Markus Friedrich

Die Jesuiten: Aufstieg, Niedergang, Neubeginn. Munich: Piper, 2016. Pp. 727. Hb, €39.

Almost twenty-five years ago, John O'Malley gave a fresh impetus to historical research on the early modern Society of Jesus with *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993). The book still serves as the authoritative introduction to the "customary ministries" of the sixteenth-century Jesuits in the context of their spiritual, ecclesiastical, and intellectual world. A similarly reliable and engaging study of the Jesuits throughout the entire early modern period has been sadly lacking until the publication of Markus Friedrich's impressive new book. Within two years *The First Jesuits* appeared in German. *Die Jesuiten* should appear in English translation just as expeditiously.

Considerable expertise underpins Friedrich's comprehensive survey of Jesuit history. In 2011, he published a detailed study of the structures and practice of Jesuit governance, *Der lange Arm Roms? Globale Verwaltung und Kommunikation im Jesuitenorden, 1540–1773* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2011). His "Alltagsgeschichte von Politik" doubled as an "Alltagsgeschichte von administrativer Information" (18). A micro-historical investigation of the system of information in the Society of Jesus revealed its increasing bureaucratization, a phenomenon it shared with the early modern state.

Not surprisingly, Friedrich in *Die Jesuiten* identifies various networks of Jesuit communication. The Marian congregations comprised "a global network of Christian lay organizations for which General Claudio Acquaviva issued uniform statutes and regulations in 1587" (232). Jesuit colleges became intellectual "hubs of the republic of letters," participating in "a transregional and even a globally dispersed network" of knowledge (318). "A sort of network for food supply" (267) connected Jesuits in mission territories as they bought from and sold to each other their agricultural surplus. In the "astonishingly well interconnected" missionary world, the Jesuits made an enduring contribution to "the first structures of global communication" (514). The wealth of data, channeled by the Jesuits, about the world beyond Europe "quickly became a veritable system of information" (516).

In his chosen historical scope, Friedrich rightly subordinates chronology to a thematic approach. The first chapter on the internal life and the structures of the Society begins, however, with a sketch of the order's growth over time in the various regions of Europe. Its "most vigorous expansion" (28) occurred under the long generalate of Acquaviva (1581–1615) and experienced "a certain saturation" (32) by the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The sociology, spirituality, and the development of structures that turned the Society into a "bureaucratic machine" (27) dominate the chapter. The next three substantive

chapters address large themes that afford vital perspectives on the Jesuits: (a) their place within the Catholic Church, promotion of piety, pastoral ministries, and attitude towards Protestants; (b) their activities “in the world” as they engaged in the society, economics, and politics of early modern Europe and rose to prominence in the production of knowledge and culture; and (c) their global expansion as they participated in colonial societies and served as missionaries. A shorter fifth chapter analyzes early modern hostility towards the Jesuits before outlining the history of the Society’s suppression in 1773, the wilderness years of the ex-Jesuits, and the restoration of the Society in 1814. This chapter and the brief epilogue that considers nineteenth- and twentieth-century developments helpfully connect the early modern and modern phases of Jesuit history. Specialists in the so-called old Society would do well to extend their horizons into the modern period, in which Jesuits inaugurated the critical approach to their early modern origins, to investigate historical continuities and discontinuities.

One continuity, besides the expulsion of Jesuits, is their involvement in confessional conflict. Disputes with Protestants were as prominent in the nineteenth century as they were in the early modern period. Friedrich’s characterization of the early modern Jesuit approach to confessional difference is confusing. “It was compassion (*Bedauern*), not hostility,” he writes, “with which the Jesuits encountered the simple Lutherans or Calvinists. Thus two basic possibilities ensued for dealing with Protestants: on the one hand, open, aggressive, hostile measures aimed at rebuttal, refutation, and combat; on the other, the effort to lead back every single, accessible Protestant to the bosom of the Catholic Church through pastoral care” (235). The former method clearly has nothing to do with compassion.

The previous quotation raises an important question: did the Jesuits operate in uniform ways? Friedrich is determined to present the Society as “a tremendously diverse institution.” Its “religious activities, achievements, and projects” were not only diverse “but also contradictory and at times irreconcilable.” And yet the “colourful diversity” must be considered alongside “the search for unity and an integrated, common identity” (23). Although the order possessed “a sort of spiritual core identity” (68), it was far from being “an actually homogeneous, solid, uniform group of co-ordinated men” (120). Obedience and chastity were problematic for some members. Nationality or ethnicity proved internally divisive. The contrary positions of Martín Delrio and Friedrich Spee on witch persecutions demonstrated that “there had never been a uniform Jesuit line even on this topic, even though the order’s leadership in Rome collectively preferred to urge restraint” (157). After pointing out the Chinese words for God that the Jesuits found acceptable, Friedrich notes without elaboration that Jesuits initially quarrelled about “these aspects” of Christian vocabulary (511).

In his *Commentarium in bullam Pauli III, Licet ab initio*, published in 1750 and then proscribed, Giovanni Battista Faure criticized the harsh and slipshod methods of the Dominicans who staffed the Roman Inquisition. He advocated “in typical Jesuit fashion” a lenient approach towards heretics. Friedrich curiously observes: “In this matter Faure was surely not the official voice of his order” (135). How does this statement correspond to a plea that was *typisch jesuitisch*?

Friedrich conveys the “colourful diversity” of the Society of Jesus through its members. Ferdinand Orban’s vast collection of material objects merited, beginning in 1725, the construction of a museum at the Jesuit college in Ingolstadt. With a critical analysis Jean Hardouin exposed the contradictions and other textual problems in the acts of ecclesiastical councils. Paul Le Jeune travelled with the nomadic Montagnais people through the snow and cold of a Canadian winter to report on their cultural life. Juan Antonio de Oviedo was a globetrotter. He was born in Bogotá, entered the Society in Mexico, crossed the Pacific Ocean to the Philippines, and attended the Jesuit congregation of procurators in Rome.

According to a sermon that Gabriel Malagrida published in 1756, the great earthquake of the previous year in Lisbon poured out God’s wrath on the vices of the Portuguese court. The Marquis de Pombal, the chief government minister, in turn banished all Jesuit confessors from the court in 1757. In an oversight, Friedrich writes that “Malagrida had already been burned beforehand” (539) but then correctly states that he was “publicly executed in 1761” (540).

For all their disagreements and unique characters the Jesuits frequently, indeed usually, appear as a unified whole. Most Jesuits promoted “a positive undertone” in devotion dominated by “sweetness” and “gentleness” (165). Pastoral care to the marginalized revealed the core of Jesuit identity. Their Latin poetry drew attention in “the context of the late humanist culture of Europe” not only to individual Jesuits “but also to the Society of Jesus as an intellectual heavyweight” (370). Friedrich writes of “Jesuit architecture” (383) and “Jesuit knowledge” (517). Giulio Aleni’s transformation into Ai Rulüe, the Chinese intellectual, exemplified “the method of the Jesuits in China” (491) that privileged cultural accommodation in order to win converts to Christianity. Friedrich denies the existence of an “explicitly prescribed, universally binding Jesuit missionary strategy.” Instead he points to “a series of common prerequisites that all Jesuits shared since their formation” (452).

Friedrich wants neither to condemn nor to praise the Jesuits. His detailed discussion of Jesuit achievements in the realm of scholarship and culture evokes admiration, even if it does not count as glorification. Friedrich also attends to a “history of disappointments, dismissals, and disillusionment”

(28). “The history of Jesuit court confessors,” he maintains, “is also a history of failure, of profound collapse, of dismissals in disgrace” (278). The Jesuits, enmeshed in colonialism, owned slaves, and in the Society, “slavery was indeed a brutal business” (445). The order may have treated slaves in a Christian way, but it still profited from slavery.

As a comprehensive survey of early modern Jesuit history, *Die Jesuiten* deserves praise. Notwithstanding a few confusing passages, Friedrich clearly and authoritatively unfolds the “colourful diversity” of that history in an appealing narrative style that takes into account the fundamentally religious orientation of the Jesuits. In the narrative, he wears his learning lightly, but the endnotes and bibliography disclose a staggering investigation of primary and secondary sources. Friedrich’s book will enrich the knowledge of scholars of and newcomers to Jesuit history.

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