Introduction

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The following twelve essays are a selection of papers presented at the first International Symposium on Jesuit Studies held at Boston College's Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies in June 2015. The symposium theme was the distinctiveness of Jesuits and their ministries. The participants explored the *quidditas jesuitica*, or the specifically Jesuit way(s) of proceeding in which Jesuits and their colleagues operated from historical, geographical, social, and cultural perspectives. They asked whether there was an essential core of distinctive elements that characterize the way in which Jesuits lived their religious vocation and conducted their various works and how these ways of proceeding were lived out in the various epochs and cultures in which Jesuits worked over four and a half centuries; what changed and adapted itself to different times and situations, and what remained constant, transcending time and place, infusing the apostolic works and lives of Jesuits with the charism at the source of the Society of Jesus's foundation and development.

As John W. O'Malley stressed in his inaugural keynote address,¹ the main reason why the Society of Jesus became so distinctive among other religious orders of the Catholic Church was that the Jesuits were founded in the sixteenth and not in the thirteenth century, as the Franciscans or the Dominicans had been. The historical context of the sixteenth century—the Age of Explorations and the Renaissance, among others—offered the Jesuits some opportunities that facilitated a distinct definition of their identity. Certainly, the Protestant Reformation also shaped the Jesuit identity but probably not to the extent it has been claimed by traditional historiography. Interestingly enough, the shaping of anti-Protestant Jesuit identity took a different turn after the death of Ignatius in 1556, whose eyes were turned more towards Jerusalem than towards Wittenberg.² As the chapters by Spencer Weinreich and Rady Roldán-Figueroa testify, the early Jesuit Pedro de Ribadeneyra played a special role in the new definition of the Society's distinctive place in the church and society.

1 See John W. O'Malley, "The Distinctiveness of the Society of Jesus," *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 3, no. 1 (2016): 1–16.

2 See William David Myers, "Ignatius of Loyola and Martin Luther: The History and Basis of a Comparison," in *A Companion to Ignatius of Loyola: Life, Writings, Spirituality, Influence*, ed. Robert Aleksander Maryks (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 141–58.

The Jesuits situated themselves within the late medieval monastic tradition of devotions and ministries, yet—as Loyola’s close associate Jerónimo Nadal put it—they were not monks and the world was their house.³ Hence they proposed radical (and controversial) changes to the traditional concept of religious life: they wore no distinctive habit; they did not recite or chant the liturgical prayers in choir; they resided in houses and colleges and not in monasteries; and they were governed by an authoritative superior general rather than provincial or general chapters. They were hence “a species within a genre, albeit a quite special species.”⁴

These new features allowed the Jesuits to establish an international and centralized network of missions that was fostered by frequent and detailed correspondence between the Roman headquarters and the periphery. Following their distinctive fourth vow to be missionaries, they embarked on the colonial ships to reach territories as distant as India, Japan, and Brazil, among others. The characteristically international groups of Jesuits were not always the first missionaries to arrive at Portuguese, Spanish, or French colonies, but their distinctive adaptability and accommodation policy—which find its roots in Ignatius’s *Spiritual Exercises* and the Jesuit *Constitutions*—prompted them to enter into dialogue with various indigenous and local cultures, with varying degrees of success. These interactions have been studied in Andrew Redden’s chapter on the Jesuit martyrdom in Paraguay; in an analysis of José de Acosta’s treatise on Amerindians by Bryan Green; in Linda Zampol D’Ortia’s piece on the dress policies of the Jesuits in Japan; and in Daniele Filippi’s chapter on devotional music.

The Jesuit ministries became even more distinctive after 1548—the year of the foundation of the first Jesuit school for boys (Messina, Sicily). The Society became the first teaching religious order and created a new ministry of schooling in the Catholic Church. Espousing the Renaissance ideal of civic humanism—sometimes even more enthusiastically than their Italian predecessors—exposed the Jesuit teachers to secular culture and led them to offer curricula that were distinctive through their combination of the sacred and profane. Their mission became, therefore, not just religious but also cultural.⁵ As Paul Grendler stated in his keynote address at the symposium,

3 See John W. O’Malley, “To Travel to Any Part of the World: Jerónimo Nadal and the Jesuit Vocation,” in John W. O’Malley, *Saints or Devils Incarnate? Studies in Jesuit History* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 147–64.

4 See O’Malley, “Distinctiveness,” 2.

5 See John W. O’Malley, “The Pastoral, Social, Ecclesiastical, Civic, and Cultural Mission of the Society of Jesus,” in O’Malley, *Saints or Devils Incarnate?*, 37–52.

teaching was fundamental to the distinctive Jesuit identity,⁶ and the Jesuit superiors employed psychological insights into discerning the proper skills to foster that identity, as Cristiano Casalini's chapter suggests. Again, the roots of this unique approach can already be found in the Jesuit *Constitutions*, in which, as O'Malley pointed out, the ideal of the superior general (and of any formed Jesuit) was described with the use of Ciceronian vocabulary.⁷ Ignatius, less trained in the classics than his secretary Juan Alfonso de Polanco, did not object to this obvious reference to a pagan classic. Nor did he object to the printing of Martial's epigrams—the very first book released by the press at the Jesuit Roman College. The Roman College was also an exemplary center for the Jesuit practice of the scientific method and the study of natural philosophy. The chapter by Jeffrey Burson shows the ramifications of this tradition during the Enlightenment, and the chapter by Francisco Malta Romeiras and Henrique Leitão demonstrates how, following the earlier Jesuit tradition, the Portuguese Jesuits in recent centuries were distinctively engaged in promoting sciences in the Luso-speaking world.

But as exemplified by Yasmin Haskell's symposium keynote address,⁸ the Jesuits did not stop at simply teaching *studia humanitatis* to their pupils. They themselves engaged at the corporate level in producing copious literature inspired by the best examples of classical form and content by which their worldview was intrinsically shaped. The chapters by Paul Gwynne on Benci's epic, by Claudia Schindler on Giannettasio's didactic poetry, and by Jolanta Rzegocka on Polish school plays corroborate Haskell's point.

The variety of ministries and interactions with virtually every facet of modern culture in which the Jesuits had been engaged was so distinctive that no book will be ever able to cover all aspects of their *quidditas*. But I hope the essays that follow offer a sufficiently wide window onto a historical exploration of how distinctive, and hence worthy of study, the Jesuits have proved themselves to be.

6 See Paul F. Grendler, "The Culture of the Jesuit Teacher, 1548–1773," *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 3, no. 1 (2016): 17–41, here 25.

7 O'Malley, "Distinctiveness," 8–9.

8 Yasmin Haskell, "Suppressed Emotions: The Heroic *Tristia* of Portuguese (ex-)Jesuit, Emanuel de Azevedo," *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 3, no. 1 (2016): 42–60.