Pierre Emonet, SJ, *Ignatius of Loyola: Legend and Reality,* trans. Jerry Ryan, ed. Thomas M. McCoog, SJ(Philadelphia: St. Joseph’s University Press, 2016). Cloth $40.

This short biography of Ignatius is a remarkable achievement. Just 136 pages long, averaging only 6 or 7 pages per chapter (including a page or so of notes at the end of each), it gives the reader a great deal of information, some of it not found in other biographies, and yet it is not heavy. The author, Swiss Jesuit Pierre Emonet, has a gift for letting his conclusions emerge seamlessly from the simple but rich details he presents.

E. does not shy away from the controversies surrounding Ignatius. The authoritarian rough edges, for instance, get full treatment. After you read the details he provides, you know very well why Rodrigues and Bobadilla, two of the original companions and among Ignatius’ harshest critics, were so difficult. He draws on Jesuit psychiatrist William Meissner’s biography to illuminate Ignatius’ relations with women.

Ignatius owed a lot to women, both early in his converted life and after he became general superior. And their demands on him could sometimes greatly complicate his decision making. Two influential Spanish Jesuits planted the idea of becoming a Jesuit with the Princess Juana, daughter of Charles V and Regent of Spain. After considerable discernment, she was secretly admitted to the Society and did help with some of its ventures. But she could also behave in an imperious way that obstructed its genuine progress.

E.’s treatment of Ignatius in the midst of all these issues and people is wise and balanced. I come away from it with new appreciation for his 15 years in the ministry of administration. There were so many issues and problems, so many challenging and difficult people to deal with. He needed all the experience in diplomacy from his early years in Arevalo and Navarre. He needed his accumulated wisdom in individual and group discernment. He didn’t do adminis- tration perfectly, but he did indeed practice the fine art of *cura personalis.*

In a final chapter, E. draws these conclusions about Ignatius:

Better than the 1,000 Jesuits divided among thirteen provinces at the time of his death, . better than the more than one hundred colleges and houses founded during his lifetime, . better than the 7,000 letters addressed to various persons throughout the world, it is . evangelical audacity that constitutes the essential of Ignatius’s legacy. An audacity which . led him to break away from the spirit of his times to bring a more efficient assistance to . people who wanted to commit themselves to the service of the Creator without having to . leave the world in which they lived and which they loved. By teaching people to make . decisions in an autonomous manner, by founding an original order, by insisting on intel- . lectual formation, by promoting the inculturation of the Christian message in the recently

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. discovered lands, Ignatius of Loyola stands out as the great innovator who introduced . the Church to modernity.

This superb biography, originally written in French and published in Belgium, has already been translated into Spanish and German; it is now also available in English.

-- George W. Traub, SJ . Xavier University