Pedro de Ribadeneira, S.J.

Treatise on the Governance of St Ignatius of Loyola. Translated and introduced by Joseph A. Munitiz, S.J. Afterword by Mark Rotsaert, S.J. Oxford: Way Books, 2016. Pp. xxi + 59. Pb, £8.

Encountering the mystery of Ignatius of Loyola involves us in meditations on the ways he cultivated a life of vibrant spirituality; on the power of his charismatic effect on so many around him; on the intrinsic compelling interest that the narrative of his life holds (a story enhanced by the crisis-filled swing from medieval to modern times that was unfolding around him); and on the wonder of his long-lasting and expansive institutional, cultural, and religious impact. To this day he has his own disciples and detractors, and more than a few scholarly commentators. All three groups will be interested in this recently rediscovered means of access to some of the Ignatian mystery, a brief set of notes left behind by Pedro de Ribadeneira (1526–1611), now freshly translated into English and introduced by Joseph Munitiz and given a contemporary evaluation in an afterword by Mark Rotsaert.

First, all prospective readers should realize that the title (which is not from Ribadeneira's hand) is hardly indicative of the contents: there is no continuous handling of themes as one would expect in a treatise, only short paragraphs presenting Ignatius's thoughts with regard to particular issues or his actions in given situations. The word "governance" in the title is also misleading, since attention is frequently drawn to Ignatius's personal virtues or opinions: these lie beyond the formal activities, procedures, and manners that we most easily associate with the sphere of administration. The work might better be called "Some Memories of How Ignatius Thought, Acted, and Dealt with Others in His Role as a Superior in the Society of Jesus" or perhaps "Ignatius as Leader and Model: Some Helpful Recollections" or even "Remembering Ignatius's Personal Art of Guidance: A Short Sketch under Six Headings."

Ribadeneira explains his rationale well enough in his prologue to Jesuit superiors: being uniquely situated for the task (as he had outlived all the others who had known Ignatius so well), he wanted to gather up some instances of the founder's governance-related behavior into one place so that others (superiors in particular) might have a convenient text by which to follow the graces that God gave to Ignatius and so maintain the Society's health. The text (including the prologue) covers only thirty-nine pages in the readable and spacious format of this edition. The six sections deal with (1) accepting novices; (2) Ignatius's expectations for Jesuits; (3) how he would implant virtues; (4) how he would promote advancement in virtue; (5) tactics for helping others;

(6) a variety of other points and anecdotes helpful for the faithful and smooth operation of the Society.

The introduction gives a very fine summary overview of the contents with some judicious remarks contextualizing certain age-bound aspects of the religious culture represented here. Two notes are in order. First, rather too short a shrift is given to Ribadeneyra himself, and there is a certain fuzziness in the swift summary of his life. Did Ignatius really accept him as a “novice” in 1540—and what would that have meant at that point? Was not Ribadeneyra in fact only aware of Ignatius through a relative (Doctor Pedro Ortiz) before taking refuge in the Society’s house? It is better to represent the order of Ribadeneyra’s formal studies not as going from Leuven to Rome to Padua but as starting in Paris, then moving to Leuven to Padua and then to Rome (even if he did move back to Rome on returning from Leuven). Mercurian’s intentions in sending him back to Spain might have been clarified. But most important, Ribadeneyra wrote his famous life of Ignatius not in Spain but in Italy (1567–69), and it was first published in Naples in 1572. Second, the introduction recommends connecting this writing closely with Luis Gonçalves da Câmara’s *Memoriale*, but there might have been a mention of the even closer connection it has with the fifth book of Ribadeneyra’s *Life of Ignatius of Loyola*, that part essentially being an extended portrait of Ignatius in terms of the virtues he manifested. This “Treatise” therefore supplements what is found in the earlier work. Ribadeneyra himself has the *Life* in mind, and he expressly mentions it (in the prologue and in 2.1).

The fifteen-page afterword by Mark Rotsaert is entitled “How to Govern a Jesuit? The Ignatian Way of Proceeding—2016.” As a former superior of the Jesuit community at the Gregorian University in Rome and two-time provincial of the Flemish province, Rotsaert offers a balanced contemporary approach to the wisdom of Ignatius as represented here. He reviews the six sections in sequence and comments on how the Ignatian model looks from our own particular historical moment. What stands out especially is Ignatius’s personal understanding, attention, and discernment of the individuals in his care, coupled with his desire that people should be striving to attain true indifference and increase their virtue. Rotsaert also points out that the “governance” that is most sought here has especially to do with “spiritual governance” (49); he cites 4.4: “My [i.e., Ribadeneyra’s] purpose is that all superiors should know what they ought to do with their subjects: namely, not to be satisfied they should live just keeping the rules in outward fashion and avoiding scandal, but they should try to advance them in all virtue.”

Beyond its value for adding to our own understanding of the saint, this work offers much material for meditation and adaptation—even some challenging

common sense, as in 5.9: “[I]f a Jesuit is living in a land where there are factions and differences of opinion, he should embrace them all and not show himself partial, nor come so close to one of the sides that he gives offence to the other.” Ignatius was a worldly-wise man of the spirit, totally absorbed in God and simultaneously quite in touch with his surroundings. That is why he will continue to fascinate us.

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