

Encounters Between Jesuits and Protestants in Asia and the Americas

Eds Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, Robert Aleksander Maryks, and Ronnie Po-chia Hsia
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ELISA FREI

Boston College-University of York-University of Macerata

This edited volume contains the proceedings of the third Symposium on Jesuit studies, which took place in June 2017 in Boston. The book is published for the Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies at Boston College, and Jesuits are the main focus of every essay. The three introductions and thirteen papers study different kinds of “encounters” between Jesuits and Protestants, in Asia and the Americas. Some of them were direct, some others were cultural confrontations happening in different times. These exchanges were not ‘negative’ or ‘positive,’ but simply inevitable: Jesuits were the first Christians in many missionary fields, and a few centuries later Protestants had to necessarily deal with their (often substantial) legacy.

The editors are three. In the general introduction ‘Protestantism and Early Jesuits,’ Robert Aleksander Maryks explains how the commonplace of the Society of Jesus as ‘a sort of papal troop to combat Protestantism’ (1) is not acceptable anymore and lacks any documentary foundation. Not only did Ignatius of Loyola (c. 1491–1556) and Martin Luther (1483–1546) never meet, but Luther did not know anything about Ignatius, and Ignatius never mentioned Luther as an enemy he planned to fight with his new order. If Ignatius and his followers started to be seen as ‘anti-Protestant characters,’ it was mainly because his biographers wanted to clear the new-born order from any ‘suspicion of heresy’ (3). The myth of Jesuits as anti-Protestant agents, however, became quite common after Ignatius’ death, and moved on the same routes missionaries (both Jesuit and Protestant) used to take.

In doing a thorough examination of the Asian situation, the third editor Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia also introduces to the essays of the first part of the book. He notices how the presence of the Society of Jesus in many countries was inextricably intertwined with the Portuguese crown, culture and agenda – even if Jesuit missionaries did not represent only that nationality. Po-Chia Hsia underlines the importance of this volume, which shows in what ways the Jesuit legacy survived in Asia until today. Erroneous prejudices and diffidence, however, prevented many historians to acknowledge the relevance of this religious and cultural contribution.

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In Japan, Christianity lived a century of alternate fortunes (1549–1639); after that period, the only foreigners allowed on the archipelago were Protestants, namely Dutch merchants. Haruko Nawata Ward focuses on the Japanese persecutions against the cult of saints as witnessed by members of the Dutch United East India Company (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, VOC). Once the Japanese empire reopened after the *sakoku* ('closed country'), the religious people arriving there from the 1850s could not ignore this Christian past, at the same time trying new ways to proselytise in a country in such a rapid transformation. Makoto Harris Takao studies the relations between Protestants, French Catholics and the Society of Jesus in Japan at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Moving then to China, Sophie Ling-chia Wei gives a historical overview of the use made by Jesuits and Protestants of vernacular Chinese as part of their *accommodatio* policies. The Society of Jesus established its first missions in China in the 1590s, while the Protestants arrived there more than two centuries later. The latter had to deeply draw from Jesuit sources and methodologies. Hui-Hung Chen focuses on the introduction in China of the Marian devotion as made by the Jesuits. She analyses a Chinese-style copy of an Italian painting and contextualises its 'discovery,' made by anthropologist Berthold Laufer (1874–1934) in a particularly hectic time for Chinese Christianity (1910). Steven Piergastini investigates the relationships between Jesuits and Protestants in Jiangnan. The respective missions faced not only spiritual difficulties, but of a national, financial, and political nature as well.

The two last Asian essays are set in India. Délio Mendonça's article concerns the public debates among Jesuits and Protestants of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; they never happened face-to-face, however, but 'through the medium of print' (137). They constantly criticised each other's methods, real goals and empires / kingdoms. Michelle Zaleski shows how the contribution of Jesuit linguists to the study of Tamil were ignored and despised by Protestants until the late twentieth century, because they were considered inseparable from the 'excessive, extravagant, and even inaccurate' (159) 'Jesuit essence' they represented.

The first editor, Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, guides the reader to the second part of the book, about the Americas. He criticises how Protestant cultures 'created a narrative in which science, entrepreneurship, and commercial freedoms were viewed as a form of liberation from the oppression of late medieval Iberian Catholicism' (179). The Society of Jesus was, in this old-fashioned perspective, enemy of all those early modern and liberal values. The contrary is true: as recent historiography and the chapters of this volume also testify, the Ignatian order was an active part of all those transformations.

This section focuses on specific people: the first essay is about José de Acosta (c. 1540–1600). Cañizares-Esguerra follows the literary fortunes of the author of *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* (Seville, 1590): a first-generation Jesuit, he was known to a wide public thanks to dozens of Anglican and Calvinist translations. Acosta

became part of a Protestant canon, while the Jesuit order almost forgot his work for centuries. Anne B. McGinness presents the fascinating case-study of Manoel de Morães (b. c. 1596). Born in Brazil, he became a Jesuit, and fought against the agents of the West Indies Company with an indigenous army. He then convinced this same army to pass on the opposite side (against the Catholics), became a Calvinist, and left for Europe. He finally went back to Brazil and died as a Catholic. The third Jesuit here taken into consideration is Antoine de La Valette (1708–67): Steve Lenik follows his life and deeds in the 18th century Caribbean. His controversial financial activities (risky slave trade and management of plantation) “accelerated the process leading to the order’s dissolution” (182–83). Nonetheless, historical and archaeological investigations testify the permanence of a strong Jesuit heritage in this territory, which became a British colony in 1763.

Catherine Ballériaux argues that, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the policies of Catholic and Protestant missionaries in New France and New England presented more similarities than differences. Both closely depending on their kingdoms’ agendas, they had to employ different strategies while operating in moving and disputed frontiers. Robert Emmett Curran focuses on the idea of ‘Jesuit’ as ‘the epitome of what it meant to be un-American’ (303), as theorised by ‘nativism’ in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Only after Catholic Americans proved themselves loyal to the American cause, Protestant Americans started to allow them religious freedom and included them in their same bigger picture. In the last essay of the book, Steven Mailloux investigates the use of the terms ‘Jesuit’ / ‘Jesuitism’ as synonym of negative, rhetorical, and insincere. A great writer like Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–81), for instance, described in his diaries and novels the ‘stinking Jesuits’ as ‘lies, casuist, lies, lies, lies,’ nothing more than ‘a Roman army’ which ‘stands outside of humanity, outside of citizenship, outside of civilization [...] a *status in statu* [...] let everything that does not agree with them die - civilization, society, science!’ (329).

This whole book clearly shows that these ideas are outdated and do not correspond to reality. The collection of essays covers almost all the years of the Jesuit endeavour, from the sixteenth century until contemporaneity, recognising successes and limits of its confrontation with the Protestant counterpart in Asia and the Americas. The publication is enriched by ca. thirty illustrations, and includes an updated bibliography which can be profitably consulted by readers of different fields. The *leitmotiv* of it all is how, even if Jesuits and Protestants brought with them their own ‘European’ prejudices and had different policies, in many periods and places their destinies were inseparable. They had to learn how to cooperate and take advantage of their respective ways of proceeding.