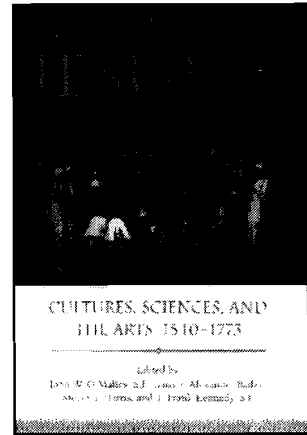


John W. O'Malley, Gauvin Alexander Bailey, Steven J. Harris, and T. Frank Kennedy, eds. *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540–1773*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999. Pp. xx, 772.

The Jesuits is an impressive interdisciplinary collection of thirty-five essays, in six thematic sections, examining the Society of Jesus and its contributions to learning before its suppression by papal edict in 1773. Originating in an international conference held at Boston College in 1997, the tome captures the Jesuit role in world culture by incorporating recent historiography and new methodological approaches, particularly social history, cultural anthropology, and multicultural perspectives. The essays are of uniformly high quality.

Love them or hate them, the Jesuits have had a profound impact on the Church, religious practices, education, and, through their missionary work, the spread of European culture to Asia and the Americas. But they in turn were affected by experiences with other cultures. At the apex of this order, the Jesuits conducted 800 universities or colleges on five continents. No other educational organization has had such reach—at least until the internet.

The scholars in this volume build on historiographical revisions made by first editor John W. O'Malley in *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993). O'Malley dispelled myths that the Jesuits were founded to combat the Reformation, were fully identified with the Counter-Reformation, and were the Pope's shock troops. The infamous fourth vow of Ignatius was to God, not to the Pope. In a learned introductory historiographical essay, O'Malley shows how misunderstandings, Protestant attacks, envy by other Catholic orders, and *philosophes'* criticism of the institutional place of the Church in the Ancien Régime contributed to the suppression of the Society. From Lucien Febvre in the 1920s through Jean Delumeau and John Bossy in the 1970s and 1980s, scholarship has evolved toward understanding religious practice rather than re-fighting the Reformation. Still, myths die hard.



Michael Gorman summarizes the departure point of many of these essays:

Thankfully, the sweeping generalizations that used to characterize the relationship between science and religion during the seventeenth century have lost their appeal to most historians. (183).

Gorman demonstrates that the supposed monolith called 'Jesuit science' encapsulated immense cultural diversity performed in a variety of environments, including classrooms, missions, courts, and the Curia in Rome. There was a plurality of traditions.

In a related essay, Steven Harris "maps" Jesuit science. From the earliest years, Ignatius asked his missionaries to report on climate, diet, customs, length of seasons, and movement of shadows from diverse regions. Jesuit travel and intellectual curiosity were integral parts of accumulating scientific knowledge. The Order had a unique corporate structure of overseas networks and nodal points of intellectual centres for distillation and dissemination of knowledge—800 towns with 650 colleges and 250 printing centres within them. The twin goals of the Jesuits—education and missions—complemented each other.

As Gorman shows, the wide geographical separation of Jesuit posts gave a unique opportunity for astronomical measurements of the polestar, lunar eclipses, and magnetic variations. Jesuit science was part of a European whole and still more a part of world endeavours than secular science in Europe in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Christoph Clavius, the leading Jesuit scientist of the time, was in correspondence with Galileo, who credited Christoph in 1610 with curing Galileo's physical illness and helping gain acceptance for his ideas. Galileo's belief in his own miraculous cure shows how ingrained were traditional belief systems amidst new scientific exploration. Jesuit pharmacies challenged alchemical charlatanism. Nevertheless, the Galileo trial and a general turn of secular science toward insulated investigation of the natural world pushed more holistic Jesuit science from interpretation to mere observation for the developing secular scientific community.

Rivra Feldhay considers Jesuit science in this holistic way, adopting Pierre Bourdieu's notion of a cultural field, considering cognitive contents as cast in language and their dynamics in scientific discourse, institutional settings, and wider politics. Nicholas Standaert's essay uses multicultural norms to investigate the impact of contact with Chinese culture on the Jesuits. Andrew Ross argues the Jesuits showed toleration and genuine respect for Japanese and Chinese cultures, adapting traditional missionary approaches to them. Jesuit world-wide success in

diverse cultures is evidence of this adaptability. These interdisciplinary approaches show the scholarly range and methodology of the volume.

Of particular interest to a Canadian audience is Dominique Deslandres's discussion of the "French Jesuits' Missionary World," a comparative study of Jesuit missionary activity in Brittany (France) and in New France. Deslandres takes an interdisciplinary approach, applying Michel Foucault's "operational concept," *viz.*: the field knowledge proper to a group at a particular time. He disputes the notion that "the Jesuits had a uniquely perverse and secret plan for the domination of souls and bodies." (258) He argues they were little different from other missionaries of the time. This is a proper correction to the idea of Jesuits as the whores of Babylon. He also correctly places missionary activity of the seventeenth century in the eschatological current of the times. From the Black Death through the seventeenth century Christianity became a religion of fear, as Jean Delumeau's *Le péché et la peur* argues. Missionaries saw themselves as God's agents engaged in a holy war with savage ignorants. This vision explains missionaries' willingness, even hope, for martyrdom.

More controversial is Deslandres's argument that the attitude toward and treatment of ignorant rural folk in Brittany was the same as toward the "sauvages" in New France. It is correct to say that the term "sauvage" was applied liberally. Voltaire used the epithet to describe French peasants as a group. The fundamental objective, conversion of the ignorant, was identically held in Brittany and in New France. Still the Jesuits countenanced unpleasant means to achieve that end in New France. They were also much less willing to accept Native American culture than they were the Asian ones described in earlier articles in the volume.

Three-quarters of the pieces in this rich volume must remain unmentioned, but not because they are without interest or quality. The introduction and a final section of "Reflections" ask whether a "Jesuit style or corporate culture" can be discerned. That question is of more interest to members of the Society than to those outside it. The intrinsic value of the individual contributions is the strength of the volume. Specialists in any area of early modern history can profit from the book, and non-specialists will probably be surprised how advanced the scholarship is. They might also be disabused of some myths about the Jesuits that serious scholars dismissed decades ago but that linger even in academic consciousness.

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