

‘TAKE THE SAME’—BUT DIFFERENTLY

Mary Ward’s Appropriation of the Ignatian Charism

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IN A MEETING WITH RELIGIOUS WOMEN on World Youth Day 2011 in Madrid, Pope Benedict reminded them that every charism is an evangelical word which the Holy Spirit recalls to the Church’s attention.¹ It is not by accident that consecrated life is, as the apostolic exhortation *Verbum Domini* stated in 2010,

... born from hearing the word of God and embracing the gospel as its rule of life. A life devoted to following Christ in his chastity, poverty and obedience becomes a living ‘exegesis’ of God’s word Every charism and every rule [all constitutions] spring from it and seeks to be an expression of it, thus opening up new pathways of Christian living marked by the radicalism of the gospel.²

This gospel radicalism is founded on an intimate relationship with Christ, being profoundly ‘rooted and built up in’ Christ.³ It finds expression in the mission that God entrusts to human persons, and it flourishes in communion with the Church.

Such gospel radicalism is clearly evident in the lives of St Ignatius and the Venerable Mary Ward: in the profundity of their individual intimacy with Christ; in the mission that each embraced, rooted in their understanding of the integration of contemplation and action; in the *Constitutions* they fashioned for the Society of Jesus and for the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary; and in their deep love for the Church and desire to serve it, even when they experienced suspicion and hostility within the body of Christ.

¹ Compare John 14: 26.

² *Verbum domini*, n.83.

³ Colossians 2: 7.

The *Constitutions* are *via quaedam ad Deum*, a pathway to God, finding an echo in Pope Benedict's words to the religious cited above. They are also a 'classic' spiritual text in the sense described by David Tracy: one 'which unites particularity of origin and expression with a disclosure of meaning and truth available in principle to all human beings'—a disclosure that is thus available to us today.⁴ According to Tracy, any such classic employs an explicit model of Christian self-transcendence, implying some form of intense journey. This finds resonance in our own individual experiences of making the intense journey of the Spiritual Exercises.

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I would argue that it is only in their enfleshed relationship to the dynamic nature of the Spiritual Exercises that the *Constitutions* could be termed a classic. The *Constitutions* presume a graced experience of the Spiritual Exercises. Such an experience involves the Holy Spirit of love drawing individuals into a deep appreciation of the providential care that can be perceived in and through the whole of life. This graced awareness enables them to recognise themselves as forgiven sinners and as invited to share in the redemptive work of Christ for the salvation of the world.

The summative expression of such an appreciation of God at work in and through all things, even the smallest and seemingly least important, is the Contemplation to Attain Love.

I shall begin here by considering the key references in contemporary sources to Mary Ward's 1611 illumination, by which she understood that she was to adopt the Jesuit *Constitutions* for her own Institute. Following this I shall focus on the context of this illumination, recusant England, and the influence of Jesuits on Mary Ward's initial formation such that she began to understand something of what 'the same' meant. My third section considers the progress of her discernment of what God willed for her, which led to this illumination. Then there is an exploration of the driving force of Love which promotes union with God and mission. The last section highlights Ignatius' and Mary Ward's relationships with the Church.

⁴ Tracy states that 'explicitly religious classic expressions will involve a claim to truth as the event of a disclosure—concealment of the whole of reality by the power of the whole—as in some sense a radical and finally gracious mystery' (David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and Culture of Pluralism* [London: SCM, 1981], 101). See also Brian O'Leary, '“Hither I Must Come to Draw”: Mary Ward and the Ignatian *Constitutions*', above, 38.

The Key Texts

In 1619, having made the Spiritual Exercises with Fr John Gerard SJ, Mary Ward wrote him a letter, which is the earliest and fullest written version of the intellectual illumination she received in 1611.

Take the same of the Society. Father Generall will never permitt it.
Goe to him⁵

The clarity of the illumination is striking. ‘Take the same of the Society’ is an unambiguous call to adopt the *Constitutions* as the rule of life for her new Institute, whose members were already formed through the experience of the Spiritual Exercises. There follows a clear indication of rejection by the General of the Society—‘Father Generall will never permitt it’—and the paradoxical admonition to ‘goe to him’. She continues:

... these are the words, whos worth cannot be valued; nor the good they containe, too dearly bought: these gave sight where there was none; made know me what god would have don; gave streingth to suffer what since hath happed: assurance of what is wished for, in time to come: and if ever I be worthy to doe any thing more about the Institute, heather I must come to draw.⁶

Despite the stark reality envisaged there is a clear recognition that ‘take the same’ is the key to what Mary had been searching for. She embraced the suffering that was part of the ‘pathway’ and never ceased from that time to engage with both Jesuit and church authorities to request recognition for what she understood to be, without doubt, a foundation desired by God. This is the experience to which she would return, time and time again, for inspiration about the affairs of the Institute.

In 1621 Mary wrote to the papal nuncio Mgr Albergati about this revelation concerning the form and spirit of the Institute that she understood herself called to found:

... being alone, in some extraordinary repose of mind, I heard distinctly, not by sound of voyce, but intellectually understood, these wordes, Take the Same of the Society, soe understood, as that we were to take the same both in matter and manner, that onely excepted which

⁵ Mary Ward to John Gerard, 1619, in *Mary Ward (1585–1645): A Briefe Relation ... with Autobiographical Fragments and a Selection of Letters*, edited by Christina Kenworthy-Browne (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2008), 142.

⁶ Mary Ward to John Gerard, 1619, 142.

God by diversity of Sex hath prohibited, these few wordes gave soe great measure of light in that perticuler Institute, comfort and strength, and changed soe the whole soule, as that impossible for me to doubt but that they came from him whose wordes are workes.⁷

Here she details the circumstances surrounding the illumination ‘in some extraordinary repose of mind’, not agitated but in a state of tranquillity—the best circumstances for discernment. In the intervening year between these two letters she had had more time to reflect on what ‘Take the Same of the Society’ might mean. Again there is an overpowering sense of consolation.

The Seed-Ground for ‘the Same’

Unlike Ignatius, who spent his youth as a nominal, cultural Roman Catholic until the time of his conversion, in an area of Europe not subject to persecution, Mary Ward saw the fierce persecution of Catholics in England during her early years. The Elizabethan Church Settlement of 1559 had embedded the framework of the Church of England within the culture of the time, and the sheer length of Elizabeth’s reign enabled it to take root as a national institution.⁸ In the north of England, where Mary lived, the Earl of Huntingdon had promised Queen Elizabeth that he would stamp out the old faith. Fines were heavy for refusal to go to a Protestant church, forty or fifty times a skilled worker’s wage for a month.⁹ The celebration of Mass or arranging for it to be said carried the death penalty. It was treason, also, to be reconciled to Rome. It became treason for a Catholic priest ordained abroad to enter the country, and treason for any person to give him aid or shelter. The Church was not just persecuted, it was humiliated and vilified.

Such circumstances tested the commitment of families and individuals to Catholicism. Mary Ward’s own grandmother suffered long years of imprisonment, and continued persecution forced her father to break up his household in 1597/8, sending Mary to live with other Catholic families.¹⁰ The prisons were full of Catholics; outside prison, Catholicism

⁷ Mary Ward to Antonio Albergati, May/June 1621, in *Mary Ward (1585–1645)*, 146.

⁸ Interestingly, despite changes in the intervening years, the 1559 settlement still informs the Church of England today.

⁹ The recusant rolls of 1591–1592 list Mary’s mother, Ursula Ward, as indicted on four counts of recusancy and fined a total of £80.

¹⁰ The Jesuit martyr Henry Garnet wrote of the situation in a letter to Superior General Acquaviva as follows: ‘Many Catholics change their dwellings [in order to receive the sacraments] and go, as it were into voluntary exile, and live unknown and obscurely in remote parts of the country. If there were

survived among the gentry, where household chaplains might be found. It was these chaplains—primarily Jesuits—who were Mary’s confessors and spiritual directors from an early age.¹¹ The Jesuits took the formation of the young very seriously and encouraged the practice of a fervent reception of the sacraments and a disciplined life of prayer.¹²

The Catholic community were also inspired and consoled by the example of martyrs, such as Edmund Campion (who died in 1581) and another Jesuit priest, Robert Southwell—martyred in 1595, when Mary Ward was at the impressionable age of ten. Among Southwell’s prose works we find a guide to Christian living for laypeople under the title of *Short Rules of a Good Life*.¹³ Mary Ward refers specifically to this work as having a significant formative role in her spirituality.¹⁴ Southwell emphasizes the ability of human persons to co-operate with God’s grace, and throughout he seeks a sound theological basis for spirituality.¹⁵

The recusant Church in England during this time may have been greatly diminished in numbers but, with the work of Campion, Southwell and others like them, it was inspired and refined into an authentic body that would maintain the faith over generations. In the Jesuits she encountered, Mary saw the life of an active apostolate, deeply rooted

some one place where they might be permitted to live in peace, they would consider themselves to be treated fairly enough. But the faithful are not left to themselves anywhere. It is impossible save at the greatest risk to baptize infants, celebrate marriages, give the sacraments or to offer the sacrifice according to the Catholic rite. Expectant mothers have to travel to far-away places for the birth of their offspring in order not to be asked about the christening of their offspring.’ (Henry Garnet to Claudio Acquaviva, 11 February 1592, cited in Philip Caraman, *A Study in Friendship: Saint Robert Southwell and Henry Garnet* [St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995], 54.)

¹¹ Of particular importance with regard to her vocation was Fr Richard Holtby, who worked in the north of England between 1593 and 1606.

¹² Fr James Sharp, writing in 1610, described the religious life of the Babthorpes, with whom Mary Ward lived for seven years. Each day had begun with two Masses. Evensong at 4.00 p.m. was followed by Matins, with the Litanies at 9.00 p.m. Sermons, catechism and spiritual lessons were given every Sunday and on holy days. Most of the household also attended meditation and mental prayer, and all would confess and receive the Eucharist at least every fourteen days. It was here that Mary first experienced her desire to become a religious.

¹³ We know the popularity of this work as it went through eight editions between 1588 and 1622.

¹⁴ Although her first formal experience of the Spiritual Exercises came after 1608, this work was one of the first literary sources from which she received some knowledge of them. Southwell closely follows the plan of the Exercises. He grounds the good life on the First Principle and Foundation; and he advises ‘continual warfare’ against the world, the flesh and the devil.

¹⁵ ‘He parallels in diagrammatic form the relationship of God’s grace and human co-operation: justification as the action of God and its effects in human beings. He indicates the action of grace, with each of the theological virtues bringing about a human response. This response begins with the intellect’s consideration of God’s justice and mercy and the merits of Christ and culminates in the will’s desire to avoid all sin. The theology underlying Mary Ward’s later description of the “estate of justice” (1615) suggests the influence of Southwell’s exposition.’ (Jeanne Cover, *Love the Driving Force: Mary Ward’s Spirituality: Its Significance for Moral Theology* [Milwaukee: Marquette UP, 1997], 35)



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'The first word that Mary uttered was Jesus', from the Painted Life of Mary Ward

in prayer and courageous in action. She saw also the practical outworking of the *Constitutions* in Jesuit lives, and even in the deaths of the martyrs. The fruitfulness of this way of life—this pathway—and the great service being offered to the Church were unambiguous. I would suggest that these things became imprinted on her heart, and her ability to recognise later significant insights was due to the refining fire of persecution, the discipline of prayer, the example of Jesuit lives and the profound intimacy of her relationship with Christ nurtured during those early years.

It is recorded that 'Jesus' was the first word Mary Ward spoke, and this story is symptomatic of the intimacy with Christ that was a feature of her life and that we can trace in her development. This concentration on the holy name of Jesus was very important to her throughout her life—so much so that she desired the name of Jesus to be in the name of the Institute that she founded. We know too that in her later years she concluded her letters often with 'May Jesus have you in His keeping'—indicative of her constant companionship with Christ, even to the last word she uttered on her deathbed.

The Progress of Discernment

As a young teenager Mary had discerned that her vocation was not to marriage but to religious life. In St Omer she embraced the contemplative

life of a Poor Clare. Then, in an illumination on St Athanasius’ day, Mary realised she was not to be a Poor Clare but was called to ‘some other thing I was to do, what, or of what nature I did not see, nor could I guess, only that it was to be a good thing, and what God willed’.¹⁶ She left the monastery, returned to England and undertook a ministry of spiritual conversation (which is a primary ministry mentioned in the *Constitutions*)¹⁷ and the corporal works of mercy to attract others to a deeper interior life. She also pondered whether she should take another rule, such as that of the Carmelites. During this time she received the ‘glory illumination’, from which she understood that what she was to do was ‘some other thing ... more to the glory of God’ than it would be to be a Carmelite.¹⁸ There is a clear sense of the progress of a discernment here, a deep sensitivity to the movement of the Spirit of God within her. Each time she articulates what she heard there is no sense of confusion.

¹⁶ Mary Ward, ‘The Italian Autobiography’, in *Mary Ward (1585–1645)*, 136.

¹⁷ Spiritual conversation avails itself of human encounters in the immediate circumstances of common life, seeking God’s presence in them. At times, Ignatius suggests a complementary relationship between this practice and preaching by Jesuits. In the *Constitutions* he wrote ‘And if two set out, it seems that with a preacher or lecturer there could well go another [who] could gather in the harvest which the speaker prepares for him, and who could aid the speaker by conversations and the other means used in dealing with our fellowmen’ (VII.2.F[624]). Ignatius also used spiritual conversation to reach individuals who would never hear God’s word if it meant entering a church. These included wayfarers, prostitutes and society’s outcasts. At inns and in the streets, Ignatius and other Jesuits took advantage of chance encounters to minister to spiritual concerns. Some of their conversations gave guidance in prayer. Others focused on the interpretation of the spiritual life as manifested to the will, the senses, or the emotions. Interpretive conversations were expected to identify the Spirit’s leading of this person to God and to the Church. Although it could serve various purposes, as an apostolic ministry one constant remained: spiritual conversation extended the reach of the Word into settings at some remove from congregational worship and to persons in walks of life incompatible with the faith of the Church. Ignatius’ apostolic work with prostitutes in the Casa Santa Martha, a home that he had opened for their social and spiritual renewal, gives one concrete indication. It is mentioned in many sources. Apostolic work with persons who would be described as un-churched is a prominent feature of Jesuit historical narrative. In the present, Jesuits are being encouraged to reappropriate the apostolate of spiritual conversation. This is an activity that both was esteemed by Mary Ward and has proliferated within the congregations she founded. We know that Mary Ward encouraged superiors to give the Exercises if a priest could not be found. We also know that she highly prized spiritual conversation both among the sisters and with others. Today we find it evident in work among those on the margins of society. It is an apostolate that informs ecumenical and interfaith dialogue. More than this, it is an everyday activity among communities and in the many diverse areas of the apostolate. It may well be that there is a particular feminine genius and grace at work here, focused on the ‘ordinary’—which, of course, means that it then becomes the extraordinary.

¹⁸ Mary Ward, ‘The Italian Autobiography’, 139. ‘I was abstracted out of my whole being, and it was shown to me with clearness and inexpressible certainty that I was not to be of the Order of St Teresa, but that some other thing was determined for me, without all comparison more to the glory of God than my entrance into that holy religion. I did not see what the assured good thing would be, but the glory of God which was to come through it, showed itself inexplicably and so abundantly as to fill my soul in such a way that I remained for a good space without feeling or hearing anything but the sound, “Glory, glory, glory”’.

At each stage she builds on previous discernment. This is a very Ignatian way of proceeding.

Sensitivity to the Spirit of God and a discerning love for the will of God were the foundation for her activity. There was something more to which God was calling her. It is clear that this, as yet unspecified, task became the object of her desire—capturing both her imagination and her heart. What we observe here is the dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises. The Exercises work with the raw material of our desires and build on them to strengthen deeper desires which then become the matter for further prayer. Mary Ward had developed a contemplative spirit that was able to recognise on St Athanasius' day that she was not to be a Poor Clare—but that there was some other good the Lord desired for her. So she began to long and pray for this good. In London she had a second illumination. Now she knew that this good, whatever it was, would be more to the glory of God. So this then became her desire—she prayed about it. In 1611 she received a further illumination that this good was to found an order of women who would have an active apostolate similar to that of the Society of Jesus.

The key principle underlying Mary Ward's practice of discernment was a deep trust in God's providential care. While she understood that discernment concerns the free, sincere and loving human response to God, with Ignatius she believed that it is the faithfulness of God which gives discernment its truth. The aim of discernment is to distinguish the true good—the doing of God's will—from all illusory forms of good. The true good is always in conformity with the teaching and example of Christ, in whom we find the expression of the most perfect choice of the true good. Discernment requires a harmony of will, understanding and affectivity with the will of God. And discernment is related to action—what is to be done or not done.

The Driving Force of Love¹⁹

Both Ignatius and Mary Ward believed that the Institutes they founded were of divine origin and at the service of Jesus. The first paragraph of the Preamble to the *Constitutions* begins with God's action across the whole Society, then moves to the Holy Spirit's action in each member, and ends in the member's own actions:

¹⁹ See Cover, *Love—the Driving Force*.

God our Creator and Lord is the one who in his Supreme Wisdom and Goodness must preserve, direct and carry forward in his divine service this least Society of Jesus, just as he deigned to begin it.²⁰

The foundation of the Society and Mary Ward’s Institute can thus be understood as totally dependent upon the wisdom and goodness of God, in which we hope and from which all that we do proceeds as from its primary source. Recognition of this reality is a first step towards union with God.

... on our own part what helps most toward this end must be, more than any exterior constitution, the interior law of charity and love which the Holy Spirit writes and imprints upon hearts.²¹

This emphasis on the love that the Holy Spirit imprints on the heart was seen by Ignatius’ close associate and companion Jerónimo Nadal as a special grace of the Society. It finds expression also in Mary Ward’s maxim that ‘the true children of this company shall accustom themselves to act not out of fear but solely from love, because they are called by God to a vocation of love’.²² This providential love is given its most concrete divine expression in the Incarnation.²³

Essential Intimacy with the Lord

The contemplation on the Incarnation begins the Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises. It encapsulates the Ignatian understanding of the universe, Christ himself and the Trinity. It is a microcosm of Ignatius’ theological understanding. In this contemplation the retreatant is asked to imagine the Trinity in conversation, as it were, discussing the salvation of the world. Ignatius then asks us to shift in our imagination to the annunciation scene. In Our Lady we see the fullness of a human response to God in her willingness to become the mother of Jesus.

²⁰ *Constitutions* Preamble 1 [134].

²¹ *Constitutions* Preamble 1 [134].

²² Quoted in Mary Catherine Elizabeth Chambers, *The Life of Mary Ward (1585–1645)* (London: Burns and Oates, 1882), volume 1, 465.

²³ It is also the impetus for the formulation of the *Constitutions* to assist apostolic endeavours. ‘Nevertheless, since the gentle disposition of Divine Providence requires co-operation from his creatures, and since too the vicar of Christ our Lord has ordered this, and since the examples given by the saints and reason itself teach us so in our Lord, we think it necessary that constitutions should be written to aid us to proceed better, in conformity with our Institute, along the path of divine service on which we have entered’ (*Constitutions* Preamble 1 [134]).

The grace for which Ignatius suggests the retreatant ask in this contemplation is that of ‘*an intimate knowledge of our Lord who has become a human person for me*, that I may love him more and follow him more closely’ (Exx 104; my italics). This *intimate knowledge* is of crucial importance. It is not merely knowledge of the intellect, acquired through study—epistemological—though it is this also. Neither is it merely an understanding arrived at through our experience—an existential knowledge—though it includes this too. Rather it is fundamentally an apprehension enabled by the Holy Spirit at the level of our very being—an ontological knowledge—of *God’s passionate commitment to each one of us*. This is the primordial reality Ignatius is concerned that we should understand. This is the reality that Mary Ward understood and in which she trained her sisters. It is this intimate knowledge of divine love which impels us towards union with God and a participation in Christ’s redemptive mission flowing from such contemplative union.

Brian O’Leary has termed the Ignatian tradition of union as ‘conative mysticism’, focused particularly on the union of will.²⁴ I would move further and suggest that this union involves an integration of will, intellect and affect at such a depth of being (ontological) that attempting to make a primary focus on the will to some extent undermines the very nature of the union.²⁵ The incarnation has a Trinitarian scope and we need to come to terms with its ontological proportions which also affect our understanding of vocation and mission.

Embracing the Mission

Here one of Mary Ward’s three speeches at St Omer is helpful in illustrating the practical outworking as Mary understood it. Patricia Harriss writes in her booklet *A First Look at the Mary Ward Documents*:

In the second speech Mary Ward reflects that nothing happens by chance; everything, however small, comes from God. Many are converted by some word of the gospel. It is not true that women’s words are not to be regarded because they are not to preach: anyone who speaks by virtue of office is to be listened to.²⁶

Mary’s own experience of spiritual conversation in London and elsewhere bore witness to her belief that women had an important contribution

²⁴ See O’Leary, “‘Hither I Must Come to Draw’”, above, 37.

²⁵ Perhaps a helpful analogy might be the *perichoresis* of Trinitarian relations.

²⁶ Patricia Harriss, *A First Look at the Mary Ward Documents*, privately printed, 9.

to make in the ministry of the word, drawing on their experience of union with God.

But the interior struggle and search that Mary Ward experienced were exacerbated by the prevailing seventeenth-century understanding of religious life for women. In 1615 she was granted a further illumination that she termed the estate of justice.²⁷ She perceived the possibility of living contemplation in action. She saw that both were derived from the same source, namely the love of God, which then stimulated action in the way of love of neighbour. Key to a living out of this interior state was a particular form of freedom and the quality of sincerity or verity. The freedom of which she spoke is threefold:

... a singuler freedome from all that could make one adhear to earthly thinges, with an intyre applycation, and apte disposition to all good works, [and] ... the freedome, that such a soule should have had to referr all to God²⁸

Mary Ward saw freedom as a graced gift so integral to human beings that real freedom is a returning of oneself and one's choices to God, both in a kenotic disposition and a way of life of ongoing self-gift. Freedom, for her, was a dimension of love—primarily, as we have already seen, God's redemptive love through Christ, which liberates human beings and enables them to respond in love to God and to others, and be open to all that is good and true. Referring all to God was akin to Ignatius' finding God in all things.²⁹

Mary's own lived spirituality embodied this freedom. Freedom and availability for whatever God wills marked her sense of mission. There was also an emphasis on sincerity and truth as the faithful response of the human person 'that we be such as we appear and appear such as we are'.³⁰ Moreover, as Jeanne Cover observes,

Mary Ward, however, did not regard the virtues of the 'estate of justice' as exclusive to women. Rather, she was quick to refute any artificial dichotomy between the spirituality of men and women. Addressing the 'fathers of the Society' she emphasized the necessity

²⁷ See Mary Ward to Roger Lee, October 1615, in *Mary Ward und ihre Gründung: Die Quellentexte bis 1645*, edited by Ursula Dirmeier (Münster: Aschendorff, 2007), volume 1, 290–291.

²⁸ Ward to Roger Lee, October 1615, 290. And see Jennifer Cameron, *A Dangerous Innovator: Mary Ward (1585–1645)* (Strathfield: St Paul's, 2000), 167.

²⁹ See Cover, *Love—the Driving Force*, 124.

³⁰ Ward to Roger Lee, October 1615, 40.

of these virtues and warned them against relying on their natural talents and opportunities for learning Christ is the exemplar of all virtue and all are called to follow him. Learning that one of these Fathers had claimed that the fervour of members of her Institute would soon decline because they were 'but women' she replied: 'Fervour is a will to do well, that is, a preventing grace of God and a gift given gratis by God, which we could not merit. It is true fervour doth many times grow cold but what is the cause? It is because we are imperfect women, and love not verity It is not *veritas hominum*, verity of men, nor verity of women, but *veritas Domini*, and this verity women may have as well as men. If we fail, it is for want of this verity and not because we are women.'³¹

Mary Ward's insights regarding a spirituality that unites contemplation and action enabled her to direct the apostolate of the Institute to the universal good of the Church and the personal good of all individuals.

An Ecclesial Disposition

Whoever desires to serve as a soldier of God beneath the banner of the cross in our Society, which we desire to be designated by the name of Jesus, and to serve the Lord alone and the Church, his spouse, under the Roman pontiff, the vicar of Christ on earth, should, after a solemn vow of perpetual chastity, poverty and obedience, keep what follows in mind. He is a member of a Society founded chiefly for this purpose: to strive especially for the defence and propagation of the faith and for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine by the ministry of the word, by spiritual exercises and works of charity and specifically by the education of children and the unlettered.³²

Thus states the *Formula of the Institute* in the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*. And, with one change of English pronoun, thus also states the *Institutum* of the Institute of the Congregatio Jesu and, with a more detailed outlining of apostolates, so states the *Institutum* of 1621 of the *Constitutions*, volume 1, of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is interesting to note that 85 per cent of the *Ratio Instituti* that Mary Ward presented to Gregory XV corresponds word for word with the *Formula*. The end of the Institute, like that of the Society of Jesus, is the glory of God through love of God and of neighbour. Its apostolate is the defence and spread of the faith, and its mission is universal.

³¹ Cover, *Love the Driving Force*, 62, citing Chambers, *Life of Mary Ward*, volume 1, 409.

³² *Formula of the Institute*, n. 1.

‘To serve the Lord alone and the Church, his spouse, under the Roman pontiff, the vicar of Christ on earth.’ This, as we have seen, is the clear aim of the Society and of the Institute, and was the request of Mary Ward. It is really difficult today to imagine the shock and horror that greeted her desire for this novel service by women in the Church. It is vital to keep in mind the context of her time. She was eventually arrested and imprisoned as ‘an Hereticke, Schismatike and Rebell to the Holy Church’,³³ though later released by direct intervention of the Pope. She was caught up in the hostility that was growing between the secular clergy and the Jesuits in England. She was surrounded by spies and informers and left in ignorance about decisions that were made about her and against her. What is most important, though, is the response of Mary Ward herself.

Like Ignatius, Mary Ward contributed to the reform of the Church from within. Through the work of her sisters on the English mission and in schools she helped young women to grow in a relationship of intimacy with Christ. She encouraged the development of their spiritual lives and educated them to be actively involved in the life and mission of the Church. Her disposition towards the Church was fuelled by the profound apprehension of the grace of the Second Week, mentioned above, that intimate knowledge of God’s love at the source of our being.

This intimacy with Christ also fuelled Ignatius’ passionate commitment to the Church. He was concerned to promote *sentire cum ecclesia*—a certain thinking, judging and feeling with the Church with a creative and passionate fidelity. The very term *sentire* is not an easy one to translate literally. It is more than just being favourably disposed towards the Church. It is to be engaged at a deeper level, to think and feel with the whole of one’s being, head and heart, with the Church. Ignatius loved the Church because he loved Christ and the Church was the spouse of Christ. Ignatius uses ‘spouse’ and ‘mother’—two very intimate terms—to describe the relationship of Christ and the individual with the Church. This is an intimacy implying communion of being within the Church. It is to suggest that one and the same Spirit is behind both the hierarchical Church³⁴ and the most intimate personal experiences of relationship.

³³ Quoted in Mary Poyntz, ‘The English Vita’, in *Mary Ward (1585–1645)*, 47.

³⁴ When Ignatius speaks of the hierarchical Church, he is referring to the institutional Church carrying the authority of Christ across all generations and visibly represented in the Pope and the different levels of Church authority. Ignatius appreciated the hierarchical Church as a Church of mediation of divine grace and saw this as operative through individual believers. So, as with a body, each part



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‘God revealed to Mary that although the Institute was not to be altogether subject to the Society of Jesus, yet it ought to be under its direction’, from the Painted Life of Mary Ward

Mary Ward loved the Church because she loved Christ. Like Ignatius she saw a creative tension between the action of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in the individual—a creative tension that was fruitful for both of them. In the face of severe persecution, Mary was able to live without bitterness or resentment. Part of the reason for this can be traced to an illumination in 1625 when,

... she received from our Lord so much light and knowledge regarding the forgiveness of enemies, that henceforth she cherished a tender affection for all who wronged her, and was in the habit of calling them friends.³⁵

In this ability to forgive Mary clearly evinces the intimacy of her relationship with Christ.³⁶ And as John Paul II stated,

needs to fulfil its proper role. As Fr Kolvenbach reminds us, ‘Ignatius looks on the Church as a whole of which nothing can be ignored: neither its ecclesial hierarchy nor the rest of its members, neither its charismatic expression nor its canonical discipline, neither its holiness nor its sinfulness’ (Peter Hans Kolvenbach, ‘The Rules for Thinking, Judging, Feeling in The Post-Conciliar Church’, *Review of Ignatian Spirituality* [CIS], 105 [2004], 19–27).

³⁵ Text from the *Painted Life of Mary Ward*. See 62 n. 11, below.

³⁶ She is also exemplary of Ignatius’ own practice when he recommended his brother Jesuits in the *Constitutions* (Examen 4.44[101]) to welcome ‘contempt, lies and injuries and to be accounted and

He [Christ] did not fail Mary Ward. No matter how great were the difficulties which she had to undergo—ill-health; dangerous journeys; imprisonment; above all, being misunderstood even by important people within the Church—in all of this, she never lost her trust and good humour. And look how fruitful her life has been, all because she built her whole life on the friendship of Jesus! [She was a] pilgrim of hope whose abiding treasure was the life of grace within her, from which she draw energies for a task which because of its dynamism and enterprising spirit seemed unusual and inexplicable to many of her contemporaries.³⁷

The Same but Different

In Mary Ward we encounter a manner of living out the *Constitutions* as a woman, fuelled by her experience of the Spiritual Exercises. We also see an ecclesial disposition, related to that of Ignatius Loyola but honed through a lifetime of persecution. Many years ahead of her own time, she endeavoured to carry out the task she believed that God had called her to undertake. She strove to bring before the Church the reasons why this new way of life both was a gift to the Church and would be of great service to it. At all times she conducted herself as a faithful daughter of the Church. She attracted companions who were prepared, like herself, to offer obedience and service to the Church and to comfort and support Catholics in those lands—notably England—where they suffered persecution.

The Society of Jesus and the Institute that Mary Ward founded came into being in order to be at the service of the Church. They did not come into existence for their own progress and development: rather the Society and the Institute were focused on ‘the divine glory and the good of the universal Church’ (*Constitutions* Preamble [136]).

looked upon as fools because they desire to resemble and imitate in some degree our Lord Jesus Christ who is the true way that leads to life’. Those familiar with the Exercises may also recognise an echo of the triple colloquy of the Two Standards.

³⁷ John Paul II, ‘Address to the Young People of the Mary Ward Schools’, 5 October 1985, n.3, available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1985/october/documents/hf_jp_ii_spe_19851005_scuole-mary-ward_en.html, accessed 18 June 2012. The text continues: ‘To the members of the Institutes which have as their Foundress this “incomparable woman”—as Pope Pius XII called her—I wish to express my greetings and appreciation. The whole Church admires the work that you do in the formation of the young and in other forms of apostolate in various parts of the world. As members of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Loreto and of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Toronto, you find in the charism of your Foundress the wisdom and insights needed to persevere in the mission which Christ has entrusted to you.’

In every continent sisters today serve in a variety of ministries of the word: in education, spiritual ministries, advocacy and many other areas.

Forged in the fire of persecution and refined by a growing intimacy with Christ, Mary Ward's discernment was sure. The transforming power of her relationship with God was witness to a holiness that was admired by many of those who could not accept her vision. Never daunted by persecution, confident in the spirit at work within the Church that treated her so badly, she left the legacy of a clear foundation for those who became her spiritual daughters. 'The same of the Society' was worth the commitment of her whole life to an enterprise that she knew was of divine origin and thus unable to fail. Her example is clear before us: 'what was not done in one yeare might be done in an other, she had noe hast, she cou'd attend God Almighty his time and Leasure'.³⁸ Like Ignatius, Mary Ward believed that

... the verity of our Lorded remaneth forever. It is not veritas hominum verity of men nor veritie of weomen but veritas Domini and this veritie wemen may have as well as men.³⁹

In that truth of God Mary Ward stands as a singular exemplar of the Ignatian charism, taking 'the same' but differently in a new pathway of Christian living—a 'living exegesis of God's word'.

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³⁸ Poyntz, 'English Vita', 86.

³⁹ 'Thre Speches of Our Reverende Mother Cheef Superiour Made at St Omers Having Ben Long Absent', in *Mary Ward und ihre Gründung*, 358.