Thomas M. McCoog, S.J.

The Society of Jesus in Ireland, Scotland, and England, 1598–1606: “Lest Our Lamp be Entirely Extinguished.” Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017. Pp. xiv + 612. Hb, \$160.

The Society of Jesus in Ireland, Scotland, and England, 1598–1606: “Lest Our Lamp be Entirely Extinguished” is the final volume in Thomas M. McCoog’s trilogy detailing the Elizabethan Jesuit enterprise. That in itself is an achievement but even more noteworthy is that, within the parameters McCoog sets himself, this final volume feels definitive.

The nine years covered by the book incorporate three main themes: the question of who should succeed Elizabeth I as monarch; the conflict between the Jesuits and the secular clergy; intra-Jesuit tensions, particularly surrounding the special privileges granted to the English mission. The final point is by no means the least important; where McCoog really breaks new ground is by plugging the English Jesuits back into the wider, global Society to which they belonged, a fact regularly neglected by the existing scholarship.

The backdrop to the whole book is the chaos over who would succeed Elizabeth I. With James VI of Scotland the only candidate who really knew what he wanted and acted with a driven determination to achieve it, others were left floundering. In McCoog’s telling, the Jesuit priest Robert Persons grew steadily more irritated at the prevarications of the Spanish over the issue. A major achievement of the book is to convey the swell of Catholic expectation as the succession of James grew closer, this in turn illuminating how crushing the disappointment was when he failed to deliver toleration let alone emancipation. Nevertheless, the real and perceived Spanish links of the English Jesuits—in particular Persons—are a constant theme. Against them, the numerically struggling Scottish Jesuits—or, more specifically, William Crichton—pushed the claims of James, floating all kinds of possibilities, including his regular bait that James would convert to Catholicism. To the superior general’s no doubt increasing confusion, in addition to the pro-Spanish reports of Persons and the pro-James partisanship of Crichton, other Scottish Jesuits warned that James’s succession would be disastrous. Meanwhile, the small number of Irish Jesuits sought to navigate the O’Neill Rebellion, with one Jesuit even openly getting behind the “faith and fatherland” crusade. One can only pity Claudio Acquaviva as he tried to work out just what was happening on the peripheries of Catholic Europe.

The succession crisis in turn brought to a boiling point tensions between the Jesuits and a faction of the secular clergy. In England this resulted in what has been termed the Archpriest or Appellant Controversy, with McCoog judging the publicly vented vitriol it generated unrivalled in the history of the

Catholic Church. With the appellants opposed to perceived pro-Spanish sentiment amongst the Jesuits, and accusing its English members of a range of offences—including that they were taking over the English Catholic mission and were dangerous extremists—their loathing grew to such an extent that some colluded with the English regime in publishing anti-Jesuit tracts. In reality, they were dupes of the English authorities, while this factionalism adversely affected attempts by the Catholic powers to formulate a strategy concerning the succession. In response, the appellants could point to wider issues; unlike their English confreres, the Scottish Jesuits were still permitting outward conformity to the Established Church rather than the gold standard of recusancy, thus providing anti-Jesuit clergy with another stick with which to beat the Society.

Notably, McCoog does not whitewash Jesuit involvement in these disputes. Historiography—often penned by Jesuit historians, as McCoog himself notes in his introduction—has tended to paint them as innocent victims. Calumnies were undoubtedly made against individual Jesuits, but McCoog squarely blames some members of the Society for continuing the disagreements even when it looked as if Rome had settled them. One reason for this was because, in McCoog's assessment, the Jesuits lost the dispute on points, another verdict that has not been given too much of a scholarly airing.

By the end of McCoog's volume, he paints the Irish Jesuit presence as steadily growing but still nowhere near as influential as Irish mendicants. The Scottish had about half the number of the small Irish Jesuit contingent. Thus, the English Jesuits dominated the scene; despite representing only about ten percent of Catholic clergy in the country c.1598, their organization and structure provided them with far more influence than their manpower, a source itself of appellant distress. The sharper eyes will notice, of course, that the book's coverage actually ventures into the early years of James I's reign. In McCoog's provocative assessment, it was the Oath of Allegiance, drawn up after the failed Gunpowder Plot, that marked the end of Elizabethan Catholicism and the start of Jacobean Catholicism, with the oath replacing conformity as the central topic of debate. Nevertheless, McCoog ends on an international note. Recognizing the importance of Acquaviva for all three missions, especially the English, he judges the superior general open to the "possibility of adapting that Institute to the ministry instead of sacrificing the work as alien to the Institute," an approach he contrasts to the caution of his predecessor, Everard Mercurian (543).

Any potential criticisms of *The Society of Jesus in Ireland, Scotland, and England, 1598–1606* really are nit-picking. The book is long and detailed, but any over-editing may have resulted in the loss of its comprehensiveness. It could be

argued that there should be more on the Scottish or Irish missions, or maybe something explicit about Wales, but then McCoog is open that his aim is to offer the Jesuit alternative to the official, national Elizabethan narrative. In the Jesuit archives he has consulted, it is the English mission that was making the most noise; more on the other missions may exist elsewhere but this is outside the scope of McCoog's stated aim.

In short, this book is a magnificent achievement. It is difficult to see its source material being expanded upon without some major discovery of an unseen Jesuit archive. Simply, it is comprehensive and vital for anyone wishing to learn about this period of Jesuit activity in Britain and Ireland, and how the Society's members interacted both nationally and internationally.

James E. Kelly

Durham University

James.kelly3@durham.ac.uk

DOI:10.1163/22141332-00504010-06