
Pro Rege

Volume 21 | Number 1

Article 3

September 1992

Ignatius Loyola: A Biography of the Founder of the Jesuits (Book Review)

Arnold Koekkoek
Dordt College

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege

Recommended Citation

Koekkoek, Arnold (1992) "Ignatius Loyola: A Biography of the Founder of the Jesuits (Book Review)," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 21: No. 1, 18.
Available at: http://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege/vol21/iss1/3

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the College Publications at Digital Collections @ Dordt. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pro Rege by an authorized administrator of Digital Collections @ Dordt. For more information, please contact ingrid.mulder@dordt.edu.



A quarterly faculty publication of
Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa

Book Reviews

Ignatius Loyola: A Biography of the Founder of the Jesuits, by Philip Caraman, S. J. (San Francisco, Harper & Row) 1990. 222 pages, \$22.95. Reviewed by Arnold Koekkoek, Associate Professor of History.

One would expect a biography of Loyola written by a Jesuit to be admiring. It is. The eminent British historian A. L. Rowse is quoted on the dust jacket as saying that "this book is not hagiography." While this is probably true, it is undeniable that Caraman holds Loyola in the highest regard. The author does not ignore certain events or actions in Ignatius' life, but the interpretation placed on those actions is complimentary throughout. Thus the picture of Loyola that emerges is not that of a militant ascetic or an anti-Protestant soldier but of a Spirit-consumed, almost mystic devotee of the Roman Catholic Church. Caraman's Loyola is dedicated to his Church, but he is not motivated by any spirit of anti-Lutheranism. The Jesuit order, established by Loyola, argues Caraman, was very loosely organized and directed rather than militaristic or autocratic in character. This presents us with a different kind of person, nobler and far less rigid, than the one traditionally pictured in most history books.

One would expect, however, that even a laudatory work published by so reputable a firm as Harper & Row would nonetheless have to be scholarly. It is. The bibliography of both primary and secondary works is lengthy, and especially the frequent references to primary sources demonstrate clearly that Caraman knows his subject well. One very knowledgeable reviewer has pointed out some gaps in that knowledge, but the fact remains that Caraman does not have to apologize for the quality of his scholarship and the depth of his knowledge of Loyola or writings about him.

Business Through the Eyes of Faith by Richard C. Chewning, John W. Eby and Shirley J. Roels. (San Francisco: Harper and Row) 1990. 266 pages, paperback. \$9.95. Reviewed by Tracy Miller, Associate Professor of Economics.

St. Jerome claimed that "a merchant can seldom if ever please God." We counter by asserting that "all of life is religion," and that this has implications for how Christians conduct themselves in business. The authors of *Business Through the Eyes of Faith* agree. They recognize that business is a necessary part of life and that here, as in all other areas of life, Christians must "integrate the tenets of faith with the practice of business" (xi).

It should be obvious, though, that this is not *the* definitive biography of Loyola. How could it be, in less than 200 pages of text? But the book serves its intended purpose, which is "to present Ignatius to English readers as he can now reveal himself on the occasion of the fifth centenary of his birth" in 1591 (p. viii). It is a scholarly work, but it is not aimed first of all at scholars.

One would expect, therefore, that a book thus aimed, especially about a character as intrinsically interesting and influential as Loyola, must be written in a style that appeals to non-specialists. For the most part, it is. There are spots where one feels a bit "bogged down," but in general the writing is clear. One need not be an expert in Reformation history to "get into" the book.

My main problem with the book is that Loyola never comes fully alive in it, never comes across as a real, flesh-and-blood, actual human being. Perhaps Caraman makes him too other-worldly, too spiritual. Human foibles and failings are almost unseen, with the result that even Ignatius' pains and sufferings—and there were many of them—seem less than real. I would not go so far as to call this a hagiography, but I never felt I was getting in touch with a man who had really been alive.

This caveat notwithstanding, I recommend the book for profitable reading, especially because it shows facets of Loyola's character and work that are not normally recognized.

This book was written primarily for college students. It is divided into four parts beginning with an overview of what it means to view business from a Christian perspective. Following this there are sections on work, leadership, and business as an agent for shalom. The book is addressed both to workers and managers and should be of interest to owners of businesses as well.

The first chapter develops the case for approaching business from a Christian perspective, while the second