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There is No Unique Jesuit Theory of Education

George W. Traub, S.J. *A Jesuit Education Reader: Contemporary Writings on the Jesuit Mission in Education, Principles, the Issue of Catholic Identity, Practical Applications of the Ignatian Way, and More.*

Chicago, Illinois, Loyola Press: 2008.

By James R. Kelly

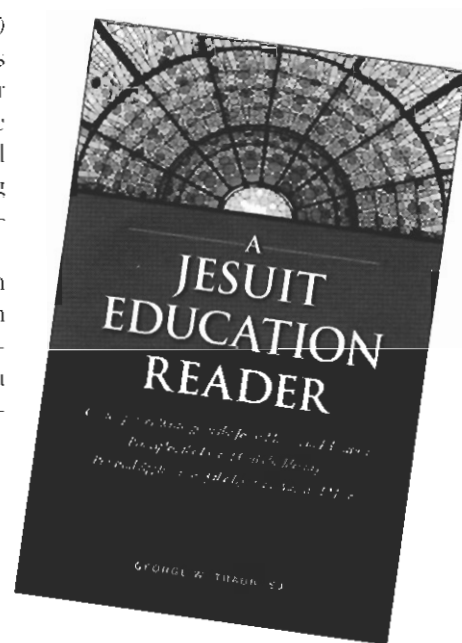
In 1540 when Ignatius and his colleagues founded the Society of Jesus, the first teaching order, they made no mention at all of teaching in colleges. Their first ministries were among those not likely to be found in anyone's schools: prostitutes, prisoners, hospital patients, the down and out. And for an order whose self identity was and is *contemplatives in action*, it took a very long 42 years after they agreed - it hadn't been their idea - to start a school in Messina, Sicily, to give an official written account, in the *Ratio Studiorum*, of what had become their primary apostolate. Moreover, the *Ratio* is short on any contemplation of ideals and vision and is long on Jesuit pragmatic pedagogical actions - class room practices, rules, curriculum.

We might say *A Jesuit Education Reader* is four and a half centuries late. But then, it takes a broadly shared sense of institutional crisis to produce a work of institutional contemplation. Worldwide, today there are nearly 200 Jesuit institutions of higher learning, and with each decade fewer Jesuits to personally embody a contemporary *Ratio* and its underlying spirituality. Non-Jesuit presidents already lead several American Jesuit Colleges and Universities. More telling, it is no longer uncommon for more than a few students at a Jesuit college to have had no Jesuit for her (and

that pronoun was rarely in the *Ratio*) teacher. *A Jesuit Education Reader* is intended for university presidents, for trustees, faculty and, indeed, for anyone seeking against some formidable cultural and academic pressures to make teaching and research and scholarship an integrated vocation as well as a profession.

There's much to admire and even just plain like about this volume. We can begin with its honesty. The editor immediately acknowledges that it is not a cover-to-cover read. Jesuit contributors - who number less than a half, and among the others are several non-Catholics and even the president of Notre Dame! - forthrightly acknowledge that there is no unique Jesuit theory of education. A highly regarded scholar of Jesuit spirituality, Howard Gray, S.J., characterizes "the Ignatian practice of being 'catholic'" as "complex" and "tricky" and explicitly questions the anthology's purpose by asking, "can you initiate non-Jesuits, non-Christian, non-believers, into a tradition that asks for appropriation" so that "they will want to appropriate its meaning into how they live and work?"

Indeed, in an appendix entitled "Do you speak Ignatian," the editor provides a 36 term glossary of Jesuit terms and names, such as (the reader can treat the following as a spot quiz) *cura personalis*; *discernment*; *finding God in all things*; *Ignatian/Jesuit vision*; *magis*;



men and women for others; ratio studiorum; the service of faith and the promotion of justice; the spiritual exercises. And, that honesty again, in the epilogue preceding the glossary Timothy Hanchin cautions that the terms that characterize the *Jesuit way of proceeding* can quickly become a marketing name-branding that amounts to a Jesuit-in-name institution that simply seeks a competitive educational excellence which in effect mostly "baptizes the privileges of an American and middle-class life style." While it might be difficult to define, the Jesuit approach to education is easy to fail. *A Jesuit*

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Education Reader makes this decidedly harder to do.

There's more honest biting of the bullets here than one can find in reading decades of critical sociology. Dean Brackley, S.J., who in 1989 left the Fordham University department of theology for the Jesuit Central American University in El Salvador to replace one of their six assassinated Jesuits, asks why North American Jesuit Colleges don't "maximize scholarships based on need, rather than athletic or scholastic ability." The anthology's fifth and last section is culled from the Association of Jesuit Colleges' and Universities' publication *Conversations* and is entitled "Practical Applications: Walking the Ignatian/Jesuit

Walk." These lay faculty, none from departments of theology or philosophy, reflect on their Jesuit Colleges' and Universities mission statements and efforts at mentoring and workshops in terms of their personal experiences of graduate and professional training, the departmentalization of American education, the requirements of scholarly publication and research, their colleagues, the challenges of promotion and tenure, and departmental hiring.

Finance professor Suzanne Erickson asks, "It's Noble But Is It Possible?" Trileigh Tucker takes on

"Just Science: Reflections on Teaching Science at Jesuit Universities." In "Art History and the Mission Statement," Joanna Ziegler fears that her Jesuit mission inspired research and writing might result in "writing myself out of the norms of publishable scholarship." Political scientist Susan Behuniak confronts the consequences of dealing with her discipline's "cloak of neutrality, objectivity and universality" which covers the portals of social science journals. Kathleen Kane explicates some of the complexities and subtleties, especially for non-Catholics, in "Value-Oriented Hiring and Promotion and the University of San Francisco's *Vision 2005*."

So the anthology begins with Jesuits beginning their order's history and concludes with lay faculty, often non-Catholic, seeking to keep alive the Jesuit vision by adapting the Jesuit *Ratio*. To help the *discernment* and the *adaptation* the Dalai Lama of American pedagogy, Parker Palmer, even makes an appearance. Not all issues are considered, much less "resolved," but Traub helpfully concludes each of the seven sections with suggestions for further reading and downloading. An operational test of a reader's appreciation of *A Jesuit Education Reader* might be if he goes on to read Traub's companion volume, *An Ignatian Spirituality Reader* (Loyola Press, 2008), "which explains the spirituality and informs this present *Reader*." I've just placed my order. ■

James R. Kelly is professor emeritus, department of sociology and anthropology at Fordham University. Following Jim Kelly's suggestion, the second volume, the Ignatian Spirituality Reader, will be reviewed in the next issue of Conversations.



A statue of Saint Ignatius on the campus of Loyola Marymount University.