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Ignatius of Loyola; Limbo; Society of Jesus, The [Encyclopedia Entries]

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"Ignatius of Loyola," pp. 543-544.

"Limbo," pp. 642-643.

"Society of Jesus, The," pp. 1030-1031.

convalescence during which his reading of the lives of Christ and the saints resulted in a religious conversion. He is frequently stereotyped as the soldier-saint, but his military career lasted only a few months, and the stereotype detracts from any real understanding of Loyola.

After his conversion he spent eleven months in prayer and fasting at Manresa in Catalonia. His religious experiences there became the basis and core of his *Spiritual Exercises*, published in 1548 after much revision. The *Spiritual Exercises*, a classic of Christian spirituality which has been published in five thousand editions in some thirty languages, is a manual designed to share Loyola's mystical experiences at a lower level with ordinary but sincere Christians and to help them reorder their lives to a single-minded service of God.

Loyola completed a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1523 and, returning to Europe, determined that he could serve his fellowman more effectively if he had an education. He therefore enrolled in a grammar school at Barcelona for two years before entering the University of Alcalá, where he attracted a few disciples. Opposition from the Inquisition forced him to transfer to the University of Salamanca. There he was imprisoned by the Inquisition; although acquitted, he was forbidden to speak on religious topics until he had completed theological studies. Thereupon, Loyola transferred to the University of Paris where he studied from 1528 to 1535 and gathered around him companions, such as Francis Xavier and Diego Lainez, who were to be the founding fathers of the Society of Jesus. In 1534 Loyola and six companions vowed perpetual poverty and chastity and promised to work for souls in Palestine if that were possible. After a short visit to Spain he was reunited with his companions at Venice, but war between Venice and the Turks prevented their departure for Palestine. Instead, they preached in the north Italian cities and then placed themselves at the disposal of Pope Paul III. Loyola was ordained a priest in 1537. Gradually the companions realized that only the structure of a religious order would preserve and perpetuate their union and apostolic work. Paul III authorized the Society of Jesus in 1540. Loyola was elected the first superior general and was commissioned to draw up constitutions.

Loyola lived in Rome from 1537 until his death in 1556, writing the Jesuit *Constitutions* and supervising the rapid expansion of the new order. His correspondence (all but a handful of 6795 items relate to the Roman years) mirrors the first decades of Jesuit history. Meanwhile, his mystical experiences, which had abated during

Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556). The founder of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). Ignatius was born of Basque noble parents in Guipúzcoa. Although early destined for a church career, he served as a courtier until 1521, when battle wounds forced

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his years of study, returned with increased force. In his last years, Loyola was at once a mystic and a religious bureaucrat. He husbanded some time for an active apostolate to those he considered most needy: he set up a halfway house for ex-prostitutes; a hospice for young girls; and charitable agencies for abandoned boys, Jewish converts, and impoverished noblemen. His autobiography, dictated to a subordinate, covers his life up to 1537.

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See also SOCIETY OF JESUS, THE.

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Limbo. Derived from a Germanic word for a hem or fringe, limbo was devised by medieval theologians as the place or state of those souls after death who did not fit neatly into either heaven or hell. In fact there were two limbos.

The limbo of the fathers (*limbus patrum*) was for the souls of the saints of the OT; Christ's descent into hell in the creed was interpreted as his liberating these souls and taking them to heaven. In Renaissance art the limbo of the fathers was depicted as a large prison cell. More important was the limbo of infants (*limbus infantum*). The majority of children born before the development of modern medicine died without attaining a maturity sufficient to commit serious personal sin. Augustine believed that all children of Adam have original sin, and hence infants who die without baptism are consigned to hell, although their punishment there will be mild. Many medieval theologians such as Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas considered the Augustinian view too harsh and postulated limbo as a perpetual state free from the pain of sense but without supernatural salvation and the enjoyment of God. Partly this view paralleled the development of the concept of original sin as privation of grace rather than as positive guilt.

The Councils of Lyons and Florence stated that those who die with only original sin will be punished differently from those with personal sin. Pius VI rejected the claim of the Jansenist Synod of Pistoia that belief in limbo was Pelagian; but belief in limbo has never been defined by the Roman Catholic Church, although it was the dominant teaching of Catholic theologians for many centuries. Theologians in the Calvinist tradition had little need to postulate a limbo: unbaptized infants go to heaven or hell as God has predestined them.

Many twentieth century Catholic theologians have tended to argue for the salvation of unbaptized infants, some postulating an illumination of the infant at the moment of death and a choice for or against God. Others see death itself as a sort of saving martyrdom. Some argue that the parents or the church provide a kind of baptism by desire. Others see limbo as lasting only until the general judgment, at which souls in limbo are either united to Christ or obdurately reject him.

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See also INTERMEDIATE STATE.

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Society of Jesus, The (Jesuits). Monastic order founded by Ignatius of Loyola and approved as a Roman Catholic religious order in 1540. The Jesuits are classified as mendicant clerks regular. Unlike most earlier orders there is no parallel branch for women.

In 1534 Loyola and six companions, all students of theology at the University of Paris, took vows of poverty and chastity and promised to devote their lives to missionary work in Palestine if that were possible. Since war between Venice and the Ottoman Empire kept them from Palestine, they began preaching, teaching catechism, and doing various charitable works in the cities of northern Italy. Gradually they gathered new recruits, and since they wished to give permanent structure to their way of life, they sought approval from Pope Paul III as a religious order. Initially membership was restricted to sixty professed priests, but this was soon lifted, and the popes conferred many privileges on the new order and relied on it for many special tasks, including diplomatic missions to Ireland, Sweden, and Russia. Jesuit-professed fathers take a special vow of obedience to the pope.

Loyola was elected the first superior general in 1540 and spent his remaining years directing the new order and writing its Constitutions. The new order had several distinctive features. The superior general is elected for life and appoints all subordinate superiors, hence the Jesuits are highly centralized. Obedience is especially stressed. There is no distinctive religious habit or uniform, such as earlier orders had, no special fasts or bodily austerities, no common singing of the divine office. Loyola demanded that recruits be carefully selected and trained and that those who did not measure up be dismissed. Later the training normally lasted fifteen years. Two years at the beginning (novitiate) and a year at the end of the training (tertianship) were devoted to the spiritual development of the members in contrast to a one year novitiate in the old orders. Since the Jesuits were to be active in working with outsiders, monastic discipline had to be interiorized by vigorous training. Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* shaped the Jesuits' interior life, and one hour's private meditation daily has been mandatory for most of the order's history. The Jesuits were in the forefront in spreading systematic meditation, a characteristic of Counter-Reformation piety. For the Jesuit, prayer and activity were to be mutually reinforcing. Popularization of the *Spiritual Exercises* in the retreat movement has been a major contemporary Jesuit apostolate; as many as five million Catholics annually make retreats.

Loyola stressed quality rather than quantity,

but the Society of Jesus grew rapidly. There were about a thousand Jesuits by the founder's death in 1556, mainly in Spain, Italy, and Portugal, but also in France, Germany, and Belgium, as well as missionaries in India, Africa, and Latin America. By 1626 there were 15,544 Jesuits. Growth was steady but somewhat slower until 1773 when Clement XIV, under pressure from the Bourbon monarchs of France, Spain, and Naples, suppressed the society. A few Jesuit houses survived in Prussia and Russia where the monarchs refused to promulgate the suppression. In 1814 Pius VII restored the Jesuits worldwide. Despite being exiled from most European Catholic countries at one time or another, the Jesuits grew steadily in numbers during the next hundred years and peaked at 36,038 in 1964. Membership declined after the Second Vatican Council, reaching 27,027 in 1981 with roughly one-third in Europe, one-third in the United States and Canada, and one-third in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Education quickly became the largest single Jesuit apostolate. Loyola supervised the founding of a dozen colleges in the order's first decade. By 1626 the Jesuits directed five hundred colleges or seminaries, a number which nearly doubled by the mideighteenth century. Most of the Jesuit colleges approximated modern prep schools, but some were full-fledged universities. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a high percentage of educated Catholic males, particularly the nobility, were graduates of these schools. The basic charter of these schools was the *Ratio Studiorum* (the Plan of Studies) of 1599, which tried to purify and simplify Renaissance humanism. Classical languages and literatures and religion provided the core curriculum with Aristotelian philosophy for advanced students. Attendance was compulsory and a planned curriculum carried students forward step by step in contrast with many contemporary schools. The rod was largely replaced by friendly rivalry as a stimulus to study. The Jesuit schools used drama, often with lush pageantry, to inculcate moral and religious values. Education remains a major Jesuit apostolate today; the Jesuits run some four thousand schools worldwide, mainly in mission countries, as well as eighteen American universities.

The Jesuits adopted Thomas Aquinas as their official theologian but freely modified his system, as in the theology of Francisco Suárez (1548-1617). Generally they stressed human action in the process of salvation in contrast to the Dominicans, who put more emphasis on the primacy of grace. Blaise Pascal attacked their casuistry as laxist. The Jesuits overwhelmingly

rejected the principle that the end justifies the means, which was often attributed to them. Prominent among recent Jesuit theologians are Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Karl Rahner, and Bernard Lonergan. The Jesuits presently edit some one thousand periodicals, including *NT Abstracts*, *Theology Digest*, and *Theological Studies*.

Traditionally the Jesuits have reserved their highest regard for missionary work. Francis Xavier (1506-52), the first and greatest Jesuit missionary, laid the basis for Jesuit activity in India, Indonesia, and Japan. The Japanese mission particularly flourished until it was wiped out by savage persecution in the early seventeenth century. In China Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) founded the Jesuit mission where he and his successors won the protection of the Ming emperors by introducing Western scientific and technical knowledge to court circles at Peking. They pioneered the adaptation of the gospel to Chinese traditions and thought forms, although in this many Catholic critics felt that they had gone too far. Their writings introduced China to the West. The goal of the Peking mission was the conversion of the emperor, but the Jesuits never found their Chinese Constantine. Ricci's idea of adapting Christianity to local culture was applied to India by Robert De Nobili (1577-1658). Jesuits such as Jacques Marquette and Issac Jogues worked among the Indians of North America. Eusebio Kino (1644-1711) established a string of mission stations which introduced the Indians of northern Mexico and the present southwestern United States to advanced agriculture. The Jesuits Christianized and civilized the Indians of Paraguay and Brazil in organized towns (reductions), which flourished for more than a century until the Jesuits were suppressed.

Although the Jesuits were not founded to combat Protestantism, they were quickly drawn into the struggle. Many Jesuits published controversial works, for instance, Peter Canisius and Robert Bellarmine, both of whom also wrote catechisms that enjoyed wide use for three centuries. Other Jesuits influenced policy as court preachers or as confessors to the emperor; the kings of France, Spain, and Poland; and the dukes of Bavaria. Well over a thousand Jesuits died as martyrs both in Europe and in the missions. The Roman Catholic Church has canonized thirty-eight Jesuits, including twenty-two martyrs.

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See also IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA.

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