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1

The Inner Life and Structure of the Society

THE JESUITS were proud of their order—proud of its members, its special qualities, and its unconventional features. They were also proud of how quickly their order spread and how prominent it soon became in the world. The Society of Jesus indeed grew rapidly after 1540, and not a few Jesuits seemed so confident of victory that this self-certainty became part of the Jesuit mentality.¹ That is the impression one gets, for example, when opening the *Imago primi saeculi* of 1640, an opulent, folio-sized luxury volume set in crisp type and illustrated with numerous fine etchings. The *Imago* was a celebratory text commissioned by the Jesuits of Antwerp on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Society, and it unmistakably reflects its authors' confident pride. The *Imago* is second to none as a document of the Jesuits' confidence in success—and it was also criticized outside and even inside the order for its lavishness. Be that as it may, it accurately reflects the mentality of many Jesuits after long years of virtually unabated success.²

Ignatius of Loyola himself laid the groundwork for the growth of his order very carefully in his sixteen years as superior general. He had set out to establish detailed, binding rules to govern the Society of Jesus in both spiritual and organizational terms. In the process, and in collaboration with his two most important associates, Juan de Polanco and Jerónimo Nadal, he ensured that his unique personal charisma

translated into a viable structure. The *Spiritual Exercises* and the *Constitutions* served as authoritative foundational texts that described both the spiritual and organizational sides of the Society in detail. Ignatius did everything conceivable to guarantee the continuity of the order. Some turbulence occurred after his death, from 1556 until the conclusion of the First General Congregation in 1558, but these two years did not cause any lasting breaks. In contrast to many other religious orders, for the Society of Jesus the loss of the charismatic founder ultimately proved to be only a moderate crisis. The rapid success of the new order continued virtually unbroken after 1556 and even accelerated.

The first section of this chapter gives a succinct overview of the most important stages and regions in which the Society of Jesus spread across Europe. On the one hand, it is intended to illustrate the enormous geographic extent of the Jesuits' presence. On the other, it should become clear that the nature and special identity of the Society were by no means universally embraced. Many contemporaries harbored reservations and harshly criticized the methods of the new order.

The second section introduces the men who joined the Society: Who were they, and what were their motives? And, fundamentally: How did one become a Jesuit? The third section then gives an overview of Jesuit religious life and the pillars of Jesuit spirituality. Here we will see the spiritual compass that a Jesuit lived by, and what religious values shaped his conception of self and the world. We also will encounter the Jesuits' claim that there actually was something like "our way of proceeding"—the *Imago primi saeculi* itself sang the praises of this "typically Jesuit" way over several hundred pages.

After spirituality, our view will shift to the structure and constitution of the Society—precisely the aspects that are traditionally regarded as the keys to the enormous success of the Society of Jesus. No other order in the history of Western Christendom gave so much thought and dedicated so much energy to regulating its internal administration. The Jesuit order became a bureaucratic machine—at least that is how its enemies saw it, and that is what many leading Jesuits seem to have intended. It is not for nothing that Superior General Claudio Acquaviva himself once declared that the Society should function like "clockwork."³

In practice, everyday operations usually fell far short of this ideal, but there was no shortage of efforts to optimize the internal procedures of the Jesuit order.

Historians normally set their sights only on the successful and loyal members of the Jesuit order. But, as the final section of this chapter shows, controversy constantly simmered beneath the surface of the Society of Jesus. In no way did every young man who joined the Society thrive there. And by no means did every Jesuit who was admitted meet his superiors' expectations. Hence, the history of the Society is also a history of disappointment, dismissal, and disillusionment. A study of the inner life of this religious order would be incomplete without discussing the dissatisfaction and dejection, the turpitude and abject indecency of some of its members and their associates. With several thousand members and hundreds of communities, it is no wonder that disputes constantly broke out in the Society of Jesus.

Growth in Europe

When the Jesuit order was founded in 1540, it had ten members. By Ignatius's death in 1556, that number had grown to a thousand.⁴ But it was the founder's successors who witnessed and guided the massive expansion of the Society. The first of these was Diego Laínez (r. 1558–65), an adept theologian and one of Ignatius's closest confidants. Laínez was the only one of Ignatius's first companions to become superior general. After Laínez's death in 1565, Francisco de Borja (r. 1565–72) was elected at the Second General Congregation. Borja came from the highest echelon of the Spanish nobility, and he had already lent the Jesuits his energetic support as Duke of Gandía. He was arguably the Jesuit superior general who was inclined the most toward mysticism and devotional introspection; accordingly, he always paid particularly close attention to the spiritual side of the Society's development. Under Laínez and Borja, the number of Jesuits quadrupled.

The order thus grew rapidly from the very start. But this growth was neither consciously planned nor completely even. The lifetime of the founder was by no means the period that witnessed the greatest

numbers of new members; while Ignatius led the Society, it grew by approximately 62 Jesuits per year. The order's most significant growth occurred, instead, under Claudio Acquaviva (r. 1581–1615), when it gained up to 309 men annually. By 1600, there consequently were already 8,519 Jesuits. It was Acquaviva who obviously maximized the attractiveness of the order. And it was by this point in time, at the latest, that the rapid developments of the past sixty years had led to an erosion of clear guidelines. A generation after Ignatius's death, the incredible vitality that could be observed everywhere had to be brought under stricter control.

Acquaviva governed the Society of Jesus for thirty-four years and consolidated the order over this long period. The final form of many Jesuit projects can be traced back to his term in office. He helped the Society find its pedagogical identity with the universal educational program set forth in the *Ratio studiorum* of 1599; he approved an obligatory guide to the *Spiritual Exercises* in the form of an official handbook (also published in 1599). Acquaviva's name is further associated with numerous administrative rules and literary projects. Not least, during his long term as superior general, he ensured that his vision of a rigorously organized, worldly, proselytizing, focused, and centralized Society of Jesus became reality, despite internal resistance.

Not all Jesuits were on board with Acquaviva's vision. He was harshly criticized in some quarters. Spanish adversaries in particular railed against his allegedly "tyrannical" leadership. At the Fifth General Congregation in 1593, they tried to pass constitutional amendments that would have dramatically changed the Society, but the superior general from the family of the Dukes of Atri in southern Italy successfully asserted his policy. In his peculiar way, he made sure that the many initiatives of the stormy early years remained coherent despite their ferocious individual dynamics. The Society of Jesus that Acquaviva erected on the foundation laid by Ignatius and his immediate successors went on to shape Europe for the next 150 years.

Under Acquaviva's cautious successor, Muzio Vitelleschi (r. 1615–45), less turbulent times followed, despite the Thirty Years' War. After the Society survived a succession of three superiors general in just six years

between 1646 and 1652, Goswin Nickel (r. 1652–64), Gianpaolo Oliva (r. 1664–81), and Charles de Noyelle (r. 1682–86) presided over a period of slower growth. Now the annual number of new recruits was only 40 to 50 Jesuits, so that by 1679 the Society had a total of 17,655 members. The late seventeenth century is often considered a period of growing problems for the order, which even experienced crises in certain areas. Andalusia, for example, registered a precipitous drop in numbers.⁵ Within the Society, the generalate of Tirso González (r. 1687–1705) was marred by fierce infighting over his unusual theological positions and his authoritarian leadership style. The overall situation did not improve until after 1700. Michaelangelo Tamburini (r. 1706–30) and Franz Retz (r. 1730–50) led the Society in its final phase of expansion. The first half of the century that gave birth to the Enlightenment was a phase in which the attractiveness of the Society increased yet again—the order grew on average by 95 Jesuits per year. In 1750, the Society reached its absolute peak membership with 22,589 Jesuits. Thereafter, membership collapsed: by 1758, only 17,879 members remained. Growing hostility toward the order in Portugal, France, Spain, and soon all across Europe made itself felt. The appeal of the Society of Jesus was rapidly dwindling at the end of the early modern period.

All these Jesuits had to live and work somewhere, and so the proliferation of Jesuit houses was no less rapid. In 1540, the Society still lacked permanent quarters; at the time of Ignatius's death, it had 79 houses. That number soon exploded to several hundred—at the Society's greatest geographic extent in 1710, there were no fewer than 612 colleges worldwide and approximately 500 other communities, excluding temporary missions. A network of significantly over 1,100 more or less permanent, more or less elaborate Jesuit outposts and communities spanned the globe. At Ignatius's death, the order had divided the world into 12 provinces; in 1616, there were 32; and prior to 1773, that number had risen to a grand total of 37.

Behind these numbers—people, provinces, houses—lie the fates of countless individuals and unique local developments. The lives of the Jesuits in Europe varied greatly throughout the early modern period.⁶ Until approximately 1750, for example, Portugal was very fertile ground

for the Jesuits.⁷ King João III became the first major patron of the young order. As early as 1539, even before the Society had been formally founded, João had instructed his ambassador in Rome to ask Loyola to send Jesuits. It was in Portugal in 1552 that a Jesuit—Diego Miró—first became court confessor. And it was in the service of the king of Portugal that the first Jesuit missionaries set out for Asia (Francis Xavier) and Brazil (Manuel da Nóbrega).

In Portugal, it was Simão Rodrigues—like Francis Xavier, one of Ignatius's earliest companions—who was initially of paramount importance. But he and Ignatius soon clashed, ultimately resulting in Rodrigues's demotion and almost in his expulsion from the Society. It was not until decades later, under the fourth superior general, Everard Mercurian (r. 1573–80), that a kind of reconciliation with the headquarters in Rome was reached. In early 1542, Rodrigues received the old monastery of Santo Antão in Lisbon in exchange for other properties that the king had transferred to him. Ten years later, this site became the Jesuit college in the capital. Almost simultaneously, in 1541, the Jesuits established a house in the university city of Coimbra, and in 1555 the Society took over the royal university there (the Real Collegio). The Jesuits also founded a new university under the aegis of Cardinal Henrique, the king's brother, in Évora in 1551. The influx of new members in Portugal was initially immense. By 1579, the small country with its 550 Jesuits had twice as many members as the German provinces combined.

Over the long term, however, developments in Portugal took an ambivalent turn for the Jesuits. When King Sebastião, João's grandson, fell in battle against the Muslims at Alcácer Quibir, Morocco, in 1578, the Jesuits were blamed for the youthful ambition of the idealistic ruler they had largely educated. Sixty years of Spanish rule in Portugal followed until 1640, a period in which the Jesuits enjoyed much less influence. Only two new establishments—a professed house in Vila Viçosa (1601) and the college of Santarém—were founded during this phase. The number of new members declined, and two of the three novitiates closed (Évora and Coimbra; only Lisbon survived).

The Jesuits were sympathetic observers of the upheaval of 1640, when the Portuguese dynasty of the Braganças ended Spanish rule, but they

did not participate directly. Over the following decades, members of the Society again came into close proximity to the king of Portugal. The Jesuits supported the new dynasty as best they could. Besides sermons, celebrations, and other activities, it is the propagandistic pamphlet *Restauração de Portugal prodigiosa* (1643) penned by the Jesuit João de Vasconcelos that best reflects the Society's loyalist position. Under João IV, Jesuits were entrusted with delicate diplomatic missions. But their influence remained variable and precarious, and they competed ever more fiercely with the Inquisition. Later kings, especially Afonso VI (1643–83; r. 1656–83), were much warier of the Society. Serious conflict with the Inquisition broke out. Although it took a variety of forms, the dispute revolved primarily around the relationship between the Catholic Church and Christians with Jewish ancestry. In this regard, the Jesuits were relatively open, whereas the Inquisition strictly opposed all cooperation. Pedro II (1648–1706; regent since 1668, king from 1683) had greater faith in the Jesuits, but like all his predecessors since 1640, he was not a major supporter of the Society.

In Portugal as in the rest of Europe in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, relatively few new houses were established—the Society had reached a certain level of saturation. Powerful financial backers, moreover, now kept their distance. The order's ties to the high nobility of Portugal were largely severed after 1700. In 1712, King João V (1689–1750; r. since 1706) explicitly emancipated himself from the staff of Jesuits that had surrounded him in his youth. The new monarch brought his royal power to bear on the Jesuits—and other churchmen—more frequently than before. Still, at least one Jesuit, Giovanni Battista Carbone (1695–1750), was able to win João's political confidence, serving him as an adviser and emissary (particularly in ecclesiastical matters). Despite the growing distance between the Jesuits and the court, however, it was still a major break when in 1759 the campaign to suppress the Society began precisely in Portugal.⁸

Italy had become the new order's home in tandem with Portugal. The authors of the *Imago primi saeculi* considered Italy the center of the Society of Jesus. Loyola may have been Spanish, and the Society long retained a Spanish character, but the Italianization of the Society of Jesus

was well underway by the generalship of Acquaviva. The superiors general of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries came predominantly from Italy. A German (Goswin Nickel), a Belgian (Charles de Noyelle), a Spaniard (Tirso González), and a Bohemian (Franz Retz) were the exceptions, not the rule. Rome had served as the center of the Jesuit order since 1540. It was here that the superior general resided; here, where the most important churches and institutions, like Il Gesù or the Collegio Romano, were to be found; here, where the Jesuits were directly connected to the church hierarchy. The order quickly spread to other Italian cities, and soon the peninsula was dotted with Jesuit houses. In 1640, there were 116 colleges and more than three thousand members in Italy.

The Jesuits arrived early in the parts of southern Italy under Spanish rule. Messina on the island of Sicily was a particularly important foothold with respect to the development of the Jesuit school system. In the north, in Spanish Milan, relations with Carlo Borromeo, the grand archbishop and church reformer, proved quite tempestuous. Nevertheless, the Jesuit houses in Milan soon proved to be important centers for all northern Italy.

The main exception to the broadly successful expansion of the Society of Jesus in Italy was its long ambivalent and, frankly, dysfunctional relationship with Venice. The order had arrived in the City of Bridges in 1550 but was banned in 1606. Conflict had broken out between the city and the pope over the question of whether clergymen who had committed a crime could be tried before a secular, municipal court. When Paul V excommunicated the city, the Jesuit *patres* were expelled in turn because they had intransigently taken the position of the Roman Curia. The Jesuits were not permitted to return to Venice until 1657.

Italy remained a bastion of strength for the Society in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Collegio Romano, with its international staff, was still considered the intellectual center of all Christendom. The Jesuits were also well-connected with numerous leading intellectual, social, and artistic figures—Gian Lorenzo Bernini, for example, the great sculptor and architect of baroque Rome, was a close friend of the Jesuit Cardinal Sforza Pallavicino and Superior General Gianpaolo Oliva. It

was not until the mid-eighteenth century that the picture began to change, at least in some regions. Depending on the political alignment of various Italian principalities, the principles of the Enlightenment began to be asserted more forcefully. In the now Austrian territories of central and northern Italy, ministers such as Karl Joseph von Firmian implemented Enlightened absolutist regimes as embodied in Austria by Maria Theresa and especially by her son Joseph II. Many of the Jesuits' traditional preferences in culture, religion, and public order came in for criticism.

The rulers of Spain reacted to the arrival of the new order much more warily than the king of Portugal and sundry Italian princes.⁹ Emperor Charles V—Charles I as king of Spain—kept his distance. The most important Spanish archbishop, Cardinal Juan Martínez Silíceo of Toledo (r. 1546–57), was even a bitter adversary. Conflict with the Inquisition ensued, leading in 1559 to a genuine crisis in connection with the imprisonment of Bartolomé de Carranza, when church authorities in Valladolid and Seville took action against several members of the Society.

It thus was no surprise that the first two Jesuits to come to Spain—Antonio de Araoz, a nephew of Ignatius's sister-in-law, and Pierre Favre, one of the founder's first companions—did so at the request of the king of Portugal, not the king of Spain. João III sought spiritual support for his daughter Maria, who had married the Spanish crown prince Philip (II). Araoz was initially a key figure in establishing the Society in Spain, but his fame was soon overshadowed by the spectacular rise of the Duke of Gandía, Francisco de Borja. Borja joined the Society as a widower in 1548, subsequently became superior general in 1565, and was ultimately sainted in 1671.

Serious conflict soon broke out between Borja and Araoz. Araoz was a strong, willful personality, who chafed at competition with the former duke. There were also significant differences in their spiritual orientations, since Borja's mystical inclinations jarred with Araoz's pious style. It was Borja, however, not Araoz, who became the dominant Jesuit figure in Spain, using his noble connections to gain access to the court—not to Charles V himself but to his daughters Maria and especially

Joanna (Juana) of Austria, who ruled the country from 1554 to 1559 as her father's representative and her brother's (Philip II) regent. She was captivated by Borja and other early Jesuits in Spain and became an important patroness. Uniquely, the daughter of the emperor and sister of the king was even officially admitted to the Society under a pseudonym—the only female Jesuit in history.

Thus, despite numerous difficulties and deep mistrust, the Society of Jesus also spread rapidly in Spain. Already by 1543, Francisco de Villanueva had received a house in Alcalá de Henares, which became a college in 1545. Araoz came to Valencia in 1544 with six young Jesuits. Gandía, Borja's ancestral home, was another important stronghold. A Jesuit presence in Madrid followed in 1560, established with the aid of Leonor de Mascareñas, a Portuguese woman from a very influential family friendly to the Jesuits. With the support of both daughters of Charles V, this eventually became the great Colegio Imperial. In 1553, when the first college in Andalusia was founded in Córdoba, the Jesuit presence in the southern Iberian Peninsula expanded rapidly. Important houses were opened in Seville and Granada in 1554, then again in Córdoba in 1558, Cádiz in 1564, Málaga in 1571, and many more in between and thereafter. The wave of new houses continued until around 1630.¹⁰

After the era of expansion, the latter half of the seventeenth century was a period in which the Society of Jesus in Spain both enjoyed great power and experienced grave crises. Even more houses were established, albeit not as many as in decades past. High-placed personages protected and sponsored the Jesuits, such as the Duke of Lerma, Francisco Gómez de Sandoval (1553–1625). Philip III's leading minister, Sandoval, was the grandson of Francisco de Borja and tried to exploit this family connection to win symbolic capital for himself. In 1629, the next king, Philip IV, founded a university in Madrid both for and with the Jesuits, summoning Jesuit professors from across Europe to staff it. The construction of a college (beginning in 1682) in Loyola, Ignatius's home, was an especially powerful symbol of this era. Some Jesuits acquired formidable political power as the confessors of ministers and queens, especially Eberhard Nithard (1607–81), an Austrian who had accompanied Mariana of Austria, the wife of Philip IV, to Spain as her confessor.

But the Jesuits tellingly never became the confessors of the kings in Spain of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The late seventeenth century was a phase of stagnation and decline. The number of Spanish Jesuits plummeted, and their intellectual cachet within the Society declined. Civil war–like unrest in Catalonia and the independence of Portugal created tension, conflict, and the unpleasant necessity of choosing political sides. As a severe economic crisis swept across the Iberian Peninsula, these decades were a time of grinding poverty for many small colleges.

When the French Bourbons came to power in 1701, during the War of the Spanish Succession, conditions changed dramatically yet again for the Jesuits. Broadly speaking, the Society quickly befriended the new ruling dynasty. The following decades of the eighteenth century were initially a period of prosperity, in terms of both new members and new houses. Now the kings of Spain themselves were counseled by Jesuit confessors like Guillaume Daubenton (1648–1723) and Gabriel Bermúdez (1667–1749).

The situation in France was even more complicated. Even the authors of the *Imago primi saeculi* had to admit that “access [was] more difficult” there than elsewhere.¹¹ When Henry II granted the Jesuits official permission to establish themselves in his kingdom in 1551, grave religious disputes already loomed on the horizon. Protestantism was on the rise in France, and its adherents fought a bloody, decades-long civil war with several Catholic parties, sometimes fighting on three fronts. The new order was thus thrust into a highly fraught situation from the very start. All in all, the Jesuits were not exceptionally active in these religious civil wars.¹² But individual members of the Society quickly adopted more or less extreme anti-Protestant positions. In 1561, Superior General Laínez was present at the Colloquy of Poissy in France, clashing with the Calvinist leaders around Theodore Beza. A few years later, Edmond Auger (1530–91), the Jesuit provincial of Aquitaine, was a welcome face among the leaders of the Catholic camp.¹³ At any rate, the Protestants blamed his sermons for the outbreak of Catholic violence in Bordeaux in 1572.

Auger was one of those erratic Jesuits who made the early years of the Society so colorful in various parts of Europe. On the one hand, he

won immense influence at court for the Jesuit community, enabling the Society of Jesus to establish fourteen colleges in France by 1580, despite the tense situation. On the other, Auger's stature made it hard for his superiors to control him. Then, in the mid-1580s, he became a problem for the Catholic extremists (the so-called Catholic League) because he still supported Henry III, whom they now no longer considered sufficiently Catholic. Jesuits like Claude Matthieu, Jacques Commolet, and Henri Samier, however, were actively collaborating with these extremists. This partisanship on behalf of the radical Catholic party became a serious problem for the Society in 1589, just when the situation seemed to be settling down.

It was then that a new king, Henry IV, ascended the French throne. Henry was actually a Protestant who owed his kingdom to a tragic accident: his predecessor, Henry III, had been murdered without male issue. Henry IV had converted to Catholicism to become king. The Jesuits initially remained skeptical, since the new ruler pursued a policy that promoted religious tolerance. Henry IV also touted the religious autonomy of France. With their strong attachment to Rome, however, the Jesuits embodied the complete opposite of this "Gallicanism." Thus, in 1594, the Society was tried before the Parlement of Paris. It was whispered that the Jesuits wanted to have the formerly Protestant king assassinated—whispers that grew louder when an unsuccessful assassination attempt was made on Henry in 1594. The Jesuits had nothing to do with it, but the Society was still outlawed in large parts of France.¹⁴

Central and northern France remained off limits to the Jesuits for nine years; they were not allowed to return until 1603. It was Henry IV himself who called them back, demonstrating his domestic strength with this royal act of clemency while simultaneously making the Society utterly dependent on his favor. Proximity to the monarch became a special feature of the French branches of the order. The king demonstrated this new solidarity between himself and the Society by founding the great Jesuit college of La Flèche. But in 1610 another attempt was made on Henry's life, this time successfully. The king had been assassinated and history seemed to repeat itself. Again the Jesuits stood in the crossfire of criticism, but this time they were not expelled, despite new trials. The Jesuit

superiors in France escaped this drastic measure by issuing a declaration that they would henceforth follow the ecclesiastical-political “doctrine of Paris”—this meant that they largely recognized the autonomy of France.¹⁵ This laid the basis for reliable royal patronage in the succeeding decades. Yet the Society remained permanently under special scrutiny. Cardinal Richelieu always kept a vigilant, critical eye on the Jesuits.

Many French Jesuits gradually came around to the fact that they had to accept a compromise between Rome and Paris in this difficult situation. Gallicanism, willy-nilly, became part of the everyday reality of the Society’s French provinces. Many French Jesuits soon internalized the lesson that survival in France under the king’s protection meant occasionally distancing oneself from Rome. Under Louis XIV, French Jesuits repeatedly had to take sides, since the king was involved in grave disputes both with Innocent XI and with the Jesuit Curia in Rome. The French Jesuits tried to maneuver as long as they could, but ultimately most of them were inclined to accommodate the position of the king in cases of doubt, despite their personal scruples and reservations.¹⁶ And so the alliance between the French Society of Jesus and the kings of France survived these times of conflict. It would not finally collapse until the middle of the eighteenth century, when the Society became ever more conspicuously a pawn in the escalating political power struggle between the king and the *parlements*. The *parlements* called for the suppression and ultimately the abolition of the Society of Jesus. Hoping that such a concession might bring about domestic peace, after long hesitation Louis XV finally granted their wish in 1762/3. The history of the Jesuits in France was thereby (for the time being) over.

Like France, the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, which comprised the entirety of Central Europe, was divided into rival confessions when the Jesuits arrived. The first Jesuit to set foot in Germany after the founding of the Society was Pierre Favre, who attended the Colloquy of Worms and Regensburg between the Catholics and Lutherans in 1540/1. In 1542, Claude Jay and Nicolás Bobadilla were also on hand. Bobadilla was the first Jesuit to come to Vienna in 1542 and to Prague in 1544—presumably accompanying the German king Ferdinand I. In 1543 and 1544, Jay established contacts in Dillingen, Ingolstadt,

and Augsburg, where he soon was made a theological adviser at the Council of Trent by Bishop Truchsess of Waldburg. In 1544, Favre established the first, albeit temporary, home for the Society on German soil in Cologne. The order's first regular residence in the Holy Roman Empire was established in Vienna in 1551. In the spring of 1543, Favre met the Dutchman Peter (Petrus) Canisius in Mainz, winning him over to the Jesuit order. Canisius was extremely important for the subsequent expansion of the Society of Jesus in the empire. The *Imago* concluded, not without reason, that "the Society and, if you believe the heretics, Religion [i.e., Catholicism] owed no one in Germany more than it did to him."¹⁷

Shortly before his death in 1556, Ignatius founded two German provinces in the wake of these early successes, the provinces of Upper Germany and the Rhine. New houses were quickly established within this framework. Cologne was expanded and Prague reopened in the same year; Munich followed in 1559; Trier was added in 1560, Mainz and the first house in the Kingdom of Hungary (Trnava) in 1561, and the college in Speyer in 1571. In 1562, Austria was split off as a separate province. The first college in Poland was established at Braniewo in 1564, and many more soon followed, so that a separate province of Poland could be founded ten years later. Piotr Skarga (1536–1612) was the most important Polish Jesuit of this early phase; he found a patron in King Sigismund III. Bohemia followed almost contemporaneously with houses at Olomouc in 1566 and Brno in 1573. A separate province was created there too in 1623. The province of Austria, however, remained the largest in Europe, since it included Hungary as well. Around the same time, the Jesuits made inroads into an especially complex border region and religious melting pot: Transylvania, where the Society was active for several years after 1579.¹⁸ Here the Society of Jesus encountered not only Muslims but also various groups of Protestant, Orthodox, and Romanian Christians. The Jesuits' expulsion from 1588 to 1595 put a temporary stop to their plans, but a lasting presence was successfully established under the auspices of Alfonso Carillo (1556–1628).

The Thirty Years' War was a devastating interlude for many branches of the Society in the Holy Roman Empire. The Jesuits had to flee Prague

in 1620, for example, only to be restored in 1622. Then in 1648, shortly before the end of the war, they had to fear the depredations of the Swedes yet again.¹⁹ Many houses in the empire were at least temporarily abandoned on account of the chaos of war; others were severely damaged. Membership plummeted. The Jesuits were also the victims of numerous wars in the Holy Roman Empire during the latter half of the seventeenth century. The Upper Rhine in particular suffered serious damage as a result of the eastern expansionism of Louis XIV—the houses in Baden and Speyer, for example, were affected by the war.

The decades after 1620 thus were a phase of constant reconstruction. During this century of warfare, the Jesuits were focused more on restoring previous conditions than on attempting anything new. New houses were rare, as at Mannheim in 1720 or Bruchsal in 1753 and a few colleges in Hungary. Nonetheless, it was not merely a time of stagnation. The gaps in membership caused by the great war had been filled in the Lower Rhine area by about 1700. Ever more missions fanned out from Münster, Paderborn, and Hildesheim to Protestant northern Germany and northern Europe. Over time, footholds were established in Hamburg, Bremen, Glückstadt, and Lübeck, as well as in Berlin and Dresden.

The Holy Roman Empire remained a battleground for most European wars of the eighteenth century, and the Jesuits experienced their fair share of these conflicts. The Jesuits of Bavaria, for example, suffered greatly during the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–48). Maria Theresa in Vienna had demanded—without success but not without reason—that the Jesuit houses in Austrian-controlled Tyrolia be split off from the province of Upper Germany, which was dominated by the hostile Bavarians, and incorporated in the province of Austria. The Jesuits of the Holy Roman Empire also felt the wave of anti-Jesuit sentiment that swept across Europe, even though the ever more numerous enemies of the Society in Germany were far less able to take political action against the Society of Jesus than in France or Portugal. Yet even here the traditional alliances with the ruling dynasties of the Wittelsbachs (in Bavaria, Neuburg, and various bishoprics like Cologne or Liège) and the Habsburgs (Vienna, Innsbruck, Graz, Klagenfurt) had undeniably begun to fray. Maria Theresa never openly opposed the Society, but she still

sought to emancipate herself from the Jesuits with respect to school policy.²⁰ Yet the first half of the Age of Enlightenment was indisputably a high point for the Society of Jesus in Austria and elsewhere. The number of Jesuits rose until shortly before the suppression of the Society in 1773; in 1767, there were 1,906 Jesuits in Austria alone.

When the Society was founded, the territory of modern Belgium and the Netherlands still belonged to the Holy Roman Empire and the possessions of the (Spanish) Habsburgs. The Netherlands, however, became increasingly Protestant after the 1560s and won their political independence from Spain in 1648. Although a very large Catholic minority remained, the country was regarded as Reformed, and so the Jesuits were only ever active there as missionaries, lacking a full-fledged infrastructure. Things were different in early modern Belgium. The Society took root there in 1542, after some young Jesuits who had studied in Paris were driven out by the French on account of their Spanish origins. They fled northward, to Leuven. Among them was Francisco de Estrada, a gifted preacher, whose sermons caused a sensation. The Society quickly attracted prospective members. In 1547, this group of young Jesuits and sympathizers came together under the leadership of the novice Cornelis Wischaven as Belgium's first Jesuit community. This early group, whose members were officially admitted by Ignatius in Rome in 1548, helped the Society spread rapidly. Pastoral excursions soon reached Mechelen, Brussels, and other cities. In 1553, a second house was founded in Tournai. After long negotiations with the Spanish governors in Brussels, the order was officially established in the country in 1556, although it was initially subject to some restrictions. New houses followed in Dinant and Cambrai, and a small establishment was founded in Antwerp in 1563. At the same time, the college in Leuven was virtually expanded into a university, and a first-rate intellectual center soon blossomed there. Robert Bellarmine began teaching in Leuven in 1569. When a separate Belgian province was founded in 1564, further communities followed. The college of Douai, founded in 1575, evolved into the province's leading institution. When Ernest of Bavaria of the House of Wittelsbach became bishop of Liège, the Society of Jesus profited from its close collaboration with the dynasty there, too.

This first wave of foundations was impressive, and yet circumstances in Belgium were anything but simple. The Dutch struggle for religious and political independence had begun. Protestants and Catholics, Dutch and Spanish intermittently fought one another with extreme brutality. Where Protestant and anti-Spanish forces gained the upper hand, the Jesuits were (temporarily) expelled. There were even difficulties with the local Spanish representatives. The Duke of Alba, governor from 1567 to 1573, was ill-disposed to the Society. Not until one of his successors took office, Alessandro Farnese in 1579, was more sympathy forthcoming from the Spanish. Farnese secured full authorization for the Society in 1584. This period of consolidation was followed by a wave of new establishments around 1600, including such important colleges as that of Brussels, founded in 1604. The time was ripe for the province to be partitioned. In 1612, the French part, the Provincia Gallo-Belgica, was split off from the Flemish, the Provincia Flandro-Belgica. The ensuing decades were a phase of breakneck growth. As early as 1621, each province had more members by itself than had existed in the formerly undivided Belgium. The Habsburg regents who governed Belgium were very friendly toward the Jesuits. Many new houses were opened until the 1630s. It was during this phase of triumphant expansion that the Antwerp Jesuits celebrated the jubilee of the Society in 1640 with the *Imago primi saeculi*.

This period of impressive growth gradually petered out in Belgium after the middle of the century. Under Louis XIV, Belgium was the scene of constant military conflict, as France and the Netherlands found themselves increasingly at odds. The University of Leuven became a prominent center of anti-Jesuit theology. The Jansenists, bitter opponents of the Jesuits, moreover established a strong presence in Belgium, which sapped public goodwill toward the Society of Jesus. Thus, the Society's activity and membership appreciably declined after the middle of the century. Despite the good financial start that many colleges enjoyed on account of the Habsburg governors, the order's economic base had largely crumbled by 1700. The Jesuits' many lavish buildings also devoured their resources.

The *Imago* thus was not wrong: wherever there were Catholics, there also seemed to be a Jesuit house nearby one hundred years after the

founding of the Society. But how did things look in Protestant Europe? Even the countries that had joined the Reformation were by no means impenetrable to the Jesuits. In these places, the Jesuits often worked as the direct representatives of the papal Curia. Antonio Possevino, for example, a Jesuit with many exceptional gifts, acted as a papal diplomat on religious-political missions in Protestant northern, northeastern, and eastern Europe several times in the late sixteenth century. In the 1560s, he was engaged in the struggle against the Calvinists in Piedmont and Valtellina; in 1580, he traveled to Scandinavia on a papal mission and shortly thereafter was involved in negotiations between Poland and Russia concerning the status of Catholicism in both kingdoms.²¹ The particulars of Possevino's achievements were sundry and varied, yet hardly any other personality better symbolizes the Society's effort to (re)assert Catholicism in Protestant Europe in alliance with the popes of the day.

Working conditions in the predominantly Protestant regions of Europe varied dramatically in the early modern period. In many northern German cities, a small handful of Jesuits had operated more or less unmolested—albeit often bitterly antagonized—since the early seventeenth century, either unofficially in the retinue of an imperial or French ambassador or even in the context of an established “mission.” In 1594, the Jesuits also began to operate in the northern provinces of the United Netherlands, which had progressively embraced Calvinism since 1568.²² Although many harsh laws against Catholics were on the books there, they were seldom enforced. The Jesuits' influence in the Netherlands persisted until the early eighteenth century, when the Society was expelled.

In Scandinavia, in contrast, and especially in England, the Jesuits could only exist undercover.²³ Whereas the Society of Jesus maintained only an intermittent and sporadic presence in early modern Sweden, the Protestant British Isles eventually became a separate province despite these impediments. The Society made its first contacts there on the margins: a very brief preliminary visit by two Jesuits took place in fall 1541. Soon afterward, Paschase Broët and Alonso Salmerón were sent as papal legates to Ireland to support the Catholic cause there. This

mission, however, did not leave behind a lasting tradition. In 1562 and 1566, the Jesuits Nikolaas Floris de Gouda and Edmund Hay traveled to Scotland to speak with Mary Stuart, the Catholic Scottish queen and cousin of the Protestant English queen Elizabeth I. Each time, the Jesuits sought (in vain) to launch an offensive pro-Catholic policy in Protestant-leaning Scotland. Around the same time, David Wolfe, Edmund Daniel, and William Good were active in Ireland again. Wolfe stayed eleven years, five of which he spent in a Dublin jail. He had previously ministered to Catholics as a traveling priest and performed episcopal duties. Daniel, in contrast, did not survive his deployment: he was executed by the English, becoming the first Jesuit to die for his faith in Europe.

The Society of Jesuit was not active in England itself for the first forty years of its existence. After England had permanently converted to Protestantism under Queen Elizabeth in 1558, life became hard for the roughly 10 percent of remaining Catholics who refused to convert or flee. Catholics were increasingly suspected of high treason; it was prohibited to recognize the authority of the pope in 1559. Further laws against the “Papists” followed. A mission thus seemed too risky to the Jesuits, as their Irish and Scottish experiences also seemed to indicate. Exiled English Catholics in Belgium and Rome were unable to convince the cautious Superior General Everard Mercurian (r. 1573–80) to send Jesuits to England until the last months of his generalship.

Three Jesuits thus set out for England in 1580: Robert Persons, Edmund Campion, and Ralph Emerson. The first martyrdom on this mission occurred not long afterward, when Campion was publicly executed in London on December 1, 1581. He would not be the only one: by 1679, twenty-seven further members of the Society had followed him to their deaths. The Act against Jesuits and Seminarists was passed in 1585, declaring membership in the order tantamount to high treason for an Englishman. Given these perilous circumstances, there were never more than about a dozen Jesuits active in England at a time during this early phase of the mission. These trying circumstances led some English Jesuits to believe that the very survival of Catholicism could be guaranteed only by political or even military action. After fleeing Ireland, David Wolfe began organizing a Catholic rebellion on the island, for

which he hoped to gain the support of the Spanish court in Madrid. Persons had similar plans. Broadly speaking, the Jesuits had high hopes for the Spanish Armada, with which Philip II of Spain tried and failed to conquer England in 1588.

The threat level remained high in the early seventeenth century. The Gunpowder Plot of 1605 and various other supposedly Catholic conspiracies against the English monarchs led to temporary spikes in anti-Catholic efforts, but in other phases, the more time passed, the more (relative) tolerance came to prevail. In 1619 and 1623, Superior General Muzio Vitelleschi was able to elevate the English mission to a vice-province and then to a full province. There may have been a good hundred Jesuits in England by 1620, who were now able to found houses and schools. “Greater calm [prevailed] under king Charles I,” the authors of the *Imago* duly remarked about the 1620s and 1630s.²⁴ Of course, violence against individual communities remained a possibility—for instance, in 1628, the Society’s quarters in London were attacked. The period of domestic unrest after 1640 during the English Civil War and then under Oliver Cromwell spelled a serious setback for the Society. When the monarchy was restored under Charles II in 1660, the king promised tolerance, but it was a promise that could not be kept unconditionally. Since yet another supposedly Catholic assassination attempt was “uncovered” in the Popish Plot of 1678–1681, the allegedly guilty Jesuits had to pay the price: although it could not be proved that they were involved, eight members of the Society died on the scaffold as did a similar number in prison.

On the one hand, the Jesuits maintained a solid presence in eighteenth-century England, with well over one hundred members; on the other, they played virtually no part in public life whatsoever, since their Catholic flock had by and large retreated from view. English Catholics had shrunken to an insignificant minority and were moreover plagued by fierce infighting. The Jesuits and the secular clergy regarded one another with deep antipathy. Thus, for all the tranquility after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, it was an era of growing insignificance. Conditions in Ireland under Protestant British rule largely corresponded to those in England, if on a smaller scale.

Another form of ministering to the spiritual needs of England and Ireland was far less dangerous in this period. Since a large number of Catholics had fled the Protestant Reformation and had settled on the Continent since the middle of the sixteenth century, there was an influential English Catholic diaspora there. In order to support them and to train clergymen from among their numbers—who might then return to their homeland as missionaries—colleges were established specifically for English Catholics everywhere on the Continent, most of them under Jesuit management. In 1579, after some back-and-forth, the Society took over the English seminary—known as English College (*Collegium Anglorum*)—in Rome; and in Belgian Saint-Omer, the Society concentrated its efforts on the British Isles to a considerable extent. A seminary there trained future English priests. Similar institutions existed in Spain and Portugal in cities like Valladolid, Seville, and Lisbon. Specialized colleges for Scandinavia were also established under Jesuit direction, notably a “Nordic Seminary” in Linz, Austria.²⁵ The *Germanicum* (1552) and the *Hungaricum* (1578) were founded in Rome for the same purpose at the direct instigation of Ignatius himself.²⁶

The authors of the *Imago primi saeculi* thus were not wrong when they proudly and confidently noted in 1640 that Europe “had received the Society in very many places.”²⁷ The network of Jesuit houses became even more close-knit in the following century, and the number of members likewise grew. It was an eventful process that made the Society of Jesus ubiquitous across Catholic and Protestant Europe. This upward trend of course had peaks and valleys, winners and losers, steps forward and backward, phases of crisis and phases of dynamic growth. It is important to note that the expansion of the Society was not at all planned in advance, let alone steered centrally from Rome. New houses, of course, had to be approved by the superior general in Rome, but in many cases local and regional circumstances dictated where and in what form Jesuits came together to live. The expansion of the Society thus played out as a series of compromises, complicated negotiations, and costly experiments. In the end, though, an impressive network of several hundred communities small and large emerged. Houses, provinces, institutions—these admittedly constituted only one side of the

Society. The actual protagonists of the history of the order are the Jesuits themselves, the persons and personalities who worked in these establishments.

Life in the Service of the Society

The first generation of Jesuits consisted of Ignatius himself and his famous nine companions. They had a decisive influence on the early history of the Society of Jesus. Ignatius had met these nine men and won them over in widely different circumstances over time. He had lodged with Francis Xavier and Pierre Favre as a student in Paris since 1529. Rodrigues had heard of Ignatius there and deliberately sought him out in 1530; Jay, Broët, and Codure, who already knew each other, were the last to join the group. They were brought over by Favre in 1535.

Ignatius's first companions were a highly heterogeneous group. There were men from Spain, the Basque Country, France, Navarre, and Savoy. There were glaring political differences, as well: the families of Francis Xavier and Ignatius, for example, had stood on opposite sides of the war in 1521. Like Ignatius himself, Xavier came from the old nobility and had been accustomed to an aristocratic lifestyle.²⁸ Salmerón and Favre, in contrast, came from humble backgrounds. Favre was the first priest among the companions. He read the mass in 1534 at which they confirmed their commitment to live together as a community. Laínez and Salmerón were the best scholars in the group and vastly superior to Ignatius in academic theology. Favre was a gentle, deeply pious, introspective, and simple character who indefatigably went about his work—he traveled constantly—with humility and modesty. Rodrigues and Bobadilla, in contrast, soon articulated bold alternative visions of the future of the Society.

The nine “first companions,” some of whom are now venerated by the Catholic Church as saints, were important role models for the Society after its founding in 1540, although they were all soon overshadowed by Ignatius himself—somewhat unfairly from a historical perspective.²⁹ It is far less well-known, however, that Ignatius was acquainted with many more people both before and after he made contact

with these men. But his attempts to win over these people to his vision of spirituality were unsuccessful. As early as 1524/5, a small circle of friends had gathered around him in Barcelona, accompanying him to Alcalá. Ignatius placed high hopes in some of the earlier people he attracted, only to be bitterly disappointed more than once. One of his initially enthusiastic followers, Jean Bochet, briefly joined the new order in 1541 but soon afterward was executed in Spain as a bandit and highwayman. Diego de Cáceres was at the deliberations in Rome in 1539 and also joined the Society, but he is not considered part of the first generation—in 1542, he “left” the young Society of Jesus to work as a spy for France. Diego Hoces, a loyal follower, died before the decisive date of 1540.³⁰

These difficult experiences probably led Ignatius to select new members of the Society with the utmost care. All Catholic orders have certain admission requirements, and all of them stipulate a phase of examination and preparation before an aspirant is formally admitted to the community. But the recruitment and selection of future Jesuits were especially close to Ignatius’s heart. Hardly any other order examines potential entrants as long or as intensely as the Society of Jesus. Detailed passages in the *Constitutions* describe the prerequisites that a future Jesuit must meet, and the long way from initial, provisional admittance as a novice to final entry into the Society as a full member. Not everyone could—or should—become a Jesuit.

Jesuits and Their Families: Origins, Recruitment, and Ties

Whoever wanted to join the Society of Jesus first had to meet certain legal, social, physical, and intellectual requirements.³¹ The *Constitutions* stipulate that no murderers or persons with physical handicaps or deficient intellectual gifts could be admitted. In reality, Ignatius himself used wide discretion in enforcing these measures, for instance, admitting men with missing fingers or eyes. Illegitimate children could also find a home in the Society. Other aspirants, such as Louis Le Valois, were initially admitted but subsequently expelled on account of sickness—only to be readmitted after the health problems in question subsided.³² The admission of interested parties who had previously

belonged to another order was a more difficult question, but exceptions could be made here, too. All candidates, of course, had to be unmarried when they were admitted to the Society, but that by no means meant that husbands and fathers could not join after their spouses' death. Francisco de Borja, Duke of Gandía, joined as a widower. The lay brother Alonso Rodríguez (1532–1617), one of the most famous intellectuals of the order and later also canonized, joined the Society of Jesus in 1571, just shy of his fortieth birthday, after the death of his wife, as the father of three children (who had died young).

It was fiercely debated within the Society whether people born outside Europe could be admitted—that is, indigenous peoples, mestizos (children born to one European and one indigenous parent), and Creoles (children born to two European parents overseas).³³ The Jesuits were not entirely at liberty to answer this question for themselves. The popes and Iberian kings had passed numerous—partly contradictory and inconsistent—laws concerning the admission of people born to non-European forefathers to ecclesiastical office.³⁴ The Councils of Lima in 1550 and 1567 had forbidden Indios and mestizos to hold ecclesiastical office. Gregory XIII then allowed them to be ordained in 1577, which Philip II subsequently prohibited again, only to allow it after all in 1588.

The Jesuits themselves were hardly less inconsistent. The provincial congregation of Peru unapologetically declared against mestizos in 1582. But there also was dissent, and at least individual children of indigenous parents were admitted at a relatively early date. The great administrator and author José de Acosta (1539–1600) is a good example of this ambivalent attitude that mingled skepticism and hostility with occasional concessions. In his standard work on the mission to the Americas, he declared that it was “not appropriate to elevate Indians to higher ecclesiastical ranks,” yet he acknowledged “that we cannot deny that some are our equals in the blamelessness of their lives and our superiors in their command of the Indian language.” The knowledge of languages was indeed a key argument in favor of consecrating mestizos. But mestizos and natives who were admissible, in Acosta's view, were “rare.”³⁵ As provincial of Peru, he personally admitted some of these select few

to the Society in 1582/3. One member of this group was the mestizo Blas Valera, whose life is a famous and inscrutable case. It is clear that he fell out with his superiors. He was imprisoned, accused of immoral conduct, and finally sent to Europe to answer to the superior general in Rome.³⁶ The background to the case was apparently Valera's all too heartfelt sympathy for indigenous culture and religion, which he considered compatible with Christianity; this view roused the resentment of many of his confreres.

Even over the long term, the Jesuits had little enthusiasm for creating an indigenous clergy and a fortiori admitting natives to the Society of Jesus. In Japan, a handful of natives had been admitted as priests around 1610. Similar concessions were deliberated in China around the same date, but the sons of the Middle Kingdom were ultimately excluded from the priesthood and entrance into the Society—some Chinese were admitted only as lay helpers.³⁷ This policy was maintained until younger missionaries took a different view in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. They were much more open to indigenous priests as members of the order. In 1688, three Chinese priests were admitted to the Society, but a tradition of indigenous members failed to materialize. Just a single Indian joined the order as a priest prior to 1773.³⁸ On this point, the Jesuits were fundamentally at odds with the official policy of the papal missionary authority, the congregation *De Propaganda Fide*, which proved to be much more liberal.

The Society of Jesus was also initially very cool toward Creoles.³⁹ General Mercurian had already assented to a restrictive policy regarding Creoles when he wrote that “indigenous people should be admitted into the Society only seldom and only after they have been tested extensively and for a long time.”⁴⁰ His successor Acquaviva confirmed this policy in 1588. Even at the end of the late seventeenth century, the Jesuit missionary António Vieira wrote a hateful document in which he used extraordinarily harsh terms to contrast the inferiority of Brazilian Creoles with the superiority of Jesuits born in Portugal.⁴¹ It was easy to exclude Creoles in the beginning, since there were so few of them, but the interest of the growing numbers of them could not be denied forever.⁴² Around the turn of the seventeenth century, ethnically Spanish settlers

in the New World began to develop a Creole identity of their own. Entrance and admission to ecclesiastical office was an important point to them. The Jesuit leadership in Rome also relaxed its position and now wished for the peaceful coexistence of metropolitan and Creole Jesuits. Former superior general Vincenzo Carafa lamented in 1647: “Nothing causes me greater concern in those provinces than the lack of unity and charity [of Jesuits] toward one another, especially between those who were born there and those who come from Europe.”⁴³ A degree of distrust on the part of both groups thus persisted, although the number and importance of Creole Jesuits constantly increased with the explicit endorsement of the leadership of the Society. By 1654, if not earlier, more Creole than Spanish novices were being trained in Peru. A Creole Jesuit, Leonardo de Peñafiel, became provincial of the Andes for the first time in 1656.

Becoming a Jesuit was also made very difficult early on for men from Jewish backgrounds. It was decided in 1593 that no conversos—that is, men from formerly Jewish families, regardless of when they converted to Christianity—could become Jesuits.⁴⁴ At least in theory, prospective members had to conduct detailed genealogical research back four or five generations to prove their eligibility.⁴⁵ This was how General Acquaviva, who himself had little personal sympathy for conversos, responded to Spanish pressure. Entrenched suspicion of Christianized Jewish and Muslim minorities (who had been forced to convert) was a major factor in Spain. Throughout the early modern period, extremely harsh restrictions on these groups remained in effect. The Spanish nobility, for example, was explicitly ordered to shun conversos so as not to taint their own *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood). Many Jesuits in Portugal, Spain, and Italy shared these discriminatory views and said as much publicly—men like Antonio de Araoz, the first provincial of Spain, and Benedetto Palmio, a provincial and highly respected authority in Italy. This group’s view carried the day in 1593. Thereafter, conversos were excluded from the Society. Although there was initial resistance to this prohibition in the seventeenth century, and knowledgeable Jesuits like those of Seville testified that it would be virtually impossible to recruit new members on account of the ubiquity

of formerly Jewish families, this discrimination against conversos remained official policy until 1946.⁴⁶

The exclusion of conversos was a question of great practical importance for the Society of Jesus. Prior to 1593, there was in fact a notably high number of men from formerly Jewish families in the Jesuits' ranks. Despite opinions to the contrary in Spain and Italy, which made themselves felt virtually from the start, Ignatius himself took a very favorable view of conversos. The first decades of the history of the Society witnessed many leading Jesuits who came from an ex-Jewish milieu or held liberal views. Diego Laínez, Antonio Possevino, and Juan de Polanco are just a few members who belonged to the large group of prominent converso-Jesuits. In addition to Ignatius, Jerónimo Nadal and Francisco de Borja were also champions of the pro-converso line. They did not shy away from bringing down on themselves the ire of the king of Spain, the Spanish Inquisition, and the most important Spanish archbishop, Juan Martínez Silíceo of Toledo. Many of the spiritual pillars of the Society that inspired Ignatius and Borja—for instance, the theology of the highly controversial mystic Juan de Valdés—derived from a converso context. The Society, however, bade farewell to this tradition of openness step by step after Borja's death in 1572. Polanco's otherwise self-evident election to superior general was then prevented because his family had once been Jewish. Acquaviva's concessions to the Spanish line in 1593 sealed the fate of the early pro-converso phase of the Society.

The requirements for admission to the Society of Jesus were far less discriminatory in social terms. Men from the high nobility of Europe, like Borja, rubbed elbows in the Society with brothers from humble backgrounds and even from the underclass. Pierre Chaumonot, for example, a celebrated Jesuit missionary in Canada, lived for years as a young tramp and vagabond on the streets of France and Italy before he became a Jesuit in Rome. For people like him, the institutions of the Catholic Church were one of very few "channels of mobility" in the early modern period that enabled at least limited social climbing.⁴⁷ Chaumonot himself was well aware of this; he wrote the following about his first weeks in the order:

O what joy! O what happiness for me to find myself among fifty novices, all young men of distinguished birth, excellent spirit and character, and handsome bodies. I would not have been more than their valet or kitchen boy had they and I stayed in the (secular) world! . . . Great God! Who would have ever imagined that a poor bumpkin like me would be admitted to such a holy, such an illustrious Society as the Society of Jesus, your son!⁴⁸

Similar stories are easy to find both within the Society and within the Catholic Church as a whole. Tirso González, an important Jesuit missionary in Spain and later superior general, grew up in extreme poverty and had worked as a shepherd in his boyhood.

The vast majority of Jesuits, of course, came from neither the top nor the bottom of the society of estates, but rather from the middle. Research on the social history of the Society largely remains a desideratum, but it is at least clear that clergymen in both the Catholic and the Protestant churches came predominantly from the urban and middle social strata in the early modern period. Middle and high officials, notaries and teachers, and even the sons of merchants and well-to-do artisans were just as much a part of the typical pool of new Jesuit recruits as the sons of the petty nobility.⁴⁹ This was the case not least because this clientele was the most important source of customers for the many Jesuit schools, which were a vital source of new recruits. Recruitment, of course, was not the explicit goal of the schools, let alone the only purpose they served; the Jesuits even temporarily prohibited the admission of students to the Society. But it is undeniable that the Jesuits frequently recruited novices from the classes they taught, as Polanco himself once admitted in 1551.⁵⁰

Outside Jesuit classrooms, recruitment also relied on family traditions—up to 10 percent of all Jesuits are thought to have had relatives in the Society.⁵¹ We sometimes can describe such relationships virtually as family networks. For example, three brothers from the Gagliardi family—Achille, Ludovico, and Leonetto—became Jesuits, and likewise three brothers from the Khabes family of Vienna joined the order in the early eighteenth century. The Acosta family from Spain arguably

epitomized such collective decisions to join the Society: in 1551, not only did the aforementioned José join, but also four of his brothers and his widowed father.⁵² Many Jesuits were also connected to other religious orders by family ties. The Jesuit Miguel Godínez (born Michael Wadding), for example, had a famous brother among the Franciscans: Lucas Wadding, one of the most important historians of his day. And Pierre Bernard's family mirrored the diverse world of Catholic orders: in addition to Pierre, another brother joined the Jesuits, while two others became Capuchins and yet another went to the Carmelites.⁵³ Some families seem to have taken to the religious life more or less en masse. Younger male relatives in such cases were doubtless inspired by the example of their elders.

But families were not always overjoyed when their younger male members decided in favor of a religious life in the Jesuit order. Ignatius himself was repeatedly confronted with family conflicts between parents and children thinking of becoming novices.⁵⁴ Pierre Ayrault, a French legal scholar, even filed a lawsuit against the Jesuits when his son René joined the Society in Paris. He detailed his case at length in a book that soon found a broad audience.⁵⁵ There were similar incidents elsewhere: a German nobleman from Trier complained in 1609 or 1610 that his son had joined the Society of Jesus.⁵⁶ In some cases, relatives even resorted to violence to pry their children or nephews away from the Society. For example, in the Italian city of Nola in 1575, relatives and guardians of the young Carlo Carafa abducted him from his novitiate with "lively force" to prevent him from joining the Society.⁵⁷ A strikingly similar case, again featuring the use of force and tumultuous scenes, took place in Paderborn in 1618.⁵⁸ By no means all fathers and mothers in the early modern period were excited when their sons resolved to become Jesuits.

There were many reasons for parents' unease and their resultant opposition to their sons' plans.⁵⁹ Ayrault, for example, although a Catholic himself, was principally averse to the Society of Jesus as a Gallican official in France under Henry IV. Other contemporaries criticized joining the Society as a religious fad and a sign of misguided devotion. Such claims were leveled especially against new orders like the Jesuits and

Capuchins. Ayrault and the aforementioned German nobleman from Trier viewed their sons' secret entrance into the order moreover as an act of contempt for their paternal authority. As stated in the case from Trier, the son's actions were especially wrong because he had acted "without consulting his parents." At the same time, the boy's father openly admitted that he had other plans for his son, namely, military service, the traditional calling of the nobility. The father of the future Jesuit Pierre Coton, who rose to the highest honors in the early seventeenth century as the confessor of two French kings, also at first saw his hopes for his son bitterly dashed when the young man joined the Society. And other parents felt the need for their sons' everyday presence in one way or another, like the mother of Peter Canisius after her husband's death in 1544.⁶⁰

Parents and other relatives opposed young men's entrance into the Society especially for economic reasons. Since Jesuits were forbidden to have any possessions yet were still entitled to receive inheritances, it naturally was asked what they intended to do with their share of the family property. Grave suspicion of the Society might quickly arise in such circumstances. In the eyes of many family members, their family property was in jeopardy. Again and again, the Jesuits were accused of attempting to persuade wealthy new members to donate their property to the order. Not a few Jesuits really bequeathed their assets to the Society of Jesus, but it was forbidden to pursue such bequests proactively, as the superiors of the order insisted time and again.⁶¹ Quite independent of the question to whom a new member wanted to leave his present and future possessions, the necessary arrangements upon his admission to the Society had to be clarified with legal experts in the province and Rome. This process might drag on for a long time, particularly in the case of wealthy young men. Over the years and decades, the Society of Jesus became entangled in many complicated legal disputes over its members' property.

Parental resistance was especially fierce when sons were intent on joining the Society at a very young age. Young men normally joined the order between the ages of sixteen and twenty, but there were exceptions both young and old.⁶² The Jesuits often hesitated to admit older men,

(continued...)

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