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Eric Nelson, *The Jesuits and the Monarchy: Catholic Reform and Political Authority in France (1590-1615)*. Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2005. vi + 275 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, notes, and index. \$94.95 U.S. (cl.). ISBN 0-7546-3888-X.

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No group of Catholics raised the hackles of staunch Gallicans in the early modern period more than the Society of Jesus, yet none became closer to the Bourbon monarchy. Though often castigated as agents of nefarious, foreign powers in Rome or Madrid, the Jesuits could arguably be considered a product of French—or, more particularly, Parisian Left Bank cosmopolitan university—culture. For it was there in the 1530s that a handful of earnest young students came under the sway of a more worldly-wise ex-soldier from Spain, Ignatius Loyola, to chart a new path for Catholicism in Europe and beyond. The complex and at times precarious place that Jesuits held in France dated from the Society's introduction into the kingdom ten years later. Yet the controversies the Jesuits generated did little to dampen their appeal among important members of the French Catholic establishment, including jurists in the Parlement of Paris, who craved for their sons a first-rate, modern education. Eric Nelson's new book explores these controversies and their implications during the reign of Henri IV (1589-1610) and its immediate aftermath, an eventful period for the Jesuits in France as they navigated the perilous shoals of the late Wars of Religion, incipient Catholic reform, and suspected involvement in serial attempts on the king's life. This was a particularly difficult time for the Jesuits, who found their Society subjected to ferocious polemics and political attacks elsewhere as well, for example over the English Oath of Allegiance and the Venetian Interdict.[1]

Nelson sees the travails of French Jesuits during this period as a lens through which to examine broader issues related to state-formation in post-League France and the tensions generated by international Catholic reform. He picks up the story in the 1590s when the Jesuits, like many Catholic religious orders, were closely allied with the Holy League in its struggle to deny the Calvinist Henri IV his dynastic claim to the French throne. However, that oppositional image of the Jesuits is quite misleading, since they, again like many other Catholic groups, had struggled mightily in the 1570s and 1580s to balance their allegiance to the crown with their deep misgivings about its inconsistent policies toward heresy. As A. Lynn Martin so astutely showed over thirty years ago, Jesuits in France became torn as some, such as Father Edmond Auger, cleaved to an arch-Gallican line while others, like Fathers Claude Matthieu and Henri Samier, cultivated ties with Leaguers and Spain.[2] This Gallican wing among French Jesuits became vitally important later in the early 1600s. Nelson does not devote much attention to these early cross-currents within the Society as he instead frames his analysis in terms of the debates and maneuvers shaping the definition and ultimately exercise of royal authority as it became restored under Henri IV. Building significantly upon my own work and that of Michel de Waele on the subject, he argues that the partial expulsion in 1595 and subsequent recall and integration after 1603 of the Jesuits reveal much about the tenor of French Catholic renewal and moves to assert a more exalted conception of royal authority.[3] In this regard, *The Jesuits and the Monarchy* provides a splendid complementary counterpoint to Jotham Parson's recent book on erudite Gallicanism, a work Nelson consulted heavily as a dissertation.[4]

The study proceeds in a chronological sequence as it charts the Society's evolving fortunes in France from 1590 to 1615. The first two chapters, "Expulsion" and "Recall", examine the controversies over the Jesuits in the broader context of Henri IV's disputes with his royalist supporters, particularly in the

Parlement of Paris, over how best to pacify his fractured kingdom. The king sought a policy of reconciliation that placed his prerogative to forgive his enemies beyond public scrutiny, while Gallican legists argued for a more punitive, legalistic settlement that confirmed the law court's role as defender of public order. The ideological stakes in these debates thus encompassed nothing less than the nature of the restored royal political establishment. Henri IV, counseled by experienced old hands like Pomponne de Bellièvre and Nicolas de Neufville, sieur de Villeroy, had many good reasons for cultivating good relations with the Jesuits, not least of which was to burnish the king's Catholic *bona fides*.^[5] Gallican opponents of the Jesuits, such as Étienne Pasquier and Antoine Arnauld, published incendiary denunciations of the Society's perfidy and alleged anti-royalism. Yet while Nelson analyzes these texts quite closely, he readily concedes that this heated polemic against the Jesuits would have been for naught but for the botched assassination attempt by Jean Chastel against Henri IV in December 1594. The lack of incriminating evidence against the Jesuits meant little to the good judges of the Parlement of Paris, who quickly expelled them from their jurisdiction the next month. Henri IV reluctantly agreed to respect the expulsion order, though his other sovereign courts across the kingdom significantly did not.^[6]

The eventual move to recall and rehabilitate the Jesuits dragged out over the next eight years as Henri IV settled each in its turn: his problematical relations with the papacy, former Leaguers, the Huguenots, and the king of Spain. Interestingly, the very same arguments that Henri IV deployed to justify his pacification of ex-Leaguers and the Huguenots came to be used when he commanded the reintroduction of the Jesuits into the jurisdictional ambit of the Parisian court in 1603. Such decisions, his decrees made clear, sprang from the *arcana imperii* of his royal office; inscrutable acts of the royal will—in this case clemency—and not codified law or the traditional advice of his royal councilors, determined his subjects' rights and obligations. Nelson closely examines the shifting political factors that shaped the tortuous *déroutement* of this decision. He underscores both the ideological ramifications of the decision as well as its performative features, especially public sermons, during the spring of 1603 when he invited the Jesuit Fathers Ignace Armand and Pierre Coton to return with him from Metz to Paris. Although some members of the Society wished to balk at the king's offer of clemency for crimes the Jesuits never committed, Armand and Coton readily acceded to it, thereby affirming this more potent conception of royal authority.

Indeed, leaders of the French Jesuit congregation purposely distanced themselves from the Society's official position on papal authority in secular affairs and theories of tyrannicide promoted by a number of Spanish Jesuits. This independent streak irked Claudio Acquaviva, the Jesuit general, to no end. Yet such casuistical accommodations became a Jesuit hallmark in the years ahead and help to explain, among other factors, why Gallican opposition to the Society started to recede after the Jesuits' recall. The new relationship between the crown and Society after 1603 paved the way for further expansion of the Jesuits' place in French society. Education formed the main mission, both in the *collèges* established to train the next generation of the Catholic elite and the missionary activities, such as controversialist publications, aimed at converting the Huguenots. Nelson shows the central role the Jesuits quickly came to play in the emerging Catholic reform movement in France. Despite lingering suspicions, the Jesuits became firmly ensconced in the politico-ecclesiastical establishment to such an extent that the Society successfully weathered the crisis occasioned by the assassination of Henri IV in May 1610, again through opportunistic (or some might say, unprincipled) accommodation.

Nelson explores the complex course of these post-assassination debates as they swirled about in the outpouring of publications, on the parquet, and the halls of the University. The weakness of Marie de Medici's regency forced the Jesuits to deal directly with the Parlement of Paris in the firestorm the regicide unleashed. But staunch critics of the Society tried with little success to fan anti-Jesuit sentiment. While political maneuvering to influence the regency also played a role, what mattered most was the decision by French Jesuits to swear an oath acknowledging the Parlement's authority, a step

much criticized by the leadership in Rome. Thus when the Parlement of Paris issued an *arrêt* condemning theories of tyrannicide proposed by Father Juan de Mariana of Spain, it explicitly avoided implicating the Jesuits in France, as it also did in a later *arrêt* denouncing the Cardinal Roberto Bellarmine's defense of the papacy's indirect powers in temporal matters. No one exemplified this shift among the legists more than Louis Servin, an *avocat général*, who back in the 1590s helped lead the expulsion of the Society but after 1610 proved to be one of its firmest backers. While Nelson suggests ways to approach the emergence of this pro-Jesuit coterie (if it can be called that) in the Parlement, more work on the subject definitely needs to be done, especially in light of the later split in the 1630s on the subject of Jansenism.[7] The accommodation the Jesuits reached with the Parlement deflected attention away from them during the heated polemic over competing conceptions of royal authority at the Estates-General held in 1614-15. Thus within the space of only twenty years, the Society of Jesus in France went a long way toward remaking its public image. It went from being perceived as a foreign group dedicated to the destruction of the French royal state to the premier religious order committed to advancing the cause of the Bourbon monarchy and its vision of Catholic reform.

Eric Nelson's study makes a signal contribution to untangling the rhetorical wrangling and complicated alliance building that accompanied the shifting fortunes and position of the Society of Jesus in France after the Wars of Religion. In doing so, he sheds much needed light on the early construction of the Bourbon state. In first accommodating the crown and then the Parlement of Paris, the Jesuits became well positioned to profoundly shape the confessional and intellectual landscape of France over the next 150 years. Indeed, they became so closely identified with the prevailing sacral absolutist order that the Society suffered an even more complete suppression in 1762 as a result of widening disagreement over the legitimacy of that system. As one of the key architects in building the Bourbon state, so the Jesuits became among the first casualties in its dismantling.[8] Nelson's book should thus be read carefully by scholars and students broadly interested in Old Regime politics, culture, and religion.

NOTES

[1] For such a broader perspective, see Harro Höppel's *Jesuit Political Thought: The Society of Jesus and the State, c. 1540-1630* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Although it appeared after Nelson's book went to press, it largely confirms Nelson's thesis that, with a few notable exceptions, the Jesuits accommodated their political stances to fit local circumstances.

[2] A. Lynn Martin, *Henry III and the Jesuit Politicians* (Geneva: Droz, 1973).

[3] Michael Wolfe, *The Conversion of Henri IV: Politics, Power, and Religious Belief in Early Modern France* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993) and Michel de Waele, *Les Relations entre le parlement de Paris et Henri IV* (Paris: Publisud, 2000).

[4] Jotham Parsons, *The Church in the Republic: Gallicanism and Political Ideology in Renaissance France* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004).

[5] Left largely unexamined in this study are the composition and workings of the pro-Jesuit faction at the royal court, in which both Bellièvre and Villeroy played leading roles. See Raymond F. Kierstead, *Pomponne de Bellièvre: A Study of the King's Men in the Age of Henry IV* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1968), Edmund H. Dickerman, *Bellièvre and Villeroy: Power in France under Henry III and Henry IV* (Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1971), and Olivier Poncet, *Pomponne de Bellièvre (1529-1607). Un homme d'état au temps des guerres de religion* (Geneva: Droz, 1998).

[6] Further work on the Jesuit controversy—or lack thereof—outside the jurisdictional bounds of the Parlement of Paris merits a full-length study of its own. A place to begin would be Arthur Desjardins' *Les parlements du roi (1589-1596)* (Paris, 1879).

[7] See Alexander Sedgwick, *The Travails of Conscience: The Arnauld Family and the Ancien Régime* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[8] On this general topic, see Dale K. Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution of 1791* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996).

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