



# STUDIES

IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

JEROME NADAL'S APOLOGY FOR THE  
SPIRITUAL EXERCISES: A STUDY IN  
BALANCED SPIRITUALITY

AARON D. PIDEL, SJ

52/1 SPRING 2020

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STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS is a publication of the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States.

The Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality is composed of Jesuits appointed from their provinces. The seminar identifies and studies topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially US and Canadian Jesuits, and gathers current scholarly studies pertaining to the history and ministries of Jesuits throughout the world. It then disseminates the results through this journal.

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ISSN 1084-0813

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

Sometimes, I wonder whether some writers and teachers on Ignatian spirituality stop to ask themselves what they mean by the expression *God's will*. How one understands that fundamental idea has profound implications for everything else regarding discernment.

I have the impression that most Christians today presuppose what I like to call the “cellphone model” of God’s will. This means that God has a unique, particular call for each human being, and that God communicates that call in the private, wordless depths of the individual. For that reason, no Christian can know what God is saying to any other Christian except himself or herself. In that sense, it is like speaking with God on a cell phone: no one else can overhear the conversation.

But there is another image of God’s call that I call the “megaphone model.” God extends *one* call to all Christians to imitate his Son as best as they can in light of their gifts, their limitations, and their circumstances. It is then up to individual Christians to have a prayerful conversation with God about what vocation will look like in their particular circumstances. In this model, each Christian knows what God is saying to other Christians, because it is the same message that he or she has heard.

In the first model, there is greater pressure to identify God’s call correctly and to respond with a *yes*; for if it is tied to the person’s unique self, then to say *no* is to reject a direct command, and to misread it will result in a person living unhappily and inauthentically. In the second model, one realizes that interior peace is not found in one particular “soul mate” or vocation. Happiness is a choice. In that light, there are usually three or four things that a person can do for God, all of which are holy, and all of which will have moments of tedium, suffering, and sacrifice. So, the only question that one should worry about is: which option will serve God objectively better, in light of one’s own gifts, limitations, and circumstances?

In the first model, spiritual directors and friends can give a Christian general advice about how to identify God's will amid the cacophony of ideas, emotions, and desires within that person. Beyond that, however, it would be inappropriate to suggest what the person *should* do, because they are not privy to what God is saying to him or her. In the second model, spiritual directors and friends can be more proactive in the person's discernment process, because they know already what God is saying to him or her, and they often know the person's gifts and limitations better than the person himself or herself does.

In the first model, reason plays a limited role relative to consolations and desolations. Reason, by definition, pertains to universal principles and logical judgments that make sense to everyone and should apply to everyone. On the other hand, consolations and desolations are interior, private movements that cannot be experienced directly by others. So, for example, if one starts from the universal principle that, *all else being equal*, celibacy enables a person to save a greater number of souls over the course a lifetime, and that Jesus chose it for that reason, then, at least theoretically, one must be able to provide cogent reasons to others for why one is not choosing celibacy. Why are *all things not equal* in this particular case? In the cellphone model, however, a person can invoke the Edie Brickell song: "*What I am is what I am . . . I know what I know, if you know what I mean.*"

In the ancient and medieval church, the megaphone model predominated. Church Fathers usually did not state it in so many words, but it can be inferred from how they addressed specific subjects such as virginity and marriage. But St. Ignatius Loyola lived on the cusp of the transition from the medieval world to the early modern world. The latter, shaped by Renaissance values, generally emphasized individualism and accommodation. So how did Ignatius understand God's will?

Perhaps most modern writers either explicitly assert, or at least seem to presuppose, that Ignatius held the cellphone model. The late Fr. Joseph Conwell (1919–2014), for example, in his masterful study of Ignatian spirituality, affirmed:

Primary for Ignatius is that the service of God, whether one state of life or another, is God's free gift and call. A

person should not choose a state of life because it is easier or more difficult or better, or because to do so would be more generous, but solely because God calls that person to one rather than another.<sup>1</sup>

Fr. Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988) credited Ignatius with having revolutionized the ancient and medieval emphasis on a universal call to all the faithful by his insistence upon a particular call directed to each Christian, and which must be regarded as constitutive of the Christian life as such. Notice the emphases on the self-actualization and greater pressure that I noted earlier:

It is not by inquiring into his own aptitudes and inclinations that the Christian—or, indeed, anyone else—comes to know the personal and loving will of God in his regard or the mission God has decreed for him. In the last analysis, his fate is determined by the “holy calling” (2 Tim 1:9) that God utters to every person from the depths of his own freedom, and that every person is obliged to serve with all his strength as soon as he becomes aware of it.”<sup>2</sup>

Now, what I suggest is that, in fact, Ignatius held something much closer to the megaphone model, and that the evidence in the *Spiritual Exercises*, Jesuit *Constitutions*, and Ignatius’s own letters, is clear in that regard. To be brief, I note just three points for consideration: (1) that, in the Principle and Foundation, Ignatius provides a universal principle incumbent upon all exercitants—namely, that they should make every decision on the basis of what will bring greater glory to God; (2) in the Call of the King meditation, Ignatius explicitly depicts a universal call; and (3) in the *Constitutions*, Ignatius invokes the proviso *all else being equal*, which presupposes the existence of an objective, universal criterion for discernment that he is bringing to the table.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph F. Conwell, SJ, *Impelling Spirit: Revisiting a Founding Experience: 1539, Ignatius of Loyola and His Companions* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1997), 312.

<sup>2</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, trans. Mary Frances McCarthy (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), 396.

<sup>3</sup> *Spiritual Exercises* 23, 91–98, hereafter abbreviated *SpEx*; *Const.* 622, 623.

If this is correct, then writers who explicate Ignatian discernment while presupposing a cellphone model will arrive at conclusions that are contrary to what Ignatius held, while at the same time believing in good faith that Ignatius held them. With respect to Fr. Conwell, for example, what Ignatius really concluded is that “*those who desire to show greater devotion and to distinguish themselves in total service to their eternal King and universal Lord [...] will make offerings of greater worth and moment.*”<sup>4</sup> As for Fr. Balthasar, Ignatius consistently affirmed in the *Constitutions* that it is *precisely* by ascertaining a man’s objective skills and gifts—as opposed to his own interior convictions about God’s call—that the *Society* comes to the determination of whether the man’s membership will serve the greater glory of God.<sup>5</sup>

In a word, what I propose is that the ancient model of a universal call still has virtues to commend it in the twenty-first century. It provides a framework to imagine a greater role for reason and the input of the community—which is to say, greater than that provided by other models—while still respecting Ignatius’s conviction about the essential role of consolations and desolations.

In the present issue of *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS*, Fr. Aaron Pidel (ucs) raises many of the same questions and tensions, but from a historical angle. He notes that, over the centuries, writers have accused Ignatius of both extremes: some asserted that he was so focused on reason and universal norms that discernment became little more than a bloodless mathematical exercise, while others—especially today—misinterpret Ignatius as making discernment a matter of private inspiration. If the latter were true, then Ignatius would not have been essentially different from the *Illuminati* with whom he was often confused.

A helpful corrective to both extremes, suggests Fr. Pidel, is the nuanced explanation of Ignatian discernment provided by Fr. Jerome Nadal (1507–1580) in his apologetic for the *Spiritual Exercises*. Nadal

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<sup>4</sup> *SpEx 97; The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius: A Translation and Commentary*, trans. and ed., George E. Ganss, SJ (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources [IJS], 1992), 54.

<sup>5</sup> On this point, see, for instance, *Const.* 147, 161, 186.



walked a fine line, courageously protecting the role that Ignatius gave to consolations at a time when many spiritual masters fiercely asserted that Christians should pay them no heed.

On behalf of the Seminar, thanks to Fr. Pidel for his insightful and innovative contribution to a most relevant topic. As for every issue of *STUDIES*, I hope that it generates conversations among Jesuits and colleagues—and even a few more essays—and that it contributes to a revitalization of Ignatian discernment to meet the needs of the twenty-first century church.

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



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# Jerome Nadal's Apology for the Spiritual Exercises: A Study in Balanced Spirituality

Aaron D. Pidel, SJ

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*Both early and contemporary critics of the Spiritual Exercises have called it imbalanced toward "illuminism." By this, they mean that it fosters an intensely private and interior spirituality that neglects the roles of reason and religious authority in favor of affectivity and the authority of religious experience. When Fr. Nadal wrote his Apologia for the Exercises in the mid-1550s, he highlighted a series of safeguards against illuminism, including the role of the director as doctrinal admonitor, the divine and ecclesial parameters placed on the meditations, and the broader ascetical program depicted in the Constitutions. To ensure a balance in contemporary Jesuit spirituality, the Society will do well to recover some of these early emphases.*

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## Introduction

**S**t. John Henry Newman (1801–1890) once observed that the "very problem which Christian duty requires us to accomplish is the reconciling in our conduct opposite virtues."<sup>1</sup> One encounters Jesus in the Gospels as both demanding and merciful, contemplative and active: he follows the consolation at the Transfiguration and endures the agonizing fear of Gethsemane. And because Christ serves as the standard of Christian spirituality in every age, all great saints likewise find themselves committed to opposite

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<sup>1</sup> *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. 2, serm. 23: "Tolerance of Religious Error" no. 282, <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/parochial/volume2/sermon23.html>.

virtues. St. Ignatius Loyola (1491–1556), founder of the Society of Jesus, managed to reconcile in himself love and fear, the head and the heart, personal inspirations and ecclesial obedience, and left to his spiritual heirs a legacy marked by the same competing values.

Given the contrasting virtues of its founder, hardly anyone should be surprised that the Society has greatly varied its own spiritual emphases over the course of its history; nor should they be surprised that from many different quarters the Society has attracted criticisms for excess on one side or the other. The non-Catholic historiography of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, for instance, tended to portray the Jesuit tradition as the enemy of freedom and Romantic feeling. Ignatius, accordingly, was a rigid man, insensible to human affection; his goal the suppression of the human personality in the service of ecclesial intrigue.<sup>2</sup>

In the wake of World War I, even influential Catholics began to register similar judgments. The ex-Jesuit Henri Brémond (1865–1933), *immortel* of the French Academy and author of the multi-volume *Histoire littéraire de la sentiment religieux en France* (1916–1933), argued in the late 1920s that fixation on the *Spiritual Exercises* left Jesuits spiritually stunted. Ignatius had filled the text of the *Exercises* with directives on sin, mortification, and imaginative prayer, Brémond argued, because he intended it as a manual for beginners. But Jesuits clung to these ascetical techniques long after they had outlived their usefulness, thereby frustrating the cultivation of a more unitive and contemplative spirituality.<sup>3</sup> Whether the blame fell on Ignatius or on his reception, then, the tendency of the pre-World-War II era was to criticize Ignatian spirituality as an unfeeling drudgery in the service of an impersonal institution.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Ignacio Iparraguire's historiographical comments on the "Deformations of the Figure of St. Ignatius" in *Obras Completas de S. Ignacio de Loyola*, ed. Ignacio Iparraguire, SJ, and Candido Dalmases, SJ, 2nd ed. (Madrid: *Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos*, 1963), 29–35.

<sup>3</sup> See the series of articles, "Ascèse ou prière? Notes sur la crise des Exercices de S. Ignace," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 7 (1927): 226–61, 402–28, 479–599. See also Joseph de Guibert, SJ, "Henri Brémond," in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1937–1994), I:1928–1938, at 1930.

<sup>4</sup> A controversy analogous to the *l'affaire Brémond* erupted among German Jesuits

Although responses to Brémond from the Jesuit order varied, perhaps the most influential was the magisterial volume of Fr. Joseph De Guibert (1877–1942), *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*.<sup>5</sup> Far from replying that mysticism was unimportant, De Guibert argues that Ignatius and the Jesuits have their own kind of mysticism, a “mysticism of service,” that takes into account both the outward and apostolic focus of the Society while recovering the interior and “mystical” side of Ignatian spirituality. De Guibert begins his chapter entitled “The Personal Interior Life of St. Ignatius” by noting Brémond’s objections. He concludes the chapter with the observation that Ignatius was a “mystic in the strongest sense of the term, and that to the same extent as a St. Francis of Assisi or a St. John of the Cross.”<sup>6</sup> The rest of the book contains a rather oblique argument that later Jesuits never lost touch with their founder’s mystical sensibility and interior attentiveness. De Guibert thus sets the stage for a recovery of the mystical, charismatic, and affective dimension of Jesuit spirituality that accelerated rapidly in the heady days after Vatican II.

Indeed, this recovery of Ignatius the feeler and mystic was so successful that contemporary criticism of Jesuit spirituality now sounds quite the opposite of nineteenth-century complaints. Critics of *Amoris Laetitia*’s putatively permissive attitudes toward communion for the divorced and remarried, for instance, detect in it a typically Jesuit option for a “process of discernment that is intensely private and subjective.”<sup>7</sup> Francis’s admirers, although well-meaning, sometimes aggravate these concerns by pitting ecclesial tradition against consecrated phrases from

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in the early 1920s, when the German Jesuit Otto Karrer published *Der Hl. Franz von Borja* (Freiburg-im-Breisgau: Herder, 1921). He contrasted Ignatius’s alleged mystical and charismatic style with Borgia’s alleged penchant for standardizing and institutionalizing. For the history of the controversy, culminating in Karrer’s departure from the order, see Paul Begheyn, SJ, “Otto Karrer and His Biography of Francisco de Borgia (1921),” in *Francisco de Borja y su Tiempo: Política, Religión, y Cultura en la Edad Moderna*, ed. Enrique García Hernán and María del Pilar Ryan (Valencia-Roma: Albatros Ediciones y Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu [hereafter AHSI], 2011), 539–46.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph de Guibert, SJ, *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*, trans. William J. Young, S.J. (Chicago: Institute of Jesuit Sources and Loyola Press, 1964).

<sup>6</sup> Joseph de Guibert, SJ, *The Jesuits*, 72.

<sup>7</sup> See R. R. Reno’s remarks in “A Stubborn Givenness,” <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2016/04/a-stubborn-givenness>.

the *Spiritual Exercises*. One need only think of the viral blog entry that Fr. Thomas Rosica, CSB, posted on the Feast of St. Ignatius in 2018, in which he declared that “Pope Francis breaks Catholic traditions whenever he wants because he is ‘free from disordered attachments.’”<sup>8</sup> Though Rosica later admitted to plagiarizing this estimate of Francis’s “detachment” from tradition from an anti-Catholic blog, the fact that he intended it as praise of Francis’s “Jesuitness” says something about how contemporary Catholics understand the spirituality of the Exercises.

One finds, accompanying these contemporary impressions of Jesuits as purveyors of a private and subjective spirituality, a resurgence of books claiming to demystify the process of vocational discernment, returning it to more common-sense considerations. The recently reprinted *Religious Vocation: An Unnecessary Mystery*, for instance, markets itself as an alternative to all those discernment methods that would relegate “religious vocation to the realm of Gnosticism, making of it an esoteric private inspiration.”<sup>9</sup> In my own pastoral experience, the book finds its warmest reception among those paralyzed or perplexed by the counsel simply to follow “what’s in their heart.”

Today, Jesuits who hear concerns about the supposedly excessive subjectivism of Jesuit spirituality might not be aware that the *Spiritual Exercises* attracted similar complaints in the lifetime of

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<sup>8</sup> Quoted in “Rosica’s Pope Francis Text Plagiarized from Anti-Catholic Blog, Report Says,” Catholic News Agency, April 17, 2019, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/rosicas-pope-francis-text-plagiarized-from-anti-catholic-blog-report-says-62310>, accessed February 23, 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Butler, OP, *Religious Vocation: An Unnecessary Mystery* (Rockford, IL: TAN, [1961] 2005), 7. In a similar spirit, Romanus Cesario emphasizes that the discernment of spirits, as introduced by the Jesuit tradition, remains foreign to Aquinas’s thought. If a Christian finds himself delighting in the things of religion, then he does well to pursue religious life until hindered. At all events, “The proper response to the realization that you are being drawn toward the priesthood is not to go to your room and begin a process of self-reflection.” Romanus Cesario, OP, “Thomas Aquinas and Vocational Discernment,” lecture, Dominican House of Studies, Washington, DC, November 19, 2014, <https://opeast.org/2014/11/vocation-discernment/>.



Ignatius himself. An influential cadre of sixteenth-century Spanish ecclesiastics thought that Ignatius and his retreat manual savored of *alumbradismo*—that is, an illuminism that abandoned reason and ecclesial tradition in favor of guidance by an interior light. Like De Guibert in the 1940s, Jesuits in the 1550s attempted to defend the doctrinal soundness and spiritual balance of the *Exercises* with a series of personal testimonials and reasoned defenses.

Now that criticisms of Jesuit spirituality have come full circle, it seems opportune to revisit the early Society's response, so that it might sharpen the discernment of modern Jesuits and their colleagues in their own cultural moment. To that end, I focus on one theme of the early Society's apologetic efforts: the *Apologia pro Exercitiis S. P. Ignatii* of Fr. Jerome Nadal (1507–1580). Unlike Nadal's other apologetic works, this lengthy treatise—it spans one hundred pages in the *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu*—focuses more on the doctrinal soundness of the *Exercises* than on the moral soundness of Ignatius.<sup>10</sup> Nadal's central concern is to vindicate the *Exercises* from charges of rudderless subjectivism and excessive interiority. He consistently maintains an equilibrium, underscoring the *Exercises'* many rational and ecclesial safeguards while at the same time insisting that it is more fitting to learn God's will through consolations and other subjective experiences. For Nadal, this both/and approach prepared the Society to be an agent of reconciliation in the religiously-fragmented culture of his day.

Nadal's *Apologia* contains three broad movements. In order to show how early objections to the *Exercises* resonate with contemporary ones, I begin with the historical background to the controversy. This background will prepare the reader to understand Nadal's response to specific criticisms leveled against the *Exercises*, especially as they touch on the role of reason, the importance of inspired and ecclesially approved sources, and the insufficiency of the *Exercises* alone as a means to spiritual perfection. My concluding remarks touch upon

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<sup>10</sup> For Nadal's defenses of Ignatius's character, see "Jerónimo Nadal, S.I.—Apología de la Compañía de Jesús conta [sic] la Censura de la Facultad de Teología de Paris (1557)," trans. Miguel Lop Sebastià, SJ, *Ignaziana: Rivista di ricerca teologica* (2008), <https://www.ignaziana.org/en/indice.html>.

Nadal's vision of spiritual balance for the Society of Jesus and its role in reconciling those estranged from the church.

## I. Historical Background to the Controversy

The German Romantic poet Novalis (1772–1801) once ascribed to poetry the power to make the familiar strange and the strange familiar. To narrate the mid-sixteenth-century controversy over the *Exercises* “poetically,” by noting its strange familiarity, one does well to set the historical scene with a few essential elements: the concept of *alumbradismo*, the debate's historical figures, and the texts that they left behind.

### A. Alumbradismo

In the first half of the sixteenth century, due to a variety of religious and social factors, Spain found itself in a moral panic about *alumbradismo*. Internally, the Spanish Crown, having only recently retaken the last Moorish stronghold of Granada in 1492, was engaged in unifying Spain around its Catholic identity. This led to increasingly repressive measures against unconverted Jews and Muslims, beginning with the expulsion of the Jews in 1492.<sup>11</sup> Even those Jews who opted for conversion (*conversos*) continued to be suspected of feigning Christianity while remaining Jewish.

Significant consequences followed the moral panic. First, the Inquisition assumed the role of policing the sincerity not just of outward religious practices but also of interior convictions. Second, popular imagination began to associate Judaism with an exclusively interior spirituality.<sup>12</sup> This association illuminates the line of questioning directed toward Ignatius in Alcalá, where the Inquisition,

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<sup>11</sup> For the general history, particularly as it affects the Society of Jesus, see Robert Aleksander Maryks, *The Jesuit Order as a Synagogue of Jews: Jesuits of Jewish Ancestry and Purity-of-Blood Laws in the Early Society of Jesus* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); James W. Reites, “St. Ignatius of Loyola and the Jews,” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 13, no. 4 (Sept. 1981).

<sup>12</sup> This association later weakened what had been the Jesuits' initial welcoming attitude toward *conversos*. See Hernán, *Ignacio de Loyola*, 127–128.

suspecting Ignatius of being an *alumbrado*, inquires whether he “got people to keep the Sabbath.”<sup>13</sup> In this case, because Ignatius appeared to be putting so much stock in interior religious experience, the Salamanca inquisitors—as their inquiry about Sabbath observance indicates—suspected him of being an insincerely converted Jew organizing an underground synagogue.

The concern about deviant religious interiority only intensified in the early 1520s, by which point Martin Luther (1483–1546), having invoked the authority of conscience to justify his defection from the Catholic Church, had become a sensation across Europe. In 1521, Adrian of Utrecht (1459–1523)—who was then inquisitor general of Spain, and later Pope Adrian VI—along with Emperor Charles V (1500–1558) began to prohibit the reading of Luther’s works in Spain.<sup>14</sup> In 1525, the Inquisition of Toledo produced a series of forty-eight illuminist propositions condemning spiritual deviations reminiscent of Luther’s teachings.<sup>15</sup> These rejected not only a false reliance on interior “illumination” but also false signs of union with God, such as “abandonment” (*dexamiento*)—that is, a rapturous suspension of the will’s activity.<sup>16</sup> The texts relevant to this study use *alumbrados* and *dejados* almost interchangeably.

Two events of the middle decades of the sixteenth century led to intensified vigilance. First, the first session of the Council of Trent met (1545–1547). Second, Charles V abdicated his throne in favor of his son Philip II (1527–1598), who brought a counter-reforming zeal to his office. By 1559, fearing the contagion of Lutheran ideas, Philip had prohibited Spanish students, including Jesuit scholastics, from studying outside of Spain.<sup>17</sup> According to historian Doris Moreno at the Universitat Autònoma of Barcelona, the middle decades of

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<sup>13</sup> *Auto*. 61; Ignatius of Loyola, “Reminiscences (Autobiography),” in *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, trans. Joseph A. Munitiz, SJ, and Philip Endean, SJ (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 13–64, at 42.

<sup>14</sup> J. Ignacio Tellechea Idígoras, SJ, *Tiempos recios: Inquisición y heterodoxias* (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1977), 25–26.

<sup>15</sup> See Antonio Márquez, *Los alumbrados: Orígenes y filosofía, 1525–1559* (Madrid: Taurus, 1972; 2nd ed. 1980), 229.

<sup>16</sup> Márquez, *Los alumbrados*, 245–46.

<sup>17</sup> Idígoras, *Tiempos recios*, 268–70.

the sixteenth century marked an “inflection point” in the history of Spanish spirituality, after which any spiritual discourse had to adopt the language of Tridentine orthodoxy to escape suspicion.<sup>18</sup>

As Lutheran reform spread, vigilance against *alumbrados* became not only more repressive but also less discriminate. Archival studies show that the Inquisition began censoring books both for endorsing definite heterodox propositions and for having a vague “Lutheran flavor.”<sup>19</sup> Even figures of otherwise unimpeachable orthodoxy, such as St. Francis Borgia (1510–1572), Ven. Luís de Granada (1504–1588), and St. Juan de Ávila (1499–1569), found their spiritual writings placed on the index in the later 1550s.<sup>20</sup> Sixteenth-century *alumbradismo* came to signify, much like *Modernism* and *Americanism* in the early twentieth century, a series of erroneous propositions as well as a hazy set of worrisome tendencies. According to Jesuit scholar Fr. Ignacio Iparraguirre (1911–1973), these tendencies boiled down to a kind of democratizing and anti-intellectualist mysticism. Here, the avid promotion of vernacular spiritual literature and frequent communion—especially for women—appeared to muddle the distinction between the lay and clerical states, and the emphasis on private religious experience seemed to eliminate the need to study Scripture and tradition.<sup>21</sup> Both the muddling and the individualism sounded dangerously Lutheran to Spanish ears.

Concerns about illuminism inevitably affected public perception of Ignatius and his *Spiritual Exercises* in Spain. Moreno lists the elements of Ignatius’s spiritual profile that would have alarmed the inquisitors of his day: “the pretension to teach spiritual profundities to women without previous studies, the insistence on mental prayer, on interior consolation, on frequent communion, and on a teaching [*magisterio*] founded not on scholastic and theological knowledge but on personal religious

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<sup>18</sup> Doris Moreno, “Los Jesuitas, la Inquisición y la frontera espiritual de 1559,” *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 92, no. 5 (2015): 655–75, at 655.

<sup>19</sup> Idigoras, *Tiempos recios*, 31–32.

<sup>20</sup> Idigoras, *Tiempos recios*, 30.

<sup>21</sup> See Ignacio Iparraguirre, SJ, *Historia de la práctica de los Ejercicios Espirituales de San Ignacio de Loyola*, vol. 1, *Práctica de los Ejercicios Espirituales de San Ignacio de Loyola en vida de su autor (1522–1556)*, Bibliotheca Institutii Historici Societatis Iesu 3 (Roma: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu [IHSI], 1946), 92–94.

experience, that of interior illumination."<sup>22</sup> On this note, Ignatius reports in his "Autobiography" that he kept seeing Christ and Mary with "his interior eyes," receiving through these visions such "confirmation regarding the faith, that he has often thought to himself that if there weren't Scripture to teach us these matters of the faith, he would be resolved to die for them solely on the basis of what he has seen."<sup>23</sup> Likely fearing a hostile reaction to such reports, superior general Francis Borgia withdrew the "Autobiography" from circulation, replacing it with the authorized biography of Ignatius written by Fr. Pedro Ribadeneira (1527–1611).<sup>24</sup>

Indeed, not only did Ignatius fit a certain profile, but also, as more recent biographers have noted, he probably had close personal contact with circles suspected of illuminism. Enrique García Hernán, the most recent Spanish-language biographer of Ignatius, takes pains to establish the illuminist sympathies of the court of Arévalo and Nájera, where Ignatius spent his formative years as a page.<sup>25</sup> Hernán also rather confidently identifies the pious woman of Manresa, whom alone Ignatius deemed to have "insight into spiritual things," as the Spanish mystic María de Santo Domingo, "la beata de Piedrahita" (ca. 1485–ca. 1524).<sup>26</sup> The "Autobiography" omits María's name, Hernán speculates, because she later came to be considered a fountainhead of *alumbradismo*.<sup>27</sup> Even later in Rome, Ignatius similarly participated in meetings of the reform-minded *spirituali*.<sup>28</sup> Although Ignatius at one point denied that he ever had been involved with the *alumbrados*, his definition of the term

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<sup>22</sup> Moreno, Doris, "Los jesuitas, la Inquisición, y la frontera espiritual de 1559," *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 92, no. 5 (2015), 655–675, at 656.

<sup>23</sup> *Auto.* 29; trans. Munitiz and Endean, 26.

<sup>24</sup> John M. McManamon, SJ, *The Text and Contexts of Ignatius Loyola's "Autobiography"* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 8–9.

<sup>25</sup> Enrique García Hernán, *Ignacio de Loyola* (Madrid: Taurus, 2013), 106–12,

<sup>26</sup> Hernán argues from the affective and imaginative tenor of María's writings, her documented presence in nearby Zaragoza in 1522, and her great fame—she had been called to Zaragoza by Adrian VI—that she alone could have been Ignatius's anonymous confidant. Hernán, *Ignacio de Loyola*, 120; *Auto.* 21, 37.

<sup>27</sup> Hernán, *Ignacio de Loyola*, 129.

<sup>28</sup> McManamon, *The Texts and Contexts of Ignatius Loyola's "Autobiography,"* 71.

was surely narrower than those of many of his contemporaries.<sup>29</sup> With friends like these, Ignatius was sure to make enemies.

## B. Figures and Texts

Unsurprisingly, for those who know the subsequent history of the respective orders, Ignatius's most influential adversaries emerged from a circle of Spanish Dominicans and their sympathizers. Also unsurprisingly, his greatest defenders came from the Jesuits and their circle of admirers.<sup>30</sup> On the Dominican side, the most influential and active figures were friars Melchor Cano (ca. 1509–1560), chair of theology at the University of Salamanca, and Tomás de Pedroche (ca. 1490–?), theologian at the Dominican Studium of St. Peter Martyr in Toledo.<sup>31</sup> On Ignatius's side, many non-Jesuit theologians testified to the orthodoxy and efficacy of the *Exercises*.<sup>32</sup> But it was Nadal who undertook the most thorough defense of Ignatius. A few words are in order about these historical figures and the texts they produced.

Cano was a theological innovator in his own way, but he promoted innovation rather selectively. As a dogmatic theologian, he advocated something like a theological *aggiornamento*, attempting to inject

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<sup>29</sup> In a letter to John XXIII of Portugal (15 March 1545), Ignatius denies ever having dealings with *alumbrados*. There remained much room for disagreement, however, as to the definition of the term. See *Obras completas*, 662.

<sup>30</sup> To my knowledge, the most synoptic accounts of the early opposition to the *Exercises* remain Antonio Astraín, *Historia de la Compañía de Jesús en la asistencia de España*, vol. 1, *San Ignacio de Loyola 1540–1556*, 2nd ed. (Madrid: Razón y Fe, 1912), 321–384; Iparraguirre, *Práctica de los Ejercicios*, 83–113; Márquez, *Los alumbrados*; Hernán, *Ignacio de Loyola*; Doris Moreno, “Los jesuitas, la Inquisición, y la frontera espiritual de 1559.”

<sup>31</sup> The biographical dates of a relatively obscure figure such as Pedroche remain difficult to determine. When Nadal writes his *Apología*, he supposes that Pedroche has already been a theologian and religious for some forty years. See Juan Alfonso de Polanco, *Vita Ignatii Loiolae et rerum Societatis Iesu historica*, 6 vols. (Madrid, 1894–1898), III:534; hereafter abbreviated *Chron*.

<sup>32</sup> Iparraguirre, *Práctica de los Ejercicios*, 102–4. Around 1552 the Spanish provincial Antonio de Araoz collected these testimonials, which are now found in *Monumenta Ignatiana: Exercitia Spiritualia Sancti Ignatii de Loyola et eorum directoria*, *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu* [MHSI] 57 (Madrid: Typis Successorum Rivadeneyrae, 1919), 653–84; hereafter abbreviated *Exercitia*.

Scholastic method as it was practiced in his own day with the historical and rhetorical sensibilities of Renaissance Humanism.<sup>33</sup> By contrast, Cano, as a spiritual theologian, had learned from bitter experience to avoid novelties. In his youth, he had imbibed and promoted writings tinged with the doctrine of the Dominican Girolamo Savonarola (1452–1498), only to discover later that they had been condemned. The chagrin seems to have sharpened a natural antipathy toward affective and mystical spirituality.<sup>34</sup> One often finds analogous anti-affective reactions today among Catholics who, reflecting back on their youth, feel they were “taken in” by purely sentimental representations of the faith.

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*With friends like these, Ignatius  
was sure to make enemies.*

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In any case, Cano perceived a dangerous novelty in the nascent Society of Jesus and began to preach against the Jesuits publicly as early as 1548, calling them *emisarios de anticristo*.<sup>35</sup> Some time before 1555, he committed his objections to writing, but he declined to circulate them until he could gain an audience with Pope Paul IV (1476–1559), who was likewise ill disposed toward the Society.<sup>36</sup> Cano's manuscript *Censura y parecer que dio contra el Instituto de los PP. Jesuitas* was thought to have been lost until it was rediscovered in 1992 in the British Library.<sup>37</sup> The document confirms that Cano held that the Society was spiritually unsound, both in the person of Ignatius and in the method of the *Exercises*.

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<sup>33</sup> Brendan Dooley, “*Veritas Folia Temporis*: Experience and Belief in Early Modern Culture,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 60, no. 3 (1999): 487–503, at 489. On the indebtedness of Cano's more historically minded method of “theological citations” (*loci theologici*) to Ciceronian humanism, see Bernhard Körner, *Melchior Cano De locis theologicis: Ein Beitrag zur theologischen Erkenntnislehre* (Graz: Ulrich Moser, 1994), esp. 155–60.

<sup>34</sup> For the psychogenesis, see Iparraguirre, *Práctica de los Ejercicios*, 95.

<sup>35</sup> Michele Olivari, *Entre el trono y la opinión: La vida política castellana en los siglos XVI y XVII*, trans. Jesús Villanueva (Junta de Castilla y León: Consejería de Cultura y Turismo, 2004), 92.

<sup>36</sup> Between 1556 and 1558, Cano wrote to friends that his criticisms of the Jesuits were not yet “letter ready” (*para carta*). Terence O'Reilly, “Melchior Cano and the Spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola: The *Censura y parecer contra el Instituto de los Padres Jesuitas*,” *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 4 (2017): 365–94, at 366–67.

<sup>37</sup> O'Reilly, “Melchior Cano and the Spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola,” 371–74.



Given Cano's stature, even his solely word-of-mouth campaign gave the early Society plenty of cause for concern. According to Michele Olivari, historian at the University of Pisa, Cano was well connected at court, allegedly consulted by Philip II "*como oráculo*," and skilled at using the prestige of his university post at Salamanca to mobilize public opinion against the Society.<sup>38</sup> He nevertheless seems to have found his most receptive audience not in Salamanca but among ecclesiastics in Toledo. There, the archbishop Juan Martínez Guijeño (1486–1587, Latinized *Silíceo*), alarmed by rumors of Cano's criticism, appointed a commission to examine the orthodoxy of the *Exercises*.<sup>39</sup> As head of the commission, Pedroche compiled a report known as the *Censura* that found the *Exercises* unsound for all the reasons that Cano had offered and more.<sup>40</sup> Although Cano was a far brighter light in the theological firmament than Pedroche, and in all likelihood the inspirer of Pedroche's thoughts, Pedroche alone hazarded a written criticism.

Cano's and Pedroche's campaigns required the Jesuits to launch their own word-of-mouth counteroffensive.<sup>41</sup> Sometime in the mid-1550s, Nadal began to compose a point-by-point rebuttal of Pedroche's charges, the only written charges then available.<sup>42</sup> Because Ignatius had insisted that a papally-approved document needed no

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<sup>38</sup> Olivari, *Entre el trono y la opinion*, 83, 93.

<sup>39</sup> Iparraguirre, *Práctica de los Ejercicios*, 98. In 1551, moreover, Silíceo, who saw a strict connection between purity of blood and orthodoxy, withdrew the faculties of priests who made the Exercises and forbade Jesuits to minister in his archdiocese. See Isabella Ianuzzi, "Mentalidad inquisitorial y jesuitas: el enfrentamiento entre el Cardenal Silíceo y la Compañía de Jesús," *Cuadernos de historia moderna* 24 (2001): 167–81, at 172.

<sup>40</sup> The similarity of Cano's criticism to those of Pedroche suggests Cano's influence on Pedroche. Cano reproaches the *Exercises* for giving too much importance to spiritual sentiments and talk about them (pp. 386, 390, 394), referring decisions to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (p. 388), promising instant perfection (pp. 389–90), and praising a stoic indifference foreign even to Christ (p. 393). Page numbers refer to the manuscript of the *Censura* found in O'Reilly, "Melchor Cano and the Spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola," 385–94.

<sup>41</sup> Cano, in point of fact, seems to have started an anti-Jesuit "school" that endured for generations. See Doris Moreno, "Crear opinion: El dominico Alonso de Avendaño y su predicación antijesuita (1567–1596)," in *Identidades y fronteras culturales en el mundo ibérico en la edad moderna*, ed. José Luis Betrán, Bernat Hernández, and Doris Moreno (Barcelona: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2016): 399–413.

<sup>42</sup> Iparraguirre, *Práctica de los Ejercicios*, 107.



further defense—a point to be revisited below—Nadal probably never intended the document for publication.<sup>43</sup> Though later discovered and edited for the *Monumenta*, Nadal's Latin-language apology has only recently become available in Spanish, and with the exception of a few pages, it remains untranslated in English.<sup>44</sup> Pedroche's *Censura* and Nadal's *Apologia* furnish the two main sources of this study.

Before proceeding to the texts, however, a few words are in order about Nadal as an interpreter of Ignatius's mind, especially as Ignatius thought and behaved in the heat of controversy. Deferring to the judgment of Ignatius and the early companions, scholars traditionally have regarded Nadal as a privileged interpreter of Ignatius's spiritual vision and the Jesuit way of proceeding. Ignatius himself regarded Nadal as one who knew his personal history and his mind. For instance, having finished narrating his "Autobiography" to Fr. Luís Gonçalves da Câmara (ca. 1519–1575), Ignatius simply referred Gonçalves to Nadal for supplementary details: "The other things Master Nadal will be able to recount."<sup>45</sup> Ignatius said elsewhere of Nadal, "He has known my thought completely and enjoys my authority."<sup>46</sup> Moreover, after Ignatius's death, the Society continued to regard Nadal as faithful communicator of Ignatius's fundamental spiritual orientations, entrusting him with positions of importance.<sup>47</sup> It is hardly surprising that so knowledgeable

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<sup>43</sup> Iparraguirre, *Práctica de los Ejercicios*, 105–107.

<sup>44</sup> Pedroche's *Censura* can be found in *Chron.* III:503–524. Nadal's *Apologia* is distributed among three places, listed according to the internal sequence of work: *Epistolae P. Hieronymi Nadal Societatis Jesu ab anno 1546 ad 1577*, 5 vols. (Madrid, 1898–1905), IV:820–826 (hereafter abbreviated *Nadal*); *Chron.* III:527–573; *Nadal* IV:826–873. For the Spanish translation, see "Jerónimo Nadal, S.I.—Apología de la Compañía de Jesús," trans. Lop Sebastià, SJ. For an English translation of the section dealing with Exercises for non-Catholics, see Jerónimo Nadal, "Exercises for Infidels, Heretics, and Sinners," *The Way* 43, no. 1 (Jan 2004): 43–50.

<sup>45</sup> *Auto.* 98; trans. Munitiz and Endean, 62.

<sup>46</sup> *Nadal* I:144.

<sup>47</sup> For Nadal's role in promulgating the mind of Ignatius, see John W. O'Malley, SJ, "To Travel to any Part of the World: Jeronimo Nadal and the Jesuit Vocation," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 16, no. 2 (March 1984): 3–5.

a reader as De Guibert would consider the Nadal's rough-draft apology a "source of the first order for an understanding of the Exercises."<sup>48</sup>

However, not all scholars identify Ignatius's mind so closely with either Nadal or his apology. Fr. Carlos Coupeau (ESP) points to Nadal's allegedly un-Ignatian penchant for imposing monkish patterns of prayer.<sup>49</sup> Likewise, Fr. John O'Malley (UMI) implies the same about Nadal's enthusiasm for multiplying house rules.<sup>50</sup> Others such as the late Fr. Iparraguirre sought to put distance not between Nadal and Ignatius but between Nadal's *Apologia* and his other writings, such as his *Instructions on Prayer*. For example, Iparraguirre concludes that Nadal's great familiarity with Ignatius "did not prevent him from insisting too much on their human and intellectual aspect."<sup>51</sup>

All of this raises the question as to whether Nadal's *Apologia* represents the general sensibilities of Ignatius or even of Nadal himself when operating *sine ira et studio*. For several reasons, I answer this question in the affirmative. First, Nadal continues to underscore the affective side of the *Exercises* and to venture risky positions, giving little sign of defensive overcorrection. Second, Nadal's positions often align closely with Ignatius's. Third, if Nadal's temperament inclined to tip the subjective-objective balance in any direction, it would be toward the subjective.<sup>52</sup> Nadal himself found the strength to elect the Society of Jesus only after a "singular grace from God," which he received during the election process of a long retreat, suddenly subdued his longstanding aversions.<sup>53</sup> The expectation that others would find

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<sup>48</sup> De Guibert, *The Jesuits*, 207.

<sup>49</sup> Juan Carlos Coupeau, SJ, "Construyendo el sujeto: Nadal, la oración, y los Ejercicios," *Ignaziana* 10 (2010): 135–60, esp. 155–60.

<sup>50</sup> John O'Malley, SJ, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 338–40.

<sup>51</sup> *Práctica de los Ejercicios*, 113.

<sup>52</sup> Describing Nadal's writings in general, De Guibert notes, "Nadal vigorously recommended more insistence on the affections in prayer than on the reflections of the understanding" (De Guibert, *The Jesuits*, 206).

<sup>53</sup> Nadal's narrative of his own election can be found in *Nadal* I:16–18, at 17. For a fuller account of Nadal's election, see Alfredo Sampaio Costa, SJ, "Cuando no somos suficientemente libres para elegir: Aprendiendo de la experiencia singular de Jerónimo

similar mystical-affective solutions to their indecision remains palpable in the *Apologia*. Hence, even if the controversial occasion of the *Apologia* led Nadal to place a heavier-than-usual accent on the human, ecclesial, and rational elements of the *Exercises*, this might only have served to bring an unusually affective spirituality closer to center.

Readers will have to decide for themselves. To that end, I focus first on the question of the supposedly exclusive appeal to inner authority, and then on the question of the suitability of the *Spiritual Exercises* for non-Catholics.

## II. "Using All the Means": Pedroche's Complaint and Nadal's Response

Though Pedroche mounts a wide-ranging criticism of the *Exercises*, Nadal deems the *Censura's* central preoccupation to be their alleged contamination by the emotivist individualism of the *alumbrados* and *dejados*.<sup>54</sup> When Pedroche begins to adduce texts that, to his mind, have clear illuminist implications, Nadal depicts Pedroche's excited thoughts as follows: "All the aforesaid charges were trivial: here, I believe, all your zeal converges, here is it enkindled, here is the crime most atrocious, here the 'abandonment of Toledo' [*derelictio toletana*] cannot be denied!"<sup>55</sup> Since Nadal considers this Pedroche's most formidable charge, he mounts the most energetic defense at this point. Both the charge and the defense, therefore, merit closer examination.

Pedroche's *Censura* finds perhaps its strongest evidence for *alumbradismo* in the Fifteenth Annotation. Readers familiar with the *Exercises* will recall that this annotation instructs the giver of the Exercises not to

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Nadal," *Studies in Spirituality* 18 (2008): 261–87; Roger Cantin, SJ, "L'élection de Jérôme Nadal: Des ténèbres jaillit la lumière," *Cahiers de spiritualité ignatienne* 4 (1980): 263–69.

<sup>54</sup> These include the *Exercises'* alleged denial of predestination, recommendation of unnatural indifference, and infringement of the doctrine of divine impassibility. Pedroche also faults the Society for appropriating the universal name of Jesus to a particular order.

<sup>55</sup> *Chron.* III:563. All translations from Nadal's *Apologia* and Pedroche's *Censura* are mine unless otherwise noted.

urge the receiver of the Exercises more toward the evangelical counsels than toward their alternatives during the course of the retreat.<sup>56</sup> Rather,

While one is engaged in the Spiritual Exercises, it is more suitable and much better [*longe . . . convenientius meliusque*] that the Creator and Lord in person communicate Himself to the devout soul in quest of the divine will, that He inflame it with His love and praise, and dispose it for the way in which it could better serve God in the future. Therefore, the director of the Exercises, as a balance at equilibrium, without leaning to one side or the other, should permit the Creator to deal directly with the creature, and the creature directly with his Creator and Lord.<sup>57</sup>

For someone concerned about both the *dejados'* exaggerated abandonment and the *alumbrados'* exaggerated reliance on interior experience, this passage was like catnip. For it counseled the passive posture of "equilibrium" and prioritized "direct" access to the Creator.

Pedroche did not mince words when commenting on this passage. He fulminates:

This writing manifests, and clearly contains, and affirms, and teaches a proposition; and a rash, and scandalous, and heretical assertion: namely, that for as long as the time of Exercises lasts, preaching has no place, nor does the preacher need to persuade [the exercitant] that, among the many goods, the election be made for one of them in particular. It is certainly a matter of astonishment that preaching and licit persuasion that is licit [*sic*] and holy outside the time of the Exercises, should not be licit nor even permitted during their course. In my opinion, this doctrine is clearly and openly of the *dejados* and *alumbrados* since, with all written instruction deferred and abandoned [*dejado*], and with all teaching and doctrine

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<sup>56</sup> In this essay, the word *exercises* appears in italics when referring to the book that Ignatius wrote and in roman when referring to the concept of the retreat.

<sup>57</sup> *Spiritual Exercises* 15, hereafter abbreviated *SpEx*; *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius: A New Translation, Based on Studies in the Language of the Autograph*, trans. Louis J. Puhl, SJ (Westminster, MD : The Newman Press, 1951), 6. All English-language quotations from the *SpEx* are from the electronic version of the Puhl edition, available at <http://spex.ignatianspirituality.com/SpiritualExercises/Puhl>. The Latin *Versio Vulgata* and Spanish autograph version are available in *Exercitia*.

deferred and abandoned [*dexada*], which the good and wise give through good voices, they entrust, surrender, commend and abandon themselves to what the spirit and God should say there in the secret of the soul. And if this doctrine is not of the *dexados* and *alumbrados*, I would like to see the doctrine of one of them to compare it with this one, and to see how much distance there is between the one and the other.<sup>58</sup>

Pedroche's two-edged criticism is clear. On the one hand, the *Exercises* promote the doctrine of the *dejados* because they disparage the normal means of coming to an informed election, such as seeking counsel through preaching. On the other hand, they disseminate the doctrine of the *alumbrados* because they bid the exercitant listen only to what transpires in the "secret of the soul."

Here, as elsewhere, Nadal attempts to offer a balanced response. Far from denying that the *Exercises* treat the secret movements of the soul as grist for the mill of election, he forthrightly admits that the retreat privileges interior consolation as evidence of God's will. Though the *Exercises* stop short of saying that the director "must not" (*non debet*) urge exercitants to one or another state of life, they do teach that such restraint is "much more fitting" (*longe convenientius*).<sup>59</sup> Besides, he explains, directors do not give the elections to everyone "in the same way" (*una ratione*), but give the elections only to those who are apt for greater service and desirous of perfection.<sup>60</sup> For such exercitants, general exhortation to the life of the counsels proves less helpful:

The exercises [*documentis*] of election will be necessary to help some, [for] the mind must first be purged so that they might be able to see sincere truth. For even when sincere truth can also be distinguished from evil, this is to know speculatively, not practically too, that is, not with heart and affect [*affectu*]. For we do not seek only to know the way of attaining to heaven, but simultaneously to know how to enter, and to want to enter, and to enter resolutely [*fortiter*]. Truth must be sought with a purified mind, but where else [can we purify our minds] than

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<sup>58</sup> *Chron.* III:509–510.

<sup>59</sup> *Chron.* III:564.

<sup>60</sup> *Chron.* III:564.

in the life of Christ, in the application of meditations oriented to elections? Here grace is asked from Christ, is sought out, is asked by knocking, is expected, as Scripture everywhere proclaims. Yet you wish in the middle of prayer (if it please God) for a preacher (perhaps from your own order) to interrupt and intervene lest he receive grace immediately rather than through the ministration of your preacher?<sup>61</sup>

Nadal follows this reply with several rhetorical questions implying Pedroche's unfamiliarity with the spirit of true prayer.

Despite the obvious edge of Nadal's rebuttals, the polemical context does not prompt Nadal to minimize the importance that the *Exercises* place on the interior and affective dispositions of the exercitant. Indeed, Nadal's argumentative strategy is not so much to downplay the importance of affective movements as to note that the *Exercises* do not limit themselves to monitoring promptings in the "secret of the soul." They instead make use of the whole panoply of means, inner and outer, affective and rational:

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*It is worth noting that Nadal does not take Annotation 15, like some do today, as evidence that Ignatius recognizes the "priority of experience over doctrine."*

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Expect grace from God, but do so in such a way that you do not put him to the test [*ut illum non tentes*]. But see how far we are from putting God to the test in our elections. We employ all means: *divine*, by meditation on the holy gospel; *ecclesiastical*, since we undertake meditations approved by the Church; *human*, since we give elections to no one—nor even any exercises whatsoever—without an instructor [*instructore*], to whom it is necessary that the exercitant refer everything that happens in meditation: all reasonings, all arguments. In short, he refers whatever he gathers from a meditation to him, that [the director] might assess if he has erred or stumbled, and recall him to or sustain him on the right path.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> *Chron.* III:564–65.

<sup>62</sup> *Chron.* III:565; my italics.

It is worth noting that Nadal does not take Annotation 15, like some do today, as evidence that Ignatius recognizes the “priority of experience over doctrine.”<sup>63</sup> Nadal effectively concedes that, if the *Exercises* limited the instruments for discovering God’s will to the interior promptings of the spirit, this would indeed risk the presumption of the *alumbrados*, *dejados*, and Lutherans. But the *Exercises*, as he sees them, carefully avoid “putting God to the test.” They instead avail themselves of all the means for ascertaining God’s will: divine, ecclesial, and human. These three kinds of means deserve unpacking.

### A. Divine and Ecclesiastical Means

Beginning with the divine and human elements, one can note that these refer in context largely to the authority of the texts used as the material for meditation. The *Exercises* employ *divine* means because they direct the exercitant to the text of inspired Scripture. They employ *ecclesiastical* means because they direct the exercitant to supplementary meditations and methods of prayer approved by the Pope. Nadal’s emphasis on inspired or ecclesially approved texts reflects aspects of Ignatius’s own piety and has implications for one’s practice of retreat direction today.

As regards Ignatius’s reverence for religious texts, Jesuits familiar with the “Autobiography” will recall that Ignatius, while still convalescing at Loyola, began to collect in a book those Gospel passages that especially moved him. These he visually marked according to the dignity of their source, transcribing the “words of Christ . . . in red ink; those of Our Lady in blue ink.”<sup>64</sup> Later in life, Ignatius would show a similar piety not only to sayings emanating from Jesus and Mary but also to those texts hallowed by ecclesial approbation and usage. Angel Suquía Goicoechea’s still valuable study, *La santa misa en la espiritualidad de san Ignacio de Loyola*, observes how nearly all the phrases that Ignatius’s *Spiritual Diary* records as consoling come from the Missal.<sup>65</sup> Nadal

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<sup>63</sup> William Reiser, SJ, “The *Spiritual Exercises* in a Religiously Pluralistic World,” *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 10 (Fall 2010): 135–57, at 150.

<sup>64</sup> *Auto.* 11; trans. Munitiz and Endean, 16.

<sup>65</sup> *La Santa Misa en la espiritualidad de san Ignacio de Loyola* (Madrid: Dirección General de Relaciones Culturales, 1950), 188–89. Goicoechea would later become Cardinal



himself notes the greater spiritual relish Ignatius derived from meditating on the words of the Mass and the canonical hours, referring to this as Ignatius's "*espíritu eclesiástico*."<sup>66</sup>

The controversy with Cano and Pedroche reveals that Ignatius extended this same reverence for ecclesially endorsed texts to the *Exercises* themselves. Pedroche at one point seized upon a mistranslated phrase of the approved Latin version of the *Exercises* as evidence of Ignatius's heterodox opinions on divine predestination.<sup>67</sup> Gonçalves da Câmara's *Memoriale* recalls that, when the Spanish provincial Araoz moved to correct the mistranslation, Ignatius disapproved:

I must recall how, when Father learned from Nadal on his return from Spain about the opposition to the *Exercises* there, and how Araoz had emended copies [of the *Exercises*] in accordance with the Spanish, he regretted it very much, and greatly blamed Araoz for having done it, because the Latin text had been approved by the Pope. He said he himself would never defend the *Exercises*, but rather it was for the Church to defend them against their opponents.<sup>68</sup>

Ignatius's reaction implies a couple of things about his reverence for the authority of a text. Negatively, Ignatius fears that apologetics might sometimes be counterproductive, implying that a question settled by

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Archbishop of Madrid (1983–1994). The Missal of Ignatius's day combined what one could call both the Roman Missal and the Lectionary.

<sup>66</sup> Ms. Archiv. S. I. Roman., *Instit.* 98, fol. 219 v.; cited in M. Nicolau, SJ, "Liturgia y Ejercicios," *Manresa* 20 (1948): 233–74, at 252.

<sup>67</sup> The version in question of rule 14 of the Rules for Thinking with the Church (*SpEx* 366) began, "Though it is very true that no one can be saved without being predestined" (*Daño que sea mucha verdad que ninguna se puede salvar sin ser predestinado*). The *Versio Vulgata* of the *Exercises*, translated by Frusius, inadvertently rendered this adversative clause into a counterfactual clause: "If it were very true that no one could be saved without being predestined" (*Etiamsi plane compertum definitumque esset nemini contingere salute nisi praedestinato*)." Araoz attempted to forestall the objection that Jesuits deny predestination by changing the offending *esset* to *sit*.

<sup>68</sup> See the entry for April 4, 1555 at Gonçalves Mem. 321; *Remembering Iñigo: Glimpses of the Life of Saint Ignatius Loyola*, trans. Alexander Eaglestone and Joseph A. Munitiz, SJ (St. Louis and Leominster: Institute of Jesuit Sources and Gracewing, 2004), 185; *Fontes narrativi de S. Ignatio de Loyola et de Societatis Jesu initiis*, 4 vols. (Rome, 1943–1965), 1:710.



the pope were still open for debate.<sup>69</sup> Positively, Ignatius's reluctance to change the papally approved text, even to make it more accurate, implies his belief that grace follows channels of authority. Papal endorsement makes the *Exercises* a privileged site for encountering God, giving the text an almost sacramental efficacy. Hence, when Nadal appeals to the divine and human means employed by the *Exercises*, he seems to reflect the verbal piety learned from Ignatius himself.

At all events, the emphasis, found in Nadal's *Apologia*, on approved sources is not without implications for the contemporary practice of retreat direction. For it strongly implies that imaginative absorption does not alone ensure the genuine Ignatian spirit of a retreat. Indeed, Nadal elsewhere expects the giver of the Exercises to be on guard lest the exercitant "wander altogether into a certain contemplative indulgence [*in luxum quendam . . . contemplationis*] and look only to delight, and so not bear fruit."<sup>70</sup> The *Exercises* effectively forestall such illuminism by directing the imagination toward "canonical" scenes.<sup>71</sup> Hence, the practice of substituting for biblical or Ignatian meditations what Anthony de Mello calls "symbolic fantasies" — that is, fantasies "not grounded on some element of history" — would remove what Nadal considers one of the chief safeguards against *alumbradismo*.<sup>72</sup> A relatively unscripted fantasy of one's own funeral, of a trip into a city, or of a self-portrait may undoubtedly have some propaedeutic value, helping pray-ers awaken

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<sup>69</sup> Polanco writes to Borgia on January 5, 1555, "Regarding the Exercises or the contradiction thereof, our Father does not feel that we ought to pay attention, but for our part to be at peace with all; and if some should ask us, we are to respond to them. And [we can do so] easily, leaning on [*descargándonos con*] the Apostolic See, to whose judgment and censure the Exercises were offered so diligently and with previous examination. And his Holiness approved with a particular brief everything they contain and exhorted his officials to avail themselves of them." Original in MHSI, *Sancti Ignatii de Loyola Societatis Jesu fundatoris epistolae et instructiones*, 12 vols. (Madrid, 1903–1911), VIII:253.

<sup>70</sup> *Chron.* III:546.

<sup>71</sup> Barton Geger, SJ, observes that, for Ignatius, it was important that the material for prayer have a historical foundation. See his prefatory remarks to Henry J. Shea, SJ, "The Beloved Disciple and the *Spiritual Exercises*," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 49, no. 2 (Summer 2017): iii–vii.

<sup>72</sup> *Sadhana, A Way to God: Christian Exercises in Eastern Form* (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 85.

their imaginative senses or grow in tolerance for stillness.<sup>73</sup> Yet these meditations finally do not require exercitants to confront their own image of God with the canonical image of Jesus in the Gospels or in the Kingdom Meditation. From this it follows that, if retreat directors today were to adapt the *Exercises* so as to neglect these divine and ecclesiastical means, Nadal and Ignatius might join Pedroche in criticizing them.

### B. Human Means

Besides the divine and ecclesiastical means of discovering God's will, Ignatius mentions a third category: "human means." Nadal, as we saw above, identifies these human means almost exclusively with the giver of the Exercises, among whose chief responsibilities is protecting the exercitant from self-delusion. For one such as myself, formed in the contemporary North American Jesuit method of spiritual direction, the most striking feature is Nadal's emphasis on the giver of the Exercises' role as teacher and guardian of sound doctrine. I learned above all to avoid giving instruction, to "stay with the person's experience," to reflect the language of the directee so as to avoid imposing doctrinal frameworks. Though Nadal might agree with this "evocative" approach as a rule, he would not feel bound to it. Here again, his sensibilities probably reflect those of Ignatius.

When Nadal protests to Pedroche that the Exercises do not neglect "human means" for discovering God's will, Nadal describes the giver of the Exercises as an "instructor" who intervenes when the exercitant strays from the path of sound spirituality, doctrine, or morals. This didactic language is not an isolated occurrence. Indeed, he considers instruction among the principal roles of the giver of the Exercises: "This is indeed that chief office [*praecipuum officium*] of the instructor, whom we never fail to provide for the Exercises, namely, that he be a guide [*praemonstrator*] and pedagogue [*paedagogus*] for the exercitant."<sup>74</sup> Thus

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<sup>73</sup> *Sadhana*, 85–88, 97.

<sup>74</sup> *Nadal* IV:841. Using similarly directive language, Nadal imagines himself asking Pedroche when to preach to the exercitants: "[To have a preacher] before prayer? This was explained above and rejected. To have a preacher after prayer? He has not only

the question is not whether the director may exhort, but when it is best to exhort.

Nadal's answer is: as soon as prayer or elections go off course. "Error does occur in these matters; therefore, we employ an instructor, concerning whom we prescribe many things in the first annotations, and [we do] this so that all things that happen and transpire in the exercises may be referred to God."<sup>75</sup> Among the clearest signs of such error is its incompatibility with the church's way of life: "We bid that that elections be examined according to a rule [*ad regulam*], and additionally according to the exact standard [*ad amussim*] of the spirit and truth and institutes of our orthodox mother Church: we immediately reject whoever elects what is alien to the Roman Church."<sup>76</sup> Nadal clearly does not oppose instructive interventions from the giver of the Exercises.

In a somewhat cheeky move, Nadal in fact compares the variety of safeguards against illusion employed by the Exercises with Thomas Aquinas's rather incautious attitude toward choosing religious life:

And see with what good will I am dealing with you. According to your (indeed, our and everybody's) Thomas, no one is to be consulted when someone is deciding about assuming the religious state. . . . If someone is making an election on his own initiative and perhaps rashly, ought he seek no counsel? Yet he who chooses religion from holy meditations on the life of Christ, on the basis of lengthy prayer, after the purification of his conscience, this one is condemned for rashness, scandal, and heresy if he does not consult a preacher? But we nevertheless assign a preacher and consultant, not to get in the way if something has been rightly and ordinately gathered and decided on the basis of prayer, but to assess [*censeat*] if anything has been decided rashly, by the illusion of a spirit, or at the urging of some bad affect.<sup>77</sup>

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a preacher and adviser, but a censor and a judge [*censorem et judicem*]." *Chron.* III:565.

<sup>75</sup> *Chron.* III:566.

<sup>76</sup> *Nadal* IV:841

<sup>77</sup> *Nadal* IV:565.

Nadal here refers to Aquinas's affirmative answer to the question in the *Summa Theologiae*, "Whether it is praiseworthy to enter religion without taking counsel of many, and previously deliberating for a long time?"<sup>78</sup> Because Christ so manifestly teaches the superiority of religion as a state

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*Thus the question is not whether the director may exhort, but when it is best to exhort.*

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of life, Aquinas argues, there is no need to take counsel or deliberate at length about entering religion unless there be a "special obstacle" such as bodily infirmity, great debt, or the like.<sup>79</sup> Aquinas no doubt pre-

sumes a well-motivated candidate, but Nadal's point is that the *Exercises* envision the director supplying more counsel than Aquinas himself requires as a minimum for a sound election.

Intriguingly, Nadal thinks that the director should attempt to convince—albeit patiently and as a last resort—even those who remain doubtful about the church's authority. For example, Nadal also speculates in the *Apologia* about how to give the Exercises to vacillating Lutherans. He recommends in such circumstances that such exercitants make all the Exercises of the First Week except sacramental confession, explaining, "As they move away from these sins, which are the reason why God gave them over into error and into perverse feeling, they will be more fit to recognize the error of their understanding and to admit the light of faith."<sup>80</sup> If they remain unmoved after the First Week, however, they may go on to the Exercises of the Second Week, not quarrying the biblical scenes for theological proofs but focusing instead on the "straightforward contemplation of the story and Application of the Senses."<sup>81</sup> Nadal continues:

If by these meditations they do not become more free from what has taken their fancy [*remissior in suis placitis*], then peacefully and quietly we should move on to disputation. In this case, as if according to the third "time" of Elections, the person

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<sup>78</sup> *Summa Theologiae* II-II 189.10.

<sup>79</sup> *Summa Theologiae* II-II 189.10.

<sup>80</sup> Nadal IV:850; "Exercises for Infidels," 48.

<sup>81</sup> Nadal IV:850; "Exercises for Infidels," 48, translation modified for accuracy.

should put their [*sic*] arguments forward, and the instructor [*instructor*] set Catholic truth against that. The two should be put together by the instructor, and the conclusion drawn.<sup>82</sup>

Although few Lutherans in Nadal's day made the Exercises, Nadal's plan for accommodating them gives a sense of what he meant by the director's role as "instructor" (*instructor*).<sup>83</sup> This included presenting Catholic teaching persuasively to the doctrinally deficient. Nadal recommends such "instructive" interventions, however, only if the purification of the affect through prayer and meditation does not produce the desired result. In this way, Nadal retains his characteristic affective-rational equilibrium.

This equilibrium arguably reflects the spirit of Ignatius's *Praesupponendum*.<sup>84</sup> In the part most often quoted—and perhaps rightly so—Ignatius exhorts both the giver and receiver of the Exercises to remember that "every good Christian is more ready to put a good interpretation on another's statement than to condemn it as false." But in the following lines, less often cited, Ignatius continues:

If an orthodox construction cannot be put on a proposition, the one who made it should be asked how he understands it. If he is in error, he should be corrected with all kindness. If this does not suffice, all appropriate means should be used to bring him to a correct interpretation, and so defend the proposition from error [*y si no basta, busque todos los medios convenientes para que, bien enténdola, se salve*].<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Nadal IV:850; "Exercises for Infidels," 48. Even outside the controversial context of the *Apologia*, Nadal concedes the possibility of giving the Exercises to Lutherans who agree to "place themselves under the Spirit of the Lord and of the Church, or at least not fight against that Spirit." MHSI 90A, P. *Hieronimi Nadal orationis observationes*, ed. M. Nicolau (Rome: IHSI, 1964), 100; English translation from "Exercises for Infidels," 48n6.

<sup>83</sup> Iparraguirre's inventory of exercitants in Ignatius's lifetime reveals few Lutherans, most of whom were speedily reconciled with the church. See his *Práctica de los Ejercicios Espirituales*, 267–307, 136.

<sup>84</sup> *SpEx* 22.

<sup>85</sup> *SpEx* 22. Puhl's translation waffles between two possible interpretations of *se salve*—namely, that of saving the person in error, and saving the proposition in question. See the commentary on this passage in *Obras completas de San Ignacio de Loyola*, 202n23. If we suppose that Nadal knows Ignatius's mind, then the *Apologia* counts as evidence for

Even for Ignatius, then, the giver of the Exercises needed to be prepared to assume an instructional role in case of need.

Though both Nadal and Ignatius are concerned to let God communicate directly with the soul, both nevertheless ascribe a more robustly admonitory role to the giver of the Exercises than is customary today. We see a far more circumscribed role for the director, for instance, in William Barry's and William Connolly's classic *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*—the book that formed numerous US Jesuits, including myself.<sup>86</sup> Barry and Connolly's work remains complicated since, on the one hand, it identifies Scripture as a privileged place to encounter God, and openness to legitimate ecclesial authority as a sign of spiritual authenticity.<sup>87</sup> On the other hand, it also insists, "Teaching, preaching, and moral guidance are not the proper task of spiritual directors. Their task is to help people experience God's action and respond to him. Fostering discovery rather than teaching doctrine is their purpose."<sup>88</sup> Though Barry and Connolly uphold Scripture and doctrine as touchstones of sound spirituality, they seem to discourage directors from teaching them in direction.

Consider, for example, Barry's and Connolly's *casus* of a married female directee who has become romantically involved with a divorced man. The director, feeling responsible for protecting the woman's marriage bond and family, becomes inwardly angry and adversarial toward the directee. In supervision, however, the same director learns that these feelings result from a role confusion. "It is laudable to want to prevent infidelity in marriage, but spiritual directors have to leave that purpose to others. They cannot build a working alliance with a directee while maintaining a hidden agenda."<sup>89</sup> Anticipating the objection that directors have a responsibility to remind Christians of their moral obligations, Barry and Connolly

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the saving-the-person interpretation.

<sup>86</sup> William A. Barry, SJ, and William J. Connolly, SJ, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* (San Francisco: Harper, 1982).

<sup>87</sup> Barry and Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, 53, 115–16.

<sup>88</sup> Barry and Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, 43.

<sup>89</sup> Barry and Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, 142.

respond that this responsibility remains conditional. After all, they observe, typical directees know their obligations already and have many other sources of moral and doctrinal formation. Moreover, immoral behavior and rogue opinions will presumably “lead to disturbances” in the directee’s relationship with God, allowing the director to broach the matter through the relational optic privileged in the “working alliance.”<sup>90</sup> In other words, the director refrains from directly addressing doctrinal or moral norms, at least until the directee perceives and reports that a given behavior or opinion has disturbed her relationship with God. Nadal, by contrast, would feel no need to wait for disturbance to arise “from within.”

And he might have good reasons not to wait, since, as some experienced directors note, disquiet does not always occur in a timely fashion. The influential Canadian Jesuit John English, for instance, when raising the question whether a directee “not fully responsive to the instructions from the magisterial church could be at peace with the Holy Spirit,” admits that they often are. Some even decide to leave the church altogether and still “experience peace in doing so.” He explains that this tranquility may owe to the pain of ecclesial scandal or “an incomplete image of the church and a neglect of its mystical significance in the world.”<sup>91</sup>

Ignatius’s First Week rules for discernment of spirits may also help explain this. In regressing souls, the good spirit normally works by amplifying the protest of conscience “through the synderesis of reason” (*por la sindérese de la razón*).<sup>92</sup> Typically, “synderesis” refers to the habitual knowledge of moral precepts.<sup>93</sup> Hence, a faint habitual knowledge of moral precepts may leave the good spirit little to amplify, allowing the wayward soul to continue in “peace.” Perhaps precisely because it is so hard to identify the false peace of stagnation without an objective moral framework, Nadal does not counsel

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<sup>90</sup> Barry and Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, 143–44.

<sup>91</sup> All citations in this paragraph are from John J. English, SJ, *Spiritual Freedom: From an Experience of the Ignatian Exercises to the Art of Spiritual Guidance*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1995), 186–87.

<sup>92</sup> *SpEx* 315.

<sup>93</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II 94.2.ad 2.



bracketing doctrine and morals indefinitely. For him, to make these external benchmarks so “secondary” to the criteria of interior experience would be to flirt with *alumbradismo*.<sup>94</sup>

In sum, Nadal’s *Apologia*, without licensing authoritarian styles of direction, requires a balance of personal-ecclesial and affective-rational elements. On the one hand, in his imagined dealings with vacillating Lutherans, Nadal knows in advance the parameters of a good election. He would nevertheless not himself push any particular conclusion during the First and Second Week dynamic. He rightly presumes that the exercitant does better to hear certain things from God rather than a human director. As Nadal sees things, Ignatius’s preference that God deal directly with the soul justifies such restraint and attentiveness to the interior experience of the exercitant. Should these methods produce an election alien to the church, on the other hand, Nadal would not scruple to propose the “catholic truth” by straightforward “human means.”

This openness to all the available means—divine, ecclesial, human—distinguishes the Jesuits in Nadal’s mind from the *alumbrados*, who, by discounting all indicators of God’s will except interior illumination, act “as if they wanted to compel God himself at their bidding into their own method of prayer and dereliction.”<sup>95</sup> With regard to the tendencies of North American Jesuit spiritual direction, I imagine Nadal would find something authentically Ignatian in the contemporary preference for discernment through the evidence of interior experience. He would nevertheless recommend that we not “put God to the test” by absolutizing this preference to the exclusion of other means.

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<sup>94</sup> Barry and Connolly typify a broader trend in English-language commentary on the *Spiritual Exercises*. For a critical review of statements similarly prioritizing the authority of interior experience—including those of the US Catholic writer Margaret Silf, Scottish Jesuit Gerard W. Hughes, English evangelical writer Joyce Hugget, and US Jesuit Dean Brackley—see Frederik Heiding, SJ, *Ignatian Spirituality at Ecclesial Frontiers* (D.Phil. Diss., Oxford, 2012), 12–18.

<sup>95</sup> *Chron.* III:566. For Nadal’s appeal to ecclesiastical and rational safeguards outside of polemical contexts, see the texts cited in Ignacio Ramos Riera, *Jerónimo Nadal (1507–1580) und der “verschriftlichte” Ignatius: Die Konstruktion einer individuellen und kollektiven Identität*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions 193 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 287–91.



### III. The Sufficiency of the Exercises

Nadal is convinced that it belongs to the Jesuit way of proceeding to maintain a certain catholic breadth—that is, to use “all the available means.” As we have seen, he applies this principle to the internal dynamics of the Exercises, arguing that attention to interior movements need not lead to the neglect of divine, ecclesiastical, and human means. But he also applies this principle to the relative place of the Exercises within Jesuit spiritual life as a whole. In this respect, Nadal’s sixteenth-century response to Pedroche both anticipates De Guibert’s twentieth-century response to Brémond, as well as twenty-first century questions regarding the relationship between the *Exercises* and the *Constitutions*.

#### A. The Exercises and Spiritual Perfection in Nadal

The occasion for Nadal to address the role of the Exercises in Jesuit spirituality as a whole comes from Pedroche’s objections to the preface to the first edition of the Vulgate version of the *Exercises*. The author of the preface, after explaining that the book represents the Latin translation of a retreat that St. Ignatius composed in Spanish, disabuses readers of the notion that just anyone can profit from the retreat. “It is clear that [the *Exercises*] were not printed with the intention of disseminating them everywhere among the common people [*in vulgus*]. . . . Rather, these thoroughly examined volumes were edited under the Society’s authority [*potestatem*] and for her use.”<sup>96</sup> Referring to the Society’s guarded and somewhat proprietary attitude toward the *Exercises*, Pedroche complains: “If this book of exercises and spiritual documents is good and useful for perfection, and so apt for obtaining it in a short time, why is it not given and permitted to all?”<sup>97</sup> Sound spirituality, in other words, need not fear the light.

Though Nadal objects to many aspects of Pedroche’s insinuation, most relevant for the moment is his objection to its characterization of

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<sup>96</sup> *Exercitia* 219.

<sup>97</sup> *Chron.* III:505–506.

the Exercises as an easy shortcut to spiritual perfection. Bristling at this exaggeration, Nadal retorts:

What moves you to attribute to us and our exercises more than we ourselves either would or could claim? Who from our number has ever said that the Exercises enable us to attain perfection in a short time? Jesus made it so that we, who would seriously strive for perfection, should become apt for our religious institute by much time, labor, industry, mortification, and exercise of virtues. We certainly embrace all these supports [*ad-minicula*], and in the meanwhile we use the exercises for prayer and direction of life.<sup>98</sup>

Here, again, Nadal admits that, though the Society privileges the *Exercises*, it nevertheless continues to avail itself of “all these [other] supports.” He takes it for granted that perfection in the spiritual life follows only prolonged spiritual struggle.

Nadal likely learned prayer’s positive-yet-relative value in Jesuit life from Ignatius himself. Gonçalves’s *Memoriale* records a conversation between Ignatius and Nadal to this effect.

When [Ignatius] told Nadal that an hour of prayer was enough for those in the colleges, he was placing the chief stress upon this mortification and abnegation. Thus it is clear that the Father constructs the great foundation of the Society from all the relevant matters, such as indifference, which is presupposed, and the examinations after a candidate has passed through probations and obtained favorable testimony about them, and not from prayer, unless it is the prayer to which all these matters give birth. Thereupon the Father praised prayer highly, especially that prayer which is made by keeping God always before one’s eyes.<sup>99</sup>

Judging by Nadal’s response in the *Apologia* that the Exercises alone do not make a Jesuit, we can surmise that he too remembered this conversation.

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<sup>98</sup> *Chron.* III:531.

<sup>99</sup> *Gonçalves Mem.* 256; De Guibert, *The Jesuits*, 89.

Partly anticipating Brémond's position in the early twentieth century, then, Nadal (following Ignatius) is already in the sixteenth century interpreting the Exercises as a kind of foundation for a spiritual edifice still under construction. The Gospels themselves teach us to begin with that repentance, he observes, to which the whole First Week is dedicated. "General confession is added so that once and for all the old man might be put off, the new man in Christ put on. Then comes the most holy Eucharist, which brings [*conciliat*] the Kingdom of God near." Inasmuch as the subsequent Weeks of the Exercises trace Christ's life, death, and Resurrection, Nadal thinks it fitting that "we [Jesuits] realize [*repraesentare*] by our Exercises the purgative, illuminative, and unitive way." But he quickly qualifies this statement, continuing rather modestly, "We certainly try to establish by our Exercises at least some beginning of these." For Nadal, the Exercises are more like the point of departure for the spiritual itinerary than its destination.<sup>100</sup>

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*Indeed, Nadal describes the Exercises as finding their completion not only in sacramental practice but in the way of life prescribed in the Constitutions.*

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Indeed, Nadal describes the Exercises as finding their completion not only in sacramental practice but in the way of life prescribed in the *Constitutions*.

For what do we do in our Society? After finishing the Exercises, do we cease to exercise ourselves? You would certainly say otherwise if you read our *Constitutions*: if you experienced an obedience so strict, so many probationations, so many penances and mortifications; if you had so many labors to undertake in helping your neighbor and observing the Institute of the Society.

Nadal thus understands the careful observance of the evangelical way of life laid out in the *Constitutions* as an ongoing spiritual exercise—the exercise that consolidates and fructifies the spiritual gains of the thirty-day retreat.

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<sup>100</sup> *Chron.* III:543.

## B. The Exercises and Spiritual Perfection Today

Nadal's insistence that the Exercises do not of themselves suffice to produce spiritual maturity, and, indeed, that Jesuits have never claimed such efficacy for them, is not without contemporary relevance. As already noted, controversy about the role of the Exercises in the spiritual progress of Jesuits flared up in the early twentieth century. Despite De Guibert's magisterial intervention, the question continues to resurface under a different guise in the early twenty-first century. Here, I will suggest some implications of Nadal's position for the controversies of each period.

As regards the early twentieth-century exchange sparked by Brémond, Nadal would have agreed with the ex-Jesuit at least in part: that the Spiritual Exercises, if by that one means the long retreat, is meant for "beginners." The Exercises, fervently made, leave the exercitant with an embryonic spiritual organism that must be nourished by ongoing mortification, the sacraments, and observance of the *Constitutions*.

At the same time, the very elements that Nadal identifies as necessary complements to the *Exercises* reveal a deep-seated difference of sensibility from Brémond's. Whereas Brémond saw the *Exercises* as a beginners' retreat precisely because of its emphasis on effort rather than restful union, Nadal calls the Exercises a "beginning" because only a lifetime of religious observance and apostolic service can fructify the seed planted therein. For Brémond, the Exercises are too ascetical; for Nadal, they are not ascetical enough—or at least do not offer a sufficiently prolonged program of asceticism. On this point, Nadal would likely support De Guibert's contention that one never outgrows the Exercises, but rather integrates them within a broader "mysticism of service."

Twenty-first century questions about the sufficiency of the Exercises have quite different presuppositions. Far from having to vindicate the Exercises as a permanently valid spiritual practice, suited for every stage of the spiritual life, Jesuits now take this perspective for granted. They instead wonder why the Exercises, now restored to their individually directed format and exalted as the defining feature of Jesuit spirituality, fail to produce lasting transformation. Decree 1 of the 36th General Congregation invited self-examination on this point:

The question that confronts the Society today is why the Exercises do not change us as deeply as we would hope. What elements in our lives, works, or lifestyles hinder our ability to let God's gracious mercy transform us? This Congregation is deeply convinced that God is calling the entire Society to a profound spiritual renewal.<sup>101</sup>

In many respects, the congregation's decree brings into sharp relief a line of self-searching that Fr. General Nicolás had introduced just after the 35th General Congregation. Reflecting on the 2009 *ex officio* letters, he posed a broader form of the same question:

Why has this interest in the spiritual life and in the renewal of spiritual practices in our communities often failed to produce the desired and expected transformation of the person? . . . It is a cause for concern that, although there are so many Jesuits, there seem to be so few "masters in the Spirit," competent spiritual directors who can help others in their journey to God.<sup>102</sup>

Over the last ten years, an awareness has emerged that the thirty-day Exercises, even when annually repeated in a condensed format, do not suffice for transformation unless supported and reinforced by an ordered way of life. Prayer cannot be the only means of spiritual growth.

I believe this is the lesson of the article by Fr. János Lukács (HUN), an experienced novice master and formator, in the most recent issues of *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS*.<sup>103</sup> He notes how the *Official Directory to the Spiritual Exercises of 1599*, much like Nadal's *Apologia* of the mid-1550s, warned against expecting that the Exercises would "automatically result in permanent changes to one's life, however intense the spiritual consolations one might have received."<sup>104</sup> For

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<sup>101</sup> GC 36, d. 1, n. 18; in *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees & Accompanying Documents of the 36th General Congregation* (Chestnut Hill, MA: Institute of Jesuit Sources [IJS], Boston College, 2017), 21.

<sup>102</sup> Letter of Superior General Nicolás to all major superiors, "On the 2009 *ex officio* Letters," Rome, 27 October 2009.

<sup>103</sup> János Lukács, SJ, "To Be Changed as Deeply as We Would Hope: Revisiting the Novitiate," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 51, no. 3 (Autumn 2019).

<sup>104</sup> János Lukács, SJ, "To Be Changed as Deeply as We Would Hope," 4.

a more comprehensive plan for fostering lasting transformation, Lukács contends, one must look to the *Constitutions*.

For the *Constitutions* not only teach how to extend the methods of prayer taught by the *Exercises* but also prescribe what Lukács calls an “engagement in interpersonal relationships and integration into the body of the Society.”<sup>105</sup> According to Lukács, this interpersonal engagement and corporate integration includes “exercises in self-awareness,” such as confession, the examen, fraternal feedback, and religious obedience; “practices for taking action,” such as guarding against temptation in the normal order of the novitiate, cultivating interior freedom through mortification, and becoming transparent to the novice master; and dispositions for uniting “the spiritual and interpersonal,” such as taking care to form a community of mutual edification.<sup>106</sup> Tellingly, many of these post-retreat practices—obedience, mortification, fruitful communions, and observance of the *Constitutions*—are those that Nadal underscores in his response to Pedroche.

Judging by his *Apologia*, then, Nadal would support the present movement in the Society of Jesus to understand the content of the *Constitutions* better and to approximate better the way of life envisioned therein. Indeed, were the Society ever to place the whole burden of spiritual growth on the thirty-day Exercises and private meditations, Nadal probably would consider Pedroche’s criticisms warranted.

## Conclusion

In sum, one might say that Nadal’s *Apologia* shares the appreciation for individual spiritual experience so evident in contemporary Jesuit literature on the Spiritual Exercises, but adds to it an appreciation of the rational, ecclesial, and ascetical dimensions of the Exercises and *Constitutions*. In this respect, Nadal presents a model of balance that Jesuits do well to retrieve. In an age of moral panic about *alumbrosos*, *dejados*, and Lutheran heretics, Nadal did not retreat into an anti-affective or anti-mystical rationalism—though this was clearly a

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 5–6.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 16–36.

temptation for many who loved the Catholic faith. Instead, Nadal's strategy was to surround subjective and affective modes of learning God's will with a panoply of other means—divine, ecclesial, human, and rational—for discovering the same. For him, the immediate experience of God crowns rather than displaces the mediated experiences of reason, doctrine, human counsel, and communal accountability.

This holistic approach to the Exercises stood for Nadal as a sort of epitome of the whole Jesuit way of proceeding as well as a providential remedy for the spiritual ills of his age. He hoped that the balance displayed by the Exercises and the Society would serve to counteract two opposing extremes in his own polarized church. On the one hand, this balanced approach would help those so fearful of spiritual illusions that they have rejected all legitimate use of spiritual movements. Drawing a thinly veiled portrait of Pedroche and Cano, Nadal observes:

There is a . . . kind of person, who will profit from the teaching or certainly the example of the Society, namely, those who immerse themselves so totally in speculation that they leave nothing whatsoever to devotion, to the spirit, to the spiritual senses, whereby they might penetrate to where they must plant their feet. For if the spirit is desirable even when treating other disciplines, who would recognize as a theologian one who is theologian only, and does not understand everything that he understands with the heart and sense of the Spirit? But this is rare. Nevertheless, it used to be very frequent in the Church. And, indeed, it should be very common, since scripture everywhere professes this way of doing theology [*rationem theologandi*] and the saints preach it. Even if we who live in the Society do not attain it, it is nevertheless our Institute; we aspire to it and strive for it. By the grace of Jesus Christ, some light for this way of study [*rationem studiorum*] has begun to shine upon us.<sup>107</sup>

Here, Nadal affirms that reason, despite its importance, is not enough. The “heart and sense of the Spirit” must suffuse it, as it must suffuse all our natural talents and efforts. Indeed, it belongs to the Society's “Institute” to unite the two.

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<sup>107</sup> *Chron.* III:567–568.

On the other hand, this balanced approach would also help to right those who have taken refuge in a spirituality of subjectivism:

We take a stand [against illuminism] throughout the whole Exercises, as has been explained above, and we proscribe [*sancimus*] it in the clearest terms [*illustrissime*] in the later rules of the Exercises, where we deal with how to think with the Hierarchical Church. The whole institute of the Society consists in this, and, according to the manly grace of Christ Jesus, she exerts herself in this: namely, exposing and uprooting, insofar as possible, all heretics and infidels. First of all, the Lutherans who denounce the Church in our age, but also the Spanish *dejados*. The former with the true light of the spirit, and with sincere efficacy, and with firm union to the Roman Church conjoined to true disciplines. The latter, even if they are only covertly heretics, if some nevertheless remain, with the truth of prayer and the sincere use of spiritual things, as well as of all the things that can aid the spirit, which the Society especially endorses [*sancit*] in the last part of the *Constitutions*.<sup>108</sup>

Doctrine remains an indispensable touchstone, according to Nadal, for discerning the “truth of prayer” and the “true light of the spirit.” The *Constitutions* too remain an irreplaceable source of “true disciplines” that “can aid the spirit.”

This both-and approach is worth considering in every age. If Nadal’s emphasis on individual spiritual affectivity challenged the anti-mystical element in his day, his complementary attention to doctrine and reason perhaps challenges the interior experientialism of our day. His *Apologia* suggests that Jesuits’ ability to become “‘masters in the Spirit,’ competent spiritual directors who can whelp others in their journey to God,” depends greatly upon reconciling the “opposite virtues” in the Society’s spiritual tradition.

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<sup>108</sup> *Chron.* III:567. For similar remarks, see also *Nadal* IV:824.



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