

Imitations of Christ: Ignatius of Loyola, Philip Neri and
the influence of the *Devotio Moderna*

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Abstract

The *Devotio Moderna* originated in northern Europe towards the end of the fourteenth century. As a movement of reform, it aimed to return to the practices of the early church and make spirituality accessible to the laity. While some scholars have claimed the *Devotio Moderna* to be a forerunner of both Protestant and Catholic reforms, others have argued that the influence of the *Devotio Moderna* has been overstated.

This dissertation seeks to assess the potential influence of the *Devotio Moderna* on Catholic Reform through focusing on two key catholic reformers – St Ignatius of Loyola and St Philip Neri. It analyses the practices and spirituality of the *Devotio Moderna*, Ignatius and Neri, exploring similarities and differences between them. Similarities are noted in their common concern for personal sanctification and in the case of Ignatius, the methodical approach of spiritual exercises and the encouragement of affective spirituality. However, neither Ignatius nor Neri shared the defining characteristic of the *Devotio Moderna* – the importance given to sharing a common life. Differences are also noted in their approaches to charitable work, mission and the role of education. The stress Ignatius and Neri laid on a practical, world-affirming faith, along with their personal mysticism reflected the context of the sixteenth century.

The dissertation concludes that although Ignatius did take inspiration from the *Devotio Moderna*, his approach was significantly different. A direct link between Neri and the *Devotio Moderna* cannot be claimed. Similarities between the *Devotio Moderna* and the catholic reformers can largely be accounted for by their common aim to recreate a more authentic, apostolic church by drawing on material from an earlier age of perceived Christian purity.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The *Devotio Moderna* was a northern European movement. It originated at around 1374 when Geert Groote converted his home in Deventer into a community of devout women. From this grew semi-monastic communities known as the Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life, who lived together under a rule but without taking vows. Following Groote's death, Florens Radewijns founded the Augustinian Canons of Windesheim, which enabled the principles of the *Devotio Moderna* to develop within a monastic setting alongside its less traditional counterpart. The movement grew numerically and geographically before declining substantially at the end of the sixteenth century.

Scholars disagree over the extent of the influence of the *Devotio Moderna*, and even argue whether it might be regarded as a forerunner of later Protestant or Catholic reforms. Its focus on lay spirituality, the importance given to scripture and the use of the vernacular point towards Protestantism. However, the movement was doctrinally conservative, emphasising obedience, morality and spiritual progress - characteristics more closely associated with Catholicism. Credit has also been given to the Devout for contributing to the rise of humanism which had a profound influence on both Catholic and Protestant theology in the sixteenth century.

Evennett¹ sees the “*powerful influence*” of the *Devotio Moderna* in all Catholic spiritual literature of the early sixteenth century, and Dickens² claims that the *Devotio Moderna* influenced the new Catholic Orders. To investigate such assertions, I have chosen to focus on two key figures whose contributions to Catholic Reform have been regarded as transformative and who were both canonised on the same day. St Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus, helped revitalise the spiritual life of Rome through encouraging individuals towards active commitment and by directing missionary outreach. Scholars have noted links between Ignatius and the *Devotio Moderna*³ particularly on account of his *Spiritual Exercises* and his fondness for Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*. Likewise, St Philip Neri, founder of the Oratorians, has been described as “one of the greatest architects of the counter-reformation, perhaps the greatest of them all...”⁴ Dickens claims that the Oratory lay

“at the very heart of the Catholic Reformation,”⁵ and he observes a continuity with the medieval devotional tradition in the religious life of Italy. Both Ignatius and Neri were active in Rome during the same period, founding organisations whose influence extended well beyond their own lifetimes. They both promoted personal reform and lay spirituality, concerns which were largely neglected by the ecclesiastical authorities, but which typified the *Devotio Moderna*. Nevertheless, despite their successes in reinvigorating the religious atmosphere of Rome, their methods and organisations differed greatly.

This dissertation examines the extent to which characteristics of Ignatius of Loyola and Philip Neri resemble those of the *Devotio Moderna*, and considers whether the medieval devotional movement may have influenced them. It will aim to show that the spirituality of Ignatius and Neri and the organisations they founded do bear some resemblance to the *Devotio Moderna*, but there are significant differences in their approaches. While there is strong evidence that Ignatius was influenced by the spiritual exercises of the Devout, there is also evidence of other influences on Ignatius, and particularly on Neri, which were more direct and pertinent than the *Devotio Moderna*.

The dissertation begins with an overview of the historical context of the *Devotio Moderna* and the period of Catholic Reform. Chapters three and four focus on the *Devotio Moderna*. Chapter three begins by considering the motivation of its founder, and the development and organisation of the movement. An overview is given of the different branches of the movement, lay and monastic. There follows a discussion on the monastic features of the secular branch and how the lay brothers and sisters interpreted poverty, chastity and obedience. Chapter four analyses how the Devout aimed to imitate Christ through virtuous living and the practice of spiritual exercises. It looks at how the Devout incorporated the three ways of the spiritual life into their exercises and combined these with the practice of *lectio divina*. The importance of affective spirituality is also considered, particularly in relation to meditation, prayer and the sacraments.

Chapters five to eight focus on Ignatius of Loyola and Philip Neri, following a similar pattern to the chapters relating to the *Devotio Moderna*. The same themes are

explored and similarities and differences are highlighted. Other sources of influence are suggested where these seem probable, but it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to describe in detail the historical development of the *Devotio Moderna*, the Society of Jesus or the Oratory of Philip Neri.

The dissertation concludes that Ignatius was directly influenced by the *Devotio Moderna* through texts such as à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*, through his contacts at the Collège de Montaigu in Paris, and indirectly through spiritual exercises he received at Montserrat. However, Ignatius adapted the methods and ideas of the Devout to suit his own context and missionary aims. The link between the *Devotio Moderna* and Philip Neri is less clear, and although similar themes appear, their treatment diverges sufficiently to make influence doubtful. Many other more likely sources of influence can be identified. However, it is likely that Neri drew ideas from Ignatius, and may thus indirectly owe something to the *Devotio Moderna*.

Primary sources have been used where possible to identify and compare the characteristics of the *Devotio Moderna*, Ignatius and Neri. There is a paucity of original material from the *Devotio Moderna* available in English. In *Devotio Moderna: Basic Writings*,⁶ John Van Engen has aimed to address this by translating a number of representative texts from Middle Dutch and Latin. Texts include Groote's *Resolutions*⁷ which sets out the principles of the movement, and an early *Customary for Brothers*⁸ which illustrates how these were lived out by the Devout. Salome Sticken's *A Way of Life for Sisters*⁹ and a selection of *Lives of Sisters*¹⁰ show the value placed on the virtues, particularly humility. *John Brinckerinck on the Holy Sacrament*¹¹ describes the importance of spiritual reception of Christ in Communion. Van Engen also provides a number of examples of spiritual exercises used by the Devout. The most important of these is Zerbolt of Zutphen's *Spiritual Ascents*.¹² This has been given especial attention in this dissertation on account of its potential influence on Ignatius. A key text of the *Devotio Moderna*, which attained widespread and continued influence across Europe, is the *Imitation of Christ*,¹³ attributed to Thomas à Kempis. The *Imitation* provides us with a clear illustration of the worldview and values of the Devout, although its extreme anti-worldly sentiments may be a reflection of its monastic background.

Primary sources relating to Ignatius have been drawn from *Ignatius of Loyola: Spiritual Exercises and Selected Writings*.¹⁴ Ignatius' "Autobiography"¹⁵ was, in fact, dictated to his colleague, C  mara. While not a comprehensive account of his life, it shows Ignatius' personal interpretation of his own history and in particular how his ideas evolved in relation to his experiences. Ignatius' *Deliberation on Poverty* and *The Spiritual Diary*¹⁶ are essential documents in enabling us to understand how he formed decisions for the Society based on reasoned argument combined with mystical and affective spirituality. The *Constitutions*¹⁷ provide a summary of the organisation and characteristics of the Society of Jesus. Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*¹⁸ are a key text which was used in the formation of members of the Society.

Primary sources relating to Philip Neri are limited. Neri himself wrote very little and disposed of most of his writings shortly before his death. However, his *Spiritual Maxims*¹⁹ are a vital resource enabling his views to be directly compared to those of the *Devotio Moderna* and to Ignatius.

A variety of secondary sources have been consulted. Van Engen's *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life*²⁰ provides a detailed account of the origins and development of the *Devotio Moderna*, as well as invaluable background information on contemporary social and religious practices. Despite trends to see the movement as foreshadowing elements of both Protestant and Catholic Reform, it is Van Engen's aim to portray the Devout as they saw themselves and not to investigate their potential influence. R. R. Post's *The Modern Devotion: Confrontation with Reformation and Humanism* also provides a wealth of material and opinions. However, his determination to refute the view of A. Hyma²¹ that the Devout contributed to the Christian Renaissance and to humanism causes him to denigrate their achievements and overlook their indirect influence. Post does nevertheless prompt a critical evaluation of the education offered by the Devout. A number of helpful articles have been written about the Devout: Mathilde Van Dijk has detailed parallels between the Devout and the Desert Fathers²² and also explored their ambivalent approach towards female members.²³ Sara Ritchey's article on affective meditation²⁴ describes methods used by the Devout to stimulate religious sentiments, and a further article by Van Dijk analyses the manner in which the Devout observed the emotions.²⁵

Outram Evennett, in *The Spirit of the Counter-Reformation* describes the mix of cultural influences in Spain, demonstrating the difficulty of disentangling early influences on Ignatius. However, Javier Melloni²⁶ convincingly argues a link between Ignatius and the *Devotio Moderna* through the exercises of Jiménez de Cisneros, as well as proposing a number of other sources of influence. O'Malley shows how Ignatius was in tune with the humanism of his own age, linking his search for piety outside the cloister with the confraternities of contemporary Italy,²⁷ while McNalley²⁸ highlights the differences between Ignatius and contemporary Orders.

The final ten years of Neri's life are well documented on account of his canonisation process. However, much of the material is anecdotal with a bias towards the miraculous, and must be read with caution. Until the publication of *St Philip Neri and the Roman Society of his Times* by Ponnelle and Bordet,²⁹ accounts relating to Neri relied heavily on Vatican records and the early biographies by Gallonio and Bacci.³⁰ Ponnelle and Bordet extended their research to include memoirs, letters and a variety of official documents from the Congregation, and their work has become the authoritative text. Further insights have been gained from the monographs of Paul Türks³¹ and Meriol Trevor.³²

There are many excellent texts on Catholic Reform such as Dickens' *The Counter Reformation*,³³ Janelle's *The Catholic Reformation*³⁴ and Olin's *Catholic Reform*.³⁵ While they invariably allude to the influence of the *Devotio Moderna* on Catholic Reform, none analyses in detail the similarities and differences in their practices and outlook. It is these which this dissertation seeks to explore.

Chapter 2

Historical Context

Devotio Moderna

The *Devotio Moderna* originated in the 1370s, flourished during the first half of the fifteenth century, and had virtually disappeared by the middle of the sixteenth century. The first houses were in Deventer, and Zwolle, with rapid expansion throughout the Netherlands, Germany and the Upper Rhenish lands. (Appendix i). Over a period of approximately one hundred and eighty years, the movement evolved in response to the social and ecclesiastical milieu and under the direction of a number of influential members. (Appendix ii). By 1450, pressures from the Church were forcing lay members to regularise; many became Franciscan tertiaries or professed Augustinians.¹ In 1568 Pope Pius V ordered the dissolution of religious communities without vows, and in 1569-70, Protestant reformers in the Netherlands closed Devout houses as being too monastic.²

The Devout were among several novel groups in this period and were frequently confused with them. The most significant of these in the Netherlands were the Beguines and the Free Spirits. Beguines lived together without vows or a rule, but they kept their individual possessions and did not follow a strict communal life. Many were engaged in social welfare. The Free Spirits were a mystical group who sought union with God through “self-emptying.” They taught freedom from rituals and moral obligations.³ The Devout consciously distanced themselves from both groups.

The most conspicuous religious Orders of the day were the mendicant friars – the Franciscans and the Dominicans. They worked outside the traditional episcopal framework, preaching and hearing confessions. Mendicants were unpopular for what was perceived as their pretence of poverty while begging for money, and their interference in local parish life.⁴ The Cistercians and Carthusians were the most respected Orders. Although the latter were enclosed, they were highly influential through publishing and disseminating spiritual literature across Europe. Van Engen observes that while the Devout contested with friars, feared Free Spirits and

dissociated from Beguines, “their vision silently incorporated elements from all three.”⁵

Similarities can also be noted between the Devout and the Friends of God, a movement which owed much to the teachings of Eckhart, Tauler and Suso. They were led by Merswin in Strasbourg and had contact with Ruusbroec in Brussels. The Friends produced mystical writings in the vernacular: Merswin’s “*Nine Rocks*” presents a distinctly negative view of the world and describes the nine steps from the world to reach God.⁶

Catholic Reform

During the early sixteenth century, the Church faced widespread demand for reform. Protestants criticised abuses within Church government, and promoted lay spirituality. At the same time many Catholics were exploring ways to develop a more meaningful and active faith. This is observable in the multiplication of lay confraternities and sodalities created to further spiritual practices and offer practical social assistance. Oratories, for clerics and laymen, sprang up in Italy. These had roots in the teachings of Catherine of Genoa, combining personal holiness with practical activity. A number of new Orders were also created which Dickens⁷ claims derived from the Oratories: The Theatines were secular clerics, working in the world but under a rule; the Barnabites held outdoor evangelical meetings; the Somaschi offered charity to the destitute and the Capuchins engaged in missionary work.

In 1536, Pope Paul III acknowledged the need for reform by commissioning the *Consilium de Emendanda Ecclesia*. Cardinal Contarini who presided over this was a member of the Catholic Evangelicals or “*Spirituali*.” He made the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius and concluded that active service in the world was preferable to life in the cloister – a view that was becoming increasingly common during this period.⁸

The Council of Trent (1545-63) was the Church’s official step towards reform. It addressed practical issues but upheld traditional doctrine. Enthusiasm for implementing reforms fluctuated with successive popes, who exerted much influence either in supporting or hindering the activities of reformers. The Spanish and Roman

Inquisitions also impacted on the message of reformers who were obliged to dissociate themselves from suspect ideas or groups and assert their allegiance to the papacy.

Spanish spirituality played a dominant role in Catholic Reform.⁹ The importance of this lies in the fact that the Spanish laity were accustomed to voicing opinions on prayer, scripture and devotion.¹⁰ The *alumbrados* were a group who openly expressed ideas similar to those of Luther; they spoke against penance and indulgences as non-scriptural and preferred to seek direct access to God rather than through clerical intermediaries. For this reason the Inquisition clamped down on their activities, yet their influence persisted. Spanish mysticism had a profound impact on Catholic spirituality. However, Evannett¹¹ and Dickens¹² point to the influences lying behind Spanish spirituality, notably identifying the Netherlands among these.

Theological thinking in the sixteenth century was shaped by humanism, and the writings of Erasmus were particularly influential. In his *Enchiridion Militis Christiani*, Erasmus encourages the Christian soldier to read the scriptures and imitate the example of Christ. Priests are not considered to possess superior status; Erasmus believes the future of the church lies in the laity and stresses the importance of inner religion. Humanist principles were pervasive in this era. A desire to return to original source material resulted in a renewed interest in the works of the Church Fathers. Education was highly valued, and spirituality became more individualistic, active and world affirming.¹³ Other widely read authors included Bernard and Bonaventure, and as these are frequently referred to both by the Devout and the Catholic reformers, they represent a common yet independent influence.

Finally it should be noted that movements with similar characteristics had taken place in other areas. In England, Wyclif (1330-83) argued that religion should be the same for the laity and those in Orders, and that the bible should be made available in the vernacular. In Italy, the mystic Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) formed a circle of followers including both clergy and laity, encouraging reform, asceticism and charitable work.¹⁴ Post points out some remarkable similarities in Prague with the activities of Groote, but considers direct influence to be unlikely.¹⁵ While these may

not have directly influenced either the *Devotio Moderna* or Catholic Reform, they are evidence of a trend in religious thinking.

Chapter 3

The Organisation of the *Devotio Moderna*

Motivation and Purpose

Geert Groote is generally acknowledged as the founder of the *Devotio Moderna*.¹ Despite his successful ecclesiastical career, a serious illness at the age of thirty-four filled Groote with a fear of death and judgement, and he began to reflect on how he might live a truly Christian life. Groote's actions were thus motivated by personal reform.

At around 1374-5, Groote began to compose a set of personal resolutions which would shape the character of the communities of the Devout. He resolved to have no benefice, no material possessions, and that he would not pursue academic work which might result in wealth or reputation. He would undertake devotional reading, fasting and frequent attendance at Mass. Groote converted his house in Deventer into a hospice for "poor women to serve God,"² and spent around three years on retreat in Monnikhuizen clarifying his thoughts on the spiritual life. By 1385 Groote's house was transformed into the first of many communities of Sisters of the Common Life. The origins of the Brothers of the Common Life are less certain.³ Following Groote's death, Florens Radewijns encouraged men who were inspired by his teaching to live in communities according to his principles.⁴

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Groote did not choose to join a religious Order following his conversion, preferring to work out his spiritual path in the secular world and to enable others to share this vision. However, in addition to the lay communities, the spirituality of the *Devotio Moderna* also developed in the Orders of the Augustinian Canons and Canonesses of Windesheim.

Groote and Radewijns had begun plans for the Windesheim Congregation near the end of Groote's life, but it was not founded until two years after his death, gaining papal approval in 1395. While Groote had great respect for monastic communities,⁵ there may have been an element of strategic self-preservation in the founding of

Windesheim.⁶ The existence of lay communities sharing a common life but without a rule was considered highly suspect by both ecclesiastical and secular authorities. Prior to 1450 the communities were constantly required to justify themselves, and pressure was exerted on them to regularise. Groote and Radewijns may have hoped to pre-empt the inevitable opposition, as the founding of an umbrella Order would have afforded their lay communities some protection.

Windesheim shared many characteristics with the Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life, such as the use of the vernacular, collations and fraternal correction. However, they wore habits, lived a cloistered life under monastic vows and their spirituality tended more towards the mystical.⁷ The nascent community sent members to St Victor in Paris to learn the customs of the canons regular, and the first professed members spent time at Ruusbroec's monastery, Groenendael, also to learn their customs.

Distinctive Characteristics of the *Devotio Moderna*

The lay communities resembled monastic life in every way other than that the members were not bound by vows; indeed, Groote may have conceived these households to be primarily monastic.⁸

Although they inhabited townhouses, the Devout withdrew from society. They attended the local church to hear Mass daily, but sat apart from the townspeople. Initially they chose simple, poor quality clothing, but by 1470 the Brothers were wearing hooded tunics which resembled clerical attire.⁹ Their daily routines were structured around the canonical hours, including periods of work, devotional reading and self-examination. Meals were taken in silence while listening to selected readings. Their monastic lifestyle fuelled accusations that the Devout were aiming to start a new Order.¹⁰

Two practices caused particular concern: those of acting as preachers and confessors. In order to counter accusations that they were delivering unauthorised sermons, the Devout referred to their talks as “admonitions” or “exhortations,” given purely for edification and with no doctrinal content. These took the form of open discussions following the reading of a scriptural text or a passage from the Fathers. On Sundays

and feast-days the Devout invited townspeople to participate in these collations, and even offered them spiritual guidance. Zerbolt¹¹ defended this practice by appealing to Aquinas, who allowed women to give instruction in private, and to Pope Innocent III's, "*Cum ex iniuncto*" (1199) which permitted the laity to advise on moral issues. In order not to infringe upon the rules of preaching, passages for reading were selected randomly, groups of listeners assembled informally and all were free to contribute.

Confession played a central part in Devout spirituality and will be discussed in the following chapter. Here we need only note two important features. Firstly, the practice of "fraternal correction" resembled the monastic chapter of faults. To foster humility, the Devout were expected to confess their sins openly and accept admonition from fellow Brothers or Sisters. Secondly, confession to a lay Brother or Sister who would then impose a penance, potentially undermined the role of the priest.¹² The Devout maintained that they were not usurping priestly authority as they attended sacramental confession at least annually.¹³

In many respects Devout communities were neither fully lay nor fully monastic. Erasmus, who spent eight years in the care of the Brothers, described them as "a middle species between monk and lay."¹⁴ Three features characterise the *Devotio Moderna*: their common life, their rejection of vows, and their devotion. We will first discuss the approach of the lay communities to the common life and vows. The following chapter analyses their spirituality and devotion.

Living in Common

Devout communities were known as Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life. The importance of this designation is significant, as there was no legal precedence for households of lay people sharing not only their accommodation, but also their belongings. Their rapid proliferation caused alarm, and after c1390 the Devout were subjected to wide-scale opposition.¹⁵ In some towns the Devout were considered to be akin to the Beguines, and anti-Beguine legislation was used to suppress them.¹⁶ The Devout, however, vehemently disassociated themselves from the Beguines.¹⁷ Nevertheless, they needed to assure the church that their lifestyle was compatible with their lay status. In his *Tractate II*, Zerbolt argued that the common life did not originate in monasticism but was a feature of the early church. Jesus had commanded

the rich young man to sell all his possessions and to follow him, and therefore this should be permitted to the non-professed.¹⁸ Furthermore, he claimed that their attitude to vows proved that they were not seeking to establish an order.¹⁹

Vows

The Devout rejected vows, emphasising that there was one religion for all, and challenging the accepted belief that poverty, chastity and obedience were only for the perfect.²⁰ However, Devout houses were not without statutes to which their members promised voluntary obedience. Individuals also formulated their own resolutions and perseverance until death was considered necessary for salvation. Typically, resolutions covered such matters as simplicity in food and clothing, with a commitment to observing chastity, a daily schedule of prayer and the household rules. Personal intentions regarding reading, meditation and self-examination were also detailed.

The statutes of the Devout communities show their stance on poverty, chastity and obedience. Groote's views on poverty arose from his disapproval of current practices among clergy and the religious: Clergy were acquiring benefices solely to profit from their incomes, convents demanded dowries and favoured wealthy novices, monks who had taken vows of poverty continued to hold private property, and mendicant friars were becoming wealthy through urban investments.²¹ Groote wished Devout communities to set an example, renouncing greed through sharing a common life.

Devout communities supported themselves through manual labour, and work was regarded as purifying when carried out silently and prayerfully.²² Women worked on textiles and lace while many Brothers became copyists, an occupation which produced a reliable income before printing became widespread. Excess income was donated to good causes.²³ Labour was primarily for the spiritual benefit of the individual or the financial benefit of the household rather than for the wider benefit of the local community. While the Devout lived simply rather than in poverty, individually they owned nothing. On entering the house, new recruits were obliged to surrender their property to the community as the members held all goods in common ownership.

The superiority of a celibate life was generally accepted during this era and Groote advised that celibacy was preferable, even within marriage.²⁴ Attitudes towards women were somewhat ambivalent. While there was a real concern for the physical and spiritual wellbeing of women,²⁵ they were also viewed as problematic. There was a perception that women were especially prone to sinfulness, and the need for male ministers for female communities strained their resources.²⁶ In addition, the perceived risks to men's sanctity through their need to interact with women resulted in some bizarre and harsh treatment of them.²⁷

Houses of the Devout were initially autonomous and their leaders chosen by election. Nevertheless, obedience was an essential aspect of Devout life. Customaries from the Brothers' houses show that while the rector had no legal rights over the community, he was to be obeyed as first among equals.²⁸ Household governance was democratic with decisions being made at monthly meetings attended by all the Brothers. While it was emphasised that obedience to superiors was through freewill, it was also made clear that disobedience would incur guilt.²⁹

Schools

A particularly influential aspect of the work of the Brothers lay in their involvement in education. Post argues that the Brothers were not well enough educated to teach but simply founded hostels to provide accommodation for schoolboys. This, he claims, was for economic reasons, as the advent of printing had reduced the Brothers' income.³⁰ To begin with, their role was to reinforce lessons taught at the local Latin school. Nevertheless, by the middle of the fifteenth century, the Brothers were founding schools in their own right. Notable among these were the school in Ghent (1463), which van Engen claims became responsible for introducing humanism to the city, the school in Liège (1496) and that in Utrecht.³¹

The Brothers were concerned for the boys' moral and spiritual formation³² and in many ways the hostels resembled the Brothers' houses. The boys were expected to dress like the Brothers, promise obedience, spend an hour each day in reading, prayer and self-examination, and attend collations and confession. Further education at university was not encouraged,³³ but it was hoped that boys might become candidates for the priesthood, or join monasteries or Devout houses.

This concern for moral formation goes back to the early period of the *Devotio Moderna*. John Brinckerinck³⁴ taught that it was necessary to imprint virtue in the hearts of the young. Dirc of Herxen³⁵ maintained the necessity of establishing a moral foundation to enable young people to resist future temptations.

The combination of education with spiritual and moral formation was growing in importance in Europe in the fifteenth century.³⁶ However, the model created by the Devout proved to be influential. In 1411 Gerson encouraged similar practices to be used in Paris. Boys were to listen to talks in the vernacular, and encouraged to report each other's faults.³⁷ Gerson emphasised the importance of confession, hoping to establish this as a regular practice for the young. Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa was also impressed by the model created by the Brothers, leaving a legacy in 1469 for a hostel to be founded in Deventer. Jean Standonck established similar hostels at the Collège de Montaigu in Paris, and also in Cambrai, Maline, Louvain and Valenciennes.³⁸

Humanism

The academic input of the Brothers is debateable. Some scholars have claimed that the Devout contributed to the rise of humanism in northern Europe³⁹ because a number of early humanists, such as Erasmus, attended their schools. However, Erasmus' scathing comments about the Brothers do not suggest a stimulating academic environment, and his humanist scholarship probably derived from elsewhere. Nevertheless, Devout schools did play a part in the dissemination of the Brothers' attitudes and methods through the influential figures that attended them. Luther studied at the school in Magdeburg in 1497, and his 1521 "*Theses concerning vows*" reflects the Brothers' view that the intentions behind vows were important.⁴⁰ Pope Adrian VI had been a pupil at Deventer or Zwolle; before his papacy he acted as Co-regent of Spain with Cardinal Jiménez de Cisneros at whose abbey Ignatius spent a significant period. Erasmus himself joined the canons regular at Steyn and later studied at the Collège de Montaigu. His hugely influential writings are infused with the spirit of the *Devotio Moderna*. Both Calvin and Ignatius also attended the Collège de Montaigu. However, Post is probably correct to argue that the Devout made a very limited contribution in terms of humanist education. Although there are similarities between humanism and the outlook of the Devout, such as their interest in books and

in the Church Fathers, the *Devotio Moderna* did not generally encourage the pursuit of learning.

Chapter 4

The Spirituality of the *Devotio Moderna*

Reform

Reform lay at the heart of the *Devotio Moderna*: Groote preached a message of ecclesiastical and personal reform and he founded a community where lay people could dedicate themselves to Christian living. Brothers and Sisters exhorted local townspeople towards moral rectitude, and hostels attached to schools were active in the formation of students. In the mid fifteenth century, the Canons of Windesheim supported Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa in implementing the monastic reforms of Pope Nicholas V in German countries and the Netherlands. They were also influential in monasteries and convents as distant as Paris.¹

For the Devout, reform meant returning to the practices of the apostolic church and of the Church Fathers.² The term “*moderna*” does not imply a break with the past but the re-establishment of former devotional practices within the present. This new devotion was driven by a deep concern for personal salvation and its distinctive character lay in the method by which it was pursued.

Exercises

The Devout filled their days with spiritual exercises – a term referring to a variety of practices which helped them towards their spiritual goal. They believed that through self-discipline and perseverance, they might progress in virtue. While this was not in itself a new idea,³ the Devout placed an unprecedented emphasis on the technique of spiritual progress through the cultivation of virtues and elimination of personal vices. Devout spirituality was thus overwhelmingly moralistic rather than mystical.⁴

The goal of the exercises was to enable individuals to conform to God’s will by bringing their own will into alignment with God’s. This was to be achieved by imitating Christ.⁵ Spiritual exercises fostered humility, self-denial, self-knowledge and obedience.⁶ Humility was the principal virtue and could best be achieved by suppression of the individual’s will through obedience to a superior.⁷ Exercises frequently aimed to eliminate pride through humiliating work or admonishment.⁸

Obedience to superiors was considered a virtue and obedience to God was shown through accepting suffering and difficulties as Christ had done. Suffering was understood to be God's means of testing and chastening people.⁹ À Kempis states that suffering strengthens virtue, and that humiliation suffered will be rewarded with eternal life. Suffering therefore is regarded as an end in itself, another means of defeating self-will.¹⁰ The Devout also emphasised the importance of inwardness: emotion, empathy and correct intention were essential aspects of their affective spirituality.¹¹ With inwardness came withdrawal from the world. Social interactions were regarded as sources of temptation, with solitude and silence being preferred.¹² Consequently, any missionary activities of the Devout were, for the most part, local and personal. Groote himself was of the opinion that expansive missionary work was not God's will.¹³

There are many examples of spiritual exercises. Zerbolt's *Spiritual Ascents* was particularly influential and became required reading within Devout communities.¹⁴ Copies were also circulated among other contemplative Orders in northern Europe.¹⁵ Zerbolt asserts that there are three levels of ascent to return to the state in which God created humanity. The individual must first come to an understanding of his or her present predicament. Following self-examination, the ascent begins with sincere contrition, confession and satisfaction. The second ascent aims to restore purity of heart by meditating on death, the final judgement and hell. Zerbolt encourages the use of the imagination to create frightening imagery, but he also advises that in order to avoid despair, fear must be balanced by hope through meditating on the life of Christ. The third ascent is the battle against personal vices which must be conquered one by one. Zerbolt explains that it is essential to have periods of "descent," either following the superior's orders or to make oneself available for others.

The spiritual exercises used by the Devout follow long established traditions of spiritual advancement. The elements of the monastic practice of *Lectio Divina* - reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation - are interwoven with the "three ways" of spiritual growth - purgative, illuminative and unitive.¹⁶

The notion of the three ways derives from Pseudo-Dionysius (c550), but has been treated differently by different writers. Bonaventure and the Franciscan school

interpreted them as three spiritual states which should be developed simultaneously through meditation or prayer. However, Hugh of Balma, a 13th century Carthusian, considered them to be progressive stages of spiritual development: thus beginners seek to free themselves from sin, the intermediate seek illumination and virtuous conduct, while those in whom love has been perfected can aspire to mystical union with God.

There is clear evidence of the purgative, illuminative and unitive ways in Zerbolt's *Ascents*. However, the emphasis is firmly on purgation as a continuous process, and on illumination as the fostering of virtues through the imitation of Christ. The ultimate aim of union with God is mentioned only briefly, with the caveat that this step cannot be achieved perfectly in this life.¹⁷ Zerbolt's understanding of the three ways bears most resemblance to the Franciscan School. He does not envisage an uninterrupted spiritual progression towards perfection, and perseverance is essential to eradicate persistent sins and cultivate virtues.

Self-knowledge was acquired through daily self-examination and this was a highly structured activity. Written notes were made to help with weekly confession. Zerbolt encourages a sense of disgust towards worldly affections: "You contract a certain sliminess and oozyiness in your desires and faculties ..." ¹⁸ The Devout were reminded of the closeness of death, and the need to judge themselves as God will judge them.¹⁹ It was expected that self-examination should search every corner of the penitents' consciences, enabling them to discern any motivation which might incriminate even apparently virtuous actions. Zerbolt advises that it is necessary to have a spiritual guide both to avoid making errors in the spiritual ascent and to maintain humility.²⁰ Zerbolt describes reading, meditation and prayer, as "the three steps which sustain and advance spiritual ascent."²¹

Reading

Devotional reading was a daily activity and individuals were permitted to choose books they found beneficial.²² In addition, the Devout would hear books read during mealtimes and collations. To facilitate their understanding, texts in the vernacular were provided. While the principle for using vernacular translations had been acknowledged in "*Cum ex iniuncto*"²³ this practice raised concerns among church

authorities²⁴ and was strongly defended by Zerbolt in “*De Libris Teutonicis*”.²⁵ In addition to Scripture, the Devout enjoyed a range of other books: their libraries included the Lives of Christ by Bonaventure and Ludolf of Saxony, and works by The Desert Fathers, Cassian, Augustine, Bernard, Anselm, Chrysostom, Henry of Suso, David of Augsburg, William of St Thierry and Hugh of St Victor. Authors from within the Devout communities were also read, and à Kempis is said to have instigated the practice of writing the lives of the Devout with a view to encouraging others to emulate them.²⁶

The Devout took notes while reading, filling private copybooks with passages they found inspirational. Such inscriptions provided material for meditation and prayer, and enabled them to intensify their emotional response to their reading.²⁷ These collections, known as *rapiaria*,²⁸ resemble the “*florilegia*” of earlier monastic practice. The Devout also adopted the tradition from the Desert Fathers of passing down by word of mouth short sayings which originated in the community.²⁹ Thomas à Kempis³⁰ *Imitatio Christi* appears to be based on a compilation of such sayings, organised thematically, and developed into a spiritual manual. It was originally circulated in four pamphlets.³¹ À Kempis was writing for a monastic readership and community virtues are commended, most notably humility, obedience and fraternal love. He encouraged progress in virtue through exercises such as meditation on the life and passion of Christ and on sin, death and judgement. There is a strong emphasis on the interior life, contempt for the world and the importance of self-denial. Academic learning is regarded as inferior to self-knowledge. Frequent Communion should be desired but prepared for by self-examination and received with inner devotion. The *Imitatio* became widely circulated during the fifteenth century and its influence can hardly be overestimated.

Meditation

Meditation continued throughout the day. It focused on the individual’s readings and notes, and on topics such as sin, death, the final judgement and hell, or the benefits of God, heaven, and the Lord’s Passion.³² Zerbolt defines meditation as, “the means by which you studiously turn over in your heart what you have read or heard and thereby stir up your affections or illuminate your intellect.”³³ The term “*ruminare*”, originally used by the Carthusians, indicates a sustained chewing over words, phrases and ideas.

In his compilations of meditations on the Passion, Zerbolt encourages his readers to enter the scene in their imaginations, re-creating the details, and engaging emotionally with the event.³⁴

This degree of emotional involvement with scripture and the expectation that affective meditation should continue through the day, presented challenges to many of the Devout, and for this reason aids to meditation were developed. John Wessel Gansfort (c1319-1489) produced a complete set of meditative prayers in steps in his *Scala meditatoria*. John Mombaer (1460-1501) incorporated Gansfort's text into his *Rosetum exercitiorum spiritualium sacrarum meditationum* (1494). The *Rosetum* was particularly influential as Mombaer introduced it to the French houses he was helping to reform.³⁵ By 1495, the Collège de Montaigu owned a copy of the *Rosetum* in its library. Mombaer developed a method in the *Rosetum* by which he hoped the user could learn to associate religious emotions with different parts of the fingers and hand. Stroking the thumb across the relevant part of the hand could then automatically evoke the required emotions to accompany prayer, meditation and Communion. (Appendix iii).

Affective spirituality influenced the reception of the sacraments. The Devout believed that the efficacy of confession depended on their sense of remorse.³⁶ Similarly, it was expected that Communion should be received with great fervour.³⁷ It was not uncommon for Devout writers to refer to a spiritual Communion resulting from inward devotion, which made physical reception virtually unnecessary.³⁸

Prayer

Zerbolt recommends that prayerfulness should be a continuous state. Vocalised prayer could take the form of short exclamations during work, meditation or temptation, as well as the longer canonical hours.³⁹ Groote translated the liturgical hours, seven penitential psalms and the litany of the saints into the vernacular for the use of the Brothers and Sisters. Zerbolt stresses that prayer should be accompanied by feelings of fear, sadness, love, wonder or gratitude, as God is more concerned with the intentions than the words of the prayer.⁴⁰ He also suggests that one should formulate prayers as conversations with God.

Summary

The distinctive features of the *Devotio Moderna* were the creation of lay communities which emulated monastic life, the development of methodical spiritual exercises, and the importance given to religious emotion. The Devout stressed morality, asceticism and withdrawal from the world, with the aim of attaining personal salvation.

Education was valued insofar as it contributed to spiritual formation. Characteristics typical of the *Devotio Moderna* persisted while the movement declined, and may have contributed to the reforms of the sixteenth century.

Chapter 5

Ignatius of Loyola and the Organisation of the Society of Jesus

This chapter focuses on Ignatius of Loyola's motivation and purpose, and the organisation of the Society of Jesus. It identifies similarities and differences with the *Devotio Moderna*, and suggests other sources of influence.

Motivation and purpose

Both Ignatius and Groote enjoyed successful careers in which religious observation was practised, but where piety was not a driving force. Both underwent a conversion experience as a result of a health crisis. In Ignatius' case, a serious leg injury prevented him from resuming his military activities. During his convalescence, he read Ludolph of Saxony's *Life of Christ*, and Jacopo de Voragine's *Flos Sanctorum*.¹ He resolved to copy the great deeds of the saints, especially St Francis and St Dominic,² and to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Ignatius' ideas evolved in response to a variety of influences.³ On his way to Jerusalem, Ignatius stopped to offer his weapons at the altar of Our Lady of Montserrat, and he remained at the nearby town of Manresa for almost a year.⁴ It is likely that he was receiving spiritual guidance at the Abbey of Montserrat where García Jiménez de Cisneros had been abbot (1493-1510), and that his experiences here caused him to reconsider his previous intentions. Ignatius notes that when he had at first aimed to imitate the saints, he knew nothing about humility, charity and patience, "or the discretion that regulates....these virtues."⁵ He now began to observe a balanced approach to penance, avoiding extreme ascetic practices which he described as "eccentricities,"⁶ and to resolve anxieties ("scruples") concerning inadequate confession.⁷ Ignatius perceived that God was teaching him directly, "as a schoolmaster treats a child."⁸ He recalls mystical experiences in the form of visions, sometimes with "interior eyes,"⁹ and also of mental "enlightenment."¹⁰ It was at the monastery of Montserrat that Ignatius was probably first influenced by the *Devotio*

Moderna. Having been refused permission to remain in Jerusalem, Ignatius decided to embark on a formal education, while at the same time offering spiritual guidance.

As had the Devout, Ignatius experienced opposition to his teaching.¹¹ When he began to offer his *Spiritual Exercises* at Salamanca, the Dominican friars suspected him of being aligned with the heretical *alumbrados* and he was forced to submit his *Exercises* for scrutiny. However, no heretical content was identified. At around 1528, Ignatius enrolled at the Collège de Montaigu in Paris.¹² This gave him direct contact with the ideas and methods of the *Devotio Moderna*. It is also likely that Ignatius wrote his rules for thinking with the church while at Paris as a result of his encounter with Protestantism.¹³

At Paris, Ignatius inspired a small group of friends to commit themselves to lives of poverty and to work for the spiritual welfare of others. In 1534 at Montmartre, they vowed to travel to Jerusalem or, if this was not possible, to offer themselves to the pope “so that he could employ them wherever he judge to be more for the glory of God and the good of souls.”¹⁴ In 1537, Ignatius and six of his companions were ordained, and unable to journey to Jerusalem, they offered their services to Pope Paul III the following year. The Society of Jesus was approved by the papal bull, “*Regimini militantis Ecclesiae*” in 1540, and Ignatius was elected as its Superior.

Reform

Ignatius was not concerned with doctrinal issues nor with reforming church structures, and he did not personally attend the Council of Trent.¹⁵ Like the Devout, he encouraged personal reform and stricter religious observance within the Orders. However, for the Devout, the purpose of conversion was personal salvation, whereas for Ignatius conversion necessitated a commitment to active ministry. The Society’s constitutions state that, “The end of this Society is to devote itself with God’s grace not only to the salvation and perfection of the members’ own souls, but also ... to labour strenuously in giving aid toward the salvation and perfection of the souls of their neighbours.”¹⁶ This difference in purpose is reflected in the membership, organisation and activities of the two organisations.

Mission

For Ignatius, mission and service took priority over formal devotions and ascetic practices. He directed the Society in such a way as to reach as many people as possible and to enable its members to carry out their activities to the greatest effect. Ignatius prioritised working with influential people and educational establishments, who would in turn influence those who fell under their authority.¹⁷ Much of the missionary activity took place in urban areas in Italy and was aimed at encouraging the reception of the sacraments and obedience to church and secular authorities. However, Ignatius' ambition was to convert whole nations, and missionaries were sent as far afield as Japan and India. Preaching and hearing confessions had been among the contentious practices of the Devout, but the priests of the Society could minister with authority.

To ensure his recruits were fit for purpose Ignatius subjected them to a lengthy admission process.¹⁸ The candidates' suitability was assessed by their "diligent and careful formation of the intellect" and on their spirituality and character.¹⁹ Ignatius had a preference for those who would be most influential, either on account of their talents or their nobility.²⁰ Membership was limited to men. It is impossible not to see the influence of Ignatius' military background in the hierarchical structure of the Society. The monarchical role of the Superior General²¹ distinguished the Society from other religious Orders and from the *Devotio Moderna*.

Vows

Ignatius' view that vows were essential²² distanced him from the ideals of Groote and the early *Devotio Moderna*. He also interpreted poverty and obedience differently to accord with the needs of his Order.

Ignatius distinguished between spiritual poverty which all should aim for, and physical poverty which God chose only for some.²³ The Constitutions require that new members distribute their goods before admittance, and that their food, drink, clothing and lodging should be that of the poor.²⁴ Unlike the Devout, the Society should have no fixed income and its members receive no payment for services.²⁵ For Ignatius, who may have been influenced by St Francis, poverty was a statement of trust in God's providence. Ignatius also appreciated the missionary value of poverty:

Visible poverty demonstrated that missionaries were engaged in God's work rather than their own. However Ignatius was aware of the dangers of alienating those whom they were hoping to influence, by wearing unkempt or unusual clothing.²⁶ The Devout were not concerned that their appearance might have a negative impact on evangelism. Ignatius affirmed the vow of chastity claiming that it is evident that purity of body and mind is in imitation of angelic purity.²⁷

Obedience was considered to be paramount, providing unity to a group whose members would operate at great distances from one another.²⁸ Ignatius' interpretation of obedience resembled that of the Devout: It was not simply following the commands of another, but the conforming of one's will to that of the superior who represented Christ.²⁹ Ignatius gave extraordinary emphasis to this vow, stating that as long as a command cannot be judged to be sinful, the professed should act "with blind obedience" and regard himself as "a lifeless body which allows itself to be carried to any place and to be treated in any manner desired..."³⁰ Ignatius introduced a fourth vow of obedience to the pope, requiring the Society to serve wherever the pope commanded.

Common life

A key difference between the Society of Jesus and the *Devotio Moderna* is the emphasis the latter placed on sharing a common life. For Ignatius, the monastic ideal of community living, shared meals, and strict prayer regimes was completely at odds with the needs of his Order to be free to travel, preach and minister at short notice. For this reason, Ignatius vigorously opposed any requirements for the Society to hold choir for the canonical hours.³¹

Schools

Both the Devout and Ignatius believed that schooling should incorporate spiritual formation, but there were significant differences in their approaches to education.

Unlike the schools of the Devout, the Society of Jesus offered free tuition. Ignatius understood education to be essential to his missionary work and his colleges had two purposes: Firstly they would provide a seedbed for new recruits,³² enabling Ignatius to deploy a skilled and educated workforce on the Society's missions;³³ secondly, the

Society could engage with a wide audience as its free tuition³⁴ and reputation for academic rigour proved to be popular. Ignatius insisted that students devote their full attention to their studies, with education taking precedence over devotional practices.³⁵

Ignatius stipulated that education should be directed towards the “better knowledge and service of God...”³⁶ To this end, certain subjects were preferred including sciences, mathematics and philosophy. In keeping with the humanist ideal of studying original texts, a range of languages might be offered.³⁷ Theology was considered to be the most important subject, and the advanced students were taught to preach, administer Communion, hear Confession and give the *Exercises*. Ignatius shared with Groote the opinion that education should not be linked to personal ambition. However, he attributed value to learning, even if the material would never be used.³⁸

During Ignatius’ lifetime, the Society opened eighteen colleges in Italy and Sicily. The Roman College (1551) offered education for around three hundred clergy.

Confraternities

Ignatius’ concern for social action contrasts with the Devout. Many of the Society’s colleges founded confraternities which promoted devotional practices and spiritual exercises, and which encouraged the laity to become involved in social care under their direction. In 1542, Ignatius founded the *Casa di Sancta Maria* as a shelter for abused women and prostitutes, and the Society had oversight of more than two-dozen confraternities in Rome and several more in Naples.³⁹

Chapter 6

Ignatius of Loyola **and the** **Spirituality of the Society of Jesus**

Ignatius did not aim to be doctrinally innovative. In common with the Devout, he discouraged theological speculation or debate over contentious issues,¹ and his *Rules For Thinking with the Church*² clearly affirm his submission to the Church's teaching.

Influences

Ignatius' writing suggests a number of influences, but these are so skilfully assimilated that direct sources are difficult to determine. Spanish Catholicism³ would likely have coloured his early views, and may have inspired his mystical leanings. We also know that he had first hand knowledge of the *Devotio Moderna*. He would have experienced their austere regime at the Collège de Montaigu, as well as having access to such books as Mombaer's *Rosetum* in the college library. He would very likely have experienced Cisneros' *Spiritual Exercises* in some form during his visits to Montserrat: Cisneros was greatly influenced by the *Devotio Moderna* and sections of his exercises show an almost verbatim resemblance to Zerbolt's *Ascents*.⁴ In his *Exercises* Ignatius recommends the reading of Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ* having declared all other spiritual writings to be superfluous.⁶

We will first compare Ignatius' understanding of the imitation of Christ to that of the *Devotio Moderna* and then examine his approach to spiritual exercises.

Imitation

Ignatius initially intended to imitate the deeds of the saints⁷ but after reading à Kempis, his focus transferred to imitating Christ through cultivating virtuous attributes.

Humility is the principal virtue permeating à Kempis' *Imitation*,⁸ and it is equally important for Ignatius. In his *Exercises* Ignatius identifies three types of humility, the most perfect of which is imitating Christ.⁹ However, unlike the Devout, he advocates

humility as a means to serving Christ better, rather than to further personal spiritual advancement.¹⁰ Ignatius, just like the Devout, considered obedience to be a virtue. For example, study that does not have an obvious purpose is “highly meritorious in the sight of the Divine and Supreme Majesty”¹¹ if carried out as an act of obedience.

Like the Devout, Ignatius sought to encourage the sentiment of love, but he also emphasised that “love is shown more in deeds than in words.”¹² Ignatius reasoned that love for God must result in service because “love consists of a mutual communication between two persons.”¹³ As God has given everything to each individual, the individual should put at God’s disposal everything he or she is or owns.

Asceticism

Ignatius emphasised the need for moderation. As the objectives of the Society were service and mission, it was essential that its members were fit enough to carry out their allotted tasks.¹⁴ Whereas for Ignatius, suffering might be a consequence of missionary work and should be endured with indifference, the Devout welcomed suffering as a means to spiritual advancement.

Ignatius’ views on self-discipline derived from his own personal angst. In his autobiography he describes confessing the same sins repeatedly, fearful that his confessions had been inadequate.¹⁵ He concluded that the correct level of self-imposed severity should depend on personal disposition. The lax should become more rigorous whereas the over-zealous should become more moderate. Discernment, therefore, was vital. Ignatius maintained that a ‘good spirit’ might bring consolations and tranquillity, or a sense of desolation in order to move a person towards self-examination. Conversely, an ‘evil spirit’ may cause desolation in order to destroy faith, but sometimes hold a person in sinful practices by inducing a sense of pleasure. Ignatius offered advice on managing periods of consolation and desolation,¹⁶ developing a more nuanced approach than that of the Devout.

Contemptus mundi

The Devout believed interaction with the world threatened their sanctity,¹⁷ but Ignatius affirmed that everything is “created for the human beings, to help them in

working toward the end for which they are created.”¹⁸ Ignatius valued creation as a gift from God. His spirituality is often described as “incarnational”¹⁹ because he encouraged his men to “seek God our Lord in all things”; the world should be loved, not for itself, but because God is in it.²⁰ Ignatius’ outlook reflects the humanistic spirit of his times, but he was also influenced by Aquinas, whose teachings he encountered in Paris. Aquinas maintained that grace perfects nature, so the spiritual and material worlds are not opposed to one another. Ignatius advises adopting an attitude of indifference, by which a person may live within the world yet remain detached, accepting both the good and the bad with equanimity. À Kempis also speaks of indifference but with a slightly different slant. He advises the Devout to be indifferent to themselves, rather than the world, in order to submit themselves to the will of others.²¹

Ignatius does state that it is preferable to live alone and without distractions while undertaking the *Spiritual Exercises*; he even claims by withdrawing from the world for this purpose exercitants will gain “much merit in the eyes of his Divine Majesty.”²² However, the Devout advocated permanent withdrawal from the world whereas, for Ignatius, it was undertaken temporarily. This difference reflects their distinctive understandings of the purpose of spiritual exercises.

Exercises

Exercises were a way of life for the Devout – a continuous effort to progress in virtue in order to attain personal salvation. Ignatius, however, intended his *Exercises* to be completed within roughly a month and made for the purpose of “conquering oneself and ordering one’s life without being influenced by any ungodly desires.”²³ Ignatius hoped his *Exercises* would enable exercitants to discern and dedicate themselves to their vocation, and they became an essential component of spiritual formation for Society members.²⁴ As such, Ignatius most likely expected participation to be a one-off experience.

Ignatius was probably first exposed to spiritual exercises at Montserrat.²⁵ The abbey’s constitutions required that the monks included Zerbolt’s *Ascents* in their reading, and knew “by heart all the exercises on meditation, prayer and contemplation, and on the purgative, illuminative and unitive ways....”²⁶ Ignatius would thus have encountered

exercises similar to those of the *Devotio Moderna*. While it is likely that his *Exercises* date mainly from the Manresa period,²⁸ attempts to identify specific influences through textual analysis have proved fruitless. Ignatius' *Exercises* had initially evoked suspicion, and it may be that he deliberately disposed of earlier drafts to conceal any links to dubious sources such as the *alumbradismo*.²⁹ Ignatius himself maintained his ideas came from his own experience of directing souls.³⁰ He continually modified and added to them,³¹ the final form being approved by Pope Paul III in 1548.³²

Ignatius' *Exercises* take the form of a handbook for the spiritual director and are not intended to be read by the exercitant. The content was to be used flexibly³³ and Ignatius stressed that the director should allow "the Creator to work directly with the creature."³⁴

Ignatius offers guidelines on how the *Exercises* should be delivered and advice on spiritual practices. The book concludes with four chapters on specific matters: *Rules for discernment of spirits*, *Rules for the distribution of alms*, *Concerning scruples*, and *Rules for thinking with the church*. These chapters relate to Ignatius' own concerns and have no parallel in the exercises of the Devout.

The *Exercises* are divided into four "weeks,"³⁵ each with its own focus. Ignatius begins by following the "three ways," describing the exercises of the first week as purgative and those of the second week as illuminative.³⁶ However, as Melloni points out, Ignatius does not wait until the exercises are nearly completed before introducing the unitive way.³⁷ Instead, this appears in the second week when he challenges the exercitant to make an election. Ignatius' aim is clearly not towards 'mystical union': Instead of the soul rising above the world to unity with the divine,³⁸ God's perfection comes to the world as the human will unites with the divine will.³⁹

The first week of the *Exercises* bears much resemblance to the *via purgativa* of Zerbolt. Exercitants should view themselves "...as an ulcer and abscess from which have come so many sins and iniquities, and such vile poison."⁴⁰ Ignatius' approach is methodical: Each day begins with a resolution to eliminate a particular sin. Written records are kept of sins committed and these are regularly reviewed to observe

improvements. Like Zerbolt, Ignatius hopes fear will intensify penitence,⁴¹ but he also seeks to instil a sense of gratitude for God's forgiveness so the individual is moved to make an election.⁴²

Election.

The election at the end of week two, when exercitants are encouraged to commit their lives to God⁴³ is the most distinctive feature of Ignatius' *Exercises*. Ignatius introduces the idea in his "*Meditation on Two Standards*."⁴⁴ The image of the Christian as a soldier of Christ was of particular importance to Ignatius. Himself a soldier, it is not surprising that Ignatius would have employed military metaphors which he would have been familiar with from scripture⁴⁵ and probably also from Erasmus' *Enchiridion*.⁴⁶ À Kempis too speaks of the Christian as the soldier of Christ who must suffer in order to increase in virtue before receiving a heavenly crown and eternal glory.⁴⁷ However, Ignatius' treatment of the analogy is quite different from that found in the *Imitation*. According to Ignatius, the soldier must choose between the Two Standards – those of Christ and Satan. Christ sends those who choose him "throughout the whole world, to spread his doctrine among people of every state and condition,"⁴⁸ and to encourage virtuous conduct.⁴⁹ The role of the soldier of Christ is thus linked to mission rather than spiritual warfare against personal sins.

Affective Spirituality

Before considering Ignatius approach to *Lectio Divina* we should note the importance he attributed to the emotions, a characteristic of the *Devotio Moderna*.

In his private life and particularly during Mass, Ignatius underwent intense emotional experiences to which he attributed a mystical significance.⁵⁰ He regarded tearfulness as a spiritual consolation, inflaming the soul with God's love,⁵¹ and providing some assurance of God's approval.⁵² Tears were of great significance for Ignatius, to the point that he recorded their occurrence or absence in his *Spiritual Diary* even when nothing else was noted.⁵³ À Kempis also associates tears with the reception of Communion, suggesting that their absence is indicative of unworthiness and a lack of love.⁵⁴

Although Ignatius asserts that emotional experiences are a gift of God,⁵⁵ he nevertheless recommends that when meditating, a suitable environment is chosen to stimulate the desired emotions.⁵⁶

Reading

Whereas the Devout chose their own texts for meditation, Ignatius prescribes specific texts to be given *via* the director. He offers a variety of scriptural passages, and each is followed by three points which enable exercitants to recall what they have heard. In addition to the *Imitation*, Ignatius also recommends exercitants read the Gospels or the lives of the saints.

Meditation/contemplation

Because Ignatius does not venture into mystical unity in his *Exercises*, his use of the term “contemplation” does not have mystical connotations.⁵⁷

Ignatius describes a clearly defined method for contemplation. Beginning with a prayer for attentiveness, the exercitant then focuses on the narrative by forming a mental image of the event. Like Zerbolt, Ignatius encourages exercitants to enter into the scenario by evoking each of their senses within their imaginations.⁵⁸ They should then create a conversation, or colloquy, with one of the Persons of the Trinity or with Mary, asking for grace and guidance.⁵⁹

While the *Devotio Moderna* is regarded by scholars as having been influential in promulgating methodical forms of meditation during the fifteenth century, there is a degree of uncertainty as to the extent Ignatius derived inspiration from this source. Evennett refers to the findings of Wattigrant who also notes the possible influence of the Franciscans and Carthusians, as well as of individuals such as Pierre d’Ailly, Gerson, Tauler and Ruusbroec.⁶⁰ However, the similarities between Ignatius and the *Devotio Moderna* suggest at least a partial influence.⁶¹

Prayer

Interior as opposed to vocal prayer, with the emphasis on the intention rather than the words, was a practice of the Devout which became widespread.⁶² Melloni argues that Ignatius came to know “the practice of mental and methodical prayer proper to the

Devotio Moderna” at Montserrat.⁶³ In his *Exercises* Ignatius proposes “Three Methods of Praying.”⁶⁴ The first is structured on themes: the Ten Commandments, the seven deadly sins, the powers of the soul, and the senses of the body. The second method requires the exercitant to dwell on the individual words of a prayer. The final method harmonises the words with the breathing and enables the individual to reflect calmly on each word. Ignatius also taught prayer as a form of conversation with God, an idea which à Kempis touches on in his *Imitation*.⁶⁵ Melloni describes Ignatius’ methods as constituting a school of prayer comprising ideas “from the tradition that preceded him.”⁶⁶

Mass

Communion was merely an annual obligation in the early sixteenth century. During his time at the Collège de Montaigu, Ignatius would have witnessed the practice of fortnightly Communion as promoted by Standonck and Mombaer, and he himself communicated and advised others to communicate weekly.⁶⁷

Mysticism

Ignatius recalls a variety of mystical experiences: on the ship to Jerusalem he perceived Christ appearing to him as a large round, golden object.⁶⁸ While at Vicenza he reports having “many spiritual visions and many quite regular consolations.”⁶⁹ He had visions of Christ and Our Lady which took indistinct supernatural forms;⁷⁰ these occurred especially during Mass.⁷¹ Ignatius began to speak of interior visions and perceptions since his time at Manresa. However, he did not encourage others to seek mystical experiences, nor did he allow his own experiences to take precedence over his practical work.⁷² His colleague Nadal, described him as “a contemplative person even while he was in action.”⁷³

In his visions, Ignatius experienced a sense of closeness to the members of the Trinity. This is reflected in the colloquies of the *Exercises* and more particularly in his *Spiritual Diary*. Ignatius’ Trinitarian mysticism contrasts with the Christocentrism of the *Devotio Moderna*.

Summary

The key characteristic of Ignatius was the central importance he gave to mission. He based his *Exercises* on traditional models but restructured them to direct exercitants towards active commitment. The *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus rejected aspects of traditional Orders which Ignatius believed would inhibit missionary activities. He valued education as a means to providing an able workforce, and also to expanding his field of influence. Ignatius encouraged individuals to engage emotionally with scripture in order to deepen their sense of personal commitment. Mysticism played an important part in his personal life, but mystical union with God was not his objective. Unity with God was to be achieved within the world by conforming to God's will through imitating Christ.

Chapter 7

Philip Neri and the Organisation of the Oratory

Whereas it has been possible to identify a potential direct influence of the *Devotio Moderna* on Ignatius, notably through à Kempis' *Imitation* and Zerbolt's *Ascents*, a similar link between the *Devotio Moderna* and Philip Neri is more tenuous. Neri did not develop structured exercises to further spiritual progress, nor recommend the writings of the Devout. However, similarities with the *Devotio Moderna* can be noted. Many of these can be traced to other sources yet may derive from the indirect influence of the Devout.

Motivation and purpose

Unlike Groote and Ignatius, Neri did not experience conversion as a call to redirect his life from worldly concerns. Even as a child he had an inclination towards piety. Aged around eighteen, he was given an opportunity to enter the business world with his father's cousin in San Germano although he had probably already decided against a worldly career.¹ Nevertheless, Neri experienced two episodes which influenced the direction he took. The first occurred at the rock in Gaetà where he used to pray. The precise nature of this experience is not known, but it prompted Neri to leave San Germano for Rome. Here, in 1533, he obtained simple lodgings² in return for tutoring his host's two sons, and lived frugally as a hermit, seeking solitude and prayer. Eleven years later, during one of his many nights spent in the catacombs of S. Sebastiano, he had his second experience. While praying to the Holy Spirit he saw a ball of fire enter his mouth and into his heart.³ From then on Neri was prone to palpitations and trembling whenever he thought about God. Following this "Pentecost" experience, Neri led a less reclusive life, explaining that he was, "Leaving Christ for Christ's sake."⁴

Neri's experiences shaped his perception of his relationship to God but they did not inspire the vision of the Oratory that he was to found.

Reform

Neri's ideas evolved in response to his environment and influential individuals. In Florence, his family had revered Savonarola with his fiery condemnation of ecclesiastical abuses, and Neri kept a portrait of the outspoken Dominican on which he had drawn a halo. In Rome, Neri admired the fervent preaching of Ignatius,⁵ underwent Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*,⁶ and both men carried out charitable activities among the same disadvantaged groups. However, Neri shared neither the severity of Savonarola nor Ignatius' propensity for organisation. Charming and charismatic by nature, he frequented the shops and squares of Rome, engaging in conversation with young men. Then by discussion and questioning punctuated with humour, he would lead them individually towards conversion.⁷

Origin of the Oratory

Neri probably drew inspiration from the lay confraternities with which he was closely involved.⁸ Three confraternities in Rome were particularly influential for Neri: The Oratory of Divine Love,⁹ the Confraternity of the Most Holy Trinity of Pilgrims and Convalescents, and the Confraternity of Charity.

The Oratory of Divine Love,¹⁰ aimed to "to sow and implant" divine love in members' hearts, and also to minister to the sick, poor, orphans and prisoners. Small, autonomous communities comprising mostly lay members spread across Italy. In Rome they founded the Hospital for Incurables at San Giacomo.¹¹ Neri became a member while he was still in lodgings, and his association with the hospital remained important for the rest of his life. Aspects of this Oratory resemble the *Devotio Moderna*, and can also be recognised in Neri's own Oratory: - the lay membership, the emphasis on humility, and the equality of the brothers. However, their focus on social responsibility, so essential to Neri, was not a priority of the Devout.

The Confraternity of the Most Holy Trinity for Pilgrims and Convalescents began when Neri's confessor, Persiano Rosa, gathered twelve men to pray, to receive weekly Communion,¹² and to minister to sick and poor pilgrims.¹³ At their meetings, the men would take turns at meetings to speak about how they might go to heaven. Ponnelle and Bordet suggest that, "In these *"ragionamenti"* we can already see the essential feature of the Oratory."¹⁴

In 1515, at Rosa's suggestion, Neri received ordination after which he lived as a guest priest with the Confraternity of Charity at San Girolamo della Carità. This was a centre for charitable work in Rome,¹⁵ and it became Neri's home for the next thirty-two years. San Girolamo gave Neri both a model of community living and a physical base for developing his apostolate. Community members provided for themselves and retained much independence. As a guest, Neri had no obligations, although he chose to say Mass daily and spend the mornings hearing confessions.

Neri's reputation as a confessor grew quickly. He invited penitents to return to his room in the afternoon when they would read and discuss texts such as St John's Gospel or the works of Gerson,¹⁶ a supporter of the *Devotio Moderna*. The group were also inspired by letters from India, sent by members of the Society of Jesus. They considered embarking on international missionary work themselves until the Cistercian, Vincenzo Ghettoni, convinced them to remain in Italy, declaring, "Your Indies are in Rome."¹⁷

The Oratory was formed as Neri began to hold gatherings in an attic room above the main church at San Girolamo. With increased numbers, meetings became more formalised and the discussions gave place to structured talks. Recruits came from a variety of backgrounds and included courtiers, physicians and tradesmen. Women were not permitted to attend.

In 1564, Neri was asked to become rector of San Giovanni. Reluctant to leave San Girolamo, he sent chaplains to carry out the duties there. This new responsibility was a significant step in the development of the Oratory. Until this point, it had been essentially a lay assembly, but now Neri needed to ensure some of his followers were ordained to supply San Giovanni with ministers. Baronius, Fideli and Bordini became his first chaplains at San Giovanni, soon to be joined by Tarugi and Velli. Meanwhile, Neri continued to hold meetings at San Girolamo and his companions travelled there daily for morning confession, the afternoon Oratory and evening prayers. This continued for ten years and was a formative period for the Congregation of the Oratory. The ordained members were now sharing a communal life, listening to readings during meals and discussing scripture. However, it was a community in which the founder was absent. This "apartness" where Neri both sought to direct the

Oratory while allowing it to have its own life was typical of his approach. Even in 1574 when the Florentines constructed an Oratory at San Giovanni to enable meetings to take place there, Neri remained at San Girolamo.

As the community grew, it needed its own house and Pope Gregory XIII offered Neri the church of Santa Maria in Vallicella. In 1575, the Congregation of the Oratory received canonical status and its new home, the *Chiesa Nuova*, was opened in 1577. The Oratory had now become hugely influential in Rome, frequented by the ecclesiastical and secular elite and attracting large numbers of vocations.¹⁸ Neri, however, continued to live in San Girolamo until the pope ordered him to move to the Vallicella in 1583.

Mission

Neri did not share Ignatius' ambitions for expansive, organised mission. He resisted requests from Charles Borromeo to send Oratorians to Milan, and only consented to founding a house at Naples because his Congregation had voted in favour of this. Neri's chief objections to expansion seem to have been his aversion to formal organisations under authoritative leadership and his prudent concern about losing talented men from Rome.¹⁹

Vows

A feature in which Neri's ideas particularly resembled the *Devotio Moderna* is their mutual rejection of vows. However, it is unlikely that Neri used the Devout as an exemplar for his community. Turks suggests that the open convent of Tor de Specchi to which Neri was confessor may have provided him with a model.²⁰ It is also possible that Neri's early experiences of the hardships in Florence brought about by the struggles against the tyrannical Medici had instilled in him a predilection for freedom and democracy.

Opinions on vows differed within the Oratory. The house at Naples had begun to develop on more formal lines than Rome, hoping to introduce vows relating to stability and poverty. Neri however, remained opposed, and the absence of vows was enshrined in the final Constitutions of 1612. When Pope Gregory XIII agreed to the formation of a community of secular clerics²¹ their Constitutions stated that, "The

Congregation of the Oratory is guided more by customs than bound with laws,” and recognised that it was new and different from other institutions.²²

Although Neri lived an ascetic life, he did not reject the concept of personal ownership nor wish Oratorians to renounce their property.²³ Neri was non-judgmental regarding the wealth of others and expected the rich to dress according to their status.²⁴

As priests, Oratorians took a vow of chastity. While this was not an Oratorian vow, Neri regarded chastity as greatly important.²⁵ Like many in his era, and also the priests who acted as confessors to Devout women, Neri restricted his contact with women and could treat them abruptly.²⁶

Although not a vow, Neri regarded obedience as fundamental. However, he set very few rules for his community, stating that someone who wishes to be obeyed should make few commands.²⁷ Despite being elected as Provost, Neri’s style of leadership was democratic, with important issues being agreed by the full community.²⁸

Common Life

Neri had not originally planned to create the Congregation of the Oratory. He had first lived and prayed in solitude, engaging in charitable works. His ministry focused on individual discussions which, after his ordination, incorporated confession and spiritual direction. The Oratory at San Girolamo had a flexible membership without formal commitment. The communal life at San Giovanni developed to some extent independently of Neri who continued to live in San Girolamo. Even as the community created its own home at the Vallicella, Neri lived apart from the other members. It seems evident that the vision of a common life did not have the same priority for Neri as it did for the Devout.²⁹

Education

Neri valued education, but agreed with Groote that it should not be used for self-promotion.³⁰ He had studied philosophy at the University of the Sapienza and theology at S. Agostino and his academic understanding was considerable.³¹ However, he maintained that prayer, not study, is the key to understanding scripture.³²

Chapter 8

Philip Neri and the Spirituality of the Oratory

Similarities between Philip Neri and the *Devotio Moderna* may stem from their common desire to re-create the practices of the early church.

In his church history, Baronius writes regarding the Oratory, “It seemed as if the ancient apostolical and beautiful method of Christian assemblies was renewed.”¹ Capacelatro points out that the very name “Oratory” goes back to the sixth century and that it was “revived and adapted by Philip.... in keeping with his grand idea of reforming the discipline of the Church of the sixteenth century by turning the eyes and hearts of men back to the primitive times of Christianity.”² In 1576, Juvenal Ancina wrote that Neri was “like a second Ruysbroek, Thomas à Kempis or Tauler.”³

Influence of the *Devotio Moderna* and Ignatius

Many of Neri’s *Maxims* reflect characteristics of both Ignatius and the *Devotio Moderna*, which could suggest the influence of either or both.

In common with the Devout, Neri addressed a secular audience.⁴ He emphasised the importance of cultivating virtues and eliminating vices,⁵ and the necessity of perseverance.⁶ He referred to making resolutions,⁷ and even adopted vocabulary distinctive of the Devout by referring to the “sweetness” of the experience of God.⁸

However, à Kempis’ *Imitation* does not appear to be listed among the books used by the Oratory. It is also noteworthy that Neri’s *Maxims* do not speak about imitating Christ, advising instead that one should aim to become a saint – as Ignatius had originally aspired to do.⁹

It is possible that Neri had in mind Ignatius’ *Exercises* when he penned his advice on scruples¹⁰ and that Ignatius may have provided him the concept of consolation and desolation.¹¹ Ignatius advised that extreme self-discipline can impede one’s ability to carry out God’s work, and Neri dispenses the same caution.¹²

Neri, in common with the Devout and Ignatius, encouraged humility, obedience and detachment.¹³ He held humility to be the greatest virtue. He borrowed St. Bernard's maxim listing the four requisites for perfect humility: to despise the world, to despise no-one, to despise one's self and to despise being despised.¹⁴ For Neri, "despising" denotes indifference rather than hatred.¹⁵ He does not speak of the world with the same distaste as the Devout, but treats it, like Ignatius, as a gift to be used.

Neri used to lay three fingers across his forehead, claiming that, "A man's sanctity lies within the compass of three fingers, and consists in the mortification of ... the power of reasoning..." Humility thus necessitates the suppression of egoism and self-justification.¹⁶ Neri went to great lengths to defeat self-pride both in himself and his followers, and there are numerous accounts of him inviting public mockery.¹⁷ The Devout too had sought humility by self-effacement, but not with the characteristic humour of Neri. Ponnelle and Bordet claim Neri intentionally imitated the comical behaviour of the Desert Fathers.¹⁸ However, he was also influenced by the satirical writings of Ariotto Mainardi who employed humour to deflate arrogance.¹⁹

Neri believed obedience should be practised voluntarily and that superiors and confessors should be regarded as standing in the place of God.²⁰ Like Ignatius, he considered obedience as self-sacrifice²¹ and more important than self-inflicted penances.²² Obedience was also evidence of humility; Neri declared that Talpa and Bordini were not suited to lead the Congregation because they had not learnt obedience.

Asceticism

Asceticism was a hallmark of the Devout and it was also encouraged by the confraternities in Neri's Italy. Neri's visions of John the Baptist, and of white robed souls offering him bread had convinced him that he should live frugally as a Desert Father.²³ However, he did not make the same demands on others.²⁴ Instead, he exhorted them to become prayerful, receive the sacraments and serve their neighbours.

Contemptus mundi

Neri encouraged young men to spend time at the Oratory to keep them from temptation,²⁵ but he also insisted on an active ministry within the world, particularly through assisting in the local hospitals. Like Ignatius, Neri recommended detachment rather than withdrawal from the world.²⁶ He believed individuals could become saints in their own homes,²⁷ whereas the Devout lived apart in their own communities.

Exercises

The exercises of the Oratory differed from those of both Zerbolt and Ignatius: They neither proposed a step-by-step method of spiritual advancement, nor a means of spiritual discernment. Rather, they offered a range of activities in which individuals were free to participate, deepening their spirituality while continuing to live secular lives.

Baronius describes the Oratory meetings in his “*De Origine Oratorii*.”²⁸ A brother would read from the lives of the Saints or a treatise on virtues. Talks would follow on such subjects as church history, the saints, death, judgement and the rewards of heaven. Everyone was free to comment and question as they felt inspired. The gathering would then conclude with music and prayers.

Meetings were informal and talks were delivered from a raised bench at the front rather than a pulpit. The speakers were laymen,²⁹ which aroused the suspicion of church authorities. However, Neri did not permit talks on theoretical subjects, and like the Devout, argued that they were not preaching but delivering moral exhortations.

Neri gives his account of the three spiritual steps in his *Maxims*. He sees the first step as God attracting the individual with feelings of devotion. This is a curious feature: Neri, whose apostolate was chiefly through confession, does not begin with the struggle against sin; this must be understood as the counterpart to cultivating virtue in the second step. He recommends persevering in the second step, stating that God will grant the third step, which is an “almost angelic life,” in his own good time.³⁰ Significantly, Neri claims that the contemplative life is only available to those who

have exercised themselves laboriously in the active life, a prerequisite not stipulated by the Devout.³¹

Neri aimed to make worship joyful: He did not see joy as solely the result of a holy life but also a means to one.³² On Sunday evenings and feast days he arranged outdoor gatherings which could be attended by women and children as well as men. Those present might play games, hear literature and enjoy performances by musicians from the Papal Chapel. Sometimes a boy, coached by Neri, delivered an elegant sermon. Neri would also play practical jokes on his friends to entertain the crowd. During Carnival, Neri organised the Pilgrimage of the Seven Churches as an alternative to the unruly pagan festivities.³³ Choirs led the singing of litanies and *laude* as the pilgrims walked from church to church and a sermon was preached at each sanctuary. Everyone ate a picnic lunch to the accompaniment of singers and instrumentalists. Neri's emphasis on joy was strikingly different from both the Devout and Ignatius, and a precedent for these occasions might be the children's carnivals of Savonarola.³⁴

Music

Music was a highly distinctive feature of the Oratory which held limited importance for the Devout or Ignatius. Religious songs in the vernacular known as *laude* had been used in Florence for around five centuries.³⁵ Neri had a preference for the *laude* of Jacopone da Todi, whose texts often related to the life and Passion of Christ or focused on ascetic themes.³⁶

Affective Spirituality

Neri was frequently overcome by emotion and tears³⁷ yet, unlike the Devout and Ignatius, he did not encourage religious emotion.³⁸ He did not consider tears as evidence of piety,³⁹ but emphasized the greater importance of virtue.⁴⁰ Neri, in fact, makes a remarkable twist to the three steps of the spiritual life, describing the first step as the "animal life," which is the experience of spiritual novices who are drawn to "sensible devotion."⁴¹

Reading

Scripture dominated Oratory readings, but a variety of other texts were also heard. Like Ignatius, Neri encouraged the reading of the lives of the saints.⁴² Many of the books read by the Devout were also read at the Oratory. Their mutual consumption of Cassian, Climacus, Bernard, Gerson and the Victorines could explain similarities in their outlook, without there necessarily being a direct influence on Neri by the Devout.⁴³

Two especially important texts for the Oratorians were the *Spiritual Canticles* of Jacopone da Todi, and the *Life of the Blessed Colombini* by Foe Belcari. Ponnelle and Bordet highlight the resemblance between *Colombini* and the exercises of the Oratory.⁴⁴ *Colombini* proposes three remedies for the absence of charity: to speak constantly of Christ, to develop greater love for all creatures, and to practise mortification.⁴⁵ Each of these points is evident in the Oratory. The meetings were filled with readings, talks and discussions about God and Christ; Neri insisted on practical charity, and although he did not demand physical mortification, Neri stressed the need for mortification of the will.

Neri encouraged an approach to reading which resembled the notion of “*ruminare*” which was important to the Devout. His *Maxim* dated August 4th states: “....we ought not to read out of curiosity, or skimming, but with pauses; and when we feel ourselves warmed, we ought not to pass on, but to stop and follow up the spirit which is stirring in us....”

Meditation/ contemplation

Neri valued reading as a springboard for talks, discourse and prayers.⁴⁶ The Oratorians treasured a form of discussion they called “Speaking on the book.”⁴⁷ Everyone was invited to contribute as they felt moved, and it was believed that in this way the Spirit spoke through them. Neri would question the speakers and encourage dialogue. This clear, simple exposition of Scripture which contrasted with the typically florid sermons of the period was described by Talpa as the Oratory’s distinctive feature.⁴⁸ However, it bears resemblance to the monastic practice of discussing short scriptural passages at the end of the day,⁴⁹ and more particularly to the collations of the Devout.

Prayer

Neri taught both spoken and mental prayer, and encouraged the use of short prayers regularly through the day. Frederick Borromeo testified that Neri prayed “in the manner of ... Cassian, Climacus, and Richard of St Victor”⁵⁰ Turks explains that, like “a man sipping a fine wine, he took the full flavour and emotion of each word. It was a practice reminiscent of the use of formulas by the desert fathers and monks.”⁵¹ Again we see the notion of “*ruminare*” as each word is rolled over in the mind.⁵² It is likely that similarities between Neri and the *Devotio Moderna* result from common sources of influence.

Sacraments

Following ordination, Neri’s ministry focussed particularly on confession, and he advised individuals to confess several times a week. Neri’s approach to confession was more sacramental than that of the Devout. He did not recommend the use of laymen as confessors or spiritual directors, nor advise Oratorians to point out each others’ faults. Like Ignatius, he believed confessors should allow God to work directly with the penitents.⁵³

Neri also encouraged frequent Communion and, despite opposition, said Mass daily at San Girolamo.⁵⁴ By 1557 frequent Communion became a standard practice in the community.

Mysticism

Mysticism was an essential element of Neri’s spirituality. Witnesses have testified to finding him in a state of ecstasy during which he was insensible to his surroundings.⁵⁵

Neri believed that God inspired and spoke through him. He admitted to Frederick Borromeo that he sometimes said things without knowing why, but claimed, “It is God who lets me speak in this way.”⁵⁶ Neri’s spontaneity can be contrasted with Ignatius’ methodical attempts to discern God’s will.

Neri also experienced visions and made prophecies, and his reputation as a miracle worker attracted many followers. It was even testified that his prayers had brought

back to life a fourteen-year-old boy.⁵⁷ However, Neri discouraged others from seeking mystical experiences,⁵⁸ and he was suspicious of those who claimed them.⁵⁹ Some of his bizarre behaviour such as having his hair cut during Mass and biting the chalice have been explained as attempts to prevent himself becoming overwhelmed by the supernatural. Neri aimed to deflect his followers from the goal of mystical union to one of active service and the pursuit of virtue.

Summary

While Philip Neri was the founder and inspiration behind the Oratory, it would be fair to say that the institution owed much to other key members. Neri initiated the readings, talks, discussions and prayers, and taught humility and obedience. However, he rarely spoke at meetings and relied on charismatic speakers such as Tarugi to attract members.

Neri's ministry was essentially one of personal contact, focusing on confession and spiritual direction. His success can largely be attributed to his magnetic personality, his message of joy during a repressive religious climate, and his reputation as a mystic and miracle worker.

It is interesting that Neri did not wish others to share the characteristics that defined his own life – asceticism, religious emotion and mysticism. He appeared to view himself as a prophetic figure, calling individuals to humility, obedience, devotion, reception of the sacraments, and acts of charity.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

The *Devotio Moderna* did not aim to be innovative, but drew its ideas and methods from sources which may have influenced Ignatius and Neri independently. However, the Devout were responsible for developing techniques of methodical prayer, meditation and spiritual self-improvement to an unprecedented degree. Their influence was spread in particular by the popularity of à Kempis' *Imitation*, by a few eminent scholars such as Erasmus and Biel, by the Windesheim Canons' contribution to monastic reform, by the dissemination of their ideas *via* the Carthusians, and through the support of the influential theologian, Gerson.

It is impossible to identify with certainty the respects in which the *Devotio Moderna* may have influenced Ignatius and Neri. Nevertheless, we will conclude by summarising their similarities and differences.

The Devout, Ignatius and Neri all sought to bring about reform in the moral and spiritual life of individuals rather than in doctrine and ecclesiastical structure. However, they set about this in different ways. The Devout, possibly adapting Beguine practices, established communities of laymen and women which emulated monastic Orders. Ignatius created a missionary Order without the inhibitions of traditional monasticism.¹ Neri, probably influenced by the confraternities, founded an Oratory in which laymen could actively participate, but which came to be run by a Congregation of clerics without vows.² None of these institutions fitted existing categories, and a common feature of all three lies in the blurring of the boundary between religious and lay spirituality. Erasmus had strongly voiced the contention that piety does not necessitate monasticism but interior conversion and active service. Gerson too had argued that there is one religion for all under the "Abbot Christ."³ By the sixteenth century, personal sanctification had become a driving concern for reformers.⁴

The manner in which the Devout organised their communities bears little resemblance to that of Ignatius and Neri. The "common life," so important for the

Devout, was regarded by Ignatius as a hindrance to missionary activities, and while the Congregation of the Oratory did adopt a community lifestyle, Neri himself was a reluctant participant. Like the Devout, Neri rejected vows; his views on humble obedience combined with democratic leadership were in accord with the Devout, but he did not agree that possessions should be held in common. Ignatius' opinion that vows were essential was completely dissimilar to the Devout. For Ignatius, obedience was not merely a virtue, but essential to the governance of his Society. Poverty, too, was institutional rather than merely individual.

While both the Devout and Ignatius were active in education, the Devout were primarily concerned with spiritual formation and recruitment rather than teaching. In contrast, Ignatius valued academic subjects, reflecting the influence of humanism. He also appreciated the need for clergy to be educated in order to become effective in mission.

Although Ignatius and Neri appear to resemble the Devout in commending the cultivation of virtues, there are significant differences in their approaches. For the Devout, progress in virtue enabled penitents to step closer to God and away from the sinful world. Neri, however, does not speak of spiritual progression, and Ignatius relates virtuous behaviour to the service of God rather than individual gain. Ignatius and Neri reflect the world-affirming humanism of their own era rather than the outlook of the Devout: Ignatius taught that God can be found in all things, and Neri was said to have founded a school of "spiritual worldlings," enabling people to become good disciples while remaining in their homes.⁵

There are similarities but also differences between the practices of the Devout and the Catholic reformers. Ignatius developed a more nuanced attitude to asceticism, abandoning the rigorous approach typical of the *Devotio Moderna*. Neri appears to have followed Ignatius in this respect. The *Exercises* of Ignatius demonstrate the clearest link with the Devout, but even here Ignatius has adapted them to suit his own purposes in such a way as to make a definitive link impossible to prove. The exercises of the Oratory differ in both purpose and content from the exercises of the Devout and Ignatius. However, the "Speaking on the book" and informal discussions

of the Oratory are similar to the collations of the Devout. It may be that both share a common source in Cassian.⁶

The Devout laid much stress on affective spirituality, and we see Ignatius advising his exercitants, in a similar way to Zerbolt, to evoke powerful sentiments and identify emotionally with the subjects in their meditations. Neri, on the other hand, downplays the importance of emotions, although they are very much a part of his personal experience.

Both Ignatius and Neri speak of mental prayer, which was also encouraged by the Devout. In his *Exercises*, Ignatius offers a variety of suggested prayer techniques which are not described in the *Ascents*, but his method of conversational prayer may derive from Zerbolt. Neri taught his followers to use short, abbreviated prayers throughout the day – a method dating back to the Desert Fathers.

The Devout encouraged frequent confession and Communion, to be accompanied by fervent emotion and the correct intentions. While this is also a feature of Ignatius and Neri, the sacramental emphasis has returned with its need for priestly mediation. This reflects the spirit of sixteenth century Catholic Reform.

Ignatius and Neri therefore develop many themes associated with the *Devotio Moderna*, but with their own distinctive slant. There are two further characteristics of the later reformers which set them apart from the Devout.

Both Ignatius and Neri were mystics, and although neither recommended mysticism to their followers, their ministries were influenced by their belief that God communicated directly with them. Mysticism, of limited interest to the Devout, was a feature of Spanish Catholicism during the sixteenth century. Also in contrast to the Devout, Ignatius and Neri insisted that engagement in charitable activities was an essential counterpart to faith. This too reflected contemporary opinions, as is evidenced by the number of confraternities dedicated to social welfare which had been established.

The *Devotio Moderna* was in terminal decline by the early sixteenth century. In Protestant areas their houses were being closed for being too monastic. Those in Catholic areas were forced to dissolve or join an Order to comply with the stricter discipline imposed by Pope Pius V in 1568.⁷

Both Ignatius and Neri made a profound impression on Catholic Reform: Neri through infusing Rome with a joyful, accessible spirituality; Ignatius through methodical missionary zeal. Neither had achieved this by conforming to the accepted norms for religious Orders, but like the Devout, by seeking to reinvigorate individuals with the fervour that they believed existed in the early church. It was their common aim to recreate a more authentic, apostolic church which accounts for the majority of the similarities between the *Devotio Moderna*, St Ignatius of Loyola and St Philip Neri.

Footnotes

Chapter 1. Introduction

- 1 H. O. Evennett, (ed. J. Bossy), *The Spirit of the Counter-Reformation* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), p.18. “In all the Catholic spiritual literature of the early sixteenth century there can be detected the powerful influence of Netherlandish and German spiritual traditions – the devotio moderna and the great force of the Carthusians, in particular.”
- 2 A. G. Dickens, *The Counter Reformation* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1968), pp. 63-4.
- 3 L. Dupré, and D. E. Saliers, (eds.), in collaboration with J. Meyendorff, *Christian Spirituality: Post Reformation and Modern* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1989), p. 5. O’Malley asserts, “Most commentators are agreed, however, upon some direct relationship to the devotio moderna, and Ignatius in fact had a special fondness for the principal document of that late-medieval tradition, The Imitation of Christ.”
Also, R. R. Post, *The Modern Devotion: Confrontation with Reformation and Humanism* (E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1968), p. 548.
Online at: https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/post029mode01_01/post029mode01_01.pdf
Accessed: 20 February 2017. “Now it is known that St Ignatius of Loyola followed certain spiritual exercises in the abbey of Montserrat after his conversion in 1522. What he heard then seems to have been derived from Cisneros and indirectly from the Modern Devotion.”
- 4 P. Türks, *Philip Neri, The Fire of Joy* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995), p. 101. Türks quotes A. Cistellini, *S. Filippo Neri e la Spiritualita dell’Oratorio* (Rome: Teresianum, 1984), p. 53.
- 5 A. G. Dickens, *The Counter Reformation*, p. 22.
- 6 J. Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna: Basic Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988).
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 48.
- 8 *Ibid.*, pp. 155-75.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 176.
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 121-136.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 223.
- 12 *Ibid.*, pp. 245-315.
- 13 Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* trans. B.I. Knott (7th Impression, London: Collins, 1974).
- 14 G. E. Ganss, (ed.) with P.R. Divarkar, E. J. Malatesta, M. E. Palmer, *Ignatius of Loyola: The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991).
- 15 *Ibid.*, pp. 67-111.
- 16 *Ibid.*, pp. 215-270.
- 17 *Ibid.*, pp. 283-321.
- 18 *Ibid.*, pp. 121-214.
- 19 Philip Neri, *Maxims and Sayings*. Online at:
<http://www.liturgialatina.org/oratorian/baccicontents.htm> Accessed: 4 January 2018.
- 20 J. Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life: The Devotio Moderna and the World of the later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).
- 21 A. Hyma, *The Brethren of the Common Life* (Santa Clarita: Eerdmans, 1950).
- 22 M. Van Dijk, “Disciples of the Deep Desert: Windesheim Biographers and the Imitation of the Desert Fathers”, *Church History and Religious Culture*, Vol. 86, Issue 1, (2006), pp. 257-289. Online at:
<http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/journals/10.1163/187124106778787114>
Accessed: 28 March 2017.
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Online at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24012940>
Accessed: 28 March 2017.
- 24 S. Ritchey, “Wessel Gansfort, John Mombaer, and Medieval Technologies of the Self: Affective Meditation in a Fifteenth-Century Emotional Community”, in Gusick, B. I. (ed.), *Fifteenth Century Studies*, Vol. 38 (New York: Campden House, 2013), pp.153-175.

- 25 Van Dijk, M., "The Devotio Moderna, the Emotions and the Search for 'Dutchness'", *Low Countries Historical Review*, Vol. 129-2 (2014), pp. 20-41.
Online at: <https://doaj.org/article/b8b65610020c43e483585c1a7ae66ad7>
Accessed: 28 March 2017.
- 26 J. Melloni, *The Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola in the Western Tradition* trans. M. Ivens (Barcelona: EIDES, 1998).
- 27 J. O'Malley, "Early Jesuit Spirituality" in L. Dupré, and D. E. Saliers, (eds.), in collaboration with J. Meyendorff, *Christian Spirituality: Post Reformation and Modern*, pp. 9-10, 23, and J. W. O'Malley, "The Jesuits, St. Ignatius, and the Counter Reformation: Some Recent Studies and their Implication Today", *Studies in the Spirituality of the Jesuits*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (American Assistancy Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality, 1982).
Online at: <https://ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/jesuit/article/download/3716/3294>
Accessed: 17 December 2017.
- 28 R. E. McNalley, "The Council of Trent, the Spiritual Exercises and the Catholic Reform", *Church History*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (March, 1965), pp. 36-49.
Online at: https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/stable/3162870?sid=primo&origin=crossref&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents
Accessed: 7 September 2017.
- 29 L. Ponnelle, L. Bordet, *St Philip Neri and the Roman Society of his Times* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1932).
- 30 Bacci, P. G., *Life of St. Philip Neri* (1706). Taken from the revised edition published in 1902, ed., F. I. Antrobus.
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Accessed: 4 January 2018.
- 31 P. Türks, *Philip Neri, The Fire of Joy* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995).
- 32 M. Trevor, *Apostle of Rome: Philip Neri 1515-1595* (London: MacMillan, 1996).
- 33 Dickens, A. G., *The Counter Reformation* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1968).
- 34 Janelle, P., *The Catholic Reformation* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1963).
- 35 Olin, J. C., *Catholic Reform from Cardinal Ximenes to the Council of Trent 1495-1563: An essay with illustrative documents and a brief study of St Ignatius Loyola* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990).

Chapter 2. Historical Context

- 1 Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, p. 232.
- 2 *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 24.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 242.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- 7 Dickens, *The Counter Reformation*, p. 70.
- 8 Olin, *Catholic Reform*, p. 17.
- 9 Evennett, *The Spirit of the Counter-Reformation*, pp.11-12. Evennett discusses Gothein's view that the Counter Reformation was "a movement born in Spain, remaining always essentially Spanish, and, largely through the Jesuits, eventually hispanising the whole of modern Catholicism – in Italy, France, Germany and elsewhere..."
- 10 T. Worchester, (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to The Jesuits* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 26.
- 11 Evennett, *The Spirit of the Counter-Reformation*, pp.12-13.
- 12 Dickens, *The Counter Reformation*, p. 26. "For the sudden flaring of this experience and literature no single factor can account. Several specialist scholars and historians of literature have frankly ascribed it – especially in the case of Cisneros – to belated Netherlandish and German influences from the worlds of Tauler and the *devotio moderna*. Even where overt links do not appear, the close similarities of theme and method cannot be wholly due to coincidence."
- 13 Olin, *Catholic Reform*, p. 11. "Catholic spirituality at this time was highly individualistic and activist, in contrast to the more communal and contemplative spirituality of the Middle Ages."
- 14 Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, p. 19.

- 15 Post, *The Modern Devotion*, p. 228. “Certain similarities or analogies can also be detected here; the struggle against abuses, the fostering of inner religious feeling and the limiting of external and formalistic methods; the reading of the Holy Scriptures in the vernacular; the contempt for the world and the imitation of Christ...”

Chapter 3. *Devotio Moderna* – Organisation.

- 1 Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, p.7. Henry Pomerius described Groote as the “chief source of that new devotion found today among the canons regular throughout lower Germany.” Henry Pomerius, *Opuscula de Viridivalle* 2.8, in *Analecta Bollandiana* 4 (1885); 288).
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 61. Also Post points out that it took several years for the household of needy women to develop into a religious community; Post, *The Modern Devotion*, p. 260.
- 3 Post, *The Modern Devotion*, p. 197. Post explains two traditions regarding origins.
- 4 Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, p. 138. Van Engen claims many were attracted by “the collations and spiritual advising and ‘home-like’ milieu of a Brothers’ gathering.”
- 5 J. Raitt, (ed.), with B. McGinn and J. Meyendorff, *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1988), p. 181. Gründler quotes Groote: “To enter the monastery is to choose the highest state of life and that which pleases God the most.”
- 6 Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, p. 90.
- 7 Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna*, p. 21.
- 8 C. Caspers, D. Müller, J. Keßler, “In the Eyes of Others. The Modern Devotion in Germany and the Netherlands: Influencing and Appropriating”, *Church History and Religious Culture* Vol. 93 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p. 495. “...Geert Grote himself, who emphasised that he regarded the beguines, to which he dedicated his letter about simony, as women religious, even if they had not taken the three vows?”
- 9 Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, pp. 268-9.
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 37-8. In 1213 Innocent III decreed that no-one was to found a “new religion” for fear that too much diversity of orders bring confusion. The rule was upheld to the end of the middle ages.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 282.
- 12 Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna*, p. 24. Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, pp. 68, 288-9. In his Tractate IX, Zerbolt links disclosure of sins with the seeking of spiritual counsel. As well as enabling the penitent to resist temptation and avoid further lapses, Zerbolt believes that venial sins may be forgiven.
- 13 *Ibid.*, pp. 288-9. Latern IV (*Omnis utriusque*) ruled that individuals must go to confession annually with their own priest.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 140, note 116. “*Medium genus inter monachos et laicos*,” and “*semi monachos*.”
- 15 Post, *The Modern Devotion*, p. 273.
- 16 Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, pp. 38-42. For over a century the Beguines had received ambivalent though often hostile treatment. The Council of Vienne (1311) produced a law condemning the Beguine lifestyle. The Beguine estate was banned by 1319 through public and clerical pressure. 1374, suppression occurred in Bohemia, but Beguines were defended by friars who claimed the inquisitors had previously pronounced their innocence.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 27. Groote forbade women from staying in his house if they taught any of the eight articles ascribed to Beguines.
- 18 Matt: 19:21
- 19 Post, *The Modern Devotion*, p. 286. Zerbolt wrote a legal defence of the Devout in the mid 1390s: “*Super modo vivendi devotorum hominum simul commorantium*”.
- 20 Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, p. 243. According to Aquinas, “an estate of the perfect will be made up of persons who bind themselves by a solemnity to that which makes for perfection, the full pursuit of charity.” But Jn 13:34 speaks of the law of love which can be fulfilled with the help of the Holy Spirit.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- 22 R. Fuller, *The Brotherhood of the Common Life and its Influence* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 137. Cassian taught the importance of resting in other work rather than pursuing relentless prayer.
- 23 Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, p. 174. A third went to the library and two thirds to the poor.
- 24 Post, *The Modern Devotion*, p. 160.

- 25 M. Van Dijk, *How to be a Good Shepherd*, p. 142, "...the pastoral care of women was a major concern in Devotio Moderna." And p. 151, Dirc of Herxen describes ministry to women as a glorious task, preparing the brides for the bridegroom.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 142. The Windesheim Chapter in 1436 requested the pope not to accept more female communities.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 147. Brinckerinck said he would rather lose both legs than be a rector of a women's house. He spoke to them through a veiled grille and heard sickbed confessions with his back turned on them.
- 28 Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, pp. 197-8. Brothers were even permitted to admonish the rector respectfully if required.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 155.
- 30 Post, *The Modern Devotion*, p. 419.
- 31 Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, p. 150.
- 32 Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna*, p. 24. Van Engen points out that this was neglected in medieval schools, and thus the Brothers were able to fill this gap in provision.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 40. Groote's Letter 29 to Johannes ten Water persuades him to remain in the community and not go to university.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 223. John Brinckerinck, *On Conversion*: "The heart of a young person is still totally blank, and if good things are not written there, the devil will write his...worldly, carnal, and idle thoughts.... If we do not take pains in our youth to imprint upon our hearts the virtues, inwardness, and good thoughts, we will never come to it in our old age..."
- 35 *Ibid.*, pp. 210-211. Dirc's, "Four pamphlets on the young": "*On drawing the young to Christ*," "*An exhortation to preserve innocence*," "*A response to those who disparage the conversion of the young*," "*On the praiseworthy effort of those who try to train the young in the good life*."
- 36 Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, p. 152.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 153.
- 38 *Ibid.*, p. 318.
- 39 Post, *The Modern Devotion*, pp. 1, and 554.
- 40 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

Chapter 4. Devotio Moderna – Spirituality.

- 1 Post, *The Modern Devotion*, p. 653. "...the influence of the Windesheimers on the monasteries extended much further than those which were incorporated in the congregation, since many Regular Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries and convents had experienced the beneficial effects of their reform work. Towards the end of the century even French houses in and near Paris were effected."
- 2 M. Van Dijk, M., *How to be a Good Shepherd*, p. 145, Johannes Busch, the chronicler of Windesheim, claimed that the Devout aspired to follow the example of the Desert Fathers in their imitation of Christ and the apostolic life. W. M. Landeen, "Gabriel Biel and the Brethren of the Common Life in Germany" *Church History*, Vol. 20, No 1 (March 1951), pp. 25-6. Online at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3162046> . Accessed: 8 April 2017. Biel claims they copy example of the apostles and early church.
- 3 Post, *The Modern Devotion*, p. 328. Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna*, p. 50.
- 4 H. A. Oberman, "Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Mysticism", *Church History*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Sept., 1961), pp. 259-287. Online at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/316564> Accessed: 8 April 2017. See p. 268: Biel was a notable exception. The Devout also read mystical authors such as Ruusbroec and Suso.
- 5 "On the Life and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ", in Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna*, p. 189: The life of Christ is "...the source of all virtue and exemplar of all holiness, the medium by which to arrive most quickly at all the virtues, and indeed apart from which we are unable to gain either the true virtues or his love."
- 6 Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* trans. B.I. Knott (7th Impression, London: Collins, 1974). Book 1:2: "The highest and most profitable form of study is to understand one's inmost nature and despise it; real wisdom and perfection lie in having no high opinion of oneself, but in always thinking highly of others."
- 7 Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, p. 169. "Of humility the blessed Bernard said, "This is the way and there is no other beside it. He who walks in another way falls rather than climbs because it is only humility that uplifts; it alone leads to life."
- 8 Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna*, p. 32. Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, p. 180, Salome Sticken speaks of the Sisters competing to be the most humble!

- 9 À Kempis, *Imitation*, Book 3:50, 52.
- 10 *Ibid.*, Book 3:35. “If you are looking for rest in this life, how will you ever reach the everlasting rest at the end? It is not rest you must expect, but suffering.....For love of God should be prepared to endure anything – toil, pain, temptation, vexation, anxiety, need, weakness, injustice, slander, blame, humiliation, shame, censure and contempt. Such things strengthen virtue; they test the soldier of Christ and make up his heavenly crown. In return for your brief labours I will give you an eternal reward for your passing humiliation, glory that will never end.”
- 11 Post, *The Modern Devotion*, p. 318.
- 12 Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, p. 178. Salome Sticken writes: “...it is best to spend the whole day.... in silence and wholehearted devotion to the things of God, that is on your sins of commission and omission, the uncertain day of your death, the awful day of judgement, the pains of hell and reward of the righteous which is eternal life.....”
- 13 Post, *The Modern Devotion*, p. 83.
- 14 J. Raitt, (ed.), with B. McGinn and J. Meyendorff, *Christian Spirituality*, p. 182. Gründler notes similarities between Zerbolt’s Ascents and the *Scala Claustralium* of Guigo II, 9th Prior of Chartreuse.
- 15 Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna*, p. 56.
- 16 *Lectio divina* was first described by Guigo II (d.1193), a Carthusian monk, in his *Scala Claustralium*.
- 17 Zerbolt of Zutphen, “The Spiritual Ascents”, trans. J. van Engen, in J. van Engen, *Devotio Moderna*, pp. 245-315. See §42.
- 18 Zerbolt, *Ascents* §4, in Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna*, p. 250.
- 19 Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, p. 96.
- 20 Zerbolt, *Ascents* §13, 51, in Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna*, pp. 258, 295.
- 21 *Ibid.*, §43, in Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna*, p. 286.
- 22 *Ibid.*, §44 in Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna*, pp. 286-8.
- 23 Pope Innocent III (1199) approved the principle but condemned those who thought they knew better than the priests through their own reading.
- 24 Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, p. 98. In 1374 Gregory XI issued *Ad apostolatus nostri* – authorising friars to restrict dangerous books and sermons in the vernacular which “usurped the office of preaching”.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 98. The vernacular was already becoming the norm in secular society, and therefore the Devout were following contemporary practice rather than introducing a revolutionary idea.
- 26 Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna*, p. 44.
- 27 S. Ritchey, *Medieval Technologies*, p. 158.
- 28 Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna*, p. 47. Lit. “scratchings.”
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 40. Short sayings of Groote have been preserved.
- 30 The authorship has been disputed, but it is now generally accepted as being Thomas à Kempis.
- 31 (i) *Some thoughts to help with the Spiritual life*, (ii) *Some advice on the inner life*, (iii) *Spiritual comfort*, (iv) *A reverent recommendation to Holy Communion*.
- 32 J. Raitt, (ed.), with B. McGinn and J. Meyendorff, *Christian Spirituality*, p. 181. Radewijns’ *Omnes inquit artes* is a treatise on meditation and a collection of texts about Christ’s Passion, the Last Four Things, sin, and the benefits of God. It affirms virtues - the love of God and neighbour, giving and receiving fraternal reproof, obedience by renunciation of will. Radewijns frequently quotes Cassian.
- 33 Zerbolt, *Ascents* §45, in Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna*, p. 288.
- 34 Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, p. 300, referring to Zerbolt, *De Reformatione* 29-34, Legrand, (ed.), pp. 214-28.
- 35 St Victor, Notre Dame de Livry, and Saint Callixte de Cysoing.
- 36 Zerbolt, *Ascents* §13, in Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna*, p. 258. “You should also hold it for certain that your sins will be forgiven you in confession according to the measure of your contrite intention and human modesty.”
- 37 Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna*, p. 72.
- 38 À Kempis, *Imitation*, Book 4:1. “For anyone who knows devotion can freely have spiritual communion with Christ every day and at every moment to his own great profit; for he shares a mystic communion and is invisibly refreshed whenever he devoutly meditates on the mystery of Christ’s incarnation and his passion, and is filled with a burning love for him.” See also, Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna*, p. 54; H. A. Oberman, *Gabriel Biel*, p. 277; Post, *The Modern Devotion*, p. 548, “According to Mombaer and Wessel, however, there was little advantage in sacramental communion. It was even detrimental, if not accompanied by inner meditation.

Spiritual communion, on the other hand, can be attained at all places and in all times, and gives all the advantages of sacramental communion, including forgiveness of sins, preservation from eternal death and a sharing in Christ.”

39 Zerbolt, *Ascents* §46, in Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna*, p. 289.

40 *Ibid.*

Chapter 5. Ignatius of Loyola– Organisation

1 Ignatius of Loyola, “Autobiography”, trans. P.R. Divarkar, in Ganss, Divarkar, Malatesta, Palmer, *Ignatius of Loyola*. See §5. *Flos Sanctorum* is a Spanish edition of Jacopo de Voragine’s *The Golden Legend*.

2 *Ibid.*, §7.

3 *Ibid.*, §14. Ignatius notes this himself.

4 *Ibid.*, §29.

5 *Ibid.*, §14.

6 *Ibid.*, §29.

7 *Ibid.*, §22-5.

8 *Ibid.*, §27.

9 *Ibid.*, §29.

10 *Ibid.*, §30.

11 *Ibid.*, §56-8. The inquisitors heard about what was happening in Alcalà and forbade him from speaking about doctrine until he had finished studying. “When they came to Alcalà, the pilgrim was warned by their host, who told him that they were calling them ... I think alumbrados (illuminists), and that they would make mincemeat of them.”

12 *Ibid.*, §73.

13 R. E. McNalley, *The Council of Trent*, pp. 41-2. McNalley quotes Dudon: “There seems no doubt now that this set of eighteen Rules for Thinking with the Church was conceived under the inspiration of the acts of the “Council of Sens,” published with the manifest intention of enlightening all Catholics of Paris, and especially the students of the university, on the Lutheran errors and the complicity of the suspected humanists.”

14 Ignatius, *Autobiography*, §84.

15 J. W. O’Malley, “Was Ignatius Loyola a Church Reformer? How to Look at Early Modern Catholicism”, *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 77, No. 2 (April 1991), pp. 177-193, (Pub: Catholic University of America Press).

Online at: [https://www-jstor-](https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/stable/25023524?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

[org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/stable/25023524?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents](https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/stable/25023524?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents) Accessed: 10

February 2018. Ignatius is reported to have said the pope should reform himself, the curia and the cardinals, and then everything else will fall into place.

16 Ignatius of Loyola, “Constitutions of the Society of Jesus”, trans. G. E. Ganss, in Ganss, Divarkar, Malatesta, Palmer, *Ignatius of Loyola*. See Chap. 1§3, p. 283.

17 *Ibid.*, §622 (e). “...preference ought to be shown to the aid which is given to the great nations such as the Indies, or to important cities, or to universities, which are generally attended by numerous persons who by being aided themselves can become labourers for the help of others.”

18 Ignatius, *Constitutions*, §98.

19 *Ibid.*, §516.

20 *Ibid.*, §147.

21 *Ibid.*, §677. Ignatius regarded General Congregations as a distraction as it was the duty of the General to make decisions.

22 *Ibid.*, §4

23 *Ibid.*, §287,555: Poverty was something that should be loved, and its effects should be felt. Ignatius’ Spiritual Diary is an account of his attempt to discern the correct approach to poverty. February 11th. Ignatius lists arguments for and against poverty, prays for guidance, and senses the consolation that confirms he has made the correct decision. He wanted the Society to embrace absolute poverty, although not all the members agreed with him.

24 *Ibid.*, §81.

25 *Ibid.*, §555.

26 M. Ivens, “Poverty in the Constitutions and Other Ignatian Sources.” Online at:

<http://www.theway.org.uk/back/s061Ivens.pdf> Accessed: 2 August 2017, p. 83.

27 Ignatius, *Constitutions*, §547.

28 *Ibid.*, §655.

- 29 *Ibid.*, §284, 547.
 30 *Ibid.*, §547.
 31 *Ibid.*, §586.
 32 *Ibid.*, §815.
 33 Letter to Araoz in G. E. Ganss, Divarkar, Malatesta, Palmer, *Ignatius of Loyola*, pp. 361-365. Ignatius aimed to create new educators who could be sent into society to 'leaven' it.
 34 Ignatius, *Constitutions*, §481.
 35 *Ibid.*, §340. "For their devoting themselves to learning, which they acquire with a pure intention of serving God and which in a certain way requires the whole person, will be not less but rather more pleasing to God our Lord during this time of study."
 36 *Ibid.*, §351.
 37 *Ibid.*, §447, 451. Also covered were logic, physics, metaphysics, mathematics and moral philosophy Medicine and law were not deemed relevant.
 38 *Ibid.*, §361. "...their very labour in studying, taken up as it ought to be because of charity and obedience, is itself work highly meritorious in the sight of the Divine and Supreme Majesty."
 39 Worcester, *Companion to The Jesuits*, p.76.

Chapter 6. Ignatius of Loyola– Spirituality

- 1 Ignatius, "Spiritual Exercises", §336-9, in Ganss, Divarkar, Malatesta, Palmer, *Ignatius of Loyola*, pp. 207-8.
 2 *Ibid.*, §352-370 .
 3 T. Worcester, (ed.) *Cambridge Companion to The Jesuits*, Chap. 1. The laity were actively involved in religious life. Many acted as spiritual directors or claimed direct communication with God.
 4 Garcia de Cisneros, *The Book of Exercises of the Spiritual Life*, and *A Directory for the Canonical Hours* (London: Burns and Oates: 1876) (Original written in 1500). Online at: <https://archive.org/details/ABookOfSpiritualExercises>
 Accessed: 1 August, 2017. See §18. Compare to Zerbolt, *Ascents*, §24.
 6 Ignatius, *Exercises*, §100. Evennett, *Spirit of the Counter Reformation*, p. 60.
 7 Ignatius, *Autobiography*, §14, 24.
 8 A Kempis, *Imitation*, Book 3:7. "...merit may be assumed when a man's life is rooted in true humility and filled with divine love, when he always seeks God's honour solely and wholeheartedly, when he thinks nothing of himself, but truly disregards himself and even prefers to receive contempt and humiliation from others, rather than honour."
 9 Ignatius, *Exercises*, "Three ways of being humble" (following Day 12):
 (i) Obedience to God's law, which is necessary for salvation; (ii) not desiring riches, honour and a long life more than poverty, dishonour and a short life; (iii) imitating Christ, which is perfect humility. Compare to Ignatius, *Constitutions*, §101, where these examples of humble behaviour are linked to imitating Christ.
 10 Ignatius, *Exercises*, §168.
 11 Ignatius, *Constitutions*, §361.
 12 Ignatius, *Exercises*, §230, 370.
 13 *Ibid.*, §231-237.
 14 Ignatius, *Constitutions*, §243. "...there is also proper care for the health and bodily strength necessary to labor in the Lord's vineyard."
 15 Ignatius, *Autobiography*, §22-25.
 16 Ignatius, *Exercises*, §314-327.
 17 A Kempis, *Imitation*, Book 2:5. "If you are to have peace and real union, you must have nothing before your eyes but your own inner life. Your progress depends on keeping yourself free from commitment to any temporal concern; if you let your thoughts dwell on anything that belongs to the world, you will fall far short of the goal."
 18 Ignatius, *Exercises*, §23.
 19 McNalley, *The Council of Trent*, p. 41.
 20 Ignatius, *Constitutions*, §288.
 21 A Kempis, *Imitation*, Book 3:13.
 22 Ignatius, *Exercises*, §20.
 23 *Ibid.*, Preface.
 24 Ignatius, *Constitutions*, §408. All members of the Society were trained to give them. "Each one should know how to give an explanation of them and how to employ this spiritual weapon, since it is obvious that God our Lord has made it so effective for His service."

- 25 Melloni, *The Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola*, p. 4. During the process of his canonisation, the monks of Montserrat asserted Ignatius had gone frequently to the monastery to receive the exercises of Cisneros via his confessor, the monk Dom Chanon.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 8. Melloni quotes “*Constituciones para los monjes*, c. VI (Garcia Jiménez de Cisneros, *Obras Completas* (Abadía de Montserrat, Col. Scripta et Documenta 16), ed. Dom Cipriano Baraut (Montserrat 1965), Vol. II, pp. 519-520.
- 27 *Ibid.*
- 28 Evennett, *Spirit of the Counter Reformation*, p. 51. “The main substance of the exercises with practically all the most important elements and meditations, would seem to date from the end of the time at Manresa – 1522-3.” Also, A. Prosperi, “The Origins and Development of a Celebrated Ignatian Meditation” *Journal of Jesuit Studies*, Vol 2, Issue 3 (2015), pp. 361-386, states that J. Nadal claimed inspiration came to Ignatius in 1525 at Manresa.
- 29 Prosperi, *The Origins and Development*.
- 30 McNalley, *The Council of Trent*, p. 48, note 27. “In the preface to the *editio princeps* (1548).”
- 31 Ignatius, *Autobiography*, §99.
- 32 McNalley, *The Council of Trent*, p. 44. In 1548 Pope Paul III issued *Pastoralis officii* approving the exercises as “full of piety and holiness, very useful and conducive to the spiritual edification and advancement of the faithful,” and worthy for use by whole church.
- 33 Ignatius, *Exercises*, §18.
- 34 *Ibid.*, §15.
- 35 The period of a week is flexible.
- 36 Ignatius, *Exercises*, §10.
- 37 Melloni, *The Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola*, p. 45.
- 38 *Ibid.*, pp. 46-7. “The unitive life, then, is the ultimate objective proposed in the sources up to Ignatius. In the framework of mediaeval and monastic spirituality, this life is identified with ecstatic contemplation...” (ie leaving world behind)... “With Ignatius, the mystical-unitive desire takes another direction...”
- 39 *Ibid.*, p. 45. Ignatius, *Exercises*, §18.
- 40 Ignatius, *Exercises*, §58. Compare with Zerbolt, *Ascents* §4, in Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna*, p. 250.
- 41 Ignatius, *Exercises*, §370; as in Zerbolt’s *Ascents*, Ignatius links love for God with fear of him, claiming they are “inseparably united.” See also Ignatius, *Spiritual Diary*, §178 (30th March); “...I kept on thinking that humility, reverence and affectionate awe ought not to be fearful but loving... I begged over and over again: ‘Give me loving humility, and with it reverence and affectionate awe.’” However *ibid.*, §187, (4th April): “When we do not find reverence or affectionate awe full of love, we ought to seek the affectionate awe which springs from fear...”
- 42 *Ibid.*, §59-60, 65-72.
- 43 *Ibid.*, §234; “I will speak as one making an offering with deep affection, and say: “Take Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and all my will – all that I have and possess. You, Lord, have given all that to me. I now give it back to you...”
- 44 *Ibid.*, §136-148.
- 45 2 Tim 2:4 and Eph 6.
- 46 Views are divided as to whether Ignatius read Erasmus’ *Enchiridion Militis Christiani*. The idea of two allegiances, Jerusalem and Babylon, is also found in Augustine and other writers. Erasmus had been accused of heresy and it was in Ignatius’ own interests to distance himself from him.
- 47 À Kempis, *Imitation*, Book 3:35.
- 48 Ignatius, *Exercises*, §145.
- 49 *Ibid.*, §146.
- 50 Ignatius, *Spiritual Diary*, §187, (4th April) “Before Mass I experienced tears, and during Mass a great abundance of them together with many insights and interior sentiments...”
- 51 Ignatius, *Exercises*, §316.
- 52 Ignatius, *Spiritual Diary*, §189-90.
- 53 *Ibid.*, §235-244.
- 54 À Kempis, *Imitation*, Book 4:14.
- 55 Ignatius, *Spiritual Diary*, March 6th.
- 56 Ignatius, *Exercises*, §130, 229.
- 57 Ignatius differentiates between meditation and contemplation, reserving the latter term for reflection upon the life of Christ, while the former relates to passages which are not in the gospels.

- 58 Ignatius, *Exercises*, §102-9, 122-5.
 59 *Ibid.*, §199.
 60 Evennett, *Spirit of the Counter Reformation*, pp. 32-3.
 61 J. Raitt, (ed.), with B. McGinn and J. Meyendorff, *Christian Spirituality*, p. 186. "It is possible that the Rosetum, with its emphasis on inner participation during the praying or singing of the hours and during the Holy Mass, and with its emphasis on a strict method during meditation, may have influenced the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, if only indirectly."
 62 Zerbolt, *Ascents*, §45.
 63 Melloni, *The Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola*, pp. 21-3.
 64 Ignatius, *Exercises*, §238-260.
 65 À Kempis, *Imitation*, Book 3:6.
 66 Melloni, *The Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola*, p. 21.
 67 Evennett, *Spirit of the Counter Reformation*, p. 38.
 68 Ignatius, *Autobiography*, §44.
 69 *Ibid.*, §95.
 70 *Ibid.*, §29. "...the form that used to appear to him, it was like a white body, not very big nor very small, but he did not see any distinction of limbs. He saw this often in Manresa... He had seen it another time when he was in Jerusalem, and again when travelling near Padua. Our Lady too he has seen in a similar form, without distinguishing the parts."
 71 *Ibid.*, §3. Ignatius speaks of rays coming from the host, signifying Christ's presence.
 72 Ganss, Divarkar, Malatesta, Palmer, *Ignatius of Loyola*, p. 231. His mystical experiences usually occurred in the morning, when he might spend up to three hours in prayer and Mass. For the rest of the day he continued his apostolic work.
 73 *Ibid.*

Chapter 7. Philip Neri – Organisation

- 1 Trevor, *Apostle of Rome*, p. 19. He tore up his genealogical table which would have helped him in business by proving his noble descent. Also Türks, *Philip Neri*, p. 9. He claimed he could have been rich had he wished to be.
 2 He lodged with Galeotto del Caccia.
 3 Türks, *Philip Neri*, chap. 5.
 4 *Ibid.*, This is similar to Zerbolt's 'descents' in order to interact with the world.
 5 Ponnelle and Bordet, *St Philip Neri and the Roman Society*, p. 101. Neri recalls his face was "all resplendent."
 6 McNalley, *The Council of Trent*, p. 45.
 7 Neri has been called the "Roman Socrates because, "Like old Socrates, Philip always knew how to take men with him, so to speak, on a journey to the ultimate reality behind everyday things." Türks, *Philip Neri*, p. 56.
 8 D. MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490-1700* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 593. The *Piagnoni* sprang up in Florence to preserve the memory of Savonarola, and as well as emphasising mystical meditation and missionary work they also promoted à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*. Neri may have been influenced while in Florence.
 9 Türks, *Philip Neri*, p. 22. Also known as the Company of Divine Love.
 10 It was established in 1497, having developed from the mystical experiences of St. Catherine of Genoa.
 11 Ponnelle and Bordet, *St Philip Neri and the Roman Society*, p. 75.
 12 The Confraternity was also responsible for introducing the devotion of the Forty Hours to Rome. This had begun in Milan in 1527. On the first Sunday of each month, the faithful took turns to pray before the exposed Host. Neri supervised the entire devotion, periodically encouraging the faithful with short talks.
 13 Ponnelle and Bordet, *St Philip Neri and the Roman Society*, p. 109. In the Jubilee year of 1550 they may have assisted up to 500 pilgrims a day.
 14 *Ibid.*, p. 107.
 15 *Ibid.*, pp. 166-8.
 16 *Ibid.*, p. 170.
 17 *Ibid.*, p. 210. Ghettoni prophesied (albeit falsely!) their martyrdom at Rome. Neri became known as "The Second Apostle to Rome."

- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 316. “The Oratory was so regularly and eagerly visited by the papal court and the households of the cardinals that it was said, “When the Pope has gone to Bologna, the Oratory will find itself almost deserted.”
- 19 *Ibid.*, pp. 457-8. Losing Tarugi to Naples was extremely damaging to Rome. “No one so much as Tarugi had the gift that was prized above all else at the oratory; so to preach, that men were attracted, moved and kept.” Neri asserted, “If I had ten men who were totally detached from the things of this world and wanted nothing but Christ, I would have the courage to convert the world with them.” Philip Neri, *Maxims and Sayings*, Dec. 3.
- 20 Türks, *Philip Neri*, p. 156.
- 21 The Papal Bull of 1575 states: “A Congregation of secular priests and clerics is hereby erected to be called ‘of the Oratory.’”
- 22 Ponnelle and Bordet, *St Philip Neri and the Roman Society*, p. 320. 1583 Constitutions : The “condition of our Institute absolutely new... and different from others.”
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 377. “Let him possess and keep his property only let him take care to avoid lawsuits over it.”
- 24 Neri, *Maxims and Sayings*, Sept. 27: “Men of rank ought to dress like their equals, and be accompanied by servants, as their state requires, but modesty should go along with it all.”
- 25 Ponnelle and Bordet, *St Philip Neri and the Roman Society*, p. 147. Neri claimed he could smell impure behaviour and wrote, “The stench of impurity before God and the angels is so great, that no stench in the world can equal it.” Neri, *Maxims and Sayings*, April 11.
- 26 Neri, *Maxims and Sayings*, March 29: “The devil generally makes use of the weaker sex when he wishes to cause us to fall.”
- 27 *Ibid.*, January 11: “He who wishes to be perfectly obeyed, should give but few orders.”
- 28 Neri agreed to the foundation of a house in Naples, despite his own reservations, because the community had voted in favour of it.
- 29 Neri may have struggled with community living. He had his own Communion cup made so as not to share it with others.
- 30 Neri, *Maxims and Sayings*, June 13: “The servant of God ought to seek knowledge, but never to show it or make a parade of it.”
- 31 Ponnelle and Bordet, *St Philip Neri and the Roman Society*, p. 81.
- 32 Neri, *Maxims and Sayings*, March 7: “The wisdom of the Scriptures is learned rather by prayer than by study.”

Chapter 8. Philip Neri – Spirituality

- 1 Türks, *Philip Neri*, p. 104. Quotes, Baronius, *Ann.* 1:162, from Bacci, trans. Faber.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 45. Quotes, Capaceltro §143.
- 3 Trevor, *Apostle of Rome*, p. 211.
- 4 Neri, *Maxims and Sayings*, Nov. 20: “When seculars have once chosen their secular state, let them persevere in it, and in the devout exercises which they have begun, and in their works of charity, and they shall have contentment at their death.”
- 5 *Ibid.*, May 30: “A virtuous life consists in mortifying vices, sins, bad thoughts, and evil affections, and in exercising ourselves in the acquisition of holy virtues.” Oct. 14: “At communion we ought to ask for the remedy of the vice to which we feel ourselves most inclined.”
- 6 *Ibid.*, March 10: “We must pray incessantly for the gift of perseverance.” April 21: “The true way to advance in holy virtues, is to persevere in a holy cheerfulness.”
- 7 *Ibid.*, Jan. 13: “Men should often renew their good resolutions.”
- 8 *Ibid.*, August 17: “When God infuses extraordinary sweetnesss into the soul, a man ought to prepare for some serious tribulation or temptation.” Sept 4: “We ought to apply ourselves to the acquisition of virtue, because in the end the whole terminates in greater sweetnesss than before...”
- 9 *Ibid.*, Nov 1: “The great thing is to become saints.”
- 10 *Ibid.*, May 9: “When a scrupulous person has once made up his mind that he has not consented to a temptation, he must not reason the matter over again to see whether he has really consented or not, for the same temptations often return by making this sort of reflections.” Oct 27: “Scruples ought to be most carefully avoided, as they disquiet the mind, and make a man melancholy.”
- 11 *Ibid.*, March 19: “It is God’s custom to interweave human life with a trouble and a consolation, at least, of an interior sort, alternately.”

- 12 *Ibid.*, June 27: "The devil has a crafty custom of sometimes urging spiritual persons to penances and mortifications, in order that by going indiscreet lengths in this way, they may so weaken themselves as to be unable to attend to good works of greater importance."
- 13 *Ibid.*, May 31: "Let us be humble and keep ourselves down:- Obedience! Humility! Detachment!"
- 14 *Ibid.*, July 27. Ponnelle and Bordet, *St Philip Neri and the Roman Society*, p. 139.
- 15 *Ibid.*, May 19: "He who wishes for goods will never have devotion." Dec 14. "When a man has to buy anything, he ought not to do so because he is moved by an attachment to the thing, but from want and necessity; for it will never do to buy attachments."
- 16 Ponnelle and Bordet, *St Philip Neri and the Roman Society*, p. 138-9.
- 17 *Ibid.*, pp. 140-1. (Eg. Wearing clothes inside out, garbling the Latin during Mass etc.).
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 140.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 60. Neri owned a copy of Ariotto Mainardi's collected witticisms, *Le facezie del Pivano Arlotto*.
- 20 Neri, *Maxims and Sayings*, Jan. 16: "They who really wish to advance in the ways of God, must give themselves up into the hands of their superiors always and in everything; and they who are not living under obedience must subject themselves of their own accord to a learned and discreet confessor, whom they must obey in the place of God,..."
- 21 *Ibid.*, Jan. 21: "Obedience is the true holocaust that we offer to God on the altar of our hearts."
- 22 *Ibid.*, Jan. 30: "A man who leads a common life under obedience, is more to be esteemed than one who does great penance after his own will."
- 23 Türks, *Philip Neri*, p. 39.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 115. Neri told the novices of the Minerva to "Eat! It makes me fat to see how much you are enjoying your food."
- 25 Neri, *Maxims and Sayings*, June 18: "For young men to make sure of persevering, it is absolutely necessary that they should avoid wicked companions, and be familiar with good ones."
- 26 *Ibid.*, Nov. 9: "The old patriarchs possessed riches, and had wives and children, but they lived without defiling their affections with these things, although they possessed them, because they only allowed themselves the use of them, and were ready to abandon them in whatever way the Majesty of God might require of them." Oct. 21: "According to the rules of the fathers and ancient monks, whoever wishes to advance in perfection must hold the world in no reputation." May: 21: "We must always pray God not to let the spirit of avarice domineer over us, but that we may live detached from the affections of this world." May 23: "He who wishes to attain to perfection must have no attachment to anything."
- 27 *Ibid.*, Jan. 20: "Let persons in the world sanctify themselves in their own houses, for neither the court, professions, or labour, are any hindrance to the service of God." Also, Türks, *Philip Neri*, p. 116, quotes Talpa: "...everyone, of whatever status or position, whether in his house or his profession, whether a holder of a spiritual or a secular position, whether a courtier or a father of a family, educated or uneducated, noble or common, shopkeeper or manual worker, in fact every person, was able to lead a spiritual life."
- 28 Ponnelle and Bordet, *St Philip Neri and the Roman Society*, p. 263.
- 29 Türks, *Philip Neri*, p. 46, quotes Capacelatro (C145); Neri "made the layman almost a minister of the divine Word."
- 30 Neri, *Maxims and Sayings*, June 19: "In the spiritual life there are three degrees: the first may be called the animal life; this is the life of those who run after sensible devotion, which God generally gives to beginners, to allure them onwards by that sweetness to the spiritual life, just as an animal is drawn on by a sensible object." June 20: "The second degree may be called the human life; this is the life of those who do not experience any sensible sweetness, but by the help of virtue combat their own passions." June 21: "The third degree may be called the angelic life; this is the life which they come to, who, having been exercised for a long time in the taming of their own passions, receive from God a quiet, tranquil, and almost angelic life, even in this world, feeling no trouble or repugnance in anything." June 22: "Of these three degrees it is well to persevere in the second, because the Lord will grant the third in His own good time."
- 31 *Ibid.*, Feb. 27: "We can never arrive at the contemplative life, if we do not first exercise ourselves laboriously in the active life."
- 32 *Ibid.*, April 21: "The true way to advance in holy virtues, is to persevere in a holy cheerfulness." Feb. 7: "Cheerfulness strengthens the heart and makes us persevere in a good life." Dec. 28: "Let young men be cheerful, and indulge in the recreations proper to their age,

- provided they keep out of the way of sin.” May 22: “The cheerful are much easier to guide in the spiritual life than the melancholy.”
- 33 Ponnelle and Bordet, *St Philip Neri and the Roman Society*, p. 191.
- 34 M. Plaisance, and N. Lebrun Carew-Reid, *Florence: Carnival in the time of Savonarola*. Online at:
https://www.academia.edu/26217712/Florence_Carnival_in_the_Time_of_Savonarola
 Accessed: 8 July 2018.
- 35 Ponnelle and Bordet, *St Philip Neri and the Roman Society*, p. 65.
- 36 *Ibid.*, pp. 207-210.
- 37 Neri, *Maxims and Sayings*, Nov. 13: “The man who loves God with a true heart, and prizes him above all things, sometimes sheds floods of tears at prayer, and has in abundance of favours and spiritual feelings coming upon him with such vehemence, that he is forced to cry out, “Lord! let me be quiet!”
- 38 *Ibid.*, June 4: “Prayer and communion are not to be made or desired for the sake of the devotion we feel in them, for that is seeking self, and not God.”
- 39 *Ibid.*, Feb 6: “Tears are no sign that a man is in the grace of God, neither must we infer that one who weeps when he speaks of holy and devout things necessarily leads a holy life.”
- 40 *Ibid.*, Feb 5: “Perfection does not consist in such outward things as shedding tears and the like, but in true and solid virtues.”
- 41 *Ibid.*, June 19: “In the spiritual life there are three degrees: the first may be called the animal life; this is the life of those who run after sensible devotion, which God generally gives to beginners, to allure them onwards by that sweetness to the spiritual life, just as an animal is drawn on by a sensible object.”
- 42 *Ibid.*, Sept. 1: “Persons who live in the world should persevere in coming to church to hear sermons, and remember to read spiritual books, especially the Lives of the Saints.”
- 43 Ponnelle and Bordet, *St Philip Neri and the Roman Society*, p. 204.
- 44 *Ibid.*, p. 205.
- 45 Belcari, *The Life of the Blessed Colombini* trans. from editions of 1541 and 1832 (London: R. Washborne, 1874). Online at:
<https://archive.org/stream/TheLifeOfBGiovColombini#page/n11/mode/2up>
 Accessed: 7 March 2018. See p. 206: “I have seen and known that ...the heart feels what the tongue utters; so he whose talk is of the world grows lukewarm and worldly; he who speaks of Christ thinks of Christ. Therefore, if you wish Christ to give Himself to you, you will always be ready to speak, sing, or read of Christ, or else to meditate on or pray to Him.”
- 46 Neri, *Maxims and Sayings*, Feb. 12: “There is nothing more to the purpose for exciting a spirit of prayer, than the reading of spiritual books.”
- 47 “*Ragionamento sopra il libro.*”
- 48 Ponnelle and Bordet, *St Philip Neri and the Roman Society*, pp. 203-4 and 322-3. Quotation from Neri’s letter of December 1588: “In accordance with the ancient usage of the Oratory, when they did so in *spiritu et veritate et in simplicitate cordis*, and when they left the field to the Holy Spirit, that he might infuse His power into the mouth of the speaker, without all that profound study, that premeditation, that analysis of authors of all kinds.... If they tell me that today is no longer the time for such simplicity... well, I have nothing to reply....”
- 49 Van Engen, *Brothers and Sisters*, p. 284.
- 50 Neri, *Maxims and Sayings*, Nov. 11: “It is an old custom with the servants of God always to have some little prayers ready, and to be darting them up to heaven frequently during the day, lifting their minds to God from out of the filth of this world. He who adopts this plan will get great fruit with little pains.” See also Türks, *Philip Neri*, p. 98.
- 51 Türks, *Philip Neri*, p. 111.
- 52 *Ibid.*, p. 111. Cassian also speaks of “*volutatio cordis*”, a ‘rolling about of the heart.’
- 53 *Ibid.*, p. 102.
- 54 Neri, *Maxims and Sayings*, March 30: “In order to begin well, and to finish better, it is quite necessary to hear mass every day, unless there be some lawful hindrance in the way.”
- 55 Ponnelle and Bordet, *St Philip Neri and the Roman Society*, p. 121.
- 56 Türks, *Philip Neri*, p. 120.
- 57 *Ibid.*, p. 97.
- 58 Neri, *Maxims and Sayings*, Oct. 19: “He who desires ecstasies and visions does not know what he is desiring.”
- 59 *Ibid.*, Oct. 20: “As for those who run after visions, dreams, and the like, we must lay hold of them by the feet and pull them to the ground by force, lest they should fall into the devil’s net.” Also Türks, *Philip Neri*, p. 19, for treatment of Sister Ursula Benincasa.

Chapter 9. Conclusion

- 1 In 1563 as Trent was closing, the Society was approved as “a society of clerks regular for the service of the Lord and his Church.”
- 2 The Bull of Gregory XIII, 1575 states, “A Congregation of secular priests and clerics is hereby erected to be called ‘of the Oratory.’”
- 3 Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, p. 310. This was also Wyclif’s phrase.
- 4 O’Malley, *The Jesuits, St. Ignatius, and the Counter Reformation*, p. 35.
- 5 Türks, *Philip Neri*, p. 115.
- 6 Van Engen, *Brothers and Sisters*, p. 284.
- 7 Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, pp. 4-5. “In 1568 Pope Pius V ordered any who lived in-between, as religious but without vows, to join an order or dissolve the community. A tightening Catholic discipline could no longer tolerate unregulated groups, people “semi-religious” or “semi-lay” at least not in principle. At the same time Protestant regimes energetically closed Devout houses and confiscated their resources, sweeping through the home region of the Devout in 1569-70.”

Appendix (i)

Significant Figures of the *Devotio Moderna*

Notes on a selection of influential individuals associated with the Devotio Moderna:

Jan Ruusbroec (1293-1381)

Ruusbroec held the reputation for being an eminent spiritual teacher in the Low Countries. Friends of God met with Ruusbroec in Brussels and he had connections with Tauler. In 1343, Ruusbroec and his companions began to live as hermits in Groenendael, but they later became canons regular after St. Victor in Paris. Ruusbroec wrote *Spiritual Espousals*, discussing true and false contemplative states, and also *The Mirror of Eternal Salvation* against the notion of spiritual self-emptying. Groote visited Ruusbroec at Groenendael c1378. He admired Ruusbroec's writings, translating *Spiritual Espousals* and other selected works into Latin. Groenendael joined the chapter of Windesheim in 1412/3.

Geert Groote (1340-1384)

After completing his studies at Paris, Groote lived an indulgent lifestyle, taking two benefices in order to benefit from their incomes. Groote converted in 1374 and decided against a life of luxury. He made his house a hospice for women and spent several years in a Carthusian monastery on retreat. In 1379, he was ordained deacon and became a missionary preacher. Groote visited Ruusbroec c1381 and admired the life of the Augustinian canons at Groenendael. In 1383 he angered clergy by preaching against concubines and simony. This resulted in an edict preventing deacons from preaching. Groote died from the plague in 1384.

Florens Radewijns (1350-1400))

Radewijns was a disciple of Groote. He encouraged men to form Devout households in accordance with Groote's teachings, and is considered to be the founder of the Brothers' house in Deventer. Radewijns promoted the creation of personal *rapiaria*. His important writings include *Multum valet* and *Omnes inquit artes*.

Jean Gerson (1363-1429)

Gerson studied under Pierre d'Ailly at the University of Paris, becoming Chancellor of the University in 1395. Gerson was a leading and influential academic. While not affiliated to the *Devotio Moderna*, he espoused and endorsed many of their views and practices. Some scholars believed him to be the author of the *Imitation of Christ*, but this view has generally been discredited. As head of the cathedral school in Paris, Gerson promoted the religious formation of boys in hostels resembling those of the Devout. At the Council of Constance in 1418, Gerson successfully argued against Grabow's contention that the Devout lifestyle was sinful in that they did not live according to their lay status. Gerson affirmed that the Christian religion could be observed with or without vows through obedience to the "Abbot Christ" and that voluntary vows added nothing to the baptismal vows.

Gerard Zerbolt von Zutphen (1367-1398)

Zerbolt attended the University of Cologne and joined the Brothers at Deventer. His writings became essential reading for the Devout, in particular his *Spiritual Ascents*. He was an important apologist for the Devout lifestyle, writing *Circa modum vivendi*.

His tractates cover topics such as the use of books in the vernacular, and clerics not wearing expensive clothing nor seeking ordination.

Salome Sticken (1369-1449)

Salome was the first prioress at Diepenveen and one of the most influential and highly regarded Sisters. Her text entitled, *A Way of Life for Sisters* is a rare example of first hand evidence of the practices within communities of Sisters, showing the importance of obedience, prayer and work.

Thomas à Kempis (1379/80-1471)

À Kempis lived with the Brothers at Deventer and Zwolle before joining the canons at St Agnietenburg in 1406 where he became novice master in 1425. He compiled pamphlets of short spiritual sayings, four of which were developed into the text of the *Imitation of Christ*.

Dirc of Herxen (1381-1457)

Dirc was rector of the house at Zwolle for nearly fifty years. He was responsible for gathering all the Dutch houses together annually for discussions and common decisions.

John Brinckerinck (1392-1419)

Brinckerinck was an early disciple of Groote who lived in Radewijn's Deventer house. He became the rector of the house of canonesses at Diepenveen. Nine preserved collations of Brinckerinck shed light on Devout attitudes towards conversion and spiritual progress.

Gabriel Biel (c1410-92)

Biel was a professor of theology at Tübingen (1484-92). He became acquainted with the Devout in Cologne, and joined the Brothers' house at Butzbach. He helped found houses in the Middle Rhine and Upper Rhine regions. Biel wrote influential apologies for the Common Life.

Wessel Gansfort (1419-1489)

Gansfort was educated at the hostel in Zwolle and he attended the Brothers' collations regularly between the ages of fourteen and thirty. After spending twenty-five years as a scholar in Heidelberg, Paris, Rome, Cologne and Louvain, he returned to the Windesheim house where he met and influenced Mombaer. His writings include the *Scala meditationis*.

Jean Standonck (1443-1504)

Standonck was in contact with the Devout during his youth in the Low Countries. After gaining a doctorate in Paris, he formed a community for poor students there based on the model of the Devout hostels. He was influential in the Collège de Montaigu, and established hostels on Devout principles in Cambrai, Malines, Louvain and Valenciennes.

Jan Mombaer (c1460-1502)

Mombaer was influenced by the Devout while being educated at the cathedral school at Utrecht. He joined Windesheim in 1475. He worked with Gansfort, devising methods to promote religious emotion. In 1494, he published the *Rosetum exercitiorum spiritualium et sacrarum meditationum*. This incorporated Gansfort's

Scala meditationis, Gerson's *Cantichordium* and his own *Chiropslaterium*. Mombaer took the *Rosetum* to France as part of his reforming activities in the houses of St Victor, Notre Dame de Livry, Saint Callixte de Cysoing. The Collège de Montaigu obtained a copy of the *Rosetum* in 1495.

Pope Adrian VI (1459-1523)

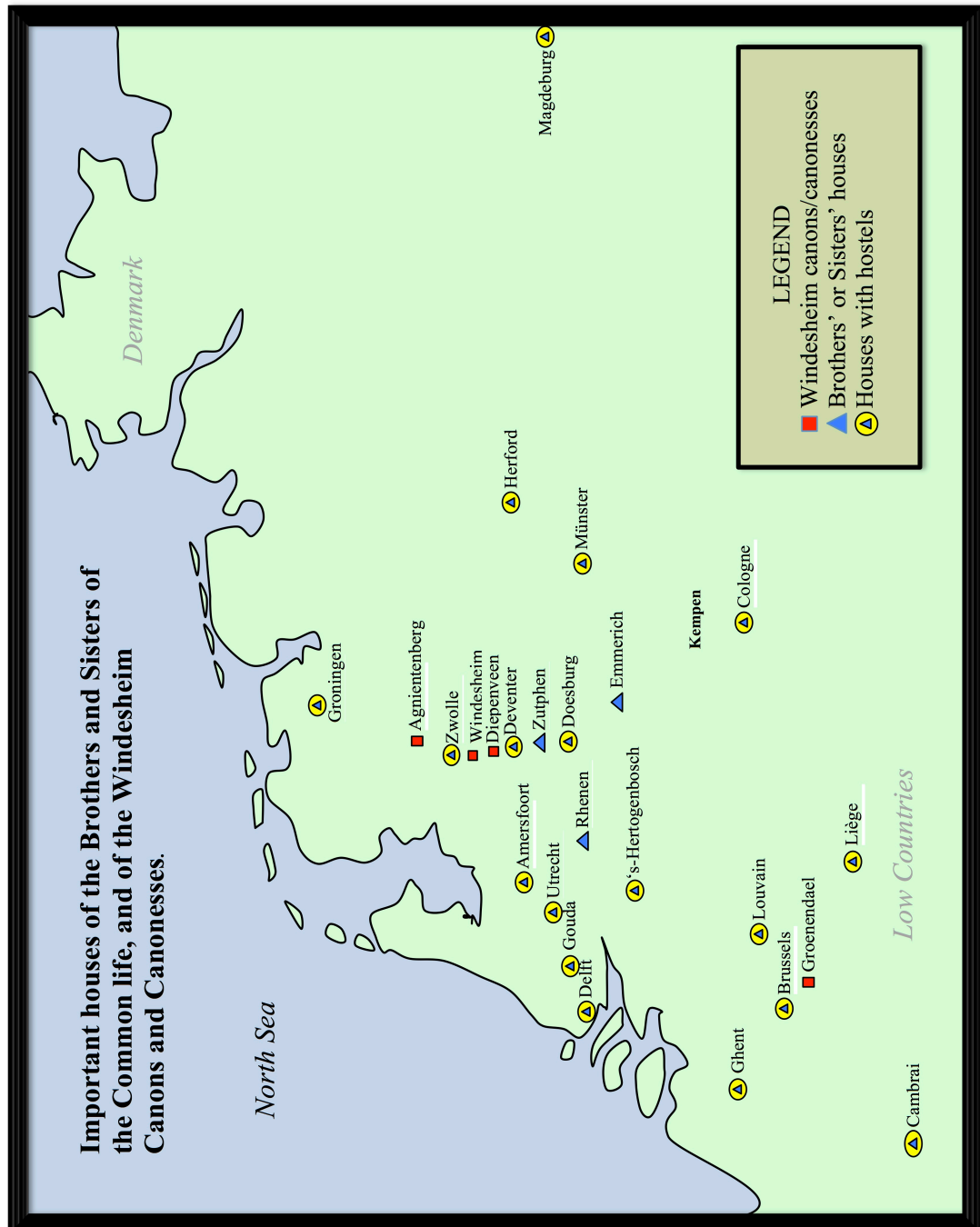
Educated by the Brothers at either Deventer or Zwolle, Adrian later studied at the University of Louvain, becoming professor of theology, chancellor and rector. Erasmus was among his pupils. Adrian served as co-regent of Spain with Cisneros, and held the role of Inquisitor of Aragon (1517) and Castille (1518). Following his election to the papacy in 1522 he attempted ecclesiastical reforms which were not well received by the Italian cardinals.

Desiderius Erasmus (c1466-1536)

Erasmus was educated by the Brothers at Deventer, Gouda and 's-Hertogenbosch. His association with the Devout continued at the Collège de Montaigu under John Standonck. Erasmus joined the canons regular at Steyn but repealed his vows in 1517. Although he was critical of their rigid asceticism, Erasmus continued to follow a typical Devout lifestyle and his writings are permeated with Devout spirituality. His *Adages* (1500) resemble the *rapiaria* of the Devout, and he emphasised inner spirituality and intentions over religious ceremony. Erasmus insisted that piety should be accessible to the laity. His reputation as a humanist scholar gave him a wide sphere of influence. Erasmus' works include the *Enchiridion militis Christiani* (1503/4) and *In Praise of Folly* (1511).

Appendix (ii)

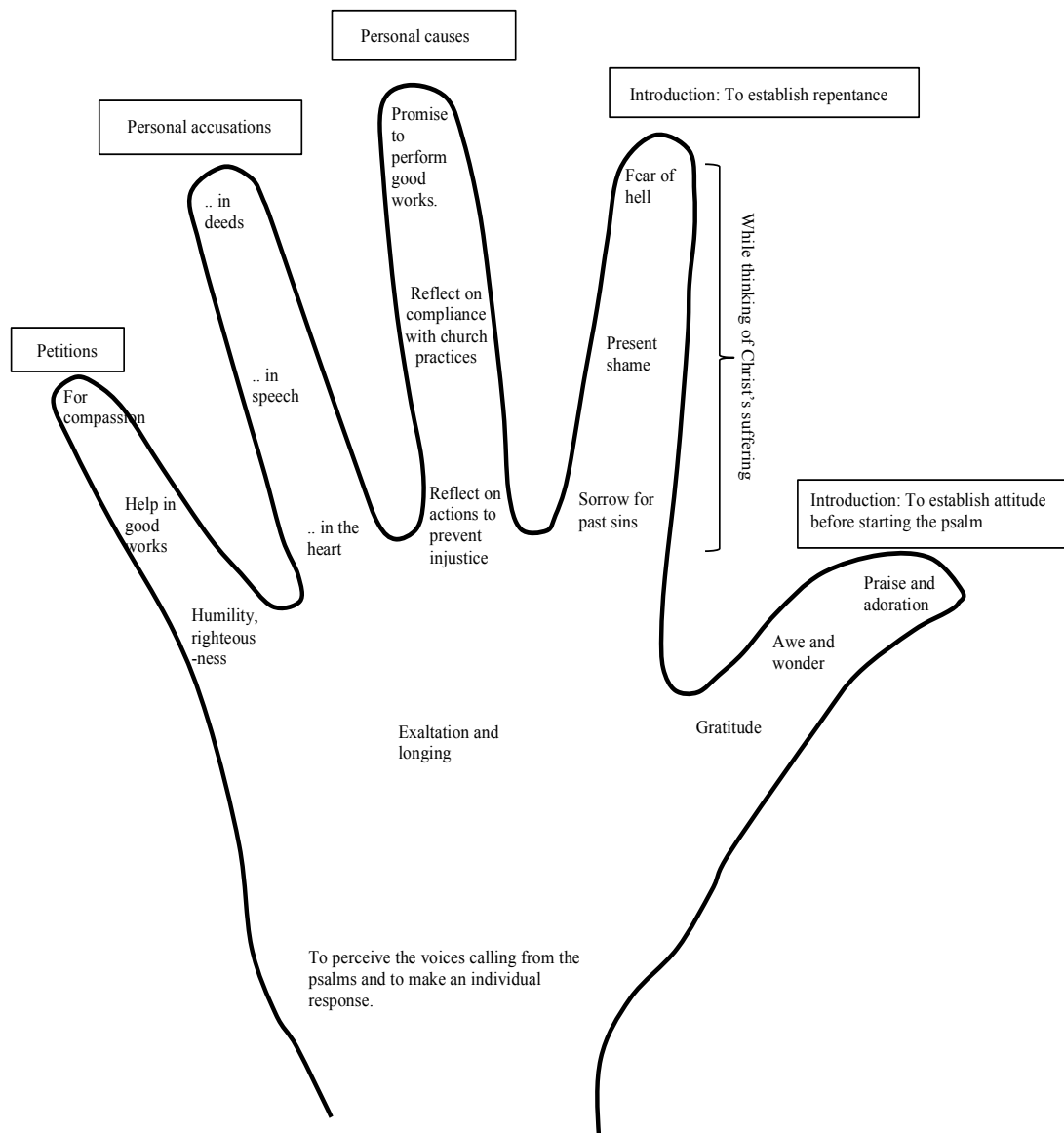
Map showing important houses of the *Devotio Moderna*



Appendix (iii)

Mombaer's *Chiropsalterium* (Finger Psalter)

The *Chiropsalterium* is found in Mombaer's *Rosetum exercitiorum spiritualium et sacrarum meditationum*. Its purpose was to evoke the desired emotions during meditation.



Mombaer's *Chiropsalterium* associates points of the hand with particular emotions. As the psalms are chanted, pressure is applied with the right thumb to the base, middle and tips of the fingers of the left hand, while the individual consciously encourages particular emotional responses. At the conclusion of the psalm, the centre of the palm is pressed while the meditant evokes feelings of exaltation and longing. Finally, the individual makes a personal response to the "voices" of the psalm while pressing the base of the palm. Over time, automatic associations are created between positions on the left hand and the emotions. Emotions can then be induced when required.

A more detailed description of the methods of the *Chiropsalterium* can be found in S. Ritchey, "Wessel Gansfort, John Mombaer, and Medieval Technologies of the Self: Affective Meditation in a Fifteenth-Century Emotional Community", in Gusick, B. I. (ed.), *Fifteenth Century Studies*, Vol. 38 (New York: Camden House, 2013), pp.153-175.

Appendix (iv)

Timeline of Key Dates

Date	<i>Devoio Moderna</i>	Ignatius of Loyola	Philip Neri
1375	Groote founds hospice for women. (1374)		
1380	Thomas à Kempis born. (1379) Ruusbroec dies. Dirck of Herxen born. (1381)		
1385	Groote dies. (1384) Women's hospice now a religious community. (1385) Brothers' houses begin to form. Windesheim founded. (1386)		
1390	John Brinckerinck born. (1392)		
1395	Approval of "Congregation of the Augustinian Canons Regular of Windesheim." (1395) Some Brothers become Franciscan tertiaries. (From 1399)		
1400	16 Sisters' houses. (Some already tertiaries.) (1400) Radewijns dies. (1400)		
1405			
1410	Dirck of Herxen rector at Zwolle. (1410-1457) Gabriel Biel born. (c1410) Windesheim granted privileges. (1413)		
1415	Wessel Gansfort born. Brinckerinck dies. (1419) Around 150 Sisters' houses. (1419)		
1420			
1425	Brothers' house founded at Herford. (1426)		

Date	<i>Devotio Moderna</i>	Ignatius of Loyola	Philip Neri
1430	Formation of colloquy of Brothers at Zwolle under Dirck of Herxen.		
1435	Windsheim Chapter persuades pope not to accept more women's houses. (1436) Chapter of Utrecht has 3000 women members. (1439)		
1440	Houses founded at Munster, Cologne, Wesel. (1439) German houses united in "Munster Colloquium" Brothers' house founded at Hildesheim. (1440)		
1445			
1450	Most women now tertiaries or members of other Orders. Windsheim active in reform. (1450-1500) Brothers' house founded at Kassel. (1454).		(Savonarola born. 1452)
1455	Dirck of Herxen dies. (1457)		
1460	Women now mostly Augustinian. (1460s) Around 80 monasteries of Windsheim. (1460) Jan Mombaer born. (1460) Brothers granted papal privileges. (1462) Brothers accept title "Canon." (1463)		
1465	Houses established in Upper Rhine under Gabriel Biel. - St Amandus, Urach, Tübingen, Herrenberg. Erasmus born. (c1466)		
1470	No new houses for sisters from 1470s.		
1475			

Date	<i>Devotio Moderna</i>	Ignatius of Loyola	Philip Neri
1480	Brothers' house founded at Magdeburg. (1482) School founded at Magdeburg. (Luther a pupil).		
1485	Most brothers now called "Canons" serving a collegiate church. (1485) Deventer becomes a religious complex. (1487) Gansfort dies. (1489)		
1490	Collège de Montaigu founded (1490) Gabriel Biel dies. (1492)	Ignatius born. (1491)	
1495			(Savonarola dies. 1498)
1500	Numbers begin to diminish. Mombaer dies. (1502)		
1505 Pope Leo X 1513			
1510			
1515			Philip Neri born. (1515)
1520 Pope Adrian VI 1522 Pope Clement VII 1523		Ignatius at Montserrat. (1522) Ignatius visits Jerusalem. (1523) Ignatius at Barcelona. (1524)	
1525		Ignatius studies at Alcalá. (1526) Ignatius studies at Salamanca. (1527) Ignatius Studies at Paris. (1528)	
1530 Pope Paul III 1534		Companions take vows at Montmartre. (1534)	Neri lodging at Rome. (1533) Studies.

Date	<i>Devotio Moderna</i>	Ignatius of Loyola	Philip Neri
1535	Erasmus dies. (1536)	Ignatius and companions come to Rome. (1537)	Neri stops studying. Begins to live as hermit. (1537)
1540		Society of Jesus founded. (1540)	
1545			“Pentecost” experience in catacombs. (1544) Forms Confraternity of the Most Holy Trinity with Rosa. (1548)
1550 Pope Julius III 1550			Neri ordained (1551) Moves to San Girolamo.
1555 Pope Marcellus II 1555 Pope Paul IV 1555 Pope Pius IV 1559		Ignatius dies. (1555)	Oratory begins at San Girolamo (1558)
1560			Congregation of Oratorians begins at St Giovanni. (1564)
1565 Pope Pius V 1566	Pius V orders dissolution of religious houses without vows. (1568)		
1570 Pope Gregory XIII 1572			Exercises of the Oratory move to San Giovanni. (1574)
1575			Congregation of the Oratory founded at Vallicella. (1575)
1580			

Date	<i>Devotio Moderna</i>	Ignatius of Loyola	Philip Neri
1585 Pope Sixtus V 1585			Oratory founded at Naples. (1586)
1590 Pope Urban VII 1590 Pope Gregory XIV 1590 Pope Innocent IX 1591 Pope Clement VIII 1592 1595			Philip Neri dies. (1595)

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