

## PSYCHOANALYTIC HAGIOGRAPHY: THE CASE OF IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

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**T**RADITIONAL HAGIOGRAPHY is a form of biography that has its own special style, intents, and purposes. The biographer most often has a spiritual or theological frame of reference, and aims at edification or some doctrinal emphasis. Traditional hagiography, therefore, is more often than not embedded in a religious matrix that selects, focuses, and articulates the relevant elements in the biographical account of the saint and his works that are pertinent to that context and intentionality.

The approach I will be describing here strikes a rather different emphasis. The psychoanalytic approach does not attempt to write the life of a saint, but rather the life of a man who happened to become a saint. The shift in emphasis brings with it modifications in methodology, approach, and emphases; it selects different data from the wealth of information about the saint's life and times, even from his spiritual works and teachings. The reason is that what is relevant to the understanding of the theological or spiritual meaning of the saint's life may not be meaningful to the psychological understanding of the human dimension of his spiritual torments and triumphs. The psychoanalytic hagiographer is less interested in the spiritual or religious aspects of the saint's accomplishments than he is in the fundamental human motivations, conflicts, developmental influences, goals, intentions, and purposes that determined the course of the saint's spiritual journey.

When the psychoanalyst enters the world of history or biography, he enters an unfamiliar, foreign territory, in which all the usual and familiar landmarks that he has habitually used to guide his explorations are missing. While he is used to dealing with a living, talking, and responding subject, he now finds confronting him all the obscurities and opacities of the historical process. The immediacy of the psychoanalytic situation is replaced by the distant removal and the concealing veil of time. Instead of the vitality and spontaneity of a patient's associations, he is met with the residues of history: faceless facts, dates, names, monuments, and the infinitely obscure impenetrability of documents. One can only conclude that the project before us is fraught with pitfalls of many kinds.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The pitfalls were amply demonstrated in Freud's ventures into psychobiography, especially his attempt to analyze Leonardo da Vinci ("Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood" [1910], *Standard Edition* 11), and his ill-fated participation in the Wilson

## PSYCHOBIOGRAPHY

The alliance between psychoanalysis and biography has never been an easy or comfortable one. Ever since William Langer's<sup>2</sup> epochal presidential address to the American Historical Association, in which he challenged his fellow historians to lay down a more psychologically meaningful basis for their explorations into the motives and behaviors of historical subjects, the reaction among historians has been at best mixed, at worst hostile. Jacques Barzun,<sup>3</sup> for one, argues that, even if the project could be carried out with thorough documentation, the result would not be a new kind of history, but rather a restatement, with the substitution of technical for common terms.

Certainly the application of psychoanalysis to any context outside of the clinical is problematic, including its applications to history. Freud himself was quick to sound a cautionary note: "... we should have to be very cautious and not forget that, after all, we are only dealing with analogies and that it is dangerous, not only with men but also with concepts, to tear them from the sphere in which they have originated and been evolved."<sup>4</sup> The simple fact is that psychoanalytic understanding and ideas flourish and do their best service in the context of concrete clinical experience; when they leave that fertile field they begin to pale and grow weak.

The data of analytic investigation are subtle, hidden, and masked behind the veil of manifest content. The causal links are nowhere immediate or evident. The proof rests on a gestalt of facts, opinions, reactions, behaviors in various contexts, comments in letters and other writings—in other words a whole congeries of data that only gradually begins to take on meaning and consistency in the light of the given hypothesis. No single fact or connection will validate the hypothesis; but it begins to take on meaning and relevance in the light of the total complex of facts, data, and their integrating interpretations. Freud faced a similar problem in trying to account for the validity of dream interpretations:

The analyst, too, may himself retain a doubt of the same kind in some particular instances. What makes him certain in the end is precisely the complication of the problem before him, which is like the solution of a jig-saw puzzle. A coloured picture, pasted upon a thin sheet of wood and fitting exactly into a wooden frame,

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biography (W. C. Bullitt and S. Freud, *Thomas Woodrow Wilson: A Psychological Study* [Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1966]).

<sup>2</sup> W. L. Langer, "The Next Assignment," *American Historical Review* 63 (1958) 283-304.

<sup>3</sup> J. Barzun, *Clio and the Doctors: Psycho-History, Quanto-History and History* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1974).

<sup>4</sup> S. Freud, "Civilization and its Discontents" (1930), *Standard Edition* 21, 144.

is cut into a large number of pieces of the most irregular and crooked shapes. If one succeeds in arranging the confused heap of fragments, each of which bears upon it an unintelligible piece of drawing, so that the picture acquires a meaning, so that there is no gap anywhere in the design and so that the whole fits into the frame—if all these conditions are fulfilled, then one knows that one has solved the puzzle and that there is no alternative solution.<sup>5</sup>

Solid ground for the historian's search for historical fact? No. Meaningful ground for the need to search out some psychological understanding? Possibly. The gestalt achieves coherence and provides meaning or it doesn't, but disproof is more complex than the disconfirmation of historical facts. It requires a piece by piece dismantling of the gestalt, so that when enough of the pieces have been removed the hypothesis lacks the necessary support and so collapses. The degree of openness to scrutiny of this process depends on the specificity of the hypothesis, the validity of the relevant data, and the construction of the psychological argument in terms of which they are integrated. The process, so conceived, is not unlike the methodological technique of the psychoanalyst in his work with the history and meaning of his patient's life. The critical point here has been articulated by Bruce Mazlish, who comments:

In sum, psychohistorical inquiry helps us to understand the "meaning" of an event, but does not—in fact, cannot—offer us a simple causal explanation of it. It follows directly that history cannot be *reduced* to psychoanalytic explanation. . . . [P]sychoanalysis adds to other explanations in history; it is no substitute for them. . . . The results should not stand in contradiction to the results of historical investigation; they may complement those findings and understandings, they may cast them in a somewhat different light, they may give rise to a more nuanced and variable interpretation, but they never can contradict established historical facts. Without such facts, the psychohistorical hypotheses are empty vessels without meaning and content.<sup>6</sup>

If there is legitimacy in the enterprise, there are also significant difficulties. None of the materials that the historical process or the biography offers can serve the psychobiographer without being shaped by his interpretation. His work consists in bringing to bear an interpretive schema based on his clinical knowledge and experience and drawn from his psychological theory—in this case psychoanalysis—to yield hypotheses and interpretations that will lend meaning and add a significant dimension to the understanding of the subject's personality and behavior

<sup>5</sup> S. Freud, "Remarks on the Theory and Practice of Dream-Interpretation" (1923), *Standard Edition* 19, 116.

<sup>6</sup> B. Mazlish, "Group Psychology and the Problems of Contemporary History" (1968), in G. Cocks and T. L. Crosby, eds. *Psycho/History: Readings in the Method of Psychology, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New Haven: Yale Univ., 1987) 225–36, at 232.

as they came to fulfillment in the course of that individual's life. It is in the interface between biographical fact and psychological interpretation that the risks and the pitfalls of this approach lie. Since the psychoanalyst is always at pains to discern the latent meaning behind the manifest content, he parts company with the biographer whose concern is to establish facts.

Problems arise in the selection of data, in the combination of events into recognizable patterns, in the omission or underemphasis of aspects that do not fit the putative hypothesis, in proposing false connections, in mistaking conjectural hypothesis for historical fact, in allowing one's own attitudes or feelings about the subject to contaminate or influence the process of judgment or interpretation. The risk of fitting the data to the hypothesis by inappropriate selection or omission runs high. Keeping in mind that the psychobiographical approach carries with it little explanatory power that would allow it to reach beyond the conjectural, there is an understandable impulse on the part of the investigator to find certainty and a degree of factuality where none exists. Distorting factors can easily enter into the process that push in the direction of trimming the subject and his life to fit the procrustean bed of psychoanalytically generated hypotheses. The subject is trimmed to fit the model, rather than the model being designed to fit the subject and the rich complexity of his biography.<sup>7</sup>

The interpretive aspect in the work of psychobiography carries its own inherent difficulties. Interpretive problems arise from the nature of the data themselves. As Mack has observed:

The problems of unbalanced interpretation or overinterpretation of insufficient psychological and/or historical data are very great indeed. The available data may be insufficient from which to draw interpretive conclusions, may be unsuitable for interpretation except speculatively . . . or may equally well be interpreted differently with no confirmation or contradiction possible as in psychoanalytic treatment.<sup>8</sup>

There is always question of what can be explained and how. There is always danger in an attempt to determine states of mind or feeling that are not evident in the historical material. Genetic reconstructions are also risky, even when they have a plausibility confirmed by clinical knowledge. The biographer is on safer ground when he works from what

<sup>7</sup> J. E. Mack. "Psychoanalysis and Historical Biography," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* (henceforth *JAPA*) 19 (1971) 143-79.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 175.

is known about the background or development of his subject to its determinable consequences in later and historically relevant contexts.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to these cautionary notes, the application of psychopathological models brings its own burden of difficulties with it. Lifton has scored the tension between the historical and the pathological paradigms. He cautions that "When this second paradigm dominates, psychopathology becomes a substitute for the psychohistorical interface. The psychopathological idiom for individual development . . . becomes extended to the point where it serves as the idiom for history, or psychohistory. When this happens there is, once more, no history."<sup>10</sup> The risk here seems to be primarily reductive, i.e. the need in the psychological observer to see his subject in terms of the pathological models that are his stock-in-trade. There is a particular trap in bringing the resources of pathological models to the study of the inner lives of the saints. Many spiritual experiences, especially those with a mystical stamp, deviate from the normal and often carry within them elements that border on the pathological. The view through the psychopathological lens can become distortive and reductive; it may filter out aspects of the subject's character and personality that are less than congruent with the model, even when it allows a clearer insight into the pathological aspects of the character.

#### THE PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH

But the matter is by no means simple. The basic difficulties the psychoanalyst faces in this enterprise can be described under two headings: methodological and interpretive. In terms of method, psychoanalysts generally do better with living patients than dead ones. The psychoanalytic method is intended for doing therapy with a patient lying on the couch, breathing, moving, associating freely, talking, thinking, developing resistances and transferences, interacting with the analyst in the task of self-discovery and self-understanding. Analyst and patient are engaged in a mutual effort to seek that truth about the patient and his life that will set him free from the chains of his neurosis or characterological difficulties. In this arena of human experience, the analyst is trained and experienced to do his work.

What happens when the putative patient is dead—and five centuries dead at that! All that is available are the residues of a life, dead residues that conceal as much or more than they reveal. All the myriad documents

<sup>9</sup> J. M. Woods, "Some Considerations on Psycho-History" (1974), in Cocks and Crosby, *Psycho/History* 109–20.

<sup>10</sup> R. J. Lifton, "On Psychohistory," in R. J. Lifton and E. Olson, eds., *Explorations in Psychohistory: The Wellfleet Papers* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974) 21–41, at 26.

from the life of Ignatius of Loyola have been collected and meticulously edited into the massive many-volumed *Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu*<sup>11</sup> with the kind of care and devotion you would expect from the best of Jesuit scholarship. Not too many biographers would complain about having all that valuable material gathered on one shelf in the library—a long shelf, but all in one place.

But the psychoanalyst's task is not simply biographical; he is not interested in merely establishing and validating the facts of his subject's life. The task he sets himself lies beyond biography. He seeks to see beyond the details of a life into the heart and mind of the man who stands behind the life. Here is where the real difficulties arise. How is he to do that when his subject is dead and can be reached only through these lifeless and opaque residues? Needless to say, he cannot even begin his attempt, if the work of biography, i.e. the historical work of validating and reconstructing the details of the life in question, has not been effectively and well done. The psychobiographer depends on the work of the biographer and without it can do nothing.

The details of Ignatius' life are well established, as well as one can hope. There are the inevitable gaps and omissions that plague any biography or history—one always wants to know more, and many details cannot be ascertained with certainty—but as much of the history as can be known and established has been. But this much provides only guideposts along the way, nodal points at which the psychobiographical account can gain a more solid historical footing. In between these points, the footing is treacherous and tentative. The work of psychobiography is necessarily more interpretive than historical, more concerned with hidden motives and meanings than with facts and historical details. Establishing and validating facts requires a methodology of its own; therein lies the claim of history and biography. Substantiating the claims of psychological interpretation requires a distinctly different method, and therein lies the difference between biography and psychobiography.

The analyst's contribution must take the rather limited form of looking at the historical data through the lens of his analytic theories as the distillation of his clinical experience. His effort deviates significantly from the usual work of the historian or biographer. Their interest is in unearthing and verifying the facts of the historical record in the first moment, and then in weaving these data into a more or less factual account. I say more or less, because even the biographer has to deal with

<sup>11</sup> Henceforth MHSJ. This monumental series consisting of nearly a hundred volumes was begun in 1894 and continues to the present. The project was moved from Madrid to Rome in 1929 where it is published under the auspices of the *Institutum Historicum Societatis Jesu*. Most of the material in these volumes is based on manuscripts kept in the Archives of the Society of Jesus in Rome.

the problem of gaps and omissions from the historical record. Most historians have come to recognize that the Rankean *wie es eigentlich gewesen ist* represents an outmoded ideal never fully realized. Gaps must be filled even in the objective historical record. In this enterprise correspondence and coherence play their complementary roles in the search for historical truth.

The analyst approaches the given historical data, viewing them through the lens of his theory, seeking to gain some degree of congruence between the emergent patterns of the data and the dictates of his theoretical perspective. His clinical concepts are but empty vessels that he seeks to fill with reliable data and content. The problem is complicated by the nature of the data. They are remote, lifeless, riddled with gaps and omissions—faceless buildings, monuments, documents. None of them convey any meaning, particularly any psychologically relevant meaning, without interpretation. Even personal documents such as letters, written for the eyes of an addressee, can conceal more than they reveal. They must be read within a specific historical context and set of conditions that qualify the meaning of the text. They are in a sense public documents, and the question of the audience intended in the writing, beyond the immediate eyes of the recipient, always lurks in the background. And in all such precipitates of the flow of a human life and experience, there remains the issue of what is not said, not included in a given document. Since the analyst's target in all this is not historical fact, but personal meaning and motive, the concealment factor looms very large indeed, since motives are by their very nature, especially unconscious motives, in large measure concealed even from the subject himself. Or if one could resurrect him, he might tell us what he thinks his real motives were, much as our analytic patients do in their analytic hours; but the account would be misleading and faulty, much as it is in the course of a typical analytic exploration. The unconscious does not yield its secrets so easily.

I have hinted already at the importance of the biographer's attitudes and feelings about his subject. This is the issue of countertransference in the biographical process, undoubtedly one of the major distorting influences in the work of the psychobiographer. Completely objective and dispassionate engagement in the life of any biographical subject is impossible. Unavoidably, significant motivations enter into the very process of choosing to write a biography, and into the choice of a particular subject. In addition, as the biographer delves more deeply and learns more and more about his individual subject, transferences from his own inner psychic world come into play that are unavoidable. The vulnerability of the method to these sources of distortion or coloring of the data is greatest at those points where the gaps in the material must be filled, or where the interpretation of certain behaviors or patterns of behavior

come under interpretive scrutiny. The burden of the interpretation in such instances rests not only on the slender substratum of the theoretical perspective, but on the treacherous footing of potential transferential misreadings or attributions of significance that can be sustained only on subjective grounds. The biographical subject can in such cases become an object of projective modifications that tell us more about the biographer than about his subject. This is without doubt the place where Erikson's "disciplined subjectivity" finds its most telling application.<sup>12</sup>

Freud's comments on this subject, made on the occasion of his receiving the Goethe Prize, have a certain bearing:

I am prepared for the reproach that we analysts have forfeited the right to place ourselves under the patronage of Goethe because we have offended against the respect due to him by trying to apply analysis to him himself: we have degraded the great man to the position of an object of analytic investigation. But I would dispute at once that any degradation is intended or implied by this. . . . It is true that the biographer does not want to depose his hero, but he does want to bring him nearer to us. That means, however, reducing the distance that separates him from us. . . . And it is unavoidable that as we learn more about a great man's life we shall also hear of occasions on which he has in fact done no better than we, has in fact come near to us as a human being.<sup>13</sup>

The risks are particularly meaningful when the subject is a profoundly religious figure, a great saint and mystic. The psychoanalytic method has nothing to say about the theological or spiritual dimension of religious experience. If the theologian allows that St. Ignatius was the recipient of great mystical graces and that the miraculous course of his inspired saintly career was the work of God's grace guiding and inspiring him at every step of the way, on this subject the psychoanalyst has nothing to say, neither Yea nor Nay. That interpretation lies beyond his ken, beyond the scope of his methodology and theory. The psychoanalyst is concerned only with those aspects of his subject that reflect basically human motivation and connections of psychic meaning, whether the patterns of behavior have religious or spiritual meaning or not.

His method and his perspective do not include the theological nor the spiritual. If he is wise he will leave those considerations to theologians and spiritual writers. He is not concerned with any actions, effects, or purposes of God. He is in no position to deny or exclude them; he is simply not interested in them since his approach has nothing to say about them. He is interested in determining what can be learned about

<sup>12</sup> E. H. Erikson, "On the Nature of Psychohistorical Evidence: In Search of Gandhi" (1974), in Lifton and Olson, *Explorations* 42-77.

<sup>13</sup> S. Freud, "The Goethe Prize" (1930), *Standard Edition* 21, 205-12, at 210-12.



the human motives and dynamic intrapsychic forces and conflicts that may have come into play at various points in the great saint's career.

Thus the approach of psychoanalytic hagiography may be regarded as reductive, but in no sense is it intended to be reductionistic. It is reductive insofar as it focuses only on certain aspects of Ignatius' life and personality, those that can be delineated and encompassed in strictly and specifically psychoanalytic terms. But the resulting account is not meant to be exclusive, nor to replace or substitute for a more spiritual or theological reading. We may conclude on these grounds that there is no necessary opposition or contraindication between the intrapsychic interpretations of a psychoanalytic hagiography and interpretations based in spiritual or theological perspectives. If the result is to allow us to see with some greater degree of clarity the human side of Ignatius, his inner psychic needs and conflicts, his hopes and desires, and the forces that drove him to the extremes of spiritual devotion and the heights of mystical experience, the enterprise will be well worth the effort.

#### THE IGNATIAN MATERIAL

When we turn to the life of St. Ignatius of Loyola, none of these difficulties can be minimized. First, there is the material on which we might base our appraisal. Our man is not only dead, but dead for going on four-and-a-half centuries. He first saw the light of day half a millennium ago. Our view through the murky mists of such a distance must be beclouded and uncertain.

The material related to Ignatius' life and career is considerable. There are copious documents: his own writings, and testimonies of various sorts offered by many who worked and lived with him. His writings include (1) the little book of the *Spiritual Exercises*,<sup>14</sup> perhaps his main contribution to the Church and history; (2) the magnificent document of the *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus,<sup>15</sup> the magisterial legislation that has guided the fortunes of the Society over the centuries and has become the model for constitutions of religious orders of men and women the world over; (3) the incomparable treasure of his own autobiography;<sup>16</sup> and (4) the voluminous correspondence that Ignatius carried on during the years of his generalship,<sup>17</sup> including letters and instructions to his fellow Jesuits, and letters to countless numbers of the great and mighty, as well as the poor and humble, of this world who were involved with the

<sup>14</sup> The material pertaining to Ignatius' life and work in the MHSJ is contained in a series of volumes designated as the Monumenta Ignatiana (henceforth MI). The *Spiritual Exercises* are found in MI, series 2, vol. 1 (Madrid, 1919).

<sup>15</sup> MI, series 3 (4 vols.; Rome, 1934-48).

<sup>16</sup> MI, series 4; Fontes Narrativi, vol. 1 (Rome, 1943).

<sup>17</sup> MI, series 1 (12 vols.; Madrid, 1903-11).

far-flung fortunes of the Society. There is also (5) his *Spiritual Journal*<sup>18</sup> that records some of his spiritual and mystical experiences during the period in Rome. Finally there are even detailed documents from the canonization process in which the life of Ignatius was examined and documented to establish his claim to sanctification.

Starting even in Ignatius' lifetime, especially during his career in Rome as General of the Society of Jesus, the process of collecting and arranging material pertinent to his life had already begun. Especially instrumental in inaugurating this process was his faithful secretary Juan de Polanco, who over the years collected in his *Chronicon*<sup>19</sup> his own recollections of life with Ignatius, and busied himself later on in gathering narrative accounts from the first companions of Ignatius and others who had extensive dealings with him. These have been collected into the *Fontes Narrativi*.<sup>20</sup> These accounts are of inestimable value in historical terms, but their value for the purposes of psychobiography is limited. They are highly personal accounts, based on memory with all its precarious deficits of retrospective distortion, selection, omissions, and all colored by the rampant idealizing transferences that seem to have affected many who had dealings with Ignatius.

The most valuable of such biographical accounts is that written by da Camara, who persuaded Ignatius to tell him his life story toward the end of his life. If we presume that the account was faithfully recorded by da Camara, how much can we rely on an account that came from Ignatius' own lips? Because of its authenticity and because it is the best source we have, we would have to rely on it as a primary source, but with a grain of salt. Why? First, the autobiography was dictated years after the events, and we have no reason to imagine that Ignatius' memory was any better than yours or mine. At many points he is honest enough to say that his recollection is shaky or uncertain, or that he simply does not remember, but those were points at which he was aware that his memory could be faulty. There were undoubtedly many more points at which his memory may have been faulty and he not aware of it. Next, we cannot be sure of the degree of retrospective distortion that could have entered into the account.<sup>21</sup> At best his autobiography remains open to the charge of

<sup>18</sup> MI, series 4, vol. 1. (Rome, 1934).

<sup>19</sup> J. A. de Polanco, S.J., *Chronicon Societatis Iesu* (6 vols.; Madrid, 1894-98).

<sup>20</sup> MHSJ, MI Series 4 (4 vols.; revised ed.; Rome, 1943-60).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. L. Silos, S.J., "Cardoner in the Life of St. Ignatius of Loyola," *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 33 (1964) 3-43. Silos indicates that the *Autobiography* was not a simple straightforward narration, but a discerned account: "The author of the rules of discernment is at work sifting, interpreting, controlling, confirming the events, the thoughts, the motions in his soul from the fateful day when a cannon ball ended a career and initiated the pilgrimage which began at Pamplona and was to end in Rome. The Autobiography is not a

retrospective distortion that could unconsciously select and shape his memory and his recounting of events to fit the identity he had evolved through the course of his life, a model of himself as saint and founder.<sup>22</sup>

Lastly, we can only guess at what was omitted from the account, either in the service of this same motive, or simply out of poor memory, or even by repressive forces that would have declared certain episodes to be insignificant and would have prevented others from even coming to mind. There is no reason to suggest that Ignatius was trying to pull the wool over anyone's eyes—he is forthcoming about what he saw as his own imperfections and limitations—but he was human, and he had an unconscious that could play as many effective tricks on him as ours does on us.

The other materials are the public documents, the monuments that Ignatius has left us as testimonies to his work in the vineyard of the Lord. First there is the *Spiritual Exercises*. These exercises are the distillation of his spiritual teaching and, taken as expressions of Ignatius' deepest and most personal insights and convictions, are perhaps the most revealing and telling of all. Although there are uncertainties regarding the time and place of their composition, there is no doubt that they are the authentic work of Ignatius and no one else. Next there are the *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus. These were the fruit of intensive labor during the years of his generalship. How much of the actual text is from Ignatius remains uncertain, since Polanco and perhaps to a minor degree others may have contributed something. But there is nothing in the documents that was not studied and approved by Ignatius or that fails to reflect his mind and heart. But these *Constitutions* are formal, legal documents that conceal more than they reveal about their author. Their tone is abstract and impersonal; only by reading between the lines might we discern anything about the man who stands behind them.

Lastly there is the mountain of letters and instructions that Ignatius wrote or dictated during the course of his years as general. They number

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simple narration of a life. It is the history of God's actions in a soul—discerned" (7-8). Moreover, the mind set of the narrator is that every step along the way, every episode, every action and reaction, was dictated and guided by the hand of the Lord, drawing him along the predestined path of spiritual growth and glory.

<sup>22</sup> The uncritical acceptance of whatever appears in the autobiography as accurate and reliable has been scored as "Jesuit fundamentalism." See P. E. Endean, S.J., "Who Do You Say Ignatius Is? Jesuit Fundamentalism and Beyond," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* (St. Louis: Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality, 1987). Endean emphasizes that the available documents provide us with no more than a filtered history—filtered through the fallible memories and biases of a small group of witnesses. As a result, our knowledge of the events of Ignatius' life are severely limited and, due to retrospective distortion, the accounts we have do not present the "events-in-themselves."

nearly seven thousand,<sup>23</sup> addressed to fellow Jesuits, dealing with matters of governance in the Society, and to kings and queens, princes and princesses, counts and countesses, dukes and duchesses, nobility of all ranks, to popes, bishops, cardinals, to priests and nuns, to fellow religious, and to large numbers of lay people. But these too are exclusively public documents that, with rare exceptions, draw a veil across the personal and inner life of their writer and present a public *persona*—always tactful, devout, courtly in manner and gracious in tone, dispensing spiritual counsel and wisdom. In these letters we can recognize that the courtier, the diplomat, the noble *hidalgo*, raised by blood, tradition, and training to move with ease among the highest levels of society and church, was still very much alive and well.

The psychoanalytic lens, therefore, is necessarily very selective and partial in what it brings into focus. If a pattern of meaning and motivation can be discerned in the life of Ignatius that can be demonstrated and explained in completely natural and human terms, in terms of the resources of psychoanalytic theory, what does that imply for the relevance of a more theologically attuned understanding? From the perspective of the methodological difficulties, the disparity in points of view poses a problem, since the prevailing mood of the accounts of the saint's life, and even the source materials themselves, have been contaminated by what I choose to call the "hagiographic bias," i.e. the persistent tendency in all of the material related to Ignatius' life to see and interpret it in the highest spiritual terms. All the early accounts and biographies are so colored by a kind of idealization and admiration for the extraordinary qualities of this spiritual giant, that we lose sight of the man. These accounts were not interested in the inner psychological dimensions of the man. One recent student of Ignatius' life has written:

But even when a judgment according to purely naturalistic principles does not lead to such a one-sided view, it requires little reflection to see that whenever the supernatural guidance of God's grace is perceived and acknowledged, greater justice is done to a saint and we receive a more comprehensive view of the reality than when only the natural conditions and forces are examined. Even a lack of psychological analysis may be admissible as long as one sees and correctly portrays the workings of God in the saint.<sup>24</sup>

Nor is there any effort, given the style of the times, to see his career in any but the most spiritual and theological terms. Even the most definitive

<sup>23</sup> D. Bertrand, S.J., (*La politique de S. Ignace de Loyola* [Paris: Cerf, 1985]) counts some 6,815 such letters.

<sup>24</sup> H. Becher, S.J., "Ignatius as Seen by His Contemporaries," in *Ignatius of Loyola: His Personality and Spiritual Heritage, 1556-1956* (ed. F. Wulf, S.J.; St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1977) 69-96, at 70.

biographies in our own time, those of Dudon<sup>25</sup> and Dalmases,<sup>26</sup> are cast along exclusively historico-biographic lines, with no attempt to look within and see the human and dynamic aspects of what Ignatius was experiencing. For Dudon, interpretations take the form of the loftiest spiritual and theological considerations; the hand of God is everywhere. For Dalmases, the spiritual hand is not as heavy, but in whatever minimal effort he makes to interpret, the result is much the same.

#### THE CONVERSION STORY

The conversion experience that Iñigo de Loyola underwent at the castle of Loyola in 1521 was a pivotal event in his life. The circumstances of this profound spiritual experience set the stage for the transformation of the fearless and flamboyant hidalgo and soldier into the humble pilgrim, the man of God, and finally the saint. My approach here will be first to set forth the story, then to discuss the pertinent aspects of the psychology of conversion, and finally to reconstruct the elements that would enter into a psychoanalytic understanding of these events.

A series of historical events had brought Iñigo back to Loyola, the culminating event having been the fateful encounter with the French cannonball at the siege of Pamplona. The bones of one leg had been severely fractured and the other leg injured as well. The defeated warrior was carried over the painful miles to Loyola after the broken bones had been hurriedly set by a French battle surgeon. Once arrived at the castle of Loyola, Iñigo entered on a severely trying series of events. The abuse of the journey had done his broken leg no good. The surgeons, after consultation, decided that the leg should be reoperated and the bones reset. Thirty years later, he recalled this surgery as a "butchery," so severe must have been the pain. As he tell us, "Again he went through this butchery, in which as in all the others that he had suffered he uttered no word, nor gave any sign of pain other than clenching his fists."<sup>27</sup> We must remind ourselves that this was several centuries before the introduction of surgical anesthesia.

His reaction to the surgical insult was not good. His condition grew worse, he lost appetite. He was told that if he showed no improvement, he could expect to die. He made his confession and received the last sacraments. But the hardy Basque was not finished yet. His condition improved on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, and Iñigo later attributed this improvement to his devotion to St. Peter. In any case, within a few days he was judged to be out of danger of death.

<sup>25</sup> P. Dudon, S.J., *St. Ignatius of Loyola* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1949).

<sup>26</sup> C. de Dalmases, S.J., *Ignatius of Loyola: Founder of the Jesuits* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1985).

<sup>27</sup> W. J. Young, S.J., ed., *St. Ignatius' Own Story* (Chicago: Regnery, 1956) 2.

But the ordeal was not over yet. The healing of this second fracture was not very successful. He recalls:

When the bones knit, one below the knee remained astride another which caused a shortening of the leg. The bones so raised caused a protuberance that was not pleasant to the sight. The sick man was not able to put up with this because he had made up his mind to seek his fortune in the world. He thought the protuberance was going to be unsightly and asked the surgeons whether it could not be cut away. They told him that it could be cut away, but that the pain would be greater than all he had already suffered, because it was now healed and it would take some time to cut it off. He determined, nevertheless, to undergo this martyrdom to gratify his own inclinations.<sup>28</sup>

We can imagine that the weeks of pain and immobility took their toll. His health was otherwise good, and he looked for some means of diverting himself. He asked for some of the romances which he favored so, but in the unlettered environs of Loyola none could be found. His sister-in-law, Magdalena, could only offer him the four volumes of the *Life of Jesus Christ* by the Carthusian Ludolph of Saxony and a volume of the lives of the saints, commonly called the *Flos Sanctorum*, which had been in circulation on the Spanish peninsula since about 1480.

What follows is a most crucial phase in the transformation that was to be wrought in Iñigo de Loyola. We can best follow the account in his own words.

By the frequent reading of these books he conceived some affection for what he found there narrated. Pausing in his reading, he gave himself up to thinking over what he had read. At other times he dwelt on the things of the world which formerly had occupied his thoughts. . . . Nevertheless, our Lord came to his assistance, for He saw to it that these thoughts were succeeded by others which sprang from the things he was reading. In reading the Life of our Lord and the Lives of the Saints, he paused to think and reason with himself. "Suppose that I should do what St. Francis did, what St. Dominic did?" He thus let his thoughts run over many things that seemed good to him, always putting before himself things that were difficult and important which seemed to him easy to accomplish when he proposed them. But all his thought was to tell himself "St. Dominic did this, therefore, I must do it. St. Francis did this, therefore, I must do it." These thoughts also lasted a good while. And then other things taking their place, the worldly thoughts above mentioned came upon him and remained a long time with him. This succession of diverse thoughts was of long duration, and they were either of worldly achievements which he desired to accomplish, or those of God which took hold of his imagination to such an extent, that worn out with the struggle, he turned them all aside and gave his attention to other things. . . .

He acquired no little light from this reading and began to think more seriously

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 4.

of his past life and the great need he had of doing penance for it. It was during this reading that these desires of imitating the saints came to him, but with no further thought of circumstances than of promising to do with God's grace what they had done. . . .<sup>29</sup>

At this juncture, there occurred a critical experience that seems to have been the central event in Iñigo's conversion experience. I refer to the vision of Our Lady holding the Christ Child. It is worth recalling Iñigo's account in his own words:

One night, as he lay awake, he saw clearly the likeness of our Lady with the Holy Child Jesus, at the sight of which he received most abundant consolation for a considerable interval of time. He felt so great a disgust with his past life, especially with its offenses of the flesh, that he thought all such images which had formerly occupied his mind were wiped out. And from that hour until August of 1553, when this is being written, he never again consented to the least suggestion of the flesh.<sup>30</sup>

This vision had a powerful psychic impact conveyed in the intense emotional reactions he describes. Even more impressive, however, is the dramatic elimination of all temptations of the flesh that seemed to have followed in its wake. These experiences cry out for psychological understanding.

This brief autobiographical account is substantially all that is known about the remarkable series of events which constituted the transformation of Iñigo de Loyola from the proud and gallant *hidalgo* into a man filled with the desire of serving God. His heart was inflamed with the desire to imitate the saintly warriors of God whose heroic deeds he had been reading. He would retreat to the desert and live on herbs like the holy hermits. He would turn his back on the world and its pleasures and devote himself to fasts, flagellations, and penances like God's heroes. He first thought of devoting himself to a life of solitude, silence, and prayer among the monks of Cuevas. Then he felt the urge to wander as a poor pilgrim through the world, begging for his sustenance and bearing the contempt of men. His model would be Il Poverello, to whom God had spoken: "Francis, take the bitter things for sweet, and despise thyself, if thou really desirest to know me."

#### THE CONVERSION PHENOMENON

We are interested in exploring this intriguing series of events and trying to find in them the inner meaning which can illumine for us their psychological significance.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 6-9.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 10.

The conversion phenomenon has been a subject of psychological and psychiatric interest for nearly a century. Writing at the turn of the century, William James summarized much of what was then known and thought about religious conversion in his *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. James describes the symptoms: "a sense of incompleteness and imperfections; brooding, depression, morbid introspection, and sense of sin; anxiety about the hereafter; distress over doubts, and the like." And he adds: "And the result is the same—a happy relief and objectivity, as the confidence in self gets greater through the adjustment of the faculties to the wider outlook. In spontaneous religious awakening . . . we may also meet with mystical experiences, astonishing subjects by their suddenness, just as in revivalistic conversion."<sup>31</sup>

James emphasized the polar elements in the mental state of the potential subject of conversion. The first element is the sense of sinfulness or of incompleteness, wrongness, inadequacy, that dominates the individual's consciousness, and from which he seeks escape. The second element is the positive ideal for which the individual yearns and toward which he struggles. In the ordinary run of cases, it is the former, the sense of sinfulness, that dominates the picture, almost becoming an obsession. The process of conversion is thus dominated by the motifs of the escape from sinfulness rather than by the striving towards an ideal. James comments:

A man's conscious wit and will, so far as they strain towards the ideal, are aiming at something only dimly and inaccurately imagined. Yet all the while the forces of mere organic ripening within him are going on towards their own prefigured results, and his conscious strainings are letting loose subconscious allies behind the scenes, which in their way work towards rearrangement; and the rearrangement towards which all these deeper forces tend is pretty surely definite, and definitely different from what he consciously conceives and determines.<sup>32</sup>

Subsequent contributions to the psychological study of conversion have tended to emphasize the psychopathological aspects, particularly the connection with depression, guilt and fear.<sup>33</sup> Individuals experiencing such conversion often felt an inner conviction of sinfulness and failure and a sense of profound incapacity to live up to the demands made by religious ethical commitments. This readily turned into a tormenting fear of damnation and death, or expressed itself in the form of depression, brooding, and endless self-examination.

Other writers recognized forces working toward rearrangement of the

<sup>31</sup> W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) (New York: Collier, 1961) 167.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 174–5.

<sup>33</sup> C. J. Ducasse, *A Philosophical Scrutiny of Religion* (New York: Ronald, 1953).



personality at a more or less subconscious level. Usually, the convert feels that his basic sense of himself has been profoundly changed and that he is not an active agent in this alteration, but rather that it has somehow been worked upon him. Thus conversion becomes "a step in the creation of a self—the actual coming-to-be of a self."<sup>34</sup>

Study of the conversion experience has revealed some common predisposing factors.<sup>35</sup> The conversion experience of twenty-two men treated in intensive psychotherapy serves to illuminate a variety of aspects of the conversion experience that may be worth looking at. However, caution is required in extrapolating from such a patient population, since selective factors may be operating that relate to the underlying psychopathology rather than to the phenomenon of the religious conversion itself. In all of these individuals, there was identifiable an unconscious conflict which related to distorted identifications, to a depreciated self-image, and to some degree of psychosexual pathology. Secondly, all of them had experienced a simplistic and fundamentalistic religious belief as a part of their early environment and psychic experience.

The religious conversion experience itself is regarded as a form of transitory, acute, hallucinatory reaction, which is set in the framework of the individual's religious beliefs. This belief system is involved with the individual's unconscious conflicts, while at the same time it serves as a support for a structurally weak ego. On the conscious level, such beliefs can serve to intensify guilt and anxiety. The belief system may also serve to resolve the underlying conflicts and to bring about a solution, which is sometimes successful, sometimes not. In any case, the religious conversion experience can be regarded as an attempt toward reintegration of the ego.

The conversion experience is also associated with certain phenomena that seem to be regressive in character. In these cases, there seems to be a loosening or relaxation of the synthetic capacity of the ego, resulting in a relative degree of internal dissociation and fragmentation that is connected with a sense of estrangement. The onset of the subjective experience of estrangement heralds the initial disintegration of the ego and is often associated with a sense of confusion regarding the self and its identity.<sup>36</sup> The fragmented aspects of the self-organization which are dissociated from their integration with the individual's sense of self are usually dealt with defensively, more often than not by projection. At

<sup>34</sup> G. A. Coe, *The Psychology of Religion*. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1916) 171.

<sup>35</sup> C. W. Christensen, "Religious Conversion," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 9 (1963) 207-16.

<sup>36</sup> W. Conn, *Christian Conversion: A Developmental Interpretation of Autonomy and Surrender* (New York: Paulist, 1986).

times the process of disintegration extends even to the individual's body image and perceptual capacity. Perceptions of the individual's own body or environmental objects will lose their character of familiarity and reality and are experienced as alien. If the confusion increases and the disintegration continues, the person becomes unable to distinguish his own "self" from that which is "nonself," i.e. the distinction between self and objects is regressively lost. This de-differentiation of the self-object differentiation is connected with the acute confusional state seen in the preconversion process; it is usually halted by the religious conversion experience itself.

Prior to the actual conversion experience, there is a period during which the individual is caught up in a struggle with both conscious and unconscious conflict. At its peak intensity, when the conflict threatens the ego with disintegration, there is a tendency for the individual to stop trying actively and consciously to resolve the conflict. The giving-up phenomenon tends to occur immediately before or concurrently with the sense of divine presence. The sense of divine presence may be regarded as a projective phenomenon, but an important aspect is that it may inspire guilt feelings if its assumed dictates are not followed. The guilt may be atoned by acts of expiation or submission.

When the sense of presence was part of the religious conversion experience, the clarity of the experience tended to vary. Some individuals experienced it as a kind of influence, while for others it was the feeling of a distinct other person close by. Inevitably, the sense of psychic presence was related to the individual's concept of God. Christensen felt that the projection involved in the experience of divine presence was related to the defensive projection of the mental representation of the mother. Thus, the surrender and submitting to the will of God has as one of its psychic equivalents the giving up to the demands of the mother on the part of the child. Auditory hallucinations may be a part of this experience of psychic presence and are usually interpreted by the convert as the voice of God.

Further exploration of these instances related the auditory hallucination to unconscious conflicts and particularly to fears of abandonment. With the feeling of submission and the sense of acceptance and conformity to the divine will, there is a sense of sudden understanding accompanied by a feeling of elation. The auditory and sometimes visual hallucination may form a part of this complex experience. The result is a feeling of change within the individual's sense of self, or in the individual's sense of himself in relation to some other important person.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Conn, *Conversion*.

There are four possible solutions to the regressive crisis involved in the conversion experience.<sup>38</sup> (1) In the first case, the conflicts on both an unconscious and conscious level are sufficiently resolved that they can be meaningfully integrated with the functioning ego. The resulting synthesis and solution are compatible with current reality experience and are brought within the adaptive control of the ego. The result is a sense of completeness or totality, as well as a sense of deep understanding within oneself. The release of energies previously bound up in conflict may then become available for more creative, productive, and adaptive use by the ego. With such individuals, the conversion experience becomes a process of growth toward greater personal and spiritual maturity.

(2) In most cases of conversion, however, the strength of the ego seems to be insufficient to synthesize and integrate the underlying conflicts, as though the suppression of more conscious conflicts allows them to gain strength from association with the unconscious conflict and thus become a source of deep psychic threat. Such elements may be responded to by a variety of ego-defense mechanisms, the result often taking the form of a kind of symbolic representation which finds expression in religious terms in the mystical nature of the religious beliefs. While this latter solution does not serve to resolve the conflict in any sense, it does allow for the alleviation of anxiety, thus creating a sense of relief and some understanding. The religious belief system in such cases serves the function of maintaining the repressive barriers and of supporting the ego insofar as any challenge to the belief system will be perceived as a threat and must be defended against. The conversion experience of Loyola seems to reflect elements of both these resolutions.

(3) In cases where the ego lacks sufficient strength to deal with the underlying conflicts in any meaningful terms, the result is often a disintegration of the ego. Reality testing is lost and the individual becomes confused, self-object differentiation is lost and the person becomes acutely disoriented. In the effort to allay the intense and overwhelming anxiety and to maintain some semblance of a sense of self-organization, the person resorts to a fantastic and psychotic symbolic solution in the form of a religious delusion.

(4) In cases of frank psychosis, this may take the form of assuming another fictitious identity, usually that of some well-known religious figure. The assumption of such a religious identity may serve as a nucleus around which subsequent reintegration can take place. The individual may function in terms of this substitute identity until he is able to gain some reintegration in more realistic terms. When this happens, the

<sup>38</sup> Christensen, "Religious Conversion."

delusional system is surrendered. If it does not happen, the psychotic process continues and the delusional system may become chronic.<sup>39</sup>

#### BACKGROUND FACTORS

The religious conversion experienced by Iñigo de Loyola on his bed of convalescence did not take place in a vacuum. A series of determinants played their part in influencing the course of that experience and its consequences. I will try to put in place some of the elements that lend themselves to a psychoanalytic hypothesis regarding his conversion. The points I will focus on are his family background and the family myth it conveyed, the issues surrounding his early maternal deprivation, and the narcissistic quality of his personality structure.

The first salient fact is his birth. Iñigo de Loyola was born the youngest son of one of the most powerful families in the Basque country of northern Spain, loyal supporters of the kings of Castile, who by their heroics and unstinting valor had won many tributes and privileges from the crown of Castile over many generations. He was born to a life of wealth, influence, and power. The family traditions were rich with legends of valor, heroism, courage, ambition, power, and strength. This constituted a kind of family mythology that carried with it a constellation of beliefs, values, and expectations to which the young Loyola was exposed from the beginning and which became part of the very fabric of his existence and his sense of self. The family myth was not only lived by his father and brothers, but was assimilated and internalized in powerful and decisive ways by this youngest son of the Loyolas. It provided the core elements of his preconversion ego-ideal.

The next salient fact we know about him is that soon after his birth his mother died. The baby was put out to be nursed by a local peasant woman who raised him until his seventh year when, on the occasion of his brother Martin's marriage to Doña Magdalena, he returned to the bosom of the Loyola castle where he lived until his sixteenth year.<sup>40</sup> These early events cause hardly a ripple in the historical record, but to the psychoanalytic eye they loom large with potential significance. The

<sup>39</sup> Conn, *Conversion*.

<sup>40</sup> The custom of wet-nursing was quite common in even late medieval times, especially among the aristocracy. The extended period of separation in Iñigo's case might have been due to conditions in the castle, where there seems to have been no woman of the house until the arrival of Magdalena de Araoz in 1498. In many such cases, alienation was unavoidable. A certain Fra Bernardino told his parishioners in a sermon: "You give your child to be suckled by a sow where he picks up the habits of his nurse. . . . And when he comes home you cry, 'I know not whom you are like; this is no son of ours!'" (F. Gies and J. Gies, *Marriage and the Family in the Middle Ages* [New York: Harper and Row, 1987] 285).

early loss of a parent is an event of extreme importance that can cast a long shadow across the life course of any child. The process of mourning of a lost object involves the capacity for tolerance of painful affects, the ability to meet repeated demands for reality testing in the face of powerful wishes, and other more developed ego functions that a young child would not yet have acquired. In this view, preadolescent children do not mourn, or if they do mourn it is in some partial and incomplete fashion.<sup>41</sup>

Nonetheless, the impact of maternal deprivation on young infants has been extensively documented. Spitz's work has examined the effects of maternal deprivation in producing anaclitic depressions, hospitalism, and even marasmus in children.<sup>42</sup> But the mourning process in children is similar to that in adults. The difference lies in the fact that for adults the purpose is to detach memories, hopes, and wishes from the dead object, while in children the process has the opposite goal: "to avoid the acceptance of the reality and emotional meaning of the death and to maintain in some internal form the relationship that has been ended in external reality."<sup>43</sup> Wolfenstein<sup>44</sup> described a pattern of denial, overtly or unconsciously, of the finality of the loss, thus allowing the hopeful fantasies of reunion and restitution to persist unabated. Such patients tend to develop elaborate fantasies in which the lost parent is idealized and glorified; this is one of the major outcomes of early parental loss. But the parental image is no longer that of the parent as he was known in life, but the glorified parent of early childhood who is now perpetuated in fantasy, most often unconscious fantasy.<sup>45</sup>

There are also long-term sequelae of this syndrome of loss-and-restitution.<sup>46</sup> As Wolfenstein<sup>47</sup> reports, such patients are often caught in a life-long effort to maintain the denial and rewrite the tragedy with a

<sup>41</sup> M. Wolfenstein, "How is Mourning Possible?" *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* (henceforth *PSC*) 21 (1966) 93-123; idem, "Loss, Rage and Repetition," *PSC* 24 (1969) 432-60; G. Rochlin, *Griefs and Discontents: The Forces of Change* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1965); J. Fleming and S. Altschul, "Activation of Mourning and Growth by Psychoanalysis," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 44 (1963) 419-32; H. Deutsch, "The Absence of Grief," in *Neuroses and Character Types* (New York: International Universities, 1937) 226-36.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. the studies of R. A. Spitz: "Hospitalism," *PSC* 1 (1945) 53-74; "Hospitalism: A Follow-up Report," *PSC* 2 (1946) 113-17; "The Psychogenic Diseases in Infancy," *PSC* 6 (1951) 255-75; and *The First Year of Life*. (New York: International Universities, 1965). Cf. also A. J. Solnit, "A Study of Object Loss in Infancy," *PSC* 25 (1970) 257-72.

<sup>43</sup> J. B. M. Miller, "Children's Reactions to the Death of a Parent: A Review of the Psychoanalytic Literature," *JAPA* 19 (1971) 697-719.

<sup>44</sup> Wolfenstein, "Loss" (see n. 41).

<sup>45</sup> Miller, "Children's Reactions" (see n. 43).

<sup>46</sup> Rochlin, *Griefs*; J. Birtchnell, I. C. Wilson, O. Bratfos, et al., *Effects of Early Parent Death* (New York: MSS Information Corp., 1973).

happier ending, acting out symbolic repetitions of the loss of the parent again and again in the unsuccessful attempt to master the trauma of loss. The other important long-term consequence of such early loss is the powerful motif of identification with the dead parent. As Birtchnell wrote in his review of the effects of early parental death, "Identification with the lost object is a feature of adult grief, but in children it is commoner and usually takes a more dramatic form. . . . Identification occurs irrespective of the sex of the parent lost. Such a reaction is probably an attempt to deny the loss."<sup>48</sup> The identification may also take the form of an identification with the state of death itself, reflecting an unconscious wish to achieve reunion with the lost parent.

These dynamic elements continue to play themselves out throughout the course of the individual's adult life. Loss becomes inextricably bound with damage to self-esteem.<sup>49</sup> The need for restitution may become a dominating force in the patient's unconscious and may take the form of various unconsciously dictated enactments and may impair the development of the child's capacity for object relationships. In many cases there are also significant anniversary reactions that may take the form of the exacerbation of emotional or psychosomatic symptoms on the anniversary of significant childhood losses.<sup>50</sup> Psychiatric research in this area tends to confirm the association of early maternal deprivation through death, divorce, or separation with relatively severe forms of lifelong psychopathology,<sup>51</sup> although there are some indications that in addition to the loss of the mother the quality of home life and childrearing afterwards may also play a critical role in determining whether psychopathology will develop in adult life.<sup>52</sup> Unfortunately these aspects of the

<sup>47</sup> Wolfenstein, "Loss."

<sup>48</sup> J. Birtchnell, "The Possible Consequences of Early Parental Death," *British Journal of Medical Psychology* 42 (1969) 1-12, here 7-8.

<sup>49</sup> Rochlin, *Griefs* (see n. 41).

<sup>50</sup> G. Pollock, "Anniversary Reactions, Trauma, and Mourning," *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 34 (1970) 347-71; I. Mintz, "The Anniversary Reaction: A Response to the Unconscious Sense of Time," *JAPA* 19 (1971) 720-35; G. H. Pollock, *The Mourning-Liberation Process* (2 vols.; Madison, Conn.: International Universities, 1989).

<sup>51</sup> I. Gregory, "Studies of Parental Deprivation in Psychiatric Patients," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 115 (1985) 432-42; A. M. Earle and B. V. Earle, "Early Maternal Deprivation and Later Psychiatric Illness," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 31 (1961) 181-6; S. J. Bradley, "The Relationship of Early Maternal Separation to Borderline Personality in Children and Adolescents: A Pilot Study," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 136 (1979) 424-26.

<sup>52</sup> A. Breier et al., "Early Parental Loss and Development of Adult Psychopathology," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 45 (1988) 987-93. Also D. W. Krueger, "Childhood Parent Loss: Developmental Impact and Adult Psychopathology," *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 37 (1983) 582-92. The effects of early parental loss may depend on the age and

situation at Loyola following the death of Iñigo's mother remain veiled in obscurity.

On the basis of these considerations we can list some of the possible influences of such early maternal deprivation on young Iñigo: there would be a pervasive sense of loss and an underlying depression; there would be an unsatisfied yearning for attachment and reunion with the lost mother that would translate into his future relationships with the women of his acquaintance; there would be an idealization and aggrandizement of the repressed image of his lost mother; there would be a powerful identification with the lost mother; there would be a yearning for reunion with the mother in death and an attachment to and idealization of the state of death itself.

Further events played their part. After the death of Beltran, his father, Iñigo entered the service of Juan Velasquez, the majordomo to the Queen and the royal treasurer of Castile. He was trained in courtly graces and became a skilled knight, a soldier, a man of arms. Political fortunes and the death of Velasquez took him to the service of the Duke of Najera in 1517. He served the Duke not only as captain in the Duke's personal armed guard, but undertook a number of difficult diplomatic missions with great success. As he tells us himself, "Up to his twenty-sixth year he was a man given over to the vanities of the world, and took a special delight in the exercise of arms, with a great and vain desire of winning glory."<sup>53</sup>

The story reached a thunderous climax in the siege of Pamplona. Francis I, king of France, took advantage of the rebellion of the Castilian nobles—the so-called "Communeros revolt"—to launch an attack against Pamplona, the capital city of Navarre, located on the Spanish border. The Duke of Najera was responsible for the defense of the fortress and city. He could only muster a few thousand troops to the support of the threatened city. He sent Iñigo at the head of his personal guard to aid in the defense. The garrison faced a force of some 12,000 French with heavy artillery—easily the best in Europe. The commandant sought capitulation and surrender, but Iñigo would have none of it. He persuaded the commandant to try to hold the citadel in the face of these overwhelming odds. He rallied the troops and led a valiant resistance for some six

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level of development of the child as well as the availability of proper support for facilitating the mourning process. See R. Furman, "Death and the Young Child: Some Preliminary Considerations," *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 19 (1964) 321-33; "Additional Remarks on Mourning and the Young Child," *Bulletin of the Philadelphia Association for Psychoanalysis* 18 (1968) 51-64; also E. Furman and R. Furman, *The Child's Parent Dies* (New Haven: Yale Univ., 1974).

<sup>53</sup> Young, *Story* 1.

hours. Finally, the gates were breached by the pounding of French artillery. Iñigo was at the gates, sword in hand, leading the desperate resistance, when he was suddenly struck down by a cannonball that shattered his leg. When he fell the resistance fell with him, and the fort surrendered. Iñigo was treated respectfully by the victors who treated his wounds and put him on a litter for the painful journey to Loyola.

The dramatic events at Pamplona provide a powerful statement of the significant aspects of Iñigo's character structure. They bear witness to the basically phallic narcissistic organization of his personality.<sup>54</sup> The elements of this personality configuration would include high ideals, the need for great and significant achievements, a sense of omnipotence and invulnerability, a willingness to take the greatest risks in the service of heroic ideals, and the overcoming of seemingly impossible odds. Phallic narcissistic personalities do best in times of war and great danger, since their omnipotence and invincibility allows them to take risks and face dangers from which others would beat a prudent retreat. Iñigo's heroics at Pamplona bear the stamp of such counterphobic daring and reveal his sense of invincibility and even grandiosity. We can focus these dynamic elements in terms of his ego-ideal in which the residues of archaic grandiosity and infantile narcissism are preserved.<sup>55</sup> The ego-ideal of Iñigo de Loyola was cast in heroic terms that would accept no defeat, would yield to no odds no matter how overwhelming, and was dedicated to deeds of the highest valor and glory. The model for this powerful narcissistic identification was the heroic, dominant, powerful, and authoritarian figure of his father Beltran, the Lord of Loyola.

#### PSYCHOANALYTIC INTERPRETATION

In Iñigo's conversion experience, it seems clear that the impact of the cannonball at Pamplona set in motion a series of events that were to have immense consequences. The first effect of the French cannonball was to shatter not only his leg, but his ego-ideal as well. The convalescence required not only the physical repair of his wounds, but the reconstitution of his shattered ego-ideal and the sense that had formed around it. In the castle of Loyola, Iñigo experienced the first movements of conversion which characteristically had the quality of sudden illumination or revelation. But these were only the first in a long series of events that would lead him, step by difficult step, away from the home

<sup>54</sup> W. W. Meissner, S.J., "Narcissistic Personalities and Borderline Conditions: A Differential Diagnosis," *Annual of Psychoanalysis* 7 (1979) 171-202; also in *The Borderline Spectrum: Differential Diagnosis and Developmental Issues* (New York: Aronson, 1984). See also "A Case of Phallic Narcissistic Personality" *JAPA* 33 (1985) 437-69.

<sup>55</sup> S. Freud "On Narcissism" (1914), *Standard Edition* 14; "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego" (1921), *Standard Edition* 18.



of his ancestors and the tradition and loyalties of the house of Loyola to the cave of Manresa and its bitter spiritual and psychic struggle. As Williams James and others have observed, the more or less acute and climactic experience of religious conversion is frequently accompanied by a long, arduous process that brings about a gradual restructuring of the individual's personality.

If we return to the sickbed at Loyola, we can retrace some of the elements of Iñigo's conversion. To begin with, the strains of narcissistic grandiosity and omnipotence that were so prominently displayed in his character were shattered at Pamplona. That singularly aimed cannonball shattered not only the bones of his leg, but also his ideals, ambitions, and dreams of glory. It was a castrative narcissistic trauma. There followed weeks of pain and passivity, which undoubtedly created a situation of considerable psychic strain and regressive potential. After all, in this sword-swinging and heroic *hidalgo*, phallic activity and a sense of counterphobic invincibility and omnipotence had been major defensive modalities that formed a considerable part of the basis of his character structure. The almost total immersion in pain, passivity and dependence on Magdalena for all his natural needs that his convalescence required must inevitably have activated and mobilized those basic anxieties against which such defenses had so effectively operated. Basic to this underlying core of anxiety had to be the threat of castration which the trauma of physical injury and broken bones must have severely intensified.

His response to the ordeal of the various operations on his shattered and deformed leg was quite remarkable. It suggests the resources which Iñigo could bring to the service of his ego-ideal. That ideal carries with it a bodily component. The unsightly deformity would not fit the image of a handsome soldier, especially when the fashion of the day, especially the tight-fitted cavalier's boots, would reveal such a deformity so readily. His willingness to undergo the torment of surgery is a measure of the extent the ego-ideal dominated his life and behavior. But beyond the ego-ideal, we get a glimpse of the fundamental strength of Iñigo. He was full of courage, unflinching determination, and possessed a superb capacity to endure unbelievable hardship and suffering to attain a goal he had set himself. He was the same Iñigo, whether he was facing the overwhelming odds of the battlefield or the torment of the surgeon's knife. When the cosmetic surgery was finished, a combination of medicaments and painful stretching were employed to prevent shortening of the affected leg. He later commented that this caused him many days of martyrdom. The convalescence was long and painful, and since he was unable to stand on the leg, he was forced to remain in bed.

The intense narcissistic cathexis of his body image suffered a severe

insult in the traumatic deformity of his leg. How could he maintain the image of the handsome, dashing, heroic *hidalgo* with a leg that was misshapen and a gait that was deformed by an obvious limp? The motifs of castration and defectiveness here blend with the narcissistic strains of diminished self-worth and the countering of exhibitionistic wishes and impulses in the sense of shame. The power of this need for the psychic well-being of the handsome soldier of fortune is manifest in his willingness to undergo further surgery, however painful, in the interest of overcoming this unsightly impediment. Little wonder then that Íñigo's mind, as he lay on his bed of pain, would have been searching for substitutes for the shattered ideals, ambitions, and values that had been so central to his sense of himself and his well-being.

It is clear that in the early phases of this period of convalescence, the ego ideal which had served as a major focus of Íñigo's psychological life was still intact and quite functional. His insistence on cosmetic surgery at exquisite cost seems utterly unintelligible without an appeal to some such powerfully determining normative image. He assures us that his intention in not only undergoing, but undertaking, this torment was to pursue his life in the world. It seems obvious that physical appearance would play a very considerable role in this projected career as chivalrous nobleman and heroic man-at-arms. But one can explore this episode on other and perhaps deeper grounds. The deformity of his limbs constituted not only a hindrance to the realization of his ideal, but it also was unassimilable to his body image. The body image is intimately associated with self-awareness and self-perception. The deformation must have formed a focus for the mobilization of deep-seated anxieties stemming from the insult to Íñigo's basic self-concept.

In this state of mind his imagination was captured by the heroic tales of the saints and the life of Christ. He tells us in his autobiography how he became fascinated by these tales of saintly heroism, and how he alternated back and forth between the residues of his former narcissism, the vanities and worldly deeds of glory, particularly those gallant heroics he might have performed in the service of his royal lady, and the new forms of more spiritual heroics that he found in his readings of the lives of the saints. The residues of shattered narcissism were beginning to be shaped to a new form and a new meaning.

In this process, the elements of a typical conversion experience began to assert themselves. As he read the accounts of the lives of the saints, he began to think more seriously of his own past life and his sinfulness, and of the need for doing penance for it. He began to think of the penances he might do, the ways in which he might imitate the lives of the saints, of doing various penances and fasts, even of making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

In this context there came the profoundly meaningful vision of the Blessed Mother and the Child Jesus. The vision provides considerable food for thought in psychoanalytic terms. During the period of his convalescence, Iñigo's brother Martin, the master of Loyola, had been away still carrying on the campaign against the French. During this time, Martin's wife, Doña Magdalena, cared for the sick man. This was the same Magdalena of whom Ignatius, three score of years later, was to speak, when he confessed to one of his novices that a picture of Our Lady in his prayerbook reminded him so much of her beauty that he had to cover the picture in order that his intense affection and passion for her might not be aroused. It does not strain credibility then that in his weakened, regressed, and tormented condition Iñigo might well have been erotically stimulated by the tender and intimate ministrations of the beautiful Magdalena.

Is it at all possible that, just as the saint of later years in his devotions had replaced the picture of the Blessed Mother with the face of Magdalena, so in this central conversion experience the bed-ridden soldier had substituted the vision of Our Lady for the loved and desired Magdalena? If so, the vision would represent a form of sublimation of powerful libidinal drives that called for equally powerful defense. After all, the Blessed Mother was in a unique way the dominant idealized image of chaste feminine perfection in Iñigo's culture.

In the present context, it seems safe to say that Doña Magdalena was a most significant participant in the drama that unfolded around the fallen warrior. We remember that Iñigo had lost his own mother at a very early age and that he had subsequently been nursed and raised by the loving and motherly nursemaid, Maria de Garin. When the lovely Doña Magdalena came to the castle of Loyola as Martin's bride, Iñigo would have been about seven years of age. She became, for all practical purposes, his mother through the years of his latency development and on into adolescence.

We have already commented on the powerful identification of the young Iñigo with his father. This phallic, narcissistic identification was a major line of defense against the underlying castration anxiety that had to be aroused in his relationship with the powerful figure of his father. This identification with the powerful, aggressive, phallic, and narcissistic father was undermined and destroyed by the symbolic castration of Iñigo's wound and his convalescence. As the identification with the phallic, narcissistic father was undermined, the identification with the maternal elements began to assert themselves through the conversion experience.

Might not Iñigo's loss of his mother soon after his birth have cast its shadow over these conversion experiences? We can recall some of the

possible consequences of early maternal deprivation: there would be a pervasive sense of loss and an underlying depression; there would be an unconscious and unsatisfied yearning for attachment and reunion with the lost mother; there would be an idealization and aggrandizement of the repressed image of his lost mother; there would be a powerful identification with the lost mother; there would be a yearning for reunion with the mother in death and an attachment to and idealization of the state of death itself. In this sense, the idealized aspects of Iñigo's lost mother would have been projected onto the lovely Doña Magdalena, whose pious influence led him increasingly toward an identification with the saints.

The saintly heroes thus embodied maternal qualities of suffering, resignation, penance, self-denial, and ascetic resignation. These qualities were set over against the phallic striving, aggressiveness, and ambitious search for glory that were tied into Iñigo's identification with his father. However, the wish to imitate the saints was contaminated by aspects of the earlier configuration, particularly with regard to the competitive wish to outdo the saints in their heroic deeds. The themes of phallic conquest are reflected in his ambitions for penance and ascetical heroics, in his plans for a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and in the themes of spiritual ambition, even grandiosity, that seem to characterize his thinking.

We can return at this juncture to the vision of Our Lady with the Child Jesus. We can conjecture that the vision of Our Lady was the embodiment of the idealized mother, the reflection of his idealized image of his own mother who had died so early, as well as the reflection of the lovely Magdalena toward whom unconscious libidinal impulses had been stirred. We might conjecture as well that in his fantasy Iñigo saw himself as the baby Jesus who could be cared for, loved, and could in turn possess, his idealized mother. The wishful regression to a preoedipal state would avoid any of the destructive consequences of the potential oedipal conflict. The regression to a state of blissful union with the idealized mother would thus serve to undercut and deny any incestuous longings that might carry the stamp of a more mature and differentiated sexuality.

The regressive wishful fantasy is followed by the imposition of a powerful repressive barrier, outlawing all sexual (incestuous) wishes. Such a powerful repressive barrier can be taken here as a sign of the institution of a new and powerfully narcissistically invested ego-ideal. When Freud first began to discuss narcissism, he connected it with the mechanism of repression.<sup>56</sup> He observed that an individual would repress instinctual impulses and wishes only if they are in conflict with his own

<sup>56</sup> S. Freud, "Narcissism."

ethical ideas and ideals. Such ideals in fact seem to be a necessary prerequisite for repression. Freud spoke of the "self-respect of the ego." Repression flows from the self-respect of the ego in the sense that impulses become threatening and give rise to anxiety as a signal of danger, insofar as they violate an ideal which the individual has set up in himself and by which he measures himself. Any content that would not be consistent with and acceptable to the ideal thus becomes repressed. While Ignatius presents this repressive action in total and absolute terms, the wise psychologist will find room to ponder whether in fact the repression was as absolute as Ignatius seems to have thought, and whether or not there was room for the return of the repressed.

Our first interest is in trying to understand what kind of psychological transformation was taking place in Iñigo. The first thing we notice in his case is that the values inherent in the lives of the saints were first assimilated to the ego-ideal. He saw the heroic deeds of the saints as projections of heroic chivalry to the level of the service of God rather than to the service of a human lord. He bears testimony to this assimilation when he tells that later, after his departure from Loyola, "He continued his way to Montserrat, thinking as usual of the great deeds he was going to do for the love of God. As his mind was filled with the adventures of Amadis of Gaul and such books, thoughts corresponding to these adventures came to his mind."<sup>57</sup>

Plainly, then, the initial mechanism involved an ego-orientation and perception of an order of values, followed by an assimilation of these perceived values to a preexistent internalized value system. However, the impulses he felt stirring within him were still cast in the frame of the phallically narcissistic structure of his preconversion ego-ideal. It is immediately apparent that these fundamental sets of values are so radically different that they could not coexist in the same coherent value system. The conflict had to come to light sooner or later, and the intensity of the conflict would be determined by the extent to which the respective values had been effectively internalized.

The significant point, then, is that the transformation that was taking place in Iñigo at this time did not consist in the substitution of one value system for another. The value system that had sustained Iñigo over the years and that had stirred him to noble and heroic deeds was too solidly established to collapse without a struggle. Iñigo hints at the beginnings of this conflict when he observes that he began to feel dry and dissatisfied with fantasies of worldly glory, but when he thought of the heroics of the saints he felt cheerful and satisfied. When he speaks of the difference

<sup>57</sup> Young, *Story* 17.

between the two spirits moving him, we can see the conflict developing between the two value systems. The integration of these value systems had to be the work of the ego in its synthetic function.

It seems that at first Iñigo's ego sought to reconcile these divergent value systems by assimilating the newly perceived spiritual ones to the older and more narcissistic system. But as his understanding of the dimensions of the new value system deepened, he was gradually compelled to face the impossibility of reconciliation. But this realization and understanding did not come in a moment. It took time, and during that time the only partially grasped values inherent in the spiritual orientation were more or less adherent to the older structure of values. With time, they would achieve autonomy and would precipitate the crisis of Manresa.

So it was that Iñigo de Loyola, as he lay on his bed of convalescence, began to experience the transformation of his own inner values. He found himself shifting from a narrower, narcissistic and even juvenile ideal and set of values, to a broader, higher, nobler and more spiritual orientation. The shift somehow implied that the order of spiritual realities, which his religion had always taught him, gradually entered into a new relation in which there was borne in on him the actuality of its existence and the pertinence of its existence to himself. This realization and the process by which it became operative in him was fundamentally an activity of the ego, accepting and internalizing this segment of reality. This implied a new awareness and a deepened understanding. It implied also an initial and possibly hesitant commitment of himself to the values that slowly became apparent to him.

#### CONCLUSION: NATURE AND GRACE

These reflections would seem to lead us on to further considerations. The form of psychoanalytic hagiography contained in the above analysis poses questions about our basic understanding of such deeply significant religious experiences and their implications for the interaction of grace and nature. The psychoanalyst, as I have indicated, has no interest in the role of divine grace as it might enter into religious experience, and in fact he has nothing to say about it. The relevance of grace and the understanding of its place in the causality underlying such experiences is matter for theological reflection.

The psychoanalyst or any psychologist who studies religious experience is bound by the limitations of his methodology. His method constitutes a kind of scientific reductionism that views the subject of investigation only within the confines of its methodology; it stands in opposition to a theologizing hagiography that constitutes a reductionism of its own. For the attribution of Ignatius' conversion experience solely to the action of divine grace, ignoring possible elements of basic human motivation that

might intersect with graceful initiatives, is a form of theological reductionism. The path of authentic understanding of the rich complexities of such intensely religious experiences—and I would include the full range of mystical experiences that formed such a central dimension of Ignatius' religious experience—seeks to search its way between the Scylla of psychological reductionism and the Charybdis of theological reductionism. Only this methodological refinement can avoid the perils of hagiographic fundamentalism.

But this appreciation opens the way to complex paradoxes and ambiguities involved in the dialogue between religion and theological understanding and the essentially nonreligious and strictly psychological understanding of the psychoanalytic perspective. Within the limits of his discipline, the psychoanalyst can reach little more than tentative hypotheses that, if they can entertain a measure of validity, can offer some meaningful basis for an emerging dialogue with a more specifically theological frame of reference. The situation here is not unlike the form of reduction involved in authentic, historico-critical study of the texts and sources of the Christian tradition on the part of biblical, patristic, and church-historical scholars. The reconstruction of the historical and cultural roots of the Christian religion in no way compromises or undermines the validity and religious significances of the Christian tradition and belief system.

If we can accept the above analysis and interpretation as one possible and valid assessment of the motivational structure of Iñigo de Loyola's conversion experience, what questions does it raise for the further exploration of the relationship and interaction between grace and the workings of intrapsychic dynamics and processes? If we accept that powerful sources of unconscious motivation were at work determining the course of Iñigo's conversion experience, does that rule grace out of the picture? Can we think of God's efficacious grace as working its effects of psychic transformation unilaterally, independently, and regardless of the natural psychic substratum? Or does it make more sense to think in terms of the interplay of the initiatives of grace with extant levels of psychic structure and motivation, both conscious and unconscious? Was Iñigo's inspiration due only to the extrinsic promptings of the spirit, or might the action of divine grace have found its expression in conjunction with the deepest unconscious yearnings in the heart of the wounded soldier as he struggled to restore his traumatized narcissism and fragmented sense of self?

The case of Ignatius of Loyola as framed here would seem to argue to the latter conclusion. If so, it would seem to open the door to a whole realm of theological reflection that demands integration of psychic realities and dynamic processes as integral to its understanding of the relationship between God and man.