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By Louis Caruana

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For centuries, the activity of Jesuits has stimulated curiosity and wonder. Their involvement in the development of science is no exception. Is it true that the Society of Jesus was a serious impediment to the natural development of the scientific revolution during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? Did their educational system, highly influential as it was for the cultural renewal of Europe, deliver the vibrant, creative spirit characteristic of modern science? This valuable collection of essays addresses such crucial questions. It re-evaluates the role of Jesuits during that crucial period by concentrating on how they taught and worked in their institutions. The most prominent institution was undoubtedly the Collegio Romano. Teaching from this one institution was disseminated widely via the impressive network of other Jesuit colleges all over Europe.

Feingold opens the collection with his own study on the profile of Jesuit Savants. He succeeds in getting past the stereotypes that surrounded the Society of Jesus during the first 200 years of its existence. He does this by evaluating the scientific dimension of its intellectual contribution, independently of its religious mission. On the whole, the scholarly activities and aspirations of Jesuits were indistinguishable from those of other contemporary savants, secular or ordained. A striking example is available in the work of the Collegio Romano Academy of Mathematicians. A paper in this volume by Baldini focuses on the work of this academy from 1553 to 1612.

The Jesuits' role in the Galileo affair is an inevitable centre of attention for any study of Jesuits and science in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Their influence on Galileo has been examined almost exclusively in relation to logic and natural philosophy. This tended to overshadow the autonomy and value of the broader scientific research engaged in by Jesuits like Christopher Clavius. In this volume, Baldini's article succeeds well in correcting this trend. In general, Jesuits were good at scientific investigation, and made some important discoveries. Some historians have even called the Society of Jesus the one most important contributor to experimental physics in the seventeenth century. Since the Jesuits engaged in science on a broad scale, it is arguable that the Society of Jesus was the first true scientific society before the Accademia del Cimento or the Royal society. Jesuits collected objects from a world-wide network and published massive amounts of data. In this volume, Baldwin's contribution dealing with natural philosophy and the Jesuit quest for the patronage of printed books in the seventeenth century addresses such interesting issues.

More on Galileo and the Jesuits can be found in the article by Wallace. He argues for a positive and enduring influence of Jesuit ideas not only on Galileo but also on other Catholic individuals of science and their patrons. The papers by Grant and Dinis make important contributions to the ongoing debate on this issue. They show how the controversies following Galileo's important publications were inevitable. They were not always motivated by empty rhetoric and malice, as commentators often portray, but by sound arguments that were respectable in the context of the time.

Apart from Galileo, other men of science in various geographic settings are dealt with in other contributions to this volume. Descartes is a major figure. The Jesuit critique of Descartes is well explored by Ariew. The argument is that the Jesuit offensive against Cartesianism did not deal primarily with claims concerning the natural world but with rules of method. Athanasius Kircher is another intriguing figure. The paper by Findlen considers Kircher and his Roman College Museum from the original perspective of 'scientific spectacle in Baroque Rome'. She refutes the idea that Jesuit scientific work became irretrievably isolated from the main currents of the scientific revolution. She shows how Kircher was a typical savant of Baroque scientific culture in that he tried to accommodate the new within the framework of the old, and put it all on display. Other aspects of this early scientific culture are explored in other contributions to this volume: Navarro's essay is on tradition and scientific change in early modern Spain; Vanpaemel's is on Jesuit science in the Spanish Netherlands, and Dooley's on the *Storia letterari d'Italia*.

All in all, this collection succeeds admirably in its intention of re-evaluating the institutional role of Jesuits during the emergence of scientific culture. The above summary cannot do justice to a work of such richness, both as regards content and as regards bibliography. All the contributions are of high quality. Let me, however, express one hesitation. A major problem with Jesuit science remains somewhat neglected in this volume. Many historians agree today that many 17th century Jesuit scientists adopted an overall attitude marked by eclecticism. Jesuits often showed a complete lack of discrimination in their collection of data. In Kircher's notebooks, for instance, we find no concern whatsoever for determining the more reliable authority. The fact that none of the contributors in this volume addresses eclecticism with the attention it deserves may leave the specialised reader somewhat unsatisfied. In spite of this element of weakness, however, the volume remains indispensable for further research. For anyone interested in the way Jesuit scholars were instrumental in elevating the status of mathematics and in emphasising the importance of experimental science, or in the way the Order was constrained because of a clearly defined apostolic mission, this book is a must.

Louis Caruana SJ

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