

Jean-Pascal Gay. *Jesuit Civil Wars: Theology, Politics and Government under Tirso González (1687–1705)*.

Catholic Christendom, 1300–1700. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2012. xi + 324 pp. \$134.95. ISBN: 978–1–4094–3852–6.

This study focuses on the neglected generalate of Tirso González (1687–1705) and in particular two conflicts, one primarily political the other theological, that in many ways defined his tenure as head of the Jesuit Order. The first emerged shortly after González became general when Louis XIV demanded a number of concessions from the Society, including the reorganization of the Jesuit provincial structure to reflect new geopolitical realities. González resisted the king's pressures that resulted for a time in the king forbidding French Jesuits, many of whom found their loyalties split, from communicating with their curia in Rome. While the issues of governance

and obedience at the heart of this conflict were specific to the Jesuits, Gay shows that the struggle was also deeply imbedded in wider tensions between the international Church based in Rome and the growing power of Catholic states in Western Europe. Since its inception the requirement to balance the needs of the Society as a whole with the political realities faced by Jesuits operating within specific national contexts had shaped the Order. Gay's account provides an interesting perspective on how these tensions played out in the late seventeenth century as more powerful states pushed for greater control over the church within their borders.

The second crisis centered on González's effort to reposition the Society in debates over moral theology. It is impossible in a short review to fully explore the debates that González engaged in; however, a few words are necessary to frame the controversy. González opposed probabilism, which maintained that as long as an action's licitness remained probable one could act on it even if other more probable options existed. This doctrine was prevalent among Jesuit theologians and confessors and was cited by Jesuit opponents especially in the Rigorist and Jansenist camps as evidence of their moral laxism. González supported the doctrine of probabiliorism, which required one to adopt the most probable opinion rather than merely a probable opinion. This difference in approach became a crisis in the early 1690s when González attempted to publish a book advocating his probabiliorist theology. While González found support among some in the Society, his work was strongly opposed by a significant portion of the Order, including the Roman Jesuit censors leading to a series of crises that continued to rumble through most of his generalate. Gay does an admirable job placing the conflict with Louis XIV and the one over moral theology in context, exploring how they intersected with wider issues in the French church, the Holy See, and European geopolitics. The Jesuits were buffeted by these currents and their internal conflicts became one of many fronts on which broader political and theological issues were contested.

At the opening of *The Jesuit Civil Wars* Gay notes that the book began as an article that kept expanding. It provides a good example of a study that merited transformation into a book. It is the context surrounding these two relatively narrow internal Jesuit conflicts over governance and theology that give the book broader resonance, making an important contribution to our understanding of the practical implications of political and theological conflicts during the period. In particular, Gay's careful survey in chapter 2 of debates over probabilism within the Jesuit Order and the Church more generally provides an accessible entry into this topic for the nonspecialist, allowing his arguments in later chapters to reach a much wider audience. One suspects that a greater focus on Spanish sources might alter the tone if not the conclusions of this study. But this should not detract from how successful it is in situating the largely internal struggles within the Jesuit order during the González generalate into broader contexts.

This study helps to fill out the neglected century in Jesuit history between 1640 and 1740. At the same time it contributes to scholarship on the Society's first century by examining how the geopolitical realities that the Jesuits attempted to negotiate in this earlier period persisted and even intensified as states grew more

powerful in the later seventeenth century. Looking forward to Jesuit struggles of the second half of the eighteenth century, Gay shows us how the scars within the Society from the struggle over González's writings turned the Jesuits away from polemics, making it more difficult to defend the Society from its critics just as their attacks were building in intensity.

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