



# STUDIES

IN  
THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

## **“Even among Turks”**

*Tirso González de Santalla (1624–1705) and Islam*

**EMANUELE COLOMBO**

44/3 • AUTUMN 2012

## THE SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

The Seminar is composed of a number of Jesuits appointed from their provinces in the United States.

It concerns itself with topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially United States Jesuits, and communicates the results to the members of the provinces through its publication, *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS*. This is done in the spirit of Vatican II's recommendation that religious institutes recapture the original inspiration of their founders and adapt it to the circumstances of modern times. The Seminar welcomes reactions or comments in regard to the material that it publishes.

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# “EVEN AMONG TURKS”

*Tirso González de Santalla (1624–1705)  
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## *the first word*

New York City is a world unto itself. While I was growing up and during the several years I was assigned to *America*, I never paid much attention to state politics. Albany might have been in Iowa, which is a state somewhere in California, not a town on Long Island, as I might once have thought. City Hall provided enough drama all by itself: comedy and tragedy, crime and revenge, celebrity gossip, soap opera, and melodrama. It was a reality show based in unreality. (We used to say that New York and Ed Koch, the colorful mayor from 1978 to 1989, deserved each other.) All that insularity changed with a tour of duty in Upstate, which for some New Yorkers means anything north of 96th Street in Manhattan. For more cosmopolitan sophisticates like myself, it begins at Yonkers. Nine years in Central New York changed my perspective appreciably. Fearful at first of being gored by a moose or being devoured by flocks of ravenous Canada geese, I gradually settled in and felt quite at home there. Yes, there is a world outside “The City,” and soon I learned that politics in Albany also generates its own quota of psychodrama.

Mario Cuomo was on the scene during many of those nine years. He was governor from 1983 to 1994, and as some confused readers might not realize, he is the father of the present governor, Andrew M. Cuomo. In 1992 the Democratic faithful believed Mario Cuomo would be a strong candidate to unseat the first President Bush. They were crushed when he failed to climb aboard the plane that was waiting on the tarmac to take him to New Hampshire in time to register as a candidate in the primary election. Why? The nomination seemed his for the taking, but Mario Cuomo was, and is, a very thoughtful man. Whether he would have made a good president is another question, and that thought may have been a major factor in his choice. Perhaps he realized that his thoughtfulness might have kept him from reducing complex issues to the sound bites needed to sell his policies to Congress and the public. Did he fear that his need to see all sides of an issue might keep him from taking timely action in moments of crisis? We’ll never know. The electorate and convention selected Bill Clinton, relatively untested and unknown, but energetic, likeable, and electable. And re-electable.

Thoughtfulness is more the issue at present than politics. With my newfound interest in state politics, I used to enjoy the Saturday morning interviews Governor Cuomo regularly gave on NPR in Albany. The interviewer, Alan Chartock, a professor of political science from the University of Albany,

seemed to know everything and everybody in the legislature. He never held back from pressing the governor, but even as they discussed contentious issues, he conducted a civil conversation. How different from rant radio and ambush interviews of today! Perhaps I was naïve, but I never felt that Professor Chartock was asking loaded questions intended to embarrass his partner in dialogue, nor did the governor lash back in anger when he got an uncomfortable question. It was political discourse at its best.

One Saturday morning they got into the topic of campaigning in the television age. Attack ads, often funded by special-interest groups, had begun to dominate campaign advertising, and neither man was happy about it. As the issues become more complicated, they observed, the more effective strategy was not to distract the voters with facts, but simply to demonize the opposition. Voters may not understand the complexities of the economy, but they can grasp that someone is a bad person. I wonder if Professor Chartock and the governor could ever imagine how toxic campaign rhetoric would become as the country passed into a new century. At one point, Governor Cuomo backed away from his polished language and reverted to his native Cityspeak. When describing modern campaigns, he said they had come down to—and I think this is an exact quote—“The other guy is a bum. Vote for me.”

As I write this, the presidential campaign of 2012 is becoming a paintball contest. What a sorry face it puts on democratic elections! Unfailingly malicious, at times it can be simply silly. During the primary campaign, for example, some Republican rivals tried to derail Mitt Romney’s cannonball express to the nomination by revealing that when the Romneys went on a vacation trip, they put their dog in a cage on the roof of the car. One wonders how the mode of family transportation could predict the future direction of the nation, but it was a pointed personal attack designed to alienate dog lovers, who were expected to turn to another primary candidate. (He’s a bum, at least as far as Fido is concerned; vote for me.) As they were assessing their potential losses among the Alpo constituency, some people in the Romney camp tried to control the damage by attacking their future opponent. They pointed out that President Obama lived in Indonesia, where some people consider dog meat a delicacy. At the very least, he condoned the practice (at age six!), and he may even have tasted a morsel or two himself. How could you possibly vote for a man who wants to turn your Fluffy into hot dogs? As the campaign goes into its final stages, we’ll probably run into sillier stuff, but that exchange is at the top of the leader board at present.

It was ever thus, since the founding of the nation. In the bitter campaign of 1790, the Jefferson camp unearthed the story that Washington had chopped down a cherry tree, and when his father confronted him with the evidence, he brazenly responded: “I cannot tell a lie. I did it with my little hatch-

et.” That does it. Can you imagine the devastation Washington would work upon the virgin forests of this new continent? And think of the arrogance. He did not even attempt to excuse or explain his actions. He had a hatchet and used it. Private enterprise run amok. Noting the outrage from his opponent’s camp, the good Washingtonians noted that if elected, Jefferson would drown American lumbering interests in a sea of government regulations. American business would have to buy lumber from Canada. Outsourcing this industry would cost jobs and raise taxes.

The campaign grew even nastier. The Jefferson camp learned that Washington had once thrown a silver dollar across the Delaware River. Obviously, they gloated, Washington spent his adult life in the army, and never learned the value of currency. If need arose, he would simply send his soldiers out to loot and pillage supplies from defenseless widows and orphans. With this background of military brutality, he has little regard for the financial needs of common folk, for whom a silver dollar represents the difference between starvation and survival. Irresponsible fiscal policies and ruthless taxation would surely be hallmarks of a Washington administration. Wait until he gets a chance to throw away *your* money, they trumpeted. The rival camp was quick to respond. If Jefferson was elected, the Delaware Valley would be flooded to prevent anyone from moving capital from one side to the other, without going over a bridge that he would build (with Federal stimulus money) and operate for his own enrichment. It was an obvious ruse that would enable him give construction and operating contracts to his cronies. He would pour all the revenue from this toll road into his ranch in Monticello.

The trend continued. Nearly four score and seven years later, Abraham Lincoln was reputed to be a rail splitter who lived in a log cabin as a young man. Fine for Lincoln, claimed Stephen Douglas, but what about all the sawmill workers he put out of work by selfishly controlling the lumber industry for his own personal profit. Clearly, Lincoln represented greed and special interests of land owners over the working man. The Lincoln team would not see their candidate swiftboated without payback, and responded immediately. They argued that if elected, Douglas would first of all revoke citizens’ Second Amendment rights to own axes. Then, in socialist frenzy, he would use the taxpayers’ money to nationalize private lumber mills and concentrate production in several government-controlled collectives or “profit zones,” one of which would surely be his home district. Bureaucrats in Washington, D.C., would dictate the size of the Yule log for free Americans. Other spoils of the scheme would go to notable campaign contributors. Douglas, they argued, was a socialist, a fascist, and possibly a Muslim.

We can't expect much improvement in our lifetimes. As ideological boundaries harden, the temptation to define the opposition as the source of all evil becomes irresistible. It's certainly a lot easier than trying to explain the mortgage crisis, the world economy, financial markets, the Middle East, or energy policies. And will we actually be ice-skating on Dante's eighth circle (fraud) before anyone takes an honest position on gun control? Like Ed Koch and New York, our politicians and voters deserve each other. While all this sniping and posturing goes on, the country pays a price equivalent to the national debt.

Somehow I wish our candidates for major (or minor) offices could read the present issue of *STUDIES*. Through a meticulous reading of the documents, Prof. Emanuele Colombo has reconstructed the story of Tirso González de Santalla (1624-1705), who through an improbable convergence of events was elected superior general of the Society of Jesus in 1687. What on earth could this historical essay have to do with American politics? A great deal. I think. The Europe of his day was still smarting from the Muslim conquest. Spain and Portugal especially were harsh in their treatment of their former occupiers, and even went into a period of forced expulsion. Theological battle lines were cast in bronze, just like political positions today. Error has no rights. No salvation outside the Church. Heretics and infidels must be punished. And so it went. González was no liberal himself, and certainly followed the prevailing orthodoxy on these points, even to the extent of opposing fellow Jesuit moralists who might have advocated more flexible positions. Yet in the manual he left behind, Professor Colombo discovers an amazing paradox. Although González is adamant in decrying their false religion, and in fact can be quite scornful of the tenets of Islam, yet he manifests respect and even affection for the Muslims that he addressed in his ministry. Of course, he intended to convert them to the Catholic faith, but even if they chose to remain faithful to their tradition, he admires their integrity.

Politicians, of course, have the right to be passionate about their political philosophy and argue their positions vigorously, as surely González did with his theology. What they could learn from him is the ability to separate issues from persons. He could ridicule Islam, yet respect Muslims. If members of Congress and candidates in the upcoming election could read Professor Colombo's essay, they might be inspired to debate one another heatedly all day, and then adjourn for bourbon, cigars, and poker at night. Then they might actually accomplish something.



## *a few second words . . .*

Regular readers of *STUDIES* know that the fall issue brings a change in our membership. Let me thank Mark Bosco, Terry Dempsey, and Frank McAloon for joining us for the past three years. Now that their terms have expired, they will continue their productive ministries at Loyola Chicago, St. Louis, and Fordham, respectively.

As we say goodbye to the retiring members, we happily welcome the two new men who have generously accepted the invitation to join us for the next three years.

Bill O'Neill, of the California Province, is associate professor of social ethics at the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University, when he is not a visiting professor at Hekima University in Nairobi, Kenya. His writings address questions of human rights, ethics and hermeneutic theory, social reconciliation, restorative justice, as well as refugee and immigration policy. He has worked with refugees in Tanzania and Malawi and done research on human rights in South Africa and Rwanda, and currently serves as Catholic chaplain at the Federal Women's Prison in Dublin, Calif. I'm sure this wealth of international experience will enrich our seminar for the next three years.

Greg Kalscheur from the Maryland Province teaches in the Law School at Boston College and also serves as senior associate dean for strategic planning and faculty development in the College of Arts and Sciences at Boston College. His areas of special interest are civil procedure, constitutional law, and Catholic social teaching and the law. After obtaining his law degree from the University of Michigan, he was admitted to the bar in the District of Columbia. He has written widely on a variety of church-state issues.

Welcome to our merrie band.

Finally, I'd like to make a preliminary announcement. For the last four years, *STUDIES* has been posting current issues on the website of the Jesuit Conference, [Jesuit.org](http://Jesuit.org). The most recent issues are all available there without a user fee, and I'm told they receive a fair number of "hits." It seems a good number of people outside our usual circle of Jesuit readers are interested in the work. In the near future, the entire forty-four volumes of back issues will become available through the resources of the O'Neill Library at Boston College. Again, the conditions of this arrangement specify that we can't make a profit from users, nor can users download any issue for "commercial purposes." The earlier issues especially should prove an invaluable resource for scholars and students working on the issues facing religious life after Vatican II. The later issues, by their very variety, provide a wide-spectrum view of contemporary Jesuit life and historical research.

We will continue to send out paper issues to all American Jesuits; at least for the immediate future, back issues will continue to be available through the Institute of Jesuit Sources, and we will continue to authorize faculty to reproduce multiple copies for a modest fee. Libraries and interested readers will be able to continue their subscriptions. When this new technology becomes available, a seminarian in India or a scholar in Africa will be able to access the entire collection of monographs without the fuss and expense of international trade. I'm sure George Ganss, who founded the journal, and John Padberg, his successor, who directed it for eighteen years, would be delighted to share the fruit of their labors with Jesuits and other Catholics throughout the world. We'll have details in a later issue.

*Richard A. Blake, S.J.*

Editor

# CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II. TIRO GONZÁLEZ DE SANTALLA: MISSIONARY AND THEOLOGIAN. . 4	
The Atlas of the Missions	8
Controversial Missions	13
III. A HANDBOOK TO CONVERT THE MUSLIMS . . . . .	15
The Value of Experience	21
The Language of the Theater	25
IV. CONCLUSION: A PATH TO DIALOGUE. . . . .	33
Ignatius and the Muslims	36

## ABBREVIATIONS

- DHCJ *Diccionario Histórico e la Compañía de Jesús: Biográfico-temático*, Charles E. O'NEILL and Joaquín MARÍA DOMÍNGUEZ, eds. Rome: Institutum Historicum and Madrid, Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 2001
- ARSI Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu. Rome
- MD *Manuductio ad conversionem Mahumetanorum*. Dillingen, 1688—89

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*Emanuele Colombo is assistant professor at DePaul University, Chicago. After receiving his Ph.D. in Church History at the Universities of Milan and Padua (Italy), he obtained research fellowships in Italy, France, and the United States. In 2010 he moved to Chicago, where he currently lives. His research is focused on religious history in the early-modern period: connections between theology and politics, the missions of the Society of Jesus, and encounters between Christians and Muslims. He is author of two books on Jesuit history (Un gesuita inquieto: Carlo Antonio Casnedi (1643–1725) e il suo tempo (Rubbettino, 2006) and Convertire i musulmani: L'esperienza di un gesuita spagnolo del Seicento (Bruno Mondadori, 2007); he is also editor—with Bernard Heyberger, Mercedes García-Arenal, and Paola Vismara—of the book L'Islam visto da occidente: Cultura e religione del Seicento europeo di fronte all'Islam (Marietti, 2009). His Italian translation of Robert Birley's The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450–1700: A Reassessment of the Counter Reformation was published in 2010. He has also written several articles and book reviews on international journals in English, French, Spanish, and Italian. He is a member of the Accademia Ambrosiana, Milan (Italy).*

# “Even among Turks”

## *Tirso González de Santalla (1624–1705) and Islam*

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*Before he was elected thirteenth superior general of the Society of Jesus in 1687, for many years Tirso González de Santalla conducted a vigorous ministry among the Muslims who remained in Spain after the forced expulsion of most of their co-religionists. Rigorous in his opposition to Islam, he nonetheless gained great respect for the individuals he encountered. His ability to distinguish between ideas and persons provides a model for dialogue today.*

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### I. Introduction

**D**uring the two last decades,<sup>1</sup> the historiography on the Society of Jesus, and in particular on the so-called “old Society,” has grown exceptionally.<sup>2</sup> One of the reasons is the easy access to

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<sup>1</sup> In the last few years I discussed different papers on Tirso González de Santalla at Notre Dame University, Penn State University, Georgetown University, Northwestern University, and Boston College in the U.S.; at the Universities of Milan and Venice, in Italy; at the University of Nancy in France. I am grateful to all the colleagues and students who gave me feedback and suggestions. I want to thank my colleagues of the Department of History at DePaul University, who discussed this paper in their monthly seminar, and Thomas Cohen, who helped me with his priceless suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> See J. W. O’Malley, G. A. Bailey, S. J. Harris, and T. F. Kennedy, eds., *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences, and Arts, 1540–1773* (Toronto/Buffalo/London, 1999); J. W. O’Malley, G. A. Bailey, S. J. Harris, and T. F. Kennedy, eds., *The Jesuits II: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540–1773* (Toronto/Buffalo/London, 2006); T. Worcester, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits* (Cambridge, 2008). For recent review articles on the historiography on Jesuit missions, see S. Ditchfield, “Of Missions and Models: The Jesuit Enterprise (1540–1773) Reassessed in Recent Literature,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 93,

an astonishing number of documents preserved in the Jesuit archives around the world. This remarkable corpus of unpublished sources might result in a professional bias among scholars, namely, the disregard or the neglect of published sources. It is not unusual for scholars to dedicate all of their attention to obscure letters or manuscripts, while ignoring widely read early modern books.

At a recent conference, Paul Shore defined the Society of Jesus as “a society of books,” emphasizing the importance of the printing press not only for the circulation of Jesuit ideas throughout the world, but also for the very identity of the order, what the Jesuits refer to as “our way of proceeding.”<sup>3</sup> We cannot forget the extraordinary circulation of these books: in the worldwide Jesuit network, it was not uncommon, for instance, that a book written in South America was published in Europe and read in Asia. Books traveled, and in different contexts the same book could acquire a new life, different meanings, and different goals.<sup>4</sup> In studying Jesuit missions, the value of books is even more remarkable. Too often historians have ignored the published lives of missionaries, their printed itineraries, and their reports, considering them apologetic and unreliable. On the contrary, an accurate and critical use of published sources in synergy with archival documents is crucial to understand the image the Jesuits had of their missions, and the image they wanted to project to the outside world. Additionally, a careful reading of these books often allows one to find, behind their smooth rhetoric, some dissonances, that is, the emerging voices of the Jesuits’ interlocutors, “alien voices,” according to the famous definition by Carlo Ginzburg.<sup>5</sup>

The main source for the present essay is a remarkable Jesuit missionary handbook written in the late-seventeenth century by the highly

no. 2 (2007): 325–43; E. Colombo, “Gesuitomania: Studi recenti sulle missioni gesuitiche (1540–1773),” in *Evangelizzazione e globalizzazione: Le missioni gesuitiche nell’età moderna tra storia e storiografia*, ed. M. Catto, G. Mongini, and S. Mostaccio (Rome, 2010), 31–59.

<sup>3</sup> “Jesuits and the Peoples of the Book: The Society of Jesus, Muslims, and Jews (1540–1773),” Boston College (March 24–25, 2010). See E. Colombo, “Jesuits, Jews, and Muslims,” in *Archivum historicum Societatis Iesu* (hereafter *AHSI*) 158 (2010): 419–26.

<sup>4</sup> See L. Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit Missions* (Cambridge, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> C. Ginzburg, “Alien Voices: The Dialogic Element in Early Modern Jesuit Historiography,” in *id.*, *History, Rhetoric, and Proof* (Hanover, N.H., 1999), 71–91.

controversial thirteenth superior general of the Society, Tirso González de Santalla (1624–1705).<sup>6</sup> The book, entitled *Manuductio ad Conversionem Mahumethanorum* (Handbook to Convert Muslims) is particularly useful to study González’s approach to Muslims and to Islam at a time when the Turks were perceived in Europe as a dangerous enemy, defeated in the Battle of Vienna in 1683.<sup>7</sup> In reading it, we have not only a picture of his theoretical knowledge about Islam and an idea of his sources, but also a lively description of González’s actual missions in Spain where, after the expulsions of the Moriscos (1609–14)—Muslims who converted to Catholicism in the Iberian peninsula—there was still a

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*Most theologians of the Society believed that excessive moral rigor, instead of focusing on God’s mercy, tended to “increase man’s yoke” and to emphasize his sin and negative nature.*

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significant presence of Muslims, mostly slaves or servants. This essay attempts to revive this fascinating book that, after a period of great success in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, has been almost completely forgotten. One might say, quoting a famous statement of an Italian journalist, that “nothing is more unpublished than what has already been published.”<sup>8</sup>

The contemporary reader might find González’s language particularly harsh, and one might think that this is just an example of the early-modern Catholic approach to non-Christian religions. In fact, many of González’s statements on Islam are the fruit of his lack of knowledge on the subject and of his apologetic perspective.<sup>9</sup> But considering González’s attitude in toto as old-fashioned would be a historical mistake for three reasons. First, we do not need to go back to the sev-

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<sup>6</sup> For a biography see I. Pinedo, “Generales,” 13: “Tirso González de Santalla,” in *Diccionario histórico de la Compañía de Jesús: Biográfico-temático*, ed. Charles E. O’Neill and Joaquín María Domínguez (hereafter *DHCJ*), 1644–50.

<sup>7</sup> J. Stoye, *The Siege of Vienna: The Last Great Trial between Cross and Crescent* (New York, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> This statement is attributed to the Italian journalist Mario Missiroli.

<sup>9</sup> See T. Michel, “Jesuit Writings on Islam in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Islamochristiana* 15 (1989): 57–85, now also in id., *A Christian View of Islam: Essays on Dialogue* by Thomas F. Michel, S.J. (Maryknoll, N.Y., 2010), 123–48.

enteenth century to find a similar attitude within the Society of Jesus: less than eighty years ago, in 1937, a letter written by the superior general Włodimir Ledóchowski to all the provincials of the Society of Jesus pointed to González's effort to convert the Muslims "condemned to live in the Mohammedan sect" as an example for the entire Society.<sup>10</sup>

Second, González's idea of Islam as a "heresy of Christianity"—a traditional view in the history of the Catholic Church—can be found still in the 1960s among prominent Catholic theologians;<sup>11</sup> many aspects of González's approach toward Islam are not that far from a view still accepted in the Catholic Church in the twentieth century.

Third, a careful reading of the book shows the presence, together with this traditional approach, of a different attitude toward Muslims. When González abandoned the ground of theoretical and theological discussion and faced the actual encounters with Muslims, we can find a curiosity, a desire to understand the interlocutors, and, between the lines, even the idea that their religiosity might be the source of virtues and a bridge to Christianity. To some extent, and with the language and the mentality of the time, in this seventeenth-century book there are seeds of a possible dialogue, not between Christianity and Islam, but among Christians and Muslims.

## II. Missionary, Theologian, and General

**F**orty-eight votes out of eighty-seven. The new superior general of the Society of Jesus was elected in Rome on July 6, 1687, on the third poll and with a bare majority, following the death, in

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<sup>10</sup> "[In the seventeenth century] in Spain, Fr. Tirso González, future superior of the Society, was involved in the popular missions. When he met during his missionary trips some Moors or descendants of the Moors condemned to live in the Mohammedan sect, worried for their salvation, not only he converted many of them to the Catholic faith, but did he also offer to others missionaries [*operarii evangelici*] a weapon to peacefully defeat Muslims; in fact, he wrote an excellent book entitled *Handbook to Convert Muslims* that was published in the same year, 1687, when the author became, against any expectation, the superior of the Society of Jesus" (letter by Włodimir Ledóchowski, twenty-sixth superior general of the Society of Jesus to the provincials, August 15, 1937 *Acta Romana Societatis Iesu* 8, no. 3: 787).

<sup>11</sup> See, for instance, J. Guitton, *Great Heresies and Church Councils* (New York, 1965; Paris, 1963).



December of the previous year, of the French general Charles de Noyelle. The newly elected Tirso González was a Spanish professor (*catedrático*) of theology in Salamanca, and had never before held any government position within the Society. Why, then, was González placed at the head of one of the most influential religious orders of the whole modern age? The answer lies in Rome. Pope Innocent XI had expressed the desire that a man rigorous in moral theology be made head of the Society of Jesus, in order to correct a possible drift of the order towards laxism, a theological theory that permits one to follow the opinion that favors liberty when liberty and the law are in conflict, even when the argument for liberty is only slightly probable. González himself reported a few years later: “The Holy Father spoke about the qualities that the new general had to have in such a way that everyone understood that he wished Father Tirso to be elected.”<sup>12</sup> In the years preceding his election, González had promoted a moral system stricter than the one traditionally taught among Jesuits. He was worried because, starting from the 1640s, the Society of Jesus was under attack by Jansenists and rigorists who spread a negative image of the Society’s moral system, as, for example, Pascal did in his celebrated *Provincial Letters* (1656).

In truth, González had devoted much time to pastoral activity. Before and during his academic career he traveled widely around Spain, preaching, confessing, and catechizing people. “I crossed many provinces of Spain,” he wrote once, “and I experienced several episodes of moral decay, many of them (I’m sad to report) among members of the Society.”<sup>13</sup> His desire for evangelization was evident throughout his life: when he was first a professor in Salamanca (1654–64), he spent all his free time in the so-called popular missions, aimed to re-evangelize European cities and countryside. Then, he asked to be relieved from teaching duties, and became a full-time and successful missionary throughout Spain (1664–76). Later, when he held the prestigious title of *catedrático* of theology at the University of Salamanca (1676–86), he still kept preaching missions during Lent and in his free time. Finally, his passion for evangelization continued throughout his generalate

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<sup>12</sup> T. González de Santalla, *Tractatus historico-theologicus de ortu et origine moderni probabilismi* (Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, Ms. 1361, cit. in *Historia de la Compañía de Jesús en la asistencia de España*, by A. Astrain [Madrid, 1902–25], 6:228).

<sup>13</sup> Tirso González to Gianpaolo Oliva, October 14, 1672, quoted in *Thyrse González et le probabilisme*, by J. M-M. Hoàng Mahn Hien (Paris, 1959), 28.

(1687–1705), during which he greatly expanded the missions of the Society of Jesus.

In 1687, right before leaving for the congregation in which, against every prediction, he would be elected general, González completed his *Handbook for Converting Muslims*;<sup>14</sup> in the book he shared his strategy developed during years of preaching the traditional popular

missions, where he became passionate about evangelizing the Muslims, mostly slaves or servants, who were still present in Spain. The two-volume *Handbook* was published in Madrid and, due in part to the author's renown, was extremely successful, reprinted in many editions, and translated into Polish and Arabic.

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*In 1664, after ten years of teaching, González asked his superiors to leave his chair and dedicate himself full-time to the popular missions. Once again his usefulness to the Jesuits as a teacher and his desire for missionary work were in conflict.*

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For a long time it was the reference book on the subject within the Society, and several copies of it are preserved in various libraries around the world, in Europe, America, and even in China, where the book was used by Jesuits to counter Muslim propaganda.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The *Handbook* was edited by the Jesuit Juan de Goyeneche, who also wrote a short introduction. The original Latin title is *Manuductio ad conversionem Mahumetanorum in duas partes divisa. In prima veritas religionis catholicae-romanae manifestis notis demonstratur. In secunda falsitas mahumetanae sectae convincitur* (Madrid, 1687; Dillingen, 1688–89; Naples, 1702). Some editions of the first volume: Dillingen, 1691; Lille, 1696; Leipzig, 1697. A Polish translation was published by Theophilus Rutka (Lwów, 1694). A manuscript translation of the second book in Arabic is preserved in Rome at the Biblioteca Vaticana. All the quotations from the *Handbook* in this essay are from the Dillingen edition of 1688–89. When quoting I use the abbreviation MD; if there is no indication to the contrary, all the translations are mine.

<sup>15</sup> On November 23, 1690, the missionary Jesuit Philippe Couplet, S.J., wrote to González from China (Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu [hereafter cited as ARSI] JaSin. 164, f° 344r/v), asking for free copies of the *Handbook* to counter Muslim propaganda. Several copies of the *Handbook* are still preserved in the Beitang collection of the Beijing National Library. See H. Verhaeren, *Catalogue de la Bibliothèque du Pe-t'ang* (Paris, 1969). I am extremely grateful to Noël Golvers for this information.

The book combines different literary genres: it is a book of polemics “against heretics,” a sort of catechism for infidels with a simple explanation of the mysteries of the faith, and a report of missions with several episodes from the author’s experience. The first volume is a treatise on the “true Church,” a classic topic of controversialist literature, in which the author proves “the truth of the Christian Roman Catholic Religion” against the heretics and the “infidels who deny the divinity of Christ.” The second volume, the more interesting for this paper, is a theoretical and practical guide to the conversion of Muslims for use by missionaries in Spain and overseas. In the first section, after proposing an accurate “life of Mohammed,” the author lists “the errors of the Qur’an and of the Mohammedan sect”; in the second section, he demonstrates “the falsity of the Qur’an from the fact that it identifies the ultimate happiness of the human beings in the pleasures of the body”; in the third section, the author shows “the falsity of the Qur’an through the Qur’an itself”—that is, through the errors against reason contained in the book; in the fourth section, González confutes the idea, which he attributes to the Qur’an, that the Old and the New Testament have been corrupted by Jews and Christians; in the fifth section, he demonstrates that “the law contained in the Qur’an is not the law of God”; in the sixth and last section, he suggests “the method, taken from the author’s experience, for the conversion of the Muslims.” Before reading the book in greater depth, we must go back to the beginning of González’s missionary vocation.

## The Atlas of the Missions

Born in 1624 in Arganza, in northwestern Spain, and ordained a priest in 1650, Tirso González de Santalla, like many young Jesuits, became passionate about the missions overseas and wrote several letters to the superior general of the Society, asking to be sent to the Indies, the extra-European lands. These letters, the so-called *Litteræ Indipetarum*, were within the Society a specific literary genre and more than 14,000 exemplars are preserved in the Roman Archive of the Society.<sup>16</sup> In 1652 González wrote to the general Goswin Nickel, expressing his

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<sup>16</sup> Two recurrent themes in these letters are the ardent desire to be a missionary, clearly given by God because of its extraordinary strength, and the candidate’s indifference, along with his availability to submit to the superior’s wishes as a form of obedience to God. On the *Litteræ Indipetarum* see G. C. Roscioni, *Il desiderio delle Indie: Storie*,



desire to go to China or the Philippines, and to dedicate his whole life to the overseas missions.<sup>17</sup> As González had predicted, he did not receive permission to leave, but was asked to continue his studies. It was not unusual at that time: since the number of requests was too high, the permission to leave was often denied because the Society also needed professors, preachers, and priests for Europe. As the famous historian of the Society Daniello Bartoli stated, "If we send to the Indies all who ask to leave, the number of the Society in Europe would halve."<sup>18</sup>

During the biennium of theology, the two-year training program for teachers, González met Jerónimo López in Salamanca,<sup>19</sup> one of the most famous Spanish missionaries of the Society; he was so popular that Spanish prelates vied to have him preach in their dioceses. López tirelessly crossed the Iberian peninsula and during his life he preached more than one thousand missions in Castile, Aragon, and Navarra. An intense friendship developed right away between López and González, who was surprised to learn of the extraordinary fruits of popular missions. He understood that "our Indies" or "the Indies out there," as Jesuits called them, were a great opportunity for evangelization. Although not converting pagans who had never known Christianity, these missionaries taught Christians the foundations of their faith, explained doctrine to people who did not have a religious education, and introduced them to a truly Christian life.<sup>20</sup> In the following years, while on hiatus from teaching in Salamanca, González accompanied López on his missions to Madrid, Avila, and Alcalá de Henares. Their friendship was also strengthened by a correspondence in which López enflamed the young Jesuit's passion for mission. He once wrote thus to González:

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*sogni e fughe di giovani gesuiti italiani* (Turin, 2001); A. Fabre and B. Vincent, eds., *Missions religieuses modernes: Notre lieu est le monde* (Rome, 2007), with a rich bibliography.

<sup>17</sup> Tirso González de Santalla to Goswin Nickel, Salamanca, August 14, 1652 (ARSI, His 88, f. 50).

<sup>18</sup> D. Bartoli, *Della vita e istituto di Sant' Ignatio, fondatore della Compagnia di Gesù: Libri cinque del Daniello Bartoli della medesima Compagnia* (Rome, 1650), 161.

<sup>19</sup> On Jerónimo López see DHCJ, 2420.

<sup>20</sup> On popular missions see Broggio, *Evangelizzare il mondo: Le missioni della Compagnia di Gesù tra Europa e America, secoli XVI-XVII* (Rome, 2004), 263; F. L. Rico Callado, *Misiones populares en España entre el Barroco y la Ilustración* (Valencia, 2006).

I am sure that God has put a jewel among your treasures. I don't know what jewel it may be, but I suspect God will use you as His teaching post, so that you might teach many others from it. God will be the Professor, and you will be God's teaching post. And if you can enter Heaven with a hundred thousand souls, . . . don't be satisfied with forty thousand; be like the merchants, who are not pleased with earning one million if they can earn two. With your example, many will embark on missions; and your disciples, who are now lion cubs and eaglets, will become strong lions and golden eagles.<sup>21</sup>

In 1664, after ten years of teaching, González asked his superiors to leave his chair and dedicate himself full-time to the popular missions. Once again his usefulness to the Jesuits as a teacher and his desire for missionary work were in conflict, and once again, as predicted, the provincial of Castile made many attempts to prevent González from leaving his position in Salamanca, considering his presence there essential. González insisted and wrote directly to the General, Gianpaolo Oliva,<sup>22</sup> who agreed with González's request, and wrote the provincial that stopping or not helping him with the greatest effectiveness possible would be opposing or resisting God's will.<sup>23</sup>

For the following twelve years (1664–76), González, “the Atlas of the missions”<sup>24</sup> or “the Apostle of Spain,”<sup>25</sup> as some fellow Jesuits called him, crisscrossed the Iberian peninsula and became well known in Spain for his extraordinary eloquence and his capacity to captivate the

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<sup>21</sup> Jerónimo López to Tirso González, in E. Reyero, *Misiones del Padre Tirso González de Santalla, XIII preposito general de la Compañía de Jesús, 1665–86* (Santiago de Compostela, 1913), 13.

<sup>22</sup> Tirso González to Gianpaolo Oliva, Salamanca, January 7, 1664, in Reyero, *Misiones*, 15–17. The tension between intellectual and missionary pursuits is a *topos* in Jesuit letters to their superiors, as it appears, for instance, in the *Litteræ Indipetarum*. For González's negotiation with his superiors see Colombo, *In virtù dell'obbedienza*.

<sup>23</sup> Gianpaolo Oliva to Francisco Chacupín (provincial of Castille), in Reyero, *Misiones*, 18.

<sup>24</sup> See the dedication to González in F. Xarque, *Insignes misioneros de la Compañía de Jesús en la provincia del Paraguay* (Pamplona, 1687).

<sup>25</sup> See the letter by Gianpaolo Oliva to Tirso González, in Reyero, *Misiones*, 18.

audience. In 1665 from Extremadura, the first destination of his travels, González informed the general about the first fruits of his preaching.

The reports of Tirso González show an extremely warm response of the people who participated to the missions.

[After our preaching,] people were smitten and they came to listen to the homilies with great devotion and without any complaint. They usually have a great desire to receive the sacraments and for this reason we celebrate the general communion every first Sunday of the month in the Cathedral; we created a general congregation for mental prayer, where many of the clergy participated during the past year.<sup>26</sup>

In another letter, González mocked the Dominicans, who had to suffer humiliation in Cáceres because while their church remained empty, the crowds flocked to listen to the Jesuits.<sup>27</sup>

During his popular missions, González strongly promoted the *Acto de contrición* (Act of Contrition), a popular ceremony among Jesuit missionaries both in Spain and overseas.

It was a procession that started from the main church of the town or village, led by a man carrying a bell, with which he alerted the people to his passing. The crucifix, illuminated by two people with lanterns, followed him. Then there were the clergy and finally the people in silence. During the procession the person in charge—not necessarily the missionary—pronounced (or in some cases sang) with intermittent frequency some short prayers called *saetas* [i.e., arrows], to arouse repentance in the faithful. In specific places of the city (crosses, squares, and main streets), from which it could be heard by as many people as possible, the procession stopped and the person who brought the bell rang it and recited two Hail Marys. When a good crowd had gathered, attracted by the sound of the bell, the person in charge exhorted the faithful with a loud and solemn voice to repent of their sins,

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<sup>26</sup> T. González de Santalla, *Breve Itinerario de las Misiones que hizo el Tirso, desde que Dios le sacó para este ministerio hasta el año 1686, escrito por él mismo*, in Reyero, *Misiones*, 57.

<sup>27</sup> T. González de Santalla, *Breve Itinerario*, in Reyero, *Misiones*, 69.

and all the kneeling crowd finally recited the actual Act of Contrition and concluded with another set of *saetas*. Then the procession continued to the next stop where the same script was repeated, so as to reach all the focal points of the city."<sup>28</sup>

Following a well-established tradition, González tried to dissolve long-lasting enmities and tensions during his missions. In 1668, for instance, in a town of the Dioceses of Seville, he preached on forgiveness with excellent results.

As I was finishing the sermon, God led me to make a gesture that I had not thought of. Suddenly it occurred to me to bring the Holy Christ to the steps of the pulpit, turning the image back to the people. This gesture meant to them that they could not look at the face of the Lord if they had not abandoned their hatred and if they had not reconciled with their enemies. From the outcomes, it was clear that the inspiration for this gesture was a divine one. It penetrated into the hearts and provoked the conscience with such strength that two ladies, who had been offended, could no longer refrain themselves, got up from their seats and threw themselves at the foot of a gentleman that was their enemy, and crying they asked for forgiveness. The whole church was moved, the gentleman got up to receive them with tears in his eyes, regretting not having preceded them, and humbly asked forgiveness.<sup>29</sup>

González's reputation grew quickly, and in January 1674 he was called to Madrid where members of the aristocracy demanded his presence. In Madrid, González preached in the Royal Palace and in the audience there was also the young Charles II, who at that time was thirteen years old. Although in a different way from his initial project, González's desire to spend his life evangelizing people was accomplished.

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<sup>28</sup> Broggio, *Evangelizzare il mondo*, 301. See also Broggio, "L'Acto de contrición entre Europe et nouveaux mondes: Diego Luis de Sanvítores et la circulation des stratégies d'évangélisation de la compagnie de Jésus au XVIIe siècle," in *Missions religieuses modernes*, 229–59.

<sup>29</sup> T. González de Santalla, *Breve Itinerario*, in Reyer, *Misiones*, 162–63.

But there was more: the infidels González dreamed of converting during his youth were not only in the Indies. During his journeys throughout Spain, González met many Muslims, slaves on galleys or servants of noble Spanish families, and he soon realized that it was possible to convert them. His interest in Muslims started almost by chance, as he wrote in the *Handbook*.

In 1668, during Advent, I preached a mission in Granada, and although many Muslims lived in that city, I never would have thought of preaching to them. . . . During the summer, however, as the blazing heat forced me to suspend the missions, I retired to the College of Granada: as soon as it was approaching the time to continue the “holy expeditions” and there were only five or six days left before the departure, during a friendly discussion after lunch, the conversation turned on the Mohammedan law, and then the Reverend Father Tomás de León, renowned professor of theology, said that he owned a certain book against the Mohammedan doctrine. . . . Immediately the desire to read that book inflamed my spirit. I borrowed the book and made a compendium of it.<sup>30</sup>

Inspired by the book, the *Confusión de la secta mahomética y del Alcorán* (1515) by Juan Andrés,<sup>31</sup> and following some of its suggestions, González started the apostolate with Muslims. He did not have any special training, and he did not know Arabic. He simply tried to adapt the model of the popular missions to the Muslim audience, learning from his own experience how to communicate with them. González wrote that the greatest obstacle he faced was not the Muslims’ cultural distance from Christians but the skepticism of many Catholic authorities.

### Controversial Missions

After the final expulsion of the Moriscos (1609–14),<sup>32</sup> groups of Muslims and crypto-Muslims were still present on the Iberian penin-

<sup>30</sup> *MD*, 2:60–61.

<sup>31</sup> See here nn. 48 and 49.

<sup>32</sup> In the vast literature on the *Moriscos*, see at least B. Vincent, *El río morisco: Granada—Sevilla—Zaragoza* (2006). On Jesuit apostolate with the Moriscos, see F. de Borja de Medina, “La Compañía de Jesús y la minoría morisca,” *AHSI* 113 (1988): 3–136; El Alaoui, *Jésuites, morisques et indiens: Etude comparative des méthodes d’évangélisation de*



sula. There were communities of descendants of the Moriscos who had escaped the expulsions and had secretly preserved their Islamic traditions and habits, as well as Muslim slaves who had been captured in North Africa or had voluntarily emigrated from Maghreb because of frequent famines. They lived mostly as slaves of the Crown, working on the galleys or as servants in noble Spanish families. To a lesser extent, Muslims lived as free men, farmers, modest craftsmen, and merchants.<sup>33</sup>

Starting from the last decades of the sixteenth century, Jesuits were involved in missions to Muslims both in the towns in North Africa under Spanish dominion, like Melilla and Ceuta, and in Spanish town and cities, particularly in Andalusia. These missions increased during the seventeenth century, as testified by the *Litteræ Annuae*, the correspondence and the accounts of Jesuits involved in this ministry. Among others, Francisco de Alemán (d. 1644),<sup>34</sup> Juan de Almarza (d. 1669),<sup>35</sup> Juan Gabriel Guillén (d. 1675),<sup>36</sup> Francisco Poch (d. 1685),<sup>37</sup> and Tirso González (d. 1705) left several letters to their superiors and ample accounts of their work.

The question of the usefulness of missions to Muslims was an open one, and objections existed even within Catholic communities. Whereas in Muslim lands the missionaries were asked to be prudent,

*la Compagnie de Jésus d'après les traités de José de Acosta (1588) et d'Ignacio de Las Casas, 1605–7* (Paris, 2006).

<sup>33</sup> In early-modern Spain there were different forms of captivity. See B. Vincent, “L’esclavage dans la Péninsule ibérique à l’époque moderne,” in *Les traités et les esclavages: Perspectives historiques et contemporaines*, ed. M. Cottias, E. Cunin, and A. de Almeida Mendes, 67–75; A. Stella, *Histoires d’esclaves dans la péninsule ibérique* (Paris, 2000). See also B. Vincent, “Musulmans et conversion en Espagne au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle,” in *Conversions islamiques: Identités religieuses en Islam méditerranéen*, ed. Mercedes García-Arenal (Paris, 2001), 193–203, and now also in Spanish in B. Vincent, *El río morisco*, 75–87; B. Vincent, “Les jésuites et l’islam méditerranéen,” in *Chrétiens et musulmans à la Renaissance*, ed. B. Bennassar and R. Sauzet (Paris, 1998), 518–31; M.-L. Copete and B. Vincent, “Missions en Bétique: Pour une typologie des missions intérieures,” in *Missions religieuses modernes*, 261–85.

<sup>34</sup> F. de Borja de Medina, “Francisco de Alemán,” in *DHCJ*, 45 (ARSI, *Baet.* 8; *Baet.* 9; *Baet.* 20).

<sup>35</sup> F. de Borja de Medina, “Juan de Almarza,” in *DHCJ*, 79–80.

<sup>36</sup> J. M. de la Escalera, “Juan Gabriel Guillén,” in *DHCJ*, 1841.

<sup>37</sup> F. de Borja de Medina, “Francisco Poch,” in *DHCJ*, 3161–62 (ARSI, *Arag.* 27 / II).

and to deal mostly with the Catholic minorities in order to avoid accusations of proselytism,<sup>38</sup> in the West, where there was no risk in evangelizing the Muslim minority, a silent skepticism had spread among many ecclesiastical circles about the actual possibility of converting them. Why waste energy on people who would never convert? This attitude had been strengthened in Spain by the failure of the missions to the Moriscos.<sup>39</sup> When González started preaching to Muslims, he met resistance from local bishops who were convinced of the impossibility of evangelizing them. González insisted, and asked them to let him try “as though it were an experiment.” He argued that if it did not achieve their conversion, his preaching might still reach the Jews who lived “hidden and unknown” in the Spanish towns, and it might prevent the phenomenon of abandoning Catholicism by teaching Christians the reasons for their faith. Another possible objection against evangelization was that conversion was not necessary because, “all can be saved in one’s own religion.” González attributes this argument to Islam, and strongly criticizes it.<sup>40</sup>

But, in fact, many Catholics without a solid background in theology, consciously or unconsciously shared the idea that a good life and belief in God were enough for salvation.<sup>41</sup> Significantly, in the same period the same attitude was denounced by some Jesuits in other Mediterranean regions, where often Catholic masters resisted the conversion of their slaves using the same argument.<sup>42</sup> González combated this

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<sup>38</sup> See T. Michel, “Misionología: Islamismo.” in *DHCJ*, 2709.

<sup>39</sup> De Borja de Medina, “La Compañía de Jesús”; El Alaoui, *Jésuites, morisques, et indiens*.

<sup>40</sup> *MD*, 2:34.

<sup>41</sup> See S. Schwartz, *All Can Be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World* (New Haven, 2008); M. García-Arenal, “Religious Dissent and Minorities: The Morisco Age,” in *The Journal of Modern History*, 81 (2009): 888–920.

<sup>42</sup> For instance, the Spanish Jesuit Manuel Sanz in his *Breve trattato nel quale con ragioni dimostrative si convincono manifestamente i Turchi esser falsa la legge di Maometto e vera solamente quella di Cristo* (Catania, 1691; Spanish trans. Seville, 1693). Sanz invited Catholic people to convert Muslims, instead of standing and waiting in a sort of passive respectfulness. Like González, Manuel Sanz reasserts in his book that he is not writing only for Muslims, and wants “to teach those who keep them in their homes, or are constantly dealing with them, so that they may know how to talk with them about the truth of our Holy Faith, and convince them of their errors with only a few words, since they won’t have anything to retort” (Sanz, *Breve trattato*, Introduction.)

form of religious non-conformity by reinforcing the doctrine that “outside the Church there is no eternal salvation.” Although the context was not particularly favorable and missions to Muslims were unpopular, González tirelessly preached to them for ten years (1669-79) in many cities of southern Spain, such as Málaga, Vélez-Málaga, Marbella, Gibraltar, Jerez de la Frontera, Puerto de Santa María, Cadiz, Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Seville, Ronda, and Arcos de la Frontera, but also in Madrid. The records of his activity are in his letters, in his reports to the superiors, and in the *Handbook* that, using his personal notes, he wrote some years later.

### III. A Handbook to Convert Muslims

The *Handbook* appeared in 1687, only a few years after the victory of the Holy League against the Ottoman Empire in Vienna (1683), in conjunction with the publication of many books celebrating the military success and the imminent spiritual triumph of Catholicism over Islam.<sup>43</sup> As one can imagine, the books published in the 1680s were influenced by the fear caused by the approaching Turks and later by the enthusiasm following the victory of Vienna. In the *Handbook* there are explicit references to the military events, and the triumph of Christianity over Islam is considered both a military and a religious victory. The military victory is a miracle, because the Holy League was vastly outnumbered, and the religious missions are described in military terms as a battle, a spiritual war. Members of religious orders contributed to this battle through the conquest of souls, converting Muslims in mission lands as well as in the West. In the dedication of the second edition of González’s *Handbook* to Emperor Leopold I, there is this military image of mission, and the Jesuits are presented as soldiers of the Church.

May His Majesty permit even us of the Society of Jesus, as soldiers defending the Church, to be able to make our contribu-

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<sup>43</sup> See A. de Backer and C. Sommervogel, *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus* (Brussels/Paris, 1840–1932), vol. 10, col. 621; E. Colombo, “Jesuits and Islam in Seventeenth-Century Europe: War, Preaching, and Conversions,” in *L’Islam visto da Occidente: Cultura e religione del Seicento europeo di fronte all’Islam*, ed. B. Heyberger, M. García-Arenal, and E. Vismara (Milan/Genoa, 2009), 315–40.

tion to this holy battle. And, while in Hungary, many a Heracles, adorned in laurel wreaths, combat with swords the Mohammedan Hydra, whose monstrous heads are as many as their terrible errors, we wish to fight this same battle with pen and ink.<sup>44</sup>

The weapons used in this battle, fought with pen and ink, are primarily traditional medieval and early-modern arguments. The main sources that González draws on abundantly are two Spanish books by Juan Andrés and Lope Obregón, published in Spain during the sixteenth century.<sup>45</sup> In particular, the *Confusión de la secta mahomética y del Alcorán* (1515) by Andrés, which González read in Granada, influenced him. Juan Andrés, a former Faquih, an expert in Islamic jurisprudence, converted to Christianity in 1487, became a priest, and was sent by the Catholic Kings to Granada to preach to Muslims. The book has a polemical and a pastoral aim.<sup>46</sup> Andrés wants to show the doctrinal and moral contradictions of Islam, insisting on the importance of reason that allows every man to recognize the falseness of Islam and the truth of Christianity. Andrés gives a lot of attention to Mohammed, denying his status of prophet, and dwelling on his sexual conduct and his idea of Heaven as a place of sensory pleasure. At the same time, in order to communicate effectively with the Moriscos and the Muslims, Andrés underlines the common ground between the two religions attempting with bold arguments to prove the Qur'an's dependence on the Christian Gospels. Despite the ample use of original sources, which make

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<sup>44</sup> MD, 2, Dedication.

<sup>45</sup> J. Andrés, *Confusión de la secta mahomética y del Alcorán* (Valencia, 1515). The book was translated into Italian, Latin, English, French, and German. A modern edition has been edited by María Isabel García Monge (Mérida, 2003). Another important source is L. Obregón, *Confutación del Alcorán y secta mahometana* (Granada, 1555). See J. El Kollí, "La polémique islamo-chrétienne en Espagne (1492–1640) a travers les réfutations de l'Islam de Juan de Andrés et Lope Obregón," doctoral thesis (Montpellier, 1983). For the other sources of Tirso González see E. Colombo, *Convertire i musulmani: L'esperienza di un gesuita spagnolo del Seicento* (Milan, 2009), 159s; Michel, "Jesuit Writings on Islam."

<sup>46</sup> Andrés wrote the *Confusión* in order to show the doctrinal and moral contradictions of Islam; he quotes and gives references to original Islamic sources, especially the *Qur'an* and the *Sunna*, of which certain passages are transliterated from Arabic. In addition, Andrés uses Islamic sources on Mohammed's life, such as the book of *Azear* and the *Liber schalæ Machometi*, the latter mistakenly considered by Christians to be a fundamental text of Islam and used to ridicule the prophet.

the book especially interesting, the *Confusión* is essentially set in the medieval tradition.<sup>47</sup> González drew on these sources and it is not surprising that his main arguments come from this traditional view. They can be summarized in five points.

First is the condemnation of Mohammed, the “first-born of the Adversary,” who is described in an insulting manner with regard to his moral conduct, and portrayed as an evil man: he was a liar, and pretended to be a prophet in order to maintain his power. The moral theme is dominant. The falsity of what González calls the “Mohammedan heresy” appeared evident to him in light of the sexual customs of Islam, particularly the treatment of women, both in the practice of polygamy and in the ease with which men could abandon their wives. Additionally, the image of paradise as a realm of sensory satisfaction not only contradicted Christianity, but was against the nature of man according to the ancient Western tradition. “What would these Philosophers [Seneca, Socrates and Horace] have said,” González demands, “listening to Muhammad declaring that the supreme happiness of man is in the sensory pleasure?”<sup>48</sup>

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*González made attempts, though not always successful, to gain a deeper understanding of Islam. Although he could not read Arabic, he tried to make critical use of Western sources.*

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The second argument González retrieves from the past is the demonstration of the “falsity of the Qur’an using the Qur’an itself”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> On Catholic polemics against Islam in the Middle Ages and the early-modern period, see at least Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Edinburgh, 1960); A. Echevarria, *The Fortress of Faith: The Attitude towards Muslims in Fifteenth-Century Spain* (Leiden, Boston, and Cologne, 1999); M. Á. de Bunes Ibarra, “El enfrentamiento con el Islam en el Siglo de Oro: Los Antialcoranes,” in *Edad de Oro* 8 (1989): 41–58; id., *La imagen de los musulmanes y del norte de África en la España de los siglos XVI y XVII: Los caracteres de una hostilidad* (Madrid, 1989).

<sup>48</sup> MD, 2:69.

<sup>49</sup> This is a classic argument of Catholic anti-Muslim polemics (see Daniel, *Islam and the West*). Other Jesuits proposed this argument; see, for example, the title of the Latin book by Michel Nau, a Jesuit missionary in Syria: *Ecclesiae romanæ graecæque vera effigies, ex variis tum recentibus, tum antiquis monumentis singulari fide expressa, Romanis*

and of the unreasonableness of Islam in light of contradictions contained in it. For instance, the validity of the Gospels is at times affirmed and at other times rejected; the notion of “holy war” is deemed necessary in one Sura and denied altogether in another passage; and dietary prohibitions are justified by “absurd and incredible fables.” Readers of such “legends” should laugh heartily, González observes, confident that anyone who encounters such lies should be able to recognize their inherent irrationality. According to the Jesuit, Islamic customs run contrary to history, philosophy, and mathematics.<sup>50</sup> For example, he attacks the unscientific use of astronomy in order to support religious interpretations. How is it possible, demands the Jesuit, to believe in a doctrine which so systematically contradicts science and reason?

The third argument is that Islam is hostile to the critical capacity of man: Mohammed prohibits disputes against the Qur’an and forbids any discussion on the precepts of Islamic law. To quote González:

If a man holds an authentic gold coin, he would not be afraid of having its weight tested by the goldsmith. If the Mohammedan religion is afraid of being tested, and prohibits examination into whether it is indeed God-given, this means that it is not the law of God, but a voluntary creation of a pseudo-prophet in order to oppress people and to maintain its own power.<sup>51</sup>

Fourth, González critiques what he views as Islamic fatalism that devalues human liberty. When González asked Muslims when they would convert, they often replied, “When God wills it,” as if they had no responsibility in this decision.

Mohammed in the Qur’an teaches that God, from the beginning of time, fixed and decided what human beings would do, so that the murderer is not able to avoid murder and the adulterer is not able to avoid adultery because all men’s actions are subjected to

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*Græcisque exhibita: Accessit Religio Christiana contra Alcoranum per Alcoranum pacifice defensa ac probata* (Paris and Madrid, 1680).

<sup>50</sup> See the chapter “Error Alcorani contra Mathematicam” (The Mistakes of the Qur’an in Mathematics), *MD*, 2:253s.

<sup>51</sup> *MD*, 2:32.

the will of God, and men cannot do anything different from what has already been destined by God as their fate.<sup>52</sup>

Fifth, in the *Handbook* there is a particular emphasis on miracles, essential proofs of the truth of the Catholic faith. They are present also in the Islamic tradition, but these are “private miracles,” not documented in any way, and so, according to González, they are certainly false. All these arguments emphasize the value of reason, which is “the foundation of human nature.” The *Handbook* underlines that reason does not allow one to totally comprehend God, but while Christianity does not contradict reason, Islam is full of contradictions.

The condemnation of the immorality of Mohammed, the incompatibility of the Qur’an with human reason, the lack of consideration for the critical capacity of man, the falsity of supposed miracles—these are all traditional Catholic arguments from medieval and early-modern anti-Islamic literature. Apparently, therefore, there is nothing new in the *Handbook*. Like the medieval authors he uses as a source, González wrote this book from a Western perspective;<sup>53</sup> and like most of the early-modern Spanish treatises about Islam, the arguments serve primarily to reinforce a pre-existing judgment rather than add any new knowledge.<sup>54</sup> However, a deeper consideration of this text reveals certain aspects of discontinuity with the past.

First, González updates the medieval approach to the historical context of the seventeenth century, showing how the arguments against Islam, are effective against other early-modern heretics. For example: the “falsity of miracles” is a useful weapon against Lutherans<sup>55</sup>; Islamic fatalism is compared with the doctrine of predestination held by Calvinists; and Muslims, Lutherans, and Calvinists are associated as enemies of Marian devotion, which held great importance in Baroque piety. González’s missionary experience provided additional evidence in support of these analogies: on several occasions, Lutherans and Cal-

<sup>52</sup> MD, 2:269.

<sup>53</sup> Daniel, *Islam and the West*, 271–307.

<sup>54</sup> M. Á. de Bunes Ibarra, “El enfrentamiento con el Islam”; id., *La imagen de los musulmanes*.

<sup>55</sup> According to González, Islam, like Lutheranism, affirms that men can be saved without the “good works” (MD, 2:265–66).

vinists who were in Spanish port cities for trading activities converted to Catholicism after listening to a Catholic missionary preaching to Muslims.

A second novelty in the *Handbook* is the presence of a greater curiosity about Islam and sometimes of more authentic information, which became available in Spain during the seventeenth century.<sup>56</sup> González made attempts, though not always successful, to gain a deeper understanding of Islam. Although he could not read Arabic, he tried to make critical use of Western sources. For instance, the first section of the second volume is a detailed narrative of the life of Muhammad, written with great precision and comparing twelve different Western sources.<sup>57</sup> Additionally, González often shows a sincere interest in Islamic habits, and his approach toward Islam gained him the admiration of Ludovico Marracci (1612–1700), one of the most famous translators of the Qur'an in the seventeenth century, who considered González's *Handbook* "an excellent work, as dignified as its author."<sup>58</sup>

A third novelty, probably the most important, is the emphasis on experience. González repeatedly mentions that he had gained much information about Islam "from the street," speaking directly with Muslims or trying to convert them, and he describes in detail Muslim habits, rites, and traditions.<sup>59</sup> In the last part of the *Handbook*, where he abandons the theological disputations, he gives an account of what he has experienced and provides methodological suggestions; thereby he breaks the usual monotony of many of the Western treatises on Islam. This section of the *Handbook* reveals an attitude less monolithic than what appears from the theoretical arguments.

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<sup>56</sup> See Daniel, *Islam and the West*, 294s. For instance González uses an Arabic *Historia Saracenica* translated into Latin by Thomas van Erpen and published in Lyon in 1625.

<sup>57</sup> See *MD*, 2:2s.

<sup>58</sup> L. Marracci, *Prodromus ad refutationem Alcorani* (Rome: Typis Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, 1691), 7. Material on Ludovico Marracci can be found in L. Saracco, *Marracci Ludovico*, in the *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* (Rome, 2008), 70:700–702.

<sup>59</sup> Other examples of this attitude of learning "from the streets" in Daniel, *Islam and the West*; A. Echevarria, *The Fortress of Faith*.



## The Value of Experience

González’s missions to Muslims—according to his reports—fit well into the model of the traditional popular missions. Usually, while visiting a town, González and his fellow Jesuits started with the traditional popular missions, and later dedicated a few days to preaching to Muslims. The first problem for the missionaries was how to gather them together to listen to sermons that challenged their religion. In one of the most successful missions, the one in Seville in 1672, many priests advertised the event in the parishes, asking the parishioners to bring their slaves to the gathering. González was concerned about respecting as much as possible the Muslims’ freedom.<sup>60</sup> He preferred the cooperation of lay people and confraternities, instead of the usual intervention of civil and religious authorities, to summon the Muslims in a respectful way. In Seville, for instance, the well-known nobleman Don Miguel de Mañara, knight of the Calatrava order and Hermano Mayor of the Santa Hermandad de la Caridad brotherhood, collaborated with González for this purpose. The members of the Santa Hermandad made every effort to gather the Muslims and to bring them to listen to the sermons, even paying each of them in compensation the equivalent of the day of work they would lose.<sup>61</sup> This emphasis on the listeners’ freedom is a recurrent theme in the book, and was quite common in the seventeenth-century Jesuit missions in Spain because of the failure of previous attempts at forced conversion in the Iberian peninsula.

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<sup>60</sup> Miguel de Mañara Vicentelo de Leca (1627–79), member of a noble family of Seville, joined the Order of Calatrava at the age of eight. He was a leading figure in Seville. After the death of his wife (1661), he entered the Santa Hermandad de la Caridad, a brotherhood responsible for burying the dead, the drowned, and the executed. When he became Hermano Mayor, he expanded the activities of the Hermandad for the poor and needy, and founded a hospital in Seville. See F. Martín Hernández, *Miguel Mañara* (Seville, 1981); L. L. Domínguez, *La Caridad de Sevilla: Mañara, Murillo, Valdés Leal* (Madrid, 1930).

<sup>61</sup> González writes: “It’s really wonderful the seriousness, the zeal, and the ardor with which Don Miguel de Mañara and the members of his confraternity worked for the conversion of Muslims. They brought Muslims with them to the missions, not with strength but with love, and participated in the sermons, exhorting them with burning words to ask for baptism. They offered prayers, alms, fasting, flagellation, and other mortifications for their conversion” (*MD*, 2:291).

The preacher, according to González, had always to begin his speech by saying that the Christian religion is against any form of coercion. In accordance with the tendencies of the time and considering the condition of slavery of most of the Muslims, it would have been plausible to force them to listen to the sermons, but González refused this approach.

Just as with a sick man who does not want to accept the intervention of a doctor, we are allowed to tie him up and force him to be treated, in the same way we could compel the unfaithful to listen to the sermons about the only true faith, since we Christians are certain, according to the Article of Faith, that outside the faith in Christ there is no salvation. But, although we could force you, Mohammedans, to participate in our missions, we do not want to use even this kind of violence; but we just ask and beg you to participate. . . . For this reason nothing bad can happen to you during these missions: you will listen to the sermons and you will be free either to embrace the faith in Jesus Christ, or to remain in your faith. If what I'm going to tell you is true—and we Christians think it is absolutely true—your salvation depends on this decision.<sup>62</sup>

The missions took place in squares, theaters, or the yards of the Society's houses. González insists on the importance of choosing the appropriate place: it had to be spacious so the crowd could fit comfortably and easily see the speaker. Unlike the traditional popular missions, churches were to be avoided to prevent their desecration by Muslims, although experience showed they seldom behaved in a hostile way.

The structure of the preaching followed the schedule of traditional popular missions. First, there was a *pars destruens*, where the preacher showed the audience the urgent need for conversion in order to save their souls, the danger of sin, and the reality of the final judgment and of hell. To the traditional arguments, González added a few images specifically directed to Muslims: hell was not a generic place, but the house of Mohammed and all his followers, and the irrationality of Islam was shown through the classic arguments of Catholic rhetoric. Then, there was a *pars construens*, in which the preacher showed

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<sup>62</sup> MD, 2:304.

the truth of Christianity, explained with simple images the dogmas of the Trinity and the Incarnation—so difficult for Muslims to accept—and recounted “true stories” of miracles, lives of saints, and episodes of conversions from Islam to Christianity that, according to the Jesuit, were more effective than any theological argument. González was convinced that after hearing about extraordinary facts which could be explained solely by divine intervention, the Muslims “could not fail to admit” the truth of Christianity.

During the sermons, González referred to conversions or supposed conversions of distinguished men, nobles, and princes of the Islamic world, whose stories widely circulated in Spain during the 1600s.<sup>63</sup>

His goal was to prove to Muslims that even prominent figures of their own world recognized the truth of Christianity. The Jesuit told of the conversion of Muley Larbe Xerife, second child of King Tafilat, who was baptized in 1671 with the name Augustine and who urged many Muslims to embrace Christianity with his example;<sup>64</sup> again, he dedicated a long excursus to the story of Baldassarre Loyola (1631–67), a prince of Fez who converted to Christianity, became a Jesuit, and preached with extraordinary success to Muslims in Italy’s ports of Genoa and Naples.<sup>65</sup> This story was particularly effective because it was recent and well known in Spain.

In 1670, the Jesuit Juan Gabriel Guillén, friend and companion of González, mentioned Baldassarre’s conversion in his sermons; five

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*They followed two different genres of preaching: the city preachers were concerned with style and followed the rules of oratory, while the popular missionaries often deliberately broke these, being more interested in moving the audience with their fervor than in the elegance of their style.*

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<sup>63</sup> See B. Alonso Acero, *Sultanes de Berbería en tierras de la cristiandad: Exilio musulmán, conversión y asimilación en la monarquía hispánica, siglos XVI y XVII* (Barcelona, 2006).

<sup>64</sup> *MD*, 2:40ss; Reyero, *Misiones*, 289s.

<sup>65</sup> On Baldassarre Loyola see E. Colombo, “Baldassarre Loyola de Mandes (1631–67): Prince de Fez et jésuite”, in *Les Musulmans dans l’histoire de l’Europe*, bk. 1, *Une intégration invisible*, ed. J. Dakhliya and B. Vincent (Paris, 2011), 159–93.

Muslims converted and Guillén attributed the success of the mission to the intercession of the former prince of Fez.<sup>66</sup> The attempt to play on the audience's culture and tradition is constant in González's missions, and he suggests that his readers devote much attention to these conversion stories when preaching to Muslims. Other reliable witnesses to the truth of Christianity were the Muslims who had converted on their deathbed. González argued that deathbed conversions were the truest conversions because the converts sought no political, social, or economic benefits from their conversions. In contrast, González noted that many Christians, "brought into captivity by the devil," had embraced Islam for material advantages, and he emphasized that these conversions had never happened on their deathbed.

The true religion is the one that is chosen by men on their deathbed. It has never happened that a Christian who was going to die has embraced the Muslim sect; on the contrary, many Muslims who are going to pass away embrace that Christian religion which they never wanted to embrace during their life.<sup>67</sup>

The stories of these conversions were told in the squares as a warning for Muslims and as an implicit retort to renegades (Christians who recanted their faith by converting to Islam).<sup>68</sup>

## The Language of Theater

The *Handbook* provides revealing glimpses of the Jesuits' preaching style. During the seventeenth century two groups of Jesuit missionaries were active in Europe: the city preachers, who visited the parishes during Lent or for important occasions, and the preachers of the popular missions. They followed two different genres of preaching: the

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<sup>66</sup> Letter of Juan Gabriel Guillén to Gianpaolo Oliva, Jesús del Mont, July 10, 1670, in Reyero, *Misiones*, 236–46.

<sup>67</sup> MD, 2:39ss. On the topic of the *ars moriendi* in Baroque preaching, see Callado, *Misiones populares*, 251ss; F. Hernandez, *Être confrère des Agonisants ou de la Bonne Mort aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, in *Confréries et dévotions dans la catholicité moderne (mi-XV<sup>e</sup>-début XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, ed. B. Dompnier and Vismara (Rome, 2008), 311–38. Deathbed conversion was a *topos* in early-modern Catholic preaching, and of course one can find the same argument in the Islamic world.

<sup>68</sup> MD, 2:41. On the renegades see B. and L. Bennassar, *Les chrétiens d'Allah: L'histoire extraordinaire des renégats, XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris, 1989).

city preachers were concerned with style and followed the rules of oratory, while the popular missionaries often deliberately broke these, being more interested in moving the audience with their fervor than in the elegance of their style.<sup>69</sup> González proudly belonged to the second group. His sermons were based both on memorization and improvisation, and he improvised around some images and quotations, depending on the situation or the audience, always being flexible to change the sermon according to the circumstances. In his book González suggests thirteen quotations from the Old and New Testament to be memorized for sermons to Muslims. Drawing on the Scripture, the preacher had to show that faith is necessary for man's salvation ("without faith it is impossible to please God")<sup>70</sup> and prove what to a Muslim was incomprehensible and scandalous: the divinity of Christ,<sup>71</sup> the mystery of the Trinity, and the historicity of Jesus' death on the cross.<sup>72</sup> Then there were useful quotations to refute the "Mohammedan sect." According to González, the announcement of the coming of false prophets in John's first letter<sup>73</sup> and in Matthew's Gospel ("many false prophets will appear and deceive many people")<sup>74</sup> was related to Mohammed. By quoting Jeremiah,<sup>75</sup> González could challenge the Muslims to discern which was the true faith.<sup>76</sup> Taking his cue from Psalm 18 ("The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple"),<sup>77</sup> he could define Islam as an unreasonable religion because, unlike Christianity, it did not "make wise the simple man"; it offered "ridiculous fairy tales"; it wanted to refute the trustworthy testimony of the Gospels; it did not suggest any way to elevate man toward God; and it pointed to "bestial and brutal men" as models of holiness. Finally, using the Gospel of John, the preacher should stir

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<sup>69</sup> B. Majorana, "Missionarius/Concionator: Note sulla predicazione dei gesuiti nelle campagne (XVII-XVIII secolo)," *Aevum: Rassegna di scienze storiche, linguistiche, e filologiche* 73, no. 3 (1999): 807-29.

<sup>70</sup> Heb. 11:6.

<sup>71</sup> John 8:24; John 17:3.

<sup>72</sup> Matt. 20:18.

<sup>73</sup>1 John 4, 1

<sup>74</sup> Matt. 24:11

<sup>75</sup> Jer. 6:16.

<sup>76</sup> MD, 2:306.

<sup>77</sup> Ps. 18:8 (19:7)

those who did not want to convert even after hearing the missionaries; to those who said they would convert when God wished them to, he should answer with Christ's call: "Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you."<sup>78</sup>

The language used in these sermons requires a few remarks. It might seem surprising that the *Handbook* does not openly deal with the language issue, given the emphasis on the importance of learning languages in the Society of Jesus.<sup>79</sup> As we have seen, González did not speak Arabic, and from his accounts it seems that in most cases his

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*Generally the slaves' social condition did not change after baptism, although occasionally the master decided to set the converted slave free or the sponsor gave the baptized enough money to redeem himself.*

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audience was able to understand, and sometimes even read, Castilian. It is plausible to conclude that many of González's interlocutors, after years as servants or slaves in Spanish noble families, knew at least the basics of the Spanish language;<sup>80</sup> we might also imagine that occasionally González was unable to

preach to groups of Muslims who did not understand him, even though he never reports this occurrence. Finally, González mentions that on a few occasions he asked for the assistance of an interpreter. González seems to have been careful about some linguistic issues. While preaching in Malaga in 1670, for example, he realized that he was mispronouncing the name of Mohammed, and that Muslims perceived it as an offense. He then learned how to pronounce the name correctly.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> John 12:35

<sup>79</sup> In Spain Jesuits usually considered it important to learn Arabic when they dedicated themselves to the apostolate to Arabic-speaking people. Given the difficulty of learning Arabic, however, the Jesuits usually did not achieve brilliant results. See F. de Borja de Medina, "La Compañía de Jesús y la minoría morisca," 22.

<sup>80</sup> The missionaries used to distribute devotional books to the Muslims who could read Spanish (see *MD*, 2:303). On the use of devotional books in the Spanish popular missions see Callado, *Misiones populares*, 277.

<sup>81</sup> *MD*, 2:15. The oscillation between gentle dialogue and harsh preaching is a peculiarity of González's ministry. Usually, according to the sources, he used a harsh tone in public preaching and a more gentle tone in private dialogues.

Not only the words, but also gestures, images, and places in which the missions were held were important for the effectiveness of the communication. The *Ratio studiorum*, the curriculum of Jesuit education, insists on the importance of theater, which had an extraordinary development within the Society during the 1600s and influenced missions both in Europe and overseas. Because of the cultural distance between the speaker and the listeners, which might make words less effective, gestures and images were even more important in the missions to Muslims. Once, during a sermon to Muslims, González displayed the fearful image of an *alma condenada*, a soul condemned to hellfire; in the *Handbook* he suggests to his readers to use as a model the passionate monologue that one missionary addressed directly to the walls of the church, so they would bear witness to his efforts to move the Muslims' hearts.

The Jesuit, turning his back toward the public and facing the wall, wiped the sweat off his brow with his hand, and then placed his palm on the wall and exclaimed in a loud voice: “O wall, listen to the Word of God, and be witness to the fact that I have preached the truth to these insensible people.” And then, turning to face the Muslims, he spoke to them menacingly. “I, I will be strict against you before God on the Day of Judgment. I will condemn your stubbornness before the supreme judge. . . . I believe that your minds are sufficiently convinced; however, your wills resist and still rebel. O good God! Melt the hardness of their hearts!” With these and other words he thundered at them.<sup>82</sup>

Those who were present during the sermon were not only passive spectators, but often participated in an active way. If a man asked for baptism, González suggested that the missionary should invite him to the stage so that everyone could see him; then, he should embrace him warmly and put a rosary around his neck. If it was a woman, the missionary should avoid embracing her, but he should ask a noble Christian woman to do so afterwards.<sup>83</sup> The emphasis on gestures attracted the attention, and occasionally the suspicion, of the Muslims,

<sup>82</sup> *MD*, 2:229–30.

<sup>83</sup> *MD*, 2:305. The devotion to the Rosary was particularly important also in the traditional popular missions, and Jesuits strongly promoted confraternities dedicated to this devotion.

who sometimes listened to the sermons while covering their heads, because they feared the missionaries would put an evil spell on them.<sup>84</sup>

While using the language of theater during his own missions, González condemned profane theater—an attitude consistent with his moral rigorism—and repeatedly promoted the devotion of the Forty Hours in open conflict with the carnival plays. During the summer of 1671 it was decided in Sanlúcar de Barrameda to extend a popular mission because of the enthusiasm of the people, and to cancel the scheduled comic plays, that, according to González, were “the missions created by the Devil to tear out innocence and piety from many souls, and to insinuate the vices in them.”<sup>85</sup>

González’s attitude toward Muslim women is particularly noteworthy. During the traditional popular missions to Catholics, missionaries often warned women regarding sexual morals and excessively revealing fashions.<sup>86</sup> In contrast, the image of Muslim women as it appears from the *Handbook* is a decidedly positive one: in his missions to Muslims González has a special reverence and attention for women, who are always used in the examples he gives and who embody the ideals and values he wants to communicate. Although the author never explains the reason for this choice, one can guess he wanted to create a deliberate contrast with the status of women in Islam, which was one of the Jesuit’s arguments to convince his audience of the falseness of Mohammed’s law. González tells many moving stories of conversion of women: Fátima, an old Muslim woman of Málaga, asked to be baptized on her deathbed after years of resistance; a slave woman received the news that she would soon be set free and could return to Algiers, her native town, but “kindly answered that she would prefer to stay in

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<sup>84</sup> Letter by Juan Gabriel Guillén to Gianpaolo Oliva, Jesus del Monte, July 10, 1670, in Reyero, *Misiones*, 237.

<sup>85</sup> T. González de Santalla, *Carta-memoria del Tirso al general sobre los sucesos de sus misiones de 1671 a 1672*, in Reyero, *Misiones*, 303.

<sup>86</sup> After Pope Alexander VII condemned some laxist propositions (1656), the Jesuits undertook in Spain a battle against excessively revealing fashions, with some caution due to the fact that many noblewomen favored such fashions. González’s attention toward moral aspects follows the tradition of the popular missions, but it is also linked to his rigorous moral approach.



Spain as a slave among Christians, than to go back to her Muslim land as a free woman.”<sup>87</sup> González understood that while preaching to Muslims it was necessary to separate men and women within the crowd, not for reasons of sexual morals, as in the traditional popular missions to Catholics, but rather to guarantee the women’s freedom to ask for baptism without being influenced by their husbands. But there are also in González’s repertoire, opposite examples of Muslim men who obtained the conversion of their wives.<sup>88</sup>

González insists that missions toward Muslims were a chance also for Catholics to better understand the reasons for their faith. Any Christian present could and

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*The debate on the importance of religious education was also a concern within the Society of Jesus in the traditional popular missions to Catholics, which usually insisted on a penitential approach instead of focusing on catechism.*

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should contribute to the missions, first by sneaking into the crowd of Muslims in order to break their cohesion, and to discourage murmuring and negative comments against the preacher, and second through prayer and charity. González emphasizes the sacrifices of many Catholics, often noblemen, in order to obtain from God the conversion of Muslims: people offered Masses, did charitable works for the poor in the hospitals, or vowed to abstain perpetually from meat. According to González, the most impressive Christian virtue in the eyes of Muslims was charity: in fact he thought that it was unknown to the Islamic world, and at the same time it was moving for Muslims. In Seville, for instance, many Muslims had converted because they were inspired

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<sup>87</sup> MD, 2:295.

<sup>88</sup> “A certain Moor received the light of God and went back home and started to preach to his wife, exhorting her not to miss the opportunity to convert and to gain eternal salvation. Since he found her very stubborn, after giving her all her belongings and all the money he had—without keeping anything for himself since he was satisfied with Christ—he left, because he did not want to live anymore with a woman who wouldn’t embrace the faith in Christ. The same happened to another Muslim man, who abandoned his beloved wife who wouldn’t convert. A few days later our Lord consoled both men, because the two wives, moved by the example of their husbands, embraced Christianity, and the husbands welcomed them with great joy” (MD, 2:294–95).

by the archbishop, who took care of and comforted the sick in the local hospital. To prove the importance of the prayers of pure and innocent men, González recalls a few episodes that centered on children. Children and their education had always been a priority in the Jesuit missions, both domestic and overseas.<sup>89</sup> Children represented people not yet corrupted by the vices of the society or a bad education, and could learn more easily than adults. González talks admiringly, for instance, about the Christian piety of a ten-year-old boy, who ardently wished for the conversion of his Muslim parents. Since he could not convince them, he distributed water during a mission in Seville, asking for alms that he used to offer three Masses for this intention. Mariana, a six-year-old girl of a noble family from Málaga, consecrated her life by vow for the conversion of a Muslim servant, to whom she was very much attached.<sup>90</sup>

The climax of the traditional popular missions to Catholics was confession, which marked the return to a Christian life and the beginning of a new existence. Not surprisingly, the climax of the missions to Muslims was baptism, which meant entering the Christian community. Just as the number of people who took part in confession was the mea-

sure of a popular mission's effectiveness, the number of baptisms weighed the success of the missions to Muslims. These baptisms were social events that involved the nobility because often the converted slaves worked for them, and they considered it an honor to be their sponsors.

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*There is something mysterious in conversion, linked to a person's freedom and God's intervention, because, as González often states, "only God can move a Moor's heart."*

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For instance, in Madrid in 1670, among those who took part in the ceremony were the Count of Oropesa and the wife of the President of Castile, who accompanied a converted slave. Generally the slaves' social condition did not change after baptism, although occasionally the mas-

<sup>89</sup> See El Alaoui, *Jésuites, morisques et indiens*.

<sup>90</sup> MD, 2:295–96.

ter decided to set the converted slave free or the sponsor gave the baptized enough money to redeem himself.<sup>91</sup>

González dwells on the description of the “extraordinary baptism” of thirty-eight Muslims held in Seville in 1672.<sup>92</sup> The baptism was preceded by an imposing ceremony: the streets of the town were full of people and “there was an extraordinarily solemn procession.” The catechumens were dressed so elegantly and colorfully that “each catechumen resembled a flourishing garden, and all the catechumens resembled a colorful spring.”<sup>93</sup> They started from the professed house of the Society and walked to the church together with the nobility and the clergy. González explains the value of the Baroque ceremonies preceding the baptisms, celebrated by a distinguished bishop or by an archbishop.<sup>94</sup> Through concrete and visible gestures, in fact, even less educated people could understand the greatness and beauty of faith. “Both the faithful and the unfaithful, participating in those sacred ceremonies and looking at the solemnity of them, understand that there is something great at stake. . . . It would not happen if they saw just men entering the holy water.”<sup>95</sup>

The *Handbook* describes in detail the effects of the magnificent baptismal ceremonies on the people observing. In Málaga in 1669, during the catechumens’ procession held “with great pomp,” a young girl “very obstinate in the Mohammedan sect” who had resisted every attempt of conversion and who opposed Christianity defiantly, “admired, . . . with great wonder, the joy on the faces of the catechumens, the spiritual happiness of Christians, the great devotion and magnifi-

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<sup>91</sup> *MD*, 2:295.

<sup>92</sup> See a published account of the mission in Seville: *Relación de los maravillosos efectos que en la ciudad de Sevilla ha obrado una misión de los Padres de la Compañía de Jesús, este año de 1672* (Seville, 1672).

<sup>93</sup> Revero, *Misiones*, 367; *MD*, 2:290–293.

<sup>94</sup> *MD*, 2, bk. 6, chap. 5: “Quantum expediat, quod Mahumetani ad Fidem conversi magna cum solemnitate baptizentur” (The importance of baptizing with solemnity the Muslims converted to our faith).

<sup>95</sup> *MD*, 2:296.

cence of the procession that recalled the whole nobility, and the beautiful singing of the mysteries of faith."<sup>96</sup>

Between the lines of the *Handbook* we can see the missionaries' emphasis on the religious education of those who asked for baptism: besides persuading, there was a need for teaching, educating, and catechizing. The debate on the importance of religious education was also a concern within the Society of Jesus in the traditional popular missions to Catholics, which usually insisted on a penitential approach instead of focusing on catechism. During the seventeenth century, however, some missionaries pointed out the importance of education, in order to produce long-lasting effects in the people.<sup>97</sup> The religious instruction of Muslim catechumens was a still-more-debated issue, because, since the sixteenth century, there had been discussions in Spain about the lawfulness and usefulness of mass baptisms, and several voices within the Society were raised against this practice.<sup>98</sup> González pays a lot of attention to the religious instruction imparted by the missionaries themselves or by local clergymen, usually simple catechism classes that lasted a few weeks. The *Handbook* shows González's care not to baptize those who were not yet adequately prepared. In Madrid in 1670 a young Muslim, moved by the solemn ceremony, got up on the stage that had been built in front of the Society's Imperial College and cried out for baptism. The sacrament was delayed because the young man had not been yet educated regarding the fundamentals of faith.<sup>99</sup> On the other hand, in 1669 in Málaga, when a Muslim young woman asked to be baptized, the bishop considered her young age and the fact that she had been living with a Christian woman for a long time, far from other Muslims, as factors in her favor. He decided not to frustrate her, but to grant the sacrament immediately and to instruct her during the following weeks.<sup>100</sup>

The *Handbook* offers a colorful picture of the missions to Muslims in seventeenth-century Spain. Although the triumphant tones and the

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<sup>96</sup> *MD*, 2:297.

<sup>97</sup> See Dompnier, "Ricerche recenti sulle missioni popolari nel Seicento," 822.

<sup>98</sup> De Borja de Medina, "La Compañía de Jesús"; El Alaoui, *Jésuites, morisques, et indiens*.

<sup>99</sup> *MD*, 2:299.

<sup>100</sup> *MD*, 2:298.

typical emphasis of the missionary literature of the time warn scholars to be cautious in evaluating González’s account, more than a few elements confirm its reliability. The author does not keep silent about the failures and difficulties: some missions showed no results, many of the Muslims he met never converted and openly opposed the missionaries, and sometimes Muslim authorities used their influence against the Jesuits. In Marbella, for instance, a Muslim expert in the Qur’an kept repeating publicly that he would never convert to Christianity, and that it was more likely that the pope would convert to Islam.<sup>101</sup> The possibility of measuring the results of the traditional popular missions is an open question for scholars: it is difficult for historians to assess the effects of missions, the sincerity of conversions, and their duration in time.<sup>102</sup> Although the same problem persists in the missions to Muslims, here we have some useful data about baptisms. The numbers of conversions and the episodes González retells in the *Handbook* match almost perfectly with the data derived from the letters and accounts of the missions written by González ten years before and preserved in the archives. González mentions about two hundred baptisms he witnessed personally in about twelve years: this number, though not especially relevant in itself, could become significant within a more complete quantitative survey on this genre of mission.

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*The missions to Muslims were not the most celebrated success of the Society and have been underestimated by the historiography; it seems, however, that within the Society there was a special fascination with Islam that, like an underground river, sometimes reemerged.*

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From the qualitative point of view, the idea of conversion that emerges in the *Handbook* is interesting. When the Jesuit exposes the arguments against Islam, he states that the mere use of reason should

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<sup>101</sup> See Reyero, *Misiones*, 240.

<sup>102</sup> As Bernard Dompnier observed, the problem of the results of the missionary enterprises will always remain an uncertain area of research in religious history (Bernard Dompnier, “Ricerche recenti sulle missioni popolari nel Seicento,” in *Società e Storia* 106 [2004]: 813–24, 814).

show the contradictions of the “Mohammedan sect.” But, in fact, in his accounts of missions, conversion is not an automatic step despite what the theoretical arguments may lead one to think. There is something mysterious in conversion, linked to a person’s freedom and God’s intervention, because, as González often states, “only God can move a Moor’s heart.” “Pray to God,” González repeats to his audiences who were not persuaded of the truth of Christianity although they sincerely desired to convert. This consciousness determines the missionary’s attitude, which sways between the insistence on the rational demonstration of Islam’s falsehood and delicacy in taking his interlocutors by the hand along the path of conversion.

#### IV: Conclusion: A Way to Dialogue

Reading González’s *Handbook*, one might be struck by the apparent dichotomy between the theoretical attacks against Islam and González’s approach towards the Muslims he actually met. We do not find in the book exceptional novelties in terms of a theoretical approach to Islam: all the traditional Catholic arguments are there, just slightly updated and adapted to the author’s contemporary situation. But when González abandons the confutation of Islam, the denigration of Mohammed, and the harsh theoretical critique of Islamic habits and traditions, and starts describing his missionary activity and the actual encounters he had, his approach significantly changes. In the squares and streets of Spain, González did not view Muslims as dangerous heretics to be opposed and defeated, but as “deceived innocents”: deceived by the falsehood of the religion they belonged to, they were not fully responsible for their “invincible ignorance” of the Christian faith.

How can we explain the coexistence of two different approaches? Some hypotheses can be raised. Hostility toward Islam was part of the religious and cultural environment of seventeenth-century Europe, when a new “Catholic reconquest”<sup>103</sup> was taking place in the East, and the struggle against Islam had both political and religious meanings;

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<sup>103</sup> O. Chalaine, *La “reconquête catholique de l’Europe centrale: XVIe–XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1998).

at the same time, however, Jesuits were trained in the approach of accommodation and Muslims seemed to have more features in common with the inhabitants of the Indies than with Lutherans and Calvinists. For the many Jesuits who wished to go on missions overseas, the traditional popular missions were often considered a second choice, something they fell back on; in their imagination, missions were connected with distant lands, different peoples, and new worlds. However, when it was possible to find these same features in Europe, Jesuits transferred to popular missions their passion for the Indies.<sup>104</sup> In the case of Muslims, the different language, culture, and habits of these people made them distant and inevitably fascinating. In 1676, for instance, writing to the general about his missions with Muslims in Barcelona, the Jesuit Francisco Poch stated that God “had moved the Indies to that town” because, in spite of the fact they lived in Spain, the Muslims had many common traits with the people living in the Indies.<sup>105</sup>

The same attitude can be found in different times and places. One century before the publication of González’s *Handbook*, in another critical period in the relationship between Christianity and Islam that culminated in the Battle of Lepanto (1571), we can find in the renowned Italian Jesuit Antonio Possevino (1534–11) the same ambivalent approach.<sup>106</sup> On the one side, Possevino was a zealous promoter of an anti-Islamic crusade; on the other side, while he served as the secretary of the Society of Jesus, he developed a missionary attitude towards Muslims based on the model of accommodation. Both attitudes converged in Possevino’s masterpiece, the *Bibliotheca selecta* (1593; 1603; 1607), a work that had an enormous influence within the Jesuit network and played an important role in the building of the *Ratio studiorum*, the curriculum of the Society of Jesus. At the end of the sixteenth century, in a completely different context, the Spanish Jesuit Jerónimo Xavier was

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<sup>104</sup> A. Proserpi, “‘Otras Indias’: Missiori della controriforma tra contadini e selvaggi.” in id., *America e Apocalisse e altri saggi* (Pisa, 1999), 65–87; Broggio, *Evangelizzare il mondo*.

<sup>105</sup> See ARSI, Arag. 27/II, f. 85.

<sup>106</sup> S. Lator, “Il padre Antonio Possevino e l’Islam,” *Studia Missionalia* 1 (1943): 215–25; D. Caccamo, “Conversione dell’Islam e conquista della Moscovia nell’attività diplomatica e letteraria di Antonio Possevino,” in *Venezia e Ungheria nel Rinascimento*, ed. V. Branca (Florence, 1973), 167–91.

sent to the Mughal empire. He spent almost twenty years at the court of Akbar ad Jahangir, where he was involved in religious debates with Muslims;<sup>107</sup> in these debates, and in his work *Fuente de Vida* (1600), he used traditional polemical arguments against Islam. At the same time, in his missionary activity among the common people of the cities of Agra and Lahore, “he introduced some interesting accommodations to the Muslim mentality, as in matters of venerating the Holy Bible, of separating men and women in the church, and of making more severe the fasting of new Christians,” and he “attempted to attract the Muslim population by a popular and public display of the Christian religious life.”<sup>108</sup> At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Xavier’s companion, the Portuguese Jesuit brother Bento de Goís (1562–1607) traveled throughout Central Asia looking for the kingdom of Cathay described by Marco Polo. During part of his trip, with his superiors’ permission, he was dressed like a Muslim and respected the fasting of Ramadan, an extreme form of accommodation toward Islam.<sup>109</sup>

## Ignatius and the Muslims

The missions to Muslims were not the most celebrated success of the Society and have been underestimated by the historiography; it seems, however, that within the Society there was a special fascination with Islam that, like an underground river, sometimes reemerged. The source of this river can be found at the very origin of the Society. Well before the foundation of the order, Ignatius of Loyola, wounded during a battle in Pamplona, had a conversion experience reading the life of the saints and decided to go to the Holy Land, to live in that sacred place and to convert Muslims. His project did not succeed, but Ignatius maintained his attraction for Islam throughout his life; when in 1534 the first companions of the Society of Jesus gathered in Montmartre, they had the idea of spending their life in the Holy Land and of evangelizing Muslims.

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<sup>107</sup> A. Camps, *Jerome Xavier, S.J., and the Muslims of the Mogul Empire: Controversial Works and Missionary Activity* (Schöneck-Beckenried, 1957); M. Alam-S. Subrahmanyam, “Frank Disputations: Catholics and Muslims in the Court of Jahangir (1608–11),” *Indian Economic Social History Review* 46 (2009): 457–511.

<sup>108</sup> Camps, *Jerome Xavier*, 251–52.

<sup>109</sup> H. Didier, *Fantômes d’Islam et de Chine: Le voyage de Bento de Goís s.j., 1603–7* (Paris, 2003).



Ignatius often showed a bellicose attitude toward Islam. In 1550, Charles V organized a military expedition against the city of Mahdia, in Tunisia, the stronghold of Muslim pirates who were threatening commercial traffic in the Mediterranean.<sup>110</sup> On that occasion, Diego Laínez, prominent member and future superior general of the Society, accompanied the viceroy of Sicily in the campaign. The expedition was successful, but it did not change the complex situation in the Maghreb. What is striking is the reaction of Ignatius, as we can read in his letters to Laínez and in the letters he circulated among the members of the Society. Ignatius was on fire with enthusiasm and talked about “the very just war” against “the enemies of the Holy Cross”; in a circular letter he asked “all the houses, priests in their Masses as well as laymen in their prayers” to pray “every day for the happy success of the expedition.”

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*[P]assages [such as these] show that in the Handbook, along with the seventeenth-century anti-Islamic polemics, there are traces of a different attitude that emerges from the missionary experience.*

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Ignatius’s interest in the Muslim presence in the Mediterranean area grew even stronger in the following years. In 1552 he began to think about an ambitious project: the creation of an Armada, a Holy League that would take a defensive and offensive role in the Mediterranean. In a fascinating exchange of letters with another important Jesuit, Jerónimo Nadal, Ignatius explained in detail his idea to promote the alliance of European rulers in order to create an anti-Muslim fleet of at least three hundred ships. This attitude of Ignatius is in accordance with the orientation of the Church at the time: the opening bull of the Council of Trent (*Lætare Jerusalem*, 1544) called for the extirpation of heresies and the defeat of the Turks, enemies of the Catholic Church.

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<sup>110</sup> On this episode see J. W. Reites, *St. Ignatius and the People of the Book: An Historical-Theological Study of St. Ignatius of Loyola’s Spiritual Motivation in His Dealings with the Jews and Muslims* (Rome: Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1977); id., “Ignacio y los musulmanes de Tierra Santa,” *Manresa* 52 (1980): 291–318; M. Scaduto, *Storia della Compagnia di Gesù in Italia*, vol. 3, *L’Epoca di Giacomo Laynez*, 148–51 and 729–42; L. Charles, *Les jésuites dans les états barbaresques: Algérie et Maroc* (Paris, 1914); F. de Borja edina, “Ignacio de Loyola y el Mar: Su política Mediterránea,” *Revista de historia naval* 13 (1995): 11–56; M. A. de Bunes Ibarra, “Ignacio de Loyola y la expansión del Islam en el siglo XVI,” *Anuario del Instituto Ignacio de Loyola* 4 (1997): 93–105.

But Ignatius also experienced missionary approaches towards Muslims. In 1553, as soon as he received from the provincial of Sicily news about the possibility of converting Muslims in North Africa, Ignatius started “making long-range plans for providing men to go there.”<sup>111</sup> Not only did Ignatius shift manpower priorities to free men to go to the Muslims, but he also wrote that he would go himself if the Society let him. For the same reason, a program of Arabic studies was organized in the Sicilian colleges of Messina and Monreale. Furthermore, Ignatius encouraged accepting Moorish converts into the college in Granada, not only out of charity, but in the hope that some may be of help in the conversion of others. Finally, it is possible to find this concern for the Muslims in the first documents of the Society of Jesus. The document of approval of the order, *Regimini militantis Ecclesiae* (1540) asserts that Jesuits are available to go everywhere, “[w]hether they [the Pope or his successors] are pleased to send us among the Turks or other unbelievers, even those who lived in the region called the Indies, or among any heretics whatever, or schismatics, or any of the faithful.”<sup>112</sup>

It is significant that “Turks,” a word used to define Muslims in general, are listed first; additionally, there is a movement from the farthest to the nearest, from the Turks to the faithful Christians.<sup>113</sup> The document emphasizes the distance of Muslims, not geographically, but in terms of culture. In a subsequent document, the bull *Exposcit debitum* of Julius III, which confirmed the Society in 1550, there was an important shift in the Jesuits’ description of their ministries: the purpose of the Society was now “to strive especially for the defense and propagation of the faith.” In the first version, the word “defense” did not appear.<sup>114</sup> The new definition reinforced the role of Jesuits in the defense of the Church against the Protestant threat. There were two possible attitudes for two different genres of non-Catholics, and the Catholic faith had to be either defended or propagated. It seems that Islam had a sort of special status in this distribution: sometimes it was necessary to struggle against the Islamic heresy—even with the holy war—for the defense of

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<sup>111</sup> Reites, *St. Ignatius*, 87.

<sup>112</sup> *Regimini Militantis Ecclesiae*, 3.

<sup>113</sup> Reites, *St. Ignatius*, 50.

<sup>114</sup> *Exposcit Debitum*, 1.

the faith; and sometimes it was possible to evangelize Muslims, treated as unbelievers, for the propagation of the faith.

The most famous episode connected with Islam in Ignatius’s life is recounted in his so-called autobiography. On his way to Montserrat, Ignatius met a Moor.<sup>115</sup> They began to discuss theology; and while they were talking about Mary, the Moor said that “he could not believe that in giving birth she remained a virgin.” When the two men parted, Ignatius was “filled with anger against the Moor” and thought that “he [Ignatius] had done wrong in allowing a Moor to utter such a thing about Our Lady.” Later, “tired of trying to figure out what would be the good thing to do, and unable to come to any definite decision,”<sup>116</sup> Ignatius resolved to let his mule decide: if the mule went in the same direction as the Muslim, Ignatius would kill him, otherwise he would let him go. Thanks to the mule’s choice, the Muslim was saved. This episode became famous within the Society and was told and recounted many times: in the lives of the saint (for example, the one by Pedro de Ribadeneira)<sup>117</sup>, in the iconography of Ignatius (like the 1609 illustrated biography),<sup>118</sup> in some dramas about the Society of Jesus (such as Calderon de la Barca’s *El Gran Principe de Fez*).<sup>119</sup> Additionally, it was well known among all the members of the order and often quoted in the letters of Jesuits involved in missions to Muslims. From Ignatius’s encounter with the Moor, many Jesuits concluded that it is possible to respect, or at least not to condemn, Muslim people for their different beliefs.

In the *Handbook*, a dialogue between González and a Muslim has the same outcome—the Muslim does not convert—and leads to the same conclusion. In Catholic polemics, the dialogue was a traditional

<sup>115</sup> J. Saralle, “Iñigo de Loyola y el moro de Pedrola,” *Boletín de la Real Sociedad Vascongada de Amigos del País* 13 (1957): 267–84.

<sup>116</sup> *A Pilgrim’s Journey: The Autobiography of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, ed. J. N. Tylenda (San Francisco, 2001), 57–58.

<sup>117</sup> Pedro de Ribadeneira, *Vita Ignatii Loiolæ, Societatis Iesu Fundatoris* (Naples, 1572).

<sup>118</sup> *Vita beati patris Ignatii Loiolæ* (Rome, 1609). For a modern edition, see *Constructing a Saint through Images: The 1609 Illustrated Biography of Ignatius of Loyola*, ed. J. W. O’Malley and J. M. Walsh (Philadelphia, 2008).

<sup>119</sup> Calderón de La Barca, *El Gran Príncipe de Fez don Balthasar de Loyola*, in *Cuarta parte de comedias nuevas de don Pedro Calderón de la Barca* (Madrid, 1672), 227–82.

literary genre, an easy way to expose the arguments and to show the reader how a discussion with a Muslim could have been carried on. The usual form was an imaginary conversation between a Christian and a Muslim, in which the Christian gradually answered all the objections and doubts of the Muslim, who by the end admitted his errors requested baptism.<sup>120</sup> In the *Handbook*, on the contrary, González admits that his reasoning did not ultimately convince the Muslim, who decided to remain with his religion. This conclusion, not in the form of a conventional model, suggests that the dialogue probably did really occur.

Hamid, my friend, before God you will not be able to justify yourself with the argument of ignorance. I have openly announced the truth to you. If you still doubt the truth of what I have said, pray that God will show you the truth, so that He may illuminate the darkness of your mind and lead you to salvation. After having heard all these arguments, you should at least keep asking if it is necessary for you, in order to obtain eternal salvation, to embrace the Christian religion. It is a crucial problem. Pray persistently God to enlighten you. So that you may be worthy of His light, avoid vices, practice piety, love God above all things and your neighbor as yourself, and diligently keep the Ten Commandments, for to these things all men are obliged.<sup>121</sup>

The same attitude can be found in other passages of González's *Handbook*. During a mission in Seville, the Jesuit recounted an episode that had happened to another Jesuit, Ignacio Las Casas (1550–1610), a Morisco who joined the Society. Facing the stubbornness of a Muslim slave, and being unable to persuade him, Las Casas told him: "I don't ask you to abandon your sect, or to do something against it; I only ask you to pray to the God that you, Moors, have in your Qur'an, and to say, "Bring me, O God, on the good and just path."<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> See, for instance, the dialogues written by Peter Abelard and Ramon Llull. A dialogue written in Arabic by the Jesuit Giovanni Battista Eliano (1530–89) was translated into English. See W. Bedwell, *Mohammedis Imposturæ: That Is, the Discovery of the Manyfold Forgeries, Falsehoods, and Horrible Impieties of the Blasphemous Seducer, Mohammed* (London, 1615).

<sup>121</sup> *MD*, 2:155.

<sup>122</sup> *MD*, 2:44.

“Ask God to show you the truth”; “pray the God that you have in your Qur’an.” These passages show that in the *Handbook*, along with the seventeenth-century anti-Islamic polemics, there are traces of a different attitude that emerges from the missionary experience. Tirso González seems to acknowledge that a sincere religiosity can be a path to conversion, and that Muslims too worship the only true God. A way to dialogue was open.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor:

Many thanks to you and to Barton T. Geger, S.J., for the Summer 2012 number of *STUDIES*, *The First First Companions*. We have waited so patiently for this topic to be addressed with such detail.

William V. Bangert gives us scarcely three sentences about the “first first” companions, and Barton T. Geger gives us thirty-eight pages, for which he deserves praise. Let us hope the next contribution to this fascinating, under-researched theme will be four hundred pages in length in any language.

One concern. There may be just a whiff of it, and it may not be conscious, but Father Geger seems to accommodate himself to the Protestant-dominated historiography of the Reformation. Reformation history has nowadays become decidedly critical of the Protestant truth claims of Saint Ignatius’s day and beyond. Perhaps Geger is needlessly casual when he mentions two precise symbols of “Catholic corruption”—the Old Orders and the Inquisitions. There are implications for these symbols.

We read on page 5: “. . . widespread among the faithful at this time was hope of a grass-roots re-

form movement in the Church, one untainted by associations with canonical religious life, which suffered from a reputation for laxity and decline.” Again on pages 2 and 5, he writes that some Illuminati were sentenced to burning at the stake, or that Ignatius himself might burn at the stake (p. 19). These assertions if taken without explanation may serve to mask the complex architecture of penalties possible in a Roman legal system. Due to Roman law, it was a lot harder to get burnt at the stake than we may think. Calvinists in Geneva had no moderating Roman law and did more heretic burning and witch burning than the Catholics did in Spain.

The Roman Church in England and in Spain did not need a deep reform as alleged by traditional Protestant propaganda. In regard to Germany, Hubert Jedin wrote that the Catholics were winning the debates on the subject of the Bible by the 1530s. No sane person could charge that the Bible was chained for the purpose of keeping it from the people.

Indeed it is difficult in the English-speaking world to get beyond the Protestant position concerning Catholic corruption in faith and morals in the sixteenth century. This viewpoint dominated our current legacy for a

very long period of time — for example, misrepresenting the history of the inquisitions and the Old Orders, what Geger refers to as “canonical religious life.”

In his *Fires of Faith: Catholic England under Mary Tudor* (2009), Eamon Duffy exposes the “myth” of the corruption of the Old Orders.

Likewise, secular historians with no particular religious allegiance have emerged to reconsider the inquisitions seriously, beginning in 1965 with Edward Peters’s *Inquisition* and continuing with Helen Rawlings and other inquisition specialists, including Henry Kamen.

I highlighted this inquisition scholarship a bit while reviewing *God’s Jury: The Inquisition and the Making of the Modern World* by Cullen Murphy (posted on *Catholic World Report* and *Ignatius Insight* as “Hysterical Anti-Catholic History” [February 23, 2012]; posted on *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, March 7, 2012); also in my *The Inquisitions of History: The Mythology and the Reality* (posted on *Ignatius Insight*, April 29, 2008; revised abridged version posted on *Roma Locuta Est*, January 13, 2012).

We are digging out from under the rubble of Protestant-driven biases about the virtues of the Reformation, especially in the English-speaking world, where those old biases are so popularized. Brad S. Gregory in *The Unintended Reformation* (2012) re-

jects any positive view of the Reform. Younger than Christopher Dawson, who decades ago tried to dispel the misleading appellation “the dark ages” in favor of an enriched understanding of the Catholic formation of Europe, Gregory has significantly helped our thinking since the appearance of his book earlier this year.

Now Eamon Duffy has just published “The Story of the Reformation Needs Reforming,” which is definitely worth our earnest study and attention at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/9350681/The-story-of-the-Reformation-needs-reforming.html>.

An aggressive annihilation of the medieval religious synthesis brought us to our present desperate straits, as Charles Taylor put forth in his *Secular Age* (2007). Let us assimilate newer findings to correct the record for Catholic truth claims, notably for the era of our Holy Founder.

In a Fallen World there will be ecclesiastical corruption, but how is it to be measured?

Brian Van Hove, S.J.  
Alma, Michigan



Editor:

I wish to note two errors in my essay “The First First Companions.” On page 25, I asserted that Simon Ro-



drigues (d. 1579) outlived all the other Companions, when in fact the last survivor was Nicolás Bobadilla (d. 1590). And on page 5, note 16, the citation should read "Auto. 75."

Brian Van Hove, S.J., has written a thoughtful response, in which he suggests that references to Ignatius's peril at the hands of the Inquisition were perhaps a bit overdone; the result of my having played unwittingly into a long-standing distortion of Protestant historiography.

I am not especially well read on the history of the Inquisition, and so I take in good stead—and consider quite plausible—the possibility that Father Van Hove is correct about the historical bias. I leave that discussion to the experts.

Did I increase the drama by making Ignatius sound closer to the stake than he really was? To be sure, it is difficult to know just how close he came. The fact that he was investigated eight times by the Inquisition, that public knowledge of those investigations preceded him from Spain to Paris to Italy, and that some of his followers fled during the Roman cri-

sis, are all suggestive. But most notable is "Autobiography," no. 59, in which Ignatius and Figueroa warn each other about the possibility of being burned at the stake. Figueroa was Vicar General in Alcalá for the Archbishop of Toledo, and repeatedly assisted in the investigations of Ignatius. So the very fact that Ignatius would say something like that to Figueroa was meant to imply that the times were dangerous, and no one was safe. Curiously enough, despite Ignatius's own problems with the inquisitors, he continued to value their work, and he even brought lapsed Catholics to them to be reconciled to the Church. Hence, I doubt that he was being casual when he related the exchange with Figueroa in the "Autobiography," a text which (it is always important to remember) was written for the edification of future Jesuits. Ignatius wished to communicate that he had been in real danger.

Barton Geger, S.J.  
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