

# Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal

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Manuscript 1478

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## Review: Jesuits and Race: A Global History of Continuity and Change, 1530–2020, eds. Nathaniel Millett and Charles H. Parker

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**Review: *Jesuits and Race:*  
*A Global History of Continuity and Change, 1530–2020*  
Edited by Nathaniel Millett and Charles H. Parker**

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Nathaniel Millett and Charles H. Parker, eds. *Jesuits and Race: A Global History of Continuity and Change, 1530–2020*. University of New Mexico Press, 2022. 298 pp. \$65.00 hardcover and pdf; \$29.95 epub.

*Jesuits and Race: A Global History of Continuity and Change, 1530–2020* is a masterful exploration of the Jesuits' enduring and complex engagement with the concepts of race and equality across the centuries. This comprehensive volume navigates the intricate history of the Society of Jesus, delving into its foundational beliefs, its role in colonial expansions, and its influence on education, to unveil the multifaceted ways in which Jesuits have interacted with diverse cultures and populations around the globe.

In their introduction, the editors, Nathaniel Millett and Charles Parker, aptly articulate how the Jesuits, by their extensive involvement in missionary endeavors, imperialistic pursuits, and educational initiatives serve as a critical lens through which to scrutinize the fluctuating dynamics of racial attitudes encompassing patterns of alienation, assimilation, empowerment, and coercion among populations in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. By providing a 'long view,' a perspective that transcends typical historical compartmentalization, this volume navigates through the complex history of the Jesuits, from the founding of the old society in the 16th century, its suppression in the 18th century, to the re-establishment of the new society in the 19th century and its evolution into the modern era. This panoramic view allows readers to appreciate the continuity and changes within the Jesuit order against the backdrop of major global historical events, such as the age of democratic revolutions and the shifting notions of modernity.

The book is structured as a collection of essays, each providing a detailed case study on various aspects of Jesuit history, from the early debates on

the incorporation of New Christians to the modern challenges of racial equality and social justice. Emanuele Colombo's opening essay sets the stage by examining the early Jesuit debates on the purity of blood, providing a lens through which to view the broader themes of racialized thought and policy within the order. This is followed by insightful chapters that cover a wide range of topics, including the spiritual conceptualization of race in the writings of Martin de Roa by Erin Kathleen Rowe, the Jesuits' involvement in unfree labor in Asia as detailed by Liam Matthew Brockey, and the complex racial dynamics in Chile and North Mexico explored, respectively, by Andrew Redden and Susan Deeds.

A standout feature of the book is its commitment to original research and the use of primary sources, which allows for fresh insights into well-known historical narratives. The essays challenge conventional heroic narratives associated with the Jesuits, revealing a history that is both enlightening and sobering, marked by moments of enlightenment as well as complicity in racial injustices.

The volume does not shy away from addressing the difficult aspects of Jesuit history, including the order's involvement in slavery and its struggles with racial segregation in educational institutions and the United States. James O'Toole and Nathaniel Millett's contributions on American Jesuit schools and the memory of slavery at St. Louis University, respectively, are particularly poignant in highlighting the contemporary reckoning with the Jesuits' historical legacies. Furthermore, Sean Dempsey's "Trial by Fire: Father George Dunne in Race Relations in Cold

War Los Angeles” provides a critical analysis of Fr. George Dunne, S.J., and his pioneering efforts to combat racial segregation in California, framed by his expertise in Soviet studies and met with obstacles from societal anti-communism and internal Church resistance. Through these narratives, the volume accentuates the intricate engagement of Jesuits like Dunne, along with contemporaries such as brothers John and William Maroke and Claude Heithaus, in the broader struggle against racial injustice, highlighting the nuanced involvement of religious figures in the racial discourse of the mid-20th century.

Additionally, the epilogue written by John McGreevy brilliantly encapsulates the essence of the volume, weaving together the historical trajectories of the Jesuits’ engagement with race and modernity. This concluding piece does more than just summarize; it offers a profound reflection on the historical divisions within the Society of Jesus and how these have influenced their understanding and interaction with race and racial ideologies over centuries. The epilogue skillfully juxtaposes the Jesuits’ historical involvement in science, culture, and education with their cautious approach toward modern philosophical ideas and their engagements with racial and social issues. It delves into the complex relationship between Jesuits and race, highlighting how the society’s long history provides a unique vantage point to explore the evolution of racial thoughts from the early modern period to contemporary times.

Readers are challenged to consider the implications of the Jesuits’ historical actions and ideologies on modern understandings of race. The book provocatively suggests that the Jesuits’ engagement with race, from their early missionary work to their role in education and social justice in the modern era offers valuable insights into the persistence and transformation of racial hierarchies.

This collection of essays is an invitation to historians and scholars to continue exploring the intricate ways in which religious orders like the Jesuits have intersected with the complex and often contentious issues of race and social justice throughout history. This volume underscores the

relevance of this historical inquiry to contemporary discussions on race, urging a re-evaluation of historical narratives in light of current understandings of racial equality and social justice. This comprehensive historiographical overview pushes the boundaries of conventional historical analysis, making it a highly recommended read for those seeking to deepen their understanding of the Society of Jesus and its enduring impact on global racial dynamics.

*Jesuits and Race* offers an invaluable contribution to the historiography of the Jesuits, providing a nuanced and comprehensive overview of the order’s engagement with race and labor practices across different geographies and epochs. It is an essential read for anyone interested in the history of the Society of Jesus, as well as for scholars and general readers alike who seek to understand the complex intersections of religion and race throughout history. The book stands as a testament to the Jesuits’ ongoing reflection on their past, their commitment to social justice, and their efforts to navigate a path toward a more just and equitable future. #JE