

If Ignatius of Loyola, seen here in a commemorative bronze statue on the campus of Boston College, thought his years as a dashing soldier were thrilling, they would pale beside the life into which his commitment to Christ would lead him. Starting with nine fellow pilgrims in what would become the Society of Jesus, he would ultimately attract thousands of disciples—and a great many enemies—and be responsible for launching unique schools and missions around the entire globe.



The shot that changed the man who turned the tide of reformation

Gravely wounded, the born-again Ignatius of Loyola founds an order whose weapons are schools, not guns, and whose conflicts and valor will endure for centuries

It was “an evil day for newborn Protestantism,” writes the nineteenth-century American historian Francis Parkman, “when a French artilleryman fired the shot that struck down Ignatius Loyola in the breach of the walls of Pamplona.” In Loyola’s long recovery from botched surgery for his smashed leg, says Parkman, “the soldier gave himself to a new warfare. In the forge of his great intellect, heated but not disturbed by the intense fires of his zeal, was wrought the prodigious enginery whose power has been felt to the uttermost confines of the world.”

Thus does the man whom many regard as the greatest American writer of history introduce the Jesuits, the Society of Jesus, founded by the ex-soldier, ex-roustabout, and ex-playboy Ignatius of Loyola, a subject Parkman entered upon with undisguised distaste. Skeptical of all religions and particularly Roman Catholicism, he loathed what the Jesuits were trying to do. But he was too deeply swayed by the undeniable heroism of the Jesuit missionaries in North America to suppress his near veneration for how they went about doing it.

Unlike many others, Parkman was of two minds about the Jesuits. Far more have been of one mind. The devout seventeenth-century mathematician and Catholic philosopher Blaise Pascal saw them as “stripped of charity,” observing pagan morality, always believing that their lofty goals could justify any means whatever of achieving them (the last a charge the Jesuits vehemently deny). Otto von Bismarck, the nineteenth-century unifier of Germany, said he had indisputable

evidence they started the Franco-Prussian War, though he never did produce it.

The American historian David J. Mitchell catalogs criticisms of the Jesuits over the centuries in his *The Jesuits: A History* (1980). In the sixteenth century they were accused of plotting the assassination of William of Orange, Henry III and Henry IV of France, and Elizabeth I of England. In the seventeenth century, they were blamed for authoring a plot to blow up the English parliament. In the eighteenth, the order was dissolved by Pope Clement XIV for conspiring against the papacy. Provided a refuge in Russia, they were back in business in the nineteenth, when the poet Thomas Carlyle described at length their “fanaticism” and the socialist essayist and novelist Charles Kingsley described them as “the Upas-shadow that has blighted the whole Romish church.” Could all these crimes and conspiracies be historically well grounded?

Felled by a cannonball that would change the course of history, an infuriated and incapacitated Ignatius of Loyola grips his sword for the last time. Later on, slowly recuperating after botched surgery on his leg, Loyola read spiritual classics, the only books available to him, first among them the New Testament, and vowed to become a soldier of Christ, dedicated not to military glory but to the glory of God.













The answer is no, since all were brought against them by undoubted enemies, jealous and/or fearful of their equally undoubted success. What is not in doubt, however, is the fact they have been embroiled in controversy within and without the church since their formation and they usually appear to thrive on it.

Most instructive, perhaps, is the English adjective derived from their name, “jesuitical.” For it, *Roget’s International Thesaurus* suggests as synonyms insincere, mealy-mouthed, disingenuous, empty, hollow, and sophistical. A German thesaurus adds two-faced, false, insidious, perfidious, mendacious, dissembling, and sanctimonious.

The order has also attracted some improbable admirers, adds Mitchell, some grudging like the twentieth-century arch-skeptic of religion Aldous Huxley. While deploring them as “mass producers of spirituality,” he nonetheless commends their defeating the puritanical Jansenist movement in the Catholic Church. Huxley’s co-irreligionist H. G. Wells goes much further. He lauds the society’s “attempt to bring the generous and chivalrous traditions of military discipline into the service of religion.” The Jesuit order, he writes, “became one of the greatest teaching and missionary societies the world has ever seen. It raised the standard of education throughout the Catholic world and quickened the Catholic conscience everywhere, and it stimulated Protestant Europe to competitive educational efforts.”

Whatever their virtues or faults, the Jesuits are either credited or denounced by both Catholics and Protestants for checking and then reversing the whole Protestant Reformation in Europe. “Fifty years after the Lutheran separation,” writes the historian Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay, “Catholicism could scarcely maintain itself on the shores of the Mediterranean. A hundred years after the separation, Protestantism could scarcely maintain itself on the shores of the Baltic.” Both statements are Macaulay exaggerations, but his tribute to the Jesuit overseas missions is not: “They were to be found in the depths of the Peruvian mines, at the markets of the African slave-caravans, on the shores of the Spice Islands, in the observatories of China. They made converts in regions which neither avarice nor curiosity had tempted any of their countrymen to enter, and preached and disputed in tongues of which no other native of the West understood a word.”

All of which was envisioned and made to happen through the mind of the

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Beloved and detested in prodigious measure, the Jesuits rarely met with mild approval or disapproval. Here are five unlikely admirers: (1) American historian Francis Parkman, (2) Futurist writer H. G. Wells, (3) Tsarina Catherine the Great of Russia, (4) philosopher-writer Aldous Huxley, and (5) novelist W. Somerset Maugham. Among the Jesuits’ famous detractors were (6) socialist cleric and novelist Charles Kingsley, (7) German statesman Otto von Bismarck, (8) philosopher-mathematician Blaise Pascal, (9) Pope Clement XIV, and (10) historian Thomas Carlyle.



man hit by the cannonball at Pamplona. Ignatius of Loyola was a Basque, a people renowned as soldiers, sailors, and good administrators but also as brawlers and ruffians. Ignatius was an adopted name. He was born Iñigo Lopez de Oñaz y Loyola near the town of Azpeitia in the Spanish province of Guipúzcoa, the last of thirteen children of one of the twenty or more families that composed the Basque landed gentry. The probable year was 1491. His mother died when he was about seven and his father when he was sixteen. He was raised by his cousins, latterly by the duke of Nájera, assigned by the Spanish crown to rule in Navarre, where Spaniards were hated. So from his teens, Iñigo went about armed, shaping himself on the model of the Spanish nobility, careful of his dress, his honor, his courtly appeal to women, and his Catholic faith. But he was also given to womanizing and fighting, and in the Mardi Gras of 1515 he was brought up on charges of assault causing bodily harm, statutory rape, and slander. A court record describes him as “treacherous, brutal, and vindictive.” He

Loyola as an armored soldier, in a seventeenth-century French oil on canvas (above). A man of well-publicized vices, he also displayed undeniable courage and a curious sense of honor. It was at the defense of the little Spanish citadel at Pamplona (below) that his life radically changed.

only narrowly escaped a jail term.

When he joined the duke’s army, other qualities appeared. He never blasphemed, he never hated, and when a town was given over to sack, he refused to take part. When the French attacked the little Spanish citadel at Pamplona, the hopelessly outnumbered defenders agreed to surrender. Iñigo would have none of this; he stood steadily in a breach in the walls, awaiting the attack. He was carried from the field bleeding, near death, by his admiring enemies. The initial surgery was botched. He was sent home and spent two years recovering.



In those two years everything began to change. He took to reading, and the only books available in the family castle at Loyola were on the lives of saints, a life of Christ, and the New Testament, probably left by his pious mother. He read them all, but his mind fixed on the Gospels. He underlined the words of Jesus in red and of Mary in blue. He made notes of his own reflections, and eventually these filled three hundred pages. Gradually, he acquired a new aspiration. He must become a soldier of Christ, dedicated not to military glory but to the glory of God. His brother, who wanted him back in the army, was appalled.

Loyola had been given to womanizing and fighting, and in 1515 was brought up on charges of assault, statutory rape and slander, but he hated no one and refused to help sack a town.

There was a great deal to be appalled about. Instead of wanting to serve Christ in the New World, the challenge embraced by many young Spaniards, he felt the four-hundred-year-old calling of the crusaders. He wanted to go to Jerusalem, not to kill but to convert the Muslims to Christ. He also took a vow of chastity, giving up marriage and family to instead help the poor and the wretched. To do this, he became poor and wretched himself, gave away his fine clothing to an astonished tramp, had a tailor make him a full-length garment of sackcloth, and bought a staff, a small gourd, and a pair of sandals. With these and with no money whatever, he set out on foot for Barcelona on the Mediterranean coast en route to Jerusalem.

Years later as he neared death, he saw much of this as a kind of grand-standing for God. He had a great deal to learn, he recalled, about the Christian life, and when he stopped outside the town of Manresa in the Cardener Valley, he began learning it. Beset now with the idea that everything he had so far done was foolish, he gazed down at the river. "There the eyes of my conscience began to open. It was not a vision that was granted me, but rather an understanding of many things—of the mind, of faith, of human knowledge." From these reflections he began composing what came to be called the Spiritual Exercises. They would become the inaugural formula of prayer, meditation, and confession to be undergone by every man aspiring to enter the Jesuit order.

Begging, barefoot, and penniless, he continued on, from Manresa to Barcelona, to Rome, to Venice, to Cyprus, and finally to Jerusalem. There, he walked where Christ had walked, lived where Christ had lived, and decided to remain for the rest of his life. But the Franciscans, official church guardians of the holy places, required him to leave the city, threatening to excommunicate him if he refused. Convinced that God must have some other plan for him, he returned to Barcelona.¹ By that time he had dropped the name Iñigo and adopted the name of the first-century martyr Ignatius of Antioch.

By now also, he had made two discoveries. First, he was academically ignorant. To serve God more effectively, he must acquire learning. Still supporting

1. Jesuit tradition preserves numerous stories of Loyola's journey to and from Jerusalem. At one point, attempting to win a Muslim to the Christian faith, he becomes embroiled in a ferocious argument. The next day, riding a mule someone loaned him, he decides he should seek the man out and kill him. Then he realizes this is hardly what Jesus would have done. So he lets the mule decide. If the animal turns back, he will take this to mean he is to fight. If it continues on its way, he will pray for the man's soul instead. The mule continues on, thereby deciding what would become for all time the Jesuit policy toward Islam. In another story, to cross the Adriatic some wealthy friends find passage for him on a fine, sturdy vessel. But the captain, discovering Loyola can't pay the fare, orders him ashore. He gets free passage on a much smaller, frail vessel that barely survives fierce storms in the crossing. Meanwhile, the bigger ship founders, and all aboard are lost.

2. The Society of Jesus is often portrayed as established to check the Protestant Reformation, something they have consistently denied. This, they say, was the function of the Inquisition, which was steadfastly suspicious of them. Though they in fact did reverse the Protestant Reformation in Germany, Poland, and Austria, they have always maintained that this was a coincidental byproduct of their real work, which was to spread the gospel through education and Christian witness. It's significant that in all the nine thousand letters, treatises, and notes left by Loyola, the name Luther appears only once.

An 1881 painting by Konrad Baumeister depicts Ignatius of Loyola (kneeling at front) and his first disciples at a Mass celebrated by Peter Faber (standing), then their only ordained member, at a small Paris chapel. In August 1534 these first Jesuits committed themselves to poverty and chastity, and vowed to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem—or, if the latter proved impossible, to do whatever the pope commanded.



himself by begging, he registered in an elementary school along with children. But he also found that he had an unusual skill in attracting young men and women to the Christian gospel, and when he moved on to audit classes at the University of Alcalá near Madrid, he captured the interest of a circle of young men, who began living in poverty as he did.

They, in turn, captured the interest of the Inquisition, who jailed Ignatius for forty-four days while they exhaustively questioned his theology. They concluded that he was not heretical but forbade him to teach since he was academically unqualified. This was the first of ten encounters he would have with the Inquisition, and in every instance he would be acquitted. Officialdom nonetheless preserved a suspicion that he must be some kind of closet Protestant. To escape such attention, he moved to the University of Salamanca, where he was arrested again, this time while his recorded meditations on the spiritual life were examined. Again the verdict was “favorable, to a degree.”² Fed up with such harassment, he set out for Paris alone and on foot, his companions of Alcalá having decided to stay behind.

It was at Paris that he found and recruited the men destined to establish the Jesuit order. He registered at Montaigu College, from whose spartan, chilly, dawn-to-late-night regimen John Calvin had recently graduated. Ignatius found it all but impossible to beg enough bread to live on but took up residence with two men who were soon captivated by his person. They were Peter Faber, who would lay the foundations for the astonishing Jesuit mission to Germany, and Francis Xavier, who would lead the Christian mission to Japan, China, and the Far East, in the process circumventing Islam. Seven others would join this core group at Paris.³

What undoubtedly swayed them was the conduct of Ignatius himself. He lived in abject poverty. When a fellow student robbed him of money lent him to pay his tuition, he ignored the theft and later walked nearly eighty miles, barefoot and fasting, to minister to the man when he became ill. When he persuaded two wealthy men to meet Christ’s challenge to the rich young ruler (Matt. 19:21–22; Mark 10:20; Luke 18:22–23), selling all their belongings and giving the money to the poor, it caused such an uproar in the university that the two were paraded before the university’s officialdom and ordered to go back to a conventional life.

Finally on a summer day seven men—all but Loyola under twenty-six years old—trekked to Montmartre in Paris and there made three vows that bound them together: they would live a celibate life, they would live in poverty, and they would make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. But there was a caveat. If they failed to reach Jerusalem within a year, they would place themselves at the disposal of the pope. It was this last proviso that

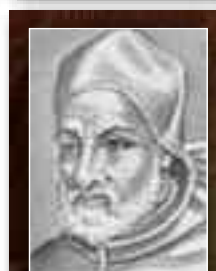
would shape their history and that of much of the world. The date was August 15, 1534. It may be taken to mark the founding of the Jesuit order.

However, they did not yet have the status of an order; they were simply a group. They assembled first in Venice, where they volunteered for the lowest and most repulsive jobs in the hospitals, and Ignatius was once again hauled before the Inquisition, this time on the complaint of Cardinal Giovanni Pietro Carafa, who as Pope Paul IV would become a fierce opponent of the Jesuits. Again the accusations were rejected. They then decided to approach Pope Paul III, seeking permission for their Jerusalem venture and also recognition for their order. Ignatius, fearing his presence would arouse Carafa to opposition, remained at Venice.

Pope Paul obliged them in both their requests, even finding the funding for their passage to Jerusalem. But he was not enthusiastic for it. They were far more needed in Italy than in Palestine, he said, and fate or the hand of God intervened on his behalf. War having broken out anew between Venice and the Turks, all sailings to the Holy Land were canceled.



Pope
Paul III



Pope
Paul IV

3. The other founding Jesuits were Diego Lainez, who would succeed Loyola as general of the order, Alfonso Salmerón, Simon Rodriguez, Nicolás Bobadilla, Claude Jay, Paschase Broët, and Jean Codure. The latter three were not present for the vows made on August 15, 1534, at Montmartre. Only Xavier would serve outside Europe (see subchapter, p. 172).

On August 15, 1534, in a crypt on Montmartre, the seven young men vowed to live a celibate life, to live in poverty, and to make pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Thus were the Jesuits born.

Moreover, he also approved the constitution for what they proposed to call the Society of Jesus, and that constitution put them at the disposal of himself as pope. It was markedly different from those of the monkish and mendicant orders. They need wear no uniform but could dress as the people to whom they ministered. More shocking still, they had no obligation to say the appointed prayers together “in choir.” They could say them alone or apart. They were to be “in the world” as was no other order. But they were not to be “of the world.” The stern discipline of the Spiritual Exercises would attend to that. To their earlier vows of poverty and chastity they now added the vow of obedience both to the pope and to the general of their order. They were also limited to sixty members. By now they already numbered twenty, and scores of young men were becoming interested in them.

Their legal birth in September 1540 was attended by controversy. The Dominicans, Franciscans, and Theatines objected to the special status conferred upon them. Many objected to the name. Wasn’t the whole church a “society of Jesus”?⁴ The society’s first order of business was the election of a superior general. That it should be Loyola was obvious to all the members but Loyola. He twice turned it down and was finally persuaded by his confessor that he must accept it.

Thus Loyola set himself up in an office at Rome, and there he worked for the rest of his life, sending his men out to those parts of Europe where their preaching

4. The name Society of Jesus continued to raise ire for years. In 1590, fifty years after the society was founded, Pope Sixtus V decided to change the name to the Ignatine order so that just as the Franciscans were named for their founder Francis and the Dominicans for their founder Dominic, so the Jesuits would be named for their founder Ignatius. The general of the order, who as a Jesuit was under oath to obey the pope, stalled as long as he could, then finally asked that a nine-day cycle of prayer (known as a novena from the Latin word for nine) be held so that the members could receive the grace needed to resignedly accept the change. The novena proceeded, and on the ninth day Pope Sixtus died, with the change not yet legally authorized. Sixtus’s successor canceled it.



Ignatius of Loyola (in black) presents himself before Pope Julius III, as portrayed by eighteenth-century artist Giovanni Battista Mariotti. When war prevented their mission to Jerusalem, Loyola set up an office in Rome and spent the rest of his life dispatching his followers throughout Europe and the world, wherever their preaching and teaching would have the best effect. On the occasion depicted above, Pope Julius confirms the Jesuit mandate in 1550.

and teaching would be most effective. Preaching the gospel, he knew, must be a key activity, but the Jesuit approach to it soon became distinguished. They were encouraged to carefully study the concerns and interests of their audience. Among workmen they should become as workmen, among peasants as peasants, among scholars as scholars. From that day to this, they excelled as military chaplains because among soldiers they could become as soldiers.

Their preaching, along with the controversies that seemed constantly to embroil them, brought them wide attention and drew young men into their ranks in a deluge. The sixty-member limit was soon abolished, and when Loyola died sixteen years after the order was founded, there were a thousand Jesuits in one hundred houses throughout Western Europe, Latin America, and Asia. A century after their founding, there were thirty-five Jesuit provinces, five hundred Jesuit colleges, and forty-nine Jesuit seminaries. A century later the membership of the order stood at twenty-two thousand.

The key to this success lay in their novitiate. From the order's beginnings, the training of a Jesuit—in terms of hours of work, disciplined study, and psychological stress demanding intense prayer, meditation, and self-examination—far exceeded that of the toughest military schools or the Christian military orders. Jesuit novices were required to do the most revolting chores in hospitals, to take to the streets as beggars, and of course to submit themselves to Loyola's Spiritual Exercises, the requirement that had drawn all of the order's founders to him.

Drawn from many late medieval spiritual writings, the Exercises were divided by Loyola into four weeklong periods in which the Christian systematically contemplates his own sin, life, mental tendencies, habits, and flaws, redirecting himself under the guidance of a confessor toward the light of Christ and the habit

of frequent fasting and perpetual prayer. The Exercises are not, however, some kind of spiritual gymnastic but aim at a genuine personal experience of God and a clear comprehension of heaven and hell, salvation and damnation. The modern reader will find they read nothing like a self-help book. “They are as unemotional as a treatise on geometry,” observes one Jesuit.

The Exercises have been savagely attacked and fiercely defended ever since they were made public, something Loyola avoided doing until long after the order was founded. Historian Mitchell estimates that four hundred commentaries have been written on them and recounts how the Dominicans said they presented “a coercive, parade ground attitude to prayer.” French intellectuals of the nineteenth century scoffed that they sought “to create ecstatic automata in thirty days,” while the American William James, sometimes called the father of modern psychology, described them as intended to create “monoideistic hysteria.” But to the twentieth-century English playwright and novelist W. Somerset Maugham they constitute “the most wonderful method that has ever been devised to gain control over that unstable and willful thing, the soul of man.”

Curiously Loyola, known for the harsh disciplines he inflicted on himself, followed medieval monastic practice and warned his followers against them. For instance, fasting was essential, but it should never be so dire as to affect health. Scourging⁵ was perhaps necessary but not to the point where it caused injury. He should have known. His own health was gravely damaged by his self-inflicted penances. But he was much sterner on the Jesuit pledge of obedience. “The true and genuine sons of this society,” he wrote, “should be recognized by this characteristic, that they never regard the individual himself as the one whom they obey, but in him Christ our Lord for whose sake they are offering obedience.”

From the start, Pope Paul III exercised his authority over them. In effect, writes historian Mitchell, he reached an understanding with Loyola. “The bargain resembled a ‘no prey, no pay’ buccaneering commission, and the Jesuits were expected to show quick results.” That is, the pope would assign them to the role Loyola envisioned for them, provided they brought about the changes in the church that they themselves considered necessary. In the ensuing years, therefore, he deployed Jesuits to those areas where Catholicism had suffered the greatest reversals and expected them to repair the damage.



At left, an engraving from 1621 by Lucas von Vorsterman shows Loyola at prayer, the cornerstone and foundation of his Spiritual Exercises (cover inset below). First composed before 1541, the Exercises were a required part of daily life for every Jesuit, intended to bring about a genuine personal experience of God.



5. The “mortification of the flesh,” or self-scourging with a whip of small cords to bring the body into submission during prayer, was practiced by monks and devout laymen throughout much of the medieval era. It comes to most twenty-first century Christians as incomprehensible. But similarly, forcing oneself to run, jump, bend double, and swing from bars like a monkey, as in any modern “fitness” club, would have been equally incomprehensible to a medieval Christian. Yes, but that’s to keep our bodies trim, the modern Christian would explain. Well, scourging was to keep our souls trim, the medieval Christian would reply.

No area had suffered more damage than Germany. By 1540, writes the German historian Manfred Barthel (*The Jesuits: History and Legend of the Society of Jesus*, 1982), “all the states of northwest Germany, and nine-tenths of the entire population had gone over to the reformed religion.” The appearance of Luther’s complete Bible in 1534 had transformed “a steady stream of Catholic defections into something more like a deluge.” Even in ostensibly Catholic southern Germany, says one Jesuit report, bookstores were crowded with Luther’s works, and Catholics were reading them. The few supposedly Catholic clergy were “half Lutheran” and “living in open concubinage.” For Catholicism, Munich was a disaster area. Lutherans were running the only good schools, and Catholic parents were sending their children to them.

Alms and acts of charity alone would no longer restore the credibility of the church in Germany. Needed were men of boundless, self-sacrificing commitment to their ministry.

Loyola sent into Germany the former shepherd boy who had been one of his first two recruits back in Paris. Peter Faber as a Jesuit was notable for his non-combative approach. To persuade heretics back to the faith, he advised, “one must be solicitous, must bear them much charity and love them truly, excluding from his mind all thoughts which tend to cool his esteem for them. It is necessary to gain their goodwill, so that they may love us and keep a place for us in their hearts.” Finally, “we should speak to them of things we have in common and avoid contentious argument.”

Faber spent the last five years of his life on what became a Jesuit-commissioned reconnaissance of Germany, and his report on how to return the country to Catholicism faced harsh realities. He set forth three principles. First, stop blaming Luther for the disintegration of Catholicism in Germany. The real cause was the deplorable state of the Catholic clergy. Second, alms and occasional acts of charity were no longer enough to restore the credibility of the church. What was needed were men of boundless, lifelong self-sacrificing commitment to their ministry. Third, due to the development of printing, practically every burgher and peasant family now had their own Bible in German. Anyone who tried to take it away from them would be regarded as an enemy not only of their religion but of Germany as well. Faber’s three principles became the basis of the Jesuit campaign to recover the country.



But to achieve this end, he had done one thing more. In 1543 he brought into the Jesuit order its first Dutch member, a twenty-two-year-old theology student from Nijmegen named Peter Kanis, which in Jesuit parlance became Canisius. His rise through the Jesuit order was meteoric—a Jesuit observer at the Council of Trent at twenty-six, rector of the University of Ingolstadt at twenty-nine, and Jesuit provincial over all Germany at thirty-five. In Jesuit history Canisius is recognized as the man almost solely responsible for the



reestablishment of Catholicism in Germany, Austria, Bohemia, and Poland. But his task did not begin easily. Assigned with two other Jesuits to Ingolstadt University in 1549, the other two soon received permission to leave because they found the university hopelessly Lutheran. Canisius stayed on. When he left after nine years, he was given a great fanfare. By what became the usual Jesuit devices—education, almsgiving, preaching, and printing—Catholicism had become dominant at the university.

Canisius's master weapon was the phenomenon known to history as the "Jesuit school." The best way to change a society, Loyola gradually realized, was not by converting adults but by converting their children. The Society of Jesus, writes the Jesuit historian John W. O'Malley (*The First Jesuits*, 1993), was "the first religious order in the Catholic Church to take on formal education as a major ministry." By the end of the sixteenth century, three-quarters of the Jesuit houses were schools and four-fifths of their priests were teachers. (Most of the rest were missionaries in Asia and Latin America.) Unlike the Lutherans and Calvinists, notes Barthel, Loyola laid more emphasis on teaching than on preaching.

The Jesuit school emerged as a new and fascinating phenomenon. It came in four forms—what today would be called elementary schools, along with colleges, seminaries, and eventually whole universities. Its curriculum was a meld of scholasticism and humanism, but it wholly embraced neither, and religion was carefully worked into every subject. The classics were emphasized and taught to "engage the imagination" and thereby to aid in the understanding of scripture.

A nineteenth-century wood relief (above) shows Jesuit Peter Canisius teaching a class of children in Augsburg. Heralded for masterminding and almost singlehandedly reestablishing Catholicism in Germany, Austria, Bohemia, and Poland, Canisius began his mission at the thoroughly Lutheran University of Ingolstadt, where he succeeded in restoring Catholicism as the dominant religion.



Peter Canisius (above) achieved phenomenal success as a Catholic missionary in the heart of Lutheran territory due largely to his master weapon—the phenomenon known as the “Jesuit school”—which helped persuade Loyola that the best way to change a society is not through adults but by influencing their children.

The discipline was strict but not brutal.⁶ Instruction was in Latin (as it remained in most Lutheran schools), and, most attractive of all, tuition was often free.

Canisius himself made a vital addition to the curriculum. He published what he called “A Summary of Christian Doctrine,” in effect a catechism much as Luther had published for Protestantism. Canisius’s came in three editions, each adapted to the ability of the reader. Though it was soon used widely throughout Europe, the Jesuits did not adopt it as a master text, but their schools were urged to develop catechisms suited to the people using them. However, the effect over time was to infuse Christian assumptions into the thought processes of Catholics all over Europe.

The success of the Jesuit schools almost worked their undoing. Although men were streaming into the order, sufficient Jesuit teachers could not be found to staff them. Lutheran parents began declaring themselves Catholic to get their children into them, and one Jesuit provincial said that he had requests for Jesuit schools from one hundred and fifty communities that he could not fill. The order soon came down: no more Jesuit schools. Moreover, many existing schools, inadequately staffed and their standards crumbling, had to be closed.

However, with the help of Canisius’s longtime friend and onetime mentor, the Jesuit Jerome Nadal, the schools were salvaged and reformed, and by the century’s end there were thirty-two Jesuit colleges in Germany, Austria, Christian Hungary, Bohemia, and Flanders, staffed by more than fifteen hundred Jesuit teachers, nearly all these institutions funded by Catholic merchants and noblemen. In addition, the Jesuits had gained control of the preexisting universities of Prague, Vienna, and Ingolstadt, while new Jesuit universities were established at Würzburg and Graz. Small wonder, then, that when Spain’s Philip II called for a new military base in the Netherlands to oppose the rising Dutch Protestant revolt, his viceroy replied that something else would be more effective: a Jesuit college.



Jerome Nadal

Canisius lived long for a Jesuit, dying in 1597 at age seventy-six. But by then he could consider his work done. Most of southern Germany as well as Austria, and Bohemia, and of

Poland had returned to the Catholic fold and Canisius himself was being branded by Protestants as “a dog of a monk” (the Latin for dog, *canis*, being likened to his name), a blasphemer, a gross blockhead, an idolater, a wolf, a swindling trickster, and “the ass of the pope.”⁷ The Catholics provided another title for him. He was canonized by Pope Pius XI in 1926 as St. Peter Canisius.

The Jesuit performance in France was much less spectacular, chiefly because they early on encountered the determined opposition of the Catholic University of Paris. This clash came to center upon the Jesuit college at Clermont, about thirty miles north of Paris, which the Jesuits wanted declared a part of the university. The university wanted the college closed. Because, replied the Jesuits, their college is drawing too many students from the university. The resulting lawsuit simply validated the status quo.

The Jesuit ventures into both ecclesiastical and national politics came as an inevitable consequence of their work. They were intelligent and firmly dedicated

6. Loyola was adamantly against corporal punishment because he believed it would diminish the status and authority of the teacher who administered it and break the psychological bond between teacher and pupil. But his Jesuits soon discovered it was impossible to teach boys without it. So they began hiring lay teachers, who were not under the Jesuit rule of obedience, to do the spanking. This would constitute, in the eyes of the order’s many critics, a typically “jesuitical” solution.

priests and very soon became the confessors first of nobles, then of kings. Indeed, in 1553 the king of Portugal asked two Jesuits to serve as his confessors; both refused. But Loyola himself ordered them to accept the position. A Jesuit became the close confidant of Grand Duke Ferdinand of Austria, and the Jesuits worked through the Polish court to thwart Protestant influence over the Poles. Others were active in the courts of Sweden and Denmark, working diligently, though unsuccessfully, to reverse their commitment to Lutheranism. At the Council of Trent three Jesuits acted as the eyes and ears of the popes, commissioned to thwart every effort of Charles V to compromise Catholic doctrine in order to persuade Lutherans back into the fold. All these functions soon ended the days of barefoot begging and poverty, as the society became an increasing presence in the courts of Catholic Europe.

Typical young men drawn to the society came neither from the nobility nor from poor families. A survey made by the Jesuit administrator Nadal showed them mostly the sons of merchants or professional men. What called them forth were the convincing accounts from the Jesuit missions beyond the seas. These had been pioneered in Asia by Francis Xavier, one of Loyola's first companions in Paris, whose story is told in the following subchapter.

None of these early Jesuit missions was distinguished by immediate success, though they evidenced the raw courage and inexhaustible devotion of the men who conducted them. The Jesuit experience in Africa was a pointed example. It began in Morocco after the Jesuits were able to get two men into the Muslim base of Tétouan, where they discovered what happened to the Christian slaves taken by Muslim raiders in the Mediterranean. Life in Tétouan, says one account, had a "nightmare" quality:

Gangs of Christian slaves loaded with chains, poor emaciated deformed creatures, half dead with hunger and ill treatment, were always to be seen in the crowded streets. From dawn to dark they sweated, turning millstones, drawing ploughs, or carrying heavy burdens. They seemed to be not men but walking corpses. At night they were herded into foul underground caves, so many to each that they could hardly move hand or foot. Those caves were a living image of hell.

Two Jesuits moved into the caves and for six years lived among the captives, smuggling food and medicine to them, cleaning the caves, preparing their meager dinner, administering the sacraments, hearing their confessions, reading the Gospel to them—"In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer: I have



An allegorical oil on canvas from the sixteenth century shows the ship of faith being propelled forward by the religious orders, headed by the Jesuits. They are represented by their founders: Francis of Assisi for the Franciscans, Bruno for the Carthusians, Dominic for the Dominicans, Basil for Eastern monasticism, Anthony for the monasticism of the desert, and Loyola for the Jesuits.

7. After the death of Loyola in 1556, the Jesuits abandoned his policy of opposing Luther by never mentioning him, and began giving as good as they got. To Canisius, for instance, Luther was "a hog in heat." Diego Lainez, the order's second general, calls him "perverse." To Jerome Nadal, once the prisoner of the Protestants, Luther was disturbed, diabolical, bestial, enraged, and devilish. Moreover, like so many Germans, he ate and drank too much.



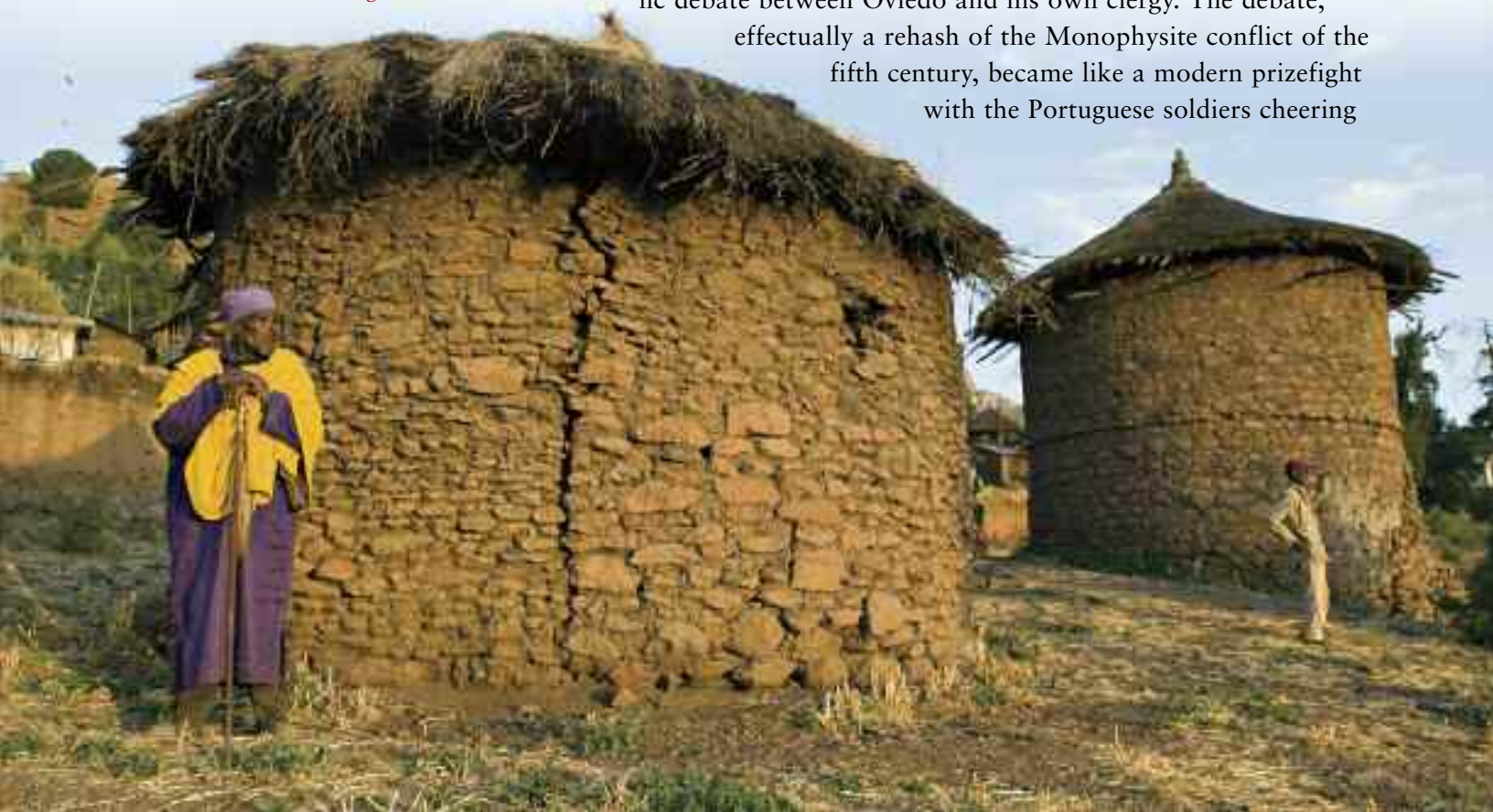
overcome the world.” (John 16:33)—and every day attending to the dying, whispering to them Christ’s promises of the beautiful country that lay ahead. When their superior called the Jesuits home, they pleaded to be allowed to live and die with these people. One, near death with fever, came back to Portugal and recovered, however, then preached in the churches for money to buy some slaves their freedom. In this way he manumitted some two hundred, then asked permission to return to Tétouan. It was denied.

Meanwhile, the Jesuit Andrew Oviedo was designated to become a bishop in Ethiopia, whose emperor had called for Portuguese troops to stop a Muslim invasion. The Ethiopians, like the Copts of Egypt, were then Monophysite Christians, heretical in the eyes of Rome (see vol. 4, p. 198). Here, then, might lie an opportunity to restore them to the Roman fold. Thirteen Jesuits were dispatched to join the Portuguese troops already sent to Ethiopia.

From the start, things went wrong. Storms beset the expedition, and three Jesuits and about two hundred other passengers were drowned. Once in Ethiopia, they discovered that the “emperor” was a mere figurehead over a number of tribal chiefs who actually ran the country. His “great capital” was in fact a city of mud huts. Worst of all, he was not immediately ready to embrace western Christianity. He would consider it and let them know. His decision took a full year. The answer was no.

Oviedo with five Jesuit companions began preaching directly to the Ethiopian people. Hearing this, the emperor stopped them and called for a public debate between Oviedo and his own clergy. The debate, effectually a rehash of the Monophysite conflict of the fifth century, became like a modern prizefight with the Portuguese soldiers cheering

Two Jesuit novices stand contemplatively in front of a statue of Ignatius at Sacred Heart Novitiate in Los Gatos, California, (above) while a Coptic priest does likewise in front of a mud hut in the holy city of Lalibela, Ethiopia, (below) a country to which the Jesuits sent a mission in the sixteenth century. Many of the missionaries were never seen again.



for Oviedo as he made points and the Ethiopians for their own champions. There was no declared winner, but the Muslim attack settled it by killing the emperor in battle.

When the emperor's brother succeeded him and discovered the numerous Ethiopian converts won by Oviedo, the brother attacked him physically, tore off his robes of office, and sent him to the nearby desert to starve. Ethiopia had erupted into civil war, during which Oviedo, living in the poverty he had always cherished anyway, stayed in the country and along with the remaining Jesuits died ministering to the people there. Meanwhile, another Jesuit, sent to look for the earlier Jesuit party, was captured at sea by the Turks, sold as a slave, and wound up as a laborer in Cairo. Here he was discovered by two fellow Jesuits, who bought his freedom, and another chapter began to unfold.

When the next Ethiopian emperor discovered the numerous converts won by Oviedo, he attacked him, tearing off his robes and sending him to the nearby desert to starve.

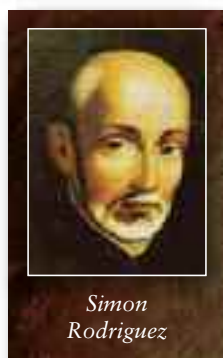
The two told this story. Some years earlier an affable Syrian named Abraham had turned up in Rome with a letter he said was from the Coptic patriarch in Alexandria, commissioning Abraham to open negotiations with Rome towards the union of Coptic and Roman churches. The then pope, Paul IV, had asked the Venetian ambassador in Cairo to confirm this. He reported back that indeed the patriarch was aware of Abraham's mission and would be happy to reestablish relations with the Roman pontiff on the friendliest of terms.

By now the pope was Pius IV. Anxious to have the Coptic Church represented at the Council of Trent, he asked the Jesuits to open a mission in Alexandria. But the Jesuits were suspicious of Abraham's legitimacy, so they sent two Jesuits ahead to check the story, the two who found their fellow Jesuit enslaved at Cairo. The Alexandrian Patriarch Gabriel VII seemed flustered by their inquiries. No, he finally told them after several months of procrastination, he was not actually interested in reunion with Rome. His letter had merely been an expression of eastern courtesy. Thus ended the initial Jesuit venture into Africa.



A Jesuit mission to Ireland was even less fruitful. Two Irish lords, rebelling against the Protestant English, sent pleas to Rome for help. Dispatched as papal nuncios by Pope Paul III, two Jesuits reached the Irish coast and discovered the two nobles defeated and now declaring themselves and their people members of the English church, while the loyal Catholics had fled to the forests, where they were feuding among themselves. The two Jesuits, barely escaping with their lives, returned to France so beaten and bedraggled that they were taken for spies and arrested before the order could rescue them.

Meanwhile, from his office in Rome the tireless Loyola, in grave ill health, tried to micromanage the whole organization, writing the members exhaustive letters of



Simon
Rodriguez



King John III
of Portugal

instruction and advice. When there were ten Jesuits, this was possible. When there were a thousand, it was not. And since the organization was composed of human beings, remarkable though many of them were, it was falling prey to all the foibles and faults of the species. There was, for instance, the Rodriguez problem. Simon Rodriguez, one of the Jesuit originals, had so ingratiated himself with King John III of Portugal that he had become top man at court, attracting 318 men into the Jesuits' Portuguese province. Some of them "hardly understood the meaning of obedience," says the Jesuit historian James Brodrick (*The Origin of the Jesuits*, 1940). When Rodriguez seemed totally out of control, he was ordered back to Rome. But he refused to leave and instead set off a Jesuit rebellion on his behalf at Lisbon, and began a campaign through the whole order to discredit Loyola. The latter never lost patience with him, and after a court trial, banishment, and much sulking, Rodriguez returned to his duties and spent the last twenty years of his life constructively serving in the Jesuit schools.

There was also the continuing necessity to maintain standards. The records are fragmentary, says O'Malley, but in Italy about a third of the men who entered the novitiate quit or were expelled. Of those who joined before they were eighteen, the figure was closer to half. Loyola, he recounts, "dismissed Jesuits from the Roman houses without previous warning and for seemingly minor offenses." Yet he sometimes admitted men against the advice of all others. There was the physically repulsive candidate, for instance, who became a superb teacher. There was the utterly ignorant candidate, so insistent upon joining that Loyola demanded he memorize the entire Bible. Astonishingly, the man did and became one of the foremost biblical scholars of the era.

But Loyola's biggest problem did not develop until the year before his death. On May 23, 1555, when the order was fifteen years old, a man who had been fervidly opposed to Loyola before the order was established was elected pope. This was Giovanni Pietro Carafa, one of the founders of the Theatine order. Years earlier, back in his Vienna days, in a letter to Carafa, Loyola had described the Theatines as so wholly focused on their inner spirituality that they did virtually nothing for the souls of ordinary people "out there" who needed their help. The enraged Carafa never forgot this, and on that fateful day the Jesuits found themselves sworn to obey a man who plainly sought to abolish them. Loyola, says one account, "shook in every bone of his body."

Pope Paul IV did not take long making his views known. He ordered certain changes to the Jesuit constitution, putting them under the same restrictions as the other orders. They must say the daily offices together and in chapel. This, as he was well aware, would destroy the whole concept of the order. But their constitution had the approval of Pope Paul III, said the Jesuits. What one pope does, said Paul, another pope can undo.

This was no doubt much on Loyola's mind on the evening of July 30, 1556, when he fell ill with a stomach ailment. Since this was about the fifteenth time he had suffered the same thing, the doctors were not alarmed. He was found dead



Ignatius of Loyola died alone and quite unexpectedly of natural causes. He had gone to bed, perhaps as pictured above in a nineteenth-century Spanish lithograph, afflicted by the chronic stomach problem that had assailed him so often that little heed was paid to it. Next morning he was found dead. His last words, colleagues recalled, had concerned a Jesuit property in Rome.

the following morning. His last words, spoken to his secretary the night before, were not about God but about the acquisition of a new Jesuit property in Rome. He died without Viaticum and without Extreme Unction,⁸ Brodrick observes. “Death for such as he, to whom God meant everything, was just part of the day’s work.” A few days later, definite word finally arrived at Rome. His companion from the beginning, Francis Xavier, had died some three years earlier. Both were canonized in 1622.

The question on many minds was, of course: could the Jesuits survive the death of Loyola? History provides the answer. Twenty-nine Jesuit superiors general would succeed Loyola between his death in the sixteenth century and the early twenty-first. Most would preside over serious conflicts with kings, popes, bishops, Protestants, other religious orders, revolutionary governments, counter-revolutionary governments, and theologians of every stripe and persuasion.

Loyola’s immediate successor was Diego Lainez, one of the originals, with whom, says Brodrick, Loyola had often been uncharacteristically harsh, because he was nominating Lainez as his successor and was plainly testing him. Though Lainez was the society’s unanimous choice, it took two years for the succession to occur. There were several reasons: The order’s constitution called for a lifetime appointment, and the hostile Pope Paul wanted this cut to three years. Further, the latest Spanish-French war made travel to the Jesuit consistory impossible. Finally, Lainez didn’t feel himself adequate for the job, a contention he would himself go on to disprove.



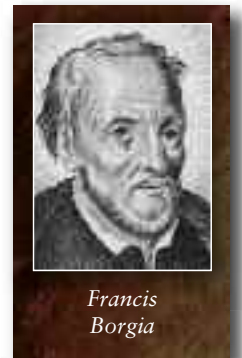
8. Viaticum, from a Latin word meaning “provision for a journey,” is Communion given to a person believed about to die. Unction means anointing with oil (referred to in Mark 6:13 and James 5:14ff). Extreme Unction was the anointing of a dying Christian. Brodrick was writing in 1940. The Second Vatican Council later renamed the rite the Anointing of the Sick, applicable to any Christian who is seriously ill.

Fleeing to the continent after refusing to take Queen Elizabeth's Oath of Supremacy, William Allen is portrayed below in an 1823 engraving. With Jesuit help, he established the English College at Douai, France, to train young Englishmen as priests who would secretly return home to restore the old faith. At bottom is St. Cuthbert's College, Ushaw, near Durham, England, founded in 1808 and a direct descendant of the English College. It still primarily educates young men for the Catholic priesthood.



His most formidable task was, of course, thwarting the determination of Pope Paul to effectually suppress the order, a problem solved first by Lainez's stalling for a year and second by Paul's convenient death thirteen months after Lainez took office—so convenient that their enemies said the Jesuits had murdered him. Paul's successor was the much more pro-Jesuit Pius IV.

The third superior general, viewed widely as the greatest after Loyola, was a man of notorious name but saintly reputation. This was Francis Borgia, fourth duke of Gandia and great grandson of Rodrigo Borgia, the ill-famed Pope Alexander VI. Unlike his ancestor, the duke had been known as a devout Christian all his life, and with the death of his wife, the mother of his eight children, he resigned as lord of Gandia to become a Jesuit novice. He rose quickly in the order, soon becoming Jesuit provincial in Spain, and played a key role in furthering the Jesuit universities. In 1572 he was elected superior general. He was canonized in 1670.



With the next superior, the first non-Spaniard, Everard Mercurian of Luxembourg, the society entered upon a mission to restore the Catholic faith in England. Mercurian, the general, was opposed to it, fearing that some very good men would be sent to a futile death. Though still reluctant, he was finally persuaded by the project's sponsors, two Catholic Englishmen, one a Jesuit and the other a theology professor.

The professor, William Allen, born and raised in Lancashire and a graduate of Oriel College, Oxford, had advanced to become principal and proctor of the affiliated St. Mary's Hall when his refusal to take Queen Elizabeth's Oath of Supremacy cost him his job and forced him to flee to the continent. There, with help from the Benedictines, he created the English College at Douai in France, near the modern Belgian border, where young Catholic men, driven out of England, could be trained as priests and



sent back to work in secret for the restoration of the old faith. The college moved temporarily to Reims, and it was there that the Douay-Rheims version of the Bible, the first Catholic Bible in English, was translated from the Latin Vulgate under Allen's direction.

Allen soon became influential at Rome, and it was he who is said to have persuaded Pope Pius V to excommunicate Queen Elizabeth (against the advice of Spain's King Philip II), thereby enabling Elizabeth to force England's Catholics to choose between their faith and their government. He was also said to be the inspiration for the Spanish Armada, because he believed that only with the help of Spanish troops could England be returned to the Catholic fold. Under the plan, he was to become archbishop of Canterbury.

In this Allen began making common cause with the Jesuit Robert Parsons (sometimes spelled Persons), another man ousted from Oxford, though for more clouded reasons. Son of a blacksmith from Somerset, he became a don at Balliol College. By one account, he was dismissed from Oxford for his Catholic leanings; by another, for "dishonorable conduct." In any event, he moved to the continent, joined the Jesuit order, and returned as head of the Jesuit mission, where he and other Jesuits lived under false names. Four were captured within a year; the saintly Edmund Campion and two companions suffered a hideous death for their faith (see sidebar, p. 324). In the end, nine Jesuits would perish in England and Wales.

From Allen's English College, some one hundred and fifty English Catholics were sent back to their native country. Many were arrested and executed; many deserted; some were caught and betrayed others. When the Spanish troops failed to arrive, both the Douai mission and the Jesuit one failed in their purpose. In 1970 Pope Paul VI canonized as martyrs nine Jesuits executed in England and thirty-one others.

But the bloodshed was only beginning. As the seventeenth century unfolded, Protestant-Catholic conflict, by now as political as it was religious, simmered ever more dangerously until 1618, when it exploded. Then the unprecedented violence of the ensuing Thirty Years' War would fulfill the worst fears of such men as the emperor Charles V, who died despairing because he so clearly saw this catastrophe coming. And the real victim would be neither Catholicism nor Protestantism but Christianity itself, whose long European decline it would then inaugurate. ■



*Robert
Parsons*

The Jesuit who spanned the world

How losing a game of billiards set Francis Xavier on a journey that brought the cross to Malaysia and Japan and Francis to his death at China's door



*As some lone pilgrim, with his staff and beads,
Mid forest-brutes whom ignorance makes tame,
He dwelt, and sowed an Eastern Church's seeds;
He reigned, a teacher and a priest of fame:
He died and dying left a murmur and a name.*

G. K. Chesterton, *St. Francis Xavier*

Francis Xavier, according to Jesuit history, was one of the tougher cases encountered by the proselytizing Ignatius of Loyola. Arriving at the University of Paris in 1529, Loyola found himself sharing quarters with this proud, handsome, athletic, and eminently affable twenty-three-year-old scion of impoverished nobility in Navarre, seeking what today would be called an arts degree. Like Loyola, he was a Basque. But young Xavier was also part of a clique of loose-living gadabouts who inhabited the taverns of Renaissance Paris, and he was not faintly interested in any message this lame and rumpled thirty-eight-year-old might have to deliver. He openly mocked Loyola for his extravagantly zealous desire to win souls for Christ. Loyola, in fact, would afterward describe Francis Xavier as the “lumpiest dough” he ever had to knead.

But one day a few years later, Xavier, a crack billiards player, challenged Loyola to a game, and Loyola agreed on condition that for one entire month the loser would do whatever the winner demanded. Xavier, unaware that his army veteran opponent was an expert in such

soldierly recreations, accepted the terms. Loyola handily beat the younger man—and for the next thirty days led Xavier through a heavy course of spiritual exercises and fasting.

Xavier consequently had visions that transformed his vainglory into humility. He also had a strange dream: a man from India was standing on his shoulders, a man so heavy he could not lift him. What could it mean? Discovering that answer would take Francis Xavier on a ten-year, sixty-two-thousand-mile odyssey through India, the Malay Peninsula, the Spice Islands, and Japan, and make him his church's most renowned missionary to the Far East.

After university, in a dank crypt in Paris's impoverished Montmartre district, the onetime mocker became one of seven men who pledged themselves to chastity and

Jesuit founder Ignatius Loyola described his early recruit Francis Xavier (above) as the “lumpiest dough” he ever had to knead—but both were Basques from northern Spain, and they understood each other. Once Xavier committed himself to Jesus Christ and the Jesuit endeavor, he became one of its most energetic missionaries. Below, modern pilgrims visit Xavier's birthplace, the Castle of Javier in Navarre.





poverty and to launch within a year a mission to convert the Turks in Jerusalem. But things did not work out as they had expected. Though they obtained the funding and gained papal approval for the Jerusalem mission, a renewed Turkish-Venetian war halted travel in the eastern Mediterranean. So instead, with the pope's approval, they established themselves as the Society of Jesus, the Jesuit order. They renewed their Montmartre pledge of chastity and poverty with an addition. They also swore absolute obedience to the papacy and to their own superior general. To this post they elected Loyola.

All but one of the original group spent the rest of their lives in Europe, and their story is told in the foregoing chapter. The exception was Francis Xavier. He never forgot the big man on his shoulders, and when the pious King John III of Portugal asked Loyola if he could spare any priests for India, Loyola turned to Xavier. "This is your enterprise," he said.¹ Thus in April 1541, at age thirty-five, Xavier set out from Lisbon

Xavier arrived in Goa, capital of Portugal's Far Eastern colonies, a 'Babylon of iniquity.'

on a grueling voyage aboard the *Santiago*, a foul vessel that also carried slaves and convicts. Xavier, as always, tended to the sick and poor, limiting the death toll on the thirteen-month voyage to a mere forty-one—a miracle, said the ship's doctor.

This journey ended at Goa, on India's west coast, capital of Portugal's Far Eastern colonies. This "Babylon of Iniquity," as one historian calls it, was a boomtown with all the symptoms of corruption and maladministration that were soon to cost Portugal its eastern empire. Xavier set up his tent among the sick at the hospital and began preaching to the local people—a lost cause, he soon discovered, because he couldn't speak their language. So with the help of two Franciscan friars he opened a school to teach the Christian faith. It soon had sixty pupils ranging from age thirteen to twenty-one, speaking some nine languages. It was to become the Jesuit College of St. Paul, the first in Asia.

The college exemplified what soon became Xavier's most notable quality, an

The Basilica of Good Jesus, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and guardian of Xavier's remains, is located in Old Goa, capital of Portugal's sixteenth-century colony in the state of Goa, India, a river port which Xavier found afflicted by corrupt administration. Arriving in 1542, Xavier found that his first task was to learn the language (the first of many) so he could preach. The second was to open a school.

1. The early dominance of the Portuguese in southwestern India and other areas rich in spices had been established by the nobleman and military genius Afonso de Albuquerque between 1503 and 1515. His conquests, which included Goa, Malacca, the Spice Islands, and Ormuz in the Persian Gulf, created immense revenues for Portugal at a time when such spices as cloves were literally worth their weight in gold.

MISSIONARY TRAVELS OF FRANCIS XAVIER



ability to recruit the help of others. Some would call it charm, some diplomacy, some the grace of Christ shining through him. “He would always seem happy,” said a man who knew him aboard the *Santiago*, “even when he was overwhelmed with work.” Everybody liked him. Xavier was a shabby man in torn gown and bare feet, but he could debate theology with bishops in palaces, crack jokes with sailors in taverns, and inspire Hindu schoolchildren to become his mini-missionaries. (The youngsters, having memorized their Pater Nosters, Ave Marias and Ten Commandments, delighted in reciting them to their families and neighbors.) His acceptance and forgiveness of human frailty greatly eased the seemingly impossible task of converting to Christianity a population at best uninterested and at worst hostile to it.

But as always he must move on. All Asia lay before him, and five months after landing in Goa, he was preaching the gospel to thirty thousand Paravas, a caste of pearl fishers, on the torrid “Fishery Coast” of Malabar, six hundred miles to the southeast. They had been baptized by Franciscans, at their own request, seven years earlier.

‘My arms are often almost paralyzed from baptizing,’ Xavier wrote.

Baptism brought with it Portuguese protection from their Muslim enemies, but no priest had ever been permanently stationed there. Xavier now faced the task of instructing this flock—in Tamil. Three native clerics came with him from Goa and helped him translate basic prayers, which he memorized as they tramped from village to village. Their reception was overwhelming. “My arms are often almost paralyzed with baptizing,” Xavier wrote to his confreres, “and my voice gives out completely through endlessly repeating in their tongue the creed, the commandments, the prayers, and a sermon on heaven and hell.”

The same held true in the kingdom of Travancore, on India’s southwest coast. “I went from village to village making Christians,” he wrote, reporting that in the fall of 1544 he baptized some ten thousand Mukkuvars, the fishermen caste of Travancore. The following spring he sailed to Melaka, Malaysia, to deal with a new culture, new language, and new set of translations. On the perilous passage through the Strait of Malacca, he recounted, “our ship of four hundred tons ran before a violent wind for more than a league, and during the

2. Homosexual liaisons were prevalent among the otherwise celibate Buddhist monks in several Japanese sects encountered by Xavier. The practice of sexual relations between monks and novices, reportedly widespread and socially accepted, is thought to have come from China—a sort of ancient Greece to Japan’s Rome—in the tenth century.

whole time the rudder was scraping the ocean floor.”

In January 1546 he traveled 1,740 nautical miles to the Spice Islands—the Moluccas of Indonesia—where he spent sixteen months evangelizing in Ambon, Ternate, Morotai, and the tiny Banda Islands. Returning to Melaka in the spring of 1547, he found three brother Jesuits priests—the first he had seen in two years—themselves en route to the Moluccas. The Jesuit order was growing, due in no small part to the sensation caused in Europe by Xavier’s letters, which Loyola was cannily disseminating.

In Melaka also he met a Japanese man named Anjiro, a disgraced samurai of thirty-five, who had killed a man in a brawl. Haunted by guilt, Anjiro heard about the famous missionary from Portuguese sailors and sought him out. Xavier was delighted. Not only would the Japanese man be baptized; he could also open the door to his country, discovered scarcely five years earlier by Portuguese traders. Anjiro assured him that his people would embrace Christianity, the credulous Xavier wrote to Loyola, for they “are entirely guided by the law of reason.”

In June 1549, with Anjiro and three others, Xavier embarked on a Chinese junk on the three thousand-mile voyage from Melaka to Japan. They encountered fierce storms that swept the captain’s daughter overboard and caused the terrified crew to beseech aid from the idol on the ship’s prow. But on August 15 they reached the southern port of Kagoshima, the native city of Anjiro (who was now named Paul of the Holy Faith).

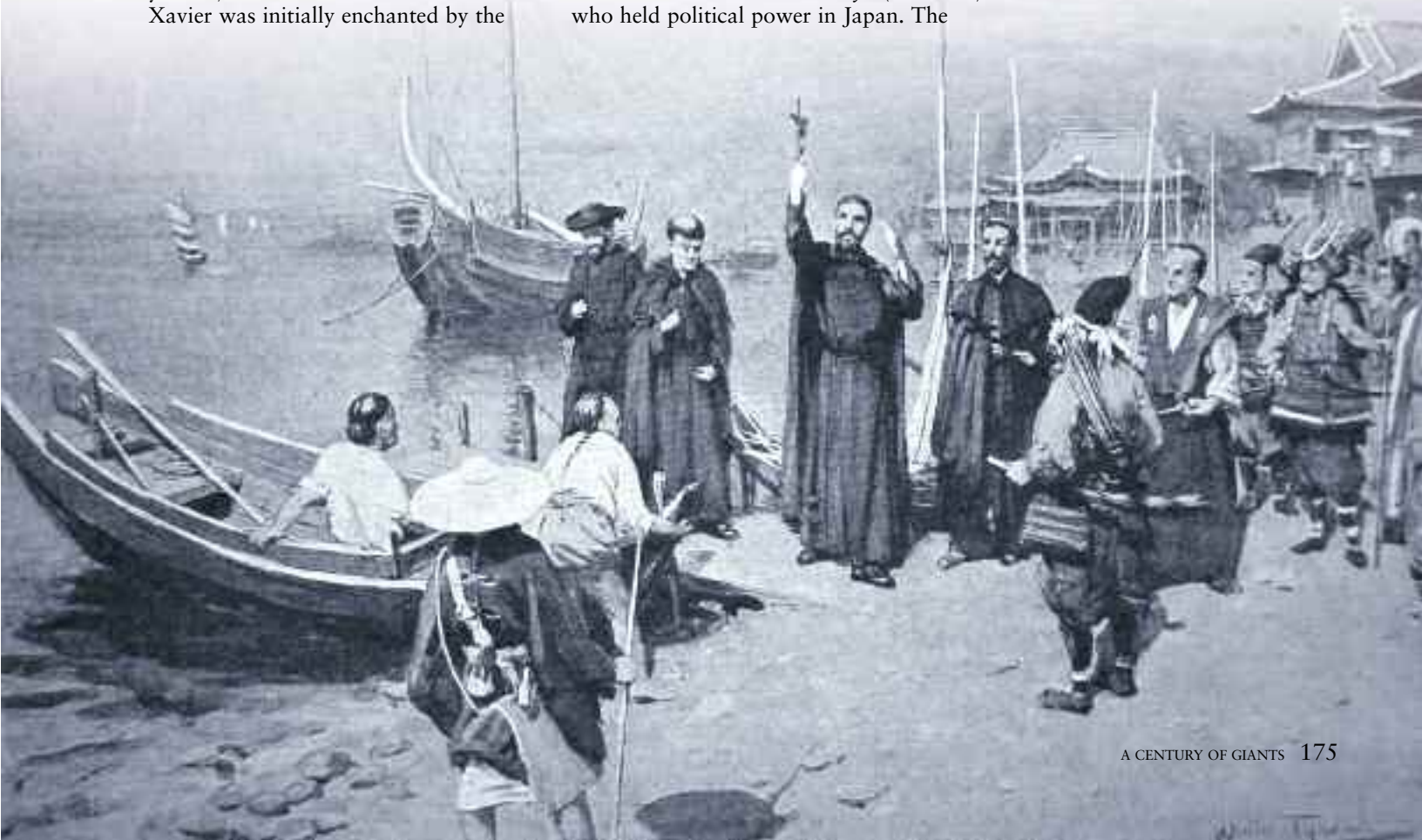
Xavier was initially enchanted by the

Japanese. Their great respect for honor appealed to his Spanish heritage, moving him to call them “the best race yet discovered,” but previous hardships were trifling compared to those he now faced. It took nearly a year to translate a rudimentary catechism into Japanese, for example. The Buddhist monks resented his denunciations of their homosexual practices.² He and his companions were mocked and stoned as they preached in the streets. “The children ran after us with shouts of derision,” he wrote.

A year later, he left with two others to find the emperor in the city of Miako (now Kyoto) four hundred miles north. Stopping for a time to preach in Yamaguchi, roughly midway to their destination, they resumed their arduous trek to the imperial city in early December of 1550. They struggled through often knee-deep snow and waded through icy water. Barefoot after their boots fell apart, they left bloody tracks in the snow, and it was all for nothing. Xavier was unaware that it was the *daimyō* (warlords) who held political power in Japan. The



A sixteenth-century Indian tapestry (above) portrays two black-clad Jesuits, at left, visiting a princely court. Below, Francis Xavier lands at Kagoshima, Japan, as portrayed in a nineteenth-century lithograph. Although initially enchanted by the Japanese and their love of honor, he faced stiff opposition during his two-and-a-half-year stay there.



emperor had no authority, lived in a run-down wooden palace, and sold poetry for extra cash.

Returning to Yamaguchi, Xavier switched tactics. The poverty that endeared him to the people of India obviously repulsed the Japanese. Therefore he changed his persona radically. He dressed in rich robes, assembled thirteen different kinds of gifts (including a cuckoo clock, a harquebus that could fire three times without reloading, and a quantity of Portuguese wine), and approached the local warlord. The daimyô, delighted with these novelties, not only gave the Jesuits permission to preach but set them up in a handsome pagoda.

In the following two months more than five hundred Japanese, many from the ranks of the samurai, asked for baptism. Xavier traveled to Bungo in southwest Japan, where the local warlord, hoping for increased Portuguese trade, also allowed him to evangelize.

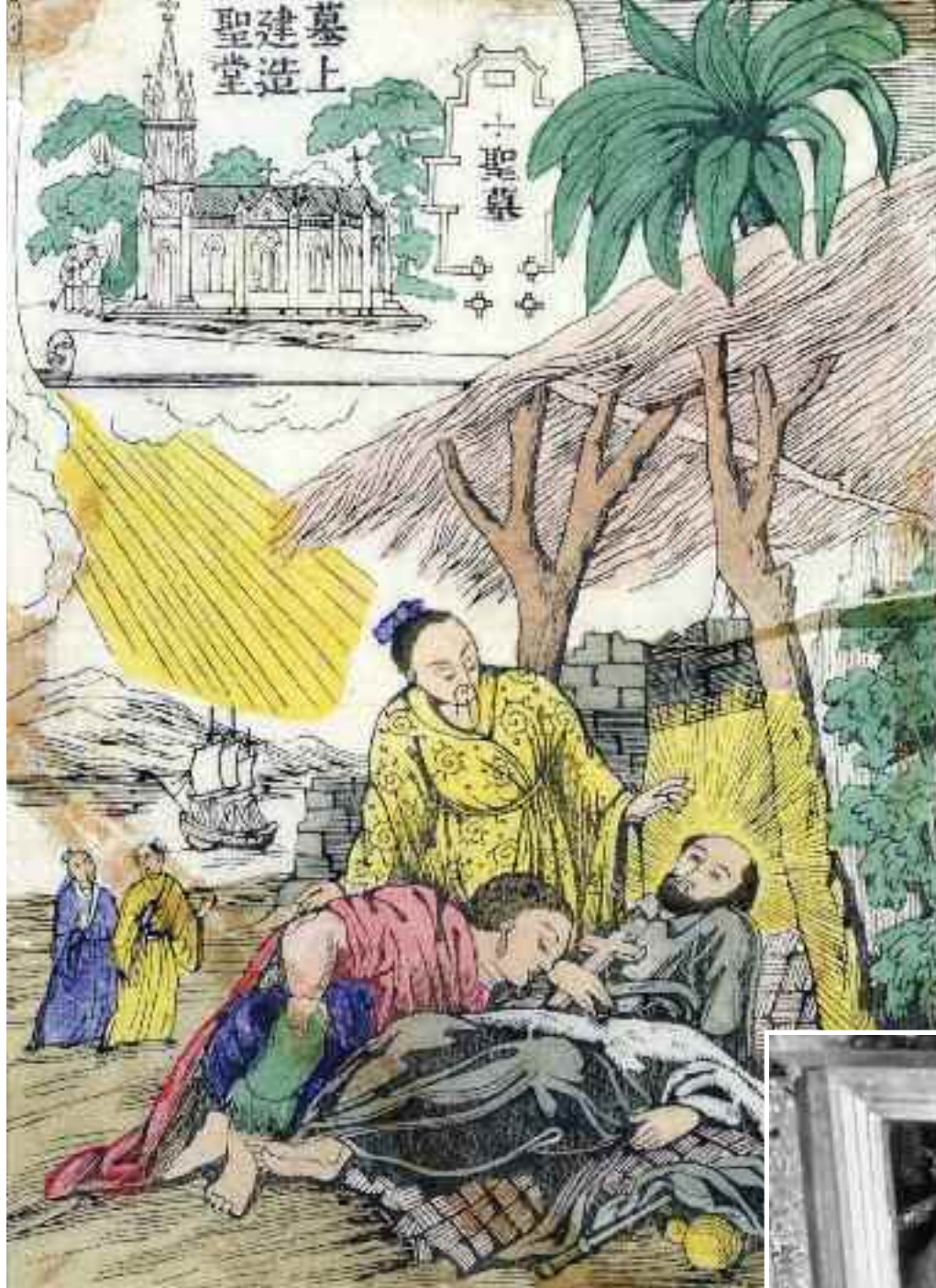
In two and a half years, he reported to the order, about two thousand Christians were established in five Japanese towns. Then he returned to Goa to resume his duties as superior of the new Jesuit province

for the Indies. Two thousand converts in a population of fifteen million was not the result he had hoped for. But he was consoled that those few were strong in their new faith, and later missionaries would confirm the enduring effect of his work. The moral condition of the city was as deplorable as ever, however, and in his letter to King John he does not mince words, warning him that kings, too, will one day die and face the consequences of what they have and have not done:

Senhor, it is a sort of martyrdom to have patience and watch being destroyed what one has built up with so much labor . . . Experience has taught me that Your Highness has not power in India to spread the faith of Christ, while you do have the power to take away and enjoy all the country's temporal riches . . . It will be a novel thing, unknown in Your Highness's existence, to see yourself at the hour of death dispossessed of your kingdoms . . . and entering into other kingdoms where you may have the new experience, which God avert, of being ordered out of paradise.

A detail from a folding screen depicting the arrival of the Portuguese in Japan. This sixteenth-century lacquer (below) shows Francis Xavier and his companions strolling down a Japanese street. During their stay they would find only two thousand converts in a population of fifteen million but were consoled that those few were strong in their faith.





For all his efforts, Francis Xavier never did reach mainland China. A nineteenth-century Chinese engraving (left) portrays his death from fever in a makeshift shelter on Sancian, a small island six miles from the coast. Returned to Old Goa in India, his body is preserved there in a silver coffin (below) at the Basilica of Good Jesus.



Next Xavier set his sights on a still greater prize: China. Foreigners were strictly banned from this largest and most influential Asian empire. Therefore, in the spring of 1552 he organized an official delegation that would allow him entry as a papal ambassador. This scheme was blocked, however, by a jealous Portuguese official in Melaka (Álvaro de Ataíde da Gama, the youngest son of the famed explorer Vasco da Gama).

Disheartened and uncertain, Xavier decided that September to travel to Sancian. About a hundred miles southwest of Hong Kong and six miles from mainland China, this tiny island was the meeting point for Portuguese smugglers with Cantonese merchants. Xavier persuaded one of the latter to take him to the mainland on his next run. But weeks passed, the merchant did not come, and Xavier fell ill with a fever. He died in a makeshift hut on December 3, 1552. He was forty-six. He and Loyola were both canonized by

Pope Gregory XV seventy years later.

Critics of Francis Xavier charge that he left his new Christians without pastoral care, but this is staunchly denied by his defenders. Not only did he train lay catechists and strongly advocate native clergy, writes Jesuit Robert Bireley in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, he was the first missionary to adapt to the customs of the people he evangelized. So the man on his shoulders proved heavy indeed, but Francis would not have things otherwise. “There is no better rest in this restless world,” he wrote, “than to face imminent peril solely for the love and service of God our Lord.” ■