

# Jesuit Writing and Publishing

*Francis Xavier's Letter from India, first published in 1545, was not only one of the earliest publications by a Jesuit but also the first letter from the East ever to be printed in Europe.*

It aroused immense interest. Although it only touched on geographical and ethnographical matters, it marked the beginning of extensive Jesuit reporting on flora, fauna, climate, and native customs that captured the European imagination and that, in its more studied forms, provided data for natural philosophers inside and outside the Jesuit order.

Although Ignatius was probably less interested in the scientific value of the reports than in their potential for enhancing the prestige of the Society, he promoted the enterprise in strong terms in a letter to India of February 24, 1554. He described the eagerness of some leading personages in Rome to read letters from India, and he urged his fellow Jesuits to write concerning "how long the days of summer and winter are, when summer begins, whether the shadows move to the left or to the right. Finally," he went on, "if there are things that seem extraordinary, let them be noted, for instance, details about animals and plants that are either not known at all, or not of such a size, etc." Missionaries from other orders of course wrote descriptions of the lands in which they found themselves, but the Jesuits' educational commitments gave them a keener eye as well as a network of institutions in which the information and artifacts could be systematically collected, maintained, and reflected upon.

In Latin America José de Acosta intended his firsthand description of the lands and people of Peru and Mexico, *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* (1590), as an aid to missionaries, in fact he composed a work of considerable scientific import. Within just a few years of publication, it had gone through four editions in Spanish, three in Latin, two each in Dutch, French, and German, and one in English. Acosta's *Historia* was more widely disseminated than many similar Jesuit accounts that followed, but it was nonetheless symptomatic of a tradition that established a network of scientific exchange linking the Jesuit missionaries with the Jesuits' schools, observatories, museums, and botanical gardens back in Europe.

—John W. O'Malley, S.J. in *The Jesuits and the Arts 1540-1773* (Saint Joseph's University Press, 2005)



From the illustrated life of Ignatius of Loyola, published in Rome in 1609 to celebrate Ignatius' beatification that year by Pope Paul V.

▲ Figure 1. Plate 59, Francis Xavier Writes to Ignatius From India. View from P. Squat London National Fine Engravers (Rome, 1609).

*"In geography and natural history alone the Jesuits before 1773 published nearly eight hundred titles, a number that according to Steven J. Harris still represents only one-seventh of the entire Jesuit scientific corpus.*

It was the schools that sparked the biggest change in Jesuit attitudes and practice about publication. Textbooks were needed, at prices students could afford. With that end in view, Ignatius in the last year of his life went to immense trouble to secure a good press for the Collegio Romano, which was installed and in working order within a few months after his death. Jesuit teachers in the meantime discovered that the texts available did not always suit them and began to compose their own.

By 1564, the press at the Collegio Romano had acquired Arabic characters, and by 1577, Hebrew. The Jesuits installed presses in other colleges, not without worry that they might seem to be running a business for profit. These presses were of modest dimensions, but they performed important services for the Jesuits and their clients. In 1556, the Jesuits introduced printing into India by installing a press in their college in Goa. Thus the first book printed in India was St. Francis Xavier's *Doutrina Christam* (Christian Doctrine).

—John W. O'Malley, S.J. in *The First Jesuit* (Harvard University Press, 1991)



▲ Figure 2. Andreas Sacquet, S.J. 1574-1627

Sucquet's popular treatise emblemizing meditation as the act of painting was translated into many languages, including Dutch, French, German, Spanish, Hungarian, and Russian. The Jesuitica Collection at Saint Joseph's University, Philadelphia, PA includes a first edition in Latin Via Vitae Aeternae, Antwerp, 1620, and the first Dutch edition: Den Wech des Eevwich Levens, Antwerp, 1622.

—James Hennesey, S.J. Company Magazine, 1989

The print medium really came into its own in the 19th century. Wherever Jesuits went in the United States, they set up printing presses. The Italian Donato Gasparri founded *Revista Cattolica* (1875), a journal for Spanish-speaking America. His Rio Grande Press published most of the textbooks for both Catholic and public schools in the New Mexico Territory. At the same time, the press at St. Ignatius Mission, Montana, began its publications in the Kalispel language with a book of narratives from Holy Scripture and a three-volume Kalispel dictionary. All through the 20th century, Jesuit publications, both scholarly and popular, have multiplied. They include in the United States *Theological Studies*, *Theology Digest*, *New Testament Abstracts*, *New Scholasticism*, *Review for Religious*, *Social Order*, as well as *Jesuit Missions*, *America*, and *Company*.

—James Hennesey, S.J. Company Magazine, 1989

As Jesuits traveled the world, the number of printing presses multiplied. In the late 1570s, catechisms were printed in India in Tamil and Konkani, two of the languages of that country. Atlases, dictionaries, and grammars followed in India and Latin America, along with learned studies of exotic flora and fauna. Seventeen-century Jesuits in Paraguay published books on the native Guaraní language, just as 19th-century Jesuits in Montana did on the language of the Kalispels, native Indians in the area. By 1580, a Japanese Jesuit press was producing catechisms, catechetical directories, collections of prayers, and spiritual books such as *The Imitation of Christ* and *The Spiritual Exercises*.

—John W. O'Malley, S.J. in *The Jesuits and the Arts 1540-1773* (Saint Joseph's University Press, 2005)

## Publishing as a means of mass communication

As Jesuits sought and found God in the physical sciences, publications followed, including over 600 geometry texts authored by Jesuits. Fr. Christopher Clavius, a brilliant mathematician, wrote books used in 16th and 17th century universities, among them a critical evaluation of Euclid and the standard astronomy text, *A Commentary on the Sphere of Sacrobosco*. His works were translated by Matteo Ricci into Chinese for use in China.

Eastern Europe was another focal point for Jesuit publications. Four Jesuit provinces in Poland kept six university presses there busy with publications of textbooks, catechisms, and devotional literature, along with Fr. Stephan Lusinka's *Warsaw Gazette* in the late 1700s.



By Edmund Campion, S.J.

Worshippers in the university church of St. Mary's at Oxford in England on commencement day, June 27, 1581, found scattered on the benches a printed pamphlet with the Latin title *Decem Rationes* (*Ten Reasons*). The author was Fr. Edmund Campion, S.J. His was a name they knew. Back in 1566 Campion had given the formal welcoming address when Queen Elizabeth visited the university. Now he was an outlaw, a Jesuit, destined to hang before the year was out. The *Decem Rationes*, like Martin Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* in 1517, was a call to theological debate, addressed to "the famous men of our universities."

Printed broadsides, pamphlets, books, and catechisms had a major role in religious quarrels of the 16th century, as Campion and his Jesuit colleague in England, Robert Persons, could attest. Persons had gotten hold of the press on which *Decem Rationes* was printed. When the queen's agents found it, he wrote to Jesuit general Fr. Claudio Acquaviva that he must have a new one "in some place close at hand." "Nothing," Persons argued, "has helped, helps, or will help our cause for the future so much as the printing of Catholic books, both controversy and devotion."

—James Hennesey, S.J. Company Magazine, 1989



The results of a decades-long project begun by Livia Agresti (c. 1508–79) and Giovanni Battista Fiammeri (1530–1617), this was the most extensively illustrated of the printed Gospels of its day. It had an extraordinary impact on Jesuit art projects around the world.

▲ Figure 3. phase 4. Nativity, from Serenino Nadal's *Adnotationes et meditationes in Evangelia* (Antwerp, 1607 edition)

## Translation as Corporate Strategy

"Given the concern of Jesuits to translate works by Jesuits about Jesuits, it is only a mild exaggeration to speak of a 'conspiracy' to translate. At the very least we might speak of a 'policy' or what has been called a 'corporate strategy'...other religious orders engaged in the enterprise of translation to a much smaller extent than the Jesuits did. There would appear to be a link between this translation activity and what John W. O'Malley has called the 'official promotion' of the history of the Jesuits. In other words, the Society...had a concern for collective self-representation, an acute sense of their 'image' relatively unshared in this period."

—Peter Butler in *The Jesuits II: Culture, Science, and the Arts 1540-1773* (University of Toronto Press, 2006)

Since the United States lacked a Spanish-language publishing house, books and pamphlets—such as they were—came from Mexico or Europe. "The complete absence of a press," a priest reported in 1875, meant that "good books in Spanish were very scarce and very costly for everyone. Alert to the market, the Neopolitan Jesuits in the West soon filled another lacuna by publishing textbooks—including an English speller, Spanish grammar, and a 146-page mathematics text. "Already four countries have adopted these books for public schools," Camillo Mazzella reported in 1875. Within a few years, the press was churning out nearly every textbook used in the 138 public and 33 private schools of New Mexico, an outcome that deeply disturbed opponents in the territory. Despite the controversy that ensued, public institutions continued to rely on Jesuit output well into the 1880s.

—John W. O'Malley, S.J. in *The Jesuits and the Arts 1540-1773* (Saint Joseph's University Press, 2003)



▲ Figure 4. A Sample of *Nice-Perce Grammar*, 1891. Jesuitica Collection, Saint Joseph's University

Jesuits in the Rocky Mountain Mission published this *Nice-Perce Grammar* at the Indian Boys' Press that they founded in De Smet, Idaho.



▲ Figure 5. A Dictionary of the Kalispel or Flathead Indian Language, 1877. Jesuitica Collection, Saint Joseph's University

Jesuits in Montana published this dictionary at their St. Ignatius Press in Montana.

*Without the schools it is doubtful the Jesuits would so soon and so enthusiastically have begun to run printing presses, and they surely would not have been printing works of pagan literature.*

Presses could print pictures as well as words. Along with the other items, Xavier brought with him into Japan an illustrated Bible. The Jesuits' most impressive venture into this field was the *Evangelicae historiae imagines*, composed by Jerónimo Nadal in the early 1570s and finally published in Antwerp in 1593. This was followed by publication of Nadal's *Adnotationes et meditationes in Evangelia* in 1595. The magnificent series of 153 copperplate illustrations engraved by the Wierix brothers and others that accompany the text is the earliest such series of the four gospels of any size or importance. The text identified persons, places, and things in the illustrations and then used them as material for contemplation. Jesuits carried the text with them almost around the globe.

Annunciation he specifies that the exercitant seek "to see the house and room of our Lady in the city of Nazareth in the province of Galilee."

Ignatius borrowed this tradition from late-medieval sources. In the *Exercises*, however, he gave it a powerfully codified form and sent it on its way into modern Catholicism. By the means of it, one can argue, he predisposed the members of the Society to an appreciation of the power of images, to which the broad and long tradition of Catholicism regarding images would already have made them sensitive.

—John W. O'Malley, S.J. in *The Jesuits and the Arts 1540-1773* (Saint Joseph's University Press, 2005)



There is evidence that Ignatius himself commissioned the work or at least encouraged Nadal in it. If so, he acted consonantly with the extraordinary emphasis he placed in his *Spiritual Exercises* on the use of the imagination. Again and again Ignatius urges the individual who is about to enter into the contemplation to conjure up a "mental representation" of some scene from the gospels, as when in the meditation on the

## Jesuit Scholarly Publishing in the United States Today

The number of scholars publishing on the history of the Society of Jesus has expanded almost exponentially. Books—good books—are rolling off the presses, with France, Italy, and North America leading the pack. The most prestigious university presses—Princeton, Harvard, Stanford and Toronto, for example—also publish on Jesuit history, a venture almost unheard of before 1995.

—John W. O'Malley, S.J.

## The Institute of Jesuit Sources

The Institute of Jesuit Sources specializes in making the spirituality and the history of the Society of Jesus better known. It publishes material by more than fifty authors on the Jesuits, their history, their traditions, their present activities, and their future opportunities.

## The Association of Jesuit University Presses

In the United States, five of its 28 Jesuit colleges and universities have formal scholarly publishing programs: Fordham University Press, Georgetown University Press, Marquette University Press, Saint Joseph's University Press, and the University of Scranton Press. In 1992, these presses founded the Association of Jesuit University Presses for mutual cooperation and support.