

MICHAEL WADDING

Mystic and Missionary (1586–1644)

By

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MICHAEL WADDING of Waterford, Ireland, is best known to literary and ecclesiastical history for his *Practice of Mystical Theology*, which is one of the most common-sense manuals of the spiritual life and fully meriting the thirteen editions in three languages in which it has appeared. But Wadding also belongs to mission history for his pioneer ministry among the Indian tribes of north-western Mexico, working with exceptional success among them from 1618 to 1626.

Michael was born in 1586 of Thomas Wadding and Mary Walsh. The father was one of the most eminent lawyers of his day in Ireland. In 1596 he was elected Mayor of Waterford, yet not long afterwards he lost most of his property because of his strong attachment to the Faith. Later, Michael would write graphically about the persecution of the Catholics in his native city, how the Jesuits disguised as officers or soldiers were able to keep alive the Faith and how he himself was condemned to death for his religion. Thomas Wadding died in 1602, his last act being to provide for the Catholic education of his children. Michael's mother was an aunt of the distinguished Thomas Walsh, future archbishop of Cashel. The Waddings had ties by blood or marriage to all the leading families of Waterford—to the Whites, Comerfords, Creaghs, Walshes, Butlers, Strongs, Lombards, Wyses, Sherlocks and Dobbyns. Luke Wadding, S.J., was a son of Thomas Wadding and his second wife, Anastasia Devereux. The Franciscan, Luke Wadding, in his writings repeatedly extolled the generosity, refinement and culture of his uncle, Thomas Wadding.

Michael studied at the famous John Flahy's Latin school in Waterford and then crossed over to Portugal to continue his course at the Irish College in Lisbon (1605–7). On 16 September,

1607, he entered the Jesuit Irish College in Salamanca, Spain—the “Real Colegio de San Patricio de Nobles Irlandeses,” to give the full title—in order to complete his classical studies. Upon graduating, he entered on 15 April, 1609, the Jesuit Novitiate of the Castile Province at Villagarcía. It was here that he came to know the eminent theologian Suarez. Many years later Michael was to write, “Father Suarez was a very holy man—not less a mystic than a scholastic—who wrote twenty-three volumes of divinity. I knew him well in the latter years of his life.”

The same spirit of generosity that led him to enter the Order at the mature age of twenty-three, now inspired him to volunteer for the distant and difficult Province of Mexico, or New Spain, as it was then usually called. He was accepted after only eleven months of novitiate and proceeded to Seville, there to await word when his ship would sail for the new homeland.

Departure at that moment demanded a double sacrifice: renunciation of all hope of seeing home again, and farewell to his younger brother Luke, who entered the same novitiate just as Michael Wadding was leaving for Mexico. Once before he had bidden farewell to a devoted brother he was not destined to see again in this life, Peter, several years older than himself and received into the Jesuit Order in Belgium on 24 October, 1601. Peter became a renowned professor of theology, author and administrator at Louvain, Prague and Graz.

History shows that the Waddings were generous in accepting God’s call: not only did Peter, Michael and Luke become Jesuits, but their first cousins Luke and Ambrose Wadding, as also another cousin, Richard Wadding, became religious—Luke, a Franciscan (the renowned theologian, historian, founder of several colleges, St. Isidore’s in Rome among them); his brother Ambrose, a Jesuit (professor of theology at Dillingen); and Richard, an Augustinian. Their home city of Waterford has its claim to distinction in the mission history of the old Society of Jesus, for of all cities in Ireland it sent the largest number of labourers into foreign fields. Michael was certainly not aware of the fact that he was the first Irish Jesuit to volunteer for the extensive Spanish missions and the second Irish Jesuit to go to any of the foreign missions. A plaque in the cathedral of Waterford commemorates him among the city’s illustrious sons.

Francisco Vázquez, former Provincial of Mexico, and now delegate

of the same Province to the sixth General Congregation in Rome, was commissioned by his Superiors to recruit subjects in Spain for the rapidly expanding missions in the New World. Wadding was among the eleven young Jesuits—one priest just ordained, nine scholastics and one lay brother—who made up Father Vázquez' contingent of volunteers. During the long voyage, Michael, the only non-Spaniard in the expedition, had ample opportunity to practise Spanish, which was to become for him a second native language and in which later he was to write with such propriety and mastery of idiom. On 29 June, 1609, the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, they set sail for Veracruz, which they sighted some forty days later. To reach Mexico City, they followed the historic route of Cortes: past towering Orizaba, via Puebla and Cholula, into the broad plain of Mexico, guarded by snow-capped Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl. Before the year 1609 was out, the Provincial Cabredo reported to General Aquaviva that all the recruits—"Miguel Vadín de Guaterfor en Irlanda" among them—had reached Mexico City safely.

After an effusive welcome by the Provincial and his staff, by the Jesuits of the Casa Profesa and of the Colegio de México, Michael set out to visit with enthusiasm and that all-seeing modesty so characteristic of novices, a bit of this strange and wondrous city, the largest and wealthiest of the New World, with its new Cathedral building, with its viceroyal palace, mint, printing establishments, University, schools and colleges, numerous churches and monasteries, fortress-like palaces of the rich and unsightly hovels of the destitute, with few remains of the Aztec capital to remind the visitor of its ancient splendour.

But Wadding was still only a novice and accordingly, in company with three other novices of the same expedition, he went by carriage a few days later to the Mexican Novitiate at Tepotzotlán, some twenty miles north of Mexico City. Tepotzotlán entered early into Jesuit history; as a residence where the first missionaries could learn two of the principal Indian languages, Aztec and Otomí (1580); a school for Indian children (1584) and the Novitiate of the Province (1585).

Even as a novice, Wadding had a chance to do some apostolic work among the Indians by teaching them catechism. From the missionaries assigned to the ministry of the Indians in the village and vicinity, and especially from veterans returning from the

distant northern missions for a brief respite, he could learn something about the difficulties inseparable from such an apostolate.

As soon as he had taken the first vows of the Society in the autumn of 1611, he was ready to begin his studies in the Colegio de México (also known as the Colegio Máximo or Colegio de San Pedro y San Pablo). That was to be his home for the next eight years: one to review his course of philosophy, three employed in teaching classical literature to extern students of the College, and four devoted to theology. The 1614 Catalogue of the Mexican Province is the earliest document that I have seen which gives his name as Godínez, by which he was henceforth designated in Mexican history.

During his course of theology, Michael wrote to the Jesuit General Vitelleschi offering himself for the mission of Japan. The General's answer, dated from Rome, 20 April, 1617, has been preserved for us.

To Hermano Miguel Godínez, Colegio de México. My dear brother in Christ, I received your letter of 3 May, 1616. After thinking over the desire through which Our Lord has prompted you to volunteer for Japan, I believe that it should be given more mature consideration and made the object of fervent prayer to God. Strive on your part to become indifferent to going to that mission or to remaining in your present Province. The decision reached should reflect the will of God and the greater good of souls. In the New World, where you now are, you will surely not lack opportunity of working among the Indians. May Our Lord guide us in coming to the best decision, and give you, as I desire, generously of His blessings. In union of prayers, Mutius Vitelleschi.

The very next packet of letters to the General from Mexico brought word that the Tepehuanes, living on the north-western rim of New Spain, had gone on the war-path and had slain eight of the nine Jesuit priests working among them (18-20 November, 1616). New missionaries would be needed to take their place. The General's words, "You will surely not lack opportunity of working among the Indians," must have seemed prophetic no less than providential to Wadding. His studies finished, and without making his year of Tertianship either then or later, he set out in the summer of 1618 on his thousand mile journey for the northern missions, which were to be his field of activity for the next eight years.

The main purpose of sending the first Jesuits to New Spain in 1572, was stated by Philip II, in the *Cédula Real* which they were to present to the Viceroy, to be the conversion and instruction of the Indians. Yet when they reached Mexico City, they found that the most pressing need at the moment was that of adequate schools. The fifty-one years that had elapsed since the capital had fallen to Cortes, had been a period of intense missionary activity on the part of the Franciscans, Dominicans and Augustinians, with numerical conversions among the various Indian tribes almost unparalleled in the annals of the Church. Such rapid success, however, needed consolidation and a firm basis. There existed the very real danger that even the European conqueror, but especially his descendants, would be so completely absorbed in material interests that the things of the mind and soul would be neglected. True, the University of Mexico had opened in 1553, but it soon became evident that preparatory schools were deficient and in many regions lacking altogether. Hence, the first decades of Jesuit endeavour emphasized schools—first in the capital and then in the more important cities of Pátzcuaro, Oaxaca, Puebla, and Valladolid (now Morelia). In the course of two centuries, the importance of schools would not be forgotten, either in the highly cultural centres or in the areas newly won from the Indians; they would be for the lay student and for the seminarian preparing for the priesthood, for Spaniard, Creole, Mestizo, Indian. They would not only consolidate and make permanent the apostolic work of the Jesuits, but become so many centres from which missionaries could set out on their expeditions and to which they could return as to a home in order to renew their energy. For nearly two centuries, the Jesuits of New Spain moved north-westward, aiding in the civilization and conversion of one tribe after another until 1767, when, at the very time they were ready to push into Upper California and northern Arizona, they were expelled from all Spanish dominions by Charles III.

In 1591 Fathers Martín Pérez and Gonzalo de Tapia had established the first permanent Jesuit missions among the Indians. Three years later, Tapia fell a victim to the blows of an assassin. In 1616 eight more missionaries met with violent death at the hands of savages. Nevertheless, at the time Fr. Wadding began his apostolic work among the tribes of Sinaloa, there were in

that one area alone twenty-five Jesuit missionaries, and twenty-eight more in the remaining stations.

The letters of the missionaries from 1591 to 1626, when Wadding was recalled to the interior of the Mexican Province to become professor of philosophy, insist on the vast differences in tribes, languages, customs, religious beliefs and especially their disposition for receiving Christianity. Some missionaries reported at first that they found no trace of any religion; this assertion they corrected as soon as they learned enough of the language of the tribe among which they were working to have the savages inform them more accurately. Some idols were discovered on the top of lofty crags or deep within dark caverns along the mountain streams; medicine men and sorcerers plotted against all Spaniards but especially against the missionaries. The numerous powers and manifestations of nature were divinized and, in the mind of the savages, had to be worshipped or propitiated. When once the language was acquired, many missionaries reported that their charges had always believed in a Supreme Being, and now the *Padres* in the spirit of St. Paul felt that they were making known to them the God that they, without knowing it, had worshipped.

There was one trait in common among such a diversity of tribes, languages and customs—all were fiercely warlike, living in perpetual hostility long before they ever beheld a Spaniard. Although they tilled their patches of maize along the rivers and streams, they lived in wretched huts or caverns high up among inaccessible crags. The missionary had to win their confidence before he could speak of Christ's teaching; he had to persuade them to abandon their savage life and settle in larger groups in the valleys below, and he had to protect his charges from unjust soldiers and colonists as well as from hostile Indian rivals. The missionary's task was to civilize them before he could convert them. If the Indians were to become Christians, they had to forsake their vices and immorality.

The missionaries usually brought with them Christian Indians from the cities or earlier missions. They served not only as catechists in instructing the pagan Indians, but especially as models of normal Christian life. Each mission had a school for the education of Indian children. Numerous are the letters of the missionaries pleading for musical instruments, for music was a

powerful incentive to draw the Indians to Church. The missionary often travelled from station to station accompanied by his choir of Indian boys. When time permitted he jotted down the new words he heard or understood or added a few syntactical hints to his grammar; thus he would make lighter the task of his successor.

We can here merely outline the mission years of Fr. Wadding. His first assignment was among the Tephahues (a tribe of the Mayos). Not satisfied with evangelizing these, he crossed the River Mayo into the territory of the Conicarís and set up a mission station among them. This proved a wise selection, as it opened the way to the conversion of the Híos, a tribe of the Chínipas. Later he persuaded the Basiroas and Tahatas to descend from their mountain fastness and settle in Christian *pueblos*, and thus brought them into the faith. In turn, the Huvagueros and the Tehuisos soon followed the example of the Híos. Contemporary records show that in 1624, Fr. Wadding from his mission station among the Tephahues was ministering to 5,400 converted Indians; a year later he had added a hundred more to his fold.

The most complete account of his mission work that has come down to us, is to be found in chapter seven of book three of his *Practice of Mystical Theology*, where he discusses the hardships of an active life. The passage is of special interest for the intensely human aspects of his Indian apostolate.

I spent many years at the bidding of my Superiors in the Indian missions in a Province called Sinaloa, along the 28th degree of latitude, some three hundred leagues north-west of Mexico City. As an eyewitness, I can attest that the missionaries whom I saw working among these barbarians suffered great hardships of body and soul. Ministry among converted and civilized Indians was only slightly less trying. In a climate stiflingly hot, these missionaries were forced to travel at all hours of the day or night, in the company of savages, ever threatened by wild animals, and forced to sleep out in the lonely desert. The hard earth was their usual bed; the shade of some tree, their home; their food, a bit of boiled or parched maize; their drink, water dipped out of some stream; their clothing usually torn and thread-bare. The only time they saw bread, beef, fruit or sweets was when they read about them in books. Life was ever at the mercy of medicine-men, who seemed to be in league with the very devil, so bitter a war did they wage against us. Two of my religious companions, the Indians wounded seriously with

arrows; twice I managed to escape into the mountains from the savages, but not until having one of my servants slain by them. Two of my fellow Jesuits, who succeeded me in the care of my mission, were martyred by the very Indians whose children I had baptized.

The early missionaries, often famished, exhausted and their life in danger, had to cross, by swimming, swollen rivers; or laden with heavy packs they made their way over mountains, through forests, ravines and canyons, frequently forced to do without the necessities of life. When they fell victims of disease, neither medicines nor doctors were to be had; no comfort was at hand to lessen their suffering, no friends to cheer and console them. Yet in the midst of such trials, they served God faithfully and converted many pagans to Him.

The martyred Father Hernando Santarén—to mention but one of these apostolic workers—learned eleven Indian languages, and built fifty churches. When we missionaries would gather once a year at the mission centre to record the baptisms conferred, and to report on the dangers that beset us, and all that had taken place, we found that the number of the baptized—I speak only of the years that I was in the missions—never fell below five thousand and some times reached ten thousand. In 1624 the records showed that eighty-two thousand baptized Indians in the Province of Sinaloa alone were under our care; later the number exceeded one hundred and twenty thousand, only to be decimated by epidemics that called for the greatest sacrifice from the missionaries tending to the stricken.

I knew several of these missionaries upon whom God bestowed the loftiest degree of infused contemplation, pouring out upon them in their wretched hovels the abundant harvest they had sown with such generosity throughout their scattered mission stations. . . .

Not infrequently, Jesuit missionaries after working several years among the Indians, were summoned back to the interior of the Province to be given an opportunity to recuperate their strength and to help out with the ministry in the colleges and churches. Thus in 1626, Fr. Wadding after eight strenuous and successful years in the Sinaloan missions was called back to the heart of the Province. At the Novitiate of Tepetzotlán, his first home in Mexico, he made the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius in preparation for pronouncing there on 12 April, 1626, the four solemn vows of a professed Jesuit. We may be sure that there was a programme in his honour that day with Latin, Spanish, Mexican

and Otomitan poems and songs; was there also a letter of congratulation from his Jesuit brothers, Peter and Luke?

From Tepotzotlán he set out for Mexico City to teach philosophy at the seminary of San Ildefonso. From a missionary instructing savages in the rudiments of the faith to a professor of philosophy seems a far cry indeed. Yet it was mainly as an educator that Wadding spent the remaining eighteen years of his life, as professor of philosophy, theology and scripture; as rector of the Royal College of San Ildefonso in Mexico City, of San Jerónimo College in Puebla, of the distant Guatemala College, and of San Ildefonso College in Puebla; and finally as Prefect of Studies of the Colegio de México. But he did not forget nor neglect ministry among the Indians in the cities where he was stationed; even during a brief period in 1632, when he was attached to the Professed House in the capital as confessor of Spanish-speaking penitents, he continued to devote himself to his favourite apostolate.

We learn of his first appointment as rector of San Ildefonso in Mexico City from Vitelleschi's letter of 25 April, 1631, which did not reach him until the following year. San Ildefonso was called a "Real Colegio," as it was under the immediate patronage of the King. During the rectorship of Fr. Wadding, the enrolment rose to about one hundred and fifty; the students attended either the Colegio de México or the University of Mexico for lectures in literature, philosophy, theology and law; repetitions and secondary courses were given in the College itself. An eminent Mexican historian states that it was the most important college in colonial New Spain, where the governing class—ecclesiastical and civil—received its education. Rebuilt in great part before the mid-eighteenth century, San Ildefonso was later confiscated and today serves as the National Preparatory School, its works of art defaced by tourists and students, and its walls covered by the frescoes of a well-known Communist painter.

We know that the very next year, Fr. Wadding was rector of the College of San Jerónimo in Puebla, since Vitelleschi in a letter dated 16 January, 1634, answered Wadding's message of 14 March, 1633, in which he had pleaded for more capable and fervent workers for his College. San Jerónimo, in Mexico's second most important city, was a boarding school for the students who attended lectures in minor courses at the Jesuit

Colegio del Espíritu Santo and those who followed the higher studies at San Ildefonso of that city.

The following year Fr. Wadding was appointed rector for the second time of San Ildefonso in Mexico City. Vitelleschi wrote to him on 30 December, 1635, to acknowledge his letters of July and November of 1634, and expressed his satisfaction over the flourishing state of the College. Wadding had written the General asking approval to print a book that he had written recently, *Practice of Mystical Theology*; and the General promised to write the Provincial about it so that the manuscript might be submitted immediately to censorship.

In March of 1636, Wadding, then rector of the College in the distant and isolated city of Guatemala, reported to the General in Rome. Vitelleschi answered on 30 October, 1637, sympathizing with him for all he had to endure during his journey from Mexico City, and rejoicing over his improved health and the favourable report on the College of Guatemala. Financial worries had lessened for the moment through the generosity of the Alférez Richelme and his wife, who gave some thirty thousand pesos to the College. In 1638, when Wadding was still its rector, the College of Guatemala boasted a relatively large community of fourteen Jesuits to do the teaching, attend to the ministry of the adjacent church and work among the Indians in that region.

Each communication from Rome at that time contained a new appointment for Wadding; that of about 1640 made him rector of San Ildefonso in Puebla. This college was one of higher studies, offering courses in philosophy, sacred scripture, moral and scholastic theology, as well as canon law. Here as in the other colleges, Wadding was not content to limit his efforts to administration, but lectured in the class-room, wrote various books, and continued his sacred ministry among Spaniards and Indians. He was not one to spare himself and before his term was out, he fell desperately ill.

A frequent enough resort of doctors in those days was to prescribe a change of air, when they could not hit upon any effective remedy. Accordingly, Fr. Wadding was sent to Mexico City. Zeal rather than prudence had been his norm of activity, and so it was then. Despite his shattered health, he devoted himself in his new home to the task of Prefect of higher studies at the Colegio de México, and continued his apostolate of writing

and of sacred ministry. Here, as in other cities, he was requested to become spiritual director of prominent ecclesiastics, religious and lay people; but above all he tended to the needs of the destitute, bringing them food and alms. He was ever a successful beggar among the wealthy, whether it was in obtaining a basket of food on behalf of a poor family or securing an endowment for a needy college. It was in the midst of his manifold duties and intense activity that God called him to Himself on 12 December, 1644.

The book for which Wadding is best known to history is, as we have seen, his *Practice of Mystical Theology*, a work that he left prepared for the press but which he did not live to see in print. The first edition is that of Puebla, Mexico, in 1681, soon followed by several other editions in Spanish in Spain and Portugal; even in 1790, during the suppression of the Society, shortly after the death of Charles III who had ordered libraries purged of Jesuit books, Wadding's manual was reprinted in Madrid. At least ten editions in Spanish (Mexico, Spain, Portugal) made their appearance. There is an Italian translation printed in Venice in 1738. But the best known edition, as also the most elaborate, is that of Manuel Ignacio de la Reguera, S.J., printed in Rome (1740-5). In these two folio tomes of four volumes are to be found a brief biographical notice of Wadding based on manuscript material from the Jesuit Archives in Rome, Mexico City, Salamanca and Villagarcía, and an exhaustive commentary with countless citations from Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, Councils, mystic authors and others, followed by scholia, appendices and so on. De la Reguera added two books to his edition, as we shall discuss later. Father H. Watrigant in 1921 reprinted in the "Collections pour directeurs spirituels" the Latin text of de la Reguera's edition; but with the exception of three pages of notes, he omitted all of the extensive commentary.

Wadding took mystical theology in the sense of "spiritual life," "Christian perfection" or "*ascetical* and mystical theology," not exclusively in the modern sense of the contemplative and unitive way, and accordingly he began his treatise with its definition, "practical wisdom that considers God under the aspect of being good and lovable," as opposed to scholastic theology, which was for him "an abstract science of God under the aspect of being true and knowable." Wadding's manual in the original Spanish was

divided into nine books: the first six deal with simple prayer and abnegation to the highest form of infused contemplation; the seventh book is destined for the spiritual director to understand the different temperaments and characters of his charges and not endeavour to guide all along the same path according to his own ideas; the eighth book is a practical development of Ignatian principles in the discernment of spirits; the last book is a short consideration of the more extraordinary manifestations of divine grace in the soul of a few privileged persons and above all a warning against the counterfeiting attempted or effected by the enemy. In de la Reguera's edition, the seventh and eleventh books take up *Nature and Grace* (De Natura et Gratia) and *Religious Government* (De Regimine Religioso) respectively. Wadding had left a lengthy treatise on the first, of which de la Reguera used only a small part in this book and in various appendices to his tomes; in the Archivo General de la Nación of Mexico City, there is a partial manuscript copy which ends with book seventeen; there is a note at the beginning stating that it is a copy of Miguel Godínez' treatise "De la Gracia y Naturaleza" and that the original was found with his *Práctica de Teología Mística*, at that time in the Colegio de México.

Wadding's life and treatise have led spiritual writers for over three centuries to call him a mystic. His contemporaries felt justified in so doing from his life, which they termed "saintly," and from the fact that he wrote on mystical principles and phenomena, "as one having authority," and from experience. His treatise, in studying the main phases of the spiritual life, does not neglect the mystical, but devotes the two more penetrating books to it: the sixth (the highest form of infused contemplation) and the ninth (visions, revelations, raptures and ecstasies).

Whatever aspect of mysticism he considers, he insists on its divine gratuitousness. Thus, in book nine, chapter three, he states:

Divine revelations are undoubtedly favours by which God from the very beginning of the world wished to honour His special friends. Thus, He revealed to Adam the Incarnation, to Abraham that the Messiah would spring from his lineage, to the Blessed Virgin that she was to become the Mother of His Divine Son. St. Peter beheld in symbolic form the conversion of the Gentiles, St. Paul was rapt to the third heaven. Few have been the great

saints of the New or Old Testament not favoured by God with such heavenly visitations. Revelations are granted to strengthen the saints along the way of life and encourage them to ever higher perfection.

The historians of the Jesuit Order in Mexico, from Alegre to Decorme and Dunne, extol the one outstanding treatise on mystical theology written by a Jesuit in the New World. Their opinion is shared by the Mexican bibliographer, Beristáin y Souza.

The eminent critic of spiritual literature, E. M. Rivière, writing in 1912, stated, "Michael Wadding was distinguished by his profound knowledge of the supernatural states and by rare prudence in the direction of souls. His treatise is the fruit of long personal experience rather than study." A recent authority, G. P. Grausem,¹ finds Wadding's book, "un traité remarquable de théologie spirituelle, fruit de l'expérience," and in outlining its contents notes, "des diverses sortes de contemplation mystique" and "des révélations et ravissements." H. Watrigant in issuing a handy modern edition of Wadding's treatise felt that he was rendering a signal service to the masters and students of the spiritual life.

Alfonso de Cuevas and Dávalos, Archbishop of Mexico, was once directed in the spiritual life by Wadding; the only extant letter of the latter is addressed to him. In giving his approbation for the first edition of the book, His Excellency writes words that might have been used by an enterprising publisher, "a treatise most necessary for directing souls along the path of perfection." Following the mitred figure is an impressive procession of doctors, canons, theologians and masters of the spiritual life, all putting in their word of approval, and some even giving a more complete analysis of the content of the book, insisting on the conformity of Wadding's life with his teaching—"his very name is the highest recommendation that can be given."

Fr. Ignacio de la Reguera, professor of philosophy and theology for many years at the Roman College, dedicated in 1740 his edition of Wadding's mystical theology to Benedict XIV. In the preface he recalls that Cardinal Luis Belluga through his high regard for Wadding's treatise had inspired him to write this extensive commentary.

Joseph de Guibert, S.J., in his history of Jesuit spirituality,

¹ *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, 1947.

characterizes Wadding's *Practice* as, ". . . très précis, très plein de choses, très traditionnel dans son exposé de la doctrine sur la contemplation où il dépend étroitement des docteurs du moyen âge." Wadding stated in his preface that he had not given references to the saints and Scripture since his volume owed everything to them. It would be an endless task to try to trace every passage to its source, but the authors that spontaneously come to one's mind in reading Wadding's manual are Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Ignatius, and Teresa of Avila, who for him is "la Doctora y Maestra Mística de la vida espiritual."

His style is clear and straightforward, often homely in its comparisons and illustrations, à-Kempian in its directness; all of which Wadding justifies by stating that his treatise was written for simple folk, inasmuch as the learned already have "an infinite number of books on the subject." The characteristic most in evidence is brevity: one has the impression that Wadding thought out or even wrote out each chapter fully; then he worked it over several times until there was not a superfluous word left. Few chapters have escaped such distillation; those that have, show that Wadding could write with exuberance and brilliant imagination. He had his pet aversions: bungling spiritual directors, vain and silly women who pretend to visions and ecstasies in order to attract notice and praise; he knows that the higher forms of contemplation are as gratuitous as the power to work miracles and as unteachable; those to whom God has given such singular grace are humble and obedient, they do not go about putting on a show. He is Juvenalian in his words on incompetent, imprudent or worldly religious superiors; but no finer chapter is to be found in the entire volume than that on capable, understanding and self-sacrificing superiors—men of prayer, and consideration for others. The future biographer of Michael Wadding may profitably seek and find in this latter chapter his true portrait: a man of penetrating intellect and sound judgment, reliant upon God's help, a doer of unselfish deeds, a man of union with God and of solid learning, one who strives through every form of apostolate to bring men to see and do good, prudent, seeking the common good to the point of sacrificing self, courteous and courageous, patient and self-controlled, inspiring others by his example rather than trying to persuade them by words or threats (Book XI, chapters 9 and 10).

A chapter of rhymed aphorisms towards the close of nearly every book sums up in still more concise form the spiritual truths set forth in it. Wadding remains the teacher even when he writes: he defines, explains and illustrates his thought at every step. He is not afraid to say that he is drawing on his own experience or observation; moreover, as he had guided many privileged souls along the path of perfection, he frequently describes God's ways with their soul, thus making his manual truly a "Practice of Mystical Theology" and not an abstract and speculative treatise. This helps to explain its three centuries of apostolate, perpetuating the sacred ministry of its author.

To the busy reader of today, it appeals by its directness, sincerity, and by making mysticism not something mysterious or vague but a way that leads to God, all good and lovable. One puts the book down each time after reading it, with the conviction that not in vain was the generosity of the young man who left his beloved native land for the sake of his faith, of the novice who volunteered for an arduous mission to work as a priest among savages, or a brother in Christ who sought God in obedience, sacrifice and prayer, and above all in charity towards his fellow men.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The Jesuit Archives in Rome are the main source for this brief sketch of Wadding. Some of the books consulted are: P. Power, *Waterford Saints and Scholars (17th Century)* (Waterford, 1920), especially Chapter IV; J. MacErlean, S.J., *Irish Jesuits in Foreign Missions from 1574 to 1773* (Dublin, s.a., but appeared in 1930), especially pages 4-14; P. M. Dunne, S.J., *Pioneer Black Robes on the West Coast* (Berkeley, 1940); G. Decorme, S.J., *La Obra de los Jesuitas Mexicanos en la época colonial* (Mexico City, 1941), two volumes.