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9

PETER CANISIUS

1521–1597

JOHN PATRICK DONNELLY

LIFE

Peter Kanijs, or Canisius, was born at Nijmegen in 1521. Jakob Kanijs, Peter's father, was a man of culture who had attended the Universities of Paris and Orleans and had served as tutor to the sons of Duke René II of Lorraine. Later he proved an astute businessman and politician, serving nine terms as mayor of Nijmegen. As his eldest son, Peter received the best education available, first at the local Latin school, then at a nearby boarding establishment, and finally at the University of Cologne.

Cologne was a natural choice, even though the university had fallen on evil days, for the Rhine linked it to Nijmegen, and Jakob Kanijs had business connections there. Among staunch Catholics such as the Kanijs family, Cologne was renowned as the German Rome, filled with old churches and relics of the saints. Jakob entrusted his son to two outstanding priests, Andrew Herll and Nicholas van Esche, who introduced their fifteen-year-old charge to the Dutch and Rhenish spirituality of the late Middle Ages. Through van Esche, Canisius became friendly with Gerard Kalckbrenner and Johannes Lanspergius, the prior and subprior at the Charterhouse of St. Barbara, which was a shining exception to the usual deterioration of monasteries during that era. Lanspergius attained eminence as a mystic and as a controversial theologian. The Carthusian life attracted Canisius, especially after his best friend, Laurence Surius, entered the Charterhouse. Still Canisius hesitated, perhaps deterred by a prediction of a saintly Beguine that he was destined for a new order of priests. Surius later went on to edit the biographies of many of the saints. The friendship between Canisius and the Cologne Carthusians later broadened into a special bond of prayer between the Carthusians and the Jesuits.

At his father's request Canisius transferred to Louvain in 1539 to study law, but when Jakob then arranged a lucrative marriage for him, Peter countered by taking a private vow of perpetual chastity, returning to Cologne, and beginning theological studies. For centuries Cologne had been a

center of scholasticism, famous for the lectures of Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, and Duns Scotus. Canisius esteemed the medieval scholastics throughout his life, but his own emphasis on Scripture and the Church Fathers suggests a preference for the humanist tradition in theology. He also learned Greek and Hebrew, languages much lauded by the humanists, but several fundamental drives of humanism never took deep root in his conservative temperament. He did not develop an interest in humane letters for their own sake, and although throughout his life he reread Cicero to sharpen his Latinity, style was for Canisius only a useful tool, never the expression of a distinctive ego.

In 1541 a Spanish Jesuit, Alvaro Alfonso, joined the college where Canisius was residing. Alfonso told Peter about the Society of Jesus and the work of Ignatius Loyola's earliest companion, Pierre Favre, at Mainz. Intrigued, Canisius took ship up the Rhine to learn more about the new order of priests. The meeting with Favre at Mainz ended his years of searching. "To my great good fortune I have found the man I was seeking—if he is a man and not an angel of the Lord. Never have I seen nor heard such a learned and profound theologian nor a man of such shining and exalted virtue . . . . I can hardly describe how the Spiritual Exercises transformed my soul and senses, enlightened my mind with new rays of heavenly grace and I feel infused with new strength . . . . I feel changed into a new man." Six months later Peter Canisius took his vows as the first German Jesuit.[1]

Shortly thereafter, he became the first Jesuit to publish a book. He is probably responsible for the German translation of the sermons of the Rhenish mystic Johann Tauler, which appeared at Cologne in 1543.[2] Three years later Canisius was ordained to the priesthood and began to publish the fruits of his patristic studies: two volumes of St. Cyril of Alexandria, including the *editio princeps* of Cyril's Genesis commentary. Since Erasmus had already published St. Cyril, the young student did not lack courage, but his edition is not remarkable for scholarship. More successful was his edition of St. Leo the Great that same year, which went on to be reprinted six times.

By this time Canisius had become the leader of nine young Jesuits studying at Cologne, but more important was his role in frustrating the efforts of Archbishop Hermann von Wied to Lutheranize his electorate. Had von Wied succeeded, the history of Germany could have been very different, since the majority of electors would have been Protestant. A Protestant emperor might have been the coup de grace to German Catholicism. Von Wied met

1. Otto Braunsberger, ed., *Beati Petri Canisii Societatis Iesu Epistulae et Acta* (Freiburg i. B.: Herder, 1896–1923), 1: 76–77. The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola are a system of reflection and meditation, mainly on the life of Christ, designed for a thirty-day retreat under a skilled director. They aim at bringing a person's major decisions and way of life into line with God's will. The printed *Spiritual Exercises* contain rules and suggestions that the director adapts to individuals and their needs. Loyola considered Pierre Favre the best director among his early companions.

2. For the controverted authorship, see James Brodrick, *St. Peter Canisius, S.J., 1521–1597*, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1935), pp. 38–40.

strong opposition from the university, the chapter of canons, the Jesuits, and the chancellor, Johann Gropper. When Charles V visited Cologne in 1545, the Catholic leaders chose Canisius to present their case against the archbishop. Later they sent Canisius to the emperor at Antwerp and at Geislingen. Charles was sympathetic but postponed action until his victory over the Lutherans at Mühlberg allowed him to depose von Wied.

Early in 1547 Cardinal Truchsess of Augsburg appointed Canisius as his theologian at the Council of Trent. Peter had hardly arrived at Trent when the council was transferred to Bologna. Canisius spoke only twice before the congregation of theologians, but he put his knowledge of German and Germany at the disposal of the other Jesuits at Bologna, Diego (Jacob) Laynez, Alfonso Salmeron, and Claude Lejay. He soon forged lasting friendships with each of them.

When the council was prorogued in June 1547, Loyola summoned Canisius to Rome where he entered a primitive form of the Jesuit tertianship, or final spiritual training. After making the Spiritual Exercises a second time,[3] he devoted several months to prayer, to service in the Roman hospitals, and to menial housework—scrubbing floors, washing dishes, and serving at table. At the end of this experience Loyola sent Canisius and nine others to start a college at Messina. The Sicilian venture was the first of three hundred colleges for lay students that the Jesuits established during Canisius's lifetime. At Messina he taught rhetoric and headed the division of humanities, and the experience gained there by trial and error stood him in good stead when he organized the first Jesuit colleges in Germany. Almost a year after landing in Sicily, he got new orders from Rome. The duke of Bavaria needed professors of theology at Ingolstadt, where the university had declined sharply after the death of Johann Eck in 1543. He was to join Lejay and Salmeron in restoring this citadel of Bavarian Catholicism.

From 1549 to 1580 Canisius worked in Germany as teacher, preacher, writer, Jesuit provincial, and adviser to the Catholic princes. His major bases of operations were Ingolstadt, Vienna, Augsburg, Innsbruck, and Munich, but his duties forced him to tramp the wretched roads of Europe more than any major religious figure of the era. In 1565 alone, when he served as unofficial nuncio to the empire, he logged five thousand miles. Seven times he went to Rome, but recurrent short trips, such as his sixty-one journeys between Dilligen and Augsburg and twenty-four climbs through the Alps from Augsburg to Innsbruck, probably entailed greater hardship.

Canisius was the first Jesuit to enter Poland when he came as theological adviser to the papal nuncio in 1558, first to Cracow and then to the Diet of Piotrków. The strength of Protestantism in Cracow and throughout the realm alarmed him. He found Polish Catholics xenophobic, backward, and filled with anti-Roman bias; the bishops and clergy seemed apathetic and

3. A Jesuit twice spends thirty days following the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola, once as a novice and again as a tertian three years or so following his ordination to the priesthood.

avaricious. Typically, his reaction was not discouragement but a desire to labor and give his life for Catholicism in Poland.[4] Seven years later he helped send a group of Jesuits to Braniewo (Braunsberg), and they gradually developed into the flourishing Polish province of Jesuits. He was aided in this by Cardinal Stanislas Hosius, who had been urging on Canisius the establishment of the Society of Jesus in Poland as early as 1554 (see chapter 10). The correspondence between the Polish cardinal and the Dutch Jesuit witnesses to nearly thirty years of friendship and cooperation. Canisius gave valued advice when Hosius served as cardinal legate at the Council of Trent. For many years Canisius looked after the publication of Hosius's works in Germany, much of which was not routine. In the case of Hosius's *Solida Propugnatio* (Cologne, 1558) against Johann Brenz, Canisius divided the work into chapters and provided marginal summaries and an index. He encouraged Hosius late in life to take up his pen again and do battle for the Lord. For years Canisius supplied the cardinal with the latest books from German publishers; in turn Hosius sent him manuscripts from Rome for his controversial works.[5]

In 1580, when the Jesuit provincial, Paul Hoffaeus, sent him to supervise the founding of a Jesuit college at Fribourg in Switzerland, Canisius left Germany, never to return. Perhaps Hoffaeus was glad to get rid of the old man, for he had long opposed his absorption in controversial theology and objected to his strict opinions against taking interest on certain kinds of loans, but Hoffaeus also realized how much Canisius's prudence and reputation for holiness would advance the delicate negotiations with the Fribourg senate for the new college.[6] Fribourg, squeezed between Protestant Bern and the Vaud, needed a college to fortify its Catholicism and stop the drain of its youth to the Protestant academies of Bern, Basel, Lausanne, and Geneva. The initial funds for the college came, as so often, from the suppression of a monastery. Canisius took up the task of preacher at Fribourg and meanwhile tried to deal with monk-pensioners, with rents from the monastic lands, and even with the temporal jurisdiction of two villages. In 1582 the Jesuits opened their school in two rented houses, but it took three more years and generous help from the senate before work could begin on a permanent college.

Gradually Canisius had to cut back on his preaching, since his voice and his health generally were failing. In 1591 he began to use a cane to totter about. His growing inability to engage in the active apostolate galled him, as we see from the many references in his letters to the "decrepitude of old age."[7] He explained to a friend that "a useless old fellow like me has plenty of leisure," but he tried to contribute whatever he could. As long as he managed

4. Braunsberger, 2:318–63.

5. Braunsberger, 2:202f, 888; 3:490, 392f, 515f; 4:19f, 793f.

6. Brodrick, pp. 712–72; Burkhart Schneider, "Peter Canisius und Paul Hoffaeus," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 89 (1957): 304–30.

7. Braunsberger, 8:844.

to get about, he insisted on doing his share in washing the community dishes and sweeping the floors. Throughout his life he had devoted up to seven hours daily to prayer, but now he added quiet walks with his rosary. The citizens came to see his presence in Fribourg as a talisman, "the strongest defense and ornament of their republic."[8]

Writing was the one activity that his health permitted, and his productivity continued unabated. Although he kept revising his earlier works, he increasingly turned to composing devotional books. Canisius published the lives of several local Swiss saints, together with prayers that were attributed to them. As history these books are worthless, but history was incidental to his purposes. Thus his life of the holy *hausfrau* Ida was an exhortation to married couples, while his writings on the soldier-saints—such as that on St. Maurice, *A Mirror for Soldiers*—were intended for Swiss mercenaries. For the future emperor, Ferdinand II, Canisius composed a book of prayers. It is easy to dismiss such writings, but they found an eager audience. The great work of his last years was five large volumes of meditations and notes on the gospels for Sundays and feast days.[9]

THEOLOGY Canisius is best known for his catechisms, which eventually appeared in five hundred editions in twenty-five languages. In Germany as in the rest of Europe before the Reformation, catechetical instruction for children had long centered on such traditional topics as the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer. This material was often cast into verse for easier memorization and supplemented by explanations of the seven sacraments, the seven capital sins, the eight beatitudes, and similar material. Nevertheless, the pre-Reformation tradition had failed to capitalize on the invention of printing by placing effective catechisms in children's hands. Very early, Protestants began to fill this vacuum, culminating with Luther's large and small catechisms of 1529. Catholic catechisms were slow to appear, but by midcentury German Catholics could choose between the catechisms of Georg Witzel, Johann Gropper,

8. Braunsberger, 8:677, 883.

9. For a discussion of the literature on Canisius, see Engelbert M. Baxbaum, *Petrus Canisius und die kirchliche Erneuerung des Herzogtums Bayern, 1549–1556* (Rome: Institutum historicum S.I., 1973), pp. 1–11. Canisius's published works include three catechisms, three polemical works in theology, nine books of piety, eight volumes of sermons and sermon notes, and five books on the lives of the saints. Friedrich Streicher has produced a critical edition of the catechisms: *S. Petri Canisii Doctoris Ecclesiae Catechismi Latini et Germanici; I, Catechismi Latini; II, Catechismi Germanici*, (Munich: Officina Silesiana; Rome: Universitas Gregoriana, 1933, 1936). Other major works are: *Commentarii de Verbi Dei Corruptelis; I. Iohannis Baptistae Historia; II. De Maria Virgine Incomparabili* (Paris, 1584); *Notae in Evangelicas Lectiones* (Fribourg, 1591, 1593); *Meditationes seu Notae in Evangelicas Lectiones*, vol. 1, (Freiburg i. B.: Herder, 1939); vols. 2 and 3 (Munich: Officina Silesiana, 1955, 1961). For a listing of Canisius editions, see Carlos Sommervogel, *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus* (Paris: Picard, 1891) 2:617–88.

Pedro de Soto, Michael Helding, and others, but none of these could rival that of Luther.[10]

Ferdinand of Austria had long desired a compendium of Catholic theology aimed at priests and educated laymen; Canisius, Lejay, and Laynez had all tried their hand at this project without much success. Early in 1553 Canisius turned instead to a large catechism, which so delighted Ferdinand that he promised it would be the only catechism allowed in Austria. The first edition, *Summa Doctrinae Christianae*, appeared anonymously at Vienna in 1555 and went through twenty printings in the first four years. Ferdinand and his advisers made the capital suggestion that Canisius provide marginal references to Scripture, the Church Fathers, and the ecumenical councils so that teachers and students could see the evidence that backed the statements of the *Summa*. Later Canisius helped Peter Buys (or Busaeus), a fellow Jesuit from Nijmegen, to compile the *Opus Catechisticum*, whose four volumes and 2,500 pages reprint the text of the *Summa* together with the passages referred to in its margins.[11] The first edition of the *Summa* has 213 questions and covers 69 pages in the Streicher critical edition; after the Council of Trent Canisius nearly doubled the length of the catechism by expanding his answers, by adding 9 new questions, and by reprinting almost verbatim the Tridentine decrees on original sin and justification. Marginal references to Scripture rose from eleven hundred to two thousand, while patristic citations jumped from four hundred to twelve hundred. Canisius seldom referred to scholastic theology since he preferred to base his vocabulary and teaching on Scripture and the fathers.

In 1556 a Latin grammar appeared at Ingolstadt that contained in an appendix the first edition of Canisius's *Catechismus minimus*. It occupies only seven pages in Streicher's edition. Editions in Latin and German quickly followed, often containing prayers, hymns, and instructions on confession and communion. The most popular of the Canisius series of catechisms was the *minor*, or *Parvus Catechismus Catholicorum*, of 1559, which was intended for adolescents and contained three innovations not found in its larger or smaller companions. It was often illustrated; especially lavish was the Plantin edition of 1589 with 102 engravings by Peter van der Borcht. Secondly, the *minor* often contains a calendar of the church year with elaborate references to readings for each day. Finally, it includes an appendix of thirty-seven scriptural quotations for students to quote against heretics; these quotations do not argue against any specific teaching but simply stress the value of tradition and the authority of the church. Only the *minor* and the *minimus* were designed for memorization. One reason for the success of the Canisius cate-

10. Jean-Claude Dhotel, *Les Origines du catéchisme moderne* (Paris: Editions Montaigne, 1967), pp. 15–98.

11. *Catechismi*, 1:38*–46*, 67*–70*; Braunsberger, 1:411–13; Brodrick, pp. 173–79; 221–24.

chisms was that they increased in length and sophistication as the child grew, while remaining familiar in wording, doctrine, and format.[12]

Most sixteenth-century catechisms, including those of Luther, Calvin, and the Council of Trent, have four major parts dealing with the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the sacraments, although the order of presentation varies. In contrast, Canisius divides Christian doctrine into two parts, "wisdom" and "justice." Under wisdom he deals with faith (the Apostles' Creed), hope (The Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary), charity (The Ten Commandments and the precepts of the church), and the sacraments. The second part, devoted to justice, is shorter but more distinctive. Justice consists in fleeing evil and doing good. Canisius describes four categories of sin that the Christian must flee. In explaining how the Christian does good he takes up the works of mercy, the cardinal virtues, the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, the beatitudes, and the evangelical counsels. He closes by explaining the four last things: death, judgment, hell, and heaven. Giving students information about Catholic doctrine was important, but Canisius's real goal was leading them to prayerfulness, to the frequent use of the sacraments, and to moral living based on intelligent religious conviction. The *justitia* of Canisius, chiefly derived from Augustine and Gregory the Great, is not an isolated philosophical virtue but includes theological justification and the whole of Christian living.

In one sense the catechisms of Canisius are among the least polemical of the Reformation era; they never mention Luther, Calvin, or any Protestant by name, and they seldom advert to Protestant doctrine, but simply present the arguments for the Catholic positions on disputed points. In their lack of direct reference to Protestant teaching they contrast with many Catholic catechisms such as those of Edmond Auger, the famous French Jesuit. Gradually even the French Jesuits came to prefer Canisius's catechisms to those of Auger, both because their section on justice and practical piety had no parallel in Auger and because they did not even bring up the alternative explanations of the Protestants.[13]

In another sense the catechisms of Canisius are profoundly anti-Protestant. Their heavy stress on good works was designed to oppose Luther's emphasis on faith. The division into two parts, one devoted to Christian wisdom and the other devoted to justice and devout living, clearly cuts against

12. Within Canisius's lifetime there were eighty-two printings of the *Summa* (twenty in the empire) and 132 Latin printings of the *Minor* (fifty-eight in the empire), plus four of the *Minimus*. There were thirteen printings each in German of the *Minor* and the *Minimus*. Stricher, *Catechismi*, (1:96*–168*; 2:16*–17*), lists the Latin and German editions, but there were many other vernacular translations, for example ten of the *Summa* and thirteen of the *Minor* in French: Dhotel, pp. 80, 81. For photo-reprints of early English translations, see *English Recusant Literature*, vols. 2, 32, 35; (Menston, Yorkshire: Scolar Press, 1968, 1970, 1971).

13. Dhotel, pp. 77–80.

Luther's link between faith and justification. In defending traditional Catholic faith and practice, Canisius shows little of the spirit of compromise found in Erasmians such as Georg Witzel. Canisius begins his tract on the sacraments in the *Summa* with a defense of the solemn rituals with which the Catholic Church surrounded the sacraments. He tries to build up a scriptural and patristic defense for the five sacraments that most Protestants rejected. Thus he sees the laying on of hands in the Acts of the Apostles as evidence for confirmation. He argues for transubstantiation but devotes more space to defending communion under one kind wherever custom and church authorities have sanctioned it. Because baptism caused little controversy between Catholics and mainstream Protestants, he treats it very briefly, giving it only a third of the space he devotes to holy orders. Clearly the needs of controversy produced an imbalance in treating the various points of doctrine; central truths on which there was general agreement get short shrift, while disputed questions suffer the elephantiasis so common in Reformation polemics. After explaining the Ten Commandments Canisius takes up the precepts of the church, which he prefaces with a long defense of church authority. The visible church is the city placed on a mountain, the pillar and foundation of truth that God fosters, preserves, defends, and vindicates. Anyone who rejects her doctrines or denies the authority of her ministers, particularly of the popes, is not a member of the church. Christians need the teaching of the church to recognize the Scriptures and to distinguish their true meaning from the false interpretations of heretics.

The controversies of the Reformation even intrude into the second part of the Canisius catechisms, which treats justice. In contrast to Luther, who defines sin as a transgression of God's law, Canisius builds on a Catholic theology of infused grace and defines mortal sin as a free act that destroys the spiritual life and brings death to the soul. Among the evangelical counsels he singles out for detailed treatment poverty, chastity, and obedience, which form the three vows of the monastic life.

The chapter on justice devotes a section to three traditional good works—fasting, prayer, and alms. Although Canisius begins by citing St. Augustine's threefold division of fasting into avoidance of sin, moderation in food and drink, and specific fasts commanded by church authorities, he concentrates on defending ecclesiastical fasts from Protestant attacks. His treatment of prayer contains little echo of his own training in the *devotio moderna* and the Spiritual Exercises; it heaps up commendations and examples of prayer from the Bible, but there is no hint of mysticism, little on inward union with God, nor much practical instruction on how to pray. His catechisms failed to prepare Catholics for the spread of systematic meditation, which was central to Counter-Reformation renewal. To almsgiving Canisius links the traditional seven spiritual and seven corporal works of mercy. He stresses that help for the needy must be generous, spontaneous, and universal, undertaken for the pure love of God rather than from human vanity, but the

social dimension of charity is neglected. He devotes his ingenuity to discovering scriptural quotations urging charity rather than to suggesting concrete applications in a sixteenth-century context. His focus remains the spiritual profit of the giver rather than the help given the needy.[14]

Through most of his life German Catholics felt themselves on the defensive and suffered from an inferiority complex. To overcome this feeling of inferiority St. Peter encouraged Catholic controversialists, even though the effect of their polemics was more to hearten waverers than to win converts. He constantly hectored friends to enter the fray with new books. He was always ready to contribute a preface, correct proofs, or shoulder negotiations with printers. He felt that Erasmus, despite his erudition, had done a disservice to the church because his edition of St. Jerome attacked the monastic life that the hermit of Bethlehem had extolled. Accordingly Canisius prepared a selection of Jerome's letters and added a preface defending the religious life against his fellow Dutchman.[15] Selling in competition with the bulky, expensive edition of Erasmus, his handy octavo selection went through forty printings. During the late sixteenth century the exploitation of the Church Fathers grew in the polemical literature, and Canisius made himself a specialist on them.

Canisius was not a creative theologian, nor did he enjoy controversial theology, but at the command of Pius V he undertook to reply to the *Magdeburg Centuries*, the massive church history arranged by centuries that Flacius Illyricus and his associates at Magdeburg had produced (see chapters 1 and 2 above). The task increasingly absorbed his time from 1567 to 1577. He quickly recognized that to refute the centuriators, passage by passage, was beyond his powers. Still less could he have produced an alternative interpretation of Christian history such as Cardinal Baronius did in the *Annales* at the end of the century. Canisius therefore decided to concentrate his effort on the first century and devote a volume each to John the Baptist, Mary, and St. Peter. Each volume would be at once a work of piety, a theological essay, and a refutation of the centuriators by showing how they mishandled the three biblical figures. The first fruit of his labor was *Iohannis Baptistae Historia Evangelica* (1571), which expanded the scattered New Testament statements about the Baptist to 796 pages; each chapter begins with the scriptural verse, appends the comments of the centuriators, then gives the lengthy *censura* of Canisius. Protestant exegetes generally reacted against the patristic interpretation of St. John as the precursor of monasticism by toning down the strangeness of his lifestyle. Thus the camel's hair worn by the Baptist becomes sturdy peasant garb or even a stylish woven garment. For Martin Bucer, the Baptist, when he retires to the desert, should not be compared to a hermit but to somebody who moves from the Rhineland to a backward part of Lorraine. Zwingli and Calvin allegorize the desert to stand for the ruined spiritual

14. *Catechismi*, 1:169–80.
15. Braunsberger, 3:274–85.

condition of the Jewish people. Canisius counters that "the outstanding continence, abstinence and general austerity of life pertains to the ornament and fullness" of the Baptist's sanctity. His treatment of the Baptist's diet of honey and locusts widens into a case for Lenten fasting and abstinence. The recovery of the body of the Baptist by his disciples becomes a defense of relics. More important are sections on celibacy, the nature of true repentance, the role of good works in Christian sanctification, and vocation to the ministry. Canisius added a long preface that ranges over many areas of doctrine and many Protestant theologians. Anticipating Bossuet's *Variations*, he contrasts Catholic unity with Protestant diversity. Among others, he attacks the Antitrinitarianism of Michael Servetus, Bernardino Ochino, and Laelius Socinus, and even finds Luther lukewarm in the defense of the Nicene Creed. He enumerates and mocks the many Protestant theories of the Eucharist. Rather idiosyncratic views such as the Brenz-Andreae doctrine of the ubiquity of Christ's body (see chapter 3 above) and Calvin's treatment of Christ's descent into hell (a blasphemy as evil as anything in Mohammed or Arius) are skillfully used to blacken all Protestant teaching.[16]

Canisius published *De Maria Virgine Incomparabili* in 1577 to continue his attack on the centuriators; again, many other Protestants come under fire—Luther, Melanchthon, Calvin, and Brenz are cited over four hundred times each. Nevertheless, devotion overshadows polemics, for this enormous book is really a summary of the whole of Christian thought about the Virgin. The revised edition of 1583 contains four thousand references to Scripture and ten thousand to patristic and scholastic authors. These statistics suggest Canisius's strengths and weaknesses as a writer and theologian. His reading was very wide, but he lacked originality and critical acumen. He tried to convince readers by inundating them with quotations and citations drawn from earlier authorities. Canisius never got his projected volume on St. Peter the Apostle beyond preliminary notes. Friends at Rome urged him to continue, but the Jesuit provincial, Paul Hoffaeus, bitterly opposed the project. Canisius had become a perfectionist, constantly revising his manuscripts, constantly ransacking libraries and pestering others for new quotations. Hoffaeus felt that Canisius should stick to short devotional books in German, practical books for ordinary people. Canisius yielded. In the course of his life he published a dozen books of prayers and pious readings. Hoffaeus was probably right; Canisius was at his best as a director of souls and a devotional writer, and German Catholicism needed zealous pastors more than speculative theologians. Indeed, throughout Europe the Catholic Reformation did not rest on savants but on men of action, for it was basically a reform of piety rather than of ideas.

16. For Calvin, Christ's descent into hell implied that Christ underwent the internal torments of the damned in his soul. *Institutes*, 2:16.

ROLE IN THE CHURCH

When the central period of Canisius's life began, with his return from Italy in 1549, it was obvious that the Interim had failed to pave the way for religious union in Germany. The princes, preachers, and people of north and central Germany were so unshakably committed to the Augsburg Confession that even Charles V at the zenith of his power could not uproot thirty years of Protestant growth. The region for Catholic reform during the lifetime of Canisius remained restricted to areas under Catholic princes, especially to Austria and Bavaria. Even in these areas Lutheranism was widespread among the common people and the lower nobility. Most Catholics were apathetic, so that without the support of the emperors and the dukes of Bavaria, the efforts of Canisius and the other Catholic reformers would have availed little in preserving these lands for the old church. Although Canisius lacked the qualities of a courtier, he soon became a confidential adviser to these princes because they respected his holiness and sincerity. His advice looked to one goal, the good of the church. The Catholic princes aimed at several conflicting goals, so that they often disregarded his advice, but in spite of disagreements Canisius and the Catholic princes retained their mutual respect.

Jesuit education in Germany began with the arrival of Canisius, Lejay, and Salmeron at Ingolstadt in 1549. During the next two decades the establishment of Jesuit colleges and universities was Canisius's most important work. The origins of these colleges varied. Sometimes the Jesuits established a separate college at an older university, as at Ingolstadt; sometimes they assumed control of an earlier foundation, as at the University of Dilligen; sometimes they started new schools from the ground up, as at Würzburg and Fribourg. Canisius played a major role in establishing the Jesuit schools at Ingolstadt, Vienna, Prague, Munich, Dilligen, Mainz, Innsbruck, Hall, Würzburg, Speyer, Regensburg, Augsburg and Fribourg. He played a less direct role in the foundation of eight others. Of these, Munich, Mainz, Dilligen, Vienna, and Würzburg averaged about nine hundred students each by the time of his death. All were fortresses of the Catholic Reformation and seedbeds for a new breed of priests. During the thirty central years of Canisius's apostolate, the first handful of German Jesuits grew to eleven hundred, most of them engaged in education.[17]

The colleges were usually established only after painful negotiations and often had strings attached. At Ingolstadt the Jesuits had to supply two professors of theology for the university and were pledged to serve the duke of Bavaria "in matters of religion wherever and in whatever way they can whenever he so requests them."[18] All too often the patron tried to endow the new colleges at the expense of a third party. A favorite device was to offer the

17. Berhard Duhr, *Geschichte der Jesuiten in den Länder deutscher Zunge in XVI, Jahrhundert* (Freiburg i. B.: Herder, 1907) 1:66–91, passim.

18. Brodrick, p. 268.

Jesuits the building and income of a decayed monastery or convent, either forcing the remaining monks or friars to move to another house of their order, or simply moving the Jesuits in as unwelcome guests. Again and again Canisius fought this sort of project, not always successfully.

Canisius realized that the students of his colleges were the key to the future of Catholicism in the empire. A pioneer of Jesuit educational practice and theory, he was convinced that young boys were pliant and that despite the ravages of original sin they could be guided to good habits. University students should be forced to live in supervised hostels, but the rigors of a Collège de Montaigu—the famous Paris college attended by Calvin and Ignatius of Loyola—would only drive students away. Regulations against dancing and fencing should not be enacted because they could not be enforced. Canisius insisted that the school buildings be kept clean, well heated, and in good repair. Few details escaped him: doors should be padded to close without noise. There should be a plentiful supply of balls and game equipment for the younger lads. Although corporal punishment was not altogether abolished, masters were to imitate Christ the Perfect Teacher in courtesy and gentleness toward their students. The study of Aristotle dominated the Jesuit curriculum, but the school libraries, always a special concern of Canisius, contained a surprising range of books. Training in piety invariably went hand in hand with academic subjects.

In June 1556 Loyola established the Jesuit province of upper Germany (Bohemia, Austria, and Bavaria) and appointed Canisius as its first provincial. Although the usual term of office was three years, he remained provincial, with short interruptions, until 1569. These were pioneer years with few customs and traditions to guide the Jesuits. Especially at the beginning many of the Jesuits were foreigners who were rushed into action before completing the long spiritual and intellectual training that later became a Jesuit hallmark. The Jesuit lifestyle was then a novelty, and the early Jesuits had a charisma that attracted men of talent, energy, and holiness. These same qualities attracted eccentrics, however. Later the long training would sift out those unsuited to Jesuit life, but in the pioneer days too many of them got out into ministry and some even became superiors.[19] Beyond doubt, fellow Jesuits laid the heaviest crosses on the shoulders of Canisius, so that when he retired as provincial at forty-eight he was an old man, but by the same token these trials developed and displayed his sterling charity.

Canisius was a practical man. He judged that the three key men in every Jesuit house were the superior, the preacher, and the cook. In deciding to locate the Jesuit novitiate at Prague rather than at Vienna, he gave three specific advantages: Prague was politically more secure, enjoyed better

19. Each Jesuit community is headed by a superior responsible for the work and well-being, physical and spiritual, of the members who in turn owe him obedience. The superior owes obedience to the provincial and the provincial to the superior general, who from the time of Ignatius Loyola to the present has lived in Rome.

weather, and brewed better beer.[20] Bad beer meant sick Jesuits. An extraordinary number of Jesuits under Canisius had health problems, particularly tuberculosis, but not all the ailments were physical. The razor-tongued Father Jean Couvillon was an able Ingolstadt theologian but was given to neurotic guilt feelings, hallucinations, and temper tantrums, which alternated with periods of depression. He would skip community meals, then order special foods served in his room. Because his sickness was attributed to the bad beer of Ingolstadt (ironically only a few leagues north of Munich), Canisius called Couvillon to Regensburg and made him his own secretary. Couvillon never really recovered, but Peter's kindness helped him do much good work. At Vienna the problem was the superior, the Basque Juan Vitoria. Like Loyola he was a dreamer of great schemes for the glory of God, but he lacked common sense. A man of great personal austerity, he could not appreciate why his subjects were unhappy when he sold off most of the community's furniture in order to decorate the church. He insisted that everything at Vienna be done Italian style, even to the way the eggs were cooked. By 1561 three of his subjects could take no more and left the Jesuits. Canisius rushed to the spot and did his best to restore the situation with kindness all around. Vitoria's faults came from excessive zeal, but what could be said for the novice who served as cook for Canisius and absconded with two hundred crowns intended for the distribution to the poor? Or the Jesuit court preacher at Innsbruck who converted to Lutheranism? More bizarre was the young Englishman Edward Thorn who entered the Jesuits for adventure and a free education, while remaining a convinced Protestant; all went well until the young Jesuits studying at Dilligen were asked to make the Tridentine Confession of Faith. Here Thorn baulked and decamped to Protestant territory. These episodes are only samples of the trials that Canisius underwent as provincial.

Most German priests and bishops watched the spread of Protestantism with apathy and discouragement. The shortcomings of the Catholic clergy in carrying out their pastoral duties filled Canisius with anguish and fired his zeal. Nothing was more fundamental than their failure to preach. Despite his duties as teacher, writer, and superior, Peter found time to become one of the most effective preachers of the age. A stolid Dutchman who lacked flair and magnetism, he compensated by hard work and total sincerity. As a young professor of rhetoric Canisius had mastered ancient oratorical theory, but when he larded his early speeches with rhetorical flourishes, he found that he lost his audience. His mature preaching was simple, direct, and designed to move his listeners to holy living. Canisius was official preacher for seven years at Augsburg, five years at Innsbruck, and eight years at Fribourg. During these years he averaged two sermons a week, sometimes speaking for two hours or longer. Sometimes he preached almost daily. Some twelve thousand

20. Braunsberger, 3:190.

pages of sermon notes survive and witness to his careful preparation, with the main points written out in full and the margins aswarm with directions. It was these that he drew together at the end of his life into five volumes of notes on the gospel readings for Sundays and feast days. Two volumes appeared before his death, but three were not published until the twentieth century. These are not sermons so much as notes, prayers, and suggestions to help parish priests prepare their own sermons.

When Canisius was appointed cathedral preacher at Augsburg in 1559, Catholicism was nearly dead in that commercial heart of the empire. Only eight hundred Catholics made their Easter duty the year Canisius arrived, and his first sermon drew only fifty, but as his reputation spread his audience grew. During his first year he was responsible for nine hundred Augsburgers returning to the Catholic sacraments, and the whole tone of Catholic devotional life improved. Although his sermons at Augsburg were mainly explanations of doctrine, they also took up the problem of city poverty with great frankness. Both as preacher and adviser Canisius did not hesitate to present his own convictions, however unpleasing to his audience and patrons, even when more popular positions were within the limits of Catholic orthodoxy. He took a very conservative stand on usury, although the Fuggers were personal friends and generous supporters of the Jesuits.[21] Likewise, he argued against granting the chalice to the laity when this was a pet project of Emperor Ferdinand.

It would be pleasant to report that Canisius foreshadowed the ecumenical spirit in his dealings with Protestants, but he was a man of his acrimonious times. He accepted the provisions of the Peace of Augsburg that allowed princes and free cities to impose either Catholicism or Lutheranism, not because the Peace was an ideal but because it was the best settlement that political circumstances allowed. Constantly he urged Catholic princes to exercise their full rights under the Peace, even as the Lutheran princes were doing. Heresy was for Canisius a deadly plague, but he often esteemed individual Lutherans as men of sincerity and virtue. "They have gone astray . . . without contention, willfulness or obstinacy. Most Germans are by nature simple, homely folk. Born and bred in Lutheranism, they receive with docility what they are taught in schools, churches and heretical books, and that is why they have gone astray."[22] The distinction between formal, obstinate heresy and the material, guiltless heresy of the common folk was an important contribution in an age when most theologians assumed that false belief flowed from willful blindness. Only slowly did Rome come to accept this obvious distinction.

21. The Fuggers, the leading German banking family, resided in Augsburg. Canisius was particularly close to George and Anton Fugger and was responsible for the conversion of Ursula and Sybil Fugger. See Brodrick, pp. 435–37, 592–96.

22. Braunsberger, 8:131.

Canisius argued that the conversion of Lutherans in Catholic territories depended on driving out their religious leaders and replacing them with zealous priests from the new Catholic colleges and seminaries. Coercion against the common people, Canisius warned Rome, was neither wise nor feasible. Germany was not Italy or Spain. He finally persuaded the curia to ease regulations governing the conversion of Protestants in Germany. Canisius advised his fellow Jesuits to imitate the courtesy of Christ, who would not quench the smoking flax, in their dealings with Protestants. On the other hand he urged stronger action toward the German Catholic princes: Lutheran ministers should be expelled, publishing strictly regulated, and heretical books combed out of Catholic schools. Teachers and graduates at Catholic universities should be made to swear the *Professio Fidei Tridentinae.*[23]

Emperor Ferdinand made Canisius one of the six Catholic spokesmen at the Colloquy of Worms in 1557. The leading Lutheran spokesmen were Melanchthon, Johann Brenz, and Erhardt Schnepf. Canisius had little hope that this theological summit meeting would have any more success in finding a *via media* than had earlier imperially sponsored colloquies. His pessimism was shared by Melanchthon, whose opening speech repudiated the decrees of Trent and pledged loyalty to the *Confessio Augustana*. The most important speech of Canisius went straight to the crucial weakness of the colloquies: the inability of Catholics and Protestants to agree on the criteria of religious truth. He argued that Scripture was insufficient since it did not prevent division among Protestants or even among Lutherans. His speech gave an opening to Schnepf, a leading follower of Flacius Illyricus, who demanded a condemnation of Zwinglians, Majorists, and all who deviated from the *Augustana*. To Brenz and Melanchthon, who wanted to present a united Protestant front, this demand was deeply embarrassing. Melanchthon countered with efforts to purge the Flacians. For all practical purposes the split between Lutherans finished the colloquy, but before it broke up Melanchthon accused Canisius to his face of idolatry and blasphemy. Canisius remained calm and polite, but later in a letter to the new Jesuit general, Laynez, Canisius vented his exasperation at the Protestant leaders and rejoiced that the open discord in the Lutheran camp might induce the Catholic princes to abandon sterile colloquies and support a reopening of the Council of Trent.[24]

St. Peter Canisius,[25] the most important shaper of Catholicism in southern Germany during the late sixteenth century, combined the inwardness of the *devotio moderna* with an energetic apostolate in the service of the hierarchical church characteristic of the early Jesuits. His writings, especially his catechisms, gave meaning and direction to generations of German Cath-

23. Braunsberger, 1:44; 4:229, 509; 5:361; 6:582–83; 8:130.

24. Braunsberger, 2:175–77; Brodrick, pp. 385–421.

25. Canisius was beatified by Pius IX in 1864. Pius XI canonized him and declared him a Doctor of the Roman Catholic Church in 1925. His canonization process was encouraged by the Jesuits.

olics, while the twenty Jesuit colleges that he helped to found trained the priests, princes, and lay leaders who enabled German Catholicism to gain the religious and political initiative in the early seventeenth century and to continue as a rich cultural and spiritual tradition throughout the baroque era.