CHAPTER 2

Some Remarks on Jesuit Historiography 1773–1814

Robert Danieluk, S.J.

The bicentenary of the bull Sollicitudo omnium Ecclesiarum (7 August 1814) invites all who are interested in the history of the Society of Jesus to reconsider the period between the Clementinian suppression and the Jesuits’ universal restoration. A key task is to re-evaluate the relationship between the so-called “old” and “new” Societies: a division generally accepted by scholars in spite of its limitations.1 An obvious first step involves bibliographical and archival examination of sources and a study of the existing historiography. This article focuses on the historiographical tradition. It does not aim for a complete worldwide overview but, rather, offers some remarks organized around the following questions: “What has been done in the field of 1773–1814 Jesuit history?”; “What is being done?”; and “What ought to be done?”

What Has Been Done?

From the outset, Jesuit historians took up the task of writing the history of their order. Outstanding and well-known examples include the series Historia Societatis Iesu and, more recently, the publications of the Jesuit Historical Institute.2 A list of titles directly concerning the 1773–1814 period is not particularly long even though the vicissitudes of the Society of Jesus were discussed widely at the time, in spite of the brief Dominus ac Redemptor which forbade discussion of the suppression.3 Several members of the suppressed Society ignored these prohibitive orders and wrote memoirs and began to collect materials related to the events they had witnessed. Among the best known examples are the writings of the Italian Jesuit historian Giulio Cesare Cordara.

---

3 Polgár I, 61–64. Surprisingly there is no special section dedicated to the suppression-restoration in Sommervogel.
and the diaries of his Spanish confere Manuel Luengo relating the expulsion from Spain in 1767 and subsequent events. Their narratives were added to by the writings of other expelled Spanish and Portuguese Jesuits. Some of these were published long ago, such as the memoirs of missionaries in the Philippines, while others, concerning Jesuits in Paraguay, have only been offered to the public fairly recently. In addition, a biography of Lorenzo Ricci written by Tommaso Termanini, an Italian Jesuit, was published in 2006.

Early on, various ex-Jesuits engaged in polemics concerning the suppression and the deeds of Clement XIV. In his recent study, Isidoro Liberale Gatti shows how they inaugurated a negative historiography of Clement and helped create a "black legend." The Jesuit cause was also championed by some of the periodicals for which members of the suppressed order had worked, e.g., *Journal Historique et Littéraire* in Liège and the Polish *Gazeta Warszawska* published in Warsaw. On the other hand, the French Jansenist periodical *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* wrote against the Jesuits, as did a number of pamphlets.

The historiography of the period 1773–1814 continued after the restoration of the Society. One of the main preoccupations of the nineteenth-century

---


