
Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



Maryks, Robert Aleksander, ed. *A Companion to Ignatius of Loyola: Life, Writings, Spirituality, Influence*

Michael O'Connor

Volume 39, Number 1, Winter 2016

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1087154ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v39i1.26563>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (print)

2293-7374 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

O'Connor, M. (2016). Review of [Maryks, Robert Aleksander, ed. *A Companion to Ignatius of Loyola: Life, Writings, Spirituality, Influence*]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 39(1), 192–194.
<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v39i1.26563>

seeing Hamlet's dilemma. Even so, Lesser's story is an intriguing and highly readable one, and contributes to a lively recent trend of giving Q1 its due as a serious text. Might its version of "To be or not to be" be seen as more coherent than that of Q2 or F? A question to be asked.

DAVID BEVINGTON

University of Chicago

Maryks, Robert Aleksander, ed.

A Companion to Ignatius of Loyola: Life, Writings, Spirituality, Influence.

Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 52. Leiden: Brill, 2014. Pp. xiv, 345 + 13 ill., 1 map. ISBN 978-90-04-25113-7 (hardcover) €154 / US\$199.

This book is a welcome addition to the literature on Ignatius of Loyola (ca.1491–1556) and the Society of Jesus. Its aim is clear: to carry out "a quest for the historical Ignatius" (Maryks, 2), along the way peeling off "layers of theological and rhetorical paint" (3) added by past generations. The resulting collection is an international panorama of current scholarship (all presented in English), reflecting goals typical of our own time: first, to provide a portrait of the saint as a human being, in his liminal experiences of transformation and discovery (especially the 1520s) as well as in the later period of more settled convictions; second, to explore his relationships with the religious Other (Luther, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists); and third, to relate Ignatius to modernity. Several of the articles give informative pointers for future research. The prevailing tone is judicious and measured, whether discussing the "forgotten" early companions or the likelihood that Ignatius fathered a daughter in early life; but this demythologizing is no debunking: as a more human Ignatius emerges, there are flashes of appreciation, empathy, and even occasional warmth towards the subject.

The first cluster of essays is biographical. Here there is repeated stress on Ignatius before his ordination in 1537. As a lay person he developed the *Spiritual Exercises* and gave spiritual direction to other lay people. At this time we find the most meaningful presence of women in his life, when he was testing boundaries and experimenting with identity (Rhodes, 19). He viewed the lay state in positive terms and saw its renewal as fundamental to the renewal of the

church. In this, he made common cause with the likes of John of Avila (Roldán-Figueroa, 162) but also with the more controversial Spanish Erasmians and *Alumbrados*. The latter group fostered an ambitious lay spirituality in opposition to the clerical and sacramental structures of the institutional church, for which they were formally denounced as heretics. Essays by Stefania Pastore and Sabina Pavone show that Ignatius's contacts with such marginal groups were far more extensive than later Jesuit sources would concede. Ignatius was put on trial for unorthodoxy eight times in all—in Spain, France, and Italy—but always acquitted. Far from being the fearless conquistador of heretics, Ignatius “was suspected by the authorities and suspicious of them” (Myers, 152), and kept with him documentary proof of his acquittals in “clear evidence of the insecurity he felt” (Pavone, 56).

Several contributors seek to replace the hagiographic image of the solitary, somewhat heroic founder with an image that better reflects the collaborative nature of the first group of *co*-founders: companions who deliberately called their group a Society (García de Castro Valdés). This can be seen at work in the co-authoring of the seminal documents of the order, including the *Constitutions* and the so-called *Autobiography* (Fabre). Only after his death does the myth of Ignatius the Founder come to the fore.

A second group of essays treats what might be called ecumenical and interreligious questions. Robert Maryks continues to add nuance to our understanding of the “Judaophilia” in which Ignatius persisted despite the pressures of prevailing anti-Semitic laws and assumptions. Emanuele Colombo traces Ignatius's bifurcated attitude to Islam: “both pastoral, aimed at helping Muslims' souls, as well as militant, aimed at defeating the infidels in the spirit of the crusades” (180). In a fascinating essay, Javier Melloni Robas traces resemblances between the teaching of Ignatius and Buddha, and then looks at the historical encounters between Jesuits and Buddhists, which became genuine religious dialogue in the twentieth century. William David Myers's essay on Ignatius and Luther offers up two correctives to the conventional narrative: first, in Ignatius's own lifetime it is “the *absence* of Luther” rather than his presence that “is most striking (and suggestive),” while Luther, for his part, never mentioned Ignatius; second, a major shift occurs in the 1560s and 1570s under Polanco and Nadal, eventually yielding the account of Ignatius as the heaven-sent vanquisher of the infernal Lutheran monster in Ribadeneyra's authoritative *Vida* published in 1572 (143–44).

A final group of essays seeks to place Ignatius in the context of emerging modernity. Christopher van Ginhoven Rey shows how the Jesuit emphasis on being an “instrument” at the service of God focused the debate on the relation between human freedom and divine grace—a debate that divided not only Catholics and Protestants but also Dominicans and Jesuits, and Jesuits and Jansenists. Several essays focus particularly on the best-known of the works that bear Ignatius’s name, the *Spiritual Exercises*. For Moshe Sluhovsky, the *Exercises* has been misunderstood in two ways: by Rahner, who saw in it a beginning of modern individualistic mystical experience; and by Foucault, for whom it was an early modern means for social control and the manufacture of obedience. Instead, Sluhovsky sees modernity arising out of continuity with earlier practices: while early Christian spiritual practices emphasized the master + student relationship in spiritual direction, and medieval practices shifted this binary onto reader + text, Ignatius combined these in a new ternary pattern: text + reader/director + listener/exercitant. The goal was not mystical experience, but “a modular, ordered, and slow process of transforming one’s life,” available to all (223). David Marno places the *Exercises* in the context of the centuries-long debate about attention and constant prayer; while Ignatius’s technique of attention is a predecessor of the modern notion of attention as “a neutral power of the mind” (232), its devotional goal marks it out as fundamentally different.

The volume is nicely produced, including thirteen illustrations reproduced from early lives of Ignatius. Unfortunately, the production quality is not always matched by the copy editing: I counted almost three dozen typos, errors, and inconsistencies—some produced by unevenness in the translations and some produced by that false friend, the spell-checker.

MICHAEL O’CONNOR

St. Michael’s College, University of Toronto