

## Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education

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### Book Review: *American Jesuits and the World: How an Embattled Religious Order Made Modern Catholicism Global*, by John T. McGreevy

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ethical questions. On the one hand, can researchers withhold treatment for a disease like malaria from one village but not from an adjacent village in order to establish a control group? On the other hand, can researchers compensate participants, like those in education interventions who would otherwise not send their daughters to school?

The ethical questions that development entails certainly should not dissuade Sachs from pursuing his work. Still, it is surprising that in his 500-page book he devotes merely seven pages to ethics, a cursory survey of six different rationales for the importance of “social inclusion,” into which he subsumes most of Enlightenment political philosophy. The section ends with the laudable remark that “we therefore need to have more discussions, more public awareness, and more debates about these underlying ethical choices, because the goals of sustainable development depend on the ethical positions we adopt.” Unfortunately, the book does not deliver on its claim to offer a “normative framework.” It neither engages colleagues like Deaton who differ on the finer points of aid nor those who question the existence of any obligation of the rich toward the poor at all. Paul VI remarked: “technical expertise is necessary, but it must be accompanied by concrete signs of love.” The technocrat Sachs could learn from his words.

*Stephen Pitts, S.J., is beginning his third year of theology studies at the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University; throughout his Jesuit training he has had a special interest in spirituality and spiritual direction.*

## *American Jesuits and the World How an Embattled Religious Order Made Modern Catholicism Global,* by John T. McGreevy

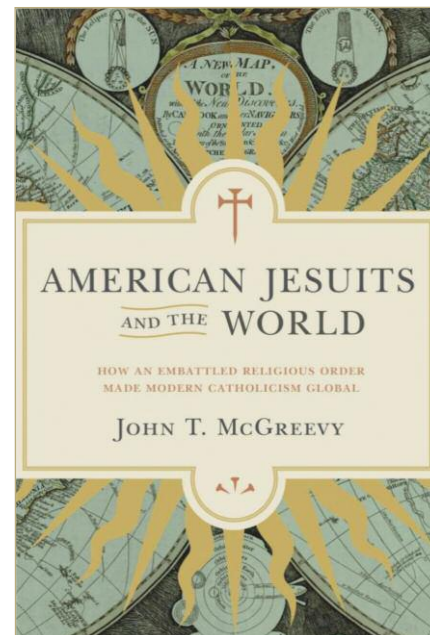
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2016 315 PAGES

Reviewed by Edward W. Schmidt, S.J.

**Jesuit history** became a hot scholarly topic roughly two decades ago. Culture, art, dance, scholarship, science, and many other specific fields received scholarly attention and publication. Major conferences were held in 1997 and 2002. The interest has not abated.

Most of this scholarship concentrated on the Society of Jesus before its suppression by Pope Clement XIV in 1773. This was the age of the pioneers, the saints and martyrs, the missionaries, the founders. In these centuries after their founding in 1540, the Jesuits started hundreds of schools, wrote grammars for exotic languages in far-off lands, patronized major artists and architects. All the while they tended to pastoral care of the people they served with retreats, sermons, and spiritual writing. And they left copious records that modern scholars found fertile ground for new research.

The period right after the restoration of the Society in 1814 did not receive so much scholarly attention. This was a time of turmoil America and in Europe. During the period of suppression, both



the American and the French revolutions had taken place. The American Revolution didn't affect the church so much; the French Revolution certainly did. As the Jesuit order grew back in numbers, it faced far different social and cultural realities from those in which it had thrived. During the mid decades of the 19th century, many countries ejected the Jesuits as agents of a foreign power – the pope, no longer a revered spiritual

figure even in countries with large Catholic populations.

Jesuits from Switzerland, Belgium, France, or Italy came to the United States as missionaries. Many of them hoped to work with the native peoples but soon found themselves working with the Catholic immigrants who were flooding the country. And many ran afoul of the dominant Protestant culture.

*American Jesuits and the World* is a careful study of this world. After a thorough look at how Jesuits were received with suspicion and hostility (chapter one), it tells the stories of four regions of the country, beginning with a study of one individual and expanding its narrative from there. In Maine, Fr. John Bapst, originally from Switzerland, provoked some local people who in 1854 captured him and tarred and feathered him. This chapter studies the issues that provoked this violence and how Father Bapst survived. It raises issues of religion in schools and state funding for education.

Chapter three focuses on Fr. Ferdinand Helias, a Belgian Jesuit. Father Helias was one of many exiled European Jesuits who headed to St. Louis, and he taught at St. Louis University before heading out to the center of the state for missionary work. He worked hard to maintain his mission, negotiating local hostilities between supporters of the Union and of the Confederacy during the Civil War. Here too state support for education was a big issue. Hostility towards the Jesuits was rampant, stirred up by writers and orators and a German-language newspaper.

In chapter four a young novice of the Sacred Heart sisters was close to death. Her sisters prayed to Bl. John Berchmans, a 16<sup>th</sup>-century Belgian Jesuit who had died very young, and she was cured; everyone was astonished for she had been very close to

death. The Jesuits at nearby St. Charles College provided pastoral care for these sisters. Religious sisters were a vital part of Catholic education in the United States. Devotions and politics merge in this chapter.

Chapter five centers on Fr. Burchard Villiger in Philadelphia, another Swiss exile, who built the Gesu Church and St. Joseph's school, which developed into today's St. Joseph's Prep and St. Joseph's University. This chapter delves deep into issues of education and adaptation to evolving demands of schooling in the United States. It is a fascinating study of what provoked these changes and how traditions adjusted to new circumstances. It wasn't easy.

The sixth chapter studies U.S. Jesuits becoming missionaries in the Philippines, where they brought their U.S. educational ideals. A concluding chapter is an insightful look at on how all of this history affects who we are today.

The author has a masterful control of the sources, from drawers and files in archives, from printed journals and books old and new; the very last of over a thousand endnotes references three websites. By centering the chapters on a single person or incident, he weaves a narrative that sets the context, examines the issues, and helps the reader to see that whatever problems and issues we face today have been encountered before in some fashion. But the author's style is very accessible and engaging; for all its scholarship the text does not get bogged down.

This history is wider than just Jesuit history. It includes the social contexts in which Jesuit schools grew up. It considers how education is funded and the tensions between public and private schools. In the wider context it touches on issues with immigration, how mainstream Americans recoiled

at the numbers of poor, uneducated immigrants – Catholics! – flooding in from places like Ireland and Italy. Any parallels today? And the reader can see how ideals that we make explicit today such as high quality of instruction and care for the whole person in mind, soul, and body developed from a lot of hard work in very tough circumstances long ago.

This book gives a lot of information but also can set the imagination loose to see that whatever challenges the Jesuit schools face today, we can face them as earlier generations did with our own resources of competence and resolve.

*Edward W. Schmidt, S.J., editor of Conversations, works at America Magazine.*

## BOOKS RECEIVED

### ***Jesuit Pedagogy, 1540 – 1616: A Reader***

Edited by Cristiano Casalini and Claude Pavur, S.J.

Boston: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2016. 346 pages.

This book provides translations of crucial Latin documents concerning education from the first decades of the Society of Jesus.

### ***Traditions of Eloquence: The Jesuits and Modern Rhetorical Studies***

Edited by Cinthia Gannett and John C. Brereton

New York: Fordham University Press, 2016. 444 pages.

In 25 essays, scholars from across the country address issues of eloquence, rhetoric, writing, and other fields with historic perspective and contemporary analysis.