

Renaissance and Reformation
Renaissance et Réforme



The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits. Edited by Thomas Worcester

Seymour Baker House

Volume 33, numéro 2, printemps 2010

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1106588ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v33i2.15302>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (imprimé)

2293-7374 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

House, S. (2010). Compte rendu de [The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits. Edited by Thomas Worcester]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 33(2), 145–148. <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v33i2.15302>

© Canadian Society for Renaissance Studies / Société canadienne d'études de la Renaissance; Pacific Northwest Renaissance Society; Toronto Renaissance and Reformation Colloquium; Victoria University Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2011

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>

érudit

Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche.

<https://www.erudit.org/fr/>

La cour d'Henri III a aussi passionné les médecins, les psychologues et les psychanalystes, qui ont fait de ce milieu un terrain de recherche particulièrement riche.

Guy Poirier conclut en disant que l'espace marginal, qui fut attribué à Henri III, par certains de ses contemporains, ainsi que par l'histoire et la littérature n'est pas glorieux, mais il a inspiré plusieurs générations d'historiens, de littéraires et d'écrivains, qui ont enrichi le personnage historique d'Henri III de leurs propres inquiétudes.

L'historien d'aujourd'hui pourrait reprocher à Guy Poirier d'avoir trop centré sa réflexion sur la sexualité d'Henri III et d'avoir négligé bien d'autres éléments, tout aussi intéressants, mais il faut reconnaître que les historiens ont eu tendance à ne pas insister sur cet aspect de la personnalité d'Henri III et à privilégier l'histoire politique, institutionnelle, sociale et économique du règne. Guy Poirier leur rappelle que l'histoire est aussi l'histoire des hommes, de leurs comportements, de leurs fantasmes, de leurs folies même et que c'est une dimension qu'il ne faut pas minimiser. En cela, son livre est une contribution capitale non seulement à l'histoire d'Henri III, mais aussi à celle des rebondissements les plus divers au fil des siècles de l'histoire d'un règne, qui n'a pas achevé d'intriguer tous les chercheurs.

JEAN MARIE CONSTANT, *Université du Maine*

The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits.

Edited by Thomas Worcester.

Cambridge Companions to Religion. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. xii, 361.

The volume is a welcome addition to the series of Cambridge Companions to Religion, and somewhat of a departure in that it treats not an individual or a concept but the origins, development, and global impact of a religious order. Although it is heavily weighted toward the period prior to the suppression of the Society in 1773 by Clement XIV (in what would prove to be a temporary ban) and addresses issues ranging from Ignatius's religious milieu to post-Vatican II discourse, overall this compilation is a Jesuit passacaglia whose themes surface and resurface throughout: the role of the Spiritual Exercises, the bene-

fits and drawbacks of the particularly centralized Jesuit order and its close proximity to political power, and the emphasis on both groundbreaking educational enterprises in Europe and a concomitant fearlessness in missionary encounters abroad. Its eighteen articles by seventeen authors (nine of whom are Jesuits) are grouped into five sections: Ignatius (three articles); European foundations (five articles); geographic and ethnic frontiers (four articles); arts and sciences (two articles); and Jesuits in the modern world (four articles.) The weighting toward the early modern period is justified by noting that this is when the Society achieved its greatest impact. The range and depth of the articles and their bibliographies will prove informative to specialists in the field, and will not only give solid footing to the student but stimulate inquiry by highlighting areas of tension and opportunities for further investigation.

In the first section, dealing with Loyola himself, Lu Ann Homza sketches the “ironies” of church praxis familiar to all students of the Reformation, from the rampant materialism of the clergy to the wide-ranging devotional material and the increasing calls for greater clerical rigour which contributed to Ignatius’s understanding of his own calling. J. Carlos Coupeau follows by looking at Loyola through a number of lenses as he moves through the early stages of setting up the Society, and groups these various portraits around the central document that emerged from them all—the Constitutions. Philip Endean rounds out this opening set with a remarkable essay on the Spiritual Exercises which provide the fundamental experiential charism of the Society. In particular he sees in them the source of what will become an ongoing tension between the Society and ecclesial authority, especially as Jesuits move further afield, since “what the individual discovers [through the Exercises] may go beyond what is ecclesiastically sanctioned.”

The second section, the book’s largest, traces the early history of Jesuits in Europe, starting with Paul V. Murphy’s discussion of Italy. In addition to its well-known dedication to education, the Society’s other apostolates—confraternities and various domestic missions, including missions among the impoverished Italian peasants—helped shape the devotional landscape of the Post-Reformation Church. As always, their tie with the papacy was simultaneously a source of strength and a liability: for instance, when papal relations with Venice soured in the early seventeenth century, the Jesuits had to go. It was to become a familiar story: despite its many successes, the Society was expelled from a number of monarchies prior to the general suppression in 1773. Tho-

mas M. McCoog explores the Society in England, Scotland, and Ireland where its mission—and relations with the local secular clergy—were considerably more complex. As usual, their fate was directly bound up in national politics, which sometimes forced Jesuits to display the extraordinary adaptability, such as adopting lay garb as they went about their business, for which they were justly famous. The history of the Jesuits in France is perhaps a microcosm of their history worldwide, as Thomas Worcester demonstrates. Periods of expulsion alternate with periods of extraordinary royal patronage, and although the Society cultivated exceptionally close ties with the monarchy (especially under Henry IV), Jesuits attracted considerable opposition from both political and theological opponents. Gemma Simmonds' essay on Mary Ward's "English Ladies" and other attempts to include women within the Society or its apostolates shows Jesuits at an impasse—reliant on wealthy benefactresses and dedicated to education, they could not admit women nor undertake their spiritual direction. Nor was the post-Tridentine Church ready to receive uncloistered women religious. Stanislaw Obirek provides a brief historiographic introduction to the study of Jesuits and their impact in eastern Europe and Poland, where, as we have come to expect, the Society's close relations with the monarchy "contributed to the opinion that they were more interested in politics than religion." Yet it was this very closeness that permitted the order to survive and even flourish in Russia and Prussia when it was suppressed in Catholic Austria after 1773.

The third section provides excellent overviews of Jesuits missionary activity abroad in Japan, China, and New France, and a concluding study of ethnic diversity within the Society itself. From the start, Jesuits had been ordered to mission: Loyola and Paul III sent Francis Xavier to India as early as 1542, and the nearly continuous presence of Jesuits in the Far East attests to the success of their adaptability and perseverance, as M. Antoni J. Üçerler points out. Although the Japanese mission slid into political entanglements and ended in martyrdom, the Society had honed its ability to missionize highly developed cultures, particularly that of China. Nicolas Standaert offers a fine overview of the Chinese mission, where despite their minimal impact on this heavily populated country (250 million by mid-eighteenth century), Jesuit experience there provided the Society with valuable lessons (accommodation, tolerance, and a particular methodology for evangelization) and enriched Europe as much as it did China. Jacques Monet's study of the Society in New France picks up familiar themes—Jesuit facility with languages, politics, and education—and the

ethnographic expertise gained in North America (as in China) proved invaluable. Thomas M. Cohen's discussion of the Society's approach to its own rapidly changing ethnic diversity provides valuable insight into the ways a highly Eurocentric order assimilated the fruits of its experience.

The final two sections deal with the Society's broader impact on early modern and modern cultures. Gauvin Alexander Bailey's discussion of Jesuit architecture in the New World explores the various tensions explicit in cultural accommodation, from the importation of European stone for Latin American churches to the adoption of vernacular themes and motifs in Jesuit mission outposts. Louis Caruana's essay on the Jesuits' valiant but doomed struggle to preserve the remnants of Aristotelian cosmology provides insights into the benefits that intellectual flexibility confers even when engaged in regressive obedience to outdated models. In the final section, Jonathan Wright concludes that the suppression of the order in 1773 was in part due to "extraordinary bad luck" before displaying the rather more conventional evidence that politics—in which the Jesuits had always been particularly well-entrenched—also played a prominent role. Gerald McKeivitt traces the trajectory of Jesuit schools as they struggle to preserve the Society's particular charism in an increasingly secular and secularizing United States, and Mary Ann Hinsdale provides an illuminating discussion of the Jesuit contribution to post-Vatican II theological discourse. The final entry, by Thomas Worcester, depicts the order as it stands today, from its geographical dispersion to the tensions confronting Jesuits as they prepare to greet the end of their fifth century of service.

This volume gives us an authoritative and reliable tour of the Jesuits and their remarkably varied history. It is highly recommended both as a general overview and as a jumping off point for more specialized investigations.

SEYMOUR BAKER HOUSE, *Mount Angel Seminary*

Tessa Storey.

Carnal Commerce in Counter-Reformation Rome.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. xvi, 296.

This new volume is a concise, widely researched, and interesting historical study. The discussion is wide-ranging, incorporating a varied source base,