

# Markus Friedrich's *The Jesuits: A History*, translated by John Noel Dillon

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**Review: Markus Friedrich's *The Jesuits: A History*, translated by John Noel Dillon  
(Princeton University Press, 2022)**

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The German historian Markus Friedrich (born in 1974), professor of early modern history at the University of Hamburg, which he defines as “from roughly 1500 to 1800” (p. 14), is the author of the new 2022 book in English translation, *The Jesuits: A History*, translated by John Noel Dillon (orig. German ed. 2016). It is a fast-paced, massively footnoted, comprehensive overview account of the history of the Society of Jesus. But I would like to have seen a more detailed table of “Contents” (p. vii) that included all the subheadings in each chapter (which I list below). Prof. Dr. Friedrich’s book will no doubt serve as the standard one-volume comprehensive history of the Jesuits for many years to come.

Now, the Jesuit order was founded by the Spanish Renaissance mystic St. Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556) and nine younger companions in 1540 – about a century after the Gutenberg printing press emerged in Europe in the mid-1450s (concerning the printing press, see Friedrich, pp. 336, 345, 423-426, and 430). Later, the order was officially suppressed in Europe and elsewhere in 1773 – a few years before the American Revolution in 1776 and before the infamous French Revolution of 1789. However, subsequently, the order was restored in 1814. In 2013, the first Jesuit pope, Pope Francis, was elected by the cardinal-electors to succeed the retired Pope Benedict XVI. For specific page references to Friedrich’s discussions of Pope Francis and Pope Benedict XVI, see the “Names Index” (pp. 833 and 830, respectively).

Now, the dramatic story of the founding of the Jesuit order begins when the Basque Spanish courtier subsequently known by the Renaissance humanist Latinized version of his first name, Ignatius Loyola, was seriously wounded in battle in Pamplona in 1521. He was carried in a litter to his family home, where he slowly recovered. As he recuperated, he read a couple of

edifying religious books that sparked his famous religious conversion and spiritual journey. In his spiritual journey, he consulted a number of different spiritual directors. Eventually, he began to write down certain spiritual exercises that he had found helpful – and to assist interested persons in making those spiritual exercises. But he also eventually decided that he should improve his formal education. In the context of improving his formal education, he assisted the nine younger companions who made those spiritual exercises and who ultimately became his co-founders of the Society of Jesus in 1540.<sup>1</sup>

Disclosure: I was in the Jesuits (1979-1987). In my first year of the two-year Jesuit novitiate, I made a 30-day directed retreat in silence (except for the daily conferences with the retreat director) following the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius Loyola, the founder and first superior general of the Society of Jesus (known informally as the Jesuit order) – an office he held for sixteen years, until his death in 1556. My 30-day directed retreat was one of the most memorable experiences of my life. Years after I left the Jesuit order, the cardinal-electors in the Roman Catholic Church elected the first Jesuit pope, Pope Francis, in March 2013. His election reinvigorated my interest in the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>2</sup>

### **Walter J. Ong's Testimony**

Now, my favorite scholar is the American Jesuit Renaissance specialist and media ecology theorist Walter J. Ong (1912-2003; Ph.D. in English, Harvard University, 1955). Over the years, I took five courses from Ong at Saint Louis University, the Jesuit university in St. Louis, Missouri. Ong's massively researched doctoral dissertation was a study of the French Renaissance logician and educational reformer and Protestant martyr Peter Ramus (1515-1572). It was published in two volumes by Harvard University Press in 1958: (1) *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (in the Age of Reason [also known as the Enlightenment]); and (2) *Ramus and Talon Inventory* (a briefly annotated bibliographic listing of more than 750 volumes [most of Latin] that Ong tracked down in more than 100 libraries in the British Isles and Continental Europe, with the financial assistance of two Guggenheim Fellowships). As Ong tracked down those volumes by Ramus and his allies and his critics, he lived abroad in Jesuit residences. For example, for three years

(November 17, 1950, to November 16, 1953), he was based in Paris at the Jesuit residence of the Jesuits who worked on the learned journal *Etudes*. At that time, the French Jesuit paleontologist and Christian evolutionary theorist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) also had a room at the same Jesuit residence. Ong first read Teilhard's work in manuscript form at that time. From 1952 onward, Ong never tired of referring to Teilhard's thought. Teilhard's posthumously published works caused quite a stir in the late 1950s and early 1960s. (Friedrich mentions Teilhard only in passing, p. 651).

Now, through no fault of his own, Ong constructed in his pioneering study of print culture a sweeping account of Western cultural history that was ahead of his times. The "fault" for Ong's for sweeping account of Western cultural history he explicitly attributes (*RMDD*, 1958a, p. 338, note 54) to the perceptive French lay Catholic philosopher Louis Lavelle (1883-1951).<sup>3</sup>

By the early twentieth century, Ramus had slipped off most people's radar. But he resurfaced around the time of the 300th anniversary of the founding of Harvard College in 1636, because Ramist logic had dominated the curriculum in Harvard College. Ramus and Ramist logic emerged prominently in Perry Miller's massively researched 1939 book *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Harvard University Press; for specific page references to Ramus, see the "Index" [p. 528]). Subsequently, Perry Miller served as the director of Ong's doctoral dissertation.

In Ong's *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason*, he drew on the latest studies in the history of the study of formal logic in his perceptive Chapter IV: "The Distant Background: Scholasticism and the Quantification of Thought" (pp. 53-91). Subsequently, after he had finished writing his doctoral dissertation, by the end of the summer of 1954, he reflected further on the import of the quantification of thought in the medieval study of formal logic in his 1956 essay "System, Space, and Intellect in Renaissance Symbolism" that he printed in his 1962 book *The Barbarian Within: And Other Fugitive Essays and Studies* (pp. 68-87). In it, he says the following:

In this historical perspective, medieval scholastic logic appears as a kind of pre-mathematics, a subtle and unwitting preparation for the large-scale operations in quantitative modes of thinking which will characterize the modern world. In assessing the meaning of [medieval] scholasticism, one must keep in mind an important and

astounding fact: in the whole history of the human mind, mathematics and mathematical physics come into their own, in a way which has changed the face of the earth and promises or threatens to change it even more, at only one place and time, that is, in Western Europe immediately after the [medieval] scholastic experience [in short, in print culture]. Elsewhere, no matter how advanced the culture on other scores, and even along mathematical lines, as in the case of the Babylonian, nothing like a real mathematical transformation of thinking takes place – not among the ancient Egyptians or Assyrians or Greeks or Romans, not among the peoples of India nor the Chinese nor the Japanese, not among the Aztecs or Mayas, not in Islam despite the promising beginnings there, any more than among the Tartars or the Avars or the Turks. These people can all now share the common scientific knowledge, but the scientific tradition itself which they share is not a merging of various parallel discoveries made by their various civilizations. **It represents a new state of mind.** However great contributions other civilizations may hereafter make to the tradition, our scientific world traces its origins back always to seventeenth and sixteenth century Europe [in short, to Copernicus and Galileo], to the place where for some three centuries and more the [medieval] arts course taught in universities and para-university schools had pounded into the heads of youth a study program consisting almost exclusively of a highly quantified logic and a companion physics, both taught on a scale and with an enthusiasm never approximated or even dreamt of in ancient academies” (p. 72; boldface emphasis here added by me).

For further discussion of the import of Ong’s extraordinary claim here about “a new state of mind” for our understanding of Western cultural history, see my article “The West Versus the Rest: Getting Our Cultural Bearings from Walter J. Ong” in the journal *Explorations in Media Ecology* (2008).

Now, Ong updated his account of the history of the formal study of logic in the magnificent “Introduction” (pp. 144-207) he wrote to *A Fuller Course in the Art of Logic Conformed to the Method of Peter Ramus (1672)* by John Milton, edited and translated by Walter J. Ong, S.J., and Charles J. Ermatinger in volume eight of Yale’s *Complete Prose Works by John Milton*:

1666-1682, edited by Maurice Kelley (1982, pp. 139-407). Ong's magnificent "Introduction" is reprinted, slightly shortened, as "Introduction to Milton's *Logic*" in volume four of Ong's *Faith and Culture*, edited by Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup (1999, pp. 111-142).

Because Ong was himself a Jesuit, we should also note here that he occasionally published about the Spanish Renaissance mystic St. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus, Jesuit spirituality, and the Victorian Jesuit classicist and poet Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889). See, for example, the following three most notable publications by Ong:

- (1) "'A.M.D.G.' [Abbreviation of the Jesuit Motto *Ad majorem Dei Gloriam*/ For the Greater Glory of God]: Dedication or Directive?" in the now-defunct Jesuit-sponsored journal *Review for Religious* (1952); reprinted in volume three of Ong's *Faith and Contexts*, edited by Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup (1995, pp. 1-8);
- (2) "St. Ignatius' Prison-Cage and the Existential Situation" in the Jesuit-sponsored journal *Theological Studies* (1954); reprinted in Ong's 1962 book *The Barbarian Within: And Other Fugitive Essays and Studies* (pp. 242-259); also reprinted in volume two of Ong's *Faith and Contexts*, edited by Thomas J. Farrell (1992b, pp. 52-67);
- (3) *Hopkins, the Self, and God* (1986), the published version of Ong's 1981 Alexander Lectures at the University of Toronto. In it, Ong reprises his discussion of the Jesuit motto *Ad majorem Dei gloriam*/ For the greater glory of God (pp. 78-81 and 87; concerning the Jesuit motto, see Friedrich, pp. 66 and 71).

More broadly, Ong also discusses Jesuit education in his 1967 encyclopedia entry on Renaissance "Humanism" that is reprinted in volume four of Ong's *Faith and Contexts*, edited by Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup (1999, pp. 69-92).

Ong has also written more broadly about religious history in his seminal 1967 book *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (Yale University Press), the expanded version of his 1964 Terry Lectures at Yale University.<sup>4</sup>

### **Markus Friedrich's Comprehensive Account of Jesuit History**

Now, in Friedrich's "Prologue: Ignatius of Loyola Finds an Order" (pp. 1-19), he repeatedly refers to what he styles "chivalric Christian values" (pp. 3, 5, 14, and 82), and he says that

Ignatius Loyola wanted to emulate the spiritual chivalry of the famous medieval founders St. Francis of Assisi and St. Dominic (pp. 4-5). The spirit of emulation that Ignatius Loyola manifested is related to what Ong refers to as the polemic spirit in his 1967 book *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History*, mentioned above, and to what he subsequently refers to as the agonistic spirit in his 1981 book *Fighting for Life: Contest, Sexuality [Gender], and Consciousness*, the published version of his 1979 Messenger Lectures at Cornell University.

Now, in Friedrich's "Prologue: Ignatius of Loyola Founds and Order," he also says that his "chapters stand on the shoulders of an immense body of literature. The body of scholarship on the Society of Jesus is completely unmanageable, particularly since it frequently is dedicated to local or regional contexts" (p. 19). He also says, "Only in recent decades has interest in the Jesuit order grown significantly outside the narrow confines of ecclesiastical and historical circles" (p. 19). In addition, he says, "Most scholarly works on the Society of Jesus today are written by historian approaching the society [of Jesus] with new questions. It goes without saying that the society of Jesus is now regarded as a serious subject of historical study, which has helped us understand many aspects of early modern and modern history" (p. 19).

Now, Friedrich's text is peppered with superscript numerals that the interested reader can look up in the brief bibliographic "Notes" (pp. 679-750) that are keyed to the complete bibliographic references in the "Works Cited" (pp. 751-828; in which Friedrich lists seven of his own publications, pp. 776-777). Friedrich's book also includes a "Names Index" (pp. 829-843) and a "Subject Index" (pp. 845-854) – both of which are extremely helpful to have available in such a massively detailed comprehensive history.

Friedrich's "Prologue: Ignatius of Loyola Founds an Order" (pp. 1-19) contains 13 superscript numerals.

Friedrich's Chapter 1: "The Inner Life and Structure of the Society [of Jesus]" (pp. 20-130) contains 365 superscript numerals.

    "Growth in Europe" (p. 22)

    "Life in the Service of the Society [of Jesus]" (p. 41)

*“Life as a Jesuit: Stations, Stages, Careers”* (p. 53)  
*“Spirituality and Religious Practice”* (p. 65)  
*“Core Elements of Jesuit Spirituality”* (p. 66)  
*“The Spiritual Exercises”* (p. 72)  
*“Between Ascetism and Mysticism”* (p. 84)  
*“Obedience and Self-Initiative”* (p. 94)  
*“Law, Constitution, and Organization”* (p. 100)  
*“Discontent, Defiance, and Working toward a Common Identity”* (p. 117)

Friedrich’s Chapter 2: “The Society [of Jesus], the Churches, and the Faithful” (pp. 131-259) contains 606 superscript numerals.

*“Relations with Other Religious Orders”* (p. 147)  
*“The Society of Jesus and Catholic Spirituality”* (p. 155)  
*“Profiles of Jesuit Spirituality in the Baroque Period”* (p. 156)  
*“Morality and Mercy: Jesuits versus Rigorists, Dominicans, and Jansenists”* (p. 171)  
*“‘Helping Souls’: Pastoral Ministry and the Fostering of Christian Life”* (p. 184)  
*“Prostitutes, Paupers, Soldiers, and Criminals: The Jesuits and the Marginalized”* (p. 186)  
*“The Jesuits as Preachers”* (p. 201)  
*“Common Sacraments: Confession and Communion”* (p. 209)  
*“Jesuits as ‘Spiritual Directors’: Long-Term Pastoral Connections”* (p. 219)  
*“Pastoral Care as Mission: Conversion Campaigns in Europe”* (p. 225)  
*“A Counterpoint to Everyday Life: The [Spiritual] Exercises for Laymen”* (p. 235)  
*“Confraternities and Marian Congregations”* (p. 240)  
*“Jesuits and Protestants, Protestants and Jesuits”* (p. 245)

Friedrich’s Chapter 3: “*Saeculum* and the Kingdom of God: The Jesuits ‘in the World’” (pp. 260-426) contains 620 superscript numerals.

*“Nobles and Cities: The Society [of Jesus] Finds Its Place”* (p. 262)  
*“Jesuits at Court and High Politics”* (p. 286)  
*“Theoretical Ideas”* (p. 296)  
*“Getting into Education: A Fundamental Decision and Its Consequences”* (p. 302).  
*“Jesuit Schools, Curriculum, Pedagogy, Everyday Routine”* (p. 310)  
*“From Teaching to Research: Jesuit Science between Advocacy, Control, and Mistrust”*



(p. 325)

"*The Great Institutions of the Society [of Jesus]: A Web of Research Centers*" (p. 331)

"*Cultural Profiles: Late Humanism*" (p. 340)

"*Cultural Profiles: Late Scholasticism*" (p. 349)

"*Cultural Profiles: The (Catholic) Enlightenment*" (p. 355)

"*Cultural Profiles: The Jesuits, Science, and Technology*" (p. 363)

"Through the Senses toward God: The Jesuits and the Arts" (p. 382)

"*Writing, Playing, and Composing*" (p. 385)

"*Song and Music*" (p. 402)

"*Building and Painting*" (p. 410)

Friedrich's Chapter 4: "The Global Society" (pp. 427-574) contains 490 superscript numerals.

"The Jesuits' Global Reach: *The Portuguese World*" (p. 429)

"GOA [INDIA]" (p. 430)

"THE [ISLAMIC] MUGHAL EMPIRE" (p. 432)

"TIBET" (p. 434)

"THE SOUTHERN INDIAN SUBCONTINENT" (p. 434)

"MELANESIA" (p. 437)

"JAPAN" (p. 439)

"CHINA" (p. 442)

"MARANHAO" (p. 446)

"AFRICA" (p. 447)

"*The Spanish World: FLORIDA AND NORTHERN SOUTH AMERICA*" (p. 449)

"PERU" (p. 450)

"AMAZONIA" (p. 452)

"CENTRAL SOUTH AMERICA" (p. 452)

"PARAGUAY" (p. 455)

"NORTHWESTERN MEXICO" (p. 458)

"THE PHILIPPINES" (p. 461)

"*The French World*" (p. 463)

"CANADA" (p. 463)

“THE FRENCH CARIBBEAN” (p. 468)

“ASIA” (p. 469)

“THE NEAR EAST” (p. 470)

“The Jesuits in Colonial Society: *Cooperation and Conflict with the Colonists*” (p. 473)

“*The Jesuits and Slavery*” (p. 480)

“Converting the ‘Heathen’: The Jesuits as Missionaries: *Motives: The Missions as Spiritual Duty and Personal Desire*” (p. 488)

“*Scenarios: The Process, Reality, and Difficulty of Christianization*” (p. 492)

“CANADA: MISSIONARIES, SAINTS, AND APOSTATES IN THE MIDDLE GROUND” (p. 493)

“MEXICO: THE MISSIONARIES’ METHODS TO CONVERT THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES” (p. 506)

“*Criticism: The Debate over Jesuit ‘Accommodation’*” (p. 554)

“Networking through Transfers: At the Dawn of Globalization” (p. 563)

Friedrich’s Chapter 5: “A World without the Society of Jesus: Hostility, Suppression, Revival” (pp. 575-620) contains 175 superscript numerals.

“The Many Enemies of the Society [of Jesus]” (p. 577)

“The Suppression of the Society of Jesus” (p. 590)

“Ex-Jesuits: The Years from 1759 and 1773 to 1814” (p. 600)

“Survival in Russia and Restoration in 1814” (p. 614)

“The Early Nineteenth Century: An Old Order, a New Outlook: *Tentative First Steps*” (p. 622)

“*Living in a New World*” (p. 624)

“[Superior] General [Johan Philipp] Roothaan Recenters the Society [of Jesus]” (p. 630)

“REFORMING THE *RATIO STUDIORUM* AND NEW EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES” (p. 636)

“Times of Ambivalence: Mid-nineteenth to Mid-twentieth Century: *Revolutions and Kulturkampf*” (p. 639)

“MODERN ANTIMODERNISTS” (p. 641)

“FROM WORLD WAR I TO WORLD WAR II: [SUPERIOR] GENERAL [WLODZIMIERZ] LEDOCHOWSKI AND THE JESUITS BETWEEN FASCISM AND ANTICOMMUNISM” (p. 645)

“SIGNS OF CHANGE” (p. 650)

*“After 1965: Toward a ‘New’ Society of Jesus”* (p. 653)

*“The Rise of the ‘Social Apostolate’”* (p. 654)

*“Vatican II, [Superior] General [Pedro] Arrupe, and ‘Social Justice’”* (p. 658)

*“Difficult Modernity: From [Superior General Pedro] Arrupe to Pope Francis”* (p. 663)

Friedrich’s “Epilogue: The Modern Society [of Jesus]” (pp. 621-671) contains 207 superscript numerals.

That’s a grand total of 2,476 superscript numerals in the text and correspondingly numbered “Notes.”

Now, Friedrich says, “No other order in the history of Western Christendom gave so much thought and dedicated so much energy to regulating its internal administration” (p. 21).

Friedrich also says, “The Society of Jesus that [the long-serving superior general Claude] Acquaviva [reigned 1581-1615] erected on the foundation laid by Ignatius [Loyola] and his immediate successors [as superior generals] went on to shape Europe for the next 150 years” (p. 23). For specific page references to Friedrich’s discussion of Acquaviva, see the “Names Index” (p. 829; concerning other long-serving superior generals, see p. 109).

I take it that how the Society of Jesus “went on to shape Europe for the next 150 years” (roughly up to 1773, when the Society of Jesus was officially suppressed) is the primary rationale for Friedrich’s rich history of the Jesuits.

Friedrich also says, “Well over thirty thousand books by Jesuit authors appeared in print by 1773, and a good two-thirds of them had nothing immediately to do with theology” (p. 326).

Friedrich covers Jesuit history from 1540 to 1773 (pp. 1-574) much more thoroughly than he covers Jesuit history from 1814 to Pope Francis (pp. 575-671).

In addition, Friedrich says, “Perhaps the greatest challenge of writing a history of the Jesuits is that it essentially has to be a world history in a nutshell. There is scarcely any sphere of human

life, any region of the world, left untouched by the Jesuits over the centuries. No book about them can therefore be complete” (p. 17).

In conclusion, Markus Friedrich’s book *The Jesuits: A History* is a well-informed and well-documented survey of Jesuit history.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For a Freudian account of Ignatius Loyola’s recuperation at his family home and his religious conversion, see the American Jesuit psychiatrist W. W. Meissner’s 1992 book *Ignatius of Loyola: The Psychology of a Saint*. For specific page references to Friedrich’s discussion of Ignatius Loyola, see the “Names Index” (p. 835). Ignatius Loyola’s famous book of succinct instructions for making spiritual exercises was translated into English as the book *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: A New Translation, Based on Studies in the Language of the Autograph*, translated by Louis J. Puhl, S.J. (1951). For specific page references to Friedrich’s discussion of the *Spiritual Exercises*, see the “Subject Index” (p. 853). Subsequently, Ignatius Loyola as the first general superior of the Society of Jesus wrote *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, translated, with an Introduction and a Commentary, by George E. Ganss, S.J. (1970). For specific page references to Friedrich’s discussion of the *Constitutions*, see the “Subject Index” (p. 847). In addition, according to Friedrich, Ignatius Loyola wrote “more than six thousand letters” (p. 113). Another key English translation is *The “Ratio Studiorum”: The Official [1599] Plan for Jesuit Education*, translated and annotated by Claude Pavur, S.J. (2005). For specific page references to Friedrich’s discussion of the *Ratio Studiorum*, see the “Subject Index” (p. 852).

<sup>2</sup> For my profile of the doctrinally conservative Pope Francis, see my online article “Pope Francis on Evil and Satan” (dated March 24, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> For further discussion of Ong’s philosophical thought, see my lengthy online article “Walter J. Ong’s Philosophical Thought” (dated September 20, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> For a briefly annotated bibliography of Ong’s 400 or so distinct publications (not counting translations and reprintings as distinct publications), see Thomas M. Walsh’s “Walter J. Ong, S.J.: A Bibliography 1929-2006” in the anthology *Language, Culture, and Identity: The Legacy of Walter J. Ong, S.J.*, edited by Sara van den Berg and Thomas M. Walsh (2011, pp. 185-

245). For an introductory survey of Ong's life and eleven of his books and selected articles, see my book *Walter Ong's Contributions to Cultural Studies: The Phenomenology of the Word and I-Thou Communication*, 2nd ed. (2015; 1st ed., 2000).

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