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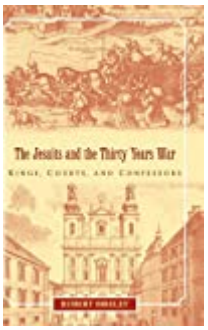

Robert Bireley. *The Jesuits and the Thirty Years War: Kings, Courts, and Confessors.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. 312 pp. $70.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-521-82017-2.

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Robert Bireley is well known to historians of early modern Germany and early modern Catholicism. His studies of the Jesuits Adam Contzen and William Lamormaini describe the relationship between court confessors and the actions and policies of Maximilian of Bavaria and the Emperor Ferdinand II. Bireley has also examined the tradition of anti-Machiavellianism in early modern Catholic political thought. Bireley builds on these foundations in this present study that analyzes the role played by Jesuit confessors, the superior generals of the Order, primarily Muzio Vitelleschi, and their influence at the courts of Vienna, Munich, Madrid, and Paris during the Thirty Years' War. He succeeds in demonstrating that the Society of Jesus was not a nefarious monolith pursuing an aggressive, Machiavellian policy for the extirpation of Protestantism.

Bireley's research illuminates divisions within the Jesuit Order between those championing a militant policy against Protestantism and those cautioning a more accommodating approach towards Protestant powers as the conflict played out. The divisions within the Jesuits also cut across regional and dynastic loyalties. Bireley finds that Jesuit confessors had far greater influence over the genuinely pious Maximilian in Munich and the more militantly Catholic Ferdinand in Vienna due to the toll the Reformation took on older religious orders and the institutional structure of the Roman Catholic Church. Jesuits had less influence on the direction of policy on the Most Catholic King of Spain in Madrid, where the Dominicans traditionally filled the role of royal confessor and where the policies of the Spanish Habsburgs conflicted at times with the policies of their German cousins. French Jesuits gained the role of confessors to the very Christian King of France, Louis XIII, but they were constrained in their influence to Louis the person and not to Louis, King of France. Their sway was further restrained by the ever-watchful presence of Richelieu.

At the center of Bireley's book is Vitelleschi, Superior General of the Jesuits from 1615 to 1645. This man of Roman noble lineage carried on a voluminous correspondence with the Jesuit confessors at the courts of Catholic powers. Vitelleschi's letters to them provide the sources for Bireley's study. Bireley's careful mining of these sources reveals a superior general intent on ensuring the integrity of the Jesuit confessors as spiritual advisors, not political councilors. Vitelleschi was also a strong proponent of papal policy, who hoped to bring about a united front among Catholic princes against Protestantism. Yet Bireley reveals how this hope was tempered by the realization that Spanish and French policy often ran at cross-purposes to that of the papacy. Above all, Bireley reveals Vitelleschi's keen awareness that the Society of Jesus re-

lied on the support of princely rulers to advance the spiritual objectives of the Order. The need for the good will of Catholic rulers necessitated an advisory policy shaped by the need for caution, compromise, and the sensitivity to regional and dynastic interests. Bireley reveals how Vitelleschi embodied the qualities to shape such a *politique* stance. Vitelleschi's letters bring to light how confessors such as Lamormaini, who enjoyed the full support and confidence of Ferdinand II, could advance Jesuit interests, such as the acquisition of disputed ecclesiastical properties and the building of colleges during the early phases of the Thirty Years' War. These letters also acknowledge how the changing political, diplomatic, and military situation called for a more conciliatory attitude towards Protestantism after the Peace of Prague in 1635.

Bireley certainly broadens our understanding of the role played by Jesuit confessors at the courts of Munich and Vienna. Furthermore, and perhaps more interestingly, Bireley's examination of the role of the Jesuit confessors in Madrid displays how Jesuits could view the Thirty Years' War as a secular, and not a religious, conflict. Francisco Aguado was the Jesuit confessor to the *privado* Olivares. Aguado's writings show that he believed that Spain did not seek war, though war was a spiritual test for Spaniards. Aguado exhorted his reader to more rigorous observance of their faith, thus "seeking God's help on the battlefield" (p. 176). The greater enemies of Spain were the Dutch and the French, not German Protestants. Aguado's writings provide an example of the ways in which a particular confessor's views could be shaped more by particularistic loyalties than by a united front against heresy. Though he followed the instructions of Ignatius Loyola and the directives of Vitelleschi in neither seeking nor accepting political office, Aguado certainly legitimated the secular needs of his spiritual charge, Olivares.

Bireley asserts that Vitelleschi navigated the waters between the *dÃ©vots* and *bons franÃ§ais* at the French court. Nicholas Caussin was the Jesuit confessor to Louis XIII until he fell from favor in 1637, having run afoul of Richelieu by promoting with the help of Louis's former mistress turned religious, Marie Louise de La Fayette, a more Catholic policy of peace with the Habsburgs that moved France away from alliances with the Dutch and the Swedes. To preserve the good will of the king and the cardinal, as well as the maintenance of the Order in France, Vitelleschi submitted to the instructions of Richelieu, directing CaussinÂ¹s successor as confessor to submit to the cardinal any moral misgivings concerning royal policy and the care of the king's soul. The instructions were meant to ensure that the French king's confessor would not become involved in factions and policies at odds with those of Richelieu. While certainly curtailing the ability of the Jesuit confessor to Louis XIII from becoming a rival to Richelieu, the cardinal's instructions did not prevent the confessor from interceding on behalf of the Jesuits. Bireley recounts how Vitelleschi wrote to thank Caussin's successor for interceding with Louis on behalf of Jesuit interests in German lands and Bohemia.

The correspondence between the Superior General and Jesuit confessors to princely rulers documents the great attention paid by men such as Vitelleschi to the pursuit of continued Jesuit influence in Munich, Vienna, Madrid, and Paris via occasional shaping of directives to confessors in the interest of secular needs of the state. Bireley is effective in convincing his readers that Vitelleschi and others recognized the difficulties of teasing out matters of faith from matters of state. Confessors often managed to mold "the national spirit" to the greater glory of God (p. 274). Vitelleschi acknowledged the competing regional and dynastic goals that would result from this strategy. Bireley concludes that during his tenure as superior general, Vitelleschi had "no grand Jesuit policy in the war" (p. 270). Rather, this book offers the thesis that the Superior General at times performed a delicate balancing act between militancy and accommodation.

Robert Bireley presents a valuable addition to the historiography of the Thirty Years' War. This is a work of interest to specialists and generalists alike, carefully weaving narrative with interpretation. And this book needs to be placed in the context of Bireley's earlier works. Together they formulate a unique body of knowledge on the Jesuit Order, court politics, and the Thirty Years' War. Bireley's writing is clear. He dispels the myth of the Jesuits as the sinister, black-robed caricatures of polemical writing. Bireley's careful reading of his sources allows him to portray the Jesuits of the first half of the seventeenth century as well-rounded, thoughtful men, very mindful of the difficulties in the relationship between faith and politics.

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