



www.BereanBeacon.org
Proclaiming the Good News of Salvation; The Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Key to Pope Francis's Identity:

Master of the Jesuit Spiritual exercises, April 10, 2014

On the first anniversary of Pope Francis's election to the papal chair, we thought it fitting to see what the Jesuits think of Francis's work so far. Appropriately, James Martin, S.J., editor-at-large of the prestigious Jesuit magazine *America*, was featured in a brief online video entitled, "Pope Francis: Still a Jesuit."¹ The video is subtitled "A look at the pope's Jesuit identity."

Martin notes that Francis had been the novice director of the Argentine province of the Jesuit Order. To have attained this position, Francis had to be thoroughly knowledgeable regarding the text of Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*.² Martin's estimation is that, indeed, Francis's Jesuit identity has in fact had a very great influence on his actions as pope. If we are to gain any useful insight into the unique character, interests, and intentions of this new pontiff, it is imperative that we appreciate the forces that have molded his mind and life. Only when we have done this will it become blindingly clear why *this man* was the perfect Vatican choice.

Francis I has already demonstrated considerable personal ability to sway multitudes of wavering Catholics in diverting them from contemplating the depressing spectacle of a corrupt and depraved ecclesiastical institution. Though the road has been beset with embarrassments, setbacks, and obstacles, Francis is effectively brushing past the real causes and consequences of the terrible moral crisis of Romanism and resettling the minds of the faithful. They have become enthusiastic spectators of a masterful theatrical presentation of "authentic" old-style spirituality. For example, it can be seen from the moment of his first appearance on the balcony after his election when he sincerely implored the population of St. Peter's Square to "pray for him," to his ongoing practice of embracing the untouchable and the unclean, washing the feet of ordinaries and enemies. Thus has Francis consistently created an atmosphere in which despairing and disillusioned Catholics around the world are now ready both to hear him, and more importantly, to be *led by him*. His determined mission to rescue the "church" using forms and techniques of Jesuit mystical spirituality is bearing remarkable fruit. It is a startling contemporary testimony to the enduring power of the Ignatian way to disarm its victims and draw them into willing submission.

Historical Context Underlying the *Spiritual Exercises*

The goal of Eastern meditation is to unite oneself directly with God. In the 12th and 13th centuries in Europe, there arose a great interest in Eastern mysticism even as the Papacy pounded out a tool by which to secure the controlling share of civil power in the Holy Roman Empire. During the earlier centuries, true evangelists had done much to evangelize Europe and the British Isles with the Gospel.³ But by the twelfth century, the Papacy was strong enough to instigate the Inquisition which through the civil state tortured and murdered those who refused to bow to its religious dictates. Rather than promoting the Gospel among the many pagans who lived within the Holy Roman Empire, the Papacy was busy coercing all of them - Christian, Jew, and pagan alike - into a religious system that would guarantee to itself the reins of civil power necessary to become its dominant ruler. The Papacy had never embraced the true Gospel and thus was easily able to assimilate to itself the pagan practices it encountered within the borders of the Holy Roman Empire. These pagan practices the Roman church whitewashed with an external form of Christianity. Without true spirituality based on the Gospel and the Bible, the Papal Church became the perfect place for an Eastern Alexandrian Egyptian mysticism to flourish.

Fleeing the aggressive push of Mohammedanism against the remnants of the collapsing Eastern Orthodox oriented empire, anchorite monks, together with hordes of other pseudo-spiritual clerical sects, heavily influenced by platonic idealism and mystic disciplines, emigrated to the safer western regions. It was this rapid infusion of new forms and practices, based on a philosophically flavored and psychologically manufactured religious experience, that influenced western monks to explore new areas of the contemplative life and pseudo-Christian piety. Consequently, in the 13th century, mystical elements emerged among new orders of monks such as the Franciscans of Saint Francis and the Dominicans of Saint Dominic.

Providentially, however, in the early 16th century Luther's rediscovery of the Gospel - that on the authority of the Scripture alone, justification is by God's grace alone, received by faith alone, in Christ alone, and to God alone be the glory - began and continued to spread like wild fire across all Europe. But it was not until the middle of the 16th century that mystics such as Ignatius of Loyola, Teresa of Avila, and John of the Cross were able to develop a systematized mysticism in their writings.

Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* is typical of the [mystical](#) movement in Roman Catholicism, but its genius is that it is an attempt, mainly through the imagination, to directly connect the thoughts and actions of an individual with what was called the grace of God. Thus did these well-known sixteenth century propagators of mysticism lay out steps by which a person was purportedly to achieve direct personal union with the divine.

A Summary Look at the *Spiritual Exercises*

J. A. Wylie's summary of the *Spiritual Exercises* is that it is a clever imitation of what biblically is called conversion.⁴ Wylie explains,

To foster the growth of this infant Hercules [the Jesuit order], Loyola had prepared beforehand his book entitled *Spiritual Exercises*. This is a body of rules for teaching men how to conduct the work of their 'conversion.' It consists of four grand meditations, and the penitent, retiring into solitude, is to occupy absorbingly his mind on each in succession, during the space of the rising and setting of seven suns. It may be fitly styled a journey from the gates of destruction to the gates of Paradise, mapped out in stages so that it might be gone in the short period of four weeks... It combines the self-denial and mortification of the Brahmin with the asceticism of the anchorite, and the ecstasies of the schoolmen. It professes, like the Koran, to be a revelation. 'The Book of Exercises,' says a Jesuit, 'was truly written by the finger of God, and delivered to Ignatius by the Holy Mother of God.' The *Spiritual Exercises*... was a body of rules by following which one could effect upon himself that great change which in Biblical and theological language is termed 'conversion.'... This Divine transformation was at that hour taking place in thousands of instances in the Protestant world. Loyola, like the magicians of old who strove to rival Moses, wrought with his enchantments to produce the same miracle.⁵

History of Loyola Submitting to Pope Paul III

Wylie gives an account of Loyola submitting himself and his men to the Pope Paul in Rome,

The war in which Loyola and his nine companions enrolled themselves when on the 15th of August, 1534, they made their vow in the church of Montmarte was to be waged against the Saracens of the East... [However, t]he war which had just broken out between the Republic and the Porte had closed the gates of Asia. They took this as an intimation that the field of their operations was to be in the Western world. Returning on their path they now directed their steps towards Rome. In every town through which they passed on their way to the Eternal City, they left behind them an immense reputation for sanctity by their labors in the hospitals, and their earnest addresses to the populace on the streets. As they drew nigh to Rome, and the hearts of some of his companions were beginning to despond, Loyola was cheered by a vision, in which Christ appeared and said to him, 'In Rome will I be gracious unto thee.' The hopes this vision inspired were not to be disappointed. Entering the gates of the capital of Christendom, and throwing themselves at the feet of Paul III, they met a most gracious reception. The Pope hailed their offer of assistance as most opportune. Mighty dangers at that hour threatened the Papacy, and with the half of Europe in revolt, and the old monkish orders become incapable, this new and unexpected aid seemed sent by Heaven. The rules and constitution of the new order were drafted, and ultimately approved, by the Pope. Two peculiarities in the constitution of the proposed order specially recommended it in the eyes of Paul III. The first was its vow of unconditional obedience. The society swore to obey the Pope as an army obeys its general. It was not canonical but military obedience which its members offered him. They would go to whatsoever place, at whatsoever time, and on whatsoever errand he should be pleased to order them. They were, in short, to be not so much monks as soldiers.⁶

Pope Francis has been thoroughly indoctrinated into Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* and his militant attitude. Now as pope, he comes on to the world stage, so versed in the *Spiritual Exercises*, so able to spread the knowledge and practice of this counterfeit way of conversion - a way that has nothing whatsoever to do with the Bible and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And this brings us to the fact that the spirit of the Ignatian training is not only mystical but also ethical.

Spiritual Exercises Demonstrated Ethically

There are several ways that Pope Francis manifests his Ignatian training, as for example, in his preaching. Rather than preaching the Gospel or exegeting the Scripture to convict his hearers of sin, righteousness and the judgment to come, he tells his audience, "Close your eyes and imagine yourself doing..." This is to appeal solely to the subjectivity of the emotions rather than to present as a proposition to the mind, the objective truth of God's Written Word in Scripture. Nevertheless, James Martin says that statements of Francis such as "close your eyes and talk to Jesus in your prayer is very Ignatian." Martin is correct in his estimation.

The emphasis in the *Spiritual Exercises* is ever on one's imagination. Imagine you can see the particular and gory details of hell; imagine you can smell the sulfur; on and on it goes stoking the heated imagination without mercy, without truth. This is the way Ignatius learned from his reading of the lives of the saints and mystics, but it is not the way of Scripture. Rather, Scripture states, "*The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.*"⁷ Thus it is a great mercy that the Lord deigns to convict the sinner of his precarious state before the Holy God. The sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ was on behalf of sinners to propitiate God's wrath against each sinner. The one who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ alone is saved unto eternal life through faith alone by God's grace alone. How will the unsaved sinner know this if he is not taught that the Bible alone is the final authority? How will the unsaved sinner know the true Gospel if he does not read a Bible or no one tells him?

Ignatius's most important endeavor was to lock both the rulers and common people of the Holy Roman Empire into unquestioning obedience to the Roman Catholic Church. His primary tactic was to train his men to excellence in various skills and professions with the intent to convert the children of Bible-believers to Catholicism. His principal book, *Spiritual Exercises*, was intended to teach people how to reach a mystical union with God as a substitute for real conversion to Jesus Christ.

Without the Gospel and locked into subjective mysticism, both the priests and the lay people are then without biblical authority - except as mediated to them by their Roman Church. Francis having completed the *Spiritual Exercises* is now "detached," i.e., free from any "disordered attachments" so that all his attachments or desires are supposedly "ordered toward God." In Pope Francis apprising himself to be, in the terminology of the *Spiritual Exercises*, one of "Christ's Captains," he now *as pope* is able to serve God according to the subjective dictates of his own darkened conscience. Therefore, it is not surprising, as Jesuit priest Martin points out, Pope Francis breaks Catholic traditions whenever he wants - because he is "free from disordered attachments" according to the subjectivity of his own mindset rather than worshiping and serving

God according to the authority of Scripture.⁸ Clearly, the Roman Catholic Church has entered a new phase: with the advent of its first Jesuit pope, it is obviously ruled by an individual rather than by the authority of Scripture alone or even its own dictates of tradition plus Scripture.

Ignatian Spirituality at the Present Time

The Jesuits are quite active in promoting the *Spiritual Exercises*. For example, on the website: www.ignatianspirituality.com, comes this quote,

The Spiritual Exercises are a compilation of meditations, prayers, and contemplative practices developed by St. Ignatius Loyola to help people deepen their relationship with God. For centuries the Exercises were most commonly given as a ‘long retreat’ of about 30 days in solitude and silence. In recent years, there has been a renewed emphasis on the Spiritual Exercises as a program for laypeople. The most common way of going through the Exercises now is a ‘retreat in daily life,’ which involves a month long program of daily prayer and meetings with a spiritual director. The Exercises have also been adapted in many other ways to meet the needs of modern people.⁹

We must keep in mind that the Jesuit spirituality and ethics are a very effective combination of mystical techniques and authoritarian propositions. The writing and teaching style of Jesuitism is heavily nuanced with techniques of suggestive dissociation. Disciples are lured ever so subtly into embracing new views of reality and ethical norms apart from critical reflection on either the intellectual or logical integrity of the insinuated dogmatic propositions. The smooth flow of suggestion and casuistic reasoning in Jesuit teaching material hinders mental resistance and diverts learners from appreciating that they are visualizing and emoting rather than thinking. It is a methodical technique of disarmament by dissociation that leads inevitably to surrender of the mind and will.

For a contemporary example, consider the Jesuit, Jim Harbaugh. He has produced a masterful synthetic amalgamation of Jesuitism and modern humanistic therapy in his book entitled *A 12-Step Approach to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*. It is based on the parallels between the *Spiritual Exercises* and the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. The 12 Step sections from the *Spiritual Exercises* are followed by an explanation of how they relate to 12-Step Alcoholics Anonymous philosophy. Thus it is that the Jesuit Jim Harbaugh capriciously implies that one will learn a new spiritual path and independence.¹⁰ However, one’s mind will be captivated by the sinister Jesuit philosophy and effectively immunized against the testimony of Holy Scripture concerning the nature of the one true and living God and the way of salvation by, and, in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, rather than “help[ing] people deepen their relationship with God,” the *Exercises* are a way to learn occult visualization. Though it may appear to be harmless, even spiritually satisfying, it is patently idolatrous mental imaging and hence, biblically forbidden.¹¹ Mental pictures communicate the message that Christ is other than the biblical God who cannot be pictured. Nonetheless, there are churches that hold Taizé meetings with repetitive chanting,

meditative silences, and candle lit rooms for their youth.¹² The point is that all these forms and means are mere techniques. They are disciplines, that is, ordered and directed structures of imaginative human and material symbolic interaction. They are designed a) to provoke certain valued moods or feelings; b) invoke surrender of the critical faculties by focusing on sensations and mental images; c) artfully reduce the risk of cognitive stress by camouflaging contradictions; and finally, d) excite elevated consciousness of an idealized better or obedient self, happily adjusted to the world by willing conformity to a program or authority.¹³

Modern Mystical Attentiveness

The modern arousal of interest in mysticism in the West in general can be traced to the lack of true biblical teaching on the whole counsel of God and the Gospel in the evangelical churches going back at least to the early twentieth century.¹⁴ By the mid-twentieth century, the infamous hippie movement had broken full force on England and America, where it was rampant in the colleges and universities and in the general culture. The basis of that movement was the widespread declaration that, “God is dead,” and its corollary, all truth is relative, including moral truth. It was into this vacuum that mysticism entered.

The modern interest in Catholic mysticism can be traced in the 20th century to Thomas Merton (1915-1968), a Trappist monk of the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky. Merton’s conviction was that self-denial and mystical experiences would lead to full obedience to the Roman Church, as they had for him. As before Merton, Ignatius had offered to people the deception of mystical experiences, so now this illusory deception has thus continued into the 21st century with Brian McLaren.

McLaren is the leader of the influential group of Emergent churches, and follows the mystical illusions of Ignatius of Loyola. In Brian McLaren’s book, *A Generous Orthodoxy*,¹⁵ the author is at no loss to demonstrate how his “emergent thinking” works. The object of his book is to lump all Evangelicals and Catholics together. Thus McLaren states, “Scripture is something God had ‘let be,’ and so it is at once God’s creation and the creation of the dozens of people and communities and cultures who produced it.” In this, as in most of his teaching, McLaren is in line with the Church of Rome. While Papal Rome does not say these words, she embodies the same concept when she states, “Sacred Scripture...and [Holy] Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God...”¹⁶ McLaren has clearly paralleled the Catholic line in attempting to equate man’s creativity on a par with God’s. It is especially serious to undermine the authorship of God’s written Word.¹⁷ Such belittling of the authority of the written Word prevents a person from coming to knowledge of the truth and embracing it as it is in Christ Jesus. McLaren (like Loyola and Pope Francis) teaches a soul-damning message because he has attempted to take away the key of knowledge in the Bible.¹⁸

Culmination and Application

Eastern mysticism continues to plague our country and culture as does its counterpart, the Catholic mysticism of the Middle Ages. The contemporary narcissism and preoccupation with self, together with an automatic reaction against objective, revealed and authoritative truth, has created a sociological and quasi-spiritual environment in which eastern mysticism and the New Age movement are flourishing. Therefore, it is not to be wondered at that in a society fragmenting as ours is, the modernized versions of the Jesuit *Spiritual Exercises* are sure to appeal to those seeking refuge from the growing chaos into which the West is devolving. The fact that Pope Francis is a Jesuit will do much to promote the *Spiritual Exercises* among religious unbelievers and ignorant believers alike.

However, we know, as the Scriptures tell us, that sorrows shall be multiplied upon those that hasten after another god and another standard of what is called truth.¹⁹ This is the destiny of those who run after the imaginations of the *Spiritual Exercises*. The doom of those who hasten to reinvent Christ and His cross, as they eagerly crave all the lusts of the mind, bring upon themselves judgments from the true God and His Christ. They that multiply anti-biblical ways increase anguish and pain for themselves, both in this life and the one to come.²⁰ The Scripture explains the reason for their ruin: “*Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*”²¹

Nevertheless, the world praises the achievements of Pope Francis as a great spiritual guide. The wicked love darkness, but God’s people love the Light! Pope Francis and the Jesuits have blindly equated the true God with “the god within.”²² They have sought to circumvent the Lord Jesus Christ and His Gospel by turning to inward self-realization and enlightenment. They thereby have divested themselves of the true knowledge of the very God to whom all their “attachments” are supposedly now ordered. Thus their values are set on personal inner feelings that are often incapable of reasoned explanation and even any quest for a biblically-reasoned rationale can be actively discouraged! Without the conviction of the Holy Spirit, how can they truly assess the depths of their own wickedness? If they do not study the Scriptures, how will they know that “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*”²³

The Gospel is the Power of God unto Salvation

In face of raw imagination fueling the *Spiritual Exercises*, the grace of God still conquers, redeems, and saves. The Scripture explains grace as power. Grace not only makes salvation possible, but it is also efficient and all-powerful to that end. The Lord God’s astonishing grace is still able to break the arrogance of Pope Francis and such as the leaders of the Emergent Church. The lying and deceitful compromises of so-called contemporary Evangelical leaders denying biblical truth are demolished by the direct work of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel.²⁴

The Gospel alone remains the power of God unto salvation. Every individual who is saved is “*being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*”²⁵ In the face

of subjective, irrational speculations, the Gospel is objective, rational, consistent, and all-powerful. The Gospel of Christ stands firm. The absolute sovereignty of God is a great battering ram against human pride and the doctrines of men. By nature, we were “*dead in trespasses and sins,*”²⁶ and in practice, rebels against the All-Holy God. We were justly exposed to the curse of the Law. Yet, the love of the heavenly Father, in the Gospel of grace, rescued us from His the fiery indignation. By His grace, we turn to Him in faith alone, for the salvation that He alone gives, by the conviction of the Holy Spirit, based on Christ’s death and resurrection for His own, and believe on Jesus Christ the Lord alone, “*for by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*”²⁷ Such grace and love melts our hearts in adoring gratitude as we proclaim, “*Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth’s sake.*”²⁸ “*For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*”²⁹ ♦

Richard Bennett of “Berean Beacon” <http://www.bereanbeacon.org>

Permission is given by the author to copy this article if it is done in its entirety without any changes.

Permission is also given post this article in its entirety on Internet Websites.

1 <http://www.americamagazine.org/media/videos/pope-francis-still-jesuit> 3/18/2014

2 Ignatius of Loyola was the founder of the Jesuit [order in 1534](#).

3 Patrick of the 5th century and those who followed during the next seven centuries evangelized Britain and Europe from the north; the Vaudois of the Cottian Alps sent their evangelists throughout Europe from south.

4 J. A. Wylie was a leading biblical authority against Roman Catholicism in the 19th century.

5 Wylie, *History of Protestantism*, Book 15, “The Jesuits,” Chapt. II. Reprint available from Solid Ground Christian Books.

6 <http://doctrine.org/the-history-of-protestantism-2/the-history-of-protestantism-volume-second-book-fifteenth-the-jesuits/>

7 [Genesis 8:21](#) Imagination, an hermeneutical point, here used from the original, properly would be of the framework of man’s thinking, his cogitations and pattern of thinking subsisting in a rebellious rejection of Divine authority concerning what is right or wrong. It is not to be understood as an exciting visualization, which is a technique of mysticism. However, this is what Ignatian training would conceive of as imagining, that is, imaging in the mind, mental idolatry, making images.

[8 Proverbs 21:16; Romans 12:1, 2](#)

[9www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises/](http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises/)

[10 I Corinthians 3:19](#)

[11 Exodus 20:4 , Leviticus 26:1, Deuteronomy 4:12-24, Isaiah 44:9-20, Titus 1:14-16](#)

[12 See what is deceptive about this at: www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/taize.htm Refer to John 3:19, 20](#)

[13 Proverbs 15:14; Matthew 15:9](#)

[14 Iain H. Murray, *Evangelicalism Divided* \(Banner of Truth Trust, 2000\)](#)

[15 Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, \(Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004\)](#)

[16 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* \(1994\), Para. 81, 82 Brackets in original.](#)

[17 Isaiah 5:20; II Peter 2:1](#)

[18 Jeremiah 23:16-22](#)

[19 See “Biblical View of Truth” by John Robbins
<http://www.trinityfoundation.org/journal.php?id=205>](#)

[20 Proverbs 28:9; Romans 16:18; I Corinthians 1:18-23](#)

[21 II Thessalonians 2:10](#)

[22 Jeremiah 14:14 & 23:26](#)

[23 Jeremiah 17:9](#)

[24 II Corinthians 4:1-4](#)

[25 Romans 3:24](#)

[26 Ephesians 2:1](#)

[27 Ephesians 2:8, 9](#)

[28 Psalm 115:1](#)

[29 Romans 11:36](#)

© 2013 Berean Beacon Ministries All Rights Reserved P.O. Box 192 Del Valle, TX 78617 USA