

Cassandra Speaks
A Position Paper on the Intellectual Apostolate
John O'Malley, SJ

A Jesuit friend of mine has been asking recently, “Are we today seeing in the church the end of the long tradition of priest-scholar that includes Anselm, Aquinas, Mendel, Teilhard de Chardin, Copleston and countless others?” Enough evidence points in that direction, as I will try to show, to make us pause for a moment to ask ourselves whether and/or to what extent the phenomenon impinges upon the Society. If it impinges, we need to ask ourselves what the consequences are and what our response should be. Dealing with these questions is the burden of my paper.

Our Charism and Way of Proceeding

When the Society of Jesus appeared on the European scene in the middle of the sixteenth century, it excited curiosity, admiration, and suspicion. The Jesuits, those “reformed priests,” seemed different from priests in the older orders. The Society did in fact have a number of special features—no choir, no distinctive habit, an international membership, founders with degrees from the prestigious University of Paris, a vow to be missionaries to any part of the world and to any category of persons, and a new kind of book called the Spiritual Exercises. Once elected, Ignatius of Loyola emerged as a new model of superior general, a CEO of an international corporation, much more modern in the degree of authority he wielded than his counterparts in the other orders. In collaboration with his brilliant secretary, Juan Alfonso de Polanco, he wrote Constitutions that also broke new ground for a religious order, even though at the time and through the centuries their originality has been little recognized.

All these features gave the Society a distinctive profile. Yet, despite its many special features, the Society for its first decade was in essence a highly burnished update of the mendicant orders of the thirteenth century, especially the Dominicans and Franciscans. Except for the Exercises, all the ministries listed in the Formula of 1540 and of 1550 were those the mendicants had been engaged in for centuries. Although the mendicants did not have a missionary vow, almost by definition theirs was an itinerant ministry. They sent members abroad long before the Jesuits came on the scene and by the beginning of the sixteenth century sent them in large numbers to “the Indies” on the Portuguese and Spanish galleons. They

provided a thorough academic training for their members and produced some of the greatest Catholic theologians of all times.

But something decisive happened to the Jesuits in 1547-1548. They opened the school at Messina, which despite many problems, was a smashing success. The next year came the school at Palermo, then Vienna and Rome, and, as the cliché has it, the rest is history. Although schooling does not appear as a ministry of the Society in either the 1540 or the 1550 versions of the Formula, by the time Ignatius died formal schooling for lay students had in practice become the primary ministry of the Society.

Jesuit commitment to the schools was massive. In 1640 in Belgium the two provinces there operated thirty-four schools. (Belgium is roughly the size of the state of Maryland in the USA [ca. 30,500 sq. kilometers, 11,800 sq miles], a medium-sized state among the fifty that comprise the nation.) The five French provinces operated about sixty-five schools; the five Italian provinces (not counting the city of Rome or Sicily), about seventy-five; the two Sicilian provinces, about twenty; the Bohemian Province, ten; the Mexican Province, twelve; the Peruvian Province, eleven; the Goa Province, nine. Numbers like these were typical of most provinces, depending of course on the size of the membership.

The Jesuits became truly “the schoolmasters of Europe” but also the schoolmasters of Latin America and a few other places as well. More important for our purposes, the schools had an immense influence on the ethos of the Society itself. They to a large extent redefined the Society and its charism. The schools were not just one more ministry among many. They affected every ministry. They affected the outlook and religious perspectives of the Jesuits who performed them. To put it bluntly, they made the Jesuits a different kind of religious.¹

I am convinced that if it had not been for schools the Society within a few decades would have been virtually indistinguishable from the mendicants. Whereas the other special features of the Society listed above made the Society an updated version of the mendicants that took to their logical conclusion some of the principles latent in the mendicants’ charisms, the schools broke the Society out of the mendicant mold. They gave the Society—that is, the members of the Society--- a new relationship to secular society and secular learning, and, in fact, to learning as such.

From about 1552 forward most Jesuits spent most of their hours not in a church or confessional but in a classroom. The Jesuits became professional schoolmasters. As

schoolmasters they had, as a corporation, to be learned not in some passive sense, but in the sense that teachers must incorporate into themselves the subjects they teach. This professional responsibility established an active, dynamic and personalized relationship to learning different from that of a person who has merely “studied” the material. Not only had no order ever done that before, at least not in a massively organized and fully intentional way, but the novelty of the ministry is not nearly as important as the fact that the new ministry redefined the ministers engaged in it..

It redefined the ministers not simply, however, as schoolmasters but as a certain kind of schoolmasters. What kind of schools did these schoolmasters operate? A relatively small number of the schools had the full course of studies the Ratio Studiorum (1599) prescribed, a course that culminated in the “higher disciplines” of philosophy and theology, which were taught in universities and were the typically clerical program of the era. All the schools, however, taught the “lower disciplines” of the humanistic program—poetry, rhetoric, oratory, drama, history—basically the literary works of classical antiquity, all of which were written by pagan authors. They taught them not as a preparation for theology, the traditional clerical rationale for the study of such texts, but as a program complete in itself with its own proper goals: providing laymen with the learning and skills they needed to make their way in this world. Those laymen were to make their way so as to be of help to others and a benefit to the community, city, or country in which they lived.

It was this commitment to the studia humanitatis and to the schools that taught them that distinguished the Jesuits culturally from the mendicant orders. Those orders, too, were like Ignatius and the first companions committed to “learned ministry,” but the programs they devised for their members originated before the Renaissance and were already fixed before the humanists’ propaganda had reintroduced the humanities in an organized and self-conscious way into the educational programs of the Western world. The mendicants’ programs for their members had, therefore, a strictly clerical orientation: to train clerics for the standard clerical ministries of preaching and administering the sacraments. This was the training Ignatius and his companions received at the University of Paris. (Universities, we must remember, did not teach “literature,” did not teach “the humanities.”)

A significantly large number of Jesuits spent their lives teaching pagan texts like Cicero

and Virgil. They taught them not simply as models of style and eloquence but as sources of ethical inspiration. They assumed, therefore, a correlation between the ethical inspiration of pagans like Cicero and the ethical imperatives of Christianity. This assumption provided them, at least in some important cases, with a culture-friendly attitude. Consistent with the “Contemplation for Obtaining Love,” it meant that, while the Jesuit had one foot firmly grounded in the church, he had the other just as firmly grounded in this world.

Do not Matteo Ricci, Alessandro Valignano, Alexandre de Rhodes, João de Brito, and Roberto De Nobili fit this pattern? Is it an accident that it was almost exclusively Jesuits who were able to look with such friendly eye on the advanced cultures of the East? They had already looked with a friendly eye on the pagan cultures of Greece and Rome.

The apex of the humanistic curriculum was rhetoric (the art of oratory), which the ancients described as the “civic discipline” because its goal was to produce leaders dedicated to the public weal. “We are not born for ourselves alone,” said Cicero in his De officiis, a text Jesuits taught in the schools year after year. “We must therefore take nature as our guide,” he continues, “and contribute to the common good of humankind . . . so as to bring human society together in peace and harmony.” Jesuits in the past would easily have correlated this passage with the “Principle and Foundation,” and Jesuits today with Pedro Arrupe’s “Men and Women for/with others.”

The crucial point here is that these pagan texts were directed to the betterment of this world qua this world. I find it difficult to believe that teaching texts about civic virtue year after year in institutions geared to the welfare here and now of the citizens of a city did not work its way into the very fabric of the Jesuits’ consciousness. In his important letter about the schools to Antonio de Araoz in 1551 Polanco summarized why the Society undertook formal schooling. “That those who are now only students will grow up to be pastors, civic officials, administrators of justice, and will fill other important post to everybody’s profit and advantage.” There is not a “churchy” word in Polanco’s letter!²

Ignatius, we are often told, “loved the cities.” That’s a good insight, but one that I am trying to take to a deeper level by showing how it became an essential part of our charism, even though it cannot be clearly pinpointed in our most foundational documents. It is, after all, not by way of official documents alone that charisms come into being

In small and medium-sized towns Jesuit schools became the primary cultural institution

and in large cites a central one. In an age before public libraries, the library of the Jesuit school often served that purpose. The plays the schools produced for public entertainment and edification included music and dance as well as elaborate “special effects.”³ The Jesuits were sometimes derided as “i preti delle commedie”—as “theater priests,” and the Jansenists decried this aspect of Jesuit pedagogy as pandering to “the world” and as a disgraceful aberration. That aspect suggests, in fact, that “intellectual apostolate” may be too narrow a term and that “cultural apostolate” comes closer to the mark.⁴

As mentioned, some Jesuit schools taught “higher disciplines,” which usually meant philosophy rather than theology. Teaching these disciplines made the schools officially or equivalently universities, whereas the schools that taught only the “lower disciplines” were the very rough equivalent of a high-powered modern Gymnasium, liceo, or high school. In schools of the “higher disciplines,” the most popular branch of the discipline was “natural philosophy,” the precursor of the modern sciences. The Jesuits even more than their counterparts in the secular universities were more and more turning to experiment and mathematics to understand the natural world. As you know, they began to operate important astronomical observatories, kept very much abreast of current scientific learning, and produced an abundant literature on scientific subjects, virtually the only Catholic clerics to do so.⁵

The reason the Jesuits developed this aspect of “philosophy” while others did not is because some Jesuits had to teach the subject on a systematic basis—and to lay students, who generally evinced more interest in “natural philosophy” than students for the ministry. By 1773 Jesuits had turned out in print nearly eight hundred titles in natural history and geography alone, a figure that accounts for only about one-seventh of the entire Jesuit scientific corpus. In 1701 the French Jesuits launched their Journal de Trévoux to promote the study of “the history of sciences and the arts,” which was among the first learned journals ever to be published.

The Jesuits became academic professionals, not only in the sense that some of them taught theology or philosophy in a university but also that the primary institutions of the order was providing instruction in the “lower disciplines” especially for lay students. The other ministries were largely based in the colleges and utilized their resources better “to help souls.” In this situation, those ministries flourished. Although a few other orders of men like the Piarists eventually began to operate schools, following the Jesuit example, and produced some important

scholars, they in that regard were almost insignificant in comparison with the Society.

Summary. Within a short time of the Society's founding, the Jesuit had evolved into a "learned religious" distinctive in two important ways: First, every scholastic and priest was at least for some period of his life engaged in teaching on a professional basis. Even if he later became a preacher, missionary, military chaplain, he had had an experience different from that of the vast majority of members of the other orders. Most of the Jesuits who were not engaged in teaching actually lived in the schools, which helped diffuse a sense of "learned ministry" to all the ministries. Many Jesuits, of course, spent their whole lives in the classroom. The academic experience all Jesuits to some extent underwent was one of the most essential characteristics of their formation and "way of proceeding." This engagement in the classroom was the stimulus for most of the enormous number of publications the Jesuits produced on almost every conceivable subject—theology, astronomy, botany, poetry, dance, military fortifications, and so forth. Not without reason does Anthony Grafton, the acclaimed professor of modern history at Princeton University, describe the Jesuits of the era as "impresarios of learning."⁶

That list of subjects about which Jesuits wrote segues easily into the second way the Jesuits were "learned religious" in a distinctive way. They were led into secular culture to a degree members of other orders were not because of the kind of schools they operated. There is no provision in the Constitutions that suggests Jesuits might someday write operas, even though the implicit theological underpinnings in the Constitutions of grace-perfecting-nature is consonant with that pursuit. If today we see as a primary aspect of the Society's charism the mediation between church and world, between secular and ecclesiastical culture, its origin is here, in a "way of proceeding" that profoundly shaped the Society by shaping the spirituality and outlook of its members.

*

The Post-Suppression Society From the Restoration until Today

The Society was suppressed in 1773. That single act struck a blow at the intellectual and cultural engagement of the church from which it has never fully recovered. Of course, the suppression of the Jesuits, crucially important for the church in and of itself, was also

symptomatic of larger phenomena. Within twenty-five years of 1773 all religious orders suffered trauma and cataclysmic loss of membership in the aftermath of the French Revolution. The diocesan priesthood in “Catholic countries” was decimated.

The papacy itself watched helplessly, as both Pius VI and Pius VII were seized by French forces and suffered long imprisonments in France. This situation ended only in 1814 with the definitive defeat of Napoleon. The Congress of Vienna, 1814-1815, tried to restore the old order, putting monarchs, including Pope Pius VII, back on their thrones. In Europe from this point forward well into the twentieth century, to be Catholic was to be a monarchist and to oppose all “novelty,” which meant especially any principles associated with the French Enlightenment.

In the year Pius VII was restored to his throne, he restored the Society of Jesus worldwide. The Jesuits and the other religious orders fell into the same pattern of political thinking and cultural reaction, which accounts for the many expulsions the Society suffered in Europe and Latin America all through the nineteenth century. With the Suppression the Society had lost all its real estate, including of course its school buildings, and in the Restoration it recovered virtually none of it. Nonetheless, in this unpromising atmosphere Catholicism at the grass roots rebounded remarkably, as did the religious orders.

As the Society gained in membership, the schools emerged again as the primary instrument of ministry, although they were hampered by a siege-mentality and the loss of the lived tradition that had made them in the pre-suppression Society so vital and engaged in a mostly positive way with general culture. Except for the scholasticates, the schools were now all the rough equivalent of secondary institutions, although that designation needs considerable qualification. In the meantime other male religious orders, to say nothing of women’s orders, also began operating schools, an indication of the impact of the Jesuit model. A new era of “Catholic education” was in the making.

By the third decade of the twentieth century the ideal of advanced scholarship especially in philosophy and theology had taken hold in most of the male religious orders. Symptomatic of a new attitude and influential in advancing it was the publication in 1920 by A. G. Sertillanges, a French Dominican, of La vie intellectuelle, a celebration of learning. The book was a great success on the international market, and, as written by a priest, it implicitly exalted the ideal of the priest-scholar or at least the priest as intellectually engaged.⁷ Some decades later Dom Jean

Leclercq published a similarly widely read book, L'amour des lettres et le désir de Dieu (in English, The Love of Learning and the Desire for God), a study of medieval monastic life that, again, implicitly connected priesthood and learning.⁸

Intellectual standards in diocesan seminaries rose, which meant members of the secular clergy needed advanced training if they were to teach in them. Never before in history did the papacy show such enthusiasm for Catholic schools and for raising the standards of clerical education as with Pope Pius XI (1924-1939). He issued a number of documents on the subject. Among the most important for clerics was the Apostolic Constitution, Deus Scientiarum Dominus, 1931, about priestly training, an effective attempt further to raise intellectual standards among all priests, diocesan and religious. He gave four new Doctors to the church, all priests of course—Peter Canisius, John of the Cross, Robert Bellarmine, and Albert the Great.

By the end of World War II Catholic clergy around the world was, as a group, the best educated in the history of the church. Although the education was for the most part narrowly ecclesiastical, advanced study in philosophy and theology piqued priests' intellectual curiosity and thus helped broaden their interests. At this very time, moreover, a number of Catholic schools around the world, practically all of which were operated by religious, now had higher aspirations and wanted to develop into universities, which themselves were undergoing important changes.⁹ In the United States Msgr. John Tracy Ellis in 1955 shocked Catholic educators out of their complacency with his essay "American Catholics and the Intellectual Life" in which he lamented the cultural isolation, the self-congratulation, and the intellectual torpor that prevailed in Catholic colleges and universities.¹⁰

This development meant that members of the orders had to have advanced training in disciplines other than philosophy and theology. The motivation for sending members for specialized doctorates was not so much "advancing scholarship" in the order or in the church or in promoting the ideal of the priest-scholar as it was filling key university positions with appropriately trained members of the order. The result, however, was often priest-scholars and priests devoted to advancing scholarship. Once again, the traditionally close relationship between "the intellectual apostolate" and the operation of schools manifested itself.

In this development the Society, because of its traditions, the number of schools it operated around the world, and the size of its membership, took the lead. On June 22, 1947 Father

General Janssens issued a letter to the whole Society “On Our Ministries..”¹¹ In it he gave first priority to advanced studies in seemingly all subject, sacred and profane. He made the point, moreover, that this advanced training was not necessarily in order to prepare teachers for our schools but had a broader scope in the tradition of learned ministry in the Society. For instance, the large number of journals the Society was publishing on both the academic and popular level, some of which like *Études* ranged widely over issues of general culture, required specially trained Jesuits. The letter seems to have had an impact on at least some provinces, perhaps nowhere more so than on the provinces in the United States.

The Thirty-First General Congregation, 1965-1966, which met to elect a successor to Janssens, seconded his letter in Decree Nine, “The Training of Scholastics Especially in Studies,” which contains a strong section on the need for “Special Studies.”¹² Decree 28, moreover, was devoted specifically to “The Apostolate of Education,” Decree 29 to “Scholarly Work and Research,” and Decree 30 to “Cultivating the Arts in the Society.”¹³ No Congregation before or since has been so forceful on the issue.

The “knowledge-explosion,” the premium placed on “original research” (even in the humanities), the proliferation of academic disciplines, and the awareness of living in a closely knit but aggressively multi-cultural world had by the 1970s changed universities profoundly. These phenomena made more patent than ever before the incredible complexity of almost every issue---social, political, economic, biological, etc. Many of the issues raised by these disciplines had relevance for the church and required trained minds if the church were to address them credibly.

After World War II, however, vocations to the priesthood, chronically low in many Latin American countries, declined precipitously in Western Europe except in Spain, Portugal, and Ireland, and by the 1970s the decline spread to North America. Seminaries closed, which meant bishops had little motivation for sending priests for advanced degrees, especially since priests were now even more urgently, sometimes desperately, needed to staff parishes. Similar patterns emerged in religious orders.

In this context the Society, while in principle remaining committed to learned ministry, by no means remained unaffected by the trend. As Jesuit universities became more complex and sophisticated, the difficulty of placing Jesuits even with advanced training sometimes had, it

seems, a dampening effect. In many parts of the world novices entering the Society were older and therefore less inclined to undertake long doctoral studies after their regular formation.

A disillusionment with the results of the massive investment of men and money in “the intellectual apostolate” probably exacerbated the situation. Some of the Jesuits sent to special studies in the past were not particularly qualified or lacked passion for their field. They entered advanced programs because of “the needs of the province” or “because my superior wants me to,” a weak motivation for the commitment their discipline generally required. Not a few ended up bored and later moved to other ministries. Others, soon stale in their fields, settled into a comfortable disengagement. There were, besides, the many who left the Society shortly after receiving their degree.

Another factor must be taken into consideration. In the Society the priority accorded “the service of faith and the promotion of justice” in General Congregation Thirty-Two, 1974-1975, eventually proved for Jesuit schools to be a wake-up call for their social responsibilities and a stimulus to productive discussion about the aims of “Jesuit education.” Nonetheless that priority plus the directly pastoral emphasis of subsequent congregations had in certain parts of the Society the unintended, but not altogether unforeseen, effect of reducing the priority of schooling and “the intellectual apostolate.” Although Congregation Thirty-Two required that special studies “be earnestly fostered” in a variety of fields, in its description of the “Distinguishing Mark of the Society” learning is not mentioned.¹⁴ In Congregations Thirty-Three, Thirty-Four, and Thirty-Five, the subject of “special studies” is virtually absent.

In his allocution to the fathers assembled for GC 33 on September 2, 1983, Pope John Paul II laid down that the Society should pay “ever greater attention to...a deeper study of relations with non-Christian religions and the dialogue of the church with culture” and specifically asked for a “deepening of research in the sacred sciences and in general even of secular culture, especially in the literary and scientific fields.”¹⁵ The Congregation, which met under difficult circumstances, decided that its main task was to elect a new general and not do much more than confirm the orientations of the previous two Congregations.

A major theme of General Congregation 34 was the dialogue of the Society with “postmodern culture.” That dialogue requires, it would seem, specialized training for at least some members of the order. In Decree 16, “The Intellectual Dimension of Jesuits Ministries,”

and Decree 17, “Jesuits and University Life,” the Congregation effectively presented the tradition of the Society and the intellectual underpinning of all our ministries. The Decrees say nothing, however, about advanced academic training. The section entitled “Called to Learned Ministry” in the Decree 26, “Our Way of Proceeding” is similarly silent.¹⁶ Although in John Paul II’s allocution to this Congregation he in passing spoke of theological research, he did not emphasize learning and research as he did for the previous Congregation.¹⁷ The good news, however, is that learning emerges in the decrees of the Congregation itself as a theme.

GC 35 had little to say on the theme. Decree 3, “Challenges to Our Mission Today,” devotes a short paragraph to “the intellectual apostolate.” In Decree 2, however, which deals with “Rediscovering Our Charism” and contains a section on “Our Way of Proceeding,” learning fails to find mention as intrinsic to our charism or our “way.”¹⁸ Benedict XVI’s allocution at the end of the Congregation made passing mention of “theological research, interreligious dialogue and dialogue with contemporary culture” but placed it, curiously but perhaps significantly, in a paragraph about our Fourth Vow and “obedience to the Successor of Peter.”¹⁹

These phenomena in the Society fit into a broader context. The decree of Vatican Council II “On the Ministry and Life of Presbyters” (*Presbyterorum ordinis*) presents an attractive ideal of priesthood. While the document states that it applies “to all priests,” the underlying model, however, is not only the diocesan priest in hierarchical communion with his bishop but a diocesan priest performing a specific ministry within that framework, viz., pastor of a parish. Moreover, the decree, in tandem with the general mind-set of the council, assumes a clear distinction between sacred and secular occupations in the church, with the priest assigned the former and the laity the latter. From several crucial aspects this model ill fits the Society, as is clear from Decree 23 of General Congregation 31 that in the wake of the council tried, with only limited success, to find correlations. The best it could do, for instance, for priests of the Society “whose apostolate lies primarily in areas of temporal concern” was to exhort them “to bring their priesthood to bear of all their activities.”²⁰

To come down to the present: in this “Year of the Priest” one hears precious little about any “intellectual life” for priests or the need for any advanced training. The two priests officially singled out as models for the year—the Curé d’Ars (Jean-Baptiste Vianney) and Padre Pio--- suggest almost an opposed ideal. These saints beautifully exemplify the truth that learning is not

a precondition for pastoral effectiveness, but holding them up as models seems almost to suggest that learning is irrelevant to it.

Whereas eighty years ago the papacy and other authorities in the church launched or at least promoted effective programs to raise the intellectual level of clerical training, today, despite occasional lip-service, they seem to attach little importance to it. Sometimes, rather, they give the impression they fear it. If we are not seeing “the end of the priest-scholar in the church,” we are certainly seeing an eclipse of it, as well as a general decline in intellectual ideals for the clergy.

It is possible to argue that for the Society advanced training is now so endemic to “our way of proceeding” that it no longer requires insistence. It is also possible to argue that it is implied in the emphasis on inculturation, on the dialogue with modern culture, and on the other trajectories for our ministries recent Congregations have taken as their themes. It is possible to argue that, despite what may be happening in the church at large, the Society still not only professes the ideal of learned ministry but lives it. Those are valid points. But we need to remind ourselves that our traditions, our charism, our way of proceeding are subject to the forces of history and that they enjoy no supernatural guarantee of survival as the Society makes its way through time.

I can speak with direct experience only of the United States, where advanced training is held up to novices and scholastics as one option among many. That is commendable, but is it enough, given the attractiveness of seemingly more pastoral ministries? I have the impression from my many years at the Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, Massachusetts, that same menu-choice prevails in provinces of other assistancies. I have the impression that it does not prevail universally, however, because in some African provinces specialized training still seems to enjoy a high priority. I am convinced, in any case, that just as the Society in its very early history could have devolved into another mendicant order, so today it could devolve into simply another pastoral body in the church without a voice addressing the issues of the day on their own terms.

If that should happen, it would deprive the church of the one religious order that implicitly but consistently and effectively mediated secular culture to it for more than four hundred and fifty years. True, today the torch has been passed to a large extent to Catholic lay

men and women, but is it not important for the church to have at least a few clerics who understand the intellectual issues at stake? If so, the Society, given present trends, is the only body in the church that has the tradition and the resources to fill that need.

I can perhaps illustrate my point from a quite specific area with which I have direct experience. Rather than important for the church at large, it is an area that suggests advanced scholarship is important for the internal life of the Society itself. My generation and the two previous ones accomplished the task of putting the history of the Society and its spirituality on a solid academic basis. We interpreted those realities for our own internal consumption but also for the larger world of scholarship, Catholic and other. We opened up the rich panorama of the Society to outside scholars and invited them to participate in exploring it. That invitation was accepted with enthusiasm, with the result that those scholars have been for the past fifteen years or so producing almost an avalanche of excellent scholarship on almost every aspect of our tradition.²¹

A dramatic shift in authorship has therefore taken place. Just two decades ago eighty-five to ninety percent of academically respectable writing about the Society, I venture, was done by Jesuits. Today, maybe five or ten percent? We should be gratified with the generally first-rate scholarship that has exploded on an international basis by non-Jesuits, only a few of whom are Catholics, but do we not need at least a nucleus of Jesuits to mediate that scholarship to us and to be able themselves to speak with authority about it? I have no statistics, but I am not aware of many younger Jesuits in training to do so.

*

What Steps to Take?

There is no overnight way to change the situation, but there are at least two steps that might be taken. First, whatever those measures are, a clear distinction must be made and maintained between “the university (and scholasticate) apostolate” and “the intellectual apostolate.” In the past half-century the former has in many provinces been the engine that drove and to some extent created the latter. The two are even today closely related. But they should not be treated as if they are identical in the Society. Many provinces do not have universities or scholasticates, but that does not exempt them from the intellectual apostolate. Moreover, problems with the former should not be transferred to the latter. The intellectual apostolate rests

on the assumption that the person engaged in it has himself been changed by his program of studies and is therefore capable of addressing issues in a variety of contexts from a more reflective and informed perspective.

Secondly, a clear and urgent message needs to be delivered by the Society to its members on the high priority of the intellectual apostolate, with its implied component of “special studies,” and on its integral relationship to our charism and way of proceeding. It should insist that learning is not one among many but a solid foundation for all our ministries. This means of course rigorous academic programs for all Jesuits in all phases of Jesuit formation. But, beyond that, the intellectual apostolate *as such* means that provincials and others early identify the scholastics qualified for this specific apostolate within the general context of our learned ministry, support them, and, given the long and arduous training required even “destine” them for it. It should, that is to say, promote a pro-active program.

The message should also encourage provincials to broaden their vision beyond the “needs of the province”---encourage them, indeed, to indulge, even in these straitened times, in a certain prodigality in assigning men to advanced studies, on the assumption that a Jesuit well trained in one field will be an asset in others. Just because a province does not have a university, a philosophate, or a theologate is not sufficient reason for closing the door to future studies for those with the aptitude.

While the message should of course be clear that it is not a call to send scholastics and young priests into advanced training without regard for their aptitude and interests, lest the mistakes of the past be repeated, it should at the same time insist provincials, novice masters, and directors of formation do all in their power to encourage those who have an interest in that apostolate or those in whom that interest can genuinely be fostered and enkindled. The hour is late.

September 1, 2009

John W. O’Malley, S.J.
Georgetown University
Washington, DC. USA

Appendix

Theses for Discussion and Debate

- ++1. Had it not been for the schools, the Society would have become one more order in the mendicant pattern.
- ++2. The schools profoundly influenced the style of learning characteristic of the Society
- ++3. This developments deeply affected our way of proceeding and our very charism, even though our most foundational documents—Exercises, Formula, and Constitutions—provide no direct warrant for it.
- ++4. This means that charism, though it of course must always be consonant with the foundational documents, is not necessarily fully articulated in them.
- ++5. Our charism developed out of historical choices, and it is subject to change through historical choices—or slippage.
- ++6. The university (scholasticate) apostolate and the intellectual apostolate are closely related, but the one should not be identified with the other.
- ++7. Although the intellectual and cultural mission of the Society has consistently been presumed in authoritative statements of the Society’s role in the church, in the past fifty years no clear and strongly worded provisions have been articulated to make it operative.
- ++8. There is evidence that, for that reason and others, the priority accorded the intellectual and cultural missions of the Society has slipped.
- ++9. If this is true, the identity of the Society is at stake.
- ++10. A clear message in this regard is an essential step for bettering the situation.
- ++11. Sound the alarm.

Endnotes

**I want to thank David J. Collins, S.J., and Mark G. Henninger, S.J., for their helpful comments and criticisms of an earlier draft of this paper.

1. I develop this thesis in my “Five Missions of the Jesuit Charism: Content and Method,” Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits, 38/4 (Winter, 2006), and from a slightly different perspective in my “Concluding Remarks,” I Gesuiti e la Ratio Studiorum, ed. Manfred Hinz, et al. (Rome; Bulzoni Editore, 2004), pp. 509-21.

2. See my The First Jesuits (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 212-13.

3. There is today a rich literature on this subject. See, e.g., Giovanna Zanlonghi, “The Jesuit Stage and Theater in Milan during the Eighteenth Century,” in The Jesuits II: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773, ed. John W. O’Malley, et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), pp. 530-49, and her monograph, Teatri di formazione: Actio, parola et immagine nella scena gesuitica del Sei-Settecento a Milano (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2002).

4. See my “Five Missions,” especially pp. 24-31, and Richard M. Liddy, “The Catholic Intellectual Tradition: Where Is It Today?” Conversations: On Jesuit Education, no. 36 (Fall,

2009), pp. 2-5. See also my Four Cultures of the West (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

5. There is now considerable literature on the subject. See, e.g., Marcus Hellyer, Catholic Physics: Jesuit Natural Philosophy in Early Modern Germany (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), and Mordechai Feingold, ed., Jesuit Science and the Republic of Letters (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003). See also passim the articles in John W. O'Malley, et al., ed., The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), and the follow-up volume published in 2006.

6. Anthony Grafton, "Entrepreneurs of the Soul, Impresarios of Learning: The Jesuits," in the collection of his studies, Worlds Made by Words: Scholarship and Community in the Modern West (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 160-75.

7. A. G. (Antonin Gilbert) Sertillanges, La vie intellectuelle (Paris: Desclée, 1921); English translation of a later French edition, The Intellectual Life: Its Spirit, Conditions, Methods, trans. Mary Ryan (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1948).

8. Original French, Jean Leclercq, L'amour des lettres et le désir de Dieu (Paris: Cerf, 1957); English, trans. Catherine Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1961).

9. For an excellent survey of how Jesuit schools evolved in the United States from their inception in the nineteenth century into full-fledged universities in the twentieth, see Gerald McKeivitt, "Jesuit Schools in the USA, 1814-1970," in The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits, ed. Thomas Worcester (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 278-97.

10. John Tracy Ellis, "American Catholics and the Intellectual Tradition," Thought, 30 (1955), 351-88.

11. Acta Romana, 11 (1948), 299-336, especially at 315-19.

12. See Jesuit Life and Ministry Today: The Decrees of the 31st-35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus, ed. John W. Padberg (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009), pp. 81-89, at 87-89.

13. See *ibid.*, pp. 168-80.

14. See *ibid.*, pp. 330 (nos. 176-77) and 294-95.

15. See *ibid.*, pp. 467, 468.

16.4. See *ibid.*, pp. 626-32 and 662.

17. See *ibid.*, pp. 667-72, at 669.

18. See *ibid.*, p 752 (no. 83/3).

19. See *ibid.*, pp. 822-25, at 824.

20. See *ibid.*, pp. 147-52, at 152. See also my “On Priesthood: Two Traditions,” in *A Concert of Charisms: Ordained Ministry in Religious Life*, ed. Paul K. Hennessy (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), pp. 9-24, or, a more lengthy treatment, “Priesthood, Ministry, and Religious Life: Some Historical and Historiographical Considerations,” *Theological Studies*, 49 (1988), 223-57.

21. See my article, “Jesuit History: A New Hot Topic,” *America* (May 9, 2005), pp. 8-11, and from a broader perspective, “The Historiography of the Society of Jesus: Where Does It Stand Today?” in *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773*, ed. John W. O’Malley, et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 3-37.