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The Men and Movements Who Made the Modern Society of Jesus

Raymond A. Schroth, S.J., *The American Jesuits: A History*

New York and London: New York University Press, 2007 (xii + 313pp.)

By John W. Padberg, S.J.

The first Jesuit to set foot on the territory of what came to be the United States was a thirty-five year old Spaniard, Pedro Martinez, in 1566. This engagingly written, direct and honest story of the American Jesuits starts there

and ends as the Society is preparing for its thirty-fifth General Congregation in 2008.

The book's four sections follow a generally chronological sequence, In the Beginning, Suppression and Return, Engaging the World and The Modern Society Emerges. Not meant to be a primary-source, scholarly-researched endeavor, it nonetheless

does draw on excellent sources as the notes and bibliography attest. Neither is it a traditional institutional narrative nor an analytic history. Rather, the author, an accomplished writer, most often attaches the story to particular Jesuits, representative or iconic figures, who embody or illustrate or provide a launching point for a period, a movement, a problem, an accomplishment, an attitude, a success, a mistake. The best way here to illustrate that characteristic is to note within the book's headings the names of some, only some, of the men through whose exploits the story progresses.

"In the Beginning" moves through a brief account of the life of Ignatius Loyola, the Spiritual Exercises, and the founding of the Society of Jesus. The world scene of the early Society involved the intertwining of church and state and the problems and opportunities of adaptation to new cultures (Ricci and De Nobili for instance). Then come the Maryland beginnings (Andrew White), and pioneers such as martyrs and missionaries East, Southwest and Mid-continent



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(Isaac Jogues, John de Brébeuf, Eusebio Kino, Jacques Marquette).

"Suppression and Return" starts with near death and resurrection of the Society, followed by new ventures and old prejudices in the new America (John Carroll, Anthony Kohlmann, and anti-Jesuit comments of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson). The Society moved boldly into the frontiers (Charles van Quickenborne and Peter DeSmet in the Midwest and West, Giuseppe Cataldo in the Northwest). The theme of a nation and faith divided tells the story of Jesuits and slave holding and the Civil War, with men on both sides of both questions. Schoolmasters and preachers loom large in the great mid-century immigrations, the founding of Woodstock (Camillo Mazzella), the urban parishes and parish missions (Arnold Damen), the rapid growth of schools in places such as Cincinnati, Milwaukee, Omaha, Detroit, and controversies about the Jesuit educational program (Timothy Brosnahan of Boston College in his conflict with Charles Eliot, the president of Harvard).

"Engaging the World" meant taking that world of the twentieth century seriously. In 1909 *America* was founded, a new national Jesuit voice (John Wynne, Thomas Campbell). Interracial concerns became ever more prominent (John LaFarge, George Dunne, William Markoe, Claude Heithaus) as did popular culture in relation to the faith (Daniel Lord, writer, sodality promoter, advisor to the movie industry). Meanwhile, a lengthy memorandum of the American Assistant (Zacheus Maher) to the Jesuit General listed the accomplishments of the American Jesuits but at the same time deplored the "spirit of the world." It had supposedly entered into the Society in everything from reading novels to smoking, from yearbook pictures to

Jesuits wearing brightly colored sweaters, to the hiring of women cooks and secretaries.

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ngaging the world meant also engaging World War II in which about 250 Jesuits served as chaplains. That world brought to the fore social questions and responses such as the Institute of Social Order, Labor Schools ("Pete Corridan" the "waterfront priest"), racial integration (Louis Twomey, Joseph Fichter). The golden age, especially of Jesuit recruitment and of college and university expansion, lasted through the 50s and on into the 60s (Paul Reinert, Michael Walsh) even if it had earlier taken a long struggle especially to find resources (Santa Clara, Loyola Marymount, Gonzaga as successful examples). But how was one to adapt the schools to the structures of American education, to face facts and to raise standards? An internal 1930s assessment (the Macelwane Report) had noted so devastatingly the shortcomings of Jesuit higher education that it was initially suppressed. It took several decades to put its recommendations fully into effect.

"The Modern Society Emerges" with Vatican II and General Congregations 31-34. It was made possible, the author says, by several interlocking "steps toward freedom," such as the ability for positive self

criticism; the church's growing commitment to a "worldly" problem, poor people; the influence of Teilhard de Chardin and the theology of Karl Rahner. Those and other influences were not always easily assimilated but they were helped by such things as the liturgical movement (Gerald Ellard) the burgeoning of scripture studies (the Catholic Biblical Association) the increasing call for high intellectual standards (John Tracy Ellis, himself not a Jesuit). The Council and the congregations (Pedro Arrupe) with their reformulations of old truths and passionate agreement or opposition thereon are vividly portrayed, as are personal and institutional crises, college and university upheavals, sexual mores, Vatican censorship, and in most recent years such striking and successful innovations as Nativity and Cristo Rey schools, and the multiple ways in which Jesuit institutions as a whole are changing.

To be honest, the publisher has not well served the author in its copy editors and proofreaders. There are too many unfortunate editorial oversights and errors. But the merits of the book surely outweigh them. It will be of great interest and value to all United States Jesuits and their friends and colleagues. I surely hope that directors of Jesuit works put it into the hands of their co-workers, their faculty members and administrators and their boards of trustees.

What will the future hold? The book ends by quoting Karl Rahner: "One thing remains certain. It is possible for men to know God." The Jesuits' role is to help people find God "in everything." Will there be enough Jesuits to do this? "How many they are numerically and in proportion to mankind as a whole is ultimately of no importance, if the church alone as the sacrament of salvation of the whole world remains present in it." ■