Introduction

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The Society of Jesus is a Catholic religious order of men, whose members are known as Jesuits. It is often recognized by a monogram, IHS, and a motto, AMDG. The former honors the name of Jesus, Jesus who is the savior of the world (Jesus Hominum Salvator). The latter points to the raison d’être of the Jesuits, “For the greater glory of God” (Ad maiorem Dei gloriam). In this introduction and eighteen essays that follow, The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits focuses principally on the early modern period, from Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556), founder of the Jesuits, to the suppression of the Society of Jesus in the eighteenth century by Pope Clement XIV. Four of the five parts of the book treat this period: I. Ignatius of Loyola; II. European Foundations of the Jesuits; III. Geographic and Ethnic Frontiers; IV. Arts and Sciences. The last part, Jesuits in the Modern World, examines some key aspects of the Society of Jesus, from its suppression in 1773 and subsequent restoration in 1814, to the present.

Ignatius of Loyola was born at the end of the fifteenth century, at Loyola, in the Basque country of Spain. He grew up at a time when Spain was rapidly becoming the dominant power of Europe and indeed of the world. It was also a time of religious change and tension, an age when Spain’s monarchs expelled Jews and Muslims, and sought to enforce a kind of uniformity in belief and practice among Catholics. Yet diverse movements, ideas, and practices, old and new, prospered among Spanish Catholics. Lu Ann Homza’s essay, the first in this Companion, examines the complexity of the religious culture Ignatius would have experienced in early sixteenth-century Spain.

Injured in battle at Pamplona in 1521, Ignatius recovered slowly and painfully, but as he did so he began to read about the lives of the saints and the life of Christ. Setting out on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, he crossed northern Spain to the shrine of Our Lady of Montserrat, where he prayed for guidance in his desire to follow Christ. He then spent some months in prayer, as a kind of hermit, at nearby Manresa. In
Figure 0.1. Sunrise at Bellarmine House (Jesuit residence), Cohasset, Massachusetts, 2006. Photo by Thomas Worcester.
1523 he journeyed to the Holy Land, but was not permitted to remain there by its Franciscan guardians. In 1524, after returning to Spain, Ignatius began to study at the universities of Alcalá and Salamanca, trying to get an education, even well into adulthood, in Latin, and in philosophy and theology, matters he knew little about. Ignatius believed that he was called to “help souls” live more authentically Christian lives, and he sought to do this by various means, but especially by helping them to do certain “spiritual exercises.” These exercises in prayer and discernment would help people to know themselves and to know Christ better, and help them to make good decisions about how best to serve God and neighbor. Philip En dean’s essay considers in detail the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius. Refined by Ignatius through much of his life, and first published in the 1540s, they became the heart and soul of the spiritual “formation” of Jesuits themselves, and a central focus of much of their ministry to others.

In 1528 Ignatius began studies at the University of Paris, where he remained until 1535. In Paris, Ignatius succeeded in gaining the education he wanted and needed in order to “help souls,” by earning a Master’s degree. He also gained a small group of companions and followers from among his fellow students. With Ignatius, in 1534, six others made a vow to go to Jerusalem, or, should that be impossible, to offer their services to the pope. In the event, after travel to Venice and ordination as priests for those who were not yet ordained, they were unable to obtain passage to the Holy Land, and instead went to Rome. They presented a proposal for a new religious order, the Society of Jesus, to Pope Paul III in 1539, a proposal accepted by the pope in 1540, over the objections of some cardinals. The following year Ignatius was elected Superior General of the new order, and he devoted the rest of his life to governance of what became known as the Jesuits, and to writing constitutions for this religious order. Ignatius died in Rome in 1556, and was canonized as a saint by Pope Gregory XV in 1622. J. Carlos Coupeau’s essay in this book explores five different personae or roles of Ignatius, as they have been imagined and propagated since the sixteenth century.

Europe was where the Society of Jesus was born, and Rome was where its central government was based. Part II of the Companion examines the ways in which the Society grew rapidly in Europe after 1540, but also some of the principal challenges and limitations it faced. Paul Murphy’s essay explores what Jesuits did in Rome and in Italy, and gives some particular attention to the origins of Jesuit schools. Ignatius had not initially imagined his “company” as taking on the responsibility
of running schools; Jesuits were to be pilgrims, itinerant ministers of the word of God, mobile and ready to go anywhere, not resident schoolmasters. But by the late 1540s Jesuits began to found schools and take over existing educational institutions when invited to do so by princes, town officials, bishops, and other authorities. Schools became a central locus of Jesuit ministries that also went beyond the classroom, with Jesuit communities attached to schools serving as a kind of base of operations for a broad range of pastoral and other ministries.³

In the 1540s and 1550s, with the help of other Jesuits, Ignatius wrote Constitutions for the Society of Jesus.⁴ Detailed norms for admission of new members and their formation are one of the main topics treated. One does not become a Jesuit quickly. With some adaptations, Jesuit formation today is what Ignatius envisioned, and it lasts many years. It begins with a two-year novitiate, in which novices are introduced to Jesuit life, by learning about its history, but especially by participating in Jesuit prayer, Jesuit community, and Jesuit work of various kinds. Most importantly, novices make the full, thirty-day version of the Spiritual Exercises. At the end of the novitiate, if approved by the provincial superior, novices may pronounce vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. If seeking ordination as a priest, the newly vowed Jesuit becomes a scholastic (a Jesuit student). A brother is a Jesuit who, though not seeking ordination, may undertake studies in various fields; he will then take a full share in the Society’s work, according to his talents. For a scholastic, his studies normally include a broad exposure to the humanities and to sciences; this is followed by two years of philosophy, after which he becomes a regent for a year or two or three, or occasionally longer. Regency is a period of full-time work in a Jesuit ministry, and it could be anywhere in the world. Four years of theology study follow before a scholastic is ordained to the priesthood. Some time after ordination – often several years later – a Jesuit does tertianship, a period of some months, providing time for extended reflection on what one’s experience of Jesuit life has been, in view of the possibility of taking final vows as a Jesuit. Like the novitiate, details of tertianship vary, but they always include a thirty-day retreat. Final vows may include the fourth vow, a vow of obedience to the pope, in the sense of availability to be missioned anywhere in the world, for the greater glory of God.⁵

The Constitutions also outlined a system of governance in which a Superior General, elected for life, would oversee implementation of, and fidelity to, the Constitutions and related documents. Father General would also appoint provincial superiors. These superiors
would govern Jesuit provinces, and the provinces were to correspond to geographic areas, such as a city and its environs, or sometimes an entire country, or several countries together. As the number of provinces grew, these were grouped together in several “assistancies” and for each of these there was an assistant to Father General in Rome. There were also local superiors who would govern individual communities of Jesuits. But it was not a simplistic top-down pyramid, for individual Jesuits were encouraged to “represent” their views, including when they differed from those of superiors. Mere commands from above could be relatively rare, and often much was left to individual initiative. In an age before rapid transportation and electronic communication, letters from Rome could be slow in coming, and action could not always await their arrival. Though exempt in various ways from episcopal authority, Jesuits did at times depend on financial and other support from local bishops. Jesuits looked to Rome for authorization for what they did, but also to local situations and needs for how to deal with day-to-day work and life. Jesuits were not exempt from various forms of oversight by civil powers, and the management of good relations with emperors, monarchs, princes, parliaments, law courts, city councilors, and other government authorities could require much diplomacy, tact, flattery, and protracted negotiations.

There can be no question in this volume of a comprehensive survey of every country in Europe where Jesuits went – several large volumes would be required – but rather of a sampling of several important contexts and issues that shed light on Jesuit priorities, and the opportunities and difficulties their implementation faced.

England and France had strong, centralized monarchies. Post-Reformation England was a difficult place for Jesuits, and a Protestant monarch who claimed supremacy over a national church was unlikely to view favorably a group of Catholic priests committed to an international vision of Christianity, and to the upholding of papal authority. Thomas McCoog’s essay considers how Jesuits fared in England, Scotland, Ireland, and in the English Jesuit mission to Maryland. My essay, on France, focuses specifically on how French Jesuits used the printing press, c. 1600–50, in an effort to obtain and retain royal favor. Though France’s monarchs were Catholic, their support for Jesuit endeavors, and the support of other French Catholics for the Society of Jesus, was often fragile, at best. While not a few in England and France wanted to have the Jesuits expelled, others, especially some female Catholics, wanted to become Jesuits, or at least something very much like them. Gemma Simmonds’ essay considers such efforts by Mary Ward and other women.
In central and eastern Europe Jesuits worked in a complex religious and political context, where Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists, and other Protestant groups fought against each other as well as against Catholics. Peter Canisius (1521–97) was a Jesuit who devoted his energies to preaching, teaching, and founding educational institutions in places such as Cologne, Vienna, and Prague. His publications included several catechisms, reprinted many times. Canisius and other Jesuits sought to “counter” Protestant inroads of various kinds, but they also sought to promote internal reform of the Catholic Church, especially through conversion of individuals from a lukewarm religion to an active, heartfelt, well-educated Catholic piety. Stanisław Obirek’s essay in this volume focuses principally on Jesuit successes and failures in early modern Poland.

Many in the first generation of Jesuits were Portuguese or Spanish, and their homelands were the leaders in European exploration, conquest, and evangelization of the Pacific and Atlantic worlds. Part III, Geographic and Ethnic Frontiers, considers some of the ways in which Jesuits made “missions” outside Europe a priority. Francis Xavier (1506–52), a Basque like Ignatius, and a roommate of Ignatius at the University of Paris, became the first Jesuit missionary to Asia. John III, King of Portugal, wanted more missionaries for India, and Xavier was chosen by Ignatius for this task. Francis Xavier left Lisbon in 1541, never to return to Europe. He labored in India, in Indonesia, in Japan; he died while seeking to enter China. He was canonized as a saint in 1622.

The cover image of this volume shows the Jesuit Church of St. Francis Xavier, built in the late seventeenth century, in Lucerne, Switzerland. By that period, St. Francis Xavier had become not only the premier exemplar of a missionary saint, but a very popular intercessory saint to whom Catholics prayed in time of plague and other illness, and at the hour of death. M. Antoni J. Üçerler’s essay considers Jesuit efforts in India, and especially in Japan, in the aftermath of Xavier’s work. Nicolas Standaert’s essay examines Jesuits in China, and how they were learners as well as teachers. European Jesuits in Asia, perhaps especially those in China, sought to separate Christianity from European culture, and to accept and adopt many local customs and traditions. Such a way of proceeding did not always please authorities in Rome, and some popes intervened to put a stop to Jesuit acceptance of what some Europeans considered to be pagan practices.

Jesuits pushed outward the boundaries of European knowledge and understanding of the rest of the world. For example, by the early seventeenth century, French Jesuits in Canada were sending back to
France detailed reports of what they experienced. Published in Paris beginning in 1632, these Jesuit Relations stimulated and fascinated their European readers’ imaginations, though they could also give ammunition to Eurocentric enemies who sought to discredit the Society of Jesus as soft on paganism, as too willing to accommodate non-Christian practices. Jacques Monet’s essay examines the complexity of the Jesuit mission to New France. Whether or not converts among Native peoples could or should be admitted to Catholic religious orders or to the priesthood was a controversial question in the early modern era, and it paralleled a question within Europe, especially on the Iberian Peninsula. Should New Christians, that is, Jewish converts to Catholicism, be admitted to the Society of Jesus? Thomas Cohen’s essay examines how this issue was handled (and/or mishandled) in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Recent scholarship has shown how, in Europe and elsewhere, Jesuits played a major role not only in a religious context or sphere of influence, but also more broadly, in culture, arts, and sciences. John O’Malley has argued that the deepening Jesuit commitment to schools went hand-in-hand with commitment to civic education, to the arts, including painting and architecture, theater, music, ballet and opera, as well as to scientific knowledge and discovery. Part IV of this Companion, Arts and Sciences, focuses on two examples: Jesuit architecture in Latin America, with an essay by Gauvin Bailey, and Jesuit contributions to the scientific revolution, with an essay by Louis Caruana.

But by the mid-eighteenth century, appreciation of Jesuit contributions was increasingly outweighed by the venom of those seeking destruction of the Society founded by Ignatius. Succumbing to pressure from several European monarchs, Pope Clement XIV suppressed the Order in 1773, in what Eamon Duffy has described as “the papacy’s most shameful hour.” And yet the Jesuits did not disappear altogether, and they were eventually formally restored by Pius VII; Jonathan Wright’s essay examines both how the Suppression came about and how it came to an end.

An explanation for the greater attention this Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits pays to the earlier period than to the last two centuries is in order. Much is known about certain exceptional Jesuits of the restored Society, though many of these men were considered marginal or misfits in their own time, to be honored post-mortem. Prominent examples include the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–89) and the scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955). But there are relatively few good studies of the Jesuits
since 1814 – in any part of the world – at least compared with the abundance of excellent work done on the history of the “old” Society and its “corporate” culture. In general, the Society of Jesus, for much of the century and a half from its restoration until Vatican II, was conservative and even reactionary. In Europe, nostalgia for the close relationship between Church and State (altar and throne) that existed before the French Revolution was strong in Jesuit circles. By the mid-twentieth century, a growing number of Jesuits in Europe, and elsewhere, began to break new ground in theology and in biblical studies, in other scholarly fields, and in promotion of Catholic social teaching that called for just wages for workers, and for support of their right to organize and defend their dignity.¹³

The USA is one of the parts of the world where the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw dramatic growth in Jesuit numbers and institutions. There had been but a few Jesuits before the Suppression in what became the new American republic. After 1814, Jesuits in the USA struggled to balance fidelity to Old World traditions with openness to the realities and opportunities of the New World. Not altogether unlike earlier generations of Jesuits elsewhere, Jesuits in the USA faced a myriad of questions about how to accommodate and adapt to unfamiliar contexts and cultures. Gerald McKevitt’s essay in this volume, on Jesuit schools in the United States to c. 1970, examines some ways in which such questions were answered.

By the 1970s Jesuit numbers were declining in western Europe and North America, but growing in many other places. In recent times, the Society of Jesus has become far more multi-cultural and multi-racial than ever before. In the post-colonial era, and in the post-Vatican II decades, Jesuits have put increasing emphasis on promotion of justice for the poor and the oppressed, this emphasis being not a substitute for earlier works, but a constitutive, central element of all Jesuit ministries, including teaching, scholarship, preaching and pastoral work, and Ignatian spirituality. It has also meant a critique of ways in which Jesuits have, at times in their history, too easily “accommodated” oppressive practices.¹⁴ Mary Ann Hinsdale’s essay considers how Jesuits have done theology in the past four decades. Finally, my essay on “Jesuits today” surveys some of the challenges and possibilities for the Society of Jesus at the early stages of the twenty-first century.

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Notes
1 The IHS monogram had been promoted in the late medieval period by Franciscans, Bernardino of Siena in particular. It was not original to the Jesuits.
8 For an excellent introduction to, and excerpts from, the Jesuit Relations, see Allan Greer, ed., The Jesuit Relations: Natives and Missionaries in Seventeenth-Century North America [New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2000].
9 See especially the published versions of major international conferences held at Boston College, in 1997 and 2002, organized by the same four scholars: John O’Malley, Gauvin Bailey, Steven J. Harris, and


14 One example is slavery; see Thomas Murphy, *Jesuit Slaveholding in Maryland, 1717–1838* (New York: Routledge, 2001).