How the First Jesuits Became Involved in Education BY JOH [(B 7 E . 3 c 1 4 ( ) - 1 0 3 . 8 5 5 W) - 1 0 . 7 1 2 (.O) -

Franciscan teachers at the medieval universities? The Jesuits differed from these

sophisticated institutions with structures, procedures, personnel, and offices that

page--than "the help of souls." That is what he wanted the Society of Jesus to be all about.

As the years wore on, he also evolved into a believer in social institutions as especially powerful means for "the help of souls." This is exemplified most dramatically in his work in founding the Society of Jesus and in saying goodbye to what he called his "pilgrim years" to become the chief administrator in that institution from 1541 until his death in 1556. This change in Ignatius has been little emphasized by historians, but it is obvious and of paramount importance.

pedagogy would give the Jesuits an edge in Italy that made their schools more attractive than the alternatives.

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their obligation to educate their children. The final reason he gives is the most encompassing and reveals the social dimension of the whole undertaking: "Those who are now only students will grow up to be pastors, civic officials, administrators of justice, and will fill other important posts to everybody's profit and advantage."10

The schools, in other words, were, as I said earlier, undertaken as a contribution to the common good of society at large. This was true as well for the Jesuit universities, where the cultivation of the sciences would be especially noteworthy, for, we need to remind ourselves, "philosophy," that central plank in the "undergraduate" curriculum, meant for the most part "natural philosophy," that is, the sciences. Moreover, the basic design for the universities, in accordance with the tradition of the University of Paris, put theology as the preeminent "graduate school," the culmination of the system. In the religiously turbulent sixteenth century, the Jesuits realized the importance of well-trained theologians.

The Jesuits were a Roman Catholic religious order, and they of course retained their religious aims. But, especially with the schools, they began to have an altogether special relationship to culture and to have a more alert eye for what they called "the common good." In other words, the "he

were aware of this reality and in a few instances had to defend themselves against critics who thought the prospect corrosive of the stability of society.

Were the Jesuit schools, then, identical in every

I am not the only scholar to suggest that the benign attitude Jesuit missioners like Matteo Ricci took toward Confucianism in China and Roberto De Nobili toward Hinduism in India related in some way especially to the humanist education that the Jesuits cultivated for their own members to a degree no other Order ever did--they had to, for practically every Jesuit was called upon at some point to teach "the humanities," that is, the Latin and Greek literary classics.

My impression is that the Jesuits, for all that, saw the boundaries between these two educational philosophies, unlike the blur that occurs in North America today where the undergraduate college both is the direct heir of the humanistic system and at the same time, by being part of the university, partakes of the technical or even vocational training reserved to "professionals." What is education for? It is for many things, according to one's philosophy, but it is difficult to be successful in it if it is seen to be for many things competing at the same time for the same person.

The Jesuits, I believe, wanted to preserve the best of two great educational ideals, the intellectual rigor and professionalism of the scholastic system and the more personalist, societal, and even practical goals of the humanists. I am not trying to say they were successful--or unsuccessful--in doing so. Indeed, I wonder if a final resolution of such disparate goals is possible within any educational vision and, unless we clearly opt for one of the two alternatives, if we are not perpetually condemned to some compromise rather than synthesis. Already in the sixteenth century , a certain ambivalence about the purpose even of university education was introduced by the Jesuits and others, and that ambivalence persists even today, though the terms in which it manifests itself are of course quite different.

faculty--for such schools, which might range from five or

because of the special backgrounds they came from and then devised for themselves, their role was special. I have tried to indicate a few ways in which this was true.

These schools must of course be placed in the context of what we can call the confessionalization of Europe, for they became confessional schools, intent on establishing for their students clear Roman Catholic identity. But they had other aspects to them that were broader in their scope, as I hope I have suggested, that helped lift them out of the special context of the sixteenth and

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