

## BOOK REVIEWS

---

GERALD CATTARO

*Fordham University*

### THE JESUIT "RATIO STUDIORUM": 400TH ANNIVERSARY PERSPECTIVES

VINCENT J. DUMINUCO, S.J., ED. FORDHAM UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2000.

*Reviewed by Anthony J. Dosen, C.M.*

*The Jesuit "Ratio Studiorum": 400th Anniversary Perspectives* is a book of proceedings from a two-day conference hosted by Fordham University to mark this anniversary. These essays document the historical foundations of the *Ratio*, a description of the *Ratio*'s impact on the wider educational mission of the Church, and a discussion of what role a *Ratio* should play in the 21st century. This volume contains seven essays, responses to four essays, and two recent documents from the Society about the nature of Jesuit education: *The Characteristics of Jesuit Education* (1986) and *Ignatian Pedagogy* (1993).

Each of the writers examined the significance of the *Ratio Studiorum* from the perspective of the life and work of St. Ignatius of Loyola and the early Jesuit community. The focal question that underlies this text is "How do we relate to traditions?" (p. 19). Fr. Gray reminds readers that there are two approaches to the issue of Catholic Jesuit identity. He asks whether Jesuit identity and tradition are best achieved by clarifying the authentic goals of the *Ratio Studiorum* and negotiating those goals in the contemporary circumstance or accepting not only the authentic goals but also the various means for achieving the goals that are recommended in the document. The authors view the value of the *Ratio Studiorum*, along with the other foundational documents of the Jesuit community, as a source of inspiration and missionary focus for Jesuit universities and schools. To a person, the essayists look to these sources for focus and understanding of the goals of Jesuit education, but none of them seeks to replicate the particulars of the curriculum or the means to the goals, if you will, in order to achieve these goals.

The first four chapters of *Perspectives* provide a fascinating description of the missionary and spiritual tradition of Ignatius of Loyola expressed in the educational ministry of the Society of Jesus. The materials in the first four

chapters of this book are well researched and well written. These chapters prove why their authors are considered among the best scholars in the field of Jesuit studies. The chapters authored by Gray and O'Malley were particularly helpful in providing a framework for my personal understanding. Each of the first four essays is followed by a response. The respondents' comments are unanimously positive endorsements of the respective author's paper. The quality of these comments varies from helpful summaries to stuttering admiration. One respondent was so stymied by his admiration for the paper's author that he failed to provide the reader with either a helpful critique or focused summary of the paper.

Rosemary De Julio's chapter describes the influence of St. Ignatius on the communities founded by Mary Ward and Madeleine Sophie Barat. While the primary purpose of this chapter is to track St. Ignatius' influence on these two communities, De Julio's description of the inequities that women's communities experienced in comparison to men's communities certainly deserves a much wider and more in-depth discussion than the limitations of chapter size allow. De Julio's admission that archival documents were scarce may make this hope an impossibility.

In looking at the *Ratio* from the perspective of the humanist tradition, O'Malley attempts to provide a broader context for understanding how generations of Jesuits had endeavored to provide their students with a humanist education. He posits that the narrow following of the *Ratio* was probably the source of more problem than help in achieving the goal of providing a humanist education in the Jesuit tradition. According to O'Malley, the humanist tradition from 1599 to the present was manifested on two levels: "First, on the level of belief in both the practical and the more broadly humanizing potential of the humanities, and second, on the level of concern for the yearnings of the human heart arising from Ignatian spirituality" (p. 144).

Fr. Duminuco's essay asks "A New *Ratio* for a New Millennium?" In this essay, the overall theme of the conference and the other papers comes to the fore. Duminuco reiterates the theme that the particular goals of Jesuit education, as presented in the source documents, are important guideposts, but the re-establishment of universal guidelines outlining curricular programs applied equally across diverse provinces, nations, and cultures was implausible in the Society's past, and is even more implausible today. In summary, the authors see the vision of the "new *Ratio*" not as prescriptive for Jesuit schools, but rather as a source of inspiration and vision for them.

This book provides a respectful tribute to the *Ratio Studiorum* and the Jesuit educational tradition. It is an example of the type of study and soul searching that the Second Vatican Council document *Perfectae Caritatus* (*The Up-to-Date Renewal of Religious Life*) asked of all religious communities as an integral part of their renewal. *Perspectives* provides a series of

reflections based on the source documents of the Jesuit community and a discussion of how those documents might impact the mission of the community's educational works today. The essays in this book offer the reader a guided tour of the sources, ask the reader to consider two contemporary renderings of the tradition, and then pose the all important mission question: In light of where we have been and who we are, where shall we go? This is the challenge of identity, both Catholic identity and the identity of the religious congregations that sponsor schools, as these educational institutions head into the new millennium.

*Fr. Anthony Dosen, C.M., Ph.D., is an assistant professor in the School of Education at DePaul University.*

---

## **NEGLIGENT LIABILITY SUITS AND PRIVATE SCHOOL PERSONNEL: DUTY, CAUSATION, DEFENSES**

SARAH M. WATSON, OAKSTONE PUBLISHING, 2001.

*Reviewed by Charles J. Russo*

*Negligent Liability Suits and Private School Personnel: Duty, Causation, Defenses* by Sarah Martin Watson, appears to be a doctoral dissertation turned into a monograph on negligence. Written by "a professional educator and not a legal expert...to provide limited guidance, but not legal advice, for private school personnel" (p. 3), the five chapters offer generally accurate summaries and analyses of cases along with practical recommendations for educators. Writing in clear and nontechnical language, the author achieves limited success, most of it in her recommendations in Chapter 5, in pursuit of her modest goal of providing guidance for educators in nonpublic schools.

The first chapter provides a brief introduction to the topic of negligence, assumptions and liabilities, definitions of terms, and selected works, most of which are dated, that might be of some limited use to readers. Only 1 of the 23 entries listed in the table of references was published in the year 2000, while 13 of the remaining items are more than 10 years old. Even conceding that older legal materials may be of some value, it is essential for educators, and, of course, attorneys, to have the most up-to-date information available. Moreover, to the extent that she identified three publications from the Education Law Association (ELA), the largest nonadvocacy group in the United States devoted to the study of education law, it is inexplicable that the author overlooked what is widely considered to be the best book on legal issues affecting nonpublic schools regardless of whether they are religiously affiliated, the fourth edition of Ralph D. Mawdsley's *Legal Problems of Religious and Private Schools*, also published by ELA.

Copyright of *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry & Practice* is the property of Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry & Practice and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.