



STUDIES

IN
THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

HIDDEN THEOLOGY IN THE
"AUTOBIOGRAPHY" OF ST. IGNATIUS

BARTON T. GEGER, S.J.

THE SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

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the first word . . .

Welcome to my fantasy world. Like a huge Jaffa orange on the horizon, the sun begins its majestic descent into luminous waters of the Mediterranean. From the balcony of my villa, I trace the silver wakes of fishing boats sliding toward the harbor. The workday comes to an end for me as well. The laptop goes dark. Time for a quick dip in the pool, tiled with a Roman motif, before dinner. It will be an intimate gathering: the countess and her ravishing daughter, who is a sculptor of some note and jewelry designer for Fabergé; an English novelist summering on the coast after winning the Booker Prize and his companion, a concert pianist; the dean of the national university and the world's leading authority on Etruscan art with his wife, formerly a dancer with the Paris Opera Ballet. Pleasant group. Daiquiris on the veranda to start; sorbet and pastries at pool side to end. They find my rambling recollections of the old days at St. Andrew-on-Hudson endlessly fascinating. (With that statement, we may have crossed the boundary between fantasy and psychopathological delusion.)

Even fantasies have a potential dark side as they become more specific. My dream assignment involves composing my memoirs, an autobiography, if you will. Surely, a topic fascinating to me, if to no one else. The plan has been taking shape over the last few weeks. First, the book would include all the deliberations and decisions that redirected world history. Not much there. We move on. Perhaps then a listing of all the important statesmen and artists befriended over the years. The page remains empty. Save that for a later chapter. Adventures on the high seas? Daring rescues in the midst of civil wars? Scientific breakthroughs? Pulitzer prizes? Secret diplomatic missions? Another dry well. This project may be more difficult than anticipated. Let's adjust expectations. Perhaps a spiritual diary of mystical experiences, heroic missionary voyages, and persecution for supposed heterodoxy. (Movie reviews don't get much ecclesiastical scrutiny.) Let's let that chapter go, too. As the fantasy slips through the clouds of daydreams and into the reality of life, what pertinent memories can I possibly record to edify posterity? He got his grades in on time? He did his laundry every week? He answered his e-mail? He flossed vigorously? Maybe the story of my life is not quite as captivating as I once thought. As they think about it, superiors and publishers may even have reservations about bankrolling this project. Who could blame them?

Obviously, many other memoirists have had richer material to deal with than I, or at least think they do. Political autobiography becomes heavy industry during campaign season. Don't vote for my policies, vote for my story. If events went well, it's important to receive the credit; if badly, to ensure someone else gets the blame. The Iraq War, the financial collapse, Katrina all have provided backdrops for multiple autobiographies. Before submerging into these kinds of documents, readers would be wise to ask why the author would undertake such a project, with or without the help of a ghostwriter. Some motives are the loftiest: to shed light on history by telling a familiar story from a particular point of view. Other such projects may arise from a desire for self-vindication. At the worst, media manufactured celebrities seek notoriety and royalty checks.

Motivation can influence not only the selection of details but their credibility. This example strikes close to home as particularly pertinent simply because it pops up almost every year in one of my classes. In 1971 Frank Capra, the great film director of the 1930s and 1940s, published his autobiography, *The Name above the Title*. As expected, it provides a wonderful, anecdotal history of Hollywood during its "golden age." But as he neared his seventy-third birthday, why did he write it? Simply because he had to. After service in World War II, he had lost his audience. His only popular postwar film was *It's a Wonderful Life*, but that was merely a remake of *American Madness*, which he made in 1932 and remade in its now familiar Christmas setting in 1946. He was vilified in the film world for apparently naming names of suspected Communists to the House Un-American Activities Committee. In liberal Hollywood his conservative, hyperpatriotic politics, which would find a cozy home in today's Tea Party movement, would hardly endear him to the artistic and academic establishments. After a decade or more of television, audience tastes had changed appreciably by the 1960s. In the public mind, foreign films set the standard for "seriousness." Reviewers and scholars alike had accepted the major tenets of auteur criticism that elevated a director to the status of an artist on the basis of his "personal vision." That didn't leave much room for an American entertainer who made commercially successful light romantic comedies.

In these multiple contexts, Capra went to work telling his story. Students regularly submit papers using his text as irrefutable evidence, a primary source that cannot be challenged. Despite my warnings, some neglect dipping into Joseph McBride's, *Frank Capra: The Catastrophe of Success*, a huge critical biography of 1991 that challenges and corrects many of Capra's misstatements. Had the years dimmed his memories? Did he deliberately distort the facts to enhance his reputation? Did he so badly want his version of events to be true that in his mind they were? Ironically, as critics gain a wider historical perspective on the man and his work, his artistic stature has re-

bounded quite nicely. But later scholars still have to read his book and view his films with some serious questions left unresolved.

These operative motivations of autobiographers need not be sinister. Far from it. In his *Confessions*, Augustine seems far less captivated by the events of his life at the end of the classical period than by God's relentless pursuit of his soul. Since this book began to appear in various forms near the start of the fifth century, how many thousands of readers, Christian and non-Christian alike, have found his story profoundly moving. Similarly, Cardinal Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, first published in 1864, used his own experience of conversion to recast the dialogue of Catholic faith and reason as the world stumbled into the Industrial Age. As the title indicates, he used his own life experience to redirect the polemic nature of traditional apologetics into something more suited to the ecumenical conversations that would flourish in the next century. In 1953 our own John LaFarge published *The Manner Is Ordinary*, a book that with Thomas Merton's *The Seven Storey Mountain* in 1948, surely pushed one high-school kid from Brooklyn closer to a vocation. Monastic life had its attractions, to be sure. Remember the popularity of *Jubilee* magazine and Osmiroid pens for writing in chancel script? But Father LaFarge had it all: the intellectual life in Germany, a family steeped in art, dedication to social justice before the civil-rights movements became fashionable, a writer, editor, and political analyst at *America*. That's the kind of life a boy in a Jesuit high school could find not only attractive, but compelling. Surely all these authors undertook their task with a hope that it might provide an avenue of God's grace for generations of readers.

With the "Autobiography" of St. Ignatius, questions of motivation, selection, and credibility become extremely complicated, as Bart Geger ably points out in his essay. Why did Ignatius choose these particular anecdotes to recount to his scribes? Why did these editors put the narrative together as they did? Did their motives vary from his? In what sense can the document be called a historical autobiography, as we understand history today, and in what sense is it a theological treatise or a spiritual exhortation? What was the intended readership, and how did readers receive it? Did the editors shade the facts, much like Frank Capra, to bolster the true intent of their work? Many of the tenets of contemporary scripture studies offer a key to this intriguing life story, as Bart meticulously points out. This monograph provides a fine companion piece to John McManamon's recent *The Texts and Contexts of Ignatius Loyola's "Autobiography,"* published in 2013 by Fordham University Press. As Jesuit novices, we all read the autobiography with great affection. We all remember the cannon ball and the Moor, the vigils and the penances. With this essay, we can revisit some familiar territory and see the old landmarks as perhaps we have never seen them before.

a few second words . . .

The fall issue of *STUDIES* always includes the introduction of new members, whose names appear on the inside front cover. This year we'll go to the back cover first. At the bottom of the page, you can see that we have a new business office. A Graphic Resource, Inc., who has handled the printing and mailing of the journal for many years, will now also process subscriptions, renewals, and requests for back issues. (For the last couple of years, the entire archive of back issues has been available on line, without charge. We do charge a fee of twenty-five dollars per issue for those who wish to produce multiple paper copies of it for course packs or class notes, which normally are sold to students in campus bookstores.) The address for the editorial office remains at Boston College. Manuscripts, inquiries, and letters to the editor should continue to go there.

Why the change? The Institute of Jesuit Sources is closing its offices in St. Louis this year. IJS continued to handle business operations, even after the editorial function was severed from IJS and the Jesuit Conference became the immediate parent operation in 2002. Although the editorial office relocated to Boston at that time, IJS generously agreed to continue the business end of the operation, as it had when the Seminar was part of its own organization. As the new editor, I was relieved no end to learn that IJS was willing to take all these technical details out of my hands. With that arrangement, I became seriously indebted to John Padberg, the late Marty O'Keefe, John McCarthy, our eagle-eyed copy editor, and the indefatigable Joni Hosty, the ever-efficient office administrator, and probably other colleagues at IJS, whose contributions I am unaware of. I remain most grateful to each and every one of them. As of this year, IJS will relocate at Boston College, with a new staff, and the opportunity to develop its own identity and priorities.

The vast majority of our readers will scarcely notice any change. AGR will receive the mailing list from the Jesuit Conference and issues will go out automatically to all members of the US Assistency, as they have in the past. Anyone changing his address in the course of the year should contact AGR directly to ensure uninterrupted delivery. Libraries and paying subscribers, domestic and international, will be informed about changes in billing methods. AGR plans to upgrade and simplify these systems to conform to those of its other clients. Again, disruption should be minimal.

Now back to the inside front cover. Meet the new cast of characters. Guy Consolmagno spent the last several years in Rome as curator of meteorites at the Vatican Observatory. Returning to the U.S. to serve as president of the Vatican Observatory Foundation in Tucson, he scarcely had time to leave

the jetway on a visit home before he received and accepted an invitation to become a member of the Seminar. In addition to two hundred scientific publications, he is the author, coauthor, or editor of seven books including *Turn Left at Orion* and *Would You Baptize an Extraterrestrial?* This year he received the Carl Sagan Award from the American Astronomical Society for his contribution to outreach in planetary sciences. He is the only member of the Seminar ever to have an asteroid named after him: 4597 Consolmagno.

Mike Harter brings a rich and varied background to the Seminar. A native of Kansas, he did studies at St. Louis University and Toronto before being ordained in 1974. For several years he was managing editor at *America* magazine in New York and later became editor of *Review for Religious* where he was charged with making the difficult decision about closing it. When the Australian Province began publishing its periodical *Eureka Street*, he served as founding consultant. Mike compiled and edited *Hearts on Fire*, a popular collection of prayers that embody themes of the *Spiritual Exercises*. In Denver, he directed Ministry Training Services, which offered leadership programs for Jesuits and others. He was assistant novice director and then director of the program in St. Paul, Minnesota, for nine years. For the past several years he has served as assistant to the director of the USA Jesuit Tertianship Program in Portland, Oregon.

A math major as a Boston College undergraduate, and subsequent M.A. in biblical languages, Randy Sachs is currently associate professor of systematic theology at the School of Theology and Ministry at his college alma mater. Ordained in 1976, he completed his doctorate in dogmatic theology at Tübingen in 1984. After a short stint at Fairfield University, he was assigned to the Weston School of Theology, in Cambridge, Mass., where he became academic dean for twelve years and chair of the Ecclesiastical Faculty. He is an associate editor and a board member of *Theological Studies*. His writings include *The Christian Vision of Humanity: Basic Christian Anthropology*, and articles in theological journals such as *Gregorianum*, *Supplement to the Way*, *The Month*, and *Theological Studies*.

As we welcome the new Seminar members, we thank those who are leaving our group. Shay Auerbach now has a few more hours to dedicate to his work as pastor of Sacred Heart Parish and director of the Sacred Heart Center in Richmond, Virginia. Kevin Cullen is leaving us after one year. As treasurer and higher-education assistant of the former Missouri Province, he will be totally committed to the reunification process for the new Central and Southern Province. There were just not enough hours in the day or weeks without meetings to accommodate the Seminar as well. Bob Scully's excellent summary of the events leading to the Suppression of the Society appeared in *STUDIES* last summer (45/2). It remains one of our bestsellers among our back issues and most widely downloaded from our Websites. Bob will

continue his research and teaching of history and law at Le Moyne College. Gilbert Sunghera will be in a perfect position to witness the rebuilding of Detroit as he continues his work of teaching architecture at the University of Detroit-Mercy. On behalf of the Seminar and the entire US Assistency, thank you for your generous contribution to this ministry.

Finally, let me tip my imaginary biretta in gratitude to all our readers who took the time to respond to the CARA survey last spring. Your gracious comments will keep STUDIES in business, in paper as well as on the Web, at least for the immediate future. I think all of us were a bit surprised to learn the varied ways our readers find these essays useful. With our international outreach through our Web version, we hope to begin attracting some contributors from around the world. Adding a bit of diversity to the series might make it more reflective of the universal Society and provide even more diverse materials that readers could incorporate into their own reflections and ministries. Thanks.

Richard A. Blake, S.J.

Editor

CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. THE THREE TEMPTATIONS.	15
III. HOW CASSIAN CURED IGNATIUS'S SCRUPLES	30
IV. THEOLOGICAL VOCABULARY	38
V. CONCLUSION	42

Barton T. Geger, S.J., entered the Missouri Province in 1990. He received a M.Th. in Systematic Theology from Heythrop College in London, an S.T.L. from Weston Jesuit School of Theology, and an S.T.D. from Universidad Pontificia Comillas in Madrid, with a dissertation on the Jesuit Constitutions. He is rector of the Jesuit Communities of St. Ignatius parish and Regis University, where he serves as “Director of Ignatian Programs” for faculty and administration. He can be reached at bgeger@regis.edu.

Hidden Theology in the “Autobiography” of St. Ignatius

The recorded early life of Ignatius recounts a series of temptations and their resolutions. Read in the context of Luke’s Gospel and the tradition of Cassian, what appears at first as a series of pious anecdotes in fact contains a sophisticated theology of vocation and perseverance. Ignatius and his editors strove to recount these personal experiences as an inspiration for the growing Society and its young members.

I. Introduction

Probably no passage in the “Autobiography” of St. Ignatius inspires such a variety of interpretations as the pilgrim’s dramatic cure from scruples. While in Manresa he suffered crippling fears after each confession that he had failed to mention minor sins. He knew his fears were irrational, but he could not shake himself of the compulsion to confess again. Neither fasting nor prayer nor counsel from others brought peace. After four months of torment, he began to consider suicide. And then, when all hope seemed lost, relief came out of the blue.

But at the end of these thoughts there came to him some feelings of disgust for the life he was leading, and some impulses to cease from it; and **with this** [*con esto*] the Lord willed that he woke up as if from sleep. And since he now had some experience of the difference in kinds of spirits through the lessons God

had given him, he began to mull over the means through which that spirit had come. As a result he decided, with great clarity, not to confess anything from the past any more. Thus from that day onward he remained free of those scruples, holding it for certain that Our Lord in his mercy had willed to liberate him.¹

No fewer than seven paragraphs are dedicated to the pilgrim's bout with scruples, making this brief description of his cure all the more perplexing. Two critical points seem to be left unclear. The first is the cause of the cure. What did Ignatius mean by "with this"? Did fatigue break him? Did he have a consolation without preceding cause? Did he lose hope in a remedy? The second ambiguity is the lesson that Ignatius learned. Was it on the nature of scruples? On true and false sanctity? On his own human limitations?

A cursory examination of how modern writers handle these points makes it obvious that the text is obscure. On the cause of the cure, Fr. William Bangert wrote that Ignatius found relief by discerning the roots of his scruples, despite the explicit affirmation in the text that he discerned the course of his thoughts only after the ordeal was over.² Fr. Cándido de Dalmases first called the cure a gift of grace, without any admixture of human effort, but shortly afterward he described it as the fruit of Ignatius's discernment.³ Michael Foss asserted that the scruples were caused by Ignatius's extreme asceticism and ended when he learned moderation.⁴ Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle wrote that he was cured after noting the strong swings between his consolations and desolations.⁵

¹"Autobiography," no. 25 (emphasis added). Unless otherwise noted, translations of the "Autobiography" and *Spiritual Exercises* are taken from *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, ed. Joseph A. Munitiz and Philip Endean (London: Penguin Books, 1996). Hereafter this source will be abbreviated to Munitiz, *Ignatius of Loyola*, and the "Autobiography" abbreviated to "Auto."

²William V. Bangert, *A History of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1972), 8 (hereafter IJS).

³Cándido de Dalmases, *Ignatius of Loyola: Founder of the Jesuits*, trans. Jerome Aixelá (St. Louis: IJS, 1985), 59-60.

⁴Michael Foss, *The Foundation of the Jesuits* (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1969), 74.

⁵Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, *Loyola's Acts: The Rhetoric of the Self* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 84.

On the lesson learned, some suggest that, similar to Martin Luther, Ignatius realized that he could not be perfect on his own, and that God accepted him with all his flaws. Fr. José Idígoras wrote of self-surrender: "Ignatius realized that he was not holding the reins of his life in his own hands, that he could not place confidence in himself."⁶ Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, on the other hand, affirmed that Ignatius was "no longer tortured by the idols which his models of holiness had become."⁷ Indeed, one writer denied that the pilgrim had received any insight at all. He conquered simply through brute force:

[W]eary disgust impelled him to give up the contest and his ascetic life altogether. Once more he summoned his strength to repel the temptation and persevere. And behold, beyond hope or expectation, the battle was won, the war was ended. The thick fog of scrupulosity drew off as suddenly as it had come, and with it went his miseries. He had conquered simply by clinging and resisting to the last; and relief had finally come, the relief of "the rhythm of life," not through any wisdom of his own or others.⁸

Perhaps the majority of writers, exemplified by Fr. Paul Dudon in his well-known biography of Ignatius, do not even attempt a clarification. When they arrive at the moment of the cure, they cease to tell the story in their own words, and instead reiterate the passage from the "Autobiography," suggesting that they themselves are unsure how to interpret it.⁹

Now, the focus of this present essay is not Ignatius's scruples per se, but rather a particular way of reading the "Autobiography," a reading that, in my opinion, renders Ignatius's cure much clearer. For centuries, historians have mined the text as a source of historical facts about the pilgrim. This only makes sense, since it seems to be a first-

⁶José Ignacio Tellechea, *Ignatius of Loyola: The Pilgrim Saint*, trans. Cornelius Michael Buckley (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1994), 194.

⁷Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, "St. Ignatius's Norms on Scruples," in *The Road from La Storta*, edited by Carl F. Starkloff (St. Louis: IJS, 2000), 234.

⁸Francis Thompson, *Saint Ignatius Loyola*, ed. John H. Pollen (Baltimore: Carroll Press, 1950), 30.

⁹Paul Dudon, *St. Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. William J. Young (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1949), 63.

hand account of his adventures, and what could be more trustworthy than that? And although in the last fifty years we have become increasingly conscious of its theological subtleties, we are probably still inclined to regard the text, first and foremost, as an account of what “really” happened.¹⁰ But what if we approach the “Autobiography” in the same way that we approach the canonical Gospels—as a text with a specific audience, theological themes, and vocabulary? From this angle, we would need to read the scruples within the context of wider motifs, as opposed to being one discrete anecdote among many others.

For, in fact, there are many similarities between the Gospels and the “Autobiography” of Ignatius that shed light on the latter.

Audience

Every Jesuit learns in theology studies that the Gospels were redacted to suit the needs of a particular audience. Mark was written for Christians persecuted in Rome, while Luke was written for second- or third-generation Christians of Gentile background who—at least in the evangelist’s estimation—were already cooling in fervor. Thus Mark has been called a “Passion account with a prologue,” and Luke stresses the sacrifices inherent with being a Christian.

The “Autobiography” had a specific audience as well. Two of Ignatius’s colleagues, Juan Polanco and Jerome Nadal, pestered him for years to leave Jesuits a testament to how God had worked in his life. To make their case, they cited the examples of SS. Francis and Dominic, who had left memoirs to their own disciples.¹¹ Thus, everyone, including Ignatius, understood that the point of his memoirs was not to satisfy idle curiosity about his life, but to edify Jesuits and to form them in his values.

Among those values were the apostolate and perseverance. In the early-sixteenth century, the conventional wisdom was that long hours of prayer and mortification were required to attain holiness. Ig-

¹⁰ On the limitations of the “Autobiography” as a historical source, see “Who Do You Say Ignatius Is? Jesuit Fundamentalism and Beyond,” by Philip Edean, *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 19 (1987), and *The First Jesuits*, by John W. O’Malley (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 65-66.

¹¹ *Fontes Narrativi de S. Ignatio de Loyola et de Societatis Iesu initiis*, 4 vols. (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1943-45), 1:354-63 (hereafter *FontiNarr* and IHSI).

natus challenged that mind-set by creating a group of men dedicated primarily to the apostolate and, more specifically, to a mobile ministry that recalled the far-flung journeys of the first apostles. Many Jesuits and potential recruits, worried about their salvation, remained ambivalent about Ignatius's idea of religious life, and their defections therefrom were so numerous that they were acknowledged in several early papal documents.¹² Thus, it is not surprising that at least two themes are prominent in the first half of the "Autobiography": Ignatius's shift from a self-absorbed asceticism to service to others and his efforts to persevere in that new way of life.

Another value of Ignatius, it seems, was that the Society recapture, in its zeal and universal ministry, the idyllic image of the apostolic Church as depicted by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles. The supposed simplicity and purity of the latter were often contrasted with the Church of Ignatius's day, and many awaited a new religious order that would restore all to its former integrity. I am not aware of any text in which Ignatius explicitly described the Society in those terms, but some do appear to presuppose it.¹³ Moreover, for centuries it was common for founders of religious institutes to express such aspirations. Nadal made it a theme in his lectures to new Jesuits, and it seems unlikely that he would have done so without Ignatius's knowledge.¹⁴

In this light, notable parallels exist between the biblical Luke-Acts and the "Autobiography" of Ignatius. In a recent study Fr. John McManamon, S.J., listed four: "the theological significance of geography and especially of the city of Jerusalem, the dynamism of the apostolic life, the cost of discipleship, and the universalism of ministry in the Spirit of Jesus."¹⁵

¹² Pope Pius V treats exclusively of this subject in *Æquum reputamus* (1566). See also Paul III, *Licet debitum* (1549), and Gregory XIII, *Ascendente Domino* (1584).

¹³ E.g., "Auto," no. 75; *Fontes documentales de S. Ignatio de Loyola* (hereafter *Font-Doc*), vol. 115 of MHSI (Rome 1977), 322; *Sancti Ignatii de Loyola Societatis Jesu fundatoris epistolæ et instructiones* (hereafter *Ignatii epistolæ*), 12 vols. (Madrid, 1903-11; reprinted in Rome, 1964-68), 3:638, 12:333, and esp. 12:441.

¹⁴ See Joseph F. Conwell, *Walking in the Spirit: A Reflection on Jerónimo Nadal's Phrase "Contemplative Likewise in Action"* (St. Louis: IJS, 2003), 73-74, 83-99.

¹⁵ John McManamon, S.J., *The Texts and Contexts of Ignatius Loyola's "Acts"* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 112. McManamon cites a letter of the Barnabites to the Jesuits after the death of Ignatius, according to which the Society had

Oral Tradition

Jesus' words and deeds were passed down orally for years before being collected in the so-called "Q-Source" that later served the synoptic evangelists.

After Ignatius had recruited the men at the University of Paris who would become the "First Companions," he often recounted his stories to them, including the important lessons he had learned in Spain and Jerusalem. Later, as superior general in Rome, he received visitors from all over Europe who had come to meet the man reputed to have such great sanctity. Naturally, they wanted to hear his stories too. Luís Gonçalves da Câmara noted that he heard Ignatius tell the same anecdotes "ten, fifteen or more times," and always with great consistency.¹⁶ Thus, when Ignatius finally consented to narrate his memoirs to da Câmara, we can be sure that da Câmara was already capable of telling many of those stories himself.

In this sense, we can speak of an "oral tradition" among early Jesuits, insofar as they would have been adept at recounting Ignatius's life and lessons from memory. Nadal, of course, had to do this frequently, for his role was to visit new Jesuits all over Europe and instruct them in the ways of Master Ignatius back in Rome. But the best evidence of this probably comes from Diego Laínez, one of the First Companions. In June of 1547 he was in Bologna, busy with the work of the Council of Trent. Nevertheless, at Polanco's request, he managed to dash off a "Life" of Ignatius within about fourteen days. That he could compose it so rapidly, with Ignatius away in Rome and (presumably) without any written sources at his disposal, indicates an expansive memory of what Ignatius had often recounted.¹⁷

helped to birth "a new Church emulating the first apostolic community, with new apostles, new martyrs" (ibid).

¹⁶See Alexander Eaglestone and Joseph A. Munitiz, eds., *Remembering Iñigo: Glimpses of the Life of Saint Ignatius Loyola: The "Memoriale" of Luís Gonçalves da Câmara* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2004), 59, no. 99.

¹⁷Joan Segarra Pijuan, S.J., noted that Laínez's letter "appears to have been written very spontaneously" (*Manresa and Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. Patricia Mathews [Ajuntament de Manresa, 1992], 66n.3).

Non-Canonical Texts

The four Gospels were not the only written accounts of Jesus in the first and second centuries. In addition to the "Q-Source," apocryphal gospels exist, the historical value of which varies, but which nonetheless have added to our knowledge of the canonical Gospels and the ancient church.

Láinez's "Life" is the earliest written account of Ignatius's story. It predates the "Autobiography" by six years and was rapidly circulated in Jesuit communities. Within months of receiving it, Polanco used it as the nucleus for his own "Life," albeit supplementing and modifying it considerably in the process.¹⁸ Da Câmara probably had both "lives" before him, in addition to his own notes from Ignatius, when he crafted the final form of the "Autobiography."

The lives written by Láinez and Polanco help us to avoid two errors. Just as some early scholars dismissed the historical value of the Gospels out of hand in light of their theological agendas, one might be tempted to dismiss the "Autobiography" as largely pious fiction. Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, who has laid bare an astonishing amount of hagiographical motifs in the text, seems to lean in this direction when she affirms that "Loyola speaks with the hollow voice of medieval texts, for which the original was anonymous, lost, forgotten, disappeared, with only copies of copies extant," and again, that "the text was invented by imitation."¹⁹ An understandable conclusion, perhaps, but in her book, O'Rourke Boyle gives no indication that she was aware of the earlier lives. That many of the same stories appear in all three texts proves, at a bare minimum, that the "Autobiography" reflects an established oral tradition with Ignatius as its original source.

The other error is to press the text too heavily for historical details. Differences that do exist between the lives and the "Autobiography" suggest that the latter was redacted for specific purposes. In the "Autobiography," for example, Ignatius did not consider a religious vocation until, driven by boredom, he read *The Life of Christ* and *The*

¹⁸ *FontNarr* 1:70-145 (Láinez), and 153-210 (Polanco). Both "lives" are edited by Antonio Alburquerque, S.J., in *Diego Láinez, S.J., Primer biógrafo de S. Ignacio* (Bilbao & Santander: Mensajero & Sal Terrae, 2005).

¹⁹ O'Rourke Boyle, *Loyola's Acts*, 4.

Lives of the Saints.²⁰ This romantic scene, in which he unexpectedly found himself daydreaming about a different kind of life, has been a revered subject of reflection for spiritual writers. But, according to Laínez and Polanco, the recuperating Ignatius had *first* made up his mind to follow Christ, and only *then* did he choose to read the books for the express purpose of bolstering his resolution.²¹

This alternative account, in which Ignatius's enforced solitude and inactivity were sufficient to prompt his conversion, suggests the possibility that dissatisfaction with his life of vanities had been rumbling in him long before Pamplona, and that his injuries, which would now prevent him from ever going back to it, were the definitive push he needed to make a change. In modern terms, we could say that Ignatius had a midlife crisis. Arguably, this is less inspiring than the canonical story. But if the apocryphal account is more accurate (and we should not assume that it is simply because it is earlier), we can see why this detail was changed for Jesuit readers. The "Autobiography" presents a positive attraction to Christ and the saints as the ideal motive for choosing the life that Ignatius did—as opposed to a man simply having nowhere else to go.

Another case in point is the mystical illumination at the Cardoner. In the canonical account, Ignatius received it after passing through a long period of scruples and confusion. This sequence of events would have implied to sixteenth-century readers the traditional theology of the "purgative way" before the "illuminative way."²² But Laínez seems to indicate in his "Life" and Polanco makes explicit in his that the illumination came first, and *then* the scruples.²³ God did it this way, Polanco added, to teach the pilgrim discernment and for "greater purity of his soul."

²⁰ "Auto," nos. 5-7.

²¹ *FontNarr* 1:74, 158. That Ignatius deliberately chose to read books to strengthen a preexisting resolution finds an intriguing parallel in the *Exercises* (no. 100); there, exercitants should not read the lives of Christ and the saints during the First Week, when exercitants reflect on their past history and sinfulness, but they may do so during the Second Week, when presumably a decision to follow Christ has already been made.

²² Nadal later drew parallels between Ignatius's experience in Manresa and the three ways (*FontNarr* 2:152).

²³ *FontNarr* 1:80, 160-161.

It is curious that Laínez and Polanco provide two different explanations of the cure from scruples, both of which differ from the "Autobiography." Laínez seems to suggest (his wording is vague) that fasting for a week cured Ignatius. But according to Polanco, Ignatius's exasperated confessor had refused to give him another absolution, and it was this startling refusal that caused Ignatius to realize that his scruples were from the Enemy. (To complicate matters further, Nadal told Jesuits that Ignatius was cured when his confessor ordered him to break his fast.)²⁴

Nor did Laínez and Polanco emphasize the scruples as we find them described in the canonical account. Both gave it just a few lines, to the effect that the pilgrim suffered beyond any known human remedy.²⁵ Neither intimated that he considered suicide.

"Ignatian School"

The historical apostles Matthew and John almost certainly did not write the Gospels whose names they bear. But many scholars believe it possible that the Gospels were composed by schools of disciples who had formed around those men. If true, then the Gospels could accurately reflect the values of their attributed authors.

Ignatius was not the immediate author of the "Autobiography." This raises the question about the extent to which da Câmara was responsible for its final form and content. Is it possible that the text reflects da Câmara's values more than Ignatius's?

The concern is not unfounded. Da Câmara listened carefully to Ignatius's recollections in five or six sessions spanning a two-year period. After each session, he made notes of what he had heard and then later elaborated on those notes. Still later, he dictated the final form of the text to three different scribes on three different occasions, partly in Spanish and partly in Italian, and sometimes five or six months after Ignatius had spoken to him. In short, da Câmara had ample time (and skills) to shape the text as he wished.

There is some evidence that da Câmara did alter the "Autobiography" significantly. He acknowledged that Ignatius had narrated to

²⁴ *FontNarr* 2:151. Ribadeneira appears to try to reconcile these accounts in his later *Life of Ignatius* (*FontNarr* 4:119, 121), awaiting publication by the IJS.

²⁵ *FontNarr* 1:80, 82, 161.

him a detailed account of his youthful indiscretions.²⁶ Since this is not found in the present text, it would seem that someone excised it, possibly out of fear that it would cause scandal. We do not know the culprit with certainty, but editors of the *Monumenta* were of the opinion that it was da Câmara himself.²⁷

My own assessment is that the final wording of the “Autobiography,” the arrangement of its stories and its redactions are owed largely, if not completely, to da Câmara. The many allusions to Scripture, to Cassian’s theology, and to the *Exercises*, make it highly improbable that Ignatius could have dictated verbatim and from memory anything close to the final wording of the text. It is also unlikely that the Superior General, preoccupied as he was with other duties, would have had time to compose his memoirs so carefully. (Of course, this does not negate the possibility that Ignatius was aware of da Câmara’s work.)

On the other hand, given the purpose of the “Autobiography” to be a testament of a spiritual master to his disciples, Jesuits formed in the “Ignatian school”—such as Laínez, Nadal, Polanco, Ribadeneira, and, of course, Ignatius himself—surely would have reacted had they detected anything antithetical to his real values and concerns.²⁸ For da Câmara to delete a section on Ignatius’s sins is one thing (for all we know, Ignatius might have requested it), but to substantially change the stories or the values that Ignatius wished to convey is quite another. Emphases in the “Autobiography” clearly mirror those of the later Ignatius. For that reason and for the sake of simplicity, I shall continue to refer to Ignatius as if he were the author, although that should be taken in a highly qualified sense.

²⁶ Munitiz, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 6.

²⁷ *FontNarr* 1:330-331. Da Câmara recounted an occasion when he had refrained from dictating an anecdote about Ignatius and Nadal to a scribe lest he scandalize him (Eaglestone, *Remembering Iñigo*, 150). In the anecdote Ignatius had reprimanded Nadal for pushing his own opinions.

²⁸ Laínez, during his generalate, did attempt to have all copies of the “Autobiography” removed from circulation. His motive apparently was to pave the way for Ribadeneira’s forthcoming and much longer biography, which, in theory, was to provide a single, authoritative interpretation of Ignatius’s life for Jesuits. Earlier, Nadal had praised the “Autobiography” for its accuracy (see McManamon, *Texts and Contexts*, 5-9).

Key Terms

The evangelists used certain words consistently to convey theological points. For John, "signs" denotes the glory of Jesus' miracles. Luke consistently distinguishes between "disciple" and "apostle." For Matthew, "little ones" refers to followers of Jesus, whereas "the nations" refers to Gentile nonbelievers; a consideration that puts a quite different spin on the "Judgment of the Nations" passage (25:31-46) than that which is commonly heard.

Terms are used strategically in the "Autobiography" as well. In a moment we shall see that "persevere" (*perseverar*) and "this life" (*esta vida*) are key to recognizing important themes.

In summary, we will never know what really cured Ignatius of his scruples on that fateful day. But, in these remaining pages, I will make a case for the existence of wider motifs within the "Autobiography," without which the story of the scruples (and other stories, such as Ignatius's encounter with the Moor) cannot be properly understood. I submit that this is more valuable than knowing the historical facts. For if the redactions in the text make it impossible to know precisely what happened in Manresa, then what they take away with one hand they give back with the other. Those same redactions reveal the mind of Ignatius the General, regarding what he most wanted future Jesuits to know.

We will consider three different redactions, all of which pertain to what Ignatius called his "primitive church" period; that is, the interval of time between his spiritual conversion at Loyola and the end of his stay in Manresa. We will see that (1) the scruples were a vehicle for prompting one of three temptations against his vocation, temptations that paralleled Jesus's temptations in Luke; (2) the scruples served as a placeholder for *acedia*, one of the eight classic vices listed by the ascetic writer John Cassian; and (3) the Spanish word *perseverar* is placed deliberately within the text.

II: The Three Temptations

Ignatius's first temptation occurred before he left home. One of his brothers (Ribadeneira later identified him as Martín Loyola), sensing that he wished to make a great change in his life, led him from

room to room, reminded him of his family, future, and noble status, and begged him “not to throw himself away,” or “not to lose himself” (*no se eche a perder*).²⁹ There is no indication that Ignatius hesitated. He simply “slipped away” (*se descabulló*) from his brother.

The narrative bears obvious parallels to the Lucan scene in which Jesus, at the beginning of his mission, is led by the devil from one location to another in an effort to dissuade him (4:1-12), and also to Jesus’ rejection by family and friends at Nazareth, where he “slipped through” the crowds (4:16-30). Later in Luke, Jesus teaches that “whoever loses his life for my sake will save it” (9:24), and that family can be a temptation from full commitment to the mission:

And another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say farewell to my family at home.” [To him] Jesus said, “No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God.” (9:61-62)

To note the Lucan parallels is not to deny the essential facticity of Ignatius’ story. It seems doubtful that Martín, as lord of the castle, would not have said something to his younger brother, who suddenly seemed posed to embarrass the family. And Ignatius, for his part, probably would not have depicted his brother as a tempter for posterity had it not happened. Nevertheless, by means of the scriptural allusion, he insinuated that the ultimate source of his temptation was not Martín, but the Enemy. Shortly we shall see why this is important.

The second temptation occurred about four months after Ignatius arrived in Manresa. A troublesome thought occurred to him: “And how are you going to be able to stand this life the seventy years you’re meant to live?” Once again, Ignatius showed no sign of wavering. Rather, “sensing it was from the enemy,” he responded forcefully in his mind, “You wretch! Can you promise me one hour of life?” With that, he became calm. Ignatius then added, “This was the first temptation that came to him after what has been recounted above.”³⁰

The diabolic activity implicit in the first temptation is now explicit: “sensing it was from the enemy.” But there is a second connection to the demonic also. The voice made itself heard at the same time

²⁹“Auto,” no. 12.

³⁰“Auto,” no. 20.

that Ignatius was having visions of a serpent with many eyes.³¹ He initially took the serpent for a divine consolation, but later he realized that it was from the Enemy.³²

The Enemy's words "this life" (*esta vida*) are significant. For Ignatius and the First Companions, "this life" and "this way of life" were favorite expressions to denote their apostolic vocation.³³ Of the nineteen times that *vida* appears in the "Autobiography," ten refer to Ignatius's way of following Christ (as opposed to the general idea of being alive), and three refer to the lives of Christ and the saints. Diego Hoces, for example, had made up his mind "to follow the pilgrim's life."³⁴ Consequently, when the En-

"You are foolish if you think to live long, since you are not certain to live one day through to the end. How many have been deceived through trusting in a long life who have suddenly been taken out of the world much sooner than they had thought."

emy asked his question, he did not mean, "How can you endure this earthly human existence for another seventy years?" but rather, "How can you endure this new religious vocation for another seventy years?"

Ignatius's second temptation mirrored an anxiety that was prominent in the religious culture of his day. Fickleness of the will had been a recurring theme since the Stoic philosophers, but it received renewed emphasis in the late Middle Ages. Gerard Groote (d. 1384) and García Jiménez de Cisneros (d. 1510), exemplars of the *Devotio Moderna*, often warned that good resolutions would waver. In *The Imitation of Christ*, which Ignatius read at Manresa and which remained a favorite throughout his life, Thomas à Kempis (d. 1471) noted that "the beginning of all evil temptations is inconstancy of mind and too little trust in

³¹ *Ibid.*, nos. 19-20.

³² *Ibid.*, no. 31.

³³ See Joseph Conwell, *Impelling Spirit: Revisiting a Founding Experience (1539): Ignatius Loyola and His Companions* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1997), 291-98.

³⁴ "Auto," no. 92.

God. . . . an unstable man who soon leaves his purpose in God is variously tempted.”³⁵

Hence it is not surprising to find in the *Imitation* something similar to Ignatius’s response to the Enemy:

You are foolish if you think to live long, since you are not certain to live one day through to the end. How many have been deceived through trusting in a long life who have suddenly been taken out of the world much sooner than they had thought.

A certain person who often doubted whether he was in a state of grace once fell prostrate in church and said: What would you do now if you knew that you should persevere? Do now as you would do then and you will be saved.³⁶

This bit of wisdom remained prominent in Ignatius’s thinking. According to da Câmara, he admonished Jesuits with it whenever they ventured to say what they were going to do in the future.

The Father was then very ill, and never accustomed to promising himself a day of life. On the contrary, when someone says, “I’ll do this in two weeks’ time or a week’s time,” the Father always says, as if astounded, “Really? And you expect to live that long?”³⁷

Of special interest in the “Autobiography” is the sentence “This was the first temptation that came to him after what has been recounted above.” It indicates at a minimum that da Câmara was conscious of the manner in which Ignatius’s temptations were being presented; and, possibly by extension, that he did not want the thematic connection to Martín Loyola to go unnoticed.

On that point a few commentators have suggested that “what has been recounted above” was a reference, not to Martín, but rather to Ignatius’s encounter with the Moor who had denied the perpetual vir-

³⁵Thomas á Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, ed. Harold C. Gardiner, S.J. (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 16-17 (bk. 1:13).

³⁶*Ibid.*, 35 (bk. 1:23); 39 (bk. 1:25).

³⁷*Scripta de Sancto Ignacio de Loyola*, 2 vols. (Madrid, 1904-18), 1:207, in Eaglestone, trans., *Remembering Iñigo*, 67.

ginity of Mary.³⁸ At first glance, this would seem to make sense. Given our modern perspective that killing the Moor would have been morally wrong, one might easily suppose that the story was intended to illustrate a temptation to violence or intolerance.

But there is a difficulty here. If Ignatius had intended to convey moral enlightenment of any sort, his blunt acknowledgement that he would have killed the Moor had the mule chosen the road to town would not have served his purpose well, nor would have his admission that, in the end, "he did not know what his duty was." On the contrary, he affirmed that he had given the reins to the mule because he was "tired of analyzing what it would be good to do," a line that presupposed that killing the Moor still remained a viable option in his mind.³⁹

The story of the Moor does not appear in the life written by either Laínez or Polanco. Either the two Jesuits were not familiar with it or chose not to include it; either way, it apparently was not deemed as significant then as it often is today.⁴⁰ Then why is it in the "Autobiography"? Shortly I will propose that, like the scruples, it was meant to serve as segue to one of Cassian's eight vices, in this case, anger.

Ignatius's third temptation was occasioned by his scruples. As noted earlier, the text here is obscure, because of the sentence that he felt "disgust for the life he was leading" with "impulses to cease from it." At first glance, this seems to refer to his suffering; that is, he felt disgust for "his life of scruples" and desired to cease from it. But, interpreted in this way, his cure remains unclear, since earlier he explicitly declared that he had experienced nothing but disgust for the scruples during the entirety of his ordeal. Or again, one might interpret it to

³⁸"Auto," nos. 14-16.

³⁹We must allow Ignatius to be a man of his time. See *Ignatii epistolæ* 3:113-14, 4:353-58, 7:398-404, in *Ignatius of Loyola: Letters and Instructions*, translated by Martin E. Palmer, S.J., edited by John W. Padberg and John L. McCarthy (St. Louis: IJS, 2006), 316-17, 379-84, 499-504.

⁴⁰The anecdote is introduced with a slightly apologetic line: "And on this journey something happened to him which it will be good to have written, so that people can understand how Our Lord used to deal with this soul." Since the same can be said for every anecdote in the "Autobiography," its inclusion here perhaps implies that the story was unfamiliar to early Jesuits. Ribadeneira includes it in his later *Life* (*FontNarr* 4:101), although he might have drawn it directly from the "Autobiography."

mean that Ignatius felt disgust for his earthly life and “desired to cease from it,” that is, to commit suicide. But this too is problematic, since he had ruled out suicide earlier in the story.

Another interpretation is possible when we recall that “the life he was leading” refers to Ignatius’s religious vocation as such; i.e., the decision he made at Castle Loyola to follow Christ without reserve. Throughout the four months of his ordeal, his scruples were provoked

If the Enemy could not convince Ignatius to tempt God by “throwing himself down” in Manresa, he could try the reverse: appeal to Ignatius’s fear of tempting God in order to prevent him from doing something good.

by his desire to make a perfect confession. Since the desire itself seemed holy and proper, the presence of the Enemy is nowhere insinuated. But then Ignatius’s suffering reached the point that, for the first time, the very idea of following Christ filled him with disgust, and he found himself considering

going back to his old life. It was precisely this new development—the “with this” in the story—that caused him to realize that the idea of making a perfect confession was really from the Enemy.⁴¹ He had been deceived under the appearance of good.

When the scruples are seen as a disguised assault on Ignatius’s religious vocation, we find a fascinating parallel with Jesus’ third temptation in Luke. Consider this passage, earlier in the story, when Ignatius was still suffering:

[T]here used to come over him, with great impetus, temptations to throw himself out of a large opening [*echarse de un agujero grande*] which the room he was in had, and which was beside the place where he used to pray. But mindful that it was a sin to kill oneself, he would revert to shouting again, “Lord, I won’t do anything to offend you,” repeating these words, like the first ones, many times.⁴²

⁴¹ Writers who offer a similar interpretation, albeit briefly, are Munitiz and Ender, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 363n.30; Joseph N. Tylenda, ed., *A Pilgrim’s Journey: The Autobiography of Ignatius of Loyola*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2001), 72; Alburquerque, *Diego Lainez*, 112n.21.

⁴² “Auto,” no. 24.

The idea of a hole in Ignatius's room, to say nothing of one large enough to allow one to commit suicide, has long been a puzzle. And besides, how does one throw oneself *from* a hole, which is what the Spanish literally reads? Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle has proposed that the word *agujero* ("hole") was used in place of *aguja*, the latter usually meaning "needle," but also in a secondary sense "steeple" or "pinnacle."⁴³ If this is correct, then Ignatius's temptation was to throw himself from a high place, perhaps a balcony near his room. This in turn would correspond perfectly with Luke's Gospel.

"If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you,' and: 'With their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him in reply, "It also says, 'You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.'" When the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time. (Luke 4:9-13)

Just as Jesus would not "put God to the test"—a sin often described in Christian literature as "tempting God"—so too Ignatius refused to tempt God by throwing himself down.

Just as the Enemy departed from Jesus "for a time," so too did he depart from Ignatius, but only for a time. Later in the "Autobiography," Ignatius conceived a plan to walk barefoot from Paris to Rouen, without eating or drinking, to convince a Spaniard to join his way of life.⁴⁴ As he prayed over it, he was suddenly filled with fear that he was "tempting God" (*tantar a Dios*). He resolved to make the trip anyway, and the fear passed. The next day it returned so strongly that he could barely dress himself. But after he forced himself to walk the first ten miles, the fear left him permanently and he was filled with joy.

A deliberate connection to the earlier temptations seems likely here. If the Enemy could no longer tempt Ignatius out of his vocation, he could at least try to dissuade him from attracting others to his way of life. If the Enemy could not convince Ignatius to tempt God by "throwing himself down" in Manresa, he could try the reverse: appeal

⁴³O'Rourke Boyle, *Loyola's Acts*, 77-78.

⁴⁴"Auto," no. 79.

to Ignatius's fear of tempting God in order to prevent him from doing something good.⁴⁵

Any lingering doubts that Ignatius's three temptations were a deliberate literary device should be put to rest once we recognize some more salient features.

- All three are directed at Ignatius's religious vocation as such: not at a vice, not at a heresy, but at his vocation to follow Christ without reserve. To use Ignatius's terminology and that of his day, it was a temptation to go back on his commitment to "evangelical perfection," for which he had left his family and friends and possessions behind.⁴⁶

- The temptations span the gamut of Ignatius's *past* sins (scruples), *present* familial concerns (Martín Loyola), and *future* perseverance (the troubling voice). In the *Exercises*, Ignatius often juxtaposes past, present, and future for making an election and persevering in it.⁴⁷

- The Enemy is behind all three temptations. This was far more than a dramatic touch or pious platitude. It conveyed a traditional axiom of religious life, to wit, that freely choosing to return to "the world" after dedicating oneself to "evangelical perfection" was objectively mistaken.⁴⁸ We shall return to this point shortly.

- The first two temptations were overt assaults on Ignatius's resolve. In the third temptation, the Enemy disguised himself as an "angel of light" by suggesting that holiness required a perfect confession. Initially deceived by this change of tactics, Ignatius did not recognize the Enemy until he saw where his thoughts were leading, to the the abandonment of his "new life," which is precisely where the first two temptations had been leading.

⁴⁵See *SpEx* 335, 351.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 135.

⁴⁷E.g., *ibid.*, 187, 323.

⁴⁸St. Bernard of Clairvaux wrote thus to an abbot of Saint Nicasius at Rheims: "Let him remember that perseverance alone is always attacked by the devil, because it is the only virtue which has the assurance of being crowned. It will be safer for him simply to persevere in the vocation wherein he is called than to renounce it under the pretext of a life more perfect, at the risk of not being found equal to that which he had the presumption to attempt" (letter 11.3; in *Some Letters of Saint Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux*, translated by Samuel J. Eales, [London, John Hodges, 1904], 49). See also *SpEx* 351.

- The three temptations follow the Rules of Discernment in the *Exercises*. The first points to Rule 1 of the First Week:

With people who go from one mortal sin to another [as the young Ignatius had done], it is the usual practice of the enemy to hold out to them apparent pleasures [Martín's reminder of his future if he stayed with the family]; he makes them imagine sensual satisfactions and gratifications, in order to retain and reinforce them in their vices and sins.⁴⁹

The second temptation corresponds to Rule 2 of the First Week:

In the case of people who are making serious progress in the purification of their sins, and advancing from good to better in the service of God Our Lord [as Ignatius was doing in Manresa], the opposite to Rule 1 takes place, because then it is typical of the bad spirit to harrass, sadden, and obstruct, and to disturb the soul with false reasoning ["How are you going to stand this life for another 70 years?"], so as to impede progress.⁵⁰

The third temptation parallels Rule 4 of the Second Week:

It is characteristic of the bad angel to assume the form of "an angel of light" in order to enter the devoted soul in her own way and to leave with his own profit; i.e., he proposes good and holy thoughts well adapted to such a just soul [such as the need to make a perfect confession], and then little by little succeeds in getting what he wants [Ignatius despairs], drawing the soul into its hidden snares and his perverted purposes.⁵¹

After his cure, Ignatius examined the false reasoning that had led to his scruples. This coincides with Rule 6 of the Second Week:

When the enemy of human nature has been detected and recognized by the evil end to which he leads, his serpent's tail, it is profitable for the person who has been tempted by him to retrace immediately the whole sequence of good thoughts he has

⁴⁹ Ibid., 314.

⁵⁰ SpEx 315.

⁵¹ SpEx 332.

suggested, looking for their starting point, and noting how the enemy contrived little by little to make the soul fall away.⁵²

“From Good to Better”

The interpretation of the cure that I propose here contains a subtle presupposition that must be acknowledged if it is going to hold water. If Ignatius made a connection between his scruples and the work of the Enemy in that the scruples were leading him to give up his new life, then he already had been taking for granted that a return to his old life was *de facto* illegitimate. To put it another way, if returning to his family, friends, and old career (such as it was) had been a legitimate possibility in his eyes, no matter how tenuous, after he had “put his hand to the plow,” then his recognition of this desire in himself would not have been, by itself, grounds for calling it a temptation. It would have been time for discernment.

As presented in the “Autobiography,” the temptation that Ignatius perceived was not to return to a life of sin *per se*—his philandering, fighting, and so on—but rather to a way of life that was, while good in itself, not equal to the pursuit of “evangelical perfection” and “the greater glory of God” as he understood them. Recall that when Ignatius beheld the Madonna and Child in his sickbed, he was left “sickened at his whole past life, and especially at matters of the flesh,” implying that any willful consent to offend God through sin was no longer an option for him.⁵³ For the rest of his story, then, it was always a question of recognizing subtle and disguised temptations against the better way that he had chosen. Martín did not lure Ignatius with sinful enticements but with the legitimate goods of familial duties. The “troubling voice” confronted him with the rigors of his new life, not with the sins of the old. The third temptation should be read in kind.

⁵²SpEx 334.

⁵³“Auto,” no. 10. My assertion that, at this point in the “Autobiography,” Ignatius had resolved to avoid all deliberate sin, mortal and venial, finds support in the “Three Kinds of Humility” (*SpEx* 165-67). Ignatius clearly had chosen the Third Kind by the time he left Castle Loyola, implying that a decision to avoid mortal and venial sins (the First and Second Kinds) had already been made at some point during his recuperation. Again, to be clear, what I am suggesting here is not what happened at Castle Loyola in historical fact, but rather how the “Autobiography” was meant to be read in light of the *Exercises*.

Ignatius distinguished between "not sinning" and the more advanced principle of "not going back to a lesser good" in a letter to Sr. Teresa Rejadell in 1536. His words suggest that he was drawing from his experiences at Manresa.

In two ways the Enemy is making you upset, but not so that he makes you fall into *the guilt of a sin separating you from your God and Lord*, but rather he makes you upset in the sense of separating you *from His greater service and your greater tranquility*. . . .

[T]he general procedure of the enemy with those who love God Our Lord and are beginning to serve Him is to bring in hindrances and obstacles. . . . Thus, "How are you going to live your whole life in such great penance, deprived of *relatives, friends and possessions*, in such a lonely life, without even some slight respite? *You can be saved in other ways without such great risks.*"⁵⁴

The distinction also appears in the Rules for Discernment, where Ignatius affirmed that the work of the Enemy is recognized when the course of one's thoughts leads one to do something "bad, or distracting, or less good [*menos buena*] than what one had previously intended to do."⁵⁵ Here, the "less good" clause is integral to the overall dynamic of the *Exercises*, which (it goes without saying) is intended to cultivate desires more profound than simply avoiding sin. Exercitants are encouraged to desire the ever greater, to go "from good to better" (*de bien en mejor*) in the divine service.⁵⁶

⁵⁴Munitiz, *Ignatius Loyola*, 130 (emphases added).

⁵⁵*SpEx* 333; see also 357. The injunction not to go back to a lesser good was a chestnut of the ancient and medieval church. The biblical proof text was 1 Tim. 5:11-12, which Ignatius was citing to his followers as early as Alcalá (*Ignatius epistolæ* 12:676; in Palmer, trans., *Letters*, 56). Another common formulation was "not to return to the fleshpots of Egypt" (Exod. 16:3); it appears in the writings of Church Fathers, Ignatius, and early Jesuits. Wrote Pierre Favre: "There are certain universal principles conducting to perfection which you ought to commit to memory. . . . Do not go, or even look, backwards. Advance and grow daily toward what lies ahead" (*The Spiritual Writings of Pierre Favre: The "Memoriale" and Selected Letters and Instructions*, translated by Edmond C. Murphy, S.J., and Martin E. Palmer, S.J. [St. Louis: IJS, 1996], 328-29); see also p. 367.

⁵⁶*SpEx* 331, 335. In the *Exercises*, Ignatius juxtaposes for consideration ways of responding to God that vary in profundity: "Spiritual poverty" with "actual poverty" (91-97, 146-47, 157), "Fidelity to the Commandments" with "Evangelical Perfection"

For this reason, going “from better to lesser” in the divine service was a direction opposed to the dynamic of the *Exercises* no less than overt sin itself.⁵⁷ If that conclusion seems overstated, consider Ignatius’s letter to Pedro Ortiz, a papal ambassador who wished to bequeath a benefice to a Jesuit. In principle there was nothing sinful about benefices; though often abused, they were a standard means of clerical support. Nonetheless, Ignatius believed it contrary to the Jesuit way of proceeding, and declined the offer. Ortiz, who had recently made the Exercises, continued to press the matter. Ignatius then sent another reply, this time quite blunt:

[Jesuits] would not dare to turn back from a more perfect to a less perfect manner of proceeding. Rather, it is our fervent wish that for his own greater service and praise, God our Lord would take us from this life rather than let us set such an example for those who are to come.⁵⁸

Needless to say, the notion of “good” and “better” states of life irritates many Catholics’ postconciliar sensibilities. I venture to raise the subject here, at the risk of distracting readers with a loaded topic, because it is necessary to secure the interpretation of Ignatius’s cure that I am proposing. Ranking various forms of Christian life was a conventional means of theological reflection in the ancient and medieval church: contemplation vs. action, cenobiticism vs. eremitism, marriage vs. celibacy, laity vs. religious, and even religious life vs. the episcopa-

(135), marriage with religious life (356), the “Three Classes of Persons” (153-55), and “Three Degrees of Humility” (165-68). Less explicit but also present is the juxtaposition of fear, obligation, and gratitude as three legitimate but unequally ideal motives for choosing what is right (96-97, 370); see also the “Spiritual Diary” under date March 30, in Munitiz, trans., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 103.

⁵⁷ “From good to better” appears repeatedly in early Jesuit texts, e.g., *Ignatii epistolæ* 1:110, 166, 353; 2:260; 12:645; *Epistolæ mixtæ ex varii Europæ loci ab anno 1537 ad 1556 scriptæ* (hereafter *EppMixtæ*), 5 vols. (Madrid 1898-1901), 1:269, 289; *Epistolæ P. Hieronymi Nadal* (hereafter *Nadal*), 4 vols. (Madrid: 1898-1905), 1:112, 239, 255. Xavier wrote on his ballot electing Ignatius the first superior general, “[Ignatius] will be able to preserve, govern, and cause us to advance from good to better, since he has a greater knowledge of each one of us than anyone else” (M. Joseph Costelloe, S.J., trans., *The Letters and Instructions of Francis Xavier* (St. Louis: IJS, 1992), 10).

⁵⁸ *Ignatii epistolæ* 1:355, in Palmer, trans., *Letters*, 127.

cy.⁵⁹ Whatever one thinks of that approach today, we cannot ignore it if we wish to read the "Autobiography" as Ignatius intended.⁶⁰

III. How Cassian Cured Ignatius's Scruples

A single word in the third temptation is a key that unlocks a whole new motif: "With this, the Lord willed that he woke up as if from sleep."⁶¹ Here "sleep" was a metaphor for acedia, an insidious vice detailed by Cassian.⁶² If a monk did not resist it, the usual result was the abandonment of his religious vocation.

John Cassian (ca. 360-435) was the well-educated son of wealthy parents. He spent years in Palestine and North Africa studying the collective wisdom of hermits and cenobites before being asked by Bishop Castor of Apt to build monasteries in Gaul based upon Eastern doctrine and practice. To that end, he wrote two books that became standard reading for religious for over a thousand years, even being recommended explicitly in the Rule of St. Benedict.⁶³ The *Institutes* contain four chapters on the externals of monastic life and eight chap-

⁵⁹St. Thomas Aquinas examines all these pairs in *Summa theologiae* II.II., Q.184-88.

⁶⁰Ignatius did not escape heat in his own day for affirming that the Society was dedicated to the *greater* glory of God (Barton T. Geger, "What Magis Really Means and Why It Matters," in Regis University's online journal, *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal* [Summer 2012], 1/2: 16-31; <http://jesuithighereducation.org>).

⁶¹"Auto," no. 25

⁶²On acedia, see Cassian, *Institutes*, 10 and *Conferences*, 5, as translated in *John Cassian: The Institutes*, edited by Boniface Ramsey, Ancient Christian Writers Series (New York: Newman Press, 2000), 217-38, and *John Cassian: The Conferences* (1997), 181-206. All following translations of Cassian are Ramsey's. For recent treatments of acedia, see Mary Margaret Funk, *Thoughts Matter: The Practice of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Continuum, 1998); and Kathleen Norris, *Acedia and Me: A Marriage, Monks, and a Writer's Life* (London: Penguin Books, 2008).

⁶³Cassian, an early writer on the discernment of spirits, exerted a great influence on Ignatius. Lawrence S. Cunningham rightly noted that Ignatian discernment is "hardly intelligible" without the former ("Cassian's Hero and Discernment," in *Finding God in All Things: Essays in Honor of Michael J. Buckley*, edited by Michael J. Himes and Stephen J. Pope [New York: Crossroads, 1996], 231); see also Santiago Arzubialde, "Casiano e Ignacio. Continuidad y ruptura," in *Las Fuentes de los Ejercicios Espirituales de San Ignacio*, edited by Juan Plazaola (Bilbao: Mensajero, 1998), 123-86. Ignatius and Polanco cited Cassian in letters (*Ignatii epistolæ* 2:59, 61; 4:676; 12:651), and Ignatius borrowed his description of chastity for the *Constitutions*: "For by no virtue do fleshly hu-

ters on vices that typically challenge monks. In the *Conferences*, Cassian recounts his visits to venerated hermits and the lessons that he learned from them.

For Cassian the ultimate goal of monastic life was mystical contemplation. To achieve that goal, a monk had to attain “purity of heart” (*puritas cordis*), meaning the absence of disordered thoughts and desires. Purity of heart was attained through prayer, asceticism, perseverance, and careful attention to thoughts and feelings as one remained in one’s cell.

Cassian’s most famous contribution to Christian patrimony is his list of eight vices—or, more accurately, “harmful thoughts”—that hinder the quest for contemplation. (Pope Gregory the Great later reduced them to the “Seven Deadly Sins” that we know today.) Monks generally experienced them in the same order, starting with baser ones for beginners and proceeding to more subtle ones for the advanced.

1. *Gluttony*: not usually gross overeating, but casual indulgence with food and drink and a desire for refined dishes
2. *Fornication*: unchastity in thought and deed
3. *Avarice*: desire for material possessions and refined comforts
4. *Anger*: typically manifested as impatience and judgmentalism toward others
5. *Sadness*: mulling and sighing over what one has sacrificed for the sake of one’s religious vocation, such as, a spouse and family and a home of one’s own
6. *Acedia*: listlessness in one’s vocation accompanied by rationalizations to adopt a different form of life
7. *Vainglory*: desire to be esteemed highly by others
8. *Pride*: high esteem of oneself

Cassian, who wrote in Latin, borrowed the Greek word *acedia* from his mentor Evagrius Ponticus to denote the “anxiety” (*anxietas*) and “disgust of the heart” (*tædium cordis*) that monks could feel toward their vocation. The previous vice, sadness, was introspective insofar as monks were dwelling on what they lacked. But when they grew tired

man beings so nearly approximate and imitate the way of life of the angelic spirits as by the deserts and grace of chastity” (*Cons.* 547; *Institutes*, 6:6).

of their sadness, instead of admitting that the problem lay in their own attitude, they redirected the blame toward the place where they were. They could find peace, they reasoned, only if they left their cells to do works of charity, or if they moved elsewhere to escape the bad influence of other monks, or if they went into town to preach to the wayward and lost. And how could leaving their cells be wrong? After all, one does not have to sit in a cell in order to serve God.

In this sense, rationalizations were characteristic of acedia. According to Evagrius,

[Acedia] instils in him a dislike for the place and for his state of life itself, for manual labor, and also the idea that love has disappeared from among the brothers and there is no one to console him. And should there be someone during those days who has offended the monk, this too the demon uses to add further to his dislike [of the place]. He leads him on to a desire for other places where he can easily find the wherewithal to meet his needs and pursue a trade that is easier and more productive; he adds that pleasing the Lord is not a question of being in a particular place: for scripture says that the divinity can be worshipped everywhere.⁶⁴ (cf. John 4:21-4)

The only way to conquer acedia was with patient perseverance. Without it, acedia typically ended in one of two ways: a monk abandoned his vocation altogether or, barring that, he fell into a kind of "sleep" (*somnus*) of lethargy and despair.⁶⁵ On the "sleep," Cassian wrote:

In one verse blessed David beautifully expressed all the misfortunes of this disease, when he said: "My soul slept from weariness"—that is, from acedia. Quite correctly did he say that not the body but the soul slept. For, indeed, the soul that has been wounded by the weapon of this disturbance is asleep with regard to any contemplation of virtue and any insight provided by the spiritual senses.⁶⁶

⁶⁴Evagrius Ponticus, *Practicus* 12.5, in *Evagrius of Pontus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus*, translated by Robert Sinkewicz (Oxford University Press, 2003), 99.

⁶⁵*Institutes*, 10:3-6.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 10:4. On the reference to David, see Ps. 119:28.

We are now in a better position to understand the story of Ignatius's scruples. During the interval of time between his conversion and his departure from Manresa, he squared off against all eight of Cassian's vices, and in the very same order! The one exception is "gluttony," which was moved from first place to fourth.

1. *Fornication*: At Castle Loyola, Ignatius's vision of the Madonna and Child leaves him "sickened at his whole past life, and especially at matters of the flesh." Afterward, "he never again had even the slightest complicity in matters of the flesh."⁶⁷

2. *Avarice*: Ignatius paid his debts, donated his remaining money to the repair of a shrine, dismissed his servants, shed his fine clothes, and assumed the garb of a beggar.⁶⁸

3. *Anger*: Ignatius felt anger (*indignación*) at the Moor, and for a long time he was "persevering in the battle against those desires" to stab him (*perseverando mucho en el combate destos deseos*).⁶⁹ The story is prefaced with an acknowledgement that Ignatius lacked discretion and balance in the virtues and that he was still blind.⁷⁰ Likewise, in the *Institutes* Cassian wrote that anger "blinds our mind's eye with its harmful darkness," and under its influence, "we shall be able neither to acquire the judgement of a proper discretion nor to possess a good contemplative vision or a mature counsel."⁷¹

4. *Gluttony*: Ignatius fasted and abstained after arriving in Manresa.⁷²

5. *Sadness*: Ignatius noted "sadness and desolation" (*tristeza y desolación*) that came upon him and then disappeared again, suddenly and without warning.⁷³ For Cassian, a characteristic of sadness (*tristitia*) was its tendency to come and go suddenly; and a principal cause was failing to attain the spiritual perfection to which one had aspired

⁶⁷ "Auto," no. 10.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, nos. 13, 16.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 15 (translation mine).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 14.

⁷¹ *Institutes*, 8:1.

⁷² "Auto," no. 19. Perhaps "gluttony" was moved to fourth to link it more clearly to no. 27 below.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, no. 21.

(just as Ignatius had failed to attain perfection through a flawless confession).⁷⁴ At an extreme, Cassian implied, sadness could lead to thoughts of suicide.⁷⁵

6. *Acedia*: After Ignatius rejected suicide, he felt "disgust" (*disgusto*) for his new life, a nod to Cassian's "disgust of the heart."⁷⁶ He then considered quitting, a "sleep" (*sueño*) from which he quickly awoke.⁷⁷

After Ignatius left Manresa, we find no indication in the "Autobiography" that he ever again struggled to persevere.

7. *Vainglory*: After his mystical experiences at Manresa, Ignatius was troubled by thoughts that he was a just man. He instructed his female devotees to call him a sinner who had offended God.⁷⁸ (Women, we should recall, seem to have thought especially highly of Ignatius.) In the same vein, Cassian wrote that vainglory tempts monks after they overcome the first six vices or after they receive gifts such as visions.⁷⁹

8. *Pride*: Ignatius felt "great confusion and pain" (*grande confusión y dolor*) upon thinking that he had not used God's gifts well.⁸⁰ Likewise, Cassian had described pride as the temptation to believe that one had attained contemplation through one's own gifts and efforts.⁸¹

⁷⁴*Institutes*, 11:1,4.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 9:9.

⁷⁶"Auto," no. 25. Favre wrote of acedia that a person "despairs of success and is driven, full of disgust and sadness, to take refuge in flight. Further, he is easily deceived, is ready to judge whatever happens as for the worst, and quickly becomes filled with suspicion" (*Spiritual Writings*, 169).

⁷⁷St. Teresa used the metaphor of "waking from sleep" when relating the reform of an unchaste priest who had been vacillating in his vocation ("The Book of Her Life," bk. 5.6, as translated in *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, 3 vols., edited by Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, 2nd ed. rev. [Washington, D.C.: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1985-87], 1:73).

⁷⁸"Auto," no. 32.

⁷⁹*Institutes*, 4:2, 4, 6. That the "vainglory" and "pride" anecdotes were inserted into the text to complete the list of vices is supported by their introductions: "Once when he was ill at Manresa . . ." and "Another time . . ." ("Auto," nos. 32, 33). Until that point, the "Autobiography" generally had implied a linear sequence of events.

⁸⁰"Auto," no. 33 (translation mine).

⁸¹*Institutes*, 12:13-16.

After Ignatius had overcome all eight vices, the thought of death filled him with great joy, so that he was filled with tears.⁸² This happened so frequently that he had to refrain from thinking about death. He had attained the ideal described by Cassian, of one who, having passed through the eight vices and the temptations presented by past, present, and future things, attains a living union with the mysteries of the life to come.

And just as he who is fixed to the gibbet of the cross no longer contemplates *present* realities or reflects on his own affections; is not distracted by worry or care for the *morrow*; is not stirred up by the desire for possessions; is not inflamed by pride or wrangling or envy; does not sorrow over *present* slights and no longer remembers those of the *past*; and, although he may still be breathing in his body, *believes himself dead in every respect and directs on ahead to the gaze of his heart to the place where he is sure that he will go*; so it behooves us all [to do the same].⁸³

IV. Theological Vocabulary

It is difficult to believe that more redactions could be packed into Ignatius's "primitive church" period. But there are. The Spanish *perseverar* ("to persevere") appears seven times in the "Autobiography." All seven appear within the same span where Ignatius faces the three temptations and eight vices. And what is even more remarkable, all seven refer to good practices that he was doing on behalf of his vocation!

- Ignatius was "persevering in his reading and his good intentions."⁸⁴
- He "persevered for a long time in his battle against those [angry] desires."⁸⁵

⁸² "Auto," no. 33.

⁸³ *Institutes* 4:35 (emphases added).

⁸⁴ "Auto," no. 11.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 15 (translation mine).

- He "always had been persevering in almost the same interior state with great consistency of happiness."⁸⁶
- He was "always persevering in his normal confessions and communions."⁸⁷
- He was "persevering in his eight hours of prayer on his knees."⁸⁸
- He "persevered all week without putting a thing into his mouth."⁸⁹
- He was "persevering in his abstinence from meat."⁹⁰

This pattern certainly seems deliberate. After Ignatius left Manresa, we find no indication in the "Autobiography" that he ever again struggled to persevere. This mirrors another principle of Cassian, who affirmed that, once a monk had learned discernment and overcome the eight trials, temptations to quit the monastic life would cease to be a problem. And as if to reinforce that point, the word *perseverar*, with one qualified exception, does not appear again in the rest of the "Autobiography."⁹¹

One use of that verb is more profound than appears at first glance: the one where Ignatius was "persevering in almost the same interior state with great consistency of happiness." From a modern perspective, possession of the same emotional state does not seem like something that would be under a person's free control. But for Ignatius and his contemporaries, it most certainly was.

Implicit here is a principle with deep roots in Christian theology, although it originated even earlier with the Stoic philosophers.⁹² The

⁸⁶ Ibid., no. 20.

⁸⁷ "Auto," no. 21 (translation mine).

⁸⁸ Ibid., no. 23 (translation mine).

⁸⁹ Ibid., no. 25 (translation mine).

⁹⁰ Ibid., no. 27 (translation mine).

⁹¹ The Italian *perseverare* does appear once, in the aforementioned story of Ignatius walking barefoot eighty-four miles to win a young man to his way of life. The fear of doing so "persevered" with Ignatius constantly ("Auto," no. 79). This is the only instance when perseverance is said of someone or something other than Ignatius. Is it coincidence that it appears in the same story in which Ignatius was put in the position of tempting God, but this time it involved someone *else's* vocation?

⁹² See Horace, *Satires* 2.7.28-29; Seneca, "To Helvia, On Consolation" 12:3.4, Letter 28; Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* 3:1060-1067.

basic idea is that happiness or, more accurately, tranquility is a choice that one makes. The contrary notion that one is condemned to be restless or despondent unless he possesses a particular lover or vocation or material item is a self-deception, since it means that he is putting the requirements for his personal fulfillment in contingent realities outside his control.

St. Paul alluded to this principle in several of his letters, even using Stoic terminology in the process.⁹³ It was a favorite theme of the desert fathers and mothers, as is only to be expected, since a lonely, restless hermit easily persuaded himself that he could serve God more effectively “over there” in town, or even “over *there*,” a little closer to other hermits, instead of “right here” in his cell.⁹⁴ Cassian called this rationalization the *horror loci*, meaning “fear of the place,” and, as we noted earlier, it was considered common during bouts of acedia. Cassian wrote the following:

[A monk] makes a great deal of far-off and distant monasteries, describing such places as more suited to progress and more conducive to salvation, and also depicting the fellowship of the brothers there as pleasant and of an utterly spiritual cast. Everything that lies at hand, on the contrary, is harsh, and not only is there nothing edifying among the brothers who dwell there but in fact there are not even any of the necessities of life to be obtained there without a huge effort. Therefore he says that he cannot be saved if he remains in that place. He must leave his cell and get away from it as quickly as he can, for he will perish if he stays in it any longer.⁹⁵

Two centuries later, St. Gregory the Great wrote these lines:

Many times when we complain about the lives of those around us, we become greatly determined to change our place, to find a

⁹³See 1 Cor. 7:37 and Phil. 4:11-12. In the latter, Paul’s words are similar to those of Philo of Alexandria, a Jewish philosopher influenced by Stoic thought (“Every Good Man Is Free,” nos. 59-61).

⁹⁴E.g., “Adam, even though he was in Paradise, disobeyed God’s command while Job, who was living on a dung hill, kept it” (Benedicta Ward, trans., *The Desert Fathers: Sayings of the Early Christian Monks* [London: Penguin Books, 2003], 129).

⁹⁵*Institutes*, 10:2.

secret and retired life, quite ignorant of the fact that, if the spirit is lacking, the place is of no avail. For the same Lot of whom we spoke earlier managed to preserve himself saintly in Sodom, but he sinned on the mountain [Gen. 19: 2, 30]. That places do not preserve our souls is attested also by the first father of the human race, who sinned in Paradise itself. But to speak of earthly places is only to touch upon the truth, for if places were able to save us at all, Satan would not have fallen from Heaven.⁹⁶

Then nine hundred years later, Ignatius wrote as follows to Bartholomew Romano, a Jesuit scholastic at the college in Ferrara:

You are much mistaken in thinking that the cause of your unrest, or lack of progress in the Lord, is the place where you are or your superiors or your brethren. It comes from inside, not from without: from your lack of humility, lack of obedience, lack of prayer—in a word, from your lack of mortification, and fervor in advancing along the way of perfection. You can change residence, superiors, and brethren; but unless you change your interior person, you will never do well. . . . Give up the thought of any external change: you will either be good there in Ferrara or in none of the colleges.⁹⁷

V. Conclusion

A remarkable amount of theology lies just beneath the surface of the "Autobiography." Is this relevant for us today, beyond helping us to interpret a few obscure passages?

⁹⁶Gregory the Great, *Homilies on Ezekiel* 1:9.22 (translation mine).

⁹⁷*Ignatii epistolæ* 8:328-29, in Palmer, trans., *Letters*, 535-36. See also *Cons.*, no. 259. In the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (no. 91), Pope Francis appealed to the same principle, citing a Latin adage from Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*: "One important challenge is to show that the solution will never be found in fleeing from a personal and committed relationship with God which at the same time commits us to serving others. This happens frequently nowadays, as believers seek to hide or keep apart from others, or quietly flit from one place to another or from one task to another, without creating deep and stable bonds. 'Imaginatio locorum et mutatio multos fefellit'" (Dreaming of many different places and moving from one to another has misled many).

In its final form, the “Autobiography” is anything but a string of anecdotes that Ignatius just happened to remember when speaking to da Câmara. It was written to preserve and increase a body of men whom Ignatius had created through great sacrifice and suffering. It was written to shape new Jesuits in his deepest values. It was written when large numbers of men were leaving the Society, motivated by doubts about his “way of life.” It was written when theologians were calling Ignatius a fraud and the Society the antichrist for promoting “heretical” ideas about prayer and religious life. Indeed, in retrospect, it seems obvious that da Câmara (and possibly other editors) of the “Autobiography” would have prepared its content quite carefully.

We can take that a step further. If the “Autobiography” is a more deliberate work than we recognized in the past, it stands to reason that studying it with that in mind has the potential to bear much fruit for our understanding of the *Exercises* and Ignatius’s spirituality. Such study would include its vocabulary, its underlying theological and hagiographical motifs, its allusions to the desert and medieval spiritual traditions, and perhaps even a “form critical” analysis of the text alongside the lives written by Laínez and Polanco and Ribadeneira.

Certainly we miss the forest for the trees when we focus on individual stories to the neglect of wider themes. A case in point is perseverance in a Jesuit vocation. All three redactions that we examined focus on it, and therefore one might reasonably conclude that it is the pilgrim’s principal message to Jesuits in the first third of the “Autobiography.” And should anyone harbor suspicions that this was really da Câmara’s concern as opposed to Ignatius’s, one need only examine the Constitutions to find the same concern running throughout. Is it fair to say that this is an important element of Ignatius’s spirituality that has been all but overlooked?

Another “forest” is the identification of, and vigilance against, disordered thoughts and temptations. Someone once observed that, in the ancient and medieval church, “knowing God’s will was easy, doing it was hard,” whereas today, “knowing God’s will is hard, doing it is easy.” There is much truth here. Today, spiritual writers can expend considerable ink teaching people how to discern the right thing to do, under the apparent presumption that, once they discern it, actually doing it will follow as a matter of course. (Personally, I find this striking. I think my own problems are less often a lack of clarity than a lack

of courage.) But the three redactions of the "Autobiography" that we have considered all indicate that Ignatius considered the "interior battle" an indispensable correlate of discernment and advancement in the spiritual life. He was rather explicit about that in the *Exercises* as well, starting from the first annotation.

One motif in the "Autobiography" that already receives much attention is that of Ignatius learning from experience. That this is a principal theme of the text is beyond question. In light of it, Ignatius called himself "the pilgrim" and, in light of it as well, he was repeatedly investigated by inquisitors who suspected him of being a closet Illuminato.

Our attention to this motif is wholly justified, as it providentially serves the Jesuit mission to form "contemplatives in action" who find God everywhere in their

One thing is certain. If the pilgrim communicates anything to Jesuits in the "Autobiography," it is that we cannot appreciate the richness of his spirituality—much less teach it to our friends and colleagues with lasting substance—without looking over his shoulder.

daily lives, especially through the Examen. But it is also misleading when, as sometimes happens, one implies that Ignatius learned most of his wisdom from scratch.⁹⁸ Acknowledgements of his debt to the tradition of the preceding fifteen hundred years are relatively rare. Still rarer are admissions of the specifically Catholic worldview that his values presupposed. How often do we hear that the Rules for Discernment were truisms dating to the ancient church? Or that finding God in all things, inculturation, and laboring with Christ have no basis apart from Catholic convictions about the intrinsic goodness of fallen humanity, co-redemption, and grace building on nature?

⁹⁸Even the idea that God teaches through experience was a trope of the desert tradition. Athanasius wrote in his *Life of St. Antony*, "He possessed this spiritual favor as well. When he sat alone on the mountain, if it ever happened that he was puzzled, seeking some solution for himself, this was revealed to him by Providence as he prayed. He was the blessed one becoming, as it is written, *taught by God*" (Robert C. Gregg, trans. [San Francisco: HarperCollins, 198], 59).

“Experience” can mean many things. One is personal appropriation of an idea that was already known at an intellectual or abstract level. As the Samaritans said to the woman at the well, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves” (John 4:42). When Ignatius wrote the second annotation of the *Exercises*, I suspect that he had something like this in mind. Specifically, he was remembering Manresa: all those whom he sought for advice, all the traditional wisdom that he had heard from them, and recalled how he prized that wisdom only after reflecting on it in light of his own experience. After all, which is more likely: That Ignatius’s response to the “troubling voice” was something that he conceived on his own, and that it just so happened to mirror what was written in *The Imitation of Christ* and countless other books before that? Or rather, that his mentors at Manresa had taught him this classic riposte to a classic temptation any number of times, but he understood its real value only after he heard his own troubling voice?

One thing is certain. If the pilgrim communicates anything to Jesuits in the “Autobiography,” it is that we cannot appreciate the richness of his spirituality—much less teach it to our friends and colleagues with lasting substance—without looking over his shoulder.

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