

INTRODUCTION

I do not like the late Resurrection of the Jesuits. They have a General, now in Russia, in correspondence with the Jesuits in the U.S. who are more numerous than every body knows. Shall we not have Swarms of them here? . . . If ever any Congregation of Men could merit, eternal Perdition on Earth and in Hell . . . it is this Company of Loiola. Our System however of Religious Liberty must afford them an Asylum. But if they do not put the Purity of our Elections to a severe Tryal, it will be a Wonder.

—JOHN ADAMS TO THOMAS JEFFERSON, MAY 6, 1816

I dislike, with you, their restoration; because it marks a retrograde step from light toward darkness.

—THOMAS JEFFERSON TO JOHN ADAMS, AUGUST 1, 1816

This Society has been a greater Calamity to Mankind than the French Revolution or Napoleon's Despotism or Ideology. It has obstructed the Progress of Reformation and the Improvement of the human mind in society much longer and more fatally.

—JOHN ADAMS TO THOMAS JEFFERSON, NOVEMBER 4, 1816

I

The suppression of the Jesuits (or Society of Jesus) in 1773 by Pope Clement XIV does not appear in US history textbooks. It is a puzzling event, with Catholic monarchs pressuring the pope to abolish a religious order perceived as excessively loyal to the papacy. Forty-one years later another pope, Pius VII, reversed course and restored the Jesuits, provoking an anxious exchange between two provincial Enlightenment intellectuals (and former US presidents). John Adams was sufficiently exercised about the

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Jesuit restoration to compose two essays on the topic, lamenting the “surprise, deception and violence” employed by the Society.¹

American Jesuits and the World begins where Adams and Thomas Jefferson end. It tracks some of the roughly one thousand Jesuits who left Europe for the United States over the course of the nineteenth century as well as American Jesuits who left for mission territories in the early twentieth century.

The significance of the Jesuits to either the history of modern Catholicism or the history of the United States was not predictable—certainly not at the moment of the Jesuit restoration in 1814. Then the Society counted only six hundred aged members; a century later the Jesuits numbered close to seventeen thousand men.² These Jesuits had become allies and admirers of Pope Pius IX (1846–78). They had become even more influential during the papacy of Leo XIII (1878–1903), whose closest advisers included a brother who was a Jesuit. Other priests, nuns, laypeople, and bishops of course led the burst of missionary activity and institution building that historians now term the nineteenth-century Catholic revival.³ But no other group possessed the Jesuit reach, from the Roman Curia to hundreds of schools and colleges and far-flung mission stations.⁴

These Jesuits desired not just the expansion of Catholicism but its uniformity. Their orientation toward Rome as the focal point of a global Catholic community made daily Catholic life across the world more similar in 1914 than in 1814. Eighteenth-century Catholics, especially in majority Protestant or non-Catholic societies, worshipped discreetly and quietly catechized their young. Nineteenth-century Catholics, often led by Jesuits, disdained other religious traditions and cultivated Catholic distinctiveness. When an exiled Swiss Jesuit organized a youth group for boys in Boston in 1858 he and the boys proudly identified themselves as “communing” with counterparts in Rome.⁵

These same Jesuits became central to the nationalist imagination. The emergence of the modern nation-state in the nineteenth century is a conventional textbook story, with Italy, Germany, Mexico, France, the United States, and other countries developing stronger national governments, funding systems of

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education, and cultivating identification with a nation’s history and culture, as opposed to the history and culture of a particular region.⁶ A Catholicism centered in Rome and unaccountable to national leaders, and the Jesuits as an international religious order managing independent colleges and schools, threatened nationalist projects. Politicians and intellectuals around the world worried that the Jesuits would, in the words of one Mexico City editor, “detain the course of the century.”⁷

These worries prompted government officials to expel the Jesuits, often multiple times, from Switzerland, various parts of modern-day Italy (including Rome, Piedmont, and Naples), Colombia, Uruguay, Ecuador, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Peru, Austria, Spain, Germany, Guatemala, France, and Nicaragua. In Mexico, a liberal government expelled “foreign-born” Jesuits.⁸ The Jesuits were not expelled from Canada, Britain, and Australia, but leading politicians and prominent writers in all of these countries denounced them. Or as one Maryland legislator (and future US senator) explained, “The Jesuits have been successfully expelled from nearly every Catholic kingdom in Europe because they would meddle in political intrigues. We have no reason to wonder that they have not neglected so tempting a field as our free institutions open to their arts.”⁹

This hostility prompted Jesuits and their allies to accelerate the building of a dense Catholic subculture of parishes, schools, associations, colleges, and magazines, all constructed in a reciprocal relationship with a particular devotional culture and communal sensibility. This social imaginary, to use the language of philosopher Charles Taylor, endured through the 1960s and profoundly shaped how Catholics understood the world around them.¹⁰ And in part for this reason Catholics and Protestants in majority Protestant countries such as the United States, Germany, and the Netherlands as well as Catholics and anticlericals in France, Italy, and much of Latin America became more segregated from each other over the course of the nineteenth century, not less. Even Chinese Catholics, a tiny minority among a sea of non-Christians, developed closer ties to Rome. What in the eighteenth century remained local disputes, between Catholics and

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non-Catholics, or among Catholics themselves, became measured against heightened Roman standards of orthodoxy and parallel disputes across the globe. The polemics that resulted from a more tightly defined religious identity typically did not lead to violence—a welcome restraint when compared to the Reformation era. But religious divisions structured a new confessional age.¹¹

This more confessional age was also more global. If Jesuits journeying to Manila, Havana, and Lima soon after the Society's founding by Ignatius of Loyola in 1540 made Catholicism the first world religion, the nineteenth century marked another leap forward in global range.¹² In the 1830s and 1840s alone, the Society established new missions in Syria (1831), Calcutta (1834), Argentina (1836), Madurai (1837), Nanking (1841), Canada (1842), Madagascar (1844), Algeria (1848), and Australia (1848).¹³ Tiny Luxembourg sent Jesuit missionaries to Africa, South Asia, China, North America, and South America.¹⁴

This book uses European Jesuits emigrating to the United States and some American Jesuits working beyond American borders to examine how Catholic globalization worked. The US focus stems from accessibility to archives and my own linguistic capacities. But since the United States was such an important site for Jesuit work, drawing more Jesuits from around the world than any other place in the nineteenth century, the choice is less idiosyncratic than it might appear. The Jesuit protagonists of this book are “American” in that they all lived and worked in the United States. Yet they all lived and worked outside the United States for long periods too.

In fact, more than most of their contemporaries, more than almost any of ours, these Jesuits lived in nation-states, including the United States, but were not entirely of them. The Jesuit Father General or leader, Jan Roothaan, grew up in the Netherlands before sojourns in Saint Petersburg, Switzerland, and Turin. By then he had “stopped being a Hollander.” In fact, “I have been since then a Pole or a Russian, then a Swiss, or a German, or a Frenchman, according to needs, and now I am an Italian.”¹⁵ At various moments in the nineteenth century, up to half of German Jesuits worked outside Germany; a third of French Jesu-

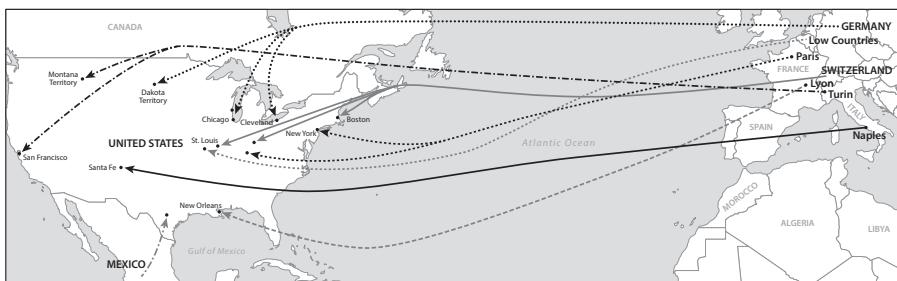
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its worked outside France. In 1902, a full 26 percent of Jesuits worked in foreign missions.¹⁶ Jesuits from particular European houses saw themselves and their friends sent to utterly distant locales based on the exigencies of expulsion and the needs of the Society at a particular moment: Madagascar or Beirut, Cleveland or Quito.

Every Jesuit expulsion led to a scattering of Jesuits, with men expelled from Austria in 1848 landing in Australia, men expelled from Spain in 1868 heading to Colombia and the Philippines, and men expelled from Germany in 1871 journeying to England and Ecuador. The most significant migration of Jesuits to the United States occurred after the 1848 revolutions as Father General Roothaan struggled to place Jesuits expelled from Europe. By the 1870s, Jesuits from Turin worked in San Francisco and among the Blackfeet Indians in the Rocky Mountains; Jesuits from Naples worked in New Mexico and as professors at the theologate for advanced Jesuit seminarians in Maryland; Jesuits from Paris worked in New York City along with the Yukon and Klondike regions in Alaska; Jesuits from Belgium worked in central Missouri and the Pacific Northwest; Jesuits from Lyon worked in New Orleans, Tampa, and El Paso; Jesuits from Germany worked on Indian reservations in the Dakota territory as well as Saint Louis, Milwaukee, Chicago, and Buffalo; Jesuits from Switzerland worked up and down the East Coast, on Indian reservations in Kansas and the Dakota territory, and in Saint Louis, Cincinnati, and Boston. A handful of Jesuits from Poland eventually came to Nebraska and various cities on the East Coast, and a few Jesuits came from Portugal to New England fishing towns. A group of Jesuits expelled from Mexico spent a decade working in Texas.

The intensity of the connections between these Jesuits and colleagues in Rome and their countries of origin distinguishes them from their sixteenth- and seventeenth-century predecessors. All of the world's great religious traditions became more self-conscious about doctrine and uniform practice in the nineteenth century, as speedier travel and new communication technologies permitted more frequent contact with coreligionists. Jesuits in Saint Louis, for example, pleaded with their Roman colleagues to use the telegraph,

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MAP 1. Jesuit Migration to the United States, 1820s–80s

not the slower postal service, to alert them to developments at the First Vatican Council.¹⁷

Here historians of Catholicism can make a distinctive contribution. Certainly Protestant revivalists crisscrossed not only Europe and North America but also once-remote locales such as Australia and South Africa. Certainly, too, Muslim scholars created new communities reaching from Istanbul to Cairo to Calcutta.¹⁸

In contrast to Protestantism or Islam, however, modern Catholicism included not just transient networks of individuals moving across the globe but an increasingly powerful central institution. The Jesuit Father General lived in Rome, when not in exile, surrounded by Jesuit assistants from varied national backgrounds monitoring, advising, and at times ordering colleagues across the world. Similarly, the bureaucratic and symbolic reach of the papacy expanded, in part as a reaction to expanded governmental authority in nation-states. More vigorous Roman offices for doctrine, canon law, and missionary work emerged, along with a diplomatic corps staffed by ambassadors (termed envoys or nuncios). If the papacy was an abstraction to most eighteenth-century Catholics, Jesuits and their allies made the embattled nineteenth-century popes known across the Catholic world. The Coeur D'Alene Indians, dwelling in the most remote section of what is now Montana and Idaho, organized themselves in 1871, with the aid of an exiled Italian Jesuit, to declare their willingness to “spill their blood and give their lives for our good Father

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Pius IX.” The allure of studying a corporate body such as the Jesuits is to do history in multiple registers, moving from local religious experience to the modern nation-state to the world’s most multicultural and multilingual institution.¹⁹

Chapter 1 surveys the history of the nineteenth-century Jesuits and that of their critics. Each subsequent chapter tells the story of a revealing event. The events include the tarring and feathering of a Swiss Jesuit in Maine, an accusation of treason made against a Belgian Jesuit in civil-war Missouri, a woman claiming a miraculous healing in rural Louisiana and the promotion of that miracle by French Jesuits, the construction of one of Philadelphia’s largest churches and a Jesuit college by a Swiss Jesuit, and finally, the educational efforts of American and Spanish Jesuits in early twentieth-century Manila. The conclusion sketches the global history of the Jesuits until Pope Francis, elected in 2013 as not only the first Jesuit Pope but also the first modern pope from outside Europe.

Once told in Jesuit rectories and periodicals, these stories are now largely forgotten.²⁰ But they merit more than parochial concern. Some of the issues confronted by these Jesuits, notably the meaning of religious liberty in a pluralist age, bedevil us still. And the sheer presence of Jesuits in the United States alerts us to ideas and institutions in tension with a “liberal tradition” once thought all encompassing. Oddly enough, then, the Latin textbooks, miracle accounts, scholarly articles, sermons, travelogues, devotions to the Sacred Heart, educational treatises, and baroque churches of the Jesuits may help place the history of the United States into a more global frame.²¹