Book Reviews Comptes rendus

John W. O'Malley. *The First Jesuits*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993. Pp. xiv, 457.

This is a book for people who think they know the Society of Jesus. From the sixteenth century onward, many Catholics found its name presumptuous, its theology suspect, and its methods Machiavellian. Protestants could be freer in their invective, and attacked the Jesuits with relish as the pre-eminent Counter-Reformation force: an order sprung fully armed from the head of the Tridentine Zeus, wielding specious logic and slippery ethics, blindly obedient to the papal antichrist, and all too threateningly successful in its missionary activities. Secular histories offered a reheated protestantism without denominational peculiarities, sure of the bigotry of all religious zealots and happy to demonstrate indiscriminating objectivity by consigning both Ignatius and Calvin to the same ash heap. The Jesuits responded with in-house hagiographies whose uncritical and immoderate praise for the Society and its members seemed only to confirm the worst suspicions of the critics. The invective has cooled, but the stereotype lingers. To adopt John Bossy's terminology, the Jesuits are often assumed to be models of the world-oriented, obedience-ordered, clerically-directed "Christianity Translated" that replaces the more communitarian, sacramental, and lay-oriented "Traditional Christianity" of the pre-Reformation period. But are they?

John O'Malley does not directly engage the Society's historical or current critics, but his analysis of its history to 1565 demonstrates how wrong much of our confident stereotyping is. The first Jesuits were in many ways the exponents of "Traditional Christianity" who were hardly aware of how Christianity was being Translated around and within them. O'Malley's careful explication of the resulting paradoxes and contradictions gives a more nuanced view of the Society and, like William Bouwsma's *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait* (1988), forces us to introduce uncertainty, tension, and moderation into our image of sixteenth-century religious reformers.

O'Malley aims to understand the first Jesuits as they understood themselves, recapturing their "way of proceeding" from early documents, and determining how

their response to the situations they found themselves in shaped the evolution of both their ministry and their self-perception. The first part of the book deals with their work (preaching, worship, charity, and education), and the second with their culture or context (contemporary intellectual movements, relations to the Church, institutional evolution). Ministry and self-perception evolved in four general phases. The first, to 1540, was the period of gestation when the companions first banded together around the *Spiritual Exercises* and a commitment to missions. In the second phase, from 1540 to 1548, the Jesuits moved more deliberately into itinerant preaching and institutional charity. They saw themselves as catalysts for lay piety, preaching, lecturing, catechizing, and fostering charitable confraternities that worked with orphans, debtors, prostitutes and other marginalized groups. Their emphasis on “spiritual consolation” animated and united these activities, and led them to avoid hierarchical entanglements as much as possible.

The third phase, from 1548 to 1559, was the most critical and controversial. By choice, necessity, and circumstance, an institutional identity began to supplant the charismatic movement. With the printing of the *Spiritual Exercises* (hitherto available only in manuscript), and the clarification of administrative procedures in the *Constitutions*, the character of the Society became more fixed. Lines of obedience became more definite as Ignatius and his secretary carried vast, detailed correspondence with far-flung individuals and houses. Ecclesiastical opposition stiffened with the Paris Theological Faculty’s formal condemnation of the Society in 1554, and the election of the largely hostile Giampietro Carafa as Pope Paul IV in 1555. External threats received internal echoes after Ignatius died in 1556, triggering a two-year crisis over whether the direction he had taken would be maintained, or if the Society itself could survive. Perhaps most significantly, this was also the period in which the Jesuits opened their first schools for the public (Messina, 1548) and for their own members (Collegio Romano, 1551; Collegio Germanico, 1552). O’Malley offers an excellent description of these institutions and their curriculum, and demonstrates how they gradually became the tail that wagged the dog, profoundly shaping Jesuit ministry, communal life, and self-definition.

The fourth phase, from 1559 to 1565, was a period of confirmation and consolidation. Paul IV died, Paris cooled its opposition, Ignatius’ successor was elected, and the *Constitutions* were confirmed. The schools and foreign missions multiplied. As the Catholic Church moved into a Counter-Reformation mode, the Society followed, and its changing shape opened up contradictions and paradoxes. It supported Trent, but adamantly abstained from episcopacy and pastorates that were the chief agencies of Tridentine reform. It condemned Erasmus, but promoted his religious and cultural ideals in the schools. It embraced scholasticism, but promoted a mystical theology. It adopted an increasingly authoritarian approach, but modified this with appreciation for individual charisma, inner inspiration, and Aristotelian moderation.

Through examination of these and other paradoxes, O’Malley offers a counterpoint to the stereotype of Jesuit dogmatism and blind obedience. The first Jesuits practised a flexibility born of a mystical spirituality and pastoral theology. Their

conviction that God deals directly with believers, “heart to heart,” led them to orient spiritual consolation to concrete situations rather than abstract doctrines, and prevented them from absolutizing the ecclesiastical institutions that they defended. Predictably, this conviction also led them into trouble with Catholics who found their approach too Erasmic, Lutheran, or opportunistic. By the end of the century, these convictions, born in Bossy’s Traditional Christianity, were being Translated, and the Society with it. Seeking to preserve peace and avoid controversy, the Society became more cautious and conventional; it moved towards the stereotype which historians later associated with it, and which they often projected back to its origins. One could wish that O’Malley would have examined this process in more detail, but his analysis of the Jesuit “style,” and his emphasis on seeing that style as constituting Jesuit “substance,” clarifies both how the first Jesuits differed from their successors, and why their mutation — or Translation — was inevitable.

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Galileo Galilei, *Le messenger des étoiles*, traduit et présenté par Fernand Hallyn. Paris, Seuil, 1992.

Jamais observations et découvertes astronomiques n’auront eu une portée aussi révolutionnaire que celles effectuées par Galilée durant les quelques mois de l’hiver 1609-1610. Braquant sa lunette sur les cieux, il allait résoudre la Voie Lactée en une myriade d’étoiles individuelles, voir les irrégularités de la surface lunaire, et, surtout, découvrir les “planètes médicéennes,” les quatre satellites de Jupiter.

“La Lune est comme la Terre,” nous dit son traducteur: elle est aussi imparfaite que la Terre, elle est de même matière que la Terre et elle a perdu le privilège de la sphéricité parfaite qui seule convient à la perfection des astres. Mais aussi, stratégiquement, pour rendre tolérable l’abandon du géocentrisme, “la Terre est comme la Lune,” elle est, elle aussi, un corps céleste, de même dignité que les autres, de même vertu que les autres: vue de l’espace, ou vue de la Lune, la Terre est lumineuse puisqu’elle est la cause de cette lumière cendrée dont s’illumine la Lune en ses premiers jours. Et les satellites de Jupiter montrent que ni la Terre, ni même le soleil ne sont les centres absolus du monde, puisque Jupiter également a sa couronne de planètes.

C’est tout cela qu’annonce Galilée en son *Sidereus Nuncius*, soit qu’il se soit fait lui-même le “Messenger des étoiles,” soit qu’il se soit borné à transmettre leur message: les deux traductions sont possibles.

Le récit de ces découvertes révolutionnaires forme un mince volume de 56 pages qui se lit aisément en une soirée, et le lecteur d’aujourd’hui se sent encore emporté par l’enthousiasme de Galilée, qui voyait un monde nouveau s’ouvrir devant lui. Le style