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Myths, Misquotes and Misconceptions about St. Ignatius Loyola

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Abstract

A number of inaccuracies are circulating in the field of Ignatian Spirituality that can hinder a richer and more profitable understanding of the saint and his doctrine. Jesuits and colleagues would do well to remain conscious of the conditions that generate and perpetuate these inaccuracies. Also included in this essay is the true origin of a quotation popularly attributed to Fr. Pedro Arrupe, SJ, "There is nothing more practical than finding God."

Introduction

U.S. Jesuits and colleagues in the last sixty years have made tremendous strides in the promotion of Ignatian spirituality, not only in our works but also among the wider population. As a result of these efforts, to which the election of a popular Jesuit pope seems to have given a divine stamp of approval, it is probably accurate that the U.S. population is now more conversant about St. Ignatius and the Jesuits than at any point in the past.

For that reason, it is more incumbent than ever upon Jesuits and "Ignatian educators" to watch for errors and undue biases that will inevitably arise in the course of our work. Spiritual ideas are powerful. They change lives profoundly. If they did not, we would not be promoting them. Therefore it stands to reason that any errors we make can impact people profoundly. In the words of a medieval Italian proverb: "The one who can heal can also harm."

For the sake of clarity, I divide the following content into three categories: misquotes, myths, and misconceptions.

Misquotes are sayings commonly attributed to Ignatius that do not appear to be corroborated by the textual evidence of his own time.¹ This is not to deny the possibility that authentic sayings can be handed down by oral tradition. And the sheer volume of the Ignatian corpus — no less than 6,800 preserved letters, in addition to the Constitutions, Autobiography, Spiritual Diary, Spiritual Exercises, and other texts — to say nothing of the volumes upon volumes of material written by Jesuits who knew Ignatius personally,

makes it risky to deny that something is to be found inside. Today, however, one can search most of these sources electronically or with concordances. Provided that one accounts for the various languages therein (Latin, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese) and different words that could have been used to articulate the same idea, it is possible to make some conclusions with reasonable certainty.

Myths are stories and ideas about Ignatius that usually have some truth to them, but because they are repeated so frequently and exclusively they begin to eclipse other truths. Like other myths, they are favored because they reinforce a certain value or worldview or ideology.

For example, Jesuits of centuries past strongly emphasized Ignatius as a soldier, ascetic, and religious,² so that integral aspects of his spirituality were largely ignored. Today we lean heavily on the mystic, pilgrim, and layman. There is nothing inappropriate about this to the extent that it serves our present needs without distorting Ignatius unduly.³ Yet we should remain mindful that we too favor certain images for certain reasons. What are *we* leaving out?

Another example is the great stress that writers often put on Annotation 15 in the Spiritual Exercises (where Ignatius affirms that God should be allowed to deal directly with the creature) as a fundamental principle of Ignatian spirituality.⁴ There is much truth here. At the end of the day, however, Annotation 15 is only one of twenty annotations, and Ignatius did not make it the "First Principle and Foundation." Given that many early texts illuminate Ignatius's understanding of the director-directee relationship

— texts rarely if ever cited — one may fairly ask whether Annotation 15 has become something of a proof-text for subjectivist interpretations of Ignatian spirituality.⁵

Misconceptions are affirmations about Ignatian spirituality that diverge significantly from what Ignatius himself actually believed, due to the fact that we read him through conceptual categories and worldviews so different from his own. Again, there is nothing necessarily embarrassing or inappropriate about this. We cannot cut-and-paste a sixteenth-century man and his ideas whole cloth into the twenty-first century.

Nonetheless we should always keep one eye fixed on the historical man and the highly interconnected nature of his doctrine. If we reinterpret him as we please, or if we regularly overlook those words and deeds of his that we consider contrary to our own values, we turn him into a cipher that lends saintly authority to our own ideas. And the arguably antiquated threads that we try to pull from the fabric of his thought will often unravel other places that we did not expect.

Misquotes

To begin, Ignatius did not write the well-known **“Prayer for Generosity”**:

**“Lord, teach me to be generous,
and to serve you as you deserve:
to give and not to count the cost,
fight and not to heed the wounds,
to labor and not to seek for rest,
to toil and not to seek for any reward,
except that of knowing that I do your
will.”**

We do not know who did, or when. Most likely, an anonymous Jesuit wrote it, and later it was attributed it to the saint.⁶

The prayer is romantic and generous, but quite opposed to authentic Ignatian spirituality. It lacks what Ignatius called *caritas discreta* (discerning charity), meaning a thoughtful and prudent pacing of oneself in the service of God. He constantly reminded Jesuits that he wanted them to make the greatest impact that they could on God’s people over the course of a whole lifetime. Thus it was

imperative that they eat properly, get enough sleep, and avoid heavy asceticism that weakens the body. They should also take retreats and vacations. In short, they should not run themselves into the ground as the result of unbridled zeal.⁷

Likewise, Ignatius did not want Jesuits naively rushing into works where angels fear to tread. In the Constitutions he instructed them to choose ministries carefully, in light of their own strengths and limitations, lest disaster ensue and the Society be discredited.⁸

I strongly advise Jesuits and Ignatian educators against promoting this prayer. In a U.S. culture where people are already overworked and where generous colleagues and students are already tempted to believe that they are not doing enough for God and others, “to labor and not to seek for rest” is not the right message to be sending.

In a similar vein, Ignatius is occasionally misquoted as asking, “What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? **What more can I do for Christ?**”⁹ Yet his actual words in the Spiritual Exercises were *lo que debo hacer por Cristo*, or “What ought I to do for Christ?”¹⁰

For the mature Ignatius, it was not a matter of how much one is doing for God, but *what* one is doing. We choose the one option that we believe will serve God’s greater glory, as opposed to being unintentional or trying to do everything. That is why discernment is so central to Ignatius’s way of proceeding.

Some translations of the *Suscipe* almost certainly misrepresent Ignatius’s intended meaning. The translators are not at fault, since the original texts are ambiguous. One well-known translation from 1978 reads:

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will — all that I have and call my own. You have given it all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours; do with it what you will. **Give me only your love and your grace.** That is enough for me.¹¹

“Give me your love and grace” accurately renders *dadme vuestro amor y gracia*. Phrased thusly, one could interpret it to mean “God, please love me,” or “God, your love for me is all I need,” or possibly “God, give me a share of that same love that you give to others.”

What we find in an early Latin translation is quite different: *amorem tui solum cum gratia tua*. It means “God, give me the grace to love you,”¹² or “God, give me love of yourself, along with your grace.”¹³ An expert Latinist produced it in consultation with Ignatius. The Church formally approved this Latin edition of the Spiritual Exercises, and Ignatius himself used it for seven years when directing people in the retreat.¹⁴

The distinction is important, because from a theological point of view it does not make much sense to ask God for that which He has already given us, never ceases to give us, and will always give us. The one certainty of our existence is God’s love for us.

What remains uncertain is whether and to what extent each human being will love God in return. Thus a principal theme of the Spiritual Exercises, most explicitly in the “Call of the King” and the Fourth Week, is the cultivation within ourselves of an ever-greater response of gratitude and magnanimity to the God who first loves us. That is why the *Suscipe* is located in a passage called the “Contemplation to Attain Love.”

Implausible as it might seem, “**Laugh and grow strong**” or variously “**Live, laugh and grow strong**” is widely attributed to Ignatius on the internet. A few writers add the curious detail that Ignatius “begged his disciples” or even “implored the world” to laugh and grow strong.

The error seems to have been lifted from a hasty reading of a life of Ignatius written in the early twentieth century. In the words of the English poet Francis Thompson:

The same saintly common sense (for high sanctity, like high genius, contrary to the vulgar notion, is eminently common-sensible) which made him cautious of visions, even of prayer, and an emphasiser of practical virtues, a lover of active

energy, caused this great ascetic to set a practical if regulated value on good appetite and its concomitant, good spirits. He did not actually say “Laugh and grow fat” (the maxim popularly imputed to monks), but he did say “Laugh and grow strong”.¹⁵

Thompson almost certainly did not intend “Laugh and grow strong” to be understood as a literal quotation from Ignatius. He appears to have been condensing the points behind two anecdotes that immediately follow the above passage. In the first, Ignatius encouraged a Jesuit to eat well and maintain his strength in light of Ignatius’s own mistakes in that regard. In the second, he praised a Jesuit for his cheerfulness on the condition that he did not let it fluctuate with every passing setback.

It is difficult to imagine a sixteenth-century man saying “Laugh and grow strong.” Perhaps the closest Ignatius came is a letter to his friend and benefactress Agnes Pascual. Composed in 1524, it is one of the oldest preserved writings that we have from him.

May our Lady be pleased to intercede for us poor sinners with her Son and Lord and obtain for us the grace that, with our own toil and effort, he may transform our weak and sorry spirits into ones that are strong and joyful in his praise.¹⁶

One might ask whether it is really necessary to deny ourselves “Laugh and grow strong” if the essence of those words is found in stories about Ignatius. Perhaps not. Yet how we communicate a truth is usually as important as the truth itself.

For example, there is a true story about Ignatius breaking into a Basque jig in order to cheer up a sad Jesuit. As charming as that image is, I think we can all agree that it would not be a good idea to quote Ignatius as saying, “Dance as if no one is watching.”

Contrary to what is often affirmed, “**Go and set the world on fire**” does not appear in any of Ignatius’s letters or other writings, nor does there seem to be any evidence for the tradition that he said it to St. Francis Xavier before sending him to the Indies.

The earliest source for the quotation appears to be Fr. Oliver Manareo, S.J.¹⁷ He entered the Society in 1549 and lived to be 91, thus attaining some celebrity as one of the last surviving Jesuits to have known Ignatius. Church authorities interviewed him about his memories of Ignatius as part of a formal inquiry into the cause for Ignatius's canonization. Regarding the written transcript of Fr. Manareo's testimony, an investigator remarked:

Fr. Manareo believes that this entire chapter [on Ignatius's life and virtues] with all its subsections are true; and what leads him to believe this is the holy man's devotion and the motto that he left inscribed on every heart and that he always had on his lips: "For the greater glory of God," an expression that sons of the Society frequently repeat by way of a tradition. Furthermore, when Ignatius missioned someone from the Society somewhere to cultivate the Lord's vineyard, he used to tell them, "Go, ignite and inflame all things." These are words that Fr. Manareo treasured after he heard them from Ignatius's own lips and received them from the common tradition.¹⁸

In light of this weighty source, anyone who wishes to quote Ignatius as saying "Go and set the world on fire" is arguably justified, even if no other evidence exists to that effect.

Yet for the sake of thoroughness and accuracy, I would like to note some circumstantial evidence to the effect that Ignatius did not really utter those words:

1. Whereas "for the greater glory of God" is found innumerable times in slightly-different forms throughout the Constitutions and Ignatius's letters, "Go and set the world on fire" does not appear once.
2. Even the general metaphor of fire, intended in an edifying sense (e.g., "to be on fire with love for God"), is completely absent from the Spiritual Exercises, and

we find it only once apiece in the Constitutions and Autobiography and Spiritual Diary.¹⁹ In 6,800 letters, it appears only about seven times; there Ignatius wrote once of "the fire of God's love,"²⁰ once of being "set afire by prayer and exhortations,"²¹ twice of "the holy fire" that Jesus came to ignite,²² and twice more of the "fire of charity."²³

There is also Ignatius's amusing response to a Franciscan who was publically insisting that all Jesuits be burned at the stake: "Tell him that what I say and desire is that he — together with all his friends and acquaintances [and] throughout the whole world — should be set afire and inflamed by the Holy Spirit."²⁴

3. Ignatius was opposed to hyperbole and rhetorical flair, and chided Jesuits for their lapses in that regard. He wanted the Society to have a reputation for sobriety, restraint, and precision in their speech, so that the truth would speak for itself.²⁵ Presumably for that reason there is a notable absence of embellishment in the entire Ignatian corpus.

4. The final line of the transcript is suspiciously ambivalent: that Fr. Manareo heard the quotation from Ignatius's lips and received it from the common tradition of his fellow Jesuits.

5. Early Jesuits were fond of wordplay that juxtaposed Ignatius's name with the Latin *ignis*, meaning fire. In the *Imago Primi Saeculi*, a massive book commemorating the first centennial of the Society, metaphors and images of fire abound.²⁶ In this light (sorry), one could easily forgive Fr. Manareo for wishfully retrojecting a beloved Jesuit tradition back onto their founder.

Ignatius is sometimes credited with "**union of mind and heart**" to denote a holistic approach to education, or a discernment process that attends to both reason and affectivity. This is false on three counts. The original phrase is "union of minds and hearts" (in the plural). It was coined by

the Jesuit Fathers of General Congregation 32 (1974-75).²⁷ And it denotes the bonds of love and ethos that Ignatius wanted Jesuits to share among themselves.

Ignatius and his aide Fr. Polanco wrote the Jesuit Constitutions in Spanish. They used the phrase “union of hearts” (*unión de los ánimos*) to denote the aforementioned bond between Jesuits.²⁸ They also used the word *unión* by itself to denote a physical meeting of Jesuits in congregation, and a uniformity among them with regard to their personal comportment, liturgical practices, and other considerations.

When the Constitutions were translated into Latin for formal approbation by the Church, *unión de los ánimos* was rendered *unio animarum*. The Spanish *ánimo* and the Latin *anima* (which are both often translated into English as “soul” or “spirit”) carry connotations of both the intellectual and the affective aspects of a person.

To capture both aspects, the English translators of the G.C. 32 decrees rendered *unio animarum* as “union of minds and hearts.”

Finally, although it does not pertain to Ignatius, I would like to advert to a popular quotation attributed to Fr. Pedro Arrupe, S.J. On numerous websites, and now more lately in books, he is credited with saying:

Nothing is more practical than finding God, than falling in Love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, whom you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in Love, stay in love, and it will decide everything.

At the present time, and after much searching by interested parties, there does not seem to be any evidence that Fr. Arrupe said or wrote this. We do not know who first claimed that he did. We do not know where or when it was first attributed to him. For all intents and purposes, it simply

appeared on the internet out of nowhere roughly twenty years ago.

The true author is Fr. Joseph P. Whelan, S.J. (d.1994), former provincial of the Maryland Province and American Assistant to the Superior General. In 1981, he gave a prepared talk to each Jesuit community in the province. A copy of that talk, twelve typed pages in length, is preserved in the Jesuit archives. Near the end it reads:

But let me be clear. I don't think there is anything more practical or useful that I can do than talk to you about God and about our union with Him in regular prayer. . . .

I said to you in closing two years ago: nothing is more practical than finding God; i.e., than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. [The rest continues *verbatim*.]²⁹

Fr. Whelan elaborated in the following paragraph:

I believe that. Love helps you see, notice, care. It keeps you peaceful and willing. It also and without any apology or embarrassment, makes you cunning and shrewd. Lovers always are. Cunning and shrewd for the things of Christ. Our Father is a God who makes deals. And so you will make them too. Because love keeps ideals fully integral — but also keeps them practical. It forces you to compromises that are holy — and perhaps not lacking in humor. Because that is what He is like. And certainly, it forces you to compromises that will be misunderstood. And perhaps not just misunderstood, but bitterly criticized, and even reviled. And then you are indeed in a good state: clothed with the livery of Christ our Lord.

Fr. Whelan did not reference Fr. Arrupe as the source of the quotation, but rather implied that Fr. Whelan himself was its author. Note too that Fr. Whelan's elaboration possesses the same rhetorical features as the quotation itself, e.g., they

both move back and forth between the merits of love in general and the merits of loving God in particular. Hence we may conclude with confidence that Fr. Whelan is its true author.³⁰

Taking together the original quotation plus the elaboration, Fr. Whelan's words are consistent with principles of Ignatian spirituality: the emphasis on attentiveness to experience, the value of practicality, and the pain of being misunderstood. So if we continue to use the quotation (while crediting Fr. Whelan), I recommend that we include his elaboration as well. My reason is that the original quotation by itself easily lends itself to misinterpretation.

Being in love — whether with God or with anyone else — does not clarify all or most of one's choices. It usually makes them more difficult. For Ignatius, discernment properly so-called presupposes that one is already in love with God and therefore desires to identify the course of action that will give Him greater glory. Ignatius's own spiritual diary testifies to this. There we see that the man already deeply in love with God nevertheless agonized for weeks and with many tears to discern whether the professed houses of the Society should accept fixed revenues.

Myths

Ignatius was irreligious in his youth.

The young Ignatius committed deeds that were far from honorable. On one occasion, he stole fruit from a neighbor's garden and then let an innocent party be convicted and fined for it. (When he returned to his hometown in 1535 to make amends for his past, he donated his last two acres of land to the man he offended.) A few years later, he and his brother were arrested for "very enormous crimes"; it seems they had ambushed and beaten someone. Ignatius also infuriated a cuckolded husband so badly that the latter stalked him and threatened to kill him.

Yet this is not to say that Ignatius was apathetic to his faith. One can be proud of one's religion and sincere in one's piety while at times acting in a manner gravely at odds with both. Ignatius demonstrated many deeds of virtue and restraint

in his youth. He was scrupulous about avoiding blasphemous language, for example, and as a young courtier he refrained from looting a sacked village, an act he characterized as dishonorable. He even wrote poems in honor of the Virgin Mary and St. Peter.³¹

The story of Ignatius's conversion is already dramatic. One might feel a temptation to increase the drama still further by making his transformation as sweeping as possible. But there is also a value in acknowledging the good to be found in Ignatius's pre-conversion life. It would be an apt reminder of the Catholic principle that "grace builds on nature," meaning that God likes to build upon a foundation of goodness that already exists in a person or culture, as opposed to wiping the slate clean and starting from scratch.³² This would have included Ignatius's romanticism, piety, and dreams of glory, however immature or misdirected they might have been.

Ignatius was a professional soldier.

For centuries this myth about Ignatius has been exploited by friends and enemies of the Society to explain its supposed militaristic structure and way of proceeding. Parallels have been drawn with regard to discipline, adaptability, obedience, and a penchant for covert ministries in lands hostile to Catholicism. It dovetailed well with another myth that Ignatius had created the Society for the express purpose of combating the Reformation. Even today it is not uncommon to hear Jesuits described as "the Pope's Commandos" or "the Marines of the Catholic Church."

The truth is more convoluted. Ignatius was never trained as a soldier. He was from a social class where soldiering was a traditional vocation, and like most courtiers he would have been taught swordsmanship and other skills. The Duke of Nájera could call upon him to fight on his behalf. But Ignatius never enlisted in an army, probably never fought in other battles besides Pamplona, and probably had little knowledge of military strategy. (One wonders whether a professional soldier at Pamplona would have been so foolish as to resist forces that outnumbered his own six to one.)

On the other hand, the desire of some to disassociate Ignatius from military imagery as much as possible has an agenda of its own, and is equally inaccurate. His personality and spirituality were shaped by far more than “a brief brush with soldiering,” as one writer put it. The Loyola family was deeply proud of its military past, and Iñigo long dreamed to distinguish himself in battle. In 1515, after he appealed to his clerical status to evade prosecution, a skeptical prosecutor objected that for the last several years Ignatius had not worn a clerical outfit at all, but rather had walked through the streets in a metal breastplate, a sword and crossbow at his side.

There is the obvious military imagery in the two oldest pieces in the Exercises, the “Call of the King” and “The Two Standards.” And to men who were considering a Jesuit vocation, Ignatius wrote in the very first line of the Formula of the Institute: “Whoever wishes to serve as a soldier of God beneath the banner of the Cross in our Society....”³³

Ignatius never considered forming a permanent group until 1539.

Today we often hear that Ignatius and his nine companions never considered forming a permanent group until their plans to go to the Holy Land fell through, or even more strongly, that the thought never even crossed their minds. In the excellent “Olive Video” produced by Fairfield University Media Center, the narrator says with a certain emphasis: “Though they *never* intended on forming an organized group, on September 27, 1540, Pope Paul III gave formal approval to the brand new order of the Society of Jesus.”

It seems hardly possible that the First Companions could spend years together at the University of Paris, endure repeated investigations by the Inquisition, dedicate their lives so selflessly to others in imitation of Ignatius, and make lifelong vows of poverty and chastity at the chapel at Montmartre, and not once contemplate the formation of a permanent group... if not a canonical religious order, then perhaps a confraternity of some sort.

Ignatius had been passionate about gathering companions as soon as he returned from Jerusalem. In Alcalá his group was rebuked by the inquisitors for wearing outfits that resembled the habits of canonical religious.³⁴ And in 1539, shortly after the Pope gave verbal approval for the Society, Ignatius wrote a revealing letter to his brother:

And since I recall how you urged me during my stay with you there [in 1535] that I should carefully let you know about the Society [*Compañía*] that I was looking forward to, I am also convinced that God our Lord looked forward to your own taking an outstanding role in it.... To come to the point: despite my unworthiness I have managed, with God’s grace, to lay a solid foundation for this Society of Jesus [*Compañía de Jesús*], which is the title we have given it and which the Pope has strongly approved.³⁵

There are several reasons for the prevalence of this myth today. To some extent it seems to be an over-reaction to another myth, centuries old, that the future Society with all of its distinguishing characteristics had been divinely revealed to Ignatius in his mystical illumination at the Cardoner. Ignatius never claimed anything of the sort. But early Jesuits used it to justify the Society in the eyes of detractors who accused it of being ill-conceived or heretical.

Another factor seems to be a desire on the part of some writers to extend as much as possible the length of time in Ignatius’s life in which he might be considered an itinerant layman with an unconventional ministry. That is, in order to make the First Companions as relevant as possible for our modern emphasis on lay vocations, their decision to create a canonical order — a priestly institute, no less — is implied to have been a last-minute decision that they were obliged to make after their plans to go to the Holy Land came to naught. As a result, the innovative lay character of their ministry was compromised. No less a scholar than Fr. Hans Urs von Balthasar affirmed the following:

So [Ignatius] began the path of studies: for a long time he thought, not of the

priesthood, but of the tools he needed in order to proclaim the Kingdom of God as a kind of itinerant preacher — for this is how he saw himself. He gathered a couple of disciples, laymen like himself, and he would have followed the plan he had at that time and sent them singly into the world to proclaim doctrine and give spiritual exercises as he himself wished to do if they had remained faithful to him. It was only conflicts with the Inquisition that opened his eyes more and more to the necessity of finishing his studies, that is, of becoming a priest, in order to be able to work as he had planned. Moreover, he saw that he had to form the companions who shared his vision into a more stable group if he was to give coherence to the movement that he wanted to start. Thus, the Society of Jesus became a priestly Order much more because of the world of education, which at that time was still organized in a medieval manner, than because of the intention of the founder.³⁶

In theory there could be some truth here, but the documentary evidence on this point is too sparse and vague to enable us to state with any certainty what was really on Ignatius's mind at this time and in this regard. Considering that Ignatius fiercely resisted a female branch for the Society, that he never instituted a "third order" of lay companions to help the Jesuits in their ministry (as the mendicant orders had done), that the Society at the time of its papal approbation in 1540 did not include Jesuit brothers as a vocational possibility,³⁷ and other considerations too unwieldy to raise here, the insinuation that the Society was a compromise of Ignatius's preferred form of lay ministry appears somewhat gratuitous.

Similarly, some writers suggest that Ignatius's decision to be ordained a priest was more of a practical move to get the Inquisition off his back than a reflection of his real aspirations. Ignatius is strangely silent in the *Autobiography* about why and when he decided to be ordained. This has been interpreted in two ways. Some see an implicit message that Ignatius never really wanted to be a priest in the first place. Conversely, others see his decision to begin theological studies after his

return from Jerusalem as a clear sign that he intended to be a priest, since in those days there was little reason to study theology otherwise.

Here we do well to keep in mind that when Ignatius dictated the content of his *Autobiography* to Fr. Luís Gonçalves da Câmara, he was the Superior General of a priestly institute whose memoirs were being recorded for the education and edification of Jesuits. In this context, it seems unlikely that he would have been downplaying his own ordination. In fact, just the opposite: he told Fr. da Câmara that he had such a devotion to the priesthood that he prepared an entire year after his ordination to preside at his first Mass.³⁸

Ignatius was a layman.

We often read that Ignatius was a layman during his seminal pilgrim years (from 1521 to his priestly ordination in 1537), thus giving greater credence to the assertion that Ignatian spirituality is essentially a "lay spirituality." There is some truth here, but without significant qualifications it misleads as much as it reveals.

Technically speaking — that is, according to church law — Ignatius was not a layman. At age 24 he was tonsured: an ancient, sacred rite whereby the crown of his head was shaved and he was invested with a surplice. This made him a member of the minor clergy, with all the duties and privileges thereof, including exemption from prosecution in civil courts. Tonsure was a required first step for any man with designs on being a priest, but a man was not obligated to be a priest by virtue of being tonsured. We do not know whether Ignatius at the time of his own tonsure had any real intentions of being a priest. One thing is clear: he did not hesitate to take advantage of his clerical status both before and after his conversion.³⁹

If by calling Ignatius a "layman" one wishes to affirm that his distinctive ministries of spiritual conversation and directing people in the Exercises can be practiced fruitfully by laypeople, this is obviously correct. Vital features of his spirituality — his attention to everyday experience as a primary locus of God's interactions with each person, his emphasis on finding God in all things, and that laboring in "the world" is no less a means

to sanctity than long hours of prayer — all serve to empower lay vocations in the Church. In this sense, Ignatius truly anticipated modern needs in a providential manner.

Nevertheless, confusion arises when we forget that the term “laity” signifies something richer and more positive today than simply not-being-ordained or not-belonging-to-a-religious-order.⁴⁰ It means a particular manner of living the gospel, typically within the context of marriage, family life, and secular employments. Until the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), Catholics spoke of “having a vocation” only with reference to priests and religious. The Council Fathers reminded Catholics that the laity have a vocation as well.

It is anachronistic to suggest that Ignatius was a layman in this newer sense. He would not have thought of himself that way. When he left home to begin his pilgrim journey, he had surrendered all the legitimate goods that belong to laity for the sake of what he considered a greater good. He renounced a wife and children by a private vow of chastity,⁴¹ he gave away almost all of his money and possessions, he relinquished a home of his own, and he broke off almost all written communication with his family because they were pleading with him to give up his new life.⁴²

Most of us would not associate this behavior with a normal or healthy lay vocation today. True, Ignatius was not yet a member of a religious order, but he had consciously chosen what in those days they called “evangelical perfection,” meaning a radical commitment to poverty, chastity, and (when possible) obedience to another human being.⁴³ Ignatius explicitly juxtaposed the lay vocation and a vocation to the counsels in the Spiritual Exercises:

The example given us by Christ our Lord of the first state of life, the observance of the Commandments, has been considered in the contemplation of His obedience to His parents; we have considered too his example of the second state, evangelical perfection, when He stayed in the Temple, leaving His adopted father and natural mother, to devote Himself to the exclusive service of His heavenly Father; now we shall begin, at the same time as

we contemplate His life, to inquire and ask in which life or state the Divine Majesty wishes to use us. By way of introduction to that we shall see (in the first exercise that follows) the intention of Christ Our Lord and on the contrary that of the enemy of human nature, as well as the attitudes we must acquire to reach perfection in whatever state of life God Our Lord may offer us for our choice.⁴⁴

Misconceptions

The modern West has been molded by five centuries of Enlightenment and existentialist thought, the beginnings of which are traditionally identified with Rene Descartes’s so-called “turn to the subject.” The philosopher’s works were first published some eighty years after Ignatius’s death. Consequently, when we see Ignatius using terms like “person” and “conscience” in the Spiritual Exercises, we tend to read them through the lens of our own individualistic and subjective frame of mind, whereas Ignatius himself, being a pre-Cartesian, would have understood them in a more communitarian sense.⁴⁵

For instance, when Ignatius refers to “freedom” [*libertad*] and “free will” [*libre albedrío*] in the Exercises, we probably think of the ability to do what we *want* without being determined by necessity or external constraints. We have been influenced by philosophers like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Sartre, who taught that our individual humanity becomes more actuated through a mature and courageous exercise of freedom, so that the actual object of our choice is a secondary consideration to some extent. In classical Christian theology, however, free will was emphasized as the ability to do what we *should*, and by conforming ourselves to those external realities we become more fully what God desires for us.

Ignatius strongly underscores the classical understanding of freedom in the Spiritual Exercises. Human freedom is always to be exercised for God, and thus it is necessary to make ourselves indifferent to all created things that will hinder us from that end, to the extent that our *libre albedrío* allows. “We should desire and choose *only* what helps us more toward the end for which we are created.”⁴⁶ Elsewhere Ignatius refers

to the fallen angels who “did not want to avail themselves of their liberty [*libertad*] in order to give reverence and obedience to their Creator and Lord....”⁴⁷

In short, whichever idea of freedom we bring to the Exercises will result in very different ideas about Ignatian discernment.

Another misconception concerns the nature of “God’s call.” Writers on Ignatian discernment frequently describe it as a discrete and highly unique communication to each person. It might be to marriage, priesthood, religious life, or any number of other missions or vocations or tasks. Because of its uniqueness, and because it is heard in the wordless depths of the individual, a person cannot know with any certainty what God is saying to anyone else except herself.

When God’s call is understood thusly (and notice how it presupposes the Cartesian idea that the “real me” is deep inside where no one else can see), then the principal task of one who discerns is to identify what God is saying and then say yes. No one particular choice should be considered nobler or more ideal than any other, because what matters is the fact that God has asked a person to do it for His own inscrutable reasons.

The late Fr. Joseph Conwell, S.J., for example, wrote the following:

Primary for Ignatius is that the service of God, whether in one state of life or another, is God’s free gift and call. A person should not choose a state of life because it is easier or more difficult or better, or because to do so would be more generous, but solely because God calls that person to one rather than another.⁴⁸

In point of fact, evidence is abundant — especially when we note what Ignatius wrote in his letters to flesh-and-blood people with regard to their own vocational discernments — that he understood God’s call similarly to the ancient and medieval church: as one universal call to all the faithful to imitate Jesus as closely as possible in light of their gifts, limitations, circumstances, and desires.

It is the difference between God speaking to one person privately on a cell-phone and speaking to everyone openly on a megaphone. In the first model, one’s task is to figure out what God is saying and then respond. In the second model, God puts the ball back in our court by having us ponder such questions as: “What do I want to do for God?” “How generous do I want to be?” “What are my gifts and limitations?”

We moderns generally seem to presuppose the cell-phone model. As a result, we often fall into the trap of saying to God, “Just give me a sign. I’m willing to do anything you ask. Just tell me what you want and I’ll do it.” Then we grow frustrated or angry when the sign does not come.

The cell-phone model also adds pressure to the discernment process. If there is one specific thing that God has in mind for a particular person and for her alone, then the onus falls on her to get it right. If she does not, she might reasonably infer that she will either disappoint God or end up unfulfilled for the rest of her life.

Considerable anxiety would be lifted if people understood that this is not what Ignatius meant by discernment, and that there are many good things they can do for God, all of which would please Him. Their question would cease to be “Will I get this right?” and instead become “What *might* I do for Christ?” “Where can I serve God’s *greater* glory?”

Ignatius makes all this explicit in “The Call of the King.” First we imagine a noble human king who addresses all his people at the same time:

I watch how this king speaks to all his own saying: “My will is to conquer all the land of the infidels! Therefore all those who want to come with me will have to be content with the same food as I, the same drink, the same clothing, etc.”⁴⁹

And then we consider Christ the King who does the same:

If such a call made by an earthly king to his subjects is worthy of our consideration, how much more is it worthy of consideration to see Christ our

Lord, the eternal King, and before Him the entire human race, as to all and to each one in particular His call goes out, "My will is to conquer the whole world and every enemy, and so enter into the glory of my Father! Therefore all those who want to come with me will have to labour with me, so that by following me in my suffering, they may also follow me in the glory."⁵⁰

Note that everyone receives the same call, but each one experiences it as addressed to him or her personally in light of his or her unique character and context.

And then, in words that compel us to examine the purity and magnanimity of our own desires to serve God:

Those who desire to show greater devotion and to distinguish themselves in total service to their eternal King and universal Lord, will not only offer themselves for the labor, but go further still.... They will make offerings of greater worth and moment, and say, "Eternal Lord of all things...."⁵¹

I cannot develop this subject here with the depth it deserves. I simply wish to raise awareness of how our modern understanding of Ignatian discernment can be dependent upon presuppositions that were not his own, and furthermore, that we might do the pilgrim an injustice by dismissing his own ideas too quickly as outdated.

Conclusion

There are other quotations wrongly attributed to Ignatius, and other myths about the man, but they are less relevant to the present work of Ignatian educators, and so we will let them rest for the moment.

One is reminded of Aristotle's famous maxim that the least initial deviation from the truth is multiplied later a thousand fold.⁵² I propose that we have seen something of that wisdom played out in the above myths, misquotes and misconceptions.

Granted, not all of them are equally serious. Even if Ignatius never said, "Go and set the world on fire," or "Laugh and grow strong," our continued use of them probably will not lead anyone down a wayward spiritual path.

Nonetheless, there is still a matter of principle at stake. Imagine that a Jewish university hires a Catholic professor of economics, and during her orientation the administrators tell her that the spirituality of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov (d.1760) is central to their mission. Furthermore she is invited, to the extent possible, to incorporate his values into her teaching. One can readily imagine how such a request might leave her flummoxed. She had never heard of the rabbi, so how significant can he be? Is he truly worth the time and effort that it will require of her to learn his spirituality, to say nothing of figuring out how to work it into her lectures on economics?

From this perspective, we can see that the first task of Jesuits and Ignatian educators — to put it candidly — is to make Ignatius as relevant and attractive as possible, as efficiently as possible, in order to persuade colleagues and students to invest in him.

It also means that Jesuits and Ignatian educators have their own occupational hazard: a subtle but ever-present temptation to depict the man and his thought in ways that are congenial but perhaps not all that accurate. We must remain mindful of that temptation, and of the more serious ramifications for the spiritual well-being of others if we regularly succumb to it. Then we will be all the more inclined, even with the "little" errors, to eschew them altogether. HJE

Notes

¹ The internet is fertile ground for the misattribution of quotations. See Cameron McWhirter, "To Quote Thomas Jefferson, I Never Actually Said That," *Wall Street Journal*, U.S. Edition, December 7, 2012, p.A1; Brian Morton, "Falsely Words Were Never Spoken," *New York Times*, August 30, 2011, p. A23. Numerous websites to the contrary, Archbishop Oscar Romero never said, "We are prophets of a future not our own"; Dorothy Day did not complain, "I feed the poor and they call me a saint; I ask why they're poor and they call me a communist"; Nelson Mandela did not write,

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate, our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure”; nor did Mother Teresa offer the blithe advice, “If you’re happy, people will resent you. Be happy anyway.”

² In Roman Catholic parlance, to call someone a “religious” signifies that he or she belongs to a canonically-approved religious community such as the Jesuits, Franciscans, Dominicans, or Benedictines, as opposed to being a layperson or a member of the diocesan clergy.

³ For more recent studies on this subject, see *A Companion to Ignatius of Loyola: Life, Writings, Spirituality, Influence*, ed. Robert Aleksander Maryks (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 2014); Philip Endean, S.J., “Who Do You Say Ignatius Is? Jesuit Fundamentalism and Beyond,” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 19/5 (1987); Joseph Veale, S.J., “Saint Ignatius Asks, ‘Are You Sure You Know Who I Am?’” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 33/4 (2001).

⁴ Spir. Ex. §15; translated in *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, eds. Joseph A. Munitiz and Philip Endean, S.J. (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 286.

⁵ See Barton T. Geger, S.J., “The First First Companions: The Continuing Impact of the Men Who Left Ignatius,” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 44/2 (2012), pp. 32-37.

⁶ For whatever reason, this error seems more particular to the United States. Jesuits in Spain were astonished to hear that anyone thought the prayer came from Ignatius. In an episode of the television sitcom *M*A*S*H* (Season 3, Episode 16, 1975), Major Margaret Houlihan attributes this quotation to Ignatius.

⁷ On Ignatius’s advice regarding *caritas discreta*, see Barton T. Geger, S.J., “What Magis Really Means and Why It Matters,” *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal*, 1(2): 16-31 (2012), <http://epublications.regis.edu/jhe/vol1/iss2/16/>; and “*Cura Personalis*: Some Ignatian Inspirations,” *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal*, 3(2): 6-20 (2014), <http://epublications.regis.edu/jhe/vol3/iss2/2/>.

⁸ Part VII of the Constitutions is dedicated to the proper discernment and selection of Jesuit works. See esp. §§622-624. For the authoritative English translation see John W. Padberg, S.J., gen. ed, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996).

⁹ As of April 2016, the Wikipedia entry for “Magis” contains this error.

¹⁰ Spir. Ex. §53; trans. Munitiz and Endean, *Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, p. 296.

¹¹ Spir. Ex. §234; trans. David L. Fleming, S.J., *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius: A Literal Translation and a Contemporary Reading* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1978), p. 141. Elder Mullan’s 1909 translation, juxtaposed with Fleming’s, likewise reads “Give me Thy love and grace” (p. 140).

¹² Trans. Munitiz and Endean, *Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, p. 329.

¹³ Trans. George E. Ganss, S.J., *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius: A Translation and Commentary* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1992), p. 95.

¹⁴ We must remember that Castilian Spanish was not Ignatius’s first language, and he never mastered it. As one Jesuit scholar put it, “[T]he principal key to [Ignatius’s] peculiar style lies in the Basque which explains his continual ellipses, his substantival infinitives, his incorrect use of reflexives, his strange use or omission of articles and pronouns, his hyperbaton, and almost word for word translation of some phrases” (Pedro Leturia, S.J., *Ñigo de Loyola*, trans. Aloysius J. Owen, S.J. [Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1965], p. 25).

¹⁵ Francis Thompson, *Saint Ignatius Loyola*, second edition (London: Burns & Oates, 1910), 201.

¹⁶ Trans. Martin E. Palmer, S.J., John W. Padberg, S.J., and John L. McCarthy, S.J., *Ignatius of Loyola: Letters and Instructions* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2006), 2.

¹⁷ “Go and set the whole world on fire” is also found in *Scintillae Ignatianae* (“Ignatian Sparks”), a book of 365 purported quotes by Ignatius, one for each day of the year, compiled by Fr. Gabriel Hevenesí, S.J., and published in 1712. Many quotes are corroborated in sources contemporary with Ignatius, but others are not, including this one. Of the latter, many were traditional maxims of Catholic religious life, making it equally arguable that Ignatius said them or that Hevenesí presumed that Ignatius said them. The book is available in English as *Thoughts of St. Ignatius Loyola for Every Day of the Year*, trans. Alan G. McDougall (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006). Our quotation is found on October 6.

¹⁸ “Credit totum hoc caput cum articulis in eo comprehensis esse verum; et ut hoc credat eum adducit sancti viri pietas et symbolum, quod reliquit omnibus cordibus inscribendum, quod semper in ore habebat “Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam”; quo simbolo per traditionem crebro utuntur Societatis alumni. Item quod, quando mittebat aliquos de Societate aliquo ad excolendam Dei vineam, solebat eis dicere: Itote, omnia accendite et inflammate; que ex ipsius ore et communi confratrum traditione deponens audivit et accepit” (*Monumenta Ignatiana. Scripta de Sancto Ignacio de Loyola*. 2 vols. Madrid: 1904, 1918. II:888). I am indebted to Claude Pavur, S.J., for directing me to this text and assisting me with the translation.

¹⁹ Ignatius refers to “burning desires” in the Constitutions §102 [*desseos encendidos*]; and to “a generous heart fired with God” [*un ánimo generoso encendido de Dios*] in the Autobiography §9. He uses *fuego* eight times in the Spiritual Diary; seven are literal references to a brazier in his room, and one is a simile for God’s grace in §64.4: “I was being helped by a warm grace which later battled like fire with water against some thoughts” (trans. Munitiz and Endean, *Ignatius of Loyola*, p. 84; see also note 60 on p. 381).

²⁰ Letter 296 (*Monumenta Ignatiana. Sancti Ignatii de Loyola Societatis Jesu fundatoris epistolae et instructiones*. 12 vols. Madrid, 1903-1911. II:57). Hereby abbreviated MI Epp. There are

other similes of fire and burning in the preserved letters, but they were written by Ignatius's secretaries or other Jesuits.

²¹ Letter 3236 (MI Epp. IV:635; *infiammato*).

²² Letter 3543 (MI Epp. V:182; *santo fuego*) and Letter 4617 (MI Epp. VII:260; *sancto fuego*).

²³ Letter 3304 (MI Epp. IV:675; *fuego de charidad*) and Letter 2784-aD (MI Epp. XII:501; *fuoco de la charità*). "The fire of divine charity" was a popular expression in the Middle Ages, as evidenced in the letters of St. Catherine of Siena. She too is credited with writing, "If you are what you should be, you will set the whole world on fire" which is a reasonably close paraphrase of her actual words, "If you are what you ought to be, you will set fire to all Italy, and not only yonder" (Letter 368 to Stefano Maconi).

²⁴ MI Epp. I:408; trans. Palmer, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 142. One can imagine that early Jesuits got a good laugh from recounting this anecdote. If repeated frequently enough, who knows? Perhaps it was the inspiration for "Go and set the world on fire," which would be a fitting irony. The grammatical similarities are suggestive.

²⁵ For examples of how Ignatius practiced it and counseled others, see *Remembering Iñigo: The Memorials of Luís Gonçalves da Câmara*, eds. Alexander Eaglestone and Joseph A. Munitiz, S.J. (Leominster: Gracewing Publishing, 2004), nos. 26-27, 192, 195, 202-204, 227, 250, 289, 291, 379, 401. For Renaissance values that Ignatius sought to emulate in this regard, see Thomas H. Clancy, S.J., *The Conversational Word of God: A Commentary on the Doctrine of St. Ignatius of Loyola concerning Spiritual Conversation, with Four Early Jesuit Texts* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1978).

²⁶ See *Art, Controversy, and the Jesuits: The Imago Primi Saeculi (1640)*, ed. John W. O'Malley, S.J., Early Modern Catholicism and the Visual Arts Series, Vol.12 (Philadelphia: St. Joseph's University Press, 2015). In one of the great ironies of the Society's history, the *Imago* was so effusive in self-congratulations and elitist rhetoric that it became a lightning rod for the Society's detractors for centuries. Ignatius must have rolled over in his grave.

²⁷ General Congregation 32, Decree 11, "The Union of Minds and Hearts," in *Jesuit Life & Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 31st-35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus*, ed. John W. Padberg, S.J. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009), 339-352. It seems that the English translators of the G.C. 32 decrees chose to render the Latin version of the phrase (*unio animarum*) as "union of minds and hearts."

²⁸ Cons. §655, 666. Though the Spanish word *unión* appears twenty-two times in the Constitutions, it does not appear once in the entire remainder of the Ignatian corpus, as improbable as that might seem. It strongly suggests that its presence in the Constitutions is owed to Fr. Polanco. For a treatment of *unión* in the Constitutions, see Antonio M. de Aldama, S.J., *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus. Part VII: Union Among Jesuits*, trans. Ignacio Echániz, S.J. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1998).

²⁹ The header on the first page reads: "Joseph F. Whelan, S.J. / Talk to the Communities / Maryland Province: 1981-82 / On Apostolic Freedom, Mobility, Community, and on the Province, National, International Context of Our Mission." A copy is on file in the archives of the Maryland Province at 5704 Roland Avenue in Baltimore. I am indebted to Gaspar Lo Biondo, S.J., for pointing me to this text.

³⁰ A collection of Fr. Whelan's spiritual reflections was published under the title *Benjamin: Essays on Prayer* (New York: Newman Press, 1972). The "Arrupe Quotation" does not appear therein, but the mystical, lyrical tone of Fr. Whelan's reflections is quite similar.

³¹ The poems have not survived. On Ignatius's early religiosity see Pedro de Leturia, S.J., *Iñigo de Loyola*, trans. Aloysius J. Owen (New York: Le Moyne College Press, 1949), 27-53; and Paul Dudon, S.J., *St. Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. William J. Young, S.J. (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1953), 17-24.

³² Fr. Juan Polanco, an early Jesuit who served as Ignatius's secretary in Rome, made this point explicit in his "Life" of Ignatius: "In general, [the young Ignatius] always did well in everything to which he applied himself, and although he was ignorant of the things of God and had evil habits, and sometimes used his abilities and natural gifts in bad ways, there could still be seen in him one whom God had made for great things" (Antonio Alburquerque, S.J., *Diego Laínez: Primer biógrafo de S. Ignacio* [Bilbao: Mensajero & Sal Terrae], 130; translation mine).

That grace builds upon nature is an essential presupposition behind the Jesuit principle of inculturation; it was also the linchpin of the Roman Catholic theological position during the Reformation debates on original sin and the relationship between nature and grace. See Ronald Modras, *Ignatian Humanism: A Dynamic Spirituality for the 21st Century* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2004), esp. pp. 66-67; and John W. O'Malley, S.J., "The Religious Culture of the First Jesuits," in *Saints or Devils Incarnate? Studies in Jesuit History* (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 2013), 188, 198.

³³ John W. Padberg, S.J., gen. ed., *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 3.

³⁴ Auto. §58.

³⁵ MI Epp. I:150; trans. Palmer, *Ignatius of Loyola*, p. 44. Emphasis mine. It is notable that Ignatius capitalized the word *Compañía* when referring to the "group" that he had discussed with his brother in 1535. During that home visit, Ignatius assuredly would not have been speaking of this group with the kind of clarity and formality entailed by the later "Society of Jesus"; yet his capitalization of *Compañía* clearly implies a strong connection in his own mind between what he had discussed with his brother and the later Society.

³⁶ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Laity and the Life of the Counsels: The Church's Mission in the World*, trans. Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), p. 82.

³⁷ The Pope gave approval to the Society of Jesus to receive Jesuit brothers (or “temporal coadjutors”) in the 1546 bull *Exponi nobis*.

³⁸ Auto. §96.

³⁹ In 1515 Ignatius appealed to his clerical status to avoid prosecution (see *Monumenta Ignatiana. Fontes documentales de S. Ignatio de Loyola*. Rome: 1977, pp. 229-246), and in 1522, about a year after his conversion, he identified himself as a cleric of the diocese of Pamplona in order to obtain papal permission for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land (*ibid.*, 289-290).

⁴⁰ Strictly speaking, “laity” denotes those Catholics who are not ordained clergy. Thus female religious and male religious who are not ordained (e.g., Jesuit brothers and scholastics studying for priesthood) are also properly called laypeople. In popular usage, however, Catholics often use “laity” more broadly to denote all those who are neither ordained nor in religious life.

⁴¹ Ignatius’s vow is not mentioned in the Autobiography, but we know of it from other early sources. See J. Iriarte, S.J., “Fijando el sitio del ‘voto de castidad’ de San Ignacio de Loyola,” *Manresa* 3 (1927), 156-164; and Thomas Hollweck, S.J., *El voto de castidad en la Compañía de Jesús*, trans. Vincente Gamarra, S.J. (Bilbao: Mensajero & Sal Terrae, 2001), 27-46.

⁴² Ignatius wrote a letter to his brother Martín in June 1532 in which he explained his reasons for not writing more often (see Palmer, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 3-7). When he returned to his hometown of Azpeitia in 1535 to make amends to the people for the sins of his youth, he endeavored mightily to avoid spending a single night at Castle Loyola. He finally agreed to one night there after family and friends applied considerable pressure.

⁴³ For many Catholics at this time, a private commitment to the evangelical counsels was an alternative to joining an ecclesiastically-approved religious community, as the latter often suffered from a reputation for laxity and decline. (Ignatius alludes to this reputation in Auto. §12.) Hermits living in the outskirts of a town or village, or in a stone cubicle attached to the exterior wall of a church building, were examples of this.

⁴⁴ Spir. Ex. §135 (trans. Munitiz and Endean, *Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, 310). In accordance with classical theology, Ignatius uses the term “perfection” in a relative sense. Christian perfection consists in the presence of grace within a person, and the desire to remain in it, and a habit of charity, but it also increases to the degree that one pursues the greater service of God and withdraws from anything that would impede that greater service. Centuries later, St. Thérèse of Lisieux used a homely metaphor of two cups of different sizes that are filled to the brim, and therefore both are “perfected” to the degree that their particular capacity allows. See Barton T. Geger, “Hidden Theology in the Autobiography of St. Ignatius,” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 46/3 (Autumn 2014), pp.11-23.

⁴⁵ The Jesuit theologian Fr. Karl Rahner (d.1980) wrote a famous essay on this subject entitled “The Logic of Concrete

Individual Knowledge in Ignatius Loyola” (trans. W. J. O’Hara, in *The Dynamic Element in the Church*, New York, Herder & Herder, 1964). Rahner acknowledged our propensity to retroject modern values onto Ignatius: “We should like to express the opinion (without being able to give grounds for it here) that Ignatius has something almost of the archaic and archetypal about him. That explains what at a first superficial glance one might call the mediaeval features of his spiritual character. He has nothing that really belongs to the Baroque or the Renaissance about him. The features that are held to justify interpretation in those terms, his individualism, deliberate reflection, his almost technically regulated self-mastery, his silence and discretion, his subordination of the highly self-aware person to the objective task, the slight skepticism which pervades everything though without lyrical self-expression or self-conscious melancholy, these and similar traits are not really ‘Baroque’ and ‘modern’, even if in other connections the distinguishing mark of the ‘Baroque’ and of ‘modern times’ is the individual’s awareness of himself as an individual, exulting in himself or intoxicated with its own problems and complexity, a self-mirroring individuality. None of that is to be observed in Ignatius” (86-87, n.1).

⁴⁶ Spir. Ex. §23; trans. Munitiz and Endean, p. 289.

⁴⁷ Spir. Ex. §50; trans. Munitiz and Endean, p. 295

⁴⁸ Joseph F. Conwell, S.J., *Impelling Spirit: Revisiting a Founding Experience (1539) Ignatius of Loyola and His Companions* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1997), 312.

⁴⁹ Spir. Ex. §93; trans. Munitiz and Endean, p. 303. Ignatius’ use of “etc.” in the text is not insignificant, as it indicates that the exercitant should already know what the king is saying.

⁵⁰ Spir. Ex. §95; trans. Munitiz and Endean, p. 304. In the ancient and medieval church, “knowing God’s will is easy, doing it is hard,” whereas today, “knowing God’s will is hard, doing it is easy.” Asceticism was emphasized more in the past because it was assumed that people will feel a natural repugnance for the hardships involved with following Christ, and therefore they require discipline to overcome those emotional reactions.

⁵¹ Spir. Ex. §§97-98. Emphases mine.

⁵² Aristotle, “On the Heavens” [*De Caelo*], Bk I:5. Ignatius presupposes a similar principle in the Spiritual Exercises §§332-333.