to accept death,” however passive and receptive a disposition, takes on a magnanimously active character in its resolute surrender to divine action.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, on this account Christ’s death on the cross is the ultimate expression of magnanimity.

Further, while Aristotle’s magnanimous man seeks to fit into the status quo of the upper echelons of political power, magnanimity for Ignatius can in fact be a solvent of such power, as when he urges the general to stand firm even against “persons of high rank and power.”<sup>81</sup> The magnanimous man thus will serve others in loving justice, even if doing so brings him into conflict with the powerful. Jesuits of course have a long history of this sort of magnanimity.

We might further note the subtle demotion of magnanimity in this characterization of the general. Magnanimity is not the crowning virtue of the virtuous person as it is for Aristotle, but rather a virtue subordinate to love and coordinate with humility. Yet Ignatius does not reject magnanimity, as did many early Christians, in an effort to avoid pride; rather, he embraces it and brings it into conformity with the life of Christian virtue.

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<sup>80</sup> *Const.* 728; ed. Padberg, 359.

<sup>81</sup> *Const.* 728; ed. Padberg, 359.

This portrait of the superior general's magnanimity might shed some light on the question of whether Ignatius could have written this description of magnanimity. While the description has long thought to be a loving portrait of Ignatius, readers as early as Gonçalves and Ribadeneira have assumed that Ignatius could not have written it with himself in mind: either he wrote it unaware of its likeness to him, or someone else wrote it with him in mind.<sup>82</sup> But does this mean that Ignatius was unaware of his own virtue? Or rather, do such writers imply that it would have been a violation of humility for Ignatius so to place himself within the *Constitutions* as a paragon of virtue?

Answering such questions does not settle the historical question of whether Ignatius in fact did write this section.<sup>83</sup> But for our purposes, we can note that the magnanimous man ought to know what his virtues are, because he is called to use them for others: to deny his virtues would be false humility. Furthermore, it may in fact be the epitome of humility to share them with others, if one does so for the glory of God. As Ignatius notes, if a "good soul" is tempted by the "specious" fear of vainglory not to "say or do something which, in conformity with the Church or the mind of our superiors, contributes to the glory of God our Lord," then "we ought to raise our minds to our Creator and Lord."<sup>84</sup> And if we see that this word or deed is indeed in his service, then we should "act diametrically against the temptation" of vainglory.<sup>85</sup> Similarly, if Ignatius had been called upon to share his knowledge of his own virtues for the service of God, it would be not proud but humble to do so.

The second famous reference to magnanimity appears in the fifth annotation:

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<sup>82</sup> Antonio M. de Aldama, SJ, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus: Part VII, Missioning*, trans. Ignacio Echániz, SJ (St. Louis: IJS, 1996), 19.

<sup>83</sup> Aldama, *Part VII, Missioning*, trans. Echániz, 20.

<sup>84</sup> *SpEx* 351; ed., Ganss, 132.

<sup>85</sup> *SpEx* 351; ed., Ganss, 132.

The persons who make the Exercises will benefit greatly by entering upon them with great spirit and generosity [*grande ánimo y liberalidad*] toward their Creator and Lord, and by offering all their desires and freedom to him so His Divine Majesty can make use of their persons and of all they possess in whatsoever way is in accord with his most holy will.<sup>86</sup>

Observe here that Ignatius again has linked magnanimity with another virtue, in this case, with generosity or liberality. Liberality closely linked to magnanimity in the classical virtues, indicates an open-handed disposition to give and share of what one has, with the assumption that one has a great deal to share.<sup>87</sup> And while liberality tends to refer to a disposition to give money, in this case the liberality in mind is clearly a spiritual offering, one of “all their desires and freedom.”

Furthermore, this offering is in the service of God, who will “make use of their persons and of all they possess,” which is the connection between liberality and magnanimity. The disposition that gives all to God is that which complementarily seeks to do all and be all for God, according of course to “his most holy will.” This annotation accordingly prepares one for the “school of conversion” and the “school of election” through which the *Exercises* leads one to a fuller understanding of *magis* firmly oriented toward God’s revealed will in Scripture and in the church.<sup>88</sup> While generosity and magnanimity are not the same virtues, they complement one another: magnanimity trains generosity on the greater good of God.

Although the fifth annotation can be understood partly in terms of liberality or generosity, Ignatius seems to have something more substantive in mind concerning magnanimity. Returning to the example of the superior general, we recall that magnanimity is the virtue to “initiate great undertakings in the service of God our Lord,” in close association with fortitude or courage, despite obstacles from material

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<sup>86</sup> *SpEx* 5; ed. Ganss, 22.

<sup>87</sup> Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1119b20–1125a35; trans. Ostwald, 83–89.

<sup>88</sup> J. Emilio González Magaña, SJ, “Anotaciones,” in *Diccionario de espiritualidad ignaciana [DEI]*, dir. José García de Castro, vol. 1 (Bilbao: Sal Terrae, 2007), 170–76, at 173–74. Translations mine.

things or other persons.<sup>89</sup> This fortitude in turn has a close relationship to both fidelity to mission and martyrdom. We further noted

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*Ignatius might also have had in mind the harsh attacks of his own opponents, including those who suspected him of heresy or a thirst for power.*

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ed that magnanimity encompasses active and passive dimensions: giving up one's energies to be deployed in the divine service and receiving God's graces as the basis for human cooperation with him. Finally, we observed the subtle demotion of magnanimity whereby the virtue's

practice acknowledges God as superior to the human person, thus coordinating that virtue with love for and humility toward God.

It does not take much to imagine these attributes applying to the magnanimity of annotation five. Like the liberal or generous man who is willing to give of his possessions, the magnanimous man wishes to exert himself "in the service of God." Given the context, then, we see that the exercitant ought to see the *Exercises* as both a "great undertaking" and as something done not just for himself, but for God. Indeed, the annotation makes clear this latter part, if not the character of magnanimity itself: "so His Divine Majesty can make use of their persons and of all they possess in whatsoever way is in accord with his most holy will."

We can further imagine that this magnanimity includes a resolution to persevere despite obstacles or difficulties incurred—for instance, aridity or temptations to sin. Ignatius might also have had in mind the harsh attacks of his own opponents, including those who suspected him of heresy or a thirst for power.<sup>90</sup> To undertake the *Exercises* is to do so in the face of such opposition as, in our time, to the noise, sound, and other distractions from our interior life; and to the desire for riches, honor, and pride that can make it painful to turn to God. Indeed, many exercitants must be persuaded to step away from the world for a while, and thus at least temporarily to forsake power,

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<sup>89</sup> *Const.* 728; ed. Padberg, 359.

<sup>90</sup> On more than one occasion, Spanish ecclesial authorities, often Dominicans, investigated Ignatius during the early days of his ministry. On this point, see *Auto.* 58–63; trans. Tylenda, 114–23.

influence, and wealth for the service of God. But with this fortitude cultivated, exercitants can enter the dynamic of human cooperation with God, in both its active and its passive aspects. Then they will encounter love: the virtue that supersedes magnanimity and; and humility: the virtue prepares them for that love.<sup>91</sup>

This study of the fifth annotation further reminds us of the importance of the doctrine of the unity of the virtues—namely, that virtues that work together in pairs or clusters. In the case of magnanimity, those virtues include humility, liberality, and fortitude. When we identify which virtues tend to work together, we gain new tools in our discernment and spiritual self-knowledge, for then we can ask whether one is being magnanimous, whether that magnanimity cooperates with these other virtues, and how they conduce in concert to God's greater glory.

Our study also alerts us to the ways in which the *Constitutions* can inform our reading of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Here, while it is not unusual for the *Exercises* to help interpret a passage from the *Constitutions*, often to establish the spiritual foundation of something putatively more practical, in this case we find that the *Constitutions* has a spiritual meaning to be imparted upon the *Exercises*.<sup>92</sup> Indeed, as we noted, the description of the superior general may be prayed over for its incarnation of magnanimity. This is a most welcome development, for Jesuits can always use more incentives to study the *Constitutions*.<sup>93</sup> As Lukács notes, the *Constitutions* no less than the *Exercises* embody “a dynamic movement toward God.”<sup>94</sup>

In addition to these two major texts on magnanimity, I want to identify two other moments of magnanimity in the *Exercises*: the Presupposition and the Incarnation meditation, both of

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<sup>91</sup> Thus the Three Degrees of Humility (*SpEx* 162–68; ed. Ganss, 71–73) precedes the Election (*SpEx* 169–89; ed. Ganss, 74–80). On this point, see Karl Rahner, SJ, *Spiritual Exercises*, trans. Kenneth Baker, SJ (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), 196–202.

<sup>92</sup> János Lukács, SJ, “The Incarnational Dynamic of the *Constitutions*,” *SSJ* 36, no. 4 (Winter 2004), 13.

<sup>93</sup> Lukács, “The Incarnational Dynamic of the *Constitutions*,” 2–5; see also Coupeau, *From Inspiration to Invention*, 4–8.

<sup>94</sup> Lukács, “The Incarnational Dynamic of the *Constitutions*,” 11–12.

which suggest, along with the foregoing, that the theme of magnanimity runs throughout the thought of Ignatius.<sup>95</sup>

Were one to approach the *Exercises* with a conventional notion of magnanimity in mind, one would immediately recognize it in the Presupposition, which corresponds closely to the interpretation often given to magnanimity as “large-heartedness.” In the familiar language of the Presupposition, both the “giver and the maker” must “be more eager to put a good interpretation on a neighbor’s statement than to condemn it.”<sup>96</sup> The magnanimity of this statement lies in its insistence that we take great strides to pursue friendship and truth in our relations with others. This beautiful notion provides perhaps the most striking antithesis to Aristotelian magnanimity, for while the person possessed of Aristotelian magnanimity refuses to acknowledge the good deeds done to him by others, the person of Ignatian magnanimity must go so far as to “ask how the other means”<sup>97</sup> what he or she says, even when the statement is clearly false. Again, the accent here falls on great deeds of charity and truth between persons even when those people find themselves at odds. Furthermore, the text implies a sense of bearing the weakness of the other person and enduring the obstacles to love and truth that the other person, perhaps unwittingly, has put up between the two persons.

Examining the Presupposition in terms of magnanimity also brings out the relationship between charity and truth in the text.<sup>98</sup> While one may interpret the Presupposition crudely to mean that “it’s more important to be nice than to win an argument,” Ignatius by no means intends the Presupposition to deny or demote truth. Rather, he wants us to seek a good interpretation of another’s statements precisely that we might find the kernel of truth in those statements. Further, even as he cautions us to “correct the person with love,” we

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<sup>95</sup> *SpEx* 22, 101–09; ed. Ganss, 31, 56–58. See Hugo Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian*, 54–56.

<sup>96</sup> *SpEx* 22; ed. Ganss, 31.

<sup>97</sup> *SpEx* 22; ed. Ganss, 31.

<sup>98</sup> For a similar consideration in Aristotle, see *Eth. Nic.* 1144b14–17; trans. Ostwald, 171.

nevertheless must correct that person precisely out of our knowledge that he or she is wrong.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, the Presupposition conveys a real hope that human relations can accord with reason—that friendship and truth are not opposed. From this dual commitment to charity and truth derives the exigency of the Presupposition. For Ignatius wants to challenge us to live in both the love of God and neighbor and in the truth of their goodness. Otherwise, we may be tempted to settle for appeasement rather than seek genuine dialogue.

We see now the difficulty with the common practice of rendering *magnanimity* as “large-hearted,” in that the expression large-hearted seems to reduce magnanimity either to good intentions, to passions or affect, or to being nice to others. But magnanimity does not reduce to good intentions; neither is it simply affective; nor is it just being friendly or inoffensive. Instead, magnanimity requires actions, and not only intentions; it is rational in addition to affective; and it often demands difficult interactions with others when they appear not to be living in conformity with God’s truth and service. Furthermore, to be great-souled is not something one does ultimately out of sheer, exuberant voluntarism, but in cooperation with God. Thus, to be magnanimous will not always mean doing things that make us feel good or important, nor will it always immediately satisfy our desires. Rather, one should be magnanimous in a way that can be sustained in the long-term through difficult ministries and because one discerns a call from God to be so—not just because one so desires. This is not to say that the interpretation of magnanimity as large-heartedness is simply wrong; just that it is not the full story.

For more insight, we might turn to the Incarnation meditation. The grace sought through this meditation is “for interior knowledge of Our Lord, who became human for me, that I may love him more intensely and follow him more closely.”<sup>100</sup> In the context specific to this meditation, the grace is often rendered as to see and love as God does, in that the meditation invites the retreatant to observe the people on earth as they appear, speak and

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<sup>99</sup> *SpEx* 22; ed. Ganss, 31.

<sup>100</sup> *SpEx* 104; ed. Ganss, 56.



act, aware that the Trinity is similarly observing the earth, the Annunciation all the while in the background.

Despite a lack of explicit reference to magnanimity, the meditation pertains to our study in at least two ways. First, the act of the Incarnation itself represents a superlative degree of magnanimity. The “great condescension” of God to enter into flesh is a great action of liberality and generosity—a great and free undertaking for which God had no compulsion or obligation, and because of which he had to undergo death on the cross.<sup>101</sup> To pray over this meditation is thus to pray over divine magnanimity.

Second, the grace of the Incarnation meditation—that is, to see as God sees—is critical to the virtue of magnanimity. For magnanimity, as in Thomas, allows Christians to have hope in God’s providence and fortitude regarding their reward in him. It is, in short, to see creation as redeemable and redeemed in the way that God sees creation as redeemable and then acts to redeem it in the Incarnation. It is in this field of redemption that the magnanimous person can expect his or her actions to be meaningful. As Fr. Peter Schineller (UNE) notes, the *Constitutions* picture the world as a “vineyard”—a place where the fruit is plentiful and that requires only laborers with the magnanimity to harvest it.<sup>102</sup>

The vineyard might seem a dead metaphor for Jesuits, losing the vibrancy and earthiness of its original meaning, but a recovered appreciation for magnanimity helps to return to its original meaning. A vineyard, Fr. Schineller argues, is

a place of growth, yielding fruits necessary for life. As laborers in the vineyard, we make a difference in this world. We are involved in a living and life-giving project, a constructive task whose goal is to bear fruit for the Lord. We do not work alone. We are co-workers with God (1 Cor. 3:9). Although we plant and water, it is God who gives the increase. We do not just pass through this life, or simply weave baskets in the

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<sup>101</sup> Karl Rahner, *Spiritual Exercises*, 97–113.

<sup>102</sup> J. Peter Schineller, SJ, “The Pilgrim Journey of Ignatius: From Solider to Laborer in the Vineyard and Its Implications for Apostolic Lay Spirituality,” *SSJ* 31, no. 4 (September 1999), 10–11.



day and take them apart at night. Rather we are here to tend the garden and bear fruit, fruit that will last. The cultivator of a vineyard is an optimist, a laborer committed to the long haul, to patient, respectful cooperation with fellow laborers and with the Lord of the harvest.<sup>103</sup>

Magnanimity is a fundamentally hopeful attitude, trusting in God's control of history. The magnanimous person knows that his work will bear fruit despite human foibles, for God ultimately directs the work. By extension, we can understand Ignatian magnanimity as a way to live in that vineyard. The vineyard is indeed the fruit of the dynamic between humility and magnanimity—the plane on which the human intersects

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*Ignatius calls the Christian to move not just from a bad to a good state of life, but from a good to a better state.*

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with the divine. For while the vision of the Incarnation meditation arises from the *Spiritual Exercises*, it comes to fruition in the *Constitution*. In other words, the incarnational movement does not end for the Jesuit with the affective response of the *Exercises*, but “advances to the point of imprinting the historic reality of the world, whether in a Jesuit community or in an apostolic work.”<sup>104</sup>

This relationship between the vision of creation in the *Exercises* and the magnanimous cooperation with the divine in the *Constitutions* is further encouragement for Jesuits to read and pray over the *Constitutions* for spiritual growth—a theme that Fr. Richard Baumann (UMI) develops at length in a recent issue of *STUDIES*.<sup>105</sup> Indeed, the life that the *Constitutions* prescribes cultivates the magnanimous fruits that the *Spiritual Exercises* produces.

This agricultural metaphor brings out a point so central to Ignatian spirituality that it is easily forgotten: the vineyard is of *the Lord*, so that to work in the vineyard is to work *for the Lord*. As

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<sup>103</sup> Schineller, “The Pilgrim Journey of Ignatius,” 14.

<sup>104</sup> Lukács, “The Incarnational Dynamic of the *Constitutions*,” 16.

<sup>105</sup> Richard J. Baumann, SJ, “Our Jesuit Constitutions: Cooperation as Union,” *SSJ* 49, no. 4 (Winter 2017), 1–2.

we saw with Thomas, magnanimity therefore must be not only a desire to do great things, but to do them *for* and *with* God. Consider Fr. McManamon's provocative claim:

Ironically, in a way that might foster vainglory, Jesuit spirituality after Ignatius has emphasized the "greater" in his cherished phrase "for the greater glory of God." Ignatius would emphasize "of God."<sup>106</sup>

In other words, human glory is an empty good if it is not aligned with God's glory. Indeed, one can say that Ignatian spirituality is not only a spirituality of love—as indeed all Christian spirituality must be—but of loving service. And it is a spirituality of loving service not only to humans, but also to God. It is a spirituality not only of *doing* great things for God, but of *being* greater so as to progress in God's service.<sup>107</sup>

This emphasis on God's glory resonates throughout Ignatius's writings. For example, in a letter to Fr. Jean Pelletier (d. 1564), Ignatius outlines three key aspects of Jesuit activities in a city.<sup>108</sup> In so doing, he specifies that all three should be done "for the better service of the Lord," and that all three things should be done under the reservation that they conduce "to God's greater service."<sup>109</sup>

In another communication, the famous letter to the Jesuits at Coimbra, Ignatius articulates the basis of religious life in the Society, which is to "single-heartedly turn and dedicate yourselves to what God created you for: his own honor and glory, your own salvation, and the help of your neighbor."<sup>110</sup> Ignatius goes on to argue that, although

all institutes of Christian life are directed to these ends, you have been called by God to this one, where, not with a mere

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<sup>106</sup> McManamon, *Text and Contexts*, 48.

<sup>107</sup> Luis de Diego, SJ, "Magis (Más)," in *DEI*, vol. 2, 1154–58, at 1158.

<sup>108</sup> "Letter to Jean Pelletier," no. 1899, 13 June 1551, in *Ignatius of Loyola: Letters and Instructions*, trans. Martin E. Palmer, SJ, John W. Padberg, SJ, and John L. McCarthy, SJ (St. Louis: IJS, 2006), 346–51.

<sup>109</sup> "Letter to Jean Pelletier"; trans. Palmer, Padberg, and McCarthy, 346, 350.

<sup>110</sup> "Letter to the Fathers and Scholastics at Coimbra," no. 169, 7 May 1547; trans. Palmer, Padberg, and McCarthy, 167.

general intent, but with an investment therein of your whole life and all its activities, you are to make yourselves a continual sacrifice to the glory of God and the salvation of the neighbor. . . . From this you can realize what a noble and royal way of life you have taken up: for not only among human beings but even among angels, there is no nobler activity than that of glorifying their Creator and bringing his creatures back to him to the extent of their capacity.<sup>111</sup>

All religious life bears regard for God's glory; but here Ignatius emphasizes that the Society has a special dedication to "glorifying" the Creator, such that every Jesuit must recognize and cultivate that mission as a "noble and royal way of life"—as one that draws him closer to the angels. Indeed, Ignatius encourages a quasi-competitive spirit in this service, both with respect to non-Jesuits and within the Society. "But above all I want you to be stirred up by the pure love of Jesus Christ," Ignatius writes—stirrings that "require you to show your desires in action."<sup>112</sup> Here, Ignatius clearly sees this *magis* as closely linked to this "pure love" of Christ:

To urge himself on, each of you should keep his eyes, not on those he considers of less caliber, but on those who are most ardent and energetic. Do not let the children of this world outdo you by showing greater care and zeal for temporal things than you do for eternal ones. It should shame you to see them running towards death more eagerly than you do towards life.<sup>113</sup>

Important here is the classic Ignatian spiritual movement "from good to better."<sup>114</sup> Ignatius calls the Christian to move not just from a bad to a good state of life, but from a good to a better state. As Fr. David Hollenbach (MAR) notes, "Ignatius Loyola's vision of the common

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<sup>111</sup> "Letter to the Fathers and Scholastics at Coimbra"; trans. Palmer, Padberg, and McCarthy, 167.

<sup>112</sup> "Letter to the Fathers and Scholastics at Coimbra"; trans. Palmer, Padberg, and McCarthy, 169–70.

<sup>113</sup> "Letter to the Fathers and Scholastics at Coimbra"; trans. Palmer, Padberg, and McCarthy, 167.

<sup>114</sup> Geger, "Hidden Theology," 20–23.

good was extraordinarily expansive in scope.”<sup>115</sup> That is because Ignatian magnanimity begins with the most “expansive” service of all, which is service to God. This of course is the lesson of the “Autobiography”: while Ignatius was initially motivated by the desire on his own part and that of his family for grandeur, those initial desires were a “substrate” that passed through a “spiritual purification” and “were converted into the spirituality of the *magis*” for God.<sup>116</sup>

Finally, magnanimity leads one to a vision of the world that is fundamentally hopeful in God’s providence—to a vision in which one can pursue goods and engage in activities *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*. Identifying those actions and objects for the greater glory of God, however, requires discernment. In the following section, I will complete this study of magnanimity by turning to some key explanations of discernment in the *Exercises* and the *Constitutions*.

## 5. Ignatian Magnanimity and Discernment

**D**iscernment depends upon and cultivates the virtue of magnanimity. To see how works, we first will consider the rules for the discernment of spirits in the *Exercises*, and then turn to apostolic discernment in part seven of the *Constitutions*.

The *Spiritual Exercises* contains two sets of rules for the discernment of spirits: one for the First Week, and one more appropriate to the Second Week.<sup>117</sup> The first set defines the context and purpose of discernment by defining *consolation* and *desolation*, but begins by identifying two spiritual states that we will now consider.

The first rule concerns those whom the enemy seduces with “apparent pleasures,” leading them from “one mortal sin to another” and thus “deeper into their sins and vices.”<sup>118</sup> A person in such a state

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<sup>115</sup> David Hollenbach, SJ, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 5–6.

<sup>116</sup> De Diego, “Magis (Más),” *DEI*, vol. 2, 1154–58, at 1155.

<sup>117</sup> *SpEx* 313–27, 328–36; ed. Ganss, 121–28.

<sup>118</sup> *SpEx* 314; ed. Ganss, 121.

will not be led to the greater glory of God. That magnanimous action is reserved to the person described in the second rule, who is “progressing from good to better in the service of God our Lord.”<sup>119</sup> Such a person, who is “earnestly” seeking the good, already has magnanimous desires.<sup>120</sup> The evil spirit will seek to discourage this person, and a sign of this person’s growing magnanimity is his ability to persevere in the pursuit of those desires despite such hindrances. On the contrary, the good spirit will support the perseverance and endurance of this magnanimous person through “courage and strength.”<sup>121</sup> We saw that, for Thomas and Ignatius, magnanimity bears a close relationship to perseverance, and rules four through eight indeed concern the necessity of perseverance despite desolation.

Rules three and four define *consolation* and *desolation*, and here too we see affinities to magnanimity. The third rule defines *consolation* as movements that cause the soul to be “inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord,” and particularly an “increase in hope, faith, and charity.”<sup>122</sup> The fourth rule describes desolation as “everything which is the contrary of what was described in the Third Rule” of consolation—notably, a lack of faith, hope, and love, as well as a kind of pusillanimity by which one exhibits an “impulsive motion toward low and earthly things.”<sup>123</sup>

In short, to be in consolation is to be oriented and moving toward God, whereas to be in desolation is to be oriented and moving away from God. Based on these definitions, we can say that consolation’s movement toward God cultivates magnanimity. For just as magnanimity depends upon directing one’s undertakings toward God, so is consolation the spiritual movement whereby one is oriented toward God. Similarly, desolation as a spiritual movement away from God obstructs the cultivation of magnanimity. But note Ignatius’s experience: he had great desires before the good spirit directed those desires toward God. In discerning the spirits at work in his desires, he came to

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<sup>119</sup> *SpEx* 315; ed. Ganss, 121.

<sup>120</sup> *SpEx* 315; ed. Ganss, 121.

<sup>121</sup> *SpEx* 315; ed. Ganss, 121.

<sup>122</sup> *SpEx* 316; ed. Ganss, 122.

<sup>123</sup> *SpEx* 317; ed. Ganss, 122.

see something about those desires that cried out for a greater satisfaction than anything a created object could grant him. The very frustration of those desires then led him to seek in himself, or at least through himself, a greater object of desire. There is thus a sense in which being magnanimous can dispose one toward consolation, however qualified that magnanimity must be before it is directed and purified by God.

Furthermore, desolation obstructs the cultivation of magnanimity, in that an “impulsive motion toward low and earthly things”

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*Ignatius’s synthesis of humility and magnanimity is never merely a theoretical exercise. Instead, the Exercises and Constitutions offer ways to live their union, and indeed demand this of the Jesuit.*

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is the very antithesis of magnanimity.<sup>124</sup> Those moved by desolation, be that vainglory or pusillanimity, do a great injustice to their natural capacities for magnanimity and service to God in acting upon that vainglory or false humility. Indeed, note in the ninth rule that all three of

the causes for desolation that Ignatius enumerates are connected to magnanimity: to highlight the lack a person’s magnanimity; to “test” the magnanimity of a person, both in his orientation toward God’s “service and praise” and his perseverance in that service and praise; and to teach that the consolation that undergirds magnanimity and through it orients the believer toward God is itself a gift from God.<sup>125</sup>

The second set of rules for the discernment of spirits is shorter but “more probing” than the first, and contains one of the most fascinating illuminations of magnanimity in Ignatius’s teaching on discernment.<sup>126</sup> In the second rule, Ignatius takes up the question of consolation without preceding cause. While much remains mysterious about this kind of consolation, Ignatius is clear that it can only be effected by God, and that it “draws the whole person into love of His Divine Majesty.”<sup>127</sup> Unlike Aristotle’s haughty, aloof magnanimous man, the mag-

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<sup>124</sup> *SpEx* 317; ed. Ganss, 122.

<sup>125</sup> *SpEx* 322; ed. Ganss, 123–24.

<sup>126</sup> *SpEx* 328; ed. Ganss, 126.

<sup>127</sup> *SpEx* 330; ed. Ganss, 126.

nanimous Christian freely acknowledges his or her filial dependence upon God. Consolation without a preceding cause, I submit, offers a beautiful expression of this radical dependence upon God, for the following reason: while the magnanimous man may not depend upon any creature for his sense of worth or his valuation of his own gifts, he cannot sever his ties with God, who creates and governs all things.

Having now a sketch of the role of magnanimity in the rules for discernment of spirits, let us turn now to the question of magnanimity as it arises in part seven of the *Constitutions*. This section concerns mission in the strict sense of the sending forth of Jesuits to places and works. Part seven is one of the best-known and oldest parts of the *Constitutions*, formed in part by Ignatius's "Constitutions on Missions" from 1544 to 1545.<sup>128</sup> It is also a wonderful school of the heart—a masterful synthesis of magnanimity in mission and humility in obedience.

To begin with, the opening section of chapter one provides one of the most characteristically Ignatian passages of the *Constitutions*. The purpose of part seven is to clarify how Jesuits are best "dispersed throughout Christ's vineyard to labor" for an "end eminently characteristic of our Institute," to help souls, through which Jesuits might pursue the "greater service of God and the good of souls."<sup>129</sup>

Chapter one continues by considering missions from the pope. While we cannot resolve the controversies surrounding the nature of the fourth vow, we can say that the text makes clear the rationale for the vow, and it relates directly to magnanimity. "The intention of the fourth vows" was to remedy a concrete problem: "those who first united to form the Society were from different provinces and realms and did not know into which regions they were to go."<sup>130</sup> And so, "to avoid erring in the path of the Lord," they vowed to leave the matter in the pope's hands.<sup>131</sup> Why the pope? As Fr. Antonio Maria de Alda-

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<sup>128</sup> These constitutions were Ignatius's early reflections on missions from the pope and Jesuit superiors, which became the source of chapter 1 of part 7. See Aldama, *An Introductory Commentary*, 246.

<sup>129</sup> *Const.* 603; ed. Padberg, 276.

<sup>130</sup> *Const.* 605; ed. Padberg, 276.

<sup>131</sup> *Const.* 605; ed. Padberg, 276.



ma (1908–2005) explains, the choice of the pope was to ensure a “universal, impartial arbiter,” one who in Faber’s words is “the overseer of the entire harvest of Christ” and knows “what concerns the entire Christendom.”<sup>132</sup> Ignatius thus seeks to invoke the magnanimity of the pope himself, who will see with the greatest vision how the Society can best undertake great things for the Lord.

The fourth vow also requires magnanimity of Jesuits. Indeed, submission to a special vow of papal obedience represents the height of the synthesis of magnanimity with humility that we noted regarding the preamble.<sup>133</sup> While divided by their particular ideas about where to go, the early Jesuits were united in their magnanimous disposition to seek “the greater divine glory.”<sup>134</sup> This magnanimity, moreover, did not give way to pride in their private ideas and schemes, but rather to humility or disinterest that allowed them to submit themselves to the pope for God’s greater glory. In this way, they revealed their magnanimity to be ecclesially centered. As Fr. Aldama notes, this ecclesial orientation is vital: in the *Constitutions*, the pope is always referred to as the “vicar of Christ” in connection with the fourth vow.<sup>135</sup>

Chapter two considers missions given by the Society through its superiors.<sup>136</sup> As chapter one takes for granted that the pope will have his own manner of proceeding, it is only in chapter two that Ignatius, assisted later by Polanco, lays out norms for discerning to what places and works Jesuits should be sent. Every missioning should be made according to what conduces to the “greater service of God and the universal good.”<sup>137</sup> The magnanimous man is characterized by a disposition to do great things for God, and these phrases indicate for the magnanimous Jesuit which universal goods are fitting objects of that disposition. Similarly, training one’s sights on such universal

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<sup>132</sup> Aldama, *Part VII, Missioning*, trans. Echániz, 20–27.

<sup>133</sup> *Const.* 134; ed. Padberg, 56.

<sup>134</sup> *Const.* 135; ed. Padberg, 56.

<sup>135</sup> Aldama, *Part VII, Missioning*, trans. Echániz, 24.

<sup>136</sup> Aldama, *Part VII, Missioning*, trans. Echániz, 79–103.

<sup>137</sup> *Const.* 618; ed. Padberg, 282.



goods teaches one how to be magnanimous, and in this sense, part seven of the *Constitutions* is a school of magnanimity.

The subsequent declarations of chapter two develop these connections between magnanimity and apostolic discernment, detailing respectively the five norms for discerning missions to places and the six norms for discerning missions to works. The five norms for place are greater need, greater fruit, greater indebtedness, the wider reach of action, and the greater opposition of the enemy, while the six norms for works are importance, urgency, need, safety, universality, and duration of the fruits.<sup>138</sup> Note here that the majority of these norms bear some connection to what is “greater” or “universal.” Further, these declarations explicitly stipulate the end of the discernment to be for “the greater service of God and the more universal good.”<sup>139</sup> In other words, these norms are meant to be means toward that end, and they are also meant to be pedagogical, in the sense that attending to the objects of these norms helps one to pick out what serves the greater glory of God. In this way, this discernment both presumes and cultivates the magnanimity that disposes one to serve the Lord in his glory.

To confirm this teaching, the following declaration echoes the language of both the beginning of this chapter and the preamble: “it is the supreme providence and direction of the Holy Spirit that must efficaciously bring us to make the right decision in all matters.”<sup>140</sup> From this phrase, Ignatius goes on to lay out how particular Jesuits should be missioned. This is vintage Ignatius: the Society’s activities are characterized as human cooperation with divine initiative, joining together magnanimity and humility for God’s greater glory.

The context of declaration one invites us to think about the magnanimity requisite for representation to a Jesuit superior.<sup>141</sup> As a whole, part seven makes it abundantly clear that the Jesuit ought to be indif-

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<sup>138</sup> Aldama, *Part VII, Missioning*, trans. Echániz, 84–103.

<sup>139</sup> *Const.* 618; ed. Padberg, 282.

<sup>140</sup> *Const.* 624; ed. Padberg, 288. See also *Const.* 618 and 134; ed. Padberg, 282 and 56.

<sup>141</sup> *Const.* 627; ed. Padberg, 291.

ferent regarding his mission, since that mission is only a means to an end about which he can in no way be indifferent—to wit, serving God’s greater glory. So why representation? The key phrase is “motions or thoughts.”<sup>142</sup> If the Jesuit ought to be steadfast in his resolution to serve God’s greater glory, then that apostolic commitment will shape deeply his interior life. In the spirit of part seven, he will be attentive to movements in his soul that foster the humility to accept in obedience whatever assignments to which he is missioned. But he also will be attentive to the motions or movements that inspire magnanimity—movements that suggest to him visions and ideas of how best to serve God.

Note, however, that the point of representation would not involve proposing those visions and ideas as counter-offers to the mission at hand; rather, the Jesuit in his humility would offer the movements of his magnanimous soul for his superior to dispose of as he sees fit. In other words, Jesuit obedience does not mean robot-like conformity, but rather the magnanimous participation of the Jesuit being missioned.

While much more could be said of the role of magnanimity in the dynamics of spiritual and apostolic discernment, let us close with this last thought. Ignatius’s synthesis of humility and magnanimity is never merely a theoretical exercise. Instead, the Exercises and Constitutions offer ways to live their union, and indeed demand this of the Jesuit. The vital proof for the power of Ignatian magnanimity thus will come not in those texts, but in the lives of Jesuits inspired and formed by them.<sup>143</sup>

Certainly, this study has revealed that the Western ethical tradition has influenced deeply the development of Jesuit spirituality. And while neither ourselves nor Ignatius and the early Jesuits were likely to be fully conscious of this, their treatment of magnanimity deepens and extends the best from the tradition. In particular, Ignatius adapts the God- and Christ-centered teaching of the Old and New Testaments while also wanting Jesuits to be truly heroic in their virtue, after the manner of the early ascetics. But unlike the ascetics, he wants that virtue to be other-oriented, which speaks to the monastic tradition. In this way,

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<sup>142</sup> *Const.* 627; ed. Padberg, 291.

<sup>143</sup> O’Malley, “Jesuit Spirituality,” 38–39.

crucial elements of both the ascetic and the monastic strands of Christianity shape Ignatius's apostolically contemplative order.

Furthermore, it is clear that Ignatius remains committed to the synthesis of humility and magnanimity effected by Thomas. And as for Aristotle, Ignatius's account of magnanimity resolves the problem of how the magnanimous man can be both magnanimous and just in his relations with others—namely, by directing his magnanimity to the service of those others. But finally, Ignatius maintains a commitment to Aristotle's fundamental concern for virtue as the general excellence of the human person, as clear in the description from the *Constitutions* of the superior general, whose fundamental virtue is love of God.

Indeed, it is love of God that animates the virtues—a love “from above” that pulls human beings “from below” toward the middle that is Christ.<sup>144</sup> And it is the Jesuit's security in that love that allows him to serve others. As Fr. Schineller has it, this marks a “shift from a focus upon fear of one's salvation to a focus on apostolic effectiveness, on bearing fruits in and for the Church.”<sup>145</sup> The law of charity thus functions not only as a principle of the Holy Spirit, but also as an interpretative royal road through Ignatian spirituality.

## 6. Conclusions

**D**espite the twists and turns of this project, my point is simple. History tends to have opposed magnanimity and humility. That they are in fact not opposed, but can be united through loving service to God, is something that Jesuits take for granted, in general perhaps without knowing it. But that synthesis is in fact a significant and earth-moving accomplishment, and one that is crucial to our self-understanding as laborers in God's vineyard.

And what are we to do with this accomplishment? First, we must be constantly mindful of it and strive to live it. Such mindfulness entails doing what we are doing now—namely, reading, studying, and

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<sup>144</sup> Hugo Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian*, 11–29.

<sup>145</sup> Schineller, “The Pilgrim Journey of Ignatius,” 14.

praying with foundational Jesuit texts, above all the *Constitutions*. Such study and prayer promises to help us see the Ignatian synthesis of humility and magnanimity, and how that synthesis comes about, which is by humbling the great undertaking of the magnanimous man in the name of God, and by elevating the humility of the Christian toward divine service. This reflection also promises to clarify the role in this dynamic of a love that chastens magnanimity and elevates humility. We thus have here the foundations of the Ignatian imagination of the vineyard—a magnanimity that relies upon love to act hopefully and humbly in the world for God’s glory.

In this sense, magnanimity is in many ways a virtue of perspective and in this regard should change how we see the world. With the image of the world as vineyard, we see creation as a place of abundant opportunities to do God’s will, and we see ourselves as God’s co-workers, humbled to work for God rather than for ourselves, and magnanimous to make that work great.

Further, when we recognize how humility and magnanimity cohere, we see that Ignatian magnanimity entrusts to us a great practical responsibility—namely, the need to ensure in our ministries, communities, and prayer that the delicate balance between magnanimity and humility does not lapse into false humility or pride.<sup>146</sup>

Clearly, then, magnanimity needs humility to keep from becoming pride. Furthermore, Jesuit spirituality naturally prizes the incarnational approach that sees God in all things and justifies our magnanimous assurance that prayer and hard work can help us, far from building castles in the sky, to build the Kingdom of God. However, when we lose the humility that reminds us that God acts first, we run the risk of lapsing into solipsistic pride. Of course, any Jesuit as a human can fall into that pride, whether the pride of professional success or career advancements, or the belief that “I’m doing the ministry that all Jesuits should be doing,” or “I’m doing the work that no other Jesuit can do as well as I can.” When we speak of the “*magis*” or of doing something

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<sup>146</sup> Hugo Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian*, 18–21.

AMDG, how do we know that it is the *magis* for God, and not something done *ad maiorem hominis gloriam*?

To take one especially provocative example, what do we mean when we say that we “go to the frontiers”?<sup>147</sup> When a Jesuit takes a controversial position in the church, does he do so in humility? Or does he do so out of pride? Or does he do so out of the security of fitting in with a group he would rather not challenge? And when we celebrate such risk-taking, do we at times discount the pervasive effects of pride? As Fr. McManamon writes, we must emphasize the “of God” as much as the “more” of ADMG.<sup>148</sup>

But just as magnanimity requires humility, so does humility need magnanimity to be other-oriented. In other words, we must be humble, but not pusillanimous or timid. How many times have we heard a provincial complain that his men have no ideas of their own? How many times has the Presupposition been invoked to avoid unpleasant conversations or conflicts that need to be brought into the open and resolved? How many times, in an issue close to my own heart, have we heard fearful concerns about the future of the intellectual apostolate, but little bold and hopeful and prayerful dreaming about it? Or daring proposals to engage the culture—proposals that look curiously like stale ideas from yesteryear? Instead, we continually must cultivate the magnanimity that raises us above fear and insipidity. Then, rooted in the magnanimous love of God, we can become adept at recognizing and guarding against the false virtue that is false humility.

I have also spoken of the unity of the virtues. Just as we must gain a renewed appreciation for the virtue of magnanimity, we also need to learn to see it against a wider concatenation of virtues—fortitude, hope, humility, gratitude, justice, and, above all, love—with which it must be understood, cultivated, and practiced. Given the moral fragmentation of our age, it is not enough to pay clichéd

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<sup>147</sup> “Address of Pope Benedict XVI to the 35th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus,” in *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 31st–35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus*, ed. John W. Padberg, SJ (St. Louis: IJS, 2009), 822–25.

<sup>148</sup> McManamon, *Text and Contexts*, 48.

homage to individual virtues: we must reflect critically upon how the virtues we seek to embody and practice cohere in every part of our life, and how they in turn integrate to form that life.

All of this work, of course, depends upon a constant engagement with the signs of the times. The Society's witness to the gospel extends to the ways in which we must cultivate humility and magnanimity where they are already present and plant their seeds where they are absent. Given that neither humility nor magnanimity are bywords of our era, this is a particularly urgent task. Indeed, perhaps our evangelization for the Ignatian virtue of gratitude needs to be paired with a promotion of magnanimity.

If we are to continue to make the audacious claim that we cooperate magnanimously with God, then we must always reflect upon the grace-filled insights of Ignatius as to how we can do so. In this spirit, we must continue the task of return and renewal inaugurated by Vatican II with *Perfectae caritatis*, and grow more deeply in and through our Institute. If nothing else, I hope this study encourages Jesuits to take up the *Constitutions* once more and to make their own the rich spiritual heritage therein. As János Lukács notes, the *Constitutions* embody a powerful and subtle "dynamic movement toward God."<sup>149</sup> It is characteristic of Ignatius's thought and practice that God is everywhere to be found, and that we have only to cooperate with him. From that vantage point, there can be no more natural act than to make of ourselves "a continual sacrifice to the glory of God and the salvation of the neighbor."<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Lukács, "The Incarnational Dynamic of the *Constitutions*," 11–12.

<sup>150</sup> "Letter to the Fathers and Scholastics at Coimbra," trans. Palmer, Padberg, and McCarthy, 167.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor:

I write in response to the conversation between Frs. Joseph Tetlow (ucs) and Richard Baumann (UMI) at the end of the Spring 2018 issue of *STUDIES*.<sup>1</sup> As such, consider my comments here as a footnote to that discussion, which I share in the spirit of your article itself.

In his remarks to Fr. Baumann, Fr. Tetlow refers indirectly to the Ignatian *Contemplatio* as the “Contemplation to Learn to Love the Way God Loves.”<sup>2</sup> This wording resembles that which he has used elsewhere with reference to the *Contemplatio*: “The Contemplation for Learning to Love Like God.”<sup>3</sup>

But both expressions differ considerably from what Ignatius himself writes in the *Spiritual Exercises*. The Spanish reads as follows: *El segundo, pedir lo que quiero: será aquí pedir conocimiento*

*interno de tanto bien recibido, para que yo enteramente reconociendo pueda en todo amar y server á su Divina Maiestad.*<sup>4</sup> That is, to “love and serve his divine majesty.”<sup>5</sup>

Referring to the *Contemplatio*, Fr. Ganss writes: “This justly renowned contemplation is aimed directly at increasing the exercitant’s love of God, as the second prelude clearly shows. Moreover, the Vulgate translated Ignatius’ Spanish title by ‘Contemplation to Stir Up Spiritual Love of God in Ourselves’.”<sup>6</sup>

Of course, this love of God surely would lead one to attempt to “love the way God loves.” And so, I certainly do not oppose Tetlow’s expression; I simply point out that his expression is an inference and not exactly what Ignatius wrote.

Fr. Joseph Fice (UWE)  
Sacred Heart Jesuit Center  
Los Gatos, California

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<sup>1</sup> “Letters to the Editor,” in Barton T. Geger, SJ, “Ten Things That St. Ignatius Never Said or Did,” *SSJ* 50, no. 1 (Spring 2018), 45–47.

<sup>2</sup> *SpEx* 230–37; “Letters,” in Geger, “Ten Things,” 45.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph A. Tetlow, SJ, *Choosing Christ in the World: A Handbook for Directing the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola According to Annotations Eighteen and Nineteen* (St. Louis: IJS, 2015), 172.

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<sup>4</sup> *SpEx* 233; *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola, Spanish and English*, 2nd ed., trans. and ed. Joseph Rickaby (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1923), 208c2.

<sup>5</sup> *SpEx* 233; trans. Rickaby, 208, c.1.

<sup>6</sup> *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius: A Translation and Commentary by George E. Ganss*, SJ (St. Louis: IJS, 1992), 183n117.

Editor:

Fr. Fice's observation is certainly correct, and a scholarly translation would be as he says. But remember two things: First, Ignatius gives no written instructions about giving this exercise during the long retreat, and some early Jesuits used it during the preparation weeks. And second, the companions were handing on the Spiritual Exercises years before Ignatius let them see his own notes.

Then consider the points in this contemplation.<sup>7</sup> First, God gives gifts—namely, life, the universe, my soul, and my self. Second, God remains in his gifts—in the cosmos, and in my own self, always present. Third, God acts in his gifts—creating, loving, redeeming, providing. And fourth, when I act—loving, serving, and praising—I am acting with a share in the divine gifts, in the divinity.

It is for this that Jesus asked the Father: that his disciples would know that the Father has loved them even as the Father has loved Jesus (Jn 17:23). The Father loves us *even as* he loves his Son—which is to say, with the same love. And from my side? Jesus prayed that the love with which

the Father loved him may be in them and the Father in them (Jn 17:26) This is the sharing in the divine gifts of the *Contemplatio*, by which I am to love with that divine love now in me.

Thus, I propose a more descriptive title: "Learning to Love the Way God Loves."

*Salvo meliore iudicio...*

Joseph A. Tetlow (ucs)  
Our Lady of the Oaks Retreat House  
Grand Coteau, Louisiana

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<sup>7</sup> *SpEx* 234–37.



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