Patrizio Foresta

"Wie ein Apostel Deutschlands": Apostolat, Obrigkeit und jesuitisches Selbstverständnis am Beispiel des Petrus Canisius (1543–1570). Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016. Pp. 528. Hb, 90 euros.

Peter Canisius, the first recruit for the Society of Jesus on German soil, began to attain wider ecclesiastical and historical significance in the late nineteenth century, almost three hundred years after his death in 1597. Pius IX beatified him in 1864. In an encyclical letter of 1897, Leo XIII hailed him as the "second apostle of Germany" after St. Boniface. Pius XI canonized Canisius in 1925 and declared him a doctor of the church. To pave the way for his canonization, Otto Braunsberger, S.J. in 1896 began publishing Canisius's correspondence and allied documents. By 1923, the edition had grown to eight substantial volumes. Many letters eluded the edition. Paul Begheyn, S.J. and Patrizio Foresta have worked for many years to collect material for a ninth volume. Both historians are experts on Canisius.

Foresta has published several scholarly articles on Canisius and a monograph of 2006, *Ad Dei gloriam et Germaniae utilitatem: San Pietro Canisio e gli inizi della Compagna di Gesù nei territori dell'Impero tedesco (1543–1555)* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2006). His most recent study, the book under review, is a revision of his *Habilitationsschrift*. It represents staggering erudition, written in flawless (and sometimes in characteristically protracted) academic German but, unlike much German research, relying extensively on non-German as well as German scholarship.

In his new book, Foresta's main interest is the apostolic identity among the early modern Jesuits, and especially that of Peter Canisius. The concept of apostolate [*Apostolatsverständnis*] serves as the important key to understanding the ministries that the Jesuits undertook in their first century. Determined to transcend confessional tendencies in scholarship, Foresta nevertheless admits that confessional conflict contributed to the Jesuit apostolic self-fashioning in German lands. Thus, owing to the contrast made between Ignatius and Martin Luther in the *Imago primi saeculi* (Antwerp: Plantin-Moretus, 1640), the volume celebrating the first century of the Society, Luther became a "constitutive element of the early modern Jesuit self-image" (146). The "inevitable and unavoidable relationship" (113) to Catholic political authority [*Obrigkeit*] also influenced the Jesuits' expression of their apostolic identity. They were obliged to shape their ministries in accordance with the requirements of Catholic potentates, secular and ecclesiastical, to maintain princely support. The deference towards political authority in the Jesuit Constitutions is a result, Foresta maintains, of intending "the greatest apostolic outcome" (91). The

early, unforeseen development of Jesuit colleges in response to the requests of political authority revealed a tension in apostolic identity between the founding ideal of pastoral mobility and “a process of institutionalization” (315).

In the first two of the book's five main chapters, Foresta meticulously prepares the ground for his examination of Canisius. He reviews the evidence from the New Testament for two different theological notions of an apostle—someone sent out by Christ on mission or someone who holds an office [*Amt*] of ministerial leadership. Of course, these two concepts correspond to the mobility and stability in Jesuit self-understanding. We may wonder whether the members of the Society of Jesus found in Jesus, and not simply in his apostles, the inspiration of their apostolate. His identity in John's Gospel is grounded in his own identity as sent by the Father. Hebrews 3:1 bestows upon him a unique Christological title: “the apostle and high priest of our confession.” Foresta uncovers several dimensions of Jesuit (apostolic) identity in the early Society: first, the mobile missionaries of Jesus Christ and later, combatants pledged to fight Protestantism. Claude Jay advocated the establishment of Jesuit colleges for the survival of Catholicism in German-speaking lands, while Pierre Favre, “the first ‘apostle of Germany’ in the Ignatian spirit” (166–67) emphasized an intensification of pastoral care for the renewal of priestly life and thus understood the Reformation as a “pastoral problem” (175) owing to the deficiencies of Catholic clergy.

Foresta's strength in historical *Gründlichkeit* is also the book's weakness. Only when readers make it to Chapter 3, almost half-way through the book, does its sustained engagement with Canisius begin. In this chapter, Foresta discusses the context, personal and *kirchenpolitisch*, of Canisius's entrance into the Society in 1543 before giving, in scholarship to date, the most thorough review of and argument for the identity of Peter of Nijmegen, editor of a collection of sermons by Johannes Tauler published in 1543. The editor was Canisius, who in this edition as well as in his editions of Leo the Great and Cyril of Alexandria (1546), pursued confessional aims.

Only in Chapter 4 does what Foresta calls the “originality of the Canisian concept of apostolate” (200) gain traction. But two digressions distract from the exposition of Canisius's *Apostolatsverständnis*: a brief excursus on the ideal of martyrdom in the writings of Philippe Alegambe, S.J. (1592–1652) and an unduly long one on the controversy stirred up by Nicolás Bobadilla against the Augsburg Interim of 1548, Charles V's temporary measure to attenuate religious conflict in the Holy Roman Empire. Canisius's concept of the apostolate was grounded in obedience, zeal, a personal spiritual encounter with Christ, and “a direct commission, addressed to him alone, through the princes of the apostles” (303), Peter and Paul. Their blessing inspired his very personal

dedication to Germany as its apostle. Canisius did not see himself as a successor of St. Boniface.

Chapter 5 explores the interplay in the first half of the 1550s between Jesuit principles and initiative and the wishes of the Catholic *Obrigkeit* in the person of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria. He wanted Canisius to be the new bishop of Vienna in violation of the Jesuit prohibition against the acceptance of prelaties, requested the Jesuits to produce a theological compendium to support an embattled Catholicism in Habsburg Austria, and supported the erection of a Jesuit college in Prague. Canisius rejected a mitre to fulfill “joyfully his apostolic services in poverty” (320), convinced that he could accomplish more in Vienna “through his apostolic freedom and mobility” than through ecclesiastical office (321). The informative discussions of the genesis of Canisius’s Large Catechism (Vienna, 1555) and his founding of the college in Prague add little to his apostolic self-image.

The book ends with three appendices. The first and most substantial appendix offers transcriptions of many archival documents. Foresta could have enhanced their utility with an introductory essay or elaborate head notes indicating the relevance of the documents to his research. Readers are left to their own devices to determine the historical significance of the documents. The second appendix is an essay on the modern ecclesiastical reception of Canisius’s identity as a saint and apostle. In the third appendix, Foresta explains the complex background to the current “Canisius project,” the assembly of a ninth volume to add to the eight edited by Braunsberger. Unfortunately, as Foresta acknowledges, no end is in sight for the completion of this volume.

The value of Foresta’s new book is his integration of a single Jesuit, Peter Canisius, within related discourses about the meaning of the Jesuit apostolate and the relationship between the Society and political authority. The book could have benefitted from a rebalancing of attention that would make Canisius its central focus. A recalibration in analysis could investigate Canisius’s apostolic mobility, his Catholic hostility towards Protestants, and his relationships with Catholic *Obrigkeiten*, especially during his *Amt* as provincial in Upper Germany (1556–70).

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